

Connections

A Publication of VEA-Retired



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President's Column

By Dennis J. Pfennig

It's been a busy winter! Since our last issue, I've attended the January meeting of the VEA Board of Directors, participated in VEA's Lobby Day and rally, attended the 50th anniversary gala of the NEA Foundation, chaired the spring meeting of the VEA-Retired Council, attended NEA's Leadership Summit and the NEA-Retired Conference in Denver, led the retired delegation at VEA's Delegate Assembly, met with VEA's new executive director to discuss improvements to VEA-Retired communications and newsletter delivery, and visited local retired chapter meetings in Arlington and Richmond.

Spending time with these two retired chapters, as well as an earlier visit to the Loudoun chapter, was enlightening, rewarding, and informative. Seeing what our members are doing in their local communities is important and inspiring. That is why I have instituted what I hope will be a permanent column for our newsletter entitled, **About the State**. Here, local retired chapters will be able to share information about their activities, and perhaps chapters in other parts of the Commonwealth will want to adopt some of these ideas with modification to fit the needs of their areas. It is my belief that retirees can be greatly beneficial on the local level to both our parent organization and local associations. I urge retired chapters to work to be granted a seat on their local association's board of directors as in this way retirees can stay involved, share insight and experiences, and volunteer to assist the local in ways they may not be aware of otherwise. Retirees might assist locals by answering phones, stuffing envelopes, or advising new members on classroom management and the benefits of VEA membership.

I trust you all enjoy the coming of spring as I do. Here in Northern Virginia we have had it with cold. Let spring flowers bloom.

**Retired Delegates to
2019 VEA Delegate
Assembly
(Not pictured: Shirley
George and Lola
McDowell)**





About VEA-Retired

-) We are the fastest growing division of VEA
-) Council members are elected by the VEA-R membership
-) We elect our own delegates to the VEA and NEA assemblies
-) We have active local chapters across the state
-) Information is published in *Connections* and is available on the VEA website
-) Contact us at vearetired@veanea.org for information on local chapters

Share your stories!

If you or your local retired chapter would like to have an article in the next issue of *Connections*, please forward it to vearetired@veanea.org by August 15, 2019.

The VEA Fund for Children and Public Education

By Denise Davis

The 2019 Virginia elections will be more contentious than any in the recent past. The VEA Fund expects to make recommendations in almost every race in both the Virginia Senate and House. An analysis of the electoral prospects and consideration of questionnaires will be done in almost 140 races. As we have seen, elections matter! The VEA Fund for Children and Public Education will continue to help elect candidates who support public education, but the donations of all VEA and VEA-Retired members are needed to accomplish this. If you aren't an Easy Pay contributor, please consider becoming one. If you need assistance with this, email me or check with your local PAC director. Check out the VEA Fund website at www.veafund.org. Here you can donate at any time and see the list of VEA recommended candidates. If all active and retired VEA members donated even a small amount, we could have even more influence and voice in public decisions. Please donate today, and often!

2019 Elections Results

By Pat Kennedy

VEA-Retired elections were held January 23rd – 25th and results were certified on January 29, 2019. All VEA-Retired Council races were uncontested, hence the following candidates were declared elected and will take office for three-year terms beginning on August 1st:

Secretary-Treasurer	Malia Huddle
Congressional District 1	Holly Jackson-Conrad
Congressional District 7	Meg Gruber
Congressional District 9	Ralph Booher
Congressional District 11	Bruce Smith

Fourteen retired delegates to the 2019 VEA Delegate Assembly were elected – Ralph Booher, Eddie Fifer, Virginia Flora, Shirley George, Elizabeth Goodson, Meg Gruber, Ernest Holley, Malia Huddle, Holly Jackson-Conrad, Debbie Jessee, Pat Kennedy, Vashti Mallory, Lola McDowell, and Martha Wood. There were no alternates. And finally, Meg Gruber, Ernest Holley, and Martha Wood were elected to serve as retired delegates to the 2019 NEA Representative Assembly to be held this summer in Houston. Ralph Booher and Debbie Jessee were elected 1st and 2nd alternates, respectively.

Beginning in 2020, VEA-Retired elections will be held only in even years. In order to align with the new election cycles, this year's candidates for secretary-treasurer and odd-numbered congressional district seats were elected to three-year terms (i.e., 2019-2022) instead of the usual two-year terms.

Thank you to all candidates and all who voted!

Distinguished Service Award

By Dennis J. Pfennig

This year, VEA-Retired was proud to present to Barbara B. Mann of Chesterfield County its Distinguished Service Award at the annual VEA Awards Banquet held March 29th during the VEA Delegate Assembly in Richmond. Barbara was presented her award by VEA President Jim Livingston. The award recognizes her as a compelling force in encouraging others to join and become involved in the Chesterfield Education Association – Retired (CEA-R).

As its president, she went above and beyond the call of duty. If there was a job to be done, Barbara did it. She has stuffed envelopes, staffed tables for events, and manned phone lines. She has shared pertinent information, provided guest speakers for meetings, consistently attended year after year the Chesterfield County New Teachers' Breakfast, and assisted in honoring retirees at CEA's last academic year meeting. She has also served many years on the VEA-Retired Council and has been tireless in promoting the VEA/CEA mission. It was appropriate to present this year's Distinguished Service Award to her.



Distinguished Service Award recipient Barbara Mann with VEA President Jim Livingston
(Photo: Lisa Sale)

FEA-R Lobby Day 2019: Oh, Let Me Count the Ways!

By Barbara Allen

Throughout the year, Fairfax Education Association – Retired lobbies both local and state officials. One of its most successful efforts is the annual bus journey to Richmond to meet General Assembly members. This year the trip took place on January 24. Many of those who traveled south in the early morning hours of the 24th returned on January 28 to take part in VEA's highly successful lobby day.

How did FEA-R's lobby day go this year, 2019? "Oh, let me count the ways!" to quote Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It went quite well. The purpose of our trip to Richmond was to talk with legislators about the items in our position statement. We did see nearly all of our Fairfax County legislators or their legislative assistants, plus a few others as well. We distributed bright pink position statement folders, thus spreading the word. We had maps of each floor of the Pocahontas Building, which allowed us to easily find our way. We had brilliant lead presenters, who articulately spoke about our issues.

We met with the Secretary of Education, Atif Qarni, who was extremely interesting, and it is indeed a pleasure to know that he has so recently come from the middle school classroom in Prince William County. He shared with us some of the programs and initiatives that he is pursuing and then was open to answering questions.

Oh, let me see the other ways! The weather cooperated for the most part, a bit of rain but no downpours. No one got lost, no items left behind (that I know of)! And, a nice nap was had by all on the way home! What more could one ask for? Each year, it is an interesting experience.



Do we have your email address? Please contact us at vearetired@veanea.org to check. We're working to increase digital communications with VEA-Retired members, including electronic distribution of *Connections*, and we need current email addresses to make that happen.

About the State

Arlington Education Association - Retired

By Judith Knight

Arlington Education Association – Retired (AEA-R) meets quarterly. In October, we discussed ways we could support our colleagues still working in Arlington Public Schools and considered options for expanding our scholarship program. At the January meeting, VEA-Retired President Dr. Dennis Pfennig provided updates on VEA-Retired activities and the benefits of lifetime membership.

Elizabeth River Retired Educators

By LaNette Desler

Elizabeth River Retired Educators (ERRE) is a newly organized chapter of VEA-Retired on the southside of Tidewater. We are primarily (but not limited to) Chesapeake residents who have taught in several local school systems. We meet on the second Thursday of the month at noon in varied locations and would welcome any VEA retiree who would like to meet new friends, socialize, and stay up-to-date on information for retirees, as well as current VEA information. Come join us!! Contact LaNette Desler, president, at lgd827@aolcom or 757-482-6823.

Fairfax Education Association – Retired

By Mimi Dash

Fairfax Education Association – Retired (FEA-R) continues to serve as a resource for our active members, while actively advocating for retiree issues on the state and local levels. We use our long-established relationships with our legislators to join with other active and retiree groups to lobby our members of the General Assembly. We meet on a quarterly basis with Fairfax County Public Schools' Human Resources Director and staff to advocate for health benefits and were instrumental in obtaining an outstanding plan which finally includes Silver Sneakers. We are working on providing mini-education sessions to our members and welcome suggestions for more activities. Finally, our annual all-member luncheon meeting will be held on May 14.

Loudoun Education Association – Retired

By Claire Scholz

Loudoun retired teachers are involved in many activities. Every year we organize and set up donated classroom materials and supplies for new teachers in August, filling the high school's cafeteria. The next day we welcome all new teachers who join LEA with boxes and bags filled with everything they can use! The excitement is infectious.

Each fall, we invite newly retired teachers to join us at a luncheon. Throughout the year we assist with LEA. We help in schools without reps, count ballots and support and participate in many LEA activities.

This fall we took a field trip to the Moton Museum in Farmville, VA. Having been active VEA members, we thought we knew quite a bit about Barbara Johns' leadership of a student-led strike in 1951. As with most students, we greatly overestimated our knowledge! It was a fascinating learning experience and we highly recommend a visit.



Richmond Education Association – Retired

By Lola McDowell

REA-R has been having an exciting year. In June, we had a celebration for retired educators and the entertainment was provided by one of our own, Marsha Meekins-Cheatam, and her jazz group. Each retiree was given a key ring and certificate. In October, presenters shared information for Richmond Public Schools retirees on insurance and the Heritage Credit Union. While the December meeting was canceled due to snow, members did collect and deliver socks, gloves, and scarves to students at Woodville Elementary School. At our February meeting, VEA President Jim Livingston, VP Dr. James Fedderman, Executive Director Dr. Brenda Pike, REA President Ramon Moore, REA VP Brad Mock, and VEA-Retired President Dr. Dennis Pfennig answered questions both about our parent organization and VEA-Retired. At this meeting, co-chairs Lola McDowell and Vashti Mallory were also excited to announce that REA-R had been awarded an NEA-Retired Organizing grant. With it, REA-R will continue its outreach to potential new members, participate in organizing projects and host community forums. REA-R is continually on the move.

Valley Association of Retired Educators

By Sharon Helbert

VARE meets the second Tuesday of each month from September through May. Attendance averages 40 members per meeting, and anyone interested in joining is welcome. Meetings begin at 11 AM with a program of interest to educators, followed by lunch and a business meeting. Recent programs have included music by a local school, The Gus Bus reading initiative, and an introduction to the Rosenwald School in Elkton, VA. Each meeting also includes legislative and VEA initiative reports.

Local projects undertaken by VARE include support for Minnick School (a local school for students who are unable to attend regular public school), a food drive for a community food pantry, and the collection of new and gently used books for children of the community.

Virginia Beach Education Association - Retired

By Shirley George

VBEA-R is and has always been very active. For several years our retiree group has participated in New Teacher Orientation, dropped gifts off to members at their schools for Teacher Appreciation Week, written holiday cards to first year educators, gone to schools for Read Across America, worked election polls, assisted with phone banking and canvassing, helped plan and set up for the annual retirees reception, and hosted speakers on topics such as AARP, Social Security Administration, IRS, long-term health care, financial planning, insurance, and estate law and will preparation.

VBEA-R meets four times a school year for lunch and information and is totally supported by the VBEA.

VEA-Retired Grant Program

By Malia Huddle

Did you know that VEA-Retired offers grants of up to \$500? Seriously, it does. These reimbursement grants are intended to create, grow, and enhance local chapters and membership participation in VEA-Retired activities. Grant proposals should address areas such as recruiting members, organizing activities, programs for members, advocacy and development, and other activities that support VEA-Retired goals and programs.

Contact us at vearetired@veanea.org to request a grant application. Grant applications can be made by any VEA-Retired member or by a local association president or UniServ Council chair if a local chapter does not exist in the area.

VEA Lobby Day and Rally

By Dennis J. Pfennig



About 4,000 educators and supporters gathered in Richmond on January 28, 2019, demanding lawmakers to fully fund schools. Among the crowd were members of VEA-Retired, proof that while we are retired, we still care deeply about public education and the VEA. Vice President Lola McDowell posted afterwards, “I was excited to see so many retirees at the rally.” Secretary-Treasurer Malia Huddle emailed, “We rocked.” And finally, Claire Scholz from Loudoun posted, “Retired teachers are a powerful force to reckon with.”



The day began with a briefing on goals and logistics. While time limited questions and comments from those assembled, VEA-Retired member and former Virginia Delegate Jim Dillard did manage to take the floor to urge continued support for lawmakers, regardless of party, who stand with VEA on the issue of full funding for public education and fair salaries for school employees.



By 8:30 a.m., VEA lobbyists were off to the Pocahontas Building. Long security lines meant it took nearly an hour to enter and begin lobbying lawmakers. Later, VEA members lined the walkway from Pocahontas to the Capitol, positioning ourselves to wave signs and chant as members of the General Assembly moved from their offices to Capitol. Several lawmakers, such as VEA member and Delegate Ken Plum, wore red. By noon, standing on the steps of the Capitol, VEA President Jim Livingston declared the time had come for legislators to hear the collective voices of those who care about public education in the Commonwealth. The cheers could be heard inside the Capitol itself.

For the retirees who participated, it was a rally reminiscent of those in our younger days. VEA-Retired members are planning even now to put on their marching shoes again on January 27, 2020, the date of VEA’s next lobby day.

Retirees Recognized

By Dennis J. Pfennig

At the 2019 VEA Delegate Assembly, VEA-Retired was twice recognized by the Chair. First, on Friday, March 29, as VEA-Retired president, I was called to the stage to accept a plaque commemorating VEA-Retired’s 25th anniversary. It now hangs permanently in the conference room at VEA headquarters. Second, on Saturday, VEA President Jim Livingston asked the 600 delegates to the convention to give retirees a round of applause for being the largest PAC contributors (\$4,409).

As many may have already seen, in the most recent issue of the *Virginia Journal of Education*, former VEA-Retired Vice President Debbie Jessee’s contributions to public education were featured on page 22. This is the first in a planned series on distinguished VEA-Retired members. This idea came out of VEA-Retired Vice President Lola McDowell’s Membership Committee and is being carried forth by Martha Wood’s Special Projects Committee.



Presentation of the VEA-Retired plaque
(Photo: Lisa Sale)



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Email Addresses Needed

If you didn't receive a digital copy of *Connections* earlier this month, then we do not have your current email address.

Please consider updating your email address one of two ways:

1. Complete the form at <https://vea.link/vear-update>
2. Email your info to vearetired@veanea.org

The VEA-Retired Council will be considering a move to fully electronic distribution of *Connections* at its September meeting. If approved, we would continue to mail the paper version for at least another year before implementing the change. During that time, we would be collecting, verifying, and updating email addresses to ensure all members continue to receive VEA-Retired communications. If you'd like to opt in to receiving *Connections* digitally before then, just email us at the address above and let us know. Please note by opting to go digital, you may receive other short communications from VEA-Retired Council members via email from time to time.

Do You Live in VA's 3rd Congressional District?

The VEA-Retired Council is composed of a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, immediate past president, two at-large members of the VEA Board of Directors, and one representative from each of Virginia's 11 Congressional Districts. Representatives must live in the district they represent. Out-of-state members may represent the district in which they were last employed.

The representative seat for the 3rd Congressional District is currently vacant. This is Congressman Bobby Scott's district. If you live in the 3rd and are interested in serving on the Council, now is your chance. Our next meeting is scheduled for September 19-20 in Richmond. Please submit a letter of interest and/or any questions to Dennis J. Pfennig, VEA-Retired President, at vearetired@veanea.org by August 15.