

District Director's Report

As I write this on Veteran's Day, I am reminded that today we honor the Veterans among educators and our families for their service. It's really special in my area, for the Blue Angels are flying their Homecoming Show. What a way to make Veterans feel special!

Fall Leadership Workshop:

The Bay unit hosted an excellent Fall Leadership Workshop October 2, led by Chair Patti Jo Johnson, President Sue Dixon, and District Membership Chair Thelma Bruce. Grace Presbyterian Church in Panama City was an ideal site, with lots of meeting rooms, a delicious breakfast and lunch, and the best entertainment: choreographed songs by the four year old pre-schoolers. The theme was a Garden Party Celebration of our growth, and each of the 50 attendees went home with a teacup full of goodies. Attendance was down from last year, and we blame Hurricane Irma for that. All units were represented, each of which contributed in their own ways to the success of the workshop. Thanks to all involved.

State President Roger Cuevas spoke about membership and volunteerism, as well as the importance of education in Florida. President-Elect Beverly Kelley stressed the necessity of communication in all levels of FREA. Bay County Sheriff's Investigator Paul Vecker shared much useful information about scams, particularly those aimed at seniors. Rick Bowes of Florida Retirement Advisors has a new type of insurance/long term care/investment plan and advised us that changes are coming in Medicare. Trustee Pam Schwartz spoke about FREA scholarships and held her usual fanatastic fundraiser taking in an impressive \$2270 for FREF.

The focus of the workshop was for the various committees to come up with ideas to increase and maintain membership. The breakout sessions were led by District Membership Chair Thelma Bruce, Membership; District Legislative Chair Ed Stanford Legislative; and District Volunteer Chair Sally Fay and State/District Chair Carolyn McLaughlin, Volunteerism/Information Services. Each section reported back to the group as a whole. Unit presidents were given the awards earned by each unit, to present to their members back home.

Latest News:

Last week I attended the FREA Executive Board Meeting in Ocala, my second as State Secretary. Lots is going on!

The new Bulletin is in the mail and is available to read/print at the FREA.org website. Be sure to print it at 70% size.

During this month our state staff is moving to a smaller office in the same building. The address will not change, but we will save a lot on the rent.

Libby Brut, our Database Administrator for the past 29 years recently retired, leaving Executive Secretary Barbara Williams and Anne Fagan, who does IT/Graphics/Marketing to run our business and manage the move. Barbara has been conducting interviews and Diane Lynch will soon join the team.

Next year District 1 will (finally) rotate to the second week of Fall Workshops, so our date will be October 8. That will give us more time to sign up members to attend.

Travel opportunities are in the works.

Membership: Treasurer Marie Grein reports that we exceeded our target number of 8,000 members statewide. We continue to need to add new members. Each of us should strive to sign up at least one new member. Ideas are to recruit from school personnel other than teachers, to invite retirees from other states, and to suggest that family and active educators join as associates so that they can profit from our benefits.

Volunteer Services: Please jot down your volunteer hours. We know you are volunteering, but only a small proportion of us are turning them in. Count the times you give a senior citizen a ride (maybe your best friend—it counts), bring a meal to someone who is sick, volunteer at a school or hospital, even the time you spend driving to volunteer. We report volunteer hours by the calendar year now, so your annual report is due at the end of the year.

New book plates for use in the Margaret Poppell project are in. Order them from Anne@frea.org. More than 4000 books were donated.

Forms: Be sure to use current forms (2016 or newer) for all reports. They are in the President's Handbook and on the frea.org website.

Legislative: Our Legislative Committee will be meeting with Legislators in Tallahassee January 15 and 16. Share your concerns with your unit and district chairs, so they can pass them along to our Senators and Representatives. Watch for emails updating us on bills. Last session was disappointing for teachers and public education.

Note: AARP members get NRTA membership free. We are affiliated with but not part of NRTA. Numbers count, so mention in emails and calls that you belong to NRTA as well as FREA. If you are a member of AARP, ask to have NRTA printed on your membership card. Then you will get a publication and additional benefits.

FREA State Convention in Altamonte Springs May 23-25

This year's convention returns to the Hilton, Altamonte Springs, May 23-25. Join us for a little business and a lot of fun! FREF is planning a special evening of entertainment.

FREF: Be sure to turn in Scholarship Applications for State Scholarships and for Practicing Educator Grants. There is also assistance available for retirees in distress.

Election: We need to elect a new District 1 Director. I am reaching term limits and need a nominee by December. Please volunteer or suggest a great future director.

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