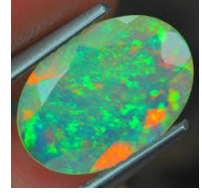




GEMS



The Official Publication of Retired Educators Association of Idaho

Volume 27 Number 1

16 May 2024

President's Message

April was a very busy month for state and regional leadership. Several of us traveled to Lewiston for the North Regional Conference held April 11th at the Clearwater River Casino. Programs given were Michelle Larson speaking on "Ten Signs of Alzheimer's," JR Spenser, Native American presenter, and historian Garry Bush, whose program "When the Circus Came to Town" was amazing and amusing. Reports on membership and community service were given, as well as brief addresses from Barbara Blasch, Executive Director, State Co-Presidents Sharon Miller and Linda Steele. Other presentations were from PERSI, AMBA, and Collette Travels. The Western Regional Conference was hosted by the Gem County unit in Emmett April 16. Thirty-three members from Emmett, Boise, Kuna, Meridian, and Payette were in attendance. The featured speaker was Teresa Little, wife of Governor Brad Little, who shared many of her experiences in her role as Idaho's First Lady. Mike Hampton, Executive Director of PERSI gave an informative update on the status of the state retirement system. We also heard from Margaret Reimer of Collette

Travels. The Eastern Idaho Regional Conference was held on the campus of College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls April 18. The conference was opened by Ruth Pierce, mayor of Twin Falls. PERSI and Collette Travels presenters Mike Hampton and Margaret Reimer gave brief programs. Other highlights were Ron James who spoke on the Chinese mining camps in early Idaho and Shon Robinson, who has traveled twice to Ukraine and is very involved in a relief charity for the victims of war in that country. We were also treated to a legislative review by members of the Idaho Legislature from southern Idaho, Greg Lanting and Chenele Dixon. We will soon begin planning the state convention to be held in April of 2025. You will receive additional information at a later date. The August Executive Board meeting will be held Wednesday, August 14 at the AARP Building in Boise. We are looking forward to seeing all of you then. Have a wonderful summer and stay safe.

Linda Steele and Sharon Miller

State Co-Presidents

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Senators:

Sen. Mike Crapo 202-224-6142, 208-334-1776,
www.crapo.senate.gov

Sen. Jim Risch 202-224-2752, 208-342-7985,
www.risch.senate.gov

Representatives:

Rep. Mike Simpson 202-225-5531, 208-334-1953,
www.simpson.house.gov

RepRuss Fulcher, 202-225-6611;
www.fulcher.house.gov

Submitted by:
Connie Jean Bunch, REAI Legislative Chair
jeanbunch@aol.com

PERSI

With the retirement of Don Drum the new Executive Director— Mike Hampton has been appointed. He attended the Emmett regional conference and presented a very informative program. The April 23, 2024 investment report reported current market value of

\$23,362,009,826 and Fiscal Year to Date Return of 6.1%.

Travel Adventures

Want a trip that's easy to take and fun? Look at our catalogue of trips or research at Collette.com. Find your trip and call Andy Boone, Business Development Manager, at 866-669-5407 (cell: 503-572-4203) or aboone@collette.com. You can also call the Collette number and talk to any representative. Be sure to mention my name and that you are a member of Retired Educators of Idaho so our unit gets a commission.

For questions and further information contact Margaret Reimer at 208-887-6747 or 208-350-9808. Reimem8@gmail.com Submitted by

Margaret Reimer
208.887.6747
reimerm8@gmail.com

Contact Information

Co - President

Linda Steele
208-86-1562
lpsteele500@gmail.com

Sharon Miller
208-707-0490 or
20643409

smidaho@fmtc.com

President Elect:

Dennis Ohrtman
208.743.0694
dwohrtman@aol.com

Executive Director

Barbara Blasch
208.229.4561
bearconsul@aol.com

Treasurer

Patricia Kluckhohn
208.288.4295
pjkluckhohn@gmail.com

Secretary

Maxine Hardy
208-201-1913
maxinehardy78@outlook.com

Community Service

Dennis Ohrtman
208.743.0694
dwohrtman@aol.com

Western Region

North Central Region

Pat Hoch
509-552-9480
patch232@yahoo.com

Legislation

Barbara Blasch
208.229.4561
bearconsul@aol.com

Webmaster

Bill Kluckhohn
208.288.4295
bkluckhohn1@gmail.com

Travel Adventures

Margaret Reimer
208.887.6747
reimerm8@gmail.com

GEMS

Larry Lee
208-390-0355
kleeidaho@gmail.com

Zoom Master

208-390-0355
kleeidaho@gmail.com

President Elect Messag

NRTA/AARP Charlotte and back

I had been warned that traveling with Executive Director Dr. Blasch could be an experience. As a first-time trainee, traveling at my busiest time of the year, meant missing the Eastern Regional and dragging my body through the paces of early morning travel after weeks of a miserable cold. My thoughts for the 265 miles to Boise and then beyond to Charlotte were fairly simple: “What would I learn?” “Who would I meet?” “What could go wrong?” “What could go right?” “Did I really need my cane?” “Should I get chariot rides at the airports?” “Will my traveling partner be kind when she discovers that I am pretty NRTA/AARP clueless?” “Would I return unscathed and baptized into new retired educator experiences?” At 76 should I not understand that overthinking issues just isn’t worth it? Getting to Charlotte was rather uneventful. Cab travel was easy with Barbara flagging, arranging, and generally displaying the marks of a seasoned traveler in new places. The opening session of meet and greet and overeat (from the “heavy snacks”) was very low-key, but a good prelude to the next day that would be a crash course of leadership and understanding. Barbara Blasch had pulled Idaho REA leaders and AARP leaders recently enough that I didn’t display too many of levels of ignorance as the presenters from the small national staff of NRTA targeted in on the history of the NRTA and AARP relationship from the NRTA founding to the rebranding of our group. Presenters gave quick information and the ice breaking session posed questions that clearly showed the difference between the states with huge membership with dozens of volunteers with energy and smaller states where equally good energy and brainpower resides in member leaders who can craft ideas into action. Once the ideas and actions are generated, the Idahos of the world have to overcome geographic and membership obstacles to energize local units like ours. Barbara was eager to prod me and others to look at the possibilities in our terms as leaders. Frankly, I was overwhelmed with both reality and possibilities. Disappointing our membership and the Executive Director isn’t really on my bucket list of leadership. The questions asked didn’t fit our situation very well as a state organization, but I was thrilled to get new ideas that could be carried to our locals. I was disappointed that the crunch schedule didn’t allow us time to hear more ideas from representatives of the other states.

Follow up sessions will help enrich the early experiences for me. The afternoon session was presented on senior citizens and their knowledge, security, and stability in the world of social media with over 1,200 platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Tik Tok, Instagram, Messenger, each vying for our allegiance and each subjecting us to costs, opportunities, challenges and security. I was instantly struck with how poorly we use and direct media resources to capture the imagination and respect of our members. Along the way I will share some specifics that may interest each unit after each unit answers a couple of basic questions: How are we currently reaching members and prospective members? How do we position ourselves better to serve our member needs and desires for information, service opportunities and socialization? Oh, how do we have fun being and working together to do what we do best—community and colleague engagement just like we did in the schools? I won’t be bashful about sharing ideas that will help pay for the plane tickets, hotels, cabs, meals, and maybe even provided by the three-day driving, hotel, airport, hotel, airport and driving experience. I hope the struggle with my eyelids was not too apparent in Twin Falls. We did return energized. Only in Idaho could one overshoot Twin Falls to end up in Hansen—another story. Many of you have already heard our embellished stories of trying to get back from Charlotte where “returning” turned into a moment where I realized that one of Dr. Blasch’s best characteristics was not necessarily patience at every corner, but one of humor. Who could believe we were both challenged by the return-trip button on the check-in app; that weather delays would trigger the dominos of Dallas delays (10 hours) with five gate changes; humorous rides on carts; a restaurant waitress who wasn’t sure they served coffee; a Kingston Trio “you’ll never return” moment on the Skyline that we stayed on just to kill time; an hour more on the tarmac—oh the list goes on. My aisle seat and an aging bladder had me vaulting over two men built like professional athletes, twice, and then not being able to go to bed at my hotel in Boise because there was a girl on it, barefoot, changing batteries in my chirping fire alarm. NRTA and AARP gets it: Getting together to network with other leaders willing to laugh has to be full of experiences to make spending money on us worth it.

Dennis W. Ohrtman, President Elect

IDAHO FALLS REA

Our guest speaker for the Retired Educators of Eastern Idaho was Terri Brinkley from Idaho Falls. She gave us a lot of creative ways to stay connected to our grandchildren. Terri expressed ways to have fun with grandchildren while educating about our world and teaching values. She suggested that grandparents tell their children that they be glad to do whatever parents needed help with. Taking grandchildren one on one to make a grandchild feel special and strengthen bonds was another great idea.

GEM COUNTY REA

Gem County Retired Educators End Productive Year

By Randa George

The local chapter of the Gem County Retired Educators will meet for the last time this school year on May 28 at the Emmett Church of the Nazarene when members gather for their regular monthly luncheon and business meeting. The program will feature both the swearing in of three newly elected officers along with the traditional Necrology Ceremony when tribute is paid to members who have passed away during the membership year. This year's ceremony will honor both Verna Krizenesky and Brenda Hansen, longtime members.

In recent weeks, the Emmett chapter hosted the Governor of Idaho's wife, Teresa Little, who was the keynote speaker at the Western Regional Conference for the state Retired Educators Association of Idaho held April 16 at the Emmett Nazarene Church. At the well-attended meeting, Mrs. Little spoke about her personal experiences being the First Lady of Idaho. In her remarks, she talked about a variety of special events that she and the governor have attended in both Idaho and in Washington D.C. where they were fortunate to have met the President of the United States, his wife, as well as a number of other important dignitaries. Mrs. Little also shared memorabilia she had collected during many of these events as well as several personal photo albums which served to highlight her remarks.

In attendance at the regional meeting were teachers from all over the Treasure Valley including from Boise, Meridian, Kuna, and Emmett, along with schools from the Lower Snake River area which includes Payette, Weiser, New Plymouth, and Fruitland. In addition to the First Lady's speech, there were presentations given by Michael Hampton, the new chief executive officer of the state-run PERSI retirement system, along with several other reports given by state REAL officers, including the state organization's current co-presidents, Linda Steele and Sharon Miller. Steele is a retired educator from the Emmett district who taught at Butte View Elementary and Carberry for 28 years, while Miller retired from the Payette district. Both are serving a two-year term as co-presidents of the state organization of retired educators.

Many members shared ideas of what ideas worked when working with their grandchildren. Teaching sewing, making books, reading stories together and camping adventures were many of the shared activities.

Terri was a very fun and interesting speaker and we gained a lot of useful ideas to think about using.

At the conference, attendees were able to participate in several fund-raising opportunities that netted the local Emmett chapter over \$550 which will be added to their altruistic budget, some of which goes to support the local Teacher Grant Program. Last year \$1500 was donated directly to several Gem County teachers who were awarded a specific amount of funding for unique classroom projects, and it is anticipated that a similar amount will be available, again, this year. Currently the applications have gone out to teachers in the district, and it is expected that the grant recipients will be notified later this summer.

As part of their altruistic outreach, in both February and March, Emmett's GCRE members personally donated over \$300, plus also provided twelve boxes of books to varying school libraries in the local district. In addition to the money raised by the teachers, the Emmett Lion's Club also generously contributed \$200 to the on-going library project. The focus group this year was at the secondary school level, but in other years both the elementary and junior high schools have benefitted.

Other altruistic activities supported this year by the GCRE have included monthly monetary donations to the high school food pantry, as well as food and personal hygiene products given by individual members to help students in need; a substantial financial contribution to the county Christmas Cheer Basket Program that supports local families during the holidays; donations to the Lion's used eyewear campaign; a monetary donation to the Emmett Cat's Meow feline rescue organization; a monetary donation to the Emmett Public Library on behalf of First Lady Teresa Little; as well as several local GCRE Teacher Grant awards.

Current co-presidents of the Gem County Retired Educators are Sandi Baker and Rita Montgomery who will serve one more year through the spring of 2025. One of the new incoming officers who will join their leadership team in May is Carolyn Hunt, who will serve as recording secretary. In addition, both Lyn Haun as vice-president and Linda Steele as service secretary will remain in office and will join Hunt during the swearing in ceremony. Other continuing officers for next year include communications secretary, Vicki Crank and treasurer, Lois Buck. Joanna Clausen will retire as recording secretary after serving a two-year term.

Any retired teacher, school nurse, administrator, and most others associated with the Gem County educational

NIREA-North Idaho Retired Educators

North Idaho Retired Educators
May 2024

Hello everyone. We hope you all are enjoying the warmer weather and are enjoying the beautiful spring flowers.

In March the retired educators of north Idaho met at JB's Restaurant with guest speaker, Carolyn Selbicky, of the Coeur d'Alene Garden Club. She talked about their goals and activities. Their main fundraiser is the annual public Garden Tour in July.

In April we went to Lewiston for our Regional Conference put on by RENCI at the Clearwater Casino. We learned about the 10 signs of Alzheimer's disease, and had a historian talk about the beginning of the circus in Lewiston. We enjoyed good food and getting together

with our Lewiston friends.

In May we are going to the Mullan Museum. Our meeting will be at the City Limits in Wallace where we will enjoy great food and install our upcoming officers for the next year.

Then in August we will meet at a member's beautiful home in Bay View to plan for 2024/2025. Our meetings have been at JB's Restaurant in Coeur d'Alene with a guest speaker each month. Our community service is still collecting money for the Coeur d'Alene, Post Falls, and Silver Valley Food Banks.

Have a wonderful summer.

Respectfully,

Mary Williams, Sec. NIREA

BOISE, KUNA, MERIDIAN REA-BKMREA

The monthly meetings of BOISE, KUNA, MERIDIAN REA are held at the Eagles Lodge in Boise and the January – April 2024 programs were:

January – Luke Mayville, co-founder of Reclaim Idaho, and Abi Sanford, Statewide Field Director, presented information on the ballot initiative, rank choice voting, and open non-partisan primaries. This initiative guarantees broad support, giving all voters regardless of party affiliation, the freedom to vote in all elections. Elected officials would represent the broader community and give power back to the people.

February – Donna Beronda and Deborah Carney, Advanced Master Gardeners from the University of Idaho, presented “tips and tools” for seasoned gardeners. Along with their power-point slide presentation, they demonstrated a variety of tools they highly recommended for gardening.

March – Members, Don and Kerri Carlin, provided a very informative presentation regarding the history and culture of Saudi Arabia based on their many years of experience living and teaching in that area. Additionally, the couple shared many of the items they had collected over the years while dressed in the local garb.

April – Jeremy Woodson, is a communication strategist and media specialist for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Idaho, which **is an American nonprofit human rights** organization. He presented examples and information outlining the organization’s purpose, which is to advocate and defend the civil rights and liberties of all Americans.

As in the past, BKM will continue to work on funding grants for local teachers and scholarships to Boise State University senior students who are completing a degree in education through: (1) the sale of donated books to members; (2) monthly door prize drawings and/or raffles; and (3) travel through Collette sponsored tours.

BKM will also be supporting our local food bank with donated food and monetary donations. Additionally, we will continue to support the nonprofit learning center, Giraffe Laughs, which provides early childhood readiness education and nurturing to 170 Treasure Valley children annually through donations of food, products, money, and quilts made by the BMK Quilting Ladies.

In addition to the many hours that our membership regularly donates in our community, this year they also started providing eye glasses and hearing aids that are donated by BMK to the local Lion’s organization for recycling.

Additionally, because 2024 is going to be a very “political year,” BKM is offering an opportunity through the “CIVIL CIV-IC Discussion Group” for our members and friends to meet in order to discuss current events and hear opinions of others in a safe environment.

Finally, the membership is kept abreast of major events and relative knowledge through the very inclusive and informative monthly BMK Newsletter which shares a variety of information with its membership.

Leigh Oliver, President Elect, BKM

Magic Valley REA

The regional meeting for Southeastern Idaho went well with presentations from Mike Hampton for PERSI. We like being assured about the solvency of PERSI. Then, from Ron James on Chinese gold mining and culture in Southern Idaho, especially in the Snake River Canyon. Dr. Dennis Ortman made some observations from North Idaho on Chinese immigrants there. Shon Robinson gave an emotional update on providing aid to Ukraine. And finally, Our legislators from Districts 24 & 25, Representatives Greg Lanting and Chenell Dixon, and Senator Linda Hartgen, reported on education funding and, in particular the Library Bill. Director Blaush reminded

the legislature who they represented, and for every one to vote. Going back to December, we provided a single father and his son with food, clothing and small gifts. We were supposed to have a visit with a Navigator from Health and Welfare, but I gave him the wrong date. Then He didn’t show up for our March meeting either. Miscommunication on my part. For February, LaMar Orton, a local member gave us a talk about shells or the animals that live in them. I forgot their biologic term. It was, surprisingly, quite interesting.

SEIREA is still stepping out providing a monthly opportunity for retired educators to mingle, socialize, learn and continue to contribute to our communities in Southeast Idaho. We have learned about small ways to brighten the lives of Ukrainians overwhelmed by war, the preservation of Idaho's natural history and the support available to traumatized children.

Lena Contor, a former citizen of Ukraine now living in Pocatello, is providing small, solar-powered lights, called Luci lights, to Ukrainian citizens whose power infrastructure has been destroyed by Russia's war on Ukrainian citizens. In partnership with the makers of Luci lights, she asks a donation of \$20 to anyone wishing to purchase a light and then an additional light is donated by the company for Lena to send to someone in Ukraine. She has made multiple trips to Ukraine to help friends still living in Ukraine, to surrounding countries to deliver aid to Ukrainian refugees there and a trip to rescue her mother from her village. Her presentation made clear the consequences to Ukrainian citizens of the invasion by Russia.

In February, Dr. Leif Tapanila from the Idaho Museum of Natural History on the ISU campus, shared with us the workings of the museum. While housed on the ISU campus, it is the state of Idaho's official repository of artifacts representing the natural history of our state. The museum's mission is to collect, house and preserve artifacts, provide a research opportunity to students and others to study our natural history and to share the story of our state's natural history through ongoing displays at the museum and published research results. Dr. Tapanila's presentation was not only informative, but he invited us all to visit the museum and become personally acquainted with the museum's millions of

stored artifacts that are regularly displayed there.

Cassidy Roske, the director of Bright Tomorrows in Pocatello, shared with us the mission of her nonprofit center. Bright Tomorrows is a designated Child Advocacy Center partnering with law enforcement to interview children and support law enforcement's efforts to hold child abusers accountable for their crimes. They provide support to families, ongoing counseling to child victims and support for law enforcement's prosecution of offenders. It was enlightening to know of the center's efforts to combat the scourge of child abuse in our area and in the larger society.

In April, SEIREA was awarded the Gem Award by Idaho State University for contributing over \$33,000 in scholarship funds to ISU. This "Opal" level of giving highlights SEIREA's commitment to students pursuing education as their career. We are proud of our support of ISU's College of Education.

Three of SEIREA's members were recognized by ISU for outstanding contributions. Jim Liday led the College of Education's graduating students into commencement in recognition of his being named the college's 2024 Professional Achievement winner. Dr. Patti Mortensen, who is retiring from ISU's College of Education faculty, was honored for her contributions to the university and public education. Tabitha Butler, who is a member of SEIREA and is the liaison to ISU from our organization, was presented with the "Bengal Partner Award" for her philanthropic efforts on behalf of ISU. We are proud to have these hard-working educators and their selfless efforts as an example of how our members make contributions to the education profession and contribute to making our communities better places to live for children and families.

Lower Snake River REA

Greetings from the Lower Snake River
Retired Educators! May 3, 2024

It has been a busy and productive year for us. We started the year with a back-to-school barbecue at the Warzyn's house in Payette. We always bring too much food and eat way too much. We enjoy thinking about school starting without us!

Our October meeting was held at a local restaurant as usual but when business was finished, we went to Paint Me Silly. It's an art studio in downtown Payette. We had a very nice instructor who taught us to paint a fall picture of an antique truck with pumpkins in the back. We all had the same instructions but none turned out the same. It was a fun time of creating and visiting.

In February we met in Weiser and had a book discussion. We all brought titles of books we especially enjoyed reading. We had a small group but we went overtime talking about books. Isn't that what teachers do?

In March we met at the New Plymouth Senior Citizens' Center to make up the meeting we missed in January because of slick roads. We enjoyed a delicious luncheon put on by Billie who works there. We learned about Meals on

Wheels and Home Delivered Meals. I think we left considering a trip to New Plymouth once in a while for lunch!

April brought us to our annual Bunco Party! We did have a short business meeting between rounds but most of our time was spent eating snacks and playing Bunco. Anne DeBord was the big Bunco winner!

We will close out our meeting season at Deb Ujjiye's house in Fruitland in May. She makes the most delicious Mandarin Chicken and fried rice. The rest of us will bring salads and desserts. No one will go away hungry. We will take a few minutes and make last minute preparations for our big fundraising yard sale which will happen on the Friday of Payette's big Apple Blossom Celebration. We use the Payette High School parking lot right on the highway and sell people all sorts of treasures. We don't price the items; instead, we put up a sign saying we accept donations and explain that the money goes for a scholarship and for students. Most people are very generous.

Best wishes for a fabulous summer.

Cris Warzyn, LSRRE Secretary

RENCI-April

The last two gatherings have felt like RENCi returned almost to the levels pre-COVID. We have several new members which is encouraging after the loss of long-time member and friend Dr. Tom Trail, professor, legislator, AARP ambassador and genuinely good friend. Several other very faithful members have transitioned to new journeys and life-situations. Everyone in the group was reenergized by three young men from Lewiston High who have, along with another now a freshman at the U of I created an exciting video capture of the events with a YouTube streamed series of videos. Daily announcements, live coverage of sports and other events have served as a popular communication vehicle. Our group was impressed by the energy of the men who articulated the birth of their sophisticated project from a simple dream to pull Lewiston into a very futuristic era digitally. Two of the founders have proud grandparents in our group.

Regional Conference

Well, Pat Hoch, long-time leader/officer, knows how to run a circus, and Esto Perpetua Historian Garry Bush, a member of RENCi, shared the fate of Mary, the crazy elephant who on a hot summer day met her match in Dr. Bradock, Mayor of Lewiston and his big game gun when the circus came to town. Each regional gathering had its own flavor and ours was cotton candy to mitigate the fears of dementia and Alzheimer's. Michelle Larson of the Alzheimer's Association answered questions in her presentation that many of us have as we age. Michael Hampton, Executive Director of PERSI walked us through the legislative session, remaining kind and calm. He is a confidence builder. What current retirees have is secure and his team is working through all the necessary hoops to make sure the next generation of public-school employees is equally secure financially. AMBA rep Charlie D'Elle did

a review of AMBA's offerings and Margaret Reimer shared travel options we have Colette Tours to strike out on new adventures.

RENCi-May

May is just fun: we find the winery. The view from Lindsay Creek is worth the drive out and our brown bag exchange isn't a bad deal either. We encourage our members to share gifts. They come in all shapes and sizes. The rule is simple: give something you wouldn't mind getting yourself. We provide the meal for the members from local a local delis and bakeries. It is nice to end our year licking our fingers on the way home.

At least a dozen tickets were purchased by members to take the Nez Perce Tribal Riverboat historical excursion into Hells Canyon on the Snake. We are working to find fun to share with each other.