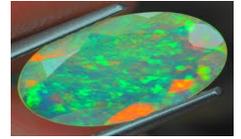




GEMS



The Official Publication of Retired Educators Association of Idaho

Volume 27 Number 3 16 September, 2022

08/19/2022

President's Message

Welcome! General Board.

The past two years wasn't good for our organization. We were confused and bewildered on how we could function and carry on. The entire country was lower than a snake's belly in a wagon rut. The pandemic was killing a lot of people, everyone was isolating, business and social contacts were being cancelled. It took a while to recover. As retirees, we were very apprehensive because we were the most susceptible age group for getting sick. The government finally provided masks, vaccine and booster shots that allowed us to be somewhat protected from the virus. Like everyone else. We lost some footing trying climb back to normal. Our membership suffered some losses, simple because of inactivity and abandoned leadership. Some unit's tried to modify and adapt to the changes while others cancelled completely. Zoom meetings became very popular and we conducted business via computer screens.

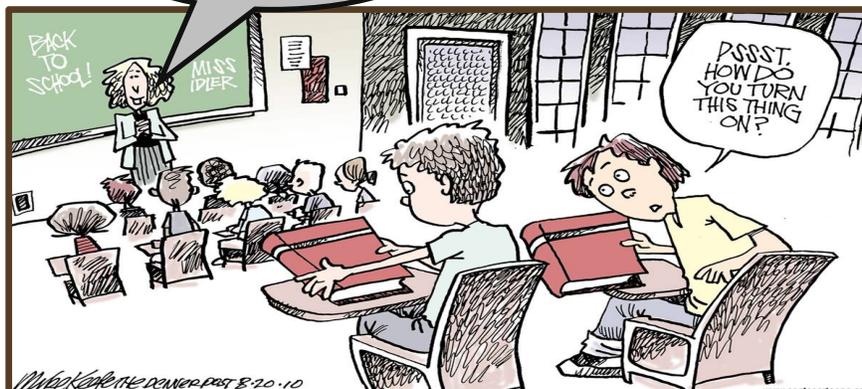
Much of the afore mentioned is behind us. I'm here to say that we can now move forward, strong and resolve to bring back our organization to full strength by retaining and recruiting new personnel.

It is my hope that we can all work together to make this happen. The National Retired Teachers Association of America will be planning to celebrate 75 years of existence next month in Washington D.C. This could be an excellent opportunity to springboard our message to others, through the media outlets.

Thank You, for your reading attention.

President of the REA of I
Stan Cope

OH, THE GOOD
OL' DAYS!



In This Issue

- President's Message
- Legislative Report
- PERSI Report
- Executive Secretary Message
- Contact Information
- Collette Travel
- BKM News
- Idaho Falls REA
- Lower Snake River REA
- Idaho Falls REA
- Lower Snake River REA
- NIREA
- RENCI
- SEIREA
- GEM County REA (AKA Squaw Butte)
- Twin Falls

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Submitted by:

Barbara Blasch

Executive Director, AARP, NRTS Reports

bearconsul@aol.com

740-841-8582

I apologize to the members of REA-I that I have missed some meetings this spring and summer due to health issues. I am now on the mend and hope to serve you as you deserve. Zoom and other ways of virtual meetings has allowed me to participate in local, state and national meetings. Please feel free to contact me with your ideas and concerns.

AARP Priorities

Each year in October AARP Idaho identifies priorities for the upcoming year based on guidelines established by AARP and the needs in Idaho. This process is about to begin for 2023. Our September 6th AARP Idaho staff and the Executive council will be meeting with AARP members and friends in Moscow, Idaho to encourage input in this process. I will be there as a member of the Executive Council. If you are in the area, please join us at the Best Western Hotel in Moscow from 5:00 to 6:30. Your ideas are needed and wanted. REA-I membership brochures will be available. There is a box in the brochure to put the local information and a contact phone number. Register at the AARP Idaho website. Let's fill this event with retired educators.

AARP - Community Challenge Grants

Every year AARP awards thousands of dollars to groups, individuals, non-profits, businesses, cities or anyone working to improve their community and the living conditions of its citizens. Retired educators participate in many volunteer venues. Grants are awarded for an innovative idea or innovative approach. These grants range from several hundred dollars to thousands of dollars. Short videos showing projects that have been awarded grants can be viewed on the AARP Idaho website. Grant applications are available in April. Start planning.

AARP — Grant Monies

REA-I and AARP Idaho have been awarded a \$5000 grant to enable the two organizations to support each other to improve the lives of the 50 plus population. REA-SEIREA is the only unit to use these funds. How can your unit or our state organization work with AARP Idaho? The funds are available. Can we use this money to increase membership?

AARP Advocacy

AARP is not partisan and does not have a Pac for political donations. AARP is active in supporting issues that improve the lives of the 50 plus population and work to defeat issues that are harmful to this population. Recently the big pharmaceutical companies spent millions of dollars and employed 1500 lobbyists on Capitol Hill to defeat lowering prescription drugs to the consumer. AARP members and friends sent communications to Congress in support of lowering prescription drug costs. 4.6 emails, 243,000 thousand phone calls, 4.3 million petitions signed, 8,000 personal stories shared and 24,500 shared receipts for drug costs. Result - Drug costs have been lowered for the consumer. The 2022 AARP Idaho Legislative wrap Up can be accessed on email.

National Retired Teacher Association

NRTA - Grant

REA-I was awarded a grant for \$5000 from NRTA. The purpose was to stay connected with our members and the community through technology. Grant money has been spent on membership brochures, postage and newspaper articles about our local units. Monies are still available. Each unit could identify three members to find uses for these monies. Invite retired educators to your monthly meetings but then have an event or a program that they could support.

NRTA - Voter Engagement

Elections take place in November. REA-I needs to be active in voter engagement. This does not mean supporting a candidate but it does mean helping voters become aware of issues and how a vote will effect the future. Most of our elected or about to be elected leaders in Idaho talk about wanting school choice. It is on their published information. Point out to voters that we have school choice in Idaho. We have public schools, private schools, home school, charter, parochial schools and school choice within a school district. What these candidates are talking about is MONEY. They want public tax money, used for private schools, to be diverted to each student to follow that student to his or her school of choice. If that happens tax payers will not be adequately funding public education but will be funding any and maybe all private schools. How will your unit support voter engagement? How can AARP help us? Can we work together?

NRTA-75th Anniversary

This is the 75th anniversary of NRTA. Our brochures state Ethel Percy Andrus formed NRTA in California in 1947. It is now in all 50 states. In 1955, our state organization, REA-I, was organized as a nonprofit organization affiliated with NRTA. In 1958, Dr. Andrus established the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). In 1982, NRTA and AARP officially merged. In September, Stan cope, Linda Steele, Sharon Miller and Barbara Blasch will be going to Washington to participate in the NRTA celebration of the 75th anniversary. In October, I would like to come to your unit to make a short presentation about the history of the NRTA and how we are supported by this larger organization.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Submitted by:

Dennis Ohrtman

Community Service/Vice President, RENC

dwohrtman@aol.com

Were you ever worth this much in the classroom? \$43,128.00 figured at 29.95 an hour—new volunteer rate, up 4.9% since last year—eight hours a day, five days a week for 180 days. Discussion: Did you ever work a five day school week? Most of us were supposed to be in school 7 hours a day, but most of us camped out at school on a cot and did a better job of going to school on Saturdays and Sundays, evenings and summer than we did going to church. We each had a sense of what it would take for us to feel good: respect, parents who cared, kids who learned, better salaries, or an administrator with insight.

Most of us felt like servants to somebody. For some of us SERVING was honorable and pay was secondary in the scheme of things. I personally didn't have much of a concept of volunteering. That was something the old guys did in Kiwanis, Rotary, Altrusa, and Soroptimist Clubs We didn't have TV service. Almost everything service had a military or gas station connection. Getting the car serviced was an all-day event that including an hour or two at the library. Some of our mother and father's friends came back from World War II and Korean service and in the mid-sixties military service became a national hot button.

What most of us didn't see was SERVICE as volunteer action. The Peace Corps erupted into "the right thing to do." No one ever said "Go in Peace. Serve the Lord." at the end of a church service and

now it is a weekly exhortation. What happened to us?

We had the protection of unions, shortened work hours, shortened work weeks, social security, and pension plans. We didn't routinely wait to die so our work could end. We left our jobs early. New realities (from the most recent PERSI document): “

Teachers/school district employees class/enhanced benefits

Teachers typically begin their careers at an earlier age and have few changes during their careers. They also tend to retire two (2) years earlier and live two (2) years longer than other general (PERSI) members...they receive more benefits for a longer amount of time...Teachers also have the option to return to work and receive a retirement (after officially retiring).

Well, some of us don't much care for the thought of subbing as janitor, secretary, cook, teacher, nor administrator. Instead, we choose to volunteer—to offer community service. The government recognizes that with a tremendously reduced workforce and ever-decreasing interest in having large families, the work in our world can't and won't get done without volunteers. Educators ring that bell of service far better than any other single group of people. You do, I do. REA-I asks you to track your hours and your financial gifts so that when we drive up to the bank, no one says—educators just drain the retirement system, retire early, sit on a couch, and veg. No, we help the system work. At the food bank, at the school tutoring, working with non-profits each of us is worth at least \$29.95 an hour. Share with your officers what you do. We carry that message to the stakeholders and the legislators.

Travel Adventures

Submitted by

Margaret Reimer

208.887.6747

reimerm8@gmail.com

Due to Covid and airline problems, traveling has been difficult.

We did have 2 people travel to Oberammergau in May. REA received 10% of their travel cost, which amounted to \$1648.80. The State REA's 20% was \$329.76. BKM's 80% was \$1319.04. We do have 3 people going on the American Heritage Tour in October.

A 2023 trip is being planned again to Mackinack Island. The 2024 possible trip is Spotlight on S. Dakota. This tour includes Crazy Horse, Custer Park, and Badlands National Park. It is too early for any further travel information on these two trips. Be watching for that information in the near future.

Contact me if you have any interest in trips. I can direct you to added information

PERSI

Submitted by

Connie Jean Bunch

208.375.4576

jeanbunch@aol.com

The most recent financial report is dated August 12, which surprises me a bit.

Current balance: \$22,155,292,196

Net change: \$1,320,252,710

Year to date: 6.4%

Month to Date: 1.6%

Upcoming board meetings:

September 20

October 18

(no November meeting)

December 6

All meetings are held at the PERSI office at 8th and Washington and begin at 8:30. Masks are encouraged.

Contact Information

President

Stan Cope
208.923.0002
skicope@hotmail.com

Co-President Elect

Linda Steele
208.866.1562
lpsteele500@gmail.com

Executive Director

Barbara Blasch
208.229.4561
bearconsul@aol.com

Treasurer

Patricia Kluckhohn
208.288.4295
pjkluckhohn@gmail.com

Secretary

Rick Aubrey
208.681.6312
aubrnick@gmail.com

Pension/Insurance

Elaine Smith
208.232.4496
erbsmith@aol.com
Community Service
Dennis Ohrtman
208.743.0694
dwohrtman@aol.com

Western Region

Randa George
208.365.3693
rgeorge365@msn.com

North Region

Mona Alfrey
509.499.5601
mona.alfrey@gmail.com

Doug Cresswell
208.664.4674

ecresswell@myfrontiermail.com

Western Region

Randa George
208.365.3693
rgeorge365@msn.com

Eastern Region

Chris Blower
208.403.1371
robochris2@gmail.com

Legislation

Connie Bunch
208.376.8325
jeanbunch@aol.com

Webmaster

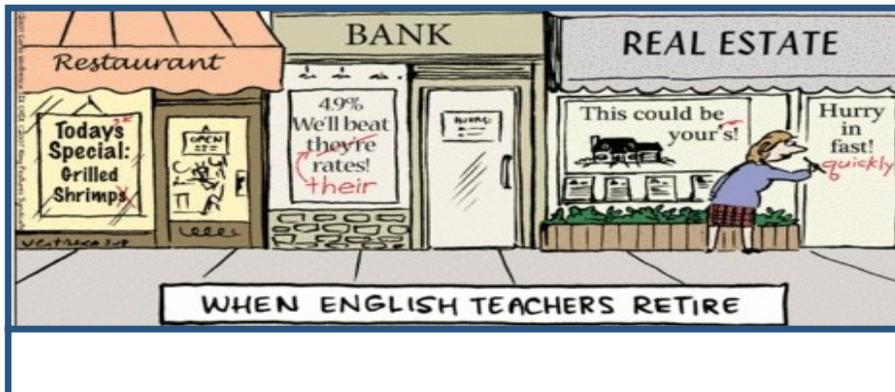
Bill Kluckhohn
208.288.4295
bkluckhohn1@gmail.com

Travel Adventures

Margaret Reimer
208.887.6747
reimerm8@gmail.com

GEMS

Jane Brewer
208.739.2789
jmbvft@gmail.com



LOWER SNAKE

Submitted by :

Cris Warzyn

Secretary LSRRE

cwarzyn@aol.com

Greetings from Lower Snake River Retired Educators! Our group had a yard sale during the same time as the Apple Blossom Festival in Payette in May. We didn't mark any items, instead asking for donations and explaining what our group does to help students and teachers. Not marking items saves us a lot of time and energy and we find that most people are generous. We earned just over \$655 that will in part go to our scholarship fund awarded to a deserving college junior or senior majoring in education. Several of our members worked the yard sale and brought great items to sell. We will have our welcome back meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of September and look forward to seeing everyone!



Squaw Butte REA (AKA Gem Co. Retired Educators)

Submitted by:
Linda Steele
Service Secretary
lpsteele@gmail.com

Since the last GEMS submission, our unit, Gem County Retired Educators, also known as Squaw Butte Retired Educators, has held the April and May business meetings. In April we elected new officers to replace the ones whose terms had expired. Sandy Baker and Rita Montgomery will be co-presidents, Lyn Haun will

serve as Vice-president, and Linda Steele will serve as Service Secretary.

In May we held our traditional Necrology ceremony. To kick off the 2022-2023 term, we held our Not Back to School potluck luncheon August 23. At the All District meeting August 22, Roy Hansen of our unit awarded teacher grants to three teachers in our school district. These grants totaling \$1500.00 are given to applicants to assist with special classroom projects. Our retired educators association has been awarding these grants annually for the past six years. We are looking forward to continuing our usual projects to support students teachers in the local schools.

NIREA

Submitted by :
Mary Williams,
Secretary
webspider@roadrunner.com

August:: The officers of NIREA met in March and decided to have a welcome back pizza party. Mona Alfrey made up a flyer which was sent to all of our members. We invited them to join us for a social gathering and free pizza. With that being a success we met again in May and had an official meeting with a speaker from the Kootenai Humane Society. Our first general meeting for the 2022/2023 year will be at McKenzie River Pizza in Coeur d'Alene

on September 26, 2022. We are excited to be going back to regular meeting and seeing all of our friends of NIREA.

August 28: The officers of NIREA met at Jeff Sherwood's house in Bay View for our annual summer meeting. He always prepares us a delicious lunch. Mona Alfrey talked about the state meeting she attended in August. Then we discussed and came up with speakers to have for this year. Our September meeting will be another social gathering. At that time we will present our program ideas to the members for input. For our programs we would like to have Don Drum from PERSI, Habitat for Humanities, SHIBA, New Beginnings, and lunch at the Snake Pit with some history of the area. We hope you all have a wonderful year reconnecting with old friends and meeting some new ones.

RENCI

Submitted by:
Pat Hoch, Co-President
RENCI
patch232@yahoo.com

Hello from North Central Idaho...

As with most everyone else, we are sweltering from the heat although we did see a little rain on the 22nd of August. Our unit has been quiet as usual during the summer months. The executive board members have been working behind the scenes to plan for

the next year of meetings and brainstorming on how to recruit new members.

Our May meeting was our Brown Bag Surprise raffle and was held at the Lindsay Creek Winery. Members bring a gift in a brown paper bag and receive a ticket when they come to the meeting. Then tickets are drawn at random and people choose on of the bags. It is a surprise to find out what is in the bag and everyone has a great time. It does get loud and noisy. It is well attended and we hope to continue the tradition in the coming years.

We hope all have had a healthy summer and stay cool!

SOUTHEAST IDAHO RETIRED EDUCATORS' ASSOCIATION

Submitted by
Frances Stephens
Vice President/GEMS
frances.stephens1624@gmail.com

March 2, 2022

Roger Wheeler introduced our guest speaker, Pocatello City Councilman Rick Cheatum. He presented an update about the Northgate addition in Pocatello. He stated the project started over 20 years ago with actual construction beginning four years ago. Many of the difficulties facing builders recently have plagued this project. Such as shortages of workers and materials.

The member spotlight for this month was on Roger Sheeler. He received the honor of Emeritus Board Member for the Idaho State University Civic Symphony. Roger served on the board over three decades.

President Black discussed the REA Eastern Idaho Conference. Delegates are needed to attend.

April 6, 2022

Lunch was provided by the generosity of Dean McGivney and Tabitha Butler of Idaho State University College of Education. Lunch was held at the College of Education.

Mrs. Black introduced our speaker Dr. Rich Novy from the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Aberdeen. He has been involved with potato breeding and genetics since 1999. He is a member of the Tri-state team which consists of Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Their goal is to improve potato production, enhance genetic strengths and enhance nutritional quality. We were all surprised to learn that China is the top producer of potatoes.

Nine members will be attending the REA Eastern Idaho Regional Conference in Idaho Falls.

May 4, 2022

Several guests and members who have been unable to attend were welcomed. Mona Heem from ISU College of Education made a request of members to become involved as University Supervisors for student interns.

Idaho State Legislative Representative James Ruchti presented a legislative update and review of the 2021/2022 legislative session. He pointed out that this was a very good session for education due to a surplus of funds and money coming from Covid relief. He gave out information regarding a bill to limit the Idaho Library Association regarding choices made for library content. The bill was not passed this session but might be brought back next session. He encouraged members become informed on upcoming candidates.

Ronda Black introduced Dr. Paul Link, former ISU Professor of Geology. He came to ISU in 1980 and taught there many years. Dr. Link presented a slide show of the Lake Bonneville Flood which occurred over 17,400 years ago. It lasted over a year and moved huge boulders through Red Rock Pass, American Falls and into the Snake River. The actual cause is not known but it is believed to have been an earthquake.

A report was given on the REA Eastern Idaho Conference in Idaho Falls. The next state conference for our region will be April of 2023. Marjean Waford will be the chair person.

Mrs. Black spotlighted Bob Myers who will be honored at ISU with the Professional Award Winner from the College of Education. Bob is a long time member of the SIREA and received membership in the Hall of Fame of 2009.

July 12, 2022

A board meeting was held. Several discussions were held. A decision was made to hold the 2022/2023 meeting/lunch at Juniper Hills Country Club.

Programs and facilitators were assigned.

Letters were sent to new retirees and several have responded.

BOISE, KUNA, MERIDIAN REA-BKMREA

Submitted by:
Keith (Larry) Lee
BKM President
kleeidaho@gmail.com

Since the last report we have had Board and General Meetings September through May. At each of the General Meetings the board reported on various things, a

program was presented for the members information or entertainment and drawings were conducted awarding prizes to some lucky members. Members shared freely donations to the Food Bank, Giraffe Laughs, and the Scholarship fund.

IDAHO FALLS UNIT

Submitted by:
Chris Blower
President, Idaho Falls Unit
robochris2@gmail.com

Whew! We survived hosting the Eastern Idaho Retired Educators Regional Conference. All our planning, sleepless nights, and hunting for a new venue at the last minute (since our original place canceled due to Covid) turned out to be a success. Our guest speakers were great. We had an excellent fiddlers group entertain us during our lunch time. Everyone enjoyed clapping and barn stomping, some even danced to the old timey tunes. Door prizes were given, and a beautiful quilt was raffled off and won by a member of the Pocatello unit.

Our summer has been filled with lots of activities. August seems to be the busiest time for family reunions and vacations. It seems like everyone wants just one more visit, one more hurrah, before our grandchildren head off to school. Meanwhile, we sigh with relief knowing we don't have to frantically prepare for the new school year. We'll just sit back and chill.

Did I say sit back and chill? Well, some of us have been busy. Guest speakers were contacted for the 2022-2023 year. Meeting notices are being sent to our members. Membership drive is ongoing; so far we have some new retirees who said they will join. And, at our September meeting, we will welcome our new unit president, Constance Christine Taow.

MAGIC VALLEY

Submitted by:
Ed Arndt
President
amdted@yahoo.com

Because of the advice of the Southeastern Health District that we hears and read in August, MVREAL, did not hold any meetings in October, November or December. We did hold our annual September picnic here in Twin Falls at Rock Creek Park. Attendance was light, but the core members were there and a good time was enjoyed. In December we did aid a young family of a single father, and two young teenagers. We provided some clothing, gifts, and a food card. The Twin Falls School District's Youth at Risk Program advised us about the family in need.

We did schedule a meeting for January with Tara McFarland from the CSI Refugee Center. Because of the Afghanistan situation, we wondered what that impact would be for refugees coming here. However, I called the South Central Health District, and they advised against a face-to-face meeting for January.

We finally resumed meeting on March 17, 2022 at Idaho Pizza at 11:AM - 1:00 PM. We were finally able to meet with Tara. She indicated that more refugees have been helped to resettle under

the Biden administration than the previous administration. Many are from Africa including the Sudan and the Congo. Also from Afghanistan and Iraq, and, of course Central America. The refugees are categorized to some degree. The Afghan people are considered parolees. Whatever, that means.

On April 21 State Representative Linda Hartgen attended our meeting, She stated that the State legislature had done well this legislative session, especially compared to the 2021 session. She appeared to agree that parents should be in charge of what library books, etc. their children read. She seems to be more open minded than her husband was. I believe she also reported on the allowing of retirees to reenter the profession. However, I don't feel that she is as proactive as is Representative Wendy Horman from Idaho Falls.

Finally, in May we had scheduled Randy Wastondosk from Central Idaho Community Partnerships was to speak at our meeting, but he had a conflict and wasn't able to attend. I panicked, but we were able to persuade Ted Hadley, a former Twin Falls music teacher, and a continuing leader in the community bands and symphony and a member of REAL to make a presentation. And did he ever! He reminded us of the many varied music and artistic programs available to the community of Twin Falls. We are very fortunate to have these cultural events available to us.