

# Connections



**December 2016**

*Continuing the Commitment*

## Hampton Roads VEA-R Meeting

By Malia Huddle

VEA-R members from the Hampton Roads area gathered at the Chesapeake Central Library on November 16, 2016. The theme of the meeting was, "Our Season of Harvest" and members were treated to several informative speakers. Following introductions, VEA Vice President Dr. James Fedderman spoke about the importance of quality public education and thanked the retired educators for all of their efforts in the classroom and all they continue to do to support our schools.

Pat Kennedy, Vice President of the VEA-R Council, gave an overview of VEA's 2017 Legislative Agenda, explained recent redistricting that significantly revised Virginia's 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional districts in Hampton Roads, and discussed a bit about school funding and how per-pupil state aid (after adjusting for inflation) has fallen since 2009.

Officer Everett, a crime prevention specialist from the Chesapeake Police Department, gave a safety presentation in which she offered many personal and home security tips we can all use to lower the chances of becoming a crime victim.

While enjoying boxed lunches, members listened to Ed Fissinger from the NEA Valuebuilder program, also a former Virginia Beach School Board member, discuss the 2020 Census and the redistricting process that will follow. He encouraged VEA-R members to stay informed and involved, and to continue to advocate for policies and candidates that support strong public education. Scott McKenna from NEA Member Benefits was also on hand to answer questions and reminded retired members that they continue to enjoy the same NEA benefits as they did when they were active educators.

Organizers LaNette Desler and Malia Huddle took care of some housekeeping issues before Dr. Fedderman returned to the podium to share his own inspirational story about the difference teachers have made in his life. He urged members to never stop advocating for children and public education because you never know

when you might be making a real difference for even just one child. After a very enjoyable and informative meeting, the group dispersed in early afternoon to make their way home on this gorgeous fall day.



*VEA Vice President James Fedderman speaking to Hampton Roads retirees.*

## VEA Board of Directors October 2016 Meeting

By Dennis Joseph Pfennig

The first business meeting of the VEA Board of Directors for 2016-2017 was held October 21-22 in Richmond. President Jim Livingston opened the meeting at 8 p.m., stressing that he and Vice President James Fedderman are both determined to spend more time around the state visiting members than in the Richmond office.

### Highlights of Reports:

a. NEA Director Carol Bauer: To keep current with NEA's campaign against institutional racism, contact [www.neaedjustice.org](http://www.neaedjustice.org).

b. Executive Director Philip Forgit: The VEA is at a crossroads...it has had successes but also faces future challenges. Among the successes was a 224-member increase in September. In addition, VEA is just one of nine state organizations to add staff in 2016. One of these new hires is Reilly Bradshaw, a digital media specialist, who has strengthened VEA's presence on social media.

In terms of challenges, VEA must get deeply involved in the 2017 Governor's race, and Congressional redistricting will follow. We need a Governor and a state legislature supportive of public education. The VEA must stand and fight for its positions. If we do not, we will go the way of other state level NEA affiliates, which today are near powerless in the lawmaking process. To put VEA in position to do this, President Livingston turned 30 minutes of the program over to a brainstorming of the 2017 VEA Strategic Plan.

c. Treasurer's Report: Dues income as of August 31 is higher than expected and expenditures lower. VP Fedderman noted that work has begun on the 2017-2018 budget.

d. Office of Communications: John O'Neil reported that VEA is increasing its digital capabilities. One Board member complained that other organizations are "stealing" VEA's staff products/research, labeling as its own, and distributing to their members. Our attorney promised to look into such accusations when these are brought to her attention.

e. Office of Minority Engagement: It is working to recruit new members and to create a toolkit for policies for the inclusion of LGBTQ students and school employees in schools and in the association.

f. Office of Government Relations: Kathy Burcher listed the candidates for Congress from Virginia endorsed by NEA PAC, stressed the need for all to vote in November 2016 and 2017, and asked Board members to recruit members to be advocates of "great public schools." To that end, President Livingston suspended the meeting for 45 minutes so Board members would have time to call VEA members at their homes, asking that they vote and finding out what else they would be willing to do to help the cause. Some 450 calls were made. As for legislators presently in office,

VEA Lobby Day is January 23, 2017 and VEA-Retired Lobby Day January 26, 2017.

g. Office of Teaching and Learning: Antoinette Rogers announced that Carol Bauer, NEA Director, York County, is one of five finalists for the *NEA Excellence in Teaching Award*.

h. Office of Legal Counsel: Dena Rosenkrantz noted her office handled 281 cases last year, costing \$784,635. This is fewer cases than in 2014 when her office handled 340 cases at a cost of \$948,000.

#### **Announcements:**

- Nominations for the 2017 VEA Friend of Education Award and ESP of the Year are now being solicited.
- The 2017 VEA Convention will be March 30-April 1 at the Roanoke Civic Center.
- Virginia Teachers of Color Summit will be at the Downtown Richmond Hilton Hotel, February 16-18, 2017.
- Next year, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the merger of the VEA and VTA will be celebrated throughout the year and at the 2017 VEA Delegate Assembly.

## Special Guests:

The First Lady of the Commonwealth, Dorothy McAuliffe, spoke of the need for superior public education. She joined the phone bank, calling a few members urging they join in championing friends of public education in November.

Toney McNair, Virginia Teacher of the Year, Indian River Middle School, Chesapeake Education Association, thanked the VEA for its support and noted how "honored" he is "to be part of the VEA family."

## Motions Passed:

1 - Amend the VEA Articles of Incorporation to allow the Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, Richmond, to become its own local. This will go before the 2017 VEA Delegate Assembly for action.

2 - The VEA is authorized to distribute \$250 each in disaster relief to North Carolina, West Virginia, Virginia and Louisiana, all seriously damaged by recent storms; and to provide information to members encouraging them to contribute as well.

3 - The VEA is to educate and disseminate information

about the TELL (Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning) survey, which is being used already in school systems.

4 - VEA supports the efforts of the Coalfield Counties in their efforts to secure adequate funding for students.

5 - The VEA will establish the Robley Jones Political Activist Award to be presented annually at the VEA Convention to a member who has contributed significantly to the advancement of candidates friendly to public education and/or having a positive impact on public education legislation at the local, state and/or national level.

6 - The VEA staff will create and distribute information in support of local associations' social media awareness campaigns to bring the public's attention to efforts to "*bridge the gap*" between state funding of K-12 and its actual need.

7 - Establish a 501(c)(3) for the presently existing Bebton Parks Scholarship Fund. Current funds will be transferred to the 501(c)(3). Passed unanimously.

The meeting ended on Saturday, October 22 at 4:55 pm. President Livingston

thanked all for a good meeting, noted he was proud of VEA, does not take his position lightly, and wished all a safe journey home.

**!!!VOTE!!!**

**Save the date  
January 25-27, 2017**



By Pat Kennedy

It will soon be time to vote for your VEA-Retired officers, council seats, and delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly and the VEA Delegate Assembly.

You are being asked to vote for the VEA-Retired Secretary/Treasurer and council seats in Congressional Districts 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11, all to serve from 2017 to 2019. Special elections for Congressional council seats in Districts 6, 8 and 10 are also being held, and these three seats are for one-year terms. You will also be voting for delegates to the VEA Delegate and NEA Representative Assemblies for 2017. The VEA Delegate Assembly will be held in Roanoke and the NEA Representative Assembly will be held in Boston, MA.

There are two methods to vote, either by paper ballot or electronically.

**Paper Ballot** – No later than January 4, 2017, contact Barbara Rackley at the VEA. Her mailing address is B. Rackley at Virginia Education Association, 116 South Third St., Richmond, VA 23219-3704; by telephone, call 1-800-552-9554 and ask for Barbara; by fax, 1-804-775-8379 ATTN: B. Rackley; and by e-mail at [brackley@veanea.org](mailto:brackley@veanea.org).

Paper ballots will be mailed on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Mail your completed ballot back to the VEA. All paper ballots must be postmarked or hand-delivered to the VEA office by the close of business on **January 24, 2017**. Ballots received after this date will not be valid. Please note if you request a paper ballot, you will not be eligible for electronic voting.

**Electronically** – The electronic voting site opens at **12:00 noon on Wednesday, 01/25/17** and closes at **12:00 noon on Friday, 01/27/2017**. To access the voting link, please go to the [veanea.org](http://veanea.org) website under *Member Center* and look for the link for “Election Central.” Click on this link and follow the directions.

You will need your VEA/NEA membership ID number that begins with three zeroes followed by seven other numerals. It can be found on your membership card, a VEA or NEA publication (in the mailing address area), or by calling the VEA.

Enter your name exactly as requested, and then click “Enter.” Biographical information on each candidate may be accessed by clicking on the candidate’s name on the electronic ballot.

After voting for your choices, you must select “Submit” or “Vote” at the end of the electronic ballot in order for your vote to be cast.

Votes will be counted **January 30th** and candidates notified of results by **February 3, 2017**.

Please remember to vote!



## President’s Column

By Eddie Fifer

SNAP OUT OF IT! The presidential election may not have gone the way most of us wanted, but this does not

alter our mission. The VEA-Retired as well as the VEA must continue to protect and promote public education in Virginia. At the local and state levels, decisions are still being made by elected officials that affect the education of our children and the working conditions of our members. We still need to make sure that we support pro-education candidates for positions on local school boards, boards of supervisors, city councils and in Virginia’s legislature. These are the people who dictate policy and control most of the money. This is a continuous challenge, because elections of some type occur every year. We all need to do our part.

VEA-Retired should also be very visible working with the active members, assisting in schools, and promoting public education in their communities. The best way to do that is to be part of a VEA-Retired chapter. If there is not a chapter near you, start one yourself. There is grant money and assistance available.

The bottom line is that we will continue to fight for public education regardless of who is in office. We will also continue to support pro-education candidates at the local, state, and national

levels. VEA-Retired will always be there with the VEA to continue our mission to protect and promote public education as well as support and defend our members.

## **NOVA VEA-Retired Member's Luncheon**

By Dennis Joseph Pfennig

On the morning of October 5, 2016, 31 members of the Virginia Education Association-Retired from Northern Virginia gathered at the Ft. Myer Officers' Club, Arlington, to receive updates on the activities of both VEA-Retired and VEA. This ideal location for discussion, lunch and entertainment was obtained through the efforts of Arlington Education Association-Retired President Joseph "J" Missal and VEA-Retired District 8 Congressional District Council member Louise Fishbein. Notification to all VEA-Retired members residing in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Congressional Districts was undertaken in September by the Fairfax Education Association's Executive Director, Nancy Perkins. The Arlington Education Association's Office Manager, Alysha Page, coordinated responses and monies collected.

VEA-Retired President R. Edward "Eddie" Fifer greeted the attendees, sharing with

them his desire to more actively coordinate the activities of the Richmond state council and local chapters. VEA-Retired Vice President Patricia Kennedy next shared information on coming elections within the organization and her earnest hope that all present would make an effort to vote when the time comes in January 2017. Dennis Pfennig, VEA-Retired Council member, followed, guiding the group through a detailed study of the VEA 2017 Legislative Agenda.



*Delegate Ken Plum addresses retirees at the NOVA VEA-R luncheon.*

A delicious mid-day buffet came next. The ambiance of the club and pleasant company made the time pass all too fast. The afternoon session saw Virginia House of Delegates, 36<sup>th</sup> District, and VEA-Retired member Kenneth Plum deliver an hour-long slide presentation on the

"Back Roads of the Old Dominion." All enjoyed his informative comments and anecdotes.

Well informed, well entertained, and well fed, the audience departed about 2:30 pm, just in time to avoid rush hour traffic.

## **Richmond Education Association-Retired On the Move**

By

Lola McDowell and Vashti Mallory

REA-Retired had a wonderful meeting in October at *63Thirty5 Restaurant* on Jahnke Road. Over 50 members attended as well as all of the REA endorsed candidates for School Board, City Council and Mayor. VEA President Jim Livingston and Vice President James Fedderman welcomed REA-Retired members and guest.

Co-chairs Lola McDowell and Vashti Mallory were excited to once again announce that REA-Retired has been awarded a \$2,800 NEA-Retired Grant for 2016-17. This grant will allow them to continue to build a strong retired local chapter by recruiting and retaining members. Through the grant, REA-Retired will also be able to accomplish its goals for this year, which include engaging members

in organizing projects and recruitment efforts.

As in the past, REA-Retired will continue the tradition of doing a community project in December. For this year's project, as decided at the October meeting, they will adopt a Kindergarten and Third Grade Class at Oak Grove Elementary School in Richmond. Retired members will purchase scarves, gloves, hats and/or socks and school supplies for the students in those classes. They will bring those items to the December meeting, and Lola and Vashti will distribute them to the adopted classes.

To add to their December celebration, Princess Moss, NEA Secretary Treasurer, will be the guest speaker at that meeting.

Richmond Education Association-Retired members are on the move!

### **Save the Dates!**

VEA-Retired Lobby Day is January 26<sup>th</sup>. As in past years, a bus will leave from Northern Va. to take retirees to meet with their legislators. A briefing will be held in the Capitol to inform on the VEA's legislative agenda. See the enclosed flyer for details.

The next VEA-Retired Council meeting will be held March 16-17, 2017. While the location has yet to be determined, all retired members are welcome to attend and observe. Check the VEA website and/or Virginia Education Association-Retired Facebook page often. Details about these and other events will be posted as they become available.

### **2017 NEA-Retired Organizing Conference March 21-23, 2017**

The 2017 NEA-Retired Organizing Conference – *Unite, Inspire, Lead: Still Doing It* is the theme for the 2017 conference. The conference is devoted to training retired members to organize their communities to advance the cause of public education. Scheduled for March 21-23, 2017, the conference will be held at the Renaissance Dallas Hotel in Dallas, TX. The event will provide skill development and knowledge building, workshops, fun times as well as opportunities to network with peers.

If you have any questions, please contact Willie Cook at [wcook@nea.org](mailto:wcook@nea.org).

Here is a link to register: <http://www.cvent.com/events/2017-nea-retired-organizing-conference-unite-inspire-lead-still-doing-it/event-summary-d6d4ea494568482c9c56089973ec4d1c.aspx>

Any VEA-Retired member can attend at their own expense. Registration is \$90. Rates at the Renaissance Dallas on N. Stemmons Freeway are \$159 plus tax per room.

