

December 2012

Connections



A VEA-R Celebration:

Save the date!



Martha Wood

Virginia Education Association-Retired is 20 years old in 2013, and we're planning an event to celebrate. VEA-R will hold an Annual Meeting on October 22-23, 2013, at The Homestead Hotel and Resort in Warm Springs, Virginia in Bath County!! This event is for all our members state-wide, instead of the regional meetings recently sponsored.

In the spring of 1993, VEA President Robley Jones assembled an Ad Hoc committee, formed of state-wide retired members, to study a dormant group of VEA members. Under the able leadership of Dr. Beth Nelson, this committee was charged with the task of determining the viability of a VEA-R program. The committee's immediate and resounding response was "Yes!". We began plans for the renewal of VEA-R, and today we are the fastest growing group in VEA.

Watch this space for details of the Annual Meeting and related plans to make this a

great visit for all. Make plans now to help celebrate our twentieth anniversary next October. After our preliminary visit to the Homestead, the planners are excited about this fantastic location, and the hotel staff is eager to welcome us.



Dickensian Times

R. "Eddie" Fifer

Charles Dickens' novel, A Tale of Two Cities, has the opening lines, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." That quote symbolizes the atmosphere at the October VEA Board of Directors meeting as well as VEA Headquarters. The decline in membership has created not only a hardship on our association; it has made it necessary to reevaluate our association's programs, staff, and our governance representation. Despite this daunting task, I sensed a positive commitment and a real desire to do what it took to save VEA.

Besides the usual Board business, our main purpose was to reduce the size of the Board of Directors, which means redistricting. I know this is a "dirty word" to many members, but it is necessary. To reduce the size of the Board, we need to have each Board member represent a larger number of members.

Now, the representation is about one Board seat per 1200 members.

Realigning the districts to incorporate a larger number of members was the main goal, with different plans developed and discussed. A final decision will be made at the January Board meeting. These changes are for governance only and not UniServ. How UniServ will be changed is another issue for another time.

I hope this meeting was the beginning of a total commitment by the leadership, staff, and members to bring VEA back to the thriving origination it used to be. I also hope that our budget situation will never create divisiveness between members and staff. We, as retired members, can help our VEA by offering our services at the local and state levels. Contact the local president or UniServ Director in your area to find out how you can help. As it takes a village to raise a child, it will take all of us to save VEA.

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Wise Women (Joyce Tennyson) is a photographic celebration of the wisdom and beauty of 80 women, ages 65-100. It is luminous, reflective, and heartwarming.

"For me success is having the respect and love of people who truly know you."
-Dame Judi Dench

Giving Time and Room to Learn

Shana Moore



Deborah Jessee is no stranger to managing multiple tasks and topics. A retired history, science, and Spanish teacher and past local education association president, Debbie remains active and involved in public education through her roles as Vice President of VEA-R and the chair of the Lee County School Board. She also cares for her aging parents and remains active through walking and tennis (on those rare dates when she can find a fourth player).

Debbie encourages others to join VEA-R and to consider running for their own local school boards, educational associations, and VEA-R offices. While she agrees many of these roles can be challenging, particularly during these tough economic times, there is a great need for knowledgeable and experienced educators. Now, more than ever, we need representatives that will

help teachers and students get the time and room they need to develop strong, lifelong, learning skill sets.

“We need to continue our advocacy on anything that affects us (retirement, healthcare, etc.). Even though we’re retired... we still need to support public education.”

Nothing really surprises her after several years of teaching. Debbie did find the recent County proposal to consolidate several local schools to be one of her most challenging tasks. Before casting the tie-breaking vote, she reviewed a wealth of information regarding community ties, travel distances, pending staff retirements, necessary infrastructure improvements, student: teacher ratios, cost savings, etc. Her experience as a teacher and a VEA member have served her well in making informed decisions that best serve students, teachers, and the community at large.

Debbie shares the concerns of many educators, current and retired, that the Standards of Learning (SOLs) may not aid student success.

“I know teachers need to be accountable; I always felt we were accountable. Yes, granted, there are a few individuals that are there to get the paycheck, but I think we’re developing children

that don’t have the ability to think. They’re great test takers, or test guessers, but are we preparing them to be thinkers on their feet?”

One of her best memories was at the end of a particularly challenging year. A parent gave Debbie a gift certificate because she had done so much for that parent’s son during the year. That little gesture was her payday, because it showed that “somebody got it after all.” As a teacher who was not above climbing onto her desk to become the giant in Don Quixote, Debbie truly cares that students “get it”. Today, more than ever, teachers and students need to be given the time and room to learn and let that information “click” home.

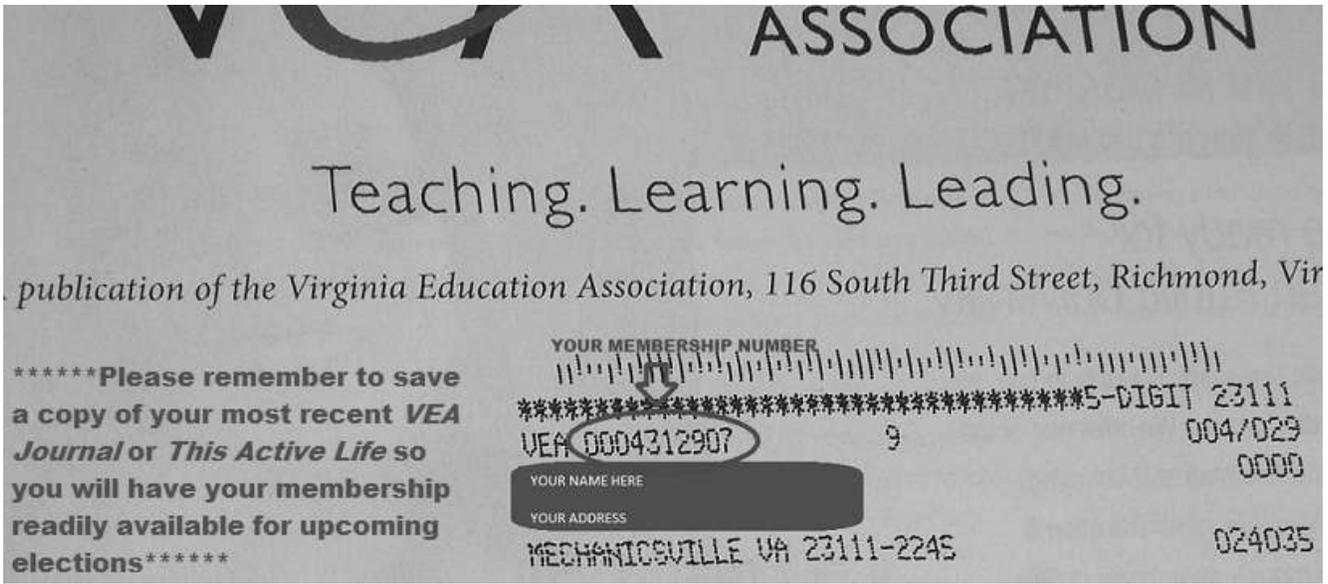
P.S. If you are available as a fourth for a tennis match, be sure to let Debbie know.

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VEA-R President’s Corner

Pat Kennedy

Greetings to all of you! This fall has been active for the VEA-R members and your officers. Four regional workshops were held in the cities of Hampton and Collinsville, Chesterfield County, and at Fort Belvoir. They were all well attended, well presented, and enjoyable. Thanks to the council members in those areas for all your hard work.



Many of you attended a pre-legislative meeting on the bills in the upcoming legislature session that will affect education, educators, and VRS. You can stay up to date on these bills as a VEA cyber lobbyist at <http://www.veanea.org/home/521.htm>. The VEA-R Lobby Day is January 24, 2013. We will meet at the General Assembly building at 8:30 am for a briefing and then go to talk to your representatives. If you can't come on that day, then January 28, 2013 is the VEA Lobby Day. Check the Facebook page for details, closer to those dates.

I hope you all have a happy holiday season in 2012 and are looking forward to 2013.

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**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
VEA-RETIRED ELECTIONS**

VEA-R will be electing a secretary-treasurer, council

members for representation on the VEA-R board, and representatives to the VEA and NEA Delegate Assemblies. The secretary/treasurer and council members are elected for two years starting August 1, 2013 to July 31, 2015. Council members will be representing odd numbered congressional districts. VEA-R will also elect a representative for the remaining one year term of congressional district 2.

Delegates to the VEA and NEA Representative Assemblies will also be on the ballot. The VEA Representative Assembly will be in Hampton, VA on April 11-13, 2013. The NEA Assembly will be held in Atlanta, GA on July 1-6, 2013.

Petitions for all seats and self-nomination forms for the delegate seats are available

on-line at www.veanea.org or contact Barbara Rackley at VEA, by phone 1-800-552-9554, or e-mail brackley@veanea.org. All petitions and self-nomination forms must be returned or postmarked to VEA no later than January 10, 2013.

Elections will be held January 17-24, 2013. To vote you may choose between voting electronically or by paper ballot. To vote electronically, you may use any type of electronic device that will connect to the internet (computer, iPhone, iPad, etc.).

To vote:

- Go to www.veanea.org
- Click on the "election central" link located midway on the right hand side of the homepage.
- Click on the link to our secure elections vendor, Election America.

- Enter your name as it appears on your VEA membership card or on the back cover of VEA/NEA publications, such as *VEA Journal* or *This Active Life*.
- Enter your membership number from card or back of publication. (As shown in picture, above, your membership number starts with "000" followed by 7 digits.)
- Click enter and vote.
- Click on submit, and you are done.

To vote by paper ballot contact Barbara Rackley at VEA, by phone 1-800-552-9554, or e-mail brackley@veanea.org. Please request paper ballots no later than December 31st, 2012 to ensure adequate mailing and return time as ballots must be returned, not just postmarked, by January 24th, 2013 to be counted.

Candidates will be notified by e-mail, phone, and letter. Results will also be posted on the VEA-R Facebook page. Housing forms for delegates will be included with the letter confirmation and must be returned to VEA by February 7, 2013.

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Review of the VEA-R Regional Meetings

Four VEA-R Regional Retirement Meetings were recently held across the Commonwealth in the

Tidewater, Central, NoVA, and Piedmont regions. Brief highlights from the organizers of these fine events:

Nancy Brooks, District 1 Council member and meeting co-chair (with Sheila Rogers)

Attendance: 21
Location: Hampton
Presentation: "Future of VRS and Public Education" by VEA's Rob Jones

Our president, Pat Kennedy, updated members on news from our state organization and upcoming VEA-R elections. Members supported the VPAC initiative for the 2014 election, and everyone attending received travel hangers labeled "Don't Be Hung Out to Dry" with instructions on how to become a cyber lobbyist.

Barbara Mann, District 7 Council member and meeting chair

Attendance: 26
Location: Chesterfield
Presentation: "Future of VRS and Public Education" by VEA's Rob Jones; "Social Networking, Twitter, cloud computing and Dropbox" by Sarah Anzelmo-Steele

Attendance was boosted by VEA-R's presence on Facebook. Pat Kennedy not only brought and prepared the buffet lunch; she also gave the latest information on the VEA and VEA-R elections.

Jim Amaral, District 10 Council member and meeting chair

Attendance: 22
Location: Fort Belvoir Officers Club
Presentation: "Identity Theft and lost money" by Virginia Treasury

In addition to getting the latest statewide news from VEA-R President Pat Kennedy, attendees learned about medical identity theft and what to do if they become a victim. Also, with the help of Virginia Treasury representatives, attendees found more than \$500 in "lost money" being held by the Commonwealth and were given instructions and forms needed to recover the money.

Katherine Hairston, District 5 Council member and meeting chair

Attendance: 21
Location: Collinsville
Presentation: "Future of VRS and Public Education" by VEA's Rob Jones

Pat Kennedy informed us on the upcoming VEA and NEA election process and other activities around the state. All enjoyed a buffet luncheon prepared by the staff at the Quality Inn.

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"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."
 -C.S. Lewis