

GEMS

The Official Publication of Retired Educators of Idaho

President's Message

January 8, 2021

Dear Members,

I pray this finds you healthy and happy at this the beginning of 2021! We have had some challenges this past year and I hope we are out of the woods very soon.

With the Covid-19 virus rearing its ugly head, we first had to cancel our Regional Meetings, as it was unsafe to travel or gather in groups. Many businesses were shut down and to date still have not been allowed to reopen. All three Regionals had been planned to be exciting and enjoyable for attendees but could not be held. I hope they are able to save the activities and speakers for the 2022 Regionals with little or no changes.

The highly loved August 2020 meeting, usually in Boise, was next to suffer. I personally had planned extra days in Boise this time to be able to get to know the area and people better. I was even going to be able to save the State money as I planned to stay with our wonderful Treasurer and her husband. Well dang, that didn't happen either! We did meet but via Zoom from the safety of our own homes. It was good to see the smiling faces of our membership, but on the computer screen is just not the same as being able to give and get hugs as usual.

Our next usual gathering is from our homes normally, due to possible travel issues in the winter. We had been meeting on a tele-conference but now are upgraded to Zoom! January 11th, 2021 we will be deciding if we will skip this State Convention for 2021 or move it back in the year. The end and beginning of terms needs consideration also as that is supposed to happen at the State Convention.

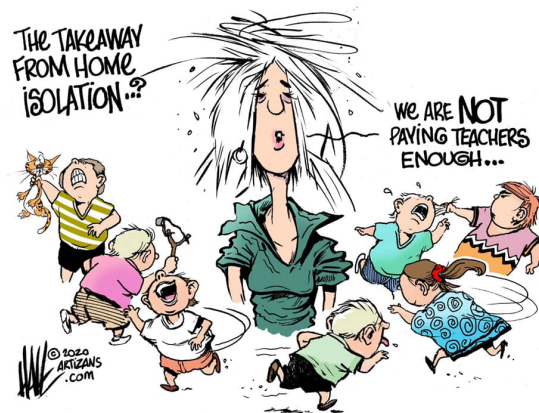
Lots of business to consider!

Stay safe!

Sincerely,
Mona Alfrey

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Executive Director's Message

Structure of Your Membership

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)
National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) - Affiliate of AARP
Retired Educators Association of Idaho (REA-I) - State Member of NRTA
Northern, Eastern, Western Regions - Divisions of REA-I
North Idaho (NIREA), North Central Idaho (RENCI), Boise, Kuna, Meridian (REA-BKM),
Squaw Butte (REA), Lower Snake River (LSRREA), Idaho Falls (REA),
Southeast Idaho (SEIREA), Magic Valley (MVREA) - Local Units of REA-I

AARP - AARP continues to work virtually for the safety of the volunteers and staff. The work has not slowed down but AARP has developed new ways of improving the lives of the 50 plus population. One of the ways AARP Idaho has stayed connected with the 183,000 members in Idaho is holding tele-town halls most Tuesdays at 12:00 to 1:00 continuing thru the pandemic with the Governor who answered questions on specific topics. Approximately 12,000 Idahoans are participating each Tuesday.

When you join or renew your AARP membership indicate you are an NRTA member. There is no additional fee but your membership card will indicate your membership in the affiliate - NRTA.

NRTA - The purpose of NRTA is to support all of the State REAs. All State Executive Directors and NRTA staff members meet virtually once a month to share activities of their State and concerns of retired educators. REA-I was the star of one of these virtual meetings when other State REAs discovered we had an article in the AARP BULLETIN about REA-I and how to join. This idea and legwork came from the AARP State Office on our behalf.

It was identified four years ago that many State NRTA Associations and State AARP offices were not working together. NRTA applied for monies to engage in a pilot project to correct this oversight. Five States were included in this pilot. Idaho was chosen because we were working with our State office and could be a beginning model for others.

AARP Idaho often turns to REA-I for participation in their activities and programs. Early in the pandemic when face-to-face programs were being eliminated, REA-I members were used as trial subjects to see how the Fraud Watch programs and others could be offered on Zoom.

NRTA offered grants to REAs to be able to stay connected with their members when monthly meetings, luncheons, and others activities were no long-

er advisable. REA-I has used the monies to print new brochures sharing information about our goals, purposes, activities and more. The form also includes a membership application. A brochure was sent to every member asking each member to contact a retired educator encouraging them to join our organization.

REA-I purchased a group Zoom license so all units, committees, and others can meet virtually. AARP and NRTA have held several sessions explaining how to use Zoom. If you have not signed on to Zoom you have another opportunity to learn how to use Zoom provided by AARP Idaho for REA-I members. Each unit is asked to have two or more members signed in to this training. The date is January 28, 2021 at 1:00 to 1:45 mountain time. This pilot program has continued into a third year with great success.

AMBA - American Member Benefits Association
REA-I members can take advantage of all the programs AMBA offers - travel insurance, health benefits, vision insurance, and more. Their representatives contact educators sharing information about REA-I and signing up new members. AMBA makes a sizable contribution to our treasury each year. The WEB experts at AMBA have worked with REA-I WEB experts to update our website as well as offer assistance with our face book page.

FUTURE - 2020 was an active year for REA-I. Most members renewed their ship. Please use those new brochures to encourage other educators to join us. I leave you with this statistic:

Idaho REA has approximately 400 members
Texas REA has approximately 93,000 members

Submitted by:

Barbara Blasch

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PERSI

Please check the PERSI website for current information.

Community Service

No report submitted.

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GEMS: In need of an editor

Legislative

January 2021

State Legislative Report

Greetings and Happy New Year!

As the year is new and our state legislature isn't scheduled to begin until Jan. 11, I struggle a bit with what to report. I have contacted one of my state legislators for ideas for proposed legislation that might be coming up, but I have yet to hear from him. We can expect the usual issues and some unexpected items to come up. The following are what I've gleaned from newspaper articles.

PROPERTY TAXES. There continues to be discussion about providing relief for property owners. Rep. Lauren Necochea will propose that the \$100,000 cap on the homeowner's exemption be removed and that future increases in the exemption be tied to local property values. Some school districts are wanting to collect impact fees on new developments, which would take some of the burden off of current property owners. So far this request has not been well received by the legislators, but it would seem as though this ability would help the property owners in the districts where growth and development are rampant.

CIRCUIT BREAKER. Senator Grant Burgoyne explains that this is a benefit program which steps in and pays property taxes for people in need, and needs some revision.

TAX EXEMPTION. Representative John Gannon has unveiled a bill to reverse a tax exemption enacted in 2008 which was intended to encourage a

French nuclear company to build a uranium enrichment facility in eastern Idaho. This didn't happen, but the result of the bill was to give Micron a \$1.3 billion exemption since Micron was only taxed on 25% of its taxable value. Gannon's bill would increase the percentage to 50% of its taxable value.

FUNDING FOR K-12 EDUCATION. Idaho still ranks at the bottom of per pupil expenditures and that does not bode well for the ability of the schools to provide a proper education for our students. I have concerns, based on comments from certain legislators, that Idaho's universities may be penalized financially for trying to meet the needs of a diversified student body.

Certainly there needs to be continued discussion of financing our state's infrastructure including the improvement of existing roads and bridges.

These issues are the tip of the iceberg, so I encourage you to be vigilante and check the state legislature's website once the session begins. Also, keep in touch with your local representatives and senators and share your concerns and opinions. As far as U.S. Congress goes, until the inauguration of President Biden takes place, there will be little to report. Our two senators and two representatives have been less than forthcoming when questioned about their positions on any of the current issues. Stay tuned!

Stay safe and well!!!

Connie Jean jeanbunch@aol.com

Idaho Representatives:

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

Travel Adventures

The **Oberammergau Trip** is scheduled for 2022. There are 7 different venues for the trip. You can contact Collette at Collette.com/passionplay for more details. You can also contact Barb Blasch for further information about this trip at bearconsul@aol.com or 208-229-4561

The two trips that were planned for 2020 have been rescheduled for 2021. **Heritage of America** is to take place Oct. 10-18.

Mackinac Island's dates are September 25-Oct. 2,- 2021. Collette will hold 10 seats for both departures. The brochure for Mackinac Island is on the

REAI Website

(<http://www.idahoretirededucators.org>)

To see more information about Heritage of America go

to: <https://gateway.gocollette.com/link/1048350>

For copies of brochures for both trips, you may email Margaret at the address below. Please note that all registration forms are being processed digitally.

Good health to everyone.

Submitted by Margaret Reimer

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Idaho Falls REA

We were so excited to see 2020 finally end, but it looks like the pandemic will continue to trouble us for several months to come. With the vaccine being distributed, however, at least we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The Idaho Falls Unit has been relatively quiet. Due to the COVID-19 threat, we cancelled our usual lunch meetings. (The management at our meeting place, a local restaurant, was very understanding

about our need to cancel; they now have us booked for our September 2021 through May 2022 meetings and are eager to see us once again.) We did have an outdoor picnic where each member brought his or her own lunch and all members maintained recommended social distance. Despite the absence of meetings, our members have been logging on to our Facebook page to keep in touch.

Chris Blower –

Idaho Falls President

Boise, Kuna, Meridian REA-BKMREA

Greetings from BKM!

Happy New Year! Our program for January 12th's general meeting is Joanne Lewis and her hospital dogs via ZOOM. In February we will be doing part 2 of Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, by Janet Worthington. She did part 1 last year in person. This year will be via Zoom.

A thank you to the BKM members (Jane Brewer, Pat Kluckhohn, Charlotte Moore, and Margaret

Reimer) who sent Christmas cards and felt ornaments to our members. They were lovely.

Our members seem to like our monthly newsletters with enough information to keep the unit together. These include up-to-date PERSI information, Happy Birthdays, Courtesy notes, Programs, Directory changes, Financial reports, etc.

Lois Treat

BKM unit President.

North Idaho Retired Educators- NIREA

The Retired Educators of North Idaho wish you a very Happy New Year. Hopefully 2021 will be better and we can start getting together again.

To our disappointment we had to cancel our April 2020 conference with RENCI (Lewiston). The 2021 state convention that was going to be in Coeur d'Alene is being put on hold.

Our last meeting was February 24, 2020. We hope by September of this year we can start gathering again. Everyone has missed the meetings and being able to visit with friends.

Stay safe everyone and hopefully you can start enjoying being together soon.

Submitted by:

Mary Williams

Secretary

Squaw Butte REA

Due to Covid, Squaw Butte Retired Educators were unable to help with the back-to-school brunch. Usually, SBRE will help to prepare and serve Emmett staff members brunch as they return to school. It seems strange how young the staff is becoming. The "Thank Goodness We are NOT Going Back to School" picnic was also cancelled.

The first regular meeting of the 2020-2021 year was held at the Nazarene Church in Emmett on September 28th. The meal was catered by Lilly Payne from Tom's Cabin. The program was given by the Gem/ Boise County 4-H Program Coordinator, Chané Nelson. Chané's program was cancelled last spring, we were grateful she was gracious to reschedule. Due to the abrupt ending of our spring

meetings, we took the rest of our time tying up loose ends and having our election. On October 26, we again met at Aubrey Hall in the Nazarene Church in Emmett. We collected warm clothing for students in Emmett School District. Our special guest was Gina Pannell who is employed by Central Health District which includes Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties. She presented a program on Safe School Opening Amid Covid Pandemic. It was an excellent presentation including question and answer session. Our November and December meetings were cancelled due to the rise of Covid cases. Members were encouraged to contribute money and time to the GCEA Christmas Cheer baskets. It has not yet been decided the status of our January meeting.

Lower Snake River REA

Lower Snake River members last met in June for a late election and installation of officers for the 2020 - 2021 year. Since then we have been in touch with members through email with offers of help to those not wanting to get out due to covid to do grocery shopping and other errands.

On October 20 our founder and honorary member, Fern Anderson, passed away at home in New Plymouth. We had honored Fern on her 100th birthday in September with a donation to the Idaho Commission for the Blind. Fern had continued to attend LSRRE meetings into her late 90s. Her kind

and encouraging presence will be missed. We will soon be sending out notification of applications for our \$750 scholarship to Idaho colleges and universities. An applicant must be a junior or senior college student majoring in education. We did not have a qualifying applicant in 2020. Due to covid our volunteer hours will be significantly down from past years. Our membership number is also down. It is unknown when we will be able to meet again. Everyone wear a mask and be well!
Respectfully submitted, Sharon Miller

SEIREA

The Southeast Idaho Retired Educators Association Board has been meeting via Zoom in November and December 2020. In November the Board made the decision to cancel the December meeting and fundraiser auction due to increases in COVID cases. Since this is our main fundraising event it was decided an email would be sent out informing members of the cancellation and asking for donations. Ronda Black and Mary Ann Hansen compiled an email and a flier requesting that members donate money to finance the chapter's College of Education annual scholarships. Last year we were able to give three \$600 scholarships and hoped to be able to do the same this year despite not being able to meet and have our items to purchase for Christmas. (See attachments)

At the December Zoom Board meeting it was decided we would continue the cancellation of in-person meetings until further notice. Stan Cope,

immediate past-president was asked to find people to run for officers for the 2021-2023 years. Treasurer Judy Liday reported donations from members in the amount of \$2,230 for scholarships this year. The board voted to allot 3 scholarships of \$800 each to the College of Education. This is one additional scholarship as well as \$200 more per scholarship from previous years. It was also decided to take additional money from our treasury to donate \$500 to The Idaho Foodbank. President Roger Wheeler sent out an email and hard copy letter to the members thanking them for their generosity. Despite not meeting in person our membership remains strong and the generosity of its members show their commitment to the SEIREA. (See attachments on SEIREA page on the website:)
Submitted by:
Ronda Black

Magic Valley REA

I don't have much to report, in fact, I may have written some in October, 2020. Well, here goes.

We held our annual picnic around the 17th of September. Fortunately, the weather was great. We had a nice turnout of ten or so people. It was potluck with roasted chicken. As always, the food was very good. Everyone has their specialty dish. Unfortunately, no new prospects showed. The district offices appear to be tied up, so getting names of retirees isn't a top priority. No one had any real ideas on how to proceed for the coming year.

We went ahead and scheduled an October meeting at Idaho Pizza for October.

The meeting room there is large enough for our gatherings. We had about twenty members attend. Becky Jaynes from the Twin Falls School District was our presenter. She is in charge of the district's At Risk Program. She gave a very informative program. She, in many ways, has become a clearing

house for needy families, as well as, at risk students. With the pandemic, the need for academic help, as well personal items has become acute.

We scheduled a November meeting with police officer O'Donnell about scams. Etc. With less than a week before the meeting, Governor Little returned Idaho to stage two! There went that meeting. Officer O'Donnell was scheduled for last March when the original shut down occurred. Talk about coincidences.

Obviously, we canceled future meetings until??? Despite canceling our Christmas party, Carol Bearup, our community chair, located a needy family needing Christmas help. Providing gifts, clothing, or food seemed impractical, so we gave the family a \$100 gift card for food and \$100 for Christmas.

Have a Happy New Year! We are overdue!

Ed Arndt

President MVREA

Retired Educators of North Central Idaho- RENC I

Hello fellow retirees from RENC I.

Wow, what a year this has been.. We have not had a meeting since February, 2020 and don't know when we can meet again. The executive board has been trying to keep in touch with our members through e-mails, etc.

For Christmas, we sent cards to all our members. Each card had a detachable ornament.

We are trying to come up with an idea to have our auction to support our scholarship fund without exposing all to the virus. The Red Lion Hotel has been very cooperative in cancelling our meeting room contract on a month to month basis.

We all wish you a healthy and happy New Year.

Pat Hoch

co-president, RENC I

