

THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

SPRING 2022



Welcome to Stone Mountain Park



GRE A 62nd Annual Convention

Stone Mountain Park is Atlanta's Favorite Destination for Family Fun! Nestled in 3200 acres of natural beauty, Stone Mountain Park features family-friendly attractions, outdoor recreational activities, and a variety of on-site lodging options so you can stay where you play! For three days in May, it will be the home of the 62nd annual Georgia Retired Educators Association Convention. As a GRE A member you are invited to enjoy all the activities that have been planned by President Jo Ann Tomlinson and the convention chair Becky Upchurch. It will be an exciting convention!

The convention will convene on May 3rd at 3 p.m. and adjourn on May 5th at 12 p.m. The host hotel is the Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Conference Resort. You can find a registration form and details on page 5 in this *Bulletin*!

A Word from the President

Serving With Power

By Dr. Henrietta Gray, President



Henrietta Gray

GREETINGS GREAs! I trust that you are well, safe, vaccinated and boosted. Your GREAs Leadership is concerned about the health and well-being of our membership. We are so grateful for your continued Service, viability, and commitment. You are indeed serving with Power.

I am excited and encouraged with your serving not only with Power, but with Passion as well. Working hard for something you don't really care about is stress. Working hard for something you love is passion. As I have traveled to face-to-face gatherings throughout our State, I have seen your passion. The excellence of your planning and the stimulating program execution is tangible evidence of your passion for GREAs. I applaud and appreciate all of you.

Although we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, your passionate service reverberates throughout the 18 Areas of GREAs! Your focused attention to the details has caused us to continue to rise and continue the length and breathe of our service. The documentation of how we are increasing membership, maintain contact and using various media for fellowship is a springboard for us to level up.

Our Board is composed of Area Directors who provide stellar support that is rendered in unwavering professionalism. The capacity, ability, and execution of tasks to direct and influence the behavior of others is clearly seen at every level of Leadership at the Local and State level. Leadership and membership of GREAs

know that you are making a positive difference and your labor is not in vain. You are living out This Administration's theme: **Empowered To Serve!** Your academic preparation and training are being utilized significantly. It has gained and maintained for us high visibility, community and stakeholders trust that is imperative for our successful perpetuation. Keep Serving with Power! Keep Serving with Passion!

Finally, please use your power to gather at our Convention, May 3-5. We will celebrate the outstanding Leadership of JoAnn Tomlinson. The convoluted effects of Covid have required us to cancel our State Convention two consecutive years. We remain committed to your health and safety as we plan this Convention to conduct the Business of GREAs. To that end, we cannot mandate masks, but strongly encourage that you wear them and adhere to all the CDC guidelines. Your safety at our Convention is our top priority.

I traveled the entire State of Georgia with President JoAnn. We have become real friends, working alongside her has been a joy and blessing. I have come to know for a certainty that she is a great Leader because she is a great person. I encourage and urge you to attend our May State Convention. JoAnn deserves to be honored and her accomplishments celebrated. We are excited about our upcoming Convention and look forward to your full participation.

I continue to be humbled and honored to serve you as the GREAs President. Please contact me with any questions, concerns, ideas, or observations.

A Word from the President-elect

By Joe Boland, President-elect



Joe Boland

So far, so good. My wife and I have had our shots/boosters and have not gotten sick, yet. Our daughter and family in Houston, Texas all have Covid. But it has not been too bad. Symptoms are mild and do not last too long. This seems to generally be the case. It would be nice to get back to some sense of normalcy.

Who knew? Not me. Who knew our TRS check would be so generous, and that we would have a COLA twice a year? I had no clue. Who knew our health insurance would be such a great benefit? Clueless in Kennesaw. Who knew we would still be getting Social Security benefits? I thought we would. I feel very fortunate to be a Georgia retired educator. I feel very fortunate to have GREAs looking after all of us.

One of the six purposes of GREAs is to promote the image of aging as one of dignity and independence. I'm not saying that any of us are old...just sayin'. Keep up the good work.

Kate Finch is a fireball. I enjoyed her time as President of GREAs and enjoyed seeing her at convention. She was one of our most dynamic leaders. She served as President 2011 to 2012.

- Theme: A Growing Force
- Colors: Red and Black (go figure)
- Charity: Fill Local Food Banks

- City of Convention: Callaway Gardens

Kate had a great time as President and so did the people around her. She loved traveling our great state with her husband, Aubrey, and visiting with local units. She appreciates the people who continue to serve our organization, singling out Ryan Greenfield of AMBA and Mike Zarem of TRS.

She is from a family of educators. Kate was a middle school teacher for 26 years in Commerce and Oglethorpe County. She taught language arts/literature. Her mom was a teacher, her husband was in education for 47 years, and 3 of her 4 children are educators. Bob is a teacher/coach in Greene County (Greensboro), Kathy teaches at UGA, Jim is Principal at Mary Persons in Forsyth, and Bill is Solicitor General in Forsyth County. Sadly, Aubrey passed away in December of 2019.

Kate grew up in Hartwell but was born in Lexington because that's where her uncle was a doctor. She has lived in Lexington for the past 35 years.

She attended and graduated from UGA. Her brother and sister attended at the same time. Wow. Dr. Sloan, who has attended games with the Finch family, calls her "Queen of the Bulldog Nation." This has been a good year to be a Dawg.

Thanks for being such a strong, positive leader for GREAs. I hope we see you again very soon.

GREAs 62nd Annual Convention

Atlanta Evergreen Marriott • Stone Mountain, Georgia • May 3-5, 2022

(See Convention Schedule and Registration form on page 5)

Ramblin' Around With the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



William Sloan

GREA has survived the pandemic and the world is getting back to normal. We are hearing wonderful things from all over the state that local units have gone back to meeting in person and our membership is taking part in the meetings. GREA is alive and well and thanks to all of you who have helped make this happen!

The Georgia General Assembly is approaching Day 20 and I am happy to report that as of now there has been nothing proposed that would have a negative effect on our Georgia TRS or that would affect retirees. One bill that is working its way through the legislature is HB 385. This proposed legislation would allow retired educators to go back to work full time and continue to receive their TRS benefits! It does require teachers to sit out one school year and it will be limited to certain subject areas as defined by the local RESA. We would like to see it expanded to include all subject areas and hopefully this is just a start to make that happen!

Any member of the Georgia House of Representative who

proposes any type of legislation loves to hear "It's On." No piece of legislation ever reaches the floor of the House of Representatives without those two words coming from Chairman Richard Smith of the Rules Committee in an official meeting of his committee. Some people believe that Chairman Smith and his colleague in the Senate are the two most powerful people in state government as nothing reaches the floor of the House or Senate without their blessings. So, to pick up on these two famous words, the leadership of GREA officially states that the 2022 State Convention "It's On". The GREA convention will be May 3 -5 at the Evergreen Marriott at Stone Mountain. We invite all GREA members to attend our convention. Past President Jon Ann Tomlinson will lead the convention. She missed both her two years as president in having a convention, so our current President Dr. Henrietta Gray graciously allowed her to have this convention and to celebrate her 2 years as president. Dr. Gray will have her convention in May of 2023. Hope to see all of you at both!

As Past President Jo Ann Tomlinson always says keep on "Cheering for GREA!"

A Word from the Past President

By Jo Ann Tomlinson, Past President



Jo Ann Tomlinson

Welcome 2022—a new year!! WooHoo!!! Looking forward to a Great 2022!!! Glad 2020 and 2021 are in the books, as they say. Hoping for a New and Better year in all areas! Get ready Stone Mountain because GREA is coming to visit! The GREA 62nd Convention is May 3-5, 2022, at the Evergreen Marriott and we want YOU to come and be a part of our Big Celebration!!

Always keep moving forward physically, emotionally, and spiritually! Ten minutes of movement once or twice a day will make a big difference to your body. We want to move forward by telling ourselves our 70's are our 50's. Make yourself move and help someone else. We all have good intentions! You get the Blessing, as well as the person you helped!

One in five Americans are providing unpaid care to an adult with health or functioning needs. Caregivers experience physical, emotional, and financial strain. Roslyn Carter, former First Lady, said "There are only four kinds of people in the world, those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those that will need a caregiver." A Big Thank You to all of you who donated to my Humanitarian Project Alzheimer's Association. Please donate generously to President Dr. Gray's March of Dimes Project.

Please be cautious about your State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) insurance. Do NOT listen to the folks on TV, phone calls and letters you receive. Our SHBP Medicare Advantage has the same benefits as all these others. Once you are OFF SHBP you can NEVER get back on!

Be sure your beneficiary information is up to date at TRS and your insurance policies.

Our generation is the MOST polite and trusting ever! Scams and fraud are on the rise so be smart and wise do not fall for it! Be super vigilant in protecting your identity and personal information. Calls or emails wanting you to confirm an order from a company—Do Not Respond! You know you haven't ordered anything, so ignore it. Do not play games or complete a survey on

your phone internet. It is a scam to get your information! Even be careful about answering questions with a YES. They can cut out the YES and say you answered that way to purchase something you did not order. Answer with Maybe or Why, just be cautious. Never pay someone for a job before it is finished. Invest in a shredder. People dig into garbage and steal folk's information. Be careful and watch your time looking at Facebook, Twitter, etc., playing games on your phone and if necessary, delete apps. I deleted Solitaire!

Never let a caller take control of your computer. Ask your credit card company to send you an email every time your card is used not in person. Don't provide personal info. Ask how did you get my phone number. Always check the email address to be sure it is real. As a GREA officer, people send emails claiming to be me or another officer asking for gift cards, money, etc. A GREA officer will NEVER ask you for gift cards. If it looks or sounds weird, it probably is!

The Joy of Living is Simple!! Heidi Pearson with *Renew* by UHC states to cut back on clutter and pursue a calmer, happier and healthier life. Mayo Clinic says, "Clutter can be holding you back from living your best life." You can free up mental and physical space and start enjoying a calmer, simpler and more joy focused life, day by day, one drawer or cabinet or closet at a time. Don't be overwhelmed! Work on it for 15 minutes and go for a walk or do something else and then come back to it. Fill your brain with gratitude. According to *Psychology Today*—gratitude has an effect on the brain that is linked to life satisfaction and improved well being. It helps us feel valued and minimizes negative habits and prevents worry and frustration.

Get ready for laughter, good times, fun and great memories!! Yes, the GREA 62nd Convention is May 3-5 at Evergreen Marriott in Stone Mountain. All of the presidents from each local unit really need to attend, as well as other members to receive all the information. You will meet other people from your area, make new friends and enjoy your retirement with new things learned. See you at the Tailgate Party!! #GREAisGreat #GREAistheBEST #FellowshipServiceSupport

TRS News: Retirement Legislation Activity in the General Assembly

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



Buster Evans

Happy New Year to our GREA friends! We so hope that the beginning of 2022 has been great for you and your families. By the time that this letter is published, our 2022 session of the Georgia legislature will be almost over. While there has been plenty of other activity otherwise, activity regarding teacher retirement has been "all good"!

For various reasons, several of our retired educators return to work after retirement for a TRS employer. Some of our retirees do so because they just love teaching and want to continue to practice their profession. Some continue to work perhaps to have something to do as they ease into retirement. Some retirees continue to work because they may need the extra income to supplement their retirement. Whether they are working as part-time teacher, a substitute teacher, or other position, our retired educators bring a lot of experience, maturity, and commitment to their post-retirement work. Currently, approximately 12,000 of our roughly 140,000 retirees return to work for a TRS employer. I would tell you that our TRS employers, whether it is our K-12 employers, Board of Regents, or otherwise, would struggle to fill some positions without having access to this valuable pool of experienced educators!

There is one retirement bill, HB 385, has passed unanimously in the House and is making its way through the Senate at this moment. This legislation would expand the return-to-work options for some of our retired educators, and that is House Bill 385. This bill would allow a retired educator to return to work full time in a teaching position and still be able to draw their monthly retirement benefit. After going through much scrutiny

last year, a substitute to this bill has been introduced that added a couple of additional stipulations for eligibility. There are a few criteria that must be met to return to work as provided under this bill. Those include 1) the educator must have been retired for at least a year and have 30 years of service in TRS, 2) the teaching position must be a critical needs area, 3) the employer would pay the TRS employee and employer contributions that would otherwise be paid for this position.

As a former district administrator as well as now at TRS, I find this bill to be truly a "win" any way that you look at it. First, it is a win for students and their parents when they have a chance to have a quality, experienced teacher. Second, it is a win for administrators who seeking to fill a hard to fill vacancy knowing they need a quality teacher. Thirdly, it is a win for the retired teacher who is given the opportunity to continue their profession for a few more years and get paid well in the process. Finally, it is a win for TRS because the retirement system receives the employee and employer contributions that would otherwise be paid to the system for that position.

The only other teacher retirement legislation that has been considered this session has been Senate Bill 267. This bill proposed allowing retirees who had selected one of the option plans to change their beneficiary, under certain circumstances, after retirement. It remains to be seen as to whether this bill will survive as there are still some obstacles that may prevent the adoption of this proposed legislation.

In closing, I look forward to seeing many of you at your upcoming annual conference at Stone Mountain. Meanwhile, we wish for each of you good health and happiness as you continue to enjoy your retirement!

Why Now Is the Time to Get A Long-Term Care Policy

When it comes to buying homeowners or car insurance, many of us don't hesitate. But if you think about it, the odds of needing nursing home care at some point may be higher than losing your house to fire or totaling your car.

There are two main reasons why people put off buying a Long-Term Care policy. One, who wants to think of themselves as becoming dependent on others or needing a nursing home somewhere down the road? Two, many people assume that Medicare will cover the cost.

Unfortunately, the first assumption isn't realistic, and the second isn't real. First, it is increasingly normal that, as we age, we need additional support. Second, Medicare is limited to long-term care coverage. To protect your family and your finances, buying a Long-Term Care policy now is the smart thing to do. Buying a Long-Term Care policy now gives you the

assurance you're covered if and when the time comes that you do need the help.

Here's what a Long-Term Care policy can do for you:

1. It helps you maintain your financial independence, so you won't have to rely on family members.
2. It helps you protect your assets and preserve your children's inheritance.
3. It makes long term care services affordable, such as home health care and custodial care.



4. It not only pays for nursing home care if needed, it also helps give you more options than other than nursing home care.

5. It can help preserve your standard of living.

A Long-Term Care policy from your association and AMBA lets you choose everything from your daily benefit amount, as well as your elimination and benefit period. This policy has no requirement for a prior hospital stay, no waiting period for pre-existing conditions, and no premium increases with age. Plus, this policy pays in addition to any other insurance you already have.

Ask a skilled AMBA agent if a Long-Term Care policy, endorsed by your association, is right for you. **Request a FREE Benefits Review with an AMBA field agent at www.amba-review.com or call 866-615-4063 Mon-Fri 8am-5pm CT.**

GREA 62nd Annual Convention Schedule

Monday, May 2, 2022

- 1:00 p.m. GREA Executive Committee Meeting
- 2:00 p.m. GREM Executive Committee Meeting
- 3:00 p.m. GREA Governing Board Meeting
Fill Goody Bags
- 4:00 p.m. GREM Governing Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 3rd

- 9:00-5:00 p.m. Registration
Display Room & Silent Auction Set-up
- 3:00 p.m. Opening Session
- 5:30 p.m. Social Hour with Cash Bar
- 6:00 p.m. Tail-Gate Banquet/Dinner served at 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 4th

- 8:30-Noon Registration
- 8:30-10:00 a.m. 3 Awards Breakfasts
- 10:30-1:15 p.m. Breakout Sessions
- 2:15-3:15 p.m. Chair Yoga & Line Dancing
- 3:00 p.m. Foundation Meeting
- 4:30-5:30 p.m. Memorial Service
- 5:30 p.m. Social Hour with Cash Bar
- 6:00 p.m. Evening Banquet/Dinner served at 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 5th

- 9:00 a.m. Closing Session / Installation
- Noon Governing Board Luncheon

REGISTRATION FORM GREA 62nd Annual Convention Atlanta Evergreen Marriott Stone Mountain, Georgia May 3-5, 2022

Please do a separate form for each person registering!
REGULAR REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 18th

Name on convention badge _____

Local Unit Name and Area _____

Office Held _____

Address _____ Phone _____

City _____ State _____

Registration for the Convention \$50 Amt. \$ _____

Early Bird Registration before April 1st \$40 Amt. \$ _____

Tuesday Night Tailgate May 3rd-6:30 p.m. \$50 Amt. \$ _____

Wednesday Awards Breakfast May 4th-8:30 a.m. \$45 Amt. \$ _____

Wednesday Night Banquet May 4th-6:30 p.m. \$50 Amt. \$ _____

Total Due Amt. \$ _____

Your check should be for the total amount shown above. Please do not include any other types of payment/donations in your Registration check. No refunds after April 18th. **A reminder that meal tickets must be bought before the convention and they will not be sold at the convention. Everyone taking part in any convention activities including meals must register for the convention.**

Mail to: GREA Convention Registration
P. O. Box 1379 • Flowery Branch, Ga. 30542

Deadline to register is April 18, 2022. After that registration will be at the convention! The number to call for reservations is 1-866-469-5461 (GREA Annual Convention) or go to <https://book.passkey.com/event/50187698/owner/13848151/home> to book your Group Rate for the GREA 2022 Convention.

News From GREA Local Units

Appling County REA has had a busy Winter quarter. December was a month of fun and follies. At our December meeting, State Rep (District 156) Leesa Hagan presented redistricting information. Of particular concern is the proposal that will divide Appling County into three Districts. Entertainment was provided by Elvis (Ray Thrift). Appling County Sheriff Mark Melton was guest speaker at our February ACREA meeting. He discussed personal safety and safety/self-defense programs offered by the county. His stories encouraged retirees to not let age restrict their participation. Our very own Dr. Stan Brobston presented information on the origins of WE SHALL OVERCOME and led us in song. It was wonderful to see Dr. Stan back with the group!

Ben Hill-Irwin REA held their third face-to-face meeting February 9th (September's meeting was held by a meeting newsletter). We honored two emeritus members with their certificate and a rose who had earned the status several years ago. Ms. Gussie Phillips was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Josephine Davis was thrilled to receive the attention given her by friends and members. February is also the month we hold our silent auction to raise funds for our GREA project. Over

\$400 was collected at the auction (we have several good bakers). Adding this to our previous March of Dimes collection, we have now raised over \$500. We had fifty members in attendance. Our March and April meetings will honor the scholarship winners from Irwin High School, Fitzgerald High School College and Career Academy star teachers.

Burke County REA, during the month of December, donated \$100 to CSRA EOA Adopt-A-Child and \$100 was donated for Johnny Jenkins Scholarship Fund. Our guest speaker for the month of January was Sean Middleton, CTAE Director of Burke County School System. He enlightened us about the career clusters, pathways and courses offered to prepare students for the future. He was presented a token of appreciation and also an Honorarium Certificate. Jackie Payton, Vice-Chair of Burke County Board of Education received a gift card and BCREA's Educator of the Month Certificate. Presentations were made by Emanuel Larkin, Jr. Tokens of appreciation for Retired Educators Day are still being presented to members from a business in the city. Thanks to our unit contact member Hattie Outlaw. We were grateful the continued support. Members participated in

the Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade. Members on the planning committee were Emanuel Larkin, Jr., Loretta Brinson and Jackie Payton. Thanks to the unit members for donating \$505 toward the American Heart Association for our Heart Brother Month activity.

Chatham REA has been busy during the first half of the 2021-2022 year. December was an exciting month for our members! Chatham REA celebrated its 50th Anniversary on Monday, December 13, 2021. It was a virtual event held on Zoom. Our theme, "Fifty and Fabulous: Still Empowered to Serve" included defining moments in this 50th year of celebration. A PowerPoint presentation highlighted 50 years of our accomplishments from 1971 until the present. Our members helped to make Christmas a little brighter for children. President Dr. Gordon N. Baker presented gift cards to the Tom Austin House and Greenbriar Children's Center. Members also collected much needed school supplies which Dr. Baker presented to May Howard Elementary School during the January school tours. Our members also attended the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools

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News From Local Units *from page 5*

Teacher of the Year Gala on February 11, 2021, with Student Teachers from the Savannah State University College of Education.

Cherokee REA is proud to announce the awarding of Emeritus GREA membership to Mrs. Carolyn Turner at the December 1st Cherokee REA meeting. Mrs. Turner was pleasantly surprised when GREA Area 15 Director Liz Bouis presented her the certificate. She turned 90 years of age in November and has been a GREA and CREA member for many years. Mrs. Turner taught over sixty years in the Cherokee County School District, working part-time and subbing many years after retiring from full time employment. She began her career at Ball Ground ES and finished at Hickory Flat ES. Mrs. Turner was joined at the presentation by two of her sons, John and Lamar, who are also retired educators. Congratulations to Carolyn Turner!

Clayton County REA met in person and via Facebook Live in December. Our presenter was Michael Kingsbury, one of our own CCREA members and a past president of the organization who is also an accomplished pianist and organist. Michael presented a piano concert of holiday music and show tunes which he dedicated in memory of his good friend and another of our CCREA members Jim Carter who died on November 19, 2021. CCREA took a "snow day" for the January meeting and will resume meeting in February.

Coweta Association of Retired Educators (CARE) has continued a second year of in-person meetings during the pandemic: one leadership session, four regular monthly meetings, two fundraisers, and two field trips. Our motto? "CARE Conquers Covid." We moved our officer installation to September so new and prospective members could personally meet the leadership team, hosting a covered dish luncheon to celebrate veterans and newcomers alike. Best of all, Vickie Davis brought news that Coweta REA was the only Unit in GREA Area 10 to earn Unit of Distinction for 2020-2021. In October Coweta County Schools Superintendent delivered his annual "State of the System" address, focusing on the district's continued response to the March 2021 tornado that seriously damaged three schools and almost 2,000 homes, many of them inhabited by CCSS students, faculty, and other employees. Ladies from United Bank taught our November attendees how to recognize and avoid scams and consumer fraud, crimes which victimized many senior citizens. CARE opened 2022 with a special program designed to encourage mental and physical health by our unit president teaching us yoga and other exercise moves which are age appropriate for retirees. Stay tuned to the next *GREA Bulletin* for a wrap-up of our tours to Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery, the Hills and Dales Estate, and the Biblical History Center; our super successful scholarship fundraisers; and our remaining 2022 programs.

Crawford County REA has been very active this year. We held our first meeting October 14th at Musella Baptist Church, where we recognized this year's CC Teachers of the Year. In November, we honored CC educators who have completed their 25th year and observed RE Day on November 7th. On November 11th, we celebrated Veterans Day with the CCHS ROTC Color Guard and honored our veterans/spouses. Georgia's Sheriff of the Year, Crawford County's Lewis Walker and Rep. Robert Dickey also joined us. On December 9th, we "Celebrated the Season" with Dr. Sloan, Johnny Smith, Dr. Gray, and Janice Habersham. On January 3-4, we provided cupcakes on Monday afternoon, and muffins and coffee on Tuesday morning to the CCHS Faculty and Staff as they worked diligently to

get moved into and set up in the new building. At our February 10th meeting, we reviewed decisions from our January planning session and received home and travel safety tips from Georgia Extension Agent Millicent Price. Each meeting concluded with a delicious lunch and a drawing for Educator of the Month.

Dalton-Whitfield-Murray REA held their 13th annual December luncheon/auction to benefit the scholarship fund. 110 DWMREA members and guests attended. \$11,000 was raised to add to the fund to award scholarships to local students majoring in education. The event was held at the Dalton Golf and Country Club, and featured a silent auction, a market, and a live auction. A buffet luncheon was featured, followed by the live auction, and Scott Chitwood, Whitfield County Sheriff, served as auctioneer. Auction committee chairs Dorothy Gray and Twinkle Chitwood, along with their committee members, work year-round getting things in place for the December event. Cash donations were also taken to support the Whitfield County Family Connections Sharing is Caring.

Dawson County REA has great plans for Spring 2022. Our school project this year consisted of delivering baskets of chocolate to all school employees from seven different schools. Spring programs will include presentation from a Line Dancing Instructor, Cookie Decorating Class, and a visit to Dawson County High School's Career and Academy Building with lunch provided by the Culinary Arts Classroom. We are planning for a great 2022. #DCREA Strong

Effingham County REA has recently sponsored two bake/craft sales in two of our local elementary schools. They were quite successful, with total sales netting about \$800. Some of these monies will be applied toward our scholarship fund, while the remainder will be given to our state project, March of Dimes. We held our January meeting on the 10th, with about 35 in attendance. Our speaker for this meeting was a retired educator, Cindy Baldwin. Cindy is currently affiliated with Lutheran Church Charities. She is a handler for Lizzie, a trained Comfort Dog. She accompanies Lizzie to various places, such as schools, nursing homes, assisted living places, and events to be shared and give comfort therapy and emotional support to those who need this type of assistance. The information was very interesting. We are pleased to announce that we have met our 10% goal for GREA with 19 members joining the state organization. This is election year for our unit, so a nominating committee will be announced soon to recommend a slate of officers to be considered for our unit positions. The Scholarship committee will be accepting applications soon for those who are interested in applying for these funds. Our next meeting will be on March 14, 2022.

Emanuel REA continues to strive to keep our members informed about state and local issues that could affect their lives. In September our new Superintendent, Scotty Hattaway, informed us of his vision for Emanuel County Schools. We followed with our state legislators, Senator Billy Hickman, Representative Butch Parrish and Senator Max Burns. Then January brought our yearly visit from Mike Zarem with Teacher Retirement System. We are gearing up for a BIG celebration of our 50th Anniversary year on May 18th.

Fayette County REA is having a 'sparkling' new year. We are grateful to our members who make our work satisfying and enjoyable by supporting the expansion of services and the implementation of creative ways to achieve our goals despite Covid. This year, we expanded our reach for Retired Educators' Day by having members contact

local Pastors and other organizations to observe and recognize retired educators in their churches and organizations respectively. We also collaborated with the FCBOE and the local media to acknowledge retired educators through their communication mediums. We have adopted two outreach projects in support of educators. We are excited to announce that we supported elementary schools throughout the district the first semester providing them with needed STEM supplies that they requested. Additionally, we support the FCBOE "Build A Mug" Program throughout the year. This program involves FCREA members assembling mugs which are presented to system employees monthly in recognition of their quality "Customer Service." We held our Annual Scholarship Fundraiser and decided to make it distinctive by incorporating a 'Market Day' component. Invitations were extended to outside vendors to participate. We were excited to have the vendors come out and support us by selling their crafts as we auctioned off lots of baskets and other donated items and gladly received monetary donations. FCREA realize that we can achieve great things when we combine our hearts and talents for good causes.

Floyd-Rome REA's November meeting's speaker was local veteran and retired educator, Bill King. Bill bought the replica of the "The Tomb of the unknown Soldier." It is a 50% scale detailed replica of the one in Arlington National Cemetery that was commissioned by the Rome Exchange Club. Mr. King shared the history of Arlington Cemetery, which honor all branches of service. The replica has sculptured artwork on both sides and represents the Greek figurines of Peace, Valor and Victory. Member Elizabeth Womble led the members in singing "This Land is Your Land" followed by Bill King and Wain Bates playing TAPS. Our December meeting was held with a luncheon at Thornton Recreation Center in Armuchee. Our speaker was State Senator Chuck Hufstetler, who spoke on "Upcoming Legislative Issues." This was followed by an entertaining session of Christmas music sing-along by FRREA member, Elizabeth Womble. FRREA promoted Georgia Retired Educators Day by having displays on billboards around Floyd County and having President Juanita King's letter to the editor printed in the *Rome News Tribune*.

Grady County REA had Lt. Daniel Lindsay, from the Grady County Sheriff's Department, to present an informative and interesting program on "Personal Safety." He shared tips for how we might be more vigilant and safer both at home and in our community. Community can now include not just the physical presence of others, but also, their impact on us via printed matter, the telephone, or the Internet. Lt. Singletary emphasized the dangers of financial scams and gave several examples, from his work, to underscore how vulnerable to threats we can be. On the surface, something appearing as an offer or transaction, may seem legitimate. But in the end, it may prove fraudulent, resulting in financial loss for the trusting individual. He urged us to be extremely careful when dealing with telephone or internet offers and even to check or follow up with our own investigations into what we are seeing or hearing. Of course, for our own personal safety, he reminded us to lock our cars, have lighted areas around our home, be careful about what we reveal of recent purchases (through the delivery boxes that we discard), be mindful of who is around when going from a store to our parked car, which should always be in a well-lit area. He urged us to train our eyes and mind to be observant, lest we fall victim to someone with harmful intentions. It was good information for all citizens, but it was especially great for seniors!

Greene County REA members wear many
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News From Local Units *from page 6*

hats as they volunteer and support various needs and organizations in their community. In December, several members of GCREA eagerly put on their Santa Helpers' hats to prepare gifts for attendees of Greene County Senior Center in Greensboro, Georgia. Members scurried about busy and delightful as elves filling decorative Christmas mugs with traditional Christmas candy of Hershey Chocolate Kisses, candy canes, and unique Christmas ornaments. Each mug was bagged in cellophane along with a Christmas card containing a \$5 bill. The bag was carefully tied with holiday ribbon of red, green, and gold curled to perfection and made ready for delivery. The following day the trip was made to Greene County Senior Center to deliver the gifts. The spirit of Christmas was everywhere! The center was festively decorated, and the staff adorned in holidays colors with fun accessories. Much to our delight, familiar smiling attendees dressed for a Christmas Party for sure; eagerly anticipated what was to come.

Henry County REA carries on in challenging times. Nothing can stop a determined group of educators and that is true of HCREA. We have met through thick or thin, face to face, by Zoom or both. As is tradition, we have heard from GREA Pres. Dr. Henrietta Gray, Henry County Schools Supt., Dr. Mary Elizabeth Davis, TOTY James Forsythe and Media Specialist OTY Christi Harp, our AMBA Rep. LeAnne Stutz and the CEO of Piedmont Henry Hospital, Dr. Lily Henson. We celebrated the holiday together and gave generously back to our community. \$1,400 in gift cards and toys were collected for foster children, 450 pounds of canned goods and non-perishable food items were donated to a local Food Bank, and members brought in over \$1,300 for the GREA President's project, the March of Dimes. We look forward to ending the year with a bang, as well!

Jefferson County REA sponsored "An Apple for the Teachers & Staff," providing refreshments to the teachers and staff of all the public schools in the county during American Education Week and presented 240 pounds of nonperishable food items and a monetary donation to the local food pantry in Louisville. A new stop on the road to fulfilling our mission of service was Jefferson County High School's "Examining the Teaching Profession" class in early November where four JCREA members shared their personal experiences in education and the impact of historical events and significant people on their journey as an educator. At our February meeting, our guest speaker was retired Jefferson County School Nutrition Director and JCREA past-president Carolyn Huntley. In observance of February as "Heart Month" and of Valentine's Day, she gave a very informative and exciting presentation on heart health entitled "Takes Love to Keep the Heart Pumping." Even two of our GREA emeritus members, 91-year-old Mrs. Geneda Henley (in person) and 96-year-old Mrs. Della Baker (at home via conference call) were moving to the beat of the music during the interactive portion of the presentation.

Johnson County REA continue to have monthly meetings in-person and news articles are sent to our local paper, *The Johnson Journal*, each month. We have had updates from our State Representative Matt Hatchett, Area 11 Director Marilyn Moore, Police Chief, Aaron Price on Crime Prevention and Insurance Protection with Justin Holland and Joey Shipp. Our members received valuable information from our guest speakers. As a unit we have donated school supplies to the Boys and Girls Club, donated nonperishable Food items to The Factory for families who were in need of help at Thanksgiving time and toys were donated to

Toys For Tots in December for Christmas. Our unit enjoyed door prizes and fellowship with refreshments after our December meeting.

Lamar REA had Truman Boyle, retired Georgia State Patrolman, to speak at the January meeting. He presented a program about "How Human Factors—such as Distracted Driving affect Driver Safety". He shared that he, along with other members of the Georgia Training Center Crash Team, were asked to make a video showing the importance of wearing seatbelts. The video can be viewed on YouTube. Search: "Rollover Video Final" Truman Boyle.

Madison County REA started off January 2022 with a special visit from our Area Director, Suellen Jones. She shared with us about her personal experience in education as well as what is ahead for GREA at the State Convention, and we treated her to the best hometown southern cooking in Georgia at Ila Restaurant. Getting back into the groove of monthly meetings as been a challenge at times and certainly contributes to lower attendance. Our annual Silent Auction was a great success, and we are well on our way to funding our two scholarships for 2022 graduates. We were also very pleased to have all our legislative officials present at our December meeting. The information they provided gave us much to think about, and we appreciate their continued support for education in Georgia.

Marion County REA attempted to resume meeting in September of 2021. Due to a significant increase on Covid cases, this meeting was canceled. We are still not meeting as a group, but we are keeping in touch with all members through e-mail. Despite us not meeting in person, we have met our membership goal for this year. We plan to donate to the March of Dimes in March, and we will give a monetary gift to the Marion County Star Students (2) and the Star Teacher (1). Both students chose the same teacher. These awards will be in May. We continue to share information received from the state office with all members and hope to resume our public meeting soon.

Mitchell/Baker REA ended the 2020-2021 year with a blast as Kevin Owens, Mayor of Camilla, Georgia shared community concerns regarding building relationships, as well as beautification projects. Although the Mitchell/Baker Association presently meets virtually, we have made great strides. Mrs. Naomi Carroll, president, and Mr. Jewell Howard, Area 1 Director, have led the group in accomplishing many goals. We kicked off the year as Mitchell County's superintendent, Dr. Rowland Cummings, shared new ideas and insights for the school system. At the time, the association decided to participate in the State School Project by giving monetary gifts to 10 schools in Mitchell and Baker Counties. In November, Mr. Don Gray, Mainstreet Director, shared great ideas about community relationships and volunteering in the local schools. One of our oldest members, Mrs. G. O. Marcus, placed an article in the *Camilla Enterprise* relating to Black History Month. During our last meeting (April 2022) for this year, two of our successful graduates from Mitchell County will share how writing children's books and production in plays and movies have impacted their lives. The Mitchell/Baker REA will continue to make strides in boosting our membership and be more involved in community activities.

Newton County REA has been busy! Our December meeting was held at Alcovy UMC Fellowship Hall. Holly Gardiner, local member and AMBA Representative, provided our program highlighting the importance of becoming a GREA member, as well as all the benefits available through AMBA. Members, their spouses,

and guests enjoyed a catered luncheon following the meeting and participated in an ornament exchange. Members also brought in warm wear for the homeless which were given out at a Christmas Eve breakfast for the homeless at The Repairers of the Breach in Covington. NCREA along with GREA and Dunkin Donuts provided Appreciation breakfasts for four randomly chosen schools in Newton County, making a total of seven schools the last two years. NCREA is proud to have reached both their 7% and 10% membership increase goals! The program for our February meeting was Voting in Newton County where Ange White-Davis, Director of Newton County Board of Elections, spoke about changes to voting laws and changes in districts and precincts in Newton County. Our unit is holding a Spring Wreath-making Class Fundraiser in March to benefit our Scholarship fund.

North Fulton REA is collecting jewelry as a Mother's Day project for a local school. First- and second-grade students will be able to select a piece of jewelry for a significant female in their lives as a gift for Mother's Day. Throughout the year, we collect and donate food, diapers, toothpaste, and other necessities to North Fulton Charities.

Paulding REA met on February 10th at the Dallas First Baptist Church. Our featured speaker was Steve Barnette, Paulding County Superintendent. He updated us on how schools are coping with rapid growth. Paulding County is the 11th largest school system in Georgia. Plans are being made for additions to existing schools and for construction of new schools. Dr. Susan Browning spoke about how our schools have coped with Covid, making use of improved technology. Burton Turner notified us of the need for retired educators to return to teaching and become mentors for current county educators. Our next meeting will be on March 8th at 10 a.m. We will hold our Memorial Service honoring Jim Jordan, Franklin Welch, Frances Rakestraw, Lymus Holman and Connie Tibbitts, members we have lost during the last two years.

Peach County REA has been busy during the year 2021. At each monthly Zoom meeting the organization received information from different speakers such as Dr. Lionel Brown Peach County School Superintendent, Area Director Janice Habersham, Peach County Investigator Lyndon Prater, and the Mayor of Fort Valley, Barbara Williams. The organization gave Valentine and Thinking of You cards to the teachers at Hunt Elementary and Kay Road Elementary Schools in Peach County. PCREA members tutored students at Hunt Elementary and Kay Road Elementary and supported the Youth Center of Fort Valley. The organization was recognized by the Peach County Board of Education for Outstanding Service where they received a certificate and plaque. PCREA maintained their Unit of Distinction and met their yearly goals. Peach County Retired Educators remained busy during the entire year of 2021 serving the community and educators of Peach County.

Polk REA honors Ms. Gladys Gipson with Emeritus Membership during their December. After serving as an educator for 41 years, Ms. Gipson has been a member of GREA and PREA for many years, serving on numerous committees and elected offices, including PREA President. She was awarded Emeritus Membership by Area Director Liz Bouis for her dedicated service to PREA and GREA.

Rockdale REA is proud to claim a \$900 grant from Snapping Shoals as a contribution for our Ferst Readers Rockdale program. In addition to providing scholarships for preservice educators, Rockdale Retired Educators also want to better prepare students for the classroom, so making

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books available to children from the ages of birth to five paves the way. First Readers also maintains a website to guide families in developing language skills and sends out monthly newsletters to keep families aware of how to best use texts with youngsters. First Readers mails a book targeting the child's age each month. Families self-identify through the local food bank. With the help of the Snapping Shoals grant, our local Head Start program will also receive books for four-year-olds, and we will continue to encourage families at the Rockdale Food Bank to participate in First Readers.

Schley County REA met on February 15, 2022, at The Buffalo Cafe in Plains, Georgia, with 19 members present. President Lou Chase called the meeting to order. Under old business, we discussed the six student teachers at Schley Elementary School this semester. After discussion, a motion was made and approved to give \$200 each to all six student teachers this semester. Following several discussions of old and new business, our next meeting was announced, on April 19th at Stephanie's Country Kitchen, at 5:30 p.m. It will be our annual fundraiser. Also, President Chase reminded members that names are needed for the memorial library donations we will soon be making. The door prize was won by Joyce Owsley, SCREA Treasurer.

South Fulton REA will observe its 50th year, or golden anniversary in 2023. The Fulton County Educators Association was started on April 23, 1972, when a group of retired teachers met with Ruby Brown presiding. This was an exceptionally large group. Hence, it was decided that since there were so many people from the two areas of Fulton County, the group should be divided to make the meetings more meaningful to all. Our organization was established in August of 1973. Since that time, we have had several officers who served diligently to keep our organization an active part of the community. Even during the pandemic, we are still an active association meeting via Zoom. This organization provides an opportunity for retired teachers to meet and enjoy the fellowship of retirees. The biggest project of SFREA is raising funds to give a scholarship to a deserving senior or educator. Also, members have volunteered at schools in the community.

Toombs County REA met on Thursday, February 3, 2022. Our speaker was Pam Fountain, the County Coordinator for Action Pact, Inc. She explained what Action Pact is and what it does for Toombs County. She shared how we could participate in volunteering, attending their programs, or use their services. It was a very interesting and informative program.

Tri-County REA has been busy this year. Emanuel Larkin, Area 12 Director, installed officers at our October meeting. Several members had pictures made with Kenneth Usry, Mayor of Thomson, as he signed the Proclamation declaring November 7th as Georgia Retired Educators Day. President Wilcher collected items from county businesses and presented gift bags to all members. Members enjoyed a fellowship luncheon at various schools. In November, our unit provided treats to all teachers and staff at each school. We collected and donated socks and underwear to area elementary schools. In December, we enjoyed fellowshiping with each other at the Fort Gordon Dinner Theater. At our February meeting, we collected and delivered canned goods to the local MANNA food bank. Later in February, members will attend a play, "Truth" at the KROC Center in Augusta, Georgia. As you can see, we are on the move.

Valdosta Lowndes REA says there is not a whole going on that we can see, but we still have many active members carrying out projects throughout the community. They are personal volunteers for family, neighbors, and the community. During our January meeting we had the Patient Advocate, Maya Loizeaux and the Auxiliary President, Ora Morrison, speak to our group about Volunteering at the hospital through the Auxiliary. Miss Ora is a retired educator, and she became a member of VLREA today. We are looking forward to our crowd picking up in number at the February 14th meeting. Fellowship, Service and Support is our motto, and our daily plan of living.

GREA

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Almost Gone!

By Jesse Hunter

The number of bricks available for purchase is now 28 (Feb.18). By the time you read this, the bricks will be sold out. As the orders are received in the office, we will notify everyone when the final 28 orders are received. The orders received over the 28 will be returned to the purchasers.

There are orders for 127 bricks that haven't been installed yet. The original company that installed 3,000 plus bricks is out of business and a new company has been employed to install the remaining bricks.

Thanks to everyone who has purchased a brick(s). The plaza is a legacy for those honored. Be sure to visit the plaza and our beautiful museum.



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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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