

THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

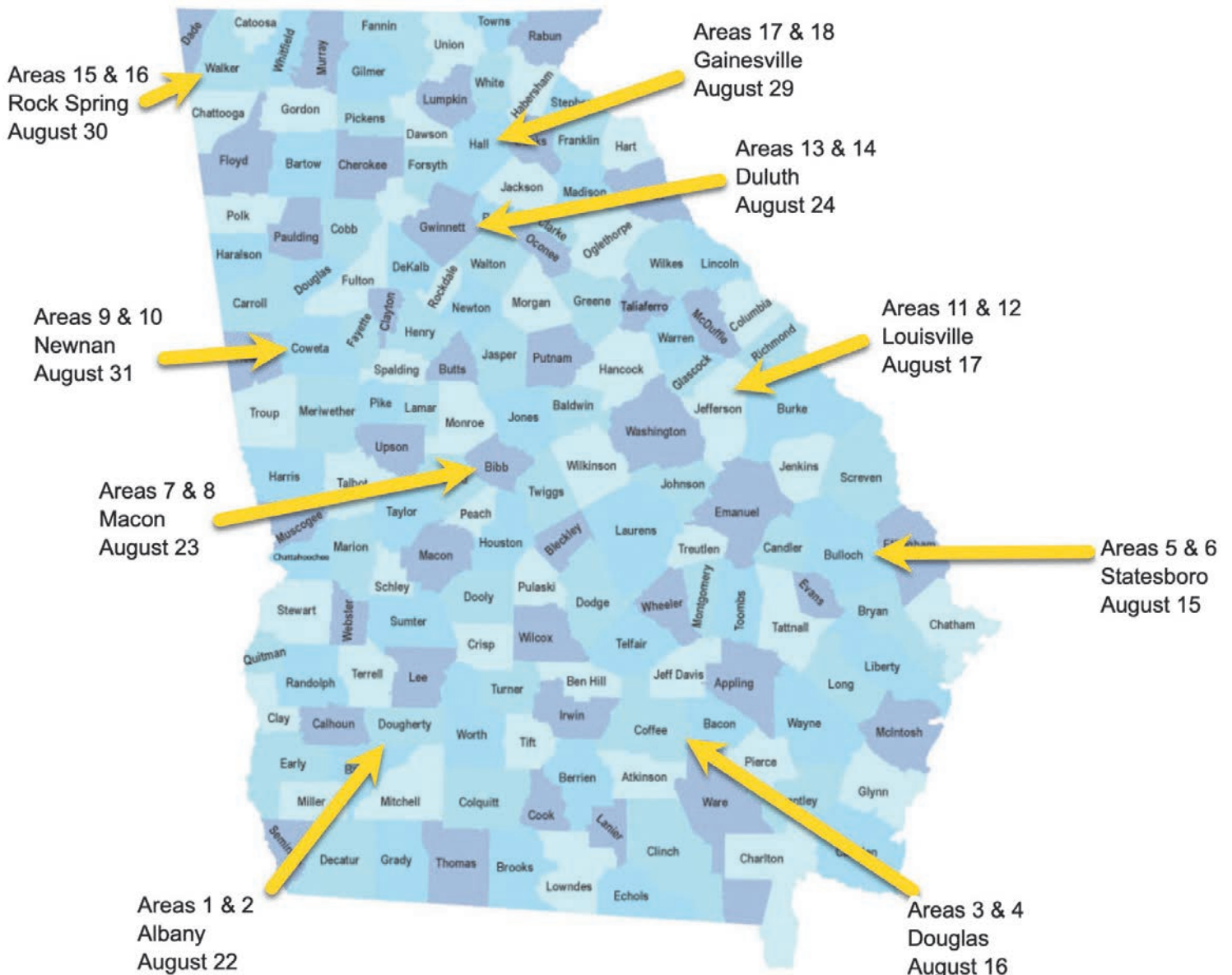
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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

FALL 2023



On the Road AGAIN!



The GRE A Travel Team of President Joe Boland his wife Melinda, President-elect Shirley Grant, Executive Director Bill Sloan, and Director of Communications Johnny Smith spent three weeks on the road crisscrossing the state for our annual Area Meetings. GRE A Photographer Joe Moore met us each day at the meeting location. We were joined by TRS Representative Mike Zarem, in his twenty-ninth year of meetings, along with AMBA representatives Doug Holt, Lisa McKenzie, Debbie Scarborough and LeeAnn Sturtz. We had a GRE A-t time talking with local units and connecting names with faces.

A Message from the President

By Joe Boland, President



Joe Boland

We finished the Area Meetings last week. Melinda and I enjoyed it very much. Thank you for your hospitality and all your efforts to prepare for these meetings. More people attend these Area Meetings than attend the convention. So it's a pretty big deal. Y'all seem to be in good spirits and ready to Get on the Bus.

We live in a great state! It turns out that the rest of the state is not exactly like metro Atlanta, where I live. Agriculture is our number 1 business. The peach crop was hit this Spring, and now it looks like the pecan crop has been hit. I'm so sorry about this.

Linda McPherson is one of the 3 loyal readers of this article. When I retired, she is the person that insisted I join GREA. I am very grateful for this. I have been friends with her since 1988 which makes me one of her newer friends. She was counselor at Garrett Middle School, and I was the third Principal of the school. She had and continues to have the greatest admiration for the first Principal of Garrett, Dr. Franklin Croker. I moved on to several other schools, but I could never get Linda to transfer. She is loyal to her school, to her friends, and to her neighbors. She had 42 years in education. Forty-one of those in Austell. She went to college at Southeast LA and grew up in Covington, LA. At the Area Meeting in Duluth, Mayor Harris spoke of being a good neighbor; of looking out for each other, taking care of each other. This is what Linda does.

I am very appreciative of the help I have received from Cobb/Marietta REA members who have helped me prepare to be President and to serve as President. These are sharp, hard-working people who serve our organization well.

- Linda McPherson, long time secretary of CMREA
- Ida Dixon, past president of CMREA
- Liz Bouis, past president of CMREA, Area Director, Secretary of GREA
- Judy Munson, long time membership chair of CMREA

I hope your year is off to a good start. Watch out for all those school buses!



TRS News

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



Buster Evans

Greetings to all of our GREA friends! During these challenging times, I hope that you and your family members are doing well. As our active educators have begun their new school year, we welcome our new retirees to the ranks of being "the happiest people I know!" So, if you are one of our new retirees, congratulations on your retirement, and thank you for your career as an educator!

Another Good Year of Returns on Investments. Our investment gains for FY 2023 were at 11.9%! When you compare our fund's gains to a number of other large pension funds in the country, our returns certainly appear to be above average, outperforming most other pension systems whose data I have been able to review for the year. While we know that some years will be better than others based on historical observations, it certainly means a lot to the sustainability of our fund when we experience gains that are well above our assumed rate of return which is 6.9%.

Rates of Retirement. For the year ending June 2023, we actually saw a slight drop in the rates of retirement. We track this number throughout the year as retirement rates could alter the benefit payment liability of our system. We have remained pretty consistent over time with somewhere between 6500 and 7000 retiring each year.

More Retirees Returning to Work After Retirement. Retired educators serve as a valuable resource for school and district administrators who rely on being able to call upon retired members to fill critical needs positions in schools. Some of our retirees come back to substitute. Some come back to work in a part-time or full-time capacity where permissible. This past year, we saw the largest number ever approved to return to work. Over 14,000 retirees came back to work after retirement indicating that those high, inflationary prices motivated some of our retirees to come back to help out in local districts. Some of the best teachers to be found come from the ranks of our retired educators!

The PBI/MoveIt Third Party Data Breach. All of you should be aware by now of the data breach that our vendor, PBI, experienced a couple of months ago where certain data of retirees and some other beneficiaries was accessed. While it was not the TRS data system that was breached, it was the data of our members. Because of that, we continue to be most disappointed in both this event and that it has inconvenienced our membership and our organization. We sincerely thank you for your understanding as we continue to work through the process of insuring our members are notified and are gaining access to customer service support from PBI and the Kroll monitoring service. If you need to access any of our previous communications regarding this matter, this can be obtained on our website at www.trsga.com under the "Retiree" button on the homepage.

In closing, we look forward to seeing many of you across the state in coming months. Meanwhile, we wish for each of you good health and happiness as you continue to enjoy your retirement! Thank you for the honor and privilege of being of service to you!

Ramblin' Around With the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



William Sloan

It is the typical beautiful day in the suburbs of downtown Flowery Branch, Ga. I am thinking how we are so blessed to be a retired educator in Georgia. Have you looked at our Facebook page and read the article about retired educators in Kansas? They have not had a COLA in 23 years! Georgia retirees receive 1.5% COLA every six months. Our pension has grown by over 69% while the retirees in Kansas had the same amount all that time. Be thankful for your Georgia TRS and the people who invest our money. They do a wonderful job for us! I am also thankful for our state legislators who have continued to make the required contribution to our TRS to keep it in great financial shape. Please never forget that our legislators support retirees in Georgia in a great way. Some of our sister states have no support from their state government. If you have the opportunity to thank a legislator, please do so as the Georgia General Assembly is our friend.

The GREA traveling team has now finished the nine area meetings we hold each year across this great state. We traveled over 1,700 miles over the 9 days and spent 8 nights away from home. Thank you to the area directors who oversaw the arrangements for these meetings. They were all great and over 600 GREA members attended. Thanks to all of you who played any part in making these events successful. GREA local leaders are super nice folks and do a wonderful job for our local members. Your state officers of President Joe Boland, President/Elect Shirley Grant, and Director of Communications Johnny Smith did an outstanding job at these nine area meetings.

Have you looked at our Facebook page recently? During a 3-week span in September, over thirty local units were spotlighted on it. Local units across this state are doing wonderful things and you can see what is going on by simply going to the Georgia Retired Educators Association Facebook page. Give it a try and you might like to see what is going on in both your local unit and other local units across the state.

Do you attend the local meetings in your area? If not, please call our office and we can give you info as to when and where your local unit meets each month. We will connect you with the local leadership and they would love for you to attend. Fellowship is one of the cornerstones of GREA and we hope you will not miss the opportunity to socialize with your fellow retirees.

As we enter the Fall season, please enjoy the great cooler weather, and do not forget to be thankful you retired in Georgia.

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 grea3@grea3.org and we will be happy to put you on the email list. Thank you for considering getting your *Bulletin* by email.

GREM

Rolling Smooth

By Dr. Henrietta Gray, GREM President



Henrietta Gray

The brevity of this article is in no way reflective of the depth of my continuing commitment and dedication to GREA. The Executive Director, Dr. Bill Sloan, shared with me the wonderful attendance of our membership to our Area Meetings. I know we had an outstanding Area 5 & 6 meeting, led by our able Area Director, Dr. Connie Cooper, who planned and executed an excellent Area Meeting. President Boland was warm, engaging, and informative. Bravo to us for getting on the bus.

The bus is running smoothly. I urge us to continue the journey in support and service. Let us all make sure we pick up new members and keep the bus loaded. Looking forward to a resplendent year of increase and growth for this 2023 and 2024 year of Fellowship, Service and Support.

I am looking forward to service as the GREM President. We will be having our first GREM MEETING for this year on September 15th. You can be sure that our Museum is alive and well in its relevance and authenticity. A more detailed report is forthcoming.

May the God who hears, helps and heals, hear us, help us and heal us everywhere we hurt.

All Aboard to Athens!

GRE Foundation, Inc.

Barbara Wilcher, President



Barbara Wilcher

The Board of Directors of the Georgia Retired Educators Foundation will hold its first quarterly meeting for the 2023-2024 fiscal year on Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at the GREM building in Flowery Branch, Ga. beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Among the various topics for discussion, one will be to determine the number of scholarships that will be given and the amount of each.

The GRE Foundation Board wishes to thank all units who contributed to the Silent Auction and those who purchased items. Without your support, we will not be able to give as many annual scholarships. Please note, all units and or individuals can make financial donations as well as donate items to the Silent Auction. We look forward to your continued support to the GRE Foundation.

If you are interested in serving on the GRE Foundation Board, please contact any board member. A list of Board members along with their contact information can be found on the GREA website, and in the GREA Handbook.

A Word from the President-elect

By Shirley Grant, President-elect



Shirley Grant

There is no doubt that Georgia is the largest state east of the Mississippi River. As part of the GREA Traveling Team, I found that fact to be true when we attended Area meetings from one end of the state to the other. Many thanks to our bus driver, Johnny Smith who got us to our destinations safe and on time. I would like to offer my thanks and appreciation to those Area Directors who were responsible for planning and conducting the business of GREA in their area. Each meeting was different, and the decorations, food, and door prizes were wonderful. I was pleased to witness the excitement and loyalty of GREA members across the state. Happy Fall Y'all and until the next meeting, it is: "On The Road Again".

Successful Retirement Starts with Smart Financial Choices

Currently, nearly 10,000 people in the United States turn 65 years old every day. By 2028, that number will reach nearly 12,000 people a day. That adds up to millions of people leaving the workforce every year. Are they prepared for a successful retirement? Americans are living, on average, more than two decades after the traditional retirement age of 65. The average 65-year-old American man will live to be nearly 86 years old, while the average 65-year-old American woman will live to nearly 88 years old. As exciting as retirement can sound, the fact is more people are retiring with less savings than they need to be comfortable. In fact, more than 1 out of 5 Americans have no retirement savings at all. It's never too late to save, even after retirement. Here are a few things you should consider for a successful retirement.



Downsize

Consider what you own, what you need, and what you'd be OK doing without. If you're an empty-nester and no longer need a big house – or want the expense of maintaining it and the property – you can move to a smaller and less costly home. You could even consider moving to another state that might have a more favorable cost of living and new adventures.

Downsizing doesn't only have to mean your home. You can consider if it's time to let go of items like season tickets to your local team or subscriptions to a variety of entertainment ser-

vices. Additionally, you could sell an extra vehicle or some items like designer clothes and handbags. Put what you make into savings.

Trim your lifestyle and spending

Look at your purchases over the past few months. Identify spending habits that you can eliminate. One of the most frequent expenses that "sneak up" in terms of the accumulation of cost to you is dining out too often. Could you start cooking more meals at home instead of going out to eat as often? Keep a diary to track your spending. Note extravagant purchases and see ways to save.

Invest wisely

At this point in life, you'll want to make less risky investments than you did when you first started working. But you'll still want to invest. See if you can get a higher return on investment by investing in an annuity or mutual fund compared to waiting for a savings account to grow.

Be ready for a rainy day

One of the smartest investments you can make for a successful retirement is having the right benefits to cover routine health exams like Vision and Dental care, or in case of an emergency. The healthier you stay, the less expensive health care will be! **Set up a FREE Benefits Review today so you can discuss with a skilled AMBA field agent what coverage you need to protect your health, finances, and loved ones. Visit www.amba-review.com or call 866-615-4063 Mon.-Fri 8am-5pm CT. It's nice to know that anytime you have questions about your insurance benefits, someone is ready to assist.**

Joint Area and Joint Unit project for Future Educators

The Jeff Davis Retired Educators Association of Area 5 and Coffee/Atkinson REA of Area 4 combined to make goody bags to welcome the incoming students to the Education Program at South Georgia State College in Douglas and Waycross, Ga. The students received special cookies, candy bars, pens, pencils, and items that they will find useful as they begin their training. We wish the best for these future educators! Members who delivered the bags were: Sue White, CAREA secretary; Gina Hughes, JDREA president; Ann Bookhardt, JDREA treasurer; and Laverne Carver, C/A REA president. We were happy to lend some encouragement to these future educators.



GRE 2023 Area Meetings

On the Road Again!



AREAS
1-2



AREAS
5-6



AREAS
3-4



EXIT TO PAGES 6-7



**AREAS
7-8**



**AREAS
9-10**



**AREAS
11-12**





AREAS
13-14



AREAS
15-16



AREAS
17-18



News From GREA Local Units

Bibb REA hosted the GREA annual Area Meeting August 23rd at the Macedonia Church of Macon for Areas 7 and 8. Area 8 Director Louis Frank Tompkins and Bibb Retired Educators (BRE) served as hosts for the meeting. We had great participation at the meeting with over 100 members in attendance. Special guests included GREA President Mr. Joe Boland, President-Elect Ms. Shirley Grant, Executive Director Dr. Bill Sloan, Macon's Mayor Lester Miller, and Superintendent Dr. Dan A. Sims, Bibb County School District and others. Lamar County REA, President Esther Washington, was presented the Most Members in Attendance Award. President Joe Boland's theme is "Get on the Bus!" The colors are blue, and gold and his special project is Totes for Tots. Come on and Get on the Bus for GREA!

Burke County REA members attended the 63rd Annual Convention at Augusta Marriott Convention Center in Augusta, Georgia . May 2nd-4th. It was enjoyable and informative. Kudos to our Unit! President Emanuel Larkin, Jr. was presented the Unit of Distinction by Area 12 Director Dr. Roger Williams. The hard work and dedication of members assisted in elevating our unit. On August 17th, fourteen members attended GREA Areas 11 and 12 Meeting which was held at Jefferson County Complex in Louisville, Georgia .. Cynthia Mobley was recognized as a 97-year-old Emeritus member. What a Blessing!

Camden County REA is ready for a GREAT 2023-2024 after having a good 2022-2023, a great planning session in July, a picture on a Camden school bus and sending 7 people to the district meeting in Douglas. The meetings for the quarter are set with a welcome reception for new members, information from an AMBA representative, recognition of Domestic Violence Month in October and a visit from a member of the GREA Administrative team. Camden has several community projects lined up and is looking forward to Retired Educators Day in November. GET READY! GET READY! HERE WE COME!!!

Chatham REA is excited to begin a new year! The first meeting was held Monday, September 11, 2023. Our new President, Carrie Howard presented a full agenda of events. Members continue to be actively engaged in a variety of community projects to include donating school supplies, supporting local agencies, and volunteering with local organizations to fulfill the GREA motto of "Fellowship, Service, Support. Chatham REA continues to "CHEER FOR GREA."

Coweta Association of Retired Educators answered the call for service with the appointment of our president, Sherry Leigh Taylor, to the mid-term, vacated office of GREA Area 10 Director. Summer immediately became a flurry of activity as she and newly elected Area 9 Director, Dr. Marietta Webb, scurried to plan and host the August 31st joint meeting. The Donald W. Nixon Centre for Performing and Visual Arts provided a stunning venue to showcase and introduce the 2023-2024 Get on the Bus theme. CARE's Board of elected officers and committee chairs had met in July to integrate GREA President Joe Boland's theme into upcoming programs, service projects, and social occasions. Our exciting agenda will include State Representative Lynn Smith, State Senator Matt Brass, Coweta County Superintended of Schools Evan Horton, local author and retired educator Andy Denny, Laughing Yoga instructor, K-9 officers, and tour of Oak Hill Cemetery. Community service opportunities include Public Safety Foundation, Veterans cards and Stars for Our Troops, Little

Free Libraries, Optimist Clubs, Coweta Elevate, Samaritan's Clinic, Keep Newnan Beautiful, and Future Georgia Educators. Members will also enjoy excursions to fall festivals, Warm Springs and The Little White House, Monastery of the Holy Spirit, and performances at the Nixon Centre. Coweta has definitely boarded that bus!

Dalton Whitfield Murray REA had three members to attend the GREA State Convention in Augusta in May. Those attending were Pete Adams, Sandra Derrick, and Sid Derrick. Sandra led a best practices four-member session on fund raising tips and ideas. Several unit members attended seven local high school senior awards day events in May to present DWMREA scholarships to students. Sally Little, DWMREA scholarship chair, attended awards day at Dalton State College to present four scholarships to students. DWMREA also held a summer workshop for incoming leadership members at The Oakwood Cafe in Dalton. Programs and events were planned for the 2023-2024 year. Gary Cochran, DWMREA president, attended the GREA Area president's meeting at Western Sizzlin in Dalton. The meeting was conducted by Penny Howerton, GREA Area 16 Director. Sara Davis, DWMREA treasurer, Gary Cochran, DWMREA president, and Sandra Derrick, DWMREA past president, attended the GREA Area 15/16 meeting in Rock Spring in August. The unit will hold the first meeting of the 2023-2024 year in September at Western Sizzlin in Dalton.

Dooly County REA members are excited to be riding the bus for 2023-2024 year. After losing our president to COVID in 2020, Ms. Donella McIntee, we have tried hard to keep our local unit going. We know that this is what she would want us to do. She would have been so proud of us for achieving the Unit of Distinction. She always worked hard to help us in this endeavor. We have already completed some of our community projects for this year. We assisted our area schools with the Back to School Bash, helped with Open House, and showed up bright and early on the first day of school to give help to students and teachers. We also presented one of our 2023 high school graduates with a \$500.00 scholarship at our August meeting. She hopes to become a teacher. Isn't that good news? I know we all can agree that we really need good teachers.

Effingham REA Planning Committee met during the summer months and discussed various items regarding our upcoming GREA year. The main topic of discussion was our Annual Banquet, which will be held on Monday, September 11. Dr. Henrietta Gray will be the featured speaker for the event, and we are looking forward to her enthusiastic spirit and encouragement for new members. At this time, we have 54 persons who are registered to attend the banquet, which is a record! At the BOE county-wide meeting at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year, Pam Anderegg and Beth Kight were in attendance to recognize our scholarship winner. Carla Luke, art teacher, was given the scholarship award to help with her pursuit of a graduate degree in her field. We had several members to attend our Area meeting in Statesboro. We are looking forward to a great year with new service projects assigned, bake sales, interesting speakers, and much fun fellowship, and food to share.

Emanuel REA has been busy all summer making plans for the upcoming year. In June, the officers and all committee chairs met to brainstorm about programs and activities for the coming year. In July, the president and president-elect attended the President's meeting, received new chapter planning guides, and networked with other officers in the area. Then in August, seven

of our members attended the Area Meeting in Statesboro where we were able to meet with the GREA leaders.

Fayette County REA is excited to begin our year as a 2022-23 Unit of Distinction, led by second year president Mrs. Doe Evans. Our first initiative was sponsoring a "Grab and Go" breakfast during the district's new teacher orientation, held on July 25th. FCREA members were delighted to welcome over one-hundred and seventy new teachers to The Fayette County Public School System. Our first unit meeting will be held on September 14, 2023, with Ms. Christy Todd, Georgia Teacher of the Year, and former Fayette County Teacher of The Year, serving as our guest speaker. In keeping with our 2023-24 theme, Get On The Bus, our creative music teacher, Karen Neuner, has invited the Executive Committee to perform an adapted version of the song, "The Wheels on the Bus". Lyrics were changed and hand motions added to go along with the GREA motto. This fun and exciting performance of "The Wheels of Learning" is one of many that FCREA will incorporate in its meetings. It is our goal to motivate and inspire members to "Get on The Bus", as we to work together to have an awesome and rewarding year!

Floyd-Rome REA has co-presidents, Judy Angle and Nancy Ivester, and they have been very busy making plans for the year. They attended the GREA Convention in May and went to the area 15 Cluster meeting in August. They have returned with some exciting ideas that will be used for our FRREA club. The new GREA theme is "Get on the Bus" to increase our membership. The new GREA project to which we will be contributing to is "Totes to Tots." Our FRREA September meeting will feature Dr. Eric Robertson, Director of Teacher Preparation Program at the Transitional Academy. Other programs are planned that are focused on attracting the interests of new members.

Forsyth County REA will be celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. We met early in the summer to plan meetings, programs and activities for this year, including an anniversary celebration at our December meeting. We are looking forward to having meetings and activities that encourage everyone to "Get on the Bus" and be active participants in supporting school system and community events. Officers and committee chairs attended our Area meeting last week and were energized by hearing important information from our GREA leaders. We're gearing up for our first meeting on October 6, and are looking forward to a GREA-T year.

Gwinnett County REA members "got on the bus" and volunteered at the Area 13/14 Annual Meeting on August 24th at Duluth UMC. They served before, during and after the meeting. From helping with food service, table decorations, greeters, Swag table helpers and pitching in to take down and clean up after the meeting, they were there all the way. They were delighted as the entire room began singing "The Wheels on the Bus" and our own moving bus/photo frame circled the room "driven" by GCREA President Karen Efration. All were happy to have been able to help make the meeting a success.

Mitchell-Baker REA members are "Getting on the Bus" for the 2023-2024 year with much collaboration and excitement. We plan on traveling throughout the community assisting, volunteering, and participating in community and state level events. Our goal is to support, provide service, and fellowship with each other, as well as the community. During the months of June and August, we participated in two executive meetings outlining activities (handbook, calendar of events, amending by-laws, etc.) for the

year. During the August Executive meeting, we scheduled a new members' reception and shared information pertaining to expectations and guidelines. Debbie Scarborough from AMBA was also in attendance. On July 27, 2023, members volunteered at Open House in Mitchell and Baker Counties. We also attended the Area 1 and 2 Meeting at Albany Technical College in Albany, Georgia. This year has gotten off to a great start!

Muscogee REA members attended the area meeting in Newnan Thursday, August 31st. Those in attendance were Dr. Mary Avery, President Elect, Dr. Jeanette Marshall, Newsletter chair, Kay Baldwin, Hospitality, Karen Hartin, Retirement Information/Services, Mary Ann Marshall, Secretary, and Carole Mashburn, President. Attendees enjoyed hearing from Joe Boland, GREA President, Area 9 Director, Dr. Marietta Webb and other GREA board members.

Newton County REA had a busy. During the summer months, our unit focused on fellowship! Our June social included lunch at the Yesterday Cafe in Rutledge. Afterward we walked over to the Rutledge Depot Community Center for a hand sculpted pottery class! In July, we met and carpoled to Buckner's Family Restaurant in Jackson for lunch. After lunch most of us headed to Musella to enjoy peach and strawberry ice cream while rocking and chatting the afternoon away! August was our annual Newton County Retirement Picnic! We had lunch with a few new retirees and all our regular members! Everyone enjoyed traditional southern fried chicken with all the fixings! September 7th we were back to business with GREA President Joe Boland and his wife, Melinda joining us! We are ready and excited to get the year started!

Oglethorpe County REA held their first meeting of the 2023-2024 year on August 8th. Dr. Wallace Vassar, our new Area 17 Director and his wife, Margaret, attended. Dr. Vassar went over President Joe Boland's mission and goals for this fiscal year. We then enjoyed a presentation by our guest speakers, Ashley Simpson and team member Elaine Collier Neal. They are members of The Digital Atlas of Historic Oglethorpe County team along with Greg Yoder and Tom Gresham. This is a volunteer-led project assembling a digital map of the county's historic sites. From their "Back to School" presentation, we learned many fascinating facts about the history of our schools in Oglethorpe County from 1820-1955. OCREA provided Amazon gift cards to our new teachers to help them supply their new classrooms. Leslie Jones, Kate Finch, Linda Banks, and Karen Wamsley attended the Area 17 & 18 meeting on the 29th in Gainesville. We had a GREA-t time! Our next meeting is scheduled for October 10th. We will hear from State Representative Trey Rhodes, Georgia House of Representatives for District 124.

Paulding REA is getting on the bus! Excuse us as we toot our own horns. We continue to "adopt" a school each year and spoil them with supplies, gift cards and hygiene items. This year we are supporting South Paulding Middle School. We also support a number of causes in our county. Paulding Helping Hands (food, clothing, and household items) receives our help. We also provide scholarships for teachers/para-pros looking to advance their degrees. For the first time we have voted to contribute to the Paulding Education Foundation which awards scholarships for students who are not necessarily college bound. Also, we literally want to get on the bus and are planning a field trip to the GRE Museum. It's an exciting start to a new school year!

Continued on page 10

Richmond County REA kicked off the year with sixty-five people present for a luncheon at the Ramada Plaza in Augusta. The festive décor with baskets of sunflowers as centerpieces reminded us that the dog days of summer were still very real. Two local legislators, Sen. Harold V. Jones II of District 22 and Rep. Brain Prince of District 132, were the guest speakers and they did an impressive job of highlighting bills that affect education in Georgia as well as bills that affect the local community. Their comments and responses to questions provided insight into the legislative process and assured those in attendance that they are genuine supporters of education. Dr. Sharon Ray, our President shared her goals and plans for our unit this year and encouraged members to sign up for an American Education Week recognition project that RCREA will sponsor in November. Before adjournment, members participated in two favorite activities: Dollar Announcements and Door Prizes! As usual, everyone left with smiles on their faces.

Rockdale REA members continue to stay involved in the community. New teachers at our local elementary public schools received a goodie bag during pre-planning welcoming them to Rockdale; the local food bank continues get monthly donations of products and cash; school supplies are being collected for distribution later in the year; Ferst Readers provides books to pre-school children. However, our greatest emphasis at this time of the year is on our scholarship fund. Our major fundraiser for that fund is our annual Holiday Silent Auction, scheduled this year for Tuesday, December 5th. We would like to invite anyone interested to join us that day for lunch (\$ 15) at and to shop for unique gifts at Conyers First Methodist Church at 11:30 am. Anyone interested should contact RREA President Joe O'Neal for information.

Tri-County REA members attended the Areas 11 and 12 Meeting for GREa which was held August 18, 2023, in Louisville, Georgia. Upon arrival we were all given gift bags and served a hearty breakfast. Once the meeting was called to order by our Area Director, Dr. Roger Williams, several state officers spoke. We were greeted and provided information from Dr. Bill Sloan, the Executive Director of GREa; the 2023-2024 GREa President, Joe Boland, who talked about his state service project which is "Totes for Tots, Inc." Johnny Smith, Director of Communications gave valuable information as well as Mike Zarem from TRS. Other state officers who spoke at the meeting were Shirley Grant, President-elect, and Lisa McKenzie from AMBA. Following the meeting we enjoyed a delicious lunch. Several attendees won door prizes. Following the meeting, we spent time fellowshiping with members from our units, and posing for pictures. This was a very productive and enjoyable meeting.

To Be an Educator

E is for the **E**nergy it takes to teach a child,
No matter what the age or grade or size.
Eating well, sleeping lots, taking care of self
Are great prescriptions for the very wise.

D is **D**edication, and going back each day
To do the best that every child deserves.
It might take all the patience one can muster
Since they seem at times to get upon your nerves.

Being **U**nderstanding needs a capital letter **U**!
Learning styles, an IEP, their hormones always churning.
Their need for love, attention, laughing at their jokes
Are equally important as the lessons they are learning.

C is for a multitude of educator skills. Just think:
Caring, **C**reative, **C**ompassionate, **C**alm, and **C**heerful.
But **C**lassroom – most important that it's decorated well
Instead of endless meetings where you get an earful.

Letter **A** stands for **A**daptable, no matter what the case.
Did the AC quit? The power go off? A fire drill end the day?
Copier down? Water won't work? Or are the buses late?
Educators always seem to know exactly what to say.

T means **T**each, so many ways, to get the knowledge known
By reading, writing, listening, playing, lots of things to make.
And if it's fun, and relevant, students will comply
And groan, "Oh, no!" when class is done and time to take a break.

For letter **O**, stay **O**rganized. Routines can really help.
To get things done with no surprise is comforting for all.
Students know the where, the when, the how and why
Inside that office or within those classroom walls.

R – **R**espect each other, old or young, and treat each other well.
The year is long, the goals are hard, and there is much to do.
Educators have a calling, not a job, that permeates their lives.
Rewards are seen as students succeed, and they say it's thanks to you.

JEAN COTTON, AUGUST 2023

To Be An Educator was written and read by
Newton County REA Member Jean Cotton at the Area 9 & 10 Meeting.



GRE Foundation, Inc. Profiles Scholarship Winners

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

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

Brennan Jagers has an M.Ed. (T-5) and is presently using her degree in Forsyth County. She has three years experience and plans to continue her education by earning a specialist degree in special education. Her school assistant principal stated that Brennan would be a good model to be chosen as a GREF scholarship recipient because, "she is organized, flexible, kind, energetic, empathetic, loyal, and a hard worker." The assistant continued by stating that she had seen many young professionals come and go, but Brennan uniquely stands out. Brennan wrote that she was paying for her educational expenses but in the last two years she had had several out-of-the pocket, very expensive health complications. She is doing some after school work to help cover costs. The GREF scholarship will be a tremendous help.



Martha Glenn Hyder is a kindergarten teacher with six and a half years-experience. She is from Richmond County, has an Elementary T-4 degree and wants to earn her M. Ed. Her principal commended her for her deep understanding of her subject and her ability to successfully teach early age children. She connects classroom content with real-life experiences. When meeting with parents Martha explains the data to the parents to show

the child's progress in her class. Martha listed several school and community activities in which she was involved. She said that for twenty-nine years she had had Cystic Fibrosis; it did not define her, but it gave her a different prospective of life and the world in which she lived. Because of medical expenses the GREF Scholarship and the M.Ed. would be very helpful financially.



Jenna Willingham, from Polk County, teaches second grade, has five years-experience, has an Elementary T-4, and wants to earn her T-5. The assistant principal wrote that she had worked with Jenna for two years and was confident that Jenna would be a good candidate for the GREF Scholarship. She continued by saying that Jenna goes over and about to ensure her students that they are loved and belong in her classroom. Jenna had a long list of school and community activities in which she participated. She stated that she did have undergraduate loans, but they had been paid off. She is trying to pay out-of-pocket for graduate school and the scholarship would be a tremendous help.



Melissa Francisco is a fifth-grade reading and language teacher. She is in her seventeenth year, has an Elementary P-5 and her M.Ed. in Secondary 6-12, and is from McIntosh County. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction listed many, many projects and activities for the school and district that Melissa had been involved in, she finished by saying that Melissa was a phenomenal teacher with outstanding character. She dedicates herself to anything she undertakes. Melissa wants to work on her Ed.D. with a concentration on social justice. She wants to advocate for equality in education. She stated that she is a single mom and works extra jobs to pay for her education. To receive the GREF Scholarship would be wonderful.



Sumter County REA Presents Scholarships

The Sumter County Retired Educators Association (SCREA) presented scholarships to two Georgia Southwestern State University education majors. Scholarship Chairperson, Sherrill Bailey, recognized Carie Wilkerson and Jayda Angry with a certificate and a check for \$1000 each. This year the organization voted to name the scholarships the Janie Turner Memorial Scholarship. Mrs. Turner was an avid member of the SCREA for many years. She taught in the Americus City School System, was a Language Arts Consultant with Chattahoochee-Flint RESA and after retirement, she worked with the PREP Program at GSW.

Pictured left to right: Carie Wilkerson, Sherrill Bailey, Jayda Angry, and SCREA President Sue Hite



Retired Educators Day in Georgia

It has become a tradition in Georgia for the first Sunday in November to be designated Retired Educators Day. Thanks so much to our Governor, Brian Kemp, for continuing the tradition. He has declared November 5, 2023, as a day to recognize the 142,000+ retirees all across Georgia for their lasting contributions to our state.



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Welfare of Retired Educators of Georgia*

Johnny Smith, Editor

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