

The Publication Dedicated to Retired Florida Educators & School Personnel



# FREA BULLETIN

Volume 52, Issue 1  
Spring 2025



**Harriett Jenkins**  
FREA President

Dear Members,

As we welcome the beautiful season of spring, it's a **perfect time to reflect on our past** successes and **look forward** to the exciting events and initiatives ahead. Your dedication and passion continue to drive the Florida Retired Educators Association (FREA) higher and higher.

**Thank You for Your Efforts** I am kicking things off with immense gratitude. **Thank you** to everyone who turned our four Regional Symposiums into a soaring success! Your passion and hard work lit up each event, and we couldn't have done it without every single one of you. Dive into this bulletin to catch the electrifying photos that capture our journey. Huge shoutout

to the Southern, Western, Eastern, and Northern Regions for absolutely knocking it out of the park. **Teamwork didn't just make the dream work—it made it a reality!**

Let's carry this incredible momentum forward and continue to reach new heights together.

**S.W.O.T.: (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis Action Plan** We are eagerly looking forward to hearing about the progress on each local Unit's S.W.O.T. Analysis Action Plan. Your insights and strategies are crucial in helping us grow and improve our association.

**Cupid Crew Community Participation:** A special thank you to Anne Fagan and Cecelia Solomon, our FREA Cupid Crew Liaisons, AARP's Wish of a Lifetime, and all the great local Unit members for their enthusiastic participation in Cupid Crew. Your involvement in the community has made a significant impact, and we appreciate your continued support. Enclosed in this spring bulletin are beautiful Cupid Crew community visitation moments captured and shared by our dedicated FREA leaders. (Continues on page 4)

**Become an FREA Member today!**  
**Click here for 6 Reasons to Join!**

**Register now for FREA Convention 2025**  
**Planning Timeline is on page 14. Full Convention info:**  
[www.frea.org/convention](http://www.frea.org/convention)

FREA Executive Committee	
President	Harriett Jenkins St. Lucie CREA HarriettMJenkins@aol.com
President-Elect	Carrie Frye Seminole CREA cfrye@att.net
State Director	Linda Stephens Polk II REA lindawest0552@icloud.com
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Executive Committee Rep. 1-5	Donna Harper harper2paint@gmail.com
Executive Committee Rep. 6-10	Pat Watkins patdanwat@msn.com
Ex-Oficio	
FREA Executive Director/ Newsletter Editor	Anne Fagan anne@frea.org

FREA Calendar	
March 17	FREF Scholarship Meeting
March 22-24	FREA Legislative Days
May 16-26	FREA Office Closed for Convention/ Memorial Day
May 19-22	FREA Convention
May 20 1:30 PM	Convention Opening General Session
May 22 11:00 AM	Convention Closing Session
June 2-6	Office Closed
June 30	End of Fiscal Year
June 30-July 4	Office Closed
For more calendars <a href="#">Please click Here</a>	





**Linda Edson**  
FREA State Legislative  
Chair

# FREA... ...Keeping an Eagle Eye on Your Pension!



## Pensionomics 2025: See How Protecting Your Pension Protects Florida's Economic Future.

Share this information with your legislators. Click here to download from [www.frea.org/legislative](http://www.frea.org/legislative).



NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON  
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### Pensionomics 2025:

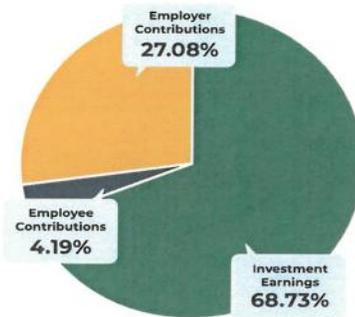
*Measuring the Economic Impact of DB Pension Expenditures*

#### Overview

Expenditures made by retirees of state and local government provide a steady economic stimulus to Florida communities and the state economy. In 2022, 565,788 residents of Florida received a total of \$14.9 billion in pension benefits from state and local pension plans.

The average pension benefit received was \$2,197 per month or \$26,358 per year. These modest benefits provide retired teachers, public safety personnel, and others who served the public during their working careers income to meet basic needs in retirement.

Between 1993 and 2022, 27.08% of Florida's pension fund receipts came from employer contributions, 4.19% from employee contributions, and 68.73% from investment earnings.\* Earnings on investments and employee contributions—not taxpayer based contributions—have historically made up the bulk of pension fund receipts.



#### Impact on Jobs and Incomes

Retiree expenditures stemming from state and local pension plan benefits supported 111,905 jobs in the state. The total income to state residents supported by pension expenditures was \$6.2 billion.

To put these employment impacts in perspective, in 2022 Florida's unemployment rate was 3.0%. The fact that DB pension expenditures supported 111,905 jobs is significant, as it represents 1.0 percentage points in Florida's labor force.

#### Economic Impact

State and local pension funds in Florida and other states paid a total of \$14.9 billion in benefits to Florida residents in 2022. Retirees' expenditures from these benefits supported a total of \$21.0 billion in total economic output in the state, and \$12.1 billion in value added in the state.

#### Impact on Tax Revenues

State and local pension payments made to Florida residents supported a total of \$3.0 billion in revenue to federal, state, and local governments. Taxes paid by retirees and beneficiaries directly out of pension payments totaled \$142.7 million. Taxes attributable to pension expenditures in the local economy accounted for \$2.9 billion in tax revenue.

Federal Tax	\$1.9 billion
State/Local Tax	\$1.2 billion
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3.0 billion</b>

Editor: Totals may not add up, see explanation on full report linked above.

## FLORIDA

### Key Findings

Benefits paid by state and local pension plans support a significant amount of economic activity in the state of Florida.

Pension benefits received by retirees are spent in the local community. This spending ripples through the economy, as one person's spending becomes another person's income, creating a multiplier effect.

In 2022, expenditures stemming from state and local pensions supported...

111,905 jobs that paid \$6.2 billion in wages and salaries

\$21.0 billion in total economic output

\$3.0 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenues

... in the state of Florida.

Each dollar paid out in pension benefits supported \$1.41 in total economic activity in Florida.

Each dollar "invested" by Florida taxpayers in these pension plans supported \$5.19 in total economic activity in the state.



**Cecelia Solomon**  
FREA Information  
Services Chair



## BY THE NUMBERS

### Cupid Crew Report 2025!



**Anne Fagan**  
FREA Executive  
Director

**Cupid Crew 2025 was a HUGE success for FREA. 16 units were selected, up from 9 in our first attempt last year. (For those Units not selected, fear not. The Organizers are working on everyone being able to participate next year.) The FREA members that participated in Wish of a Lifetime's Cupid Crew project delivered almost 4,000 roses to Seniors in Florida! Here, in their own words, are the Group Leader's comments for each Unit that was able to participate.**

#### **11 - Donna Harper, President, Escambia REA, District 1 Director—below**

For a second year, Escambia REA members volunteered to prepare and deliver 150 roses for some of the many amazing seniors we have in our communities. A huge shout out for our Team chair, Bonnie Justice.



Thank you to our delivery team and the Art students of A. K. Suter for creating the wonderful heartfelt cards. With all the happiness we shared, we were the ones truly blessed.

#### **12 – Edwinna Williams, Santa Rosa County REA—left**

We enjoyed our day presenting 350 roses along with cards to patients at various facilities. We appreciate AARP for their "Make a Wish" program to honor seniors in our county. Spreading joy and smiles, letting seniors know we value each and everyone. A sweet gratitude to every retired educator working united to provide our residents a positive experience and memory.



#### **26—Jan Bennett, Leon-Wakulla Retired Educators Cupid's Crew—right**

Forty Sharpies, fifty card-writers, fifteen flower volunteers, three hundred-fifty roses, two hours of wrapping, tying, and adding cards, one magical day of delivery.





**Want To Learn More Details About the  
Symposiums, S.W.O.T., and the 2025 Convention?  
Click on the Images to see Photos, Details, and  
Much More on the Website!**



(Continued from page 1 President's letter)

**FREA 2025 Convention** The FREA Convention is our cornerstone event that unites members from across the state, providing opportunities for professional growth, networking, and collective advocacy. Mark your calendars for the FREA 2025 Convention, taking place in the beautiful city of St. Augustine from May 20-22, 2025, at the World Golf Village Renaissance Resort. The room rate is only \$139.00 per night. The General Session of the convention will kick off on Tuesday. You can register now online at [www.frea.org](http://www.frea.org) to access all the details about Convention 2025. **This year's theme is: "Fire and Ice: Lighting the Way, Freezing the Moment"**

Suggested attire colors:

**Tuesday:** Wear RED

**Wednesday:** Wear WHITE

**Wednesday Evening Gala:** Wear RED, WHITE OR BLUE  
(dressy, semi-formal, formal attire)

**Thursday:** Wear BLUE

**Convention 2025 Keynote Speaker:** We are thrilled to announce that our keynote speaker for the 2025 Convention is Dr. William J. Bennett, MD, PhD, Pathologist, Global Head, Revolution Medical Director, Assistant Professor and Clinical Researcher at George Washington University School of Medicine. Dr. Bennett's topic will be "Embrace Your Health, Enhance Your Retirement." This promises to be an enlightening and inspiring session that you won't want to miss. Plan now to ask your health and wellness questions to enhance your retirement during the Q & A portion of this presentation.

**Convention 2025 Award** To encourage widespread participation, FREA is proud to introduce an award recognizing the unit in each district that sends the **highest percentage** of its members to the convention. The Convention Award Recognizes Effort and Engagement, Not Proximity. FREA units can plan their trips, whether by organizing carpools, securing group hotel lodging, or unit fundraisers to assist with meals and travel. This Award encourages healthy statewide participation by recognizing commitment, teamwork, and leadership. By encouraging every unit to take an active role in Convention attendance, we are reinforcing our collective strength and *Transforming Vision into Reality* for ALL Retired Educators in Florida.

**Thank you** for being an active part of the FREA community. We are seizing each moment to strengthen our bonds, celebrate our achievements, and envision a future filled with hope and possibility. Let's continue to work together on purpose while making a positive difference in the lives of **retired educators across Florida**. Looking forward to seeing you soon.

With warmest regards,

*Harriett,*

Harriett M. Jenkins, President

*"The time is always right to do what is right."*

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Our Convention Keynote Speaker  
"Embrace Your Health,  
Enhance Your Retirement"**

**Dr. William J Bennett, M.D., Ph.D.**

Dr. William Bennett is a clinical and pharmaceutical science professional, with areas of focus in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC), non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) and breast cancer. He works within the drug development industry, specifically medical affairs, in order to advance the 'best in class' treatment for a variety of cancers. His hope is that one day, they as an industry will develop novel therapies and new interventions to reduce health disparities.



Dr. William J Bennett, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Bennett is currently a Medical Scientist as well as Assistant Professor of Clinical Research at The George Washington University School of Medicine. His areas of specialty are Clinical Research, where he received his training in both Surgical and Anatomical Pathology.

Dr. Bennett also serves as a Member of Board at Piedmont Healthcare Institutional Review Board, and maintains active membership with the:

American Society of Minority Transplant Health Related Professionals (ASMTHP)

American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS)

International Society of Biological Environmental Repository (ISBER)

American Association of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)

American Association of Clinical Research (AACR)

Dr. Bennett obtained his undergraduate degree from Florida A&M University; his Master's and MD Degree from the George Washington University; and his PhD from Walden University.

Dr. Bennett proudly serves as Member of Board of Directors of Sisters By Choice, a non-profit organization that provide medical care to patients who suffers from breast cancer. He's also one of the top financial supports to the Charles H. Wesley Education Foundation, a non-profit organization that provides mentorship and scholarships to young men going to college.

Dr. Bennett shares a passion for his work in clinical research, and the advancement of educational opportunities for minorities. He is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., where he volunteers with at risk communities, including the homeless and poor, and also mentors young men who are on the verge of entering high school and college.

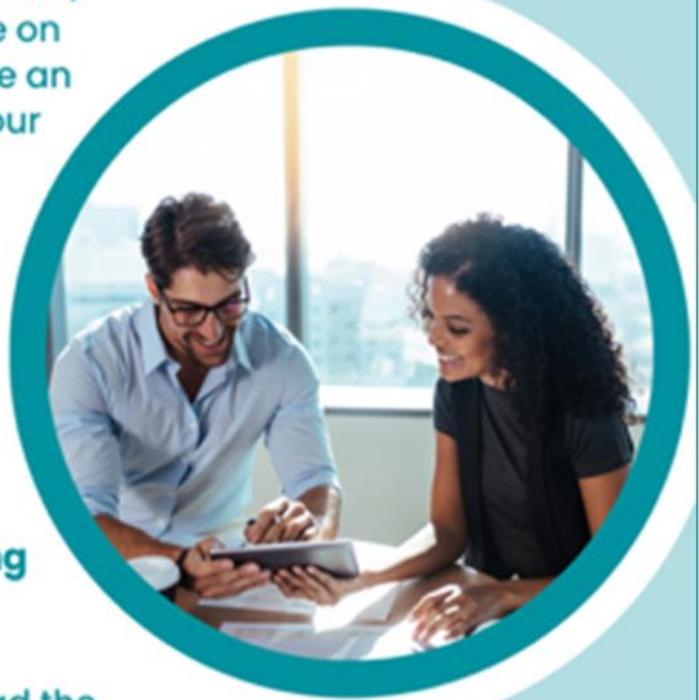
# FLORIDA EDUCATORS NOW HIRING

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## !!!!!! Notice to All Members !!!!!

FREA is going digital. This Bulletin will be the last FREA Bulletin that is hard-mailed to all FREA members. From now on, if you have an email on file with us, you will only receive the FREA Bulletin in your email inbox. (You may request a hard copy from the Office.)

**For those members with no email, you will still receive a hard copy in your mailbox.**

### FREA SPRING 2025 Membership Moment

#### DID YOU KNOW?

**Growing your Unit membership is not just the job of your Unit Membership Chair.**

Each member can contribute by reaching out to a friend, a family member, a current member or even a community organization. You are the key to *Unit Growth*. In this age of email and social media the personal touch is what often makes your unit special and inviting. Consider what keeps you involved with FREA and your unit. How can you make a difference?

#### Recruit-Retain-Reclaim

1. Call and ask a unit member that you haven't seen at an event in a while just to say "Hi, how are you doing". Many of our members may need transportation or just a friendly voice.
2. Make unit "Touch Cards" or business cards to give to people you run into at the grocery store. *Be sure to always have a few in your purse or pocket.*
3. Invite your local School Board members to join FREA. Go to a board meeting and hand them each an application and/or a Recruitment Packet.



**Jody Scruggs**  
FREA Membership  
Chair

[granjo55@aol.com](mailto:granjo55@aol.com)

#### 2025-2026 Dues

- \$45 for FREA State dues, plus Local Unit dues if you are a member of a local Unit.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> dues invoice will be sent out through email by FREA in early June. Those members without email will receive them in regular mail.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> dues notice is sent to all unpaid members in Sept by regular mail. Please help FREA save postage and pay your dues before June 1, or if you are late, before September 1.
- Online renewals can be paid any time after March 1.
- Automatic renewals: If you have them, will post on your credit card on your annual anniversary date.

**Thank you to all of our FREA members for supporting the FREA Mission!**



(By the Numbers continued from page 3)

**34 - Dorothy Bradley—Suwannee/Lafayette REA—right**

We had ten crews with a total of thirty Cupid Crew members delivering 300 roses to six facilities and the homebound. It was a wonderful experience to see the excitement on the faces of the recipients.

**61 - Mary Knight, Hernando CREA—left**

Being in the Cupid Crew was a wonderful experience this year. The flowers were delivered in a timely manner. It was great to be part of such a worthwhile Valentine event. I look forward to next year!





**62 - Jean Imperatore, Pasco REA Cupid Crew Leader—right**

This was our first year and we started small with 200 roses delivered by our five-member team. However, the support of our unit was incredible. We had letter writers, bucket donors, and loads of encouragement for this project. Our team was humbled by the loving gratitude from the rose recipients.



**64N - Nancy Whitlock—North Pinellas REA—below**

Our January meeting was

enriched by the writing and decorating of Valentines. In less than two hours, 28 members had composed 175 valentine cards with heartfelt messages and uplifting verses.

125 roses were delivered on February 11th, and they were breathtaking. On February 12th the stems were inserted into water vials and pink flower sleeves. A Valentine ornament was added along with a bow, and our floral gifts were ready for delivery the next day to two senior living centers.



When we arrived at the first home, we were met at the door by a welcoming committee of residents who were beyond excited to assist with the delivery festivities. At the second home, the mostly bedbound residents also received cheery visits, beautiful roses, and valentine cards. They could not have been more pleased. The staff at both homes were thrilled for their residents, and a good time was had by all. Thank you! for the opportunity to participate in such a lovely and heartwarming event! The North Pinellas County Association would love to participate again next year. Many thanks from all.

**Lisa Schuerholz-Winters, Sarasota REA—right**

**72 - Sarasota CREA added Roses to the Meals on Wheels organization along with 100 homemade cards. The cards were members as well as their**

**grandchildren. We combined our efforts with another teachers' organization that provided cookies. In the end, over 200 Meals on Wheels recipients received some type of Valentine's gift. (continued on page 13)**





## KEEP LIVING YOUR WAY.

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Florida Retired Educators Association



## YOUR FREA MEMBERSHIP UNLOCKS DISCOUNTS & SAVINGS

FREA is working harder than ever to support its members and to provide new and innovative ways to enhance your membership. Part of this initiative is providing discounts and benefits to promote physical and financial health for members in Florida!

My top priority is serving member's needs and fostering the growth of FREA. As AMBA continues to support FREA through our partnership, I eagerly anticipate meeting more of our valued members.

If you have any questions about your benefits or would like AMBA to be part of your next event, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Lexie Mowery*



**Lexie Mowery**  
AVP of Operations for  
East Market

Medicare Alphabet Soup Getting You Down?

Contact me to help you with a benefits question, or to have Your Local AMBA Representative contact you. [Lexie.Mowery@amba.info](mailto:Lexie.Mowery@amba.info) or (561)722-1239



Karla Brogdon  
FREF Chair

# Greetings from FREF!



## Can you use some extra cash?

### Extravaganza Tickets—Get 'Em While They're **Hot!**

\$100—\$600 can be yours. For just \$10, you earn two chances to win the following cash prizes:



\$500 - 1st Prize

\$300—2nd Prize

\$200—3rd Prize

\$100 Cash Prize to a winner in each FREA District

Between now and May 2nd, you can buy tickets through your local units. Get your tickets now, no tickets sold after May 2.



**NO Extravaganza Tickets will be sold at Convention. Make sure you purchase them in your units.**

## Convention Baskets and Basket Alternatives

As you know, one of our main FREF scholarship fundraisers is our basket room at convention. Our theme for baskets this year is “Anything Goes! However, offering alternatives to basket donations has been very successful for the last two conventions. Therefore, we are offering these alternatives again this year.

As much as I love seeing the creativity in the unit baskets, the ultimate goal is to not only raise money for scholarships but to make it more convenient for units to participate. For those who still wish to bring baskets, please do so. Here are the alternatives:

1. **Your unit can send FREA** a check (payable to FREF) for at least \$50. I will make a display for your \$50 & assign a number (just like baskets), and whoever wins your item number will get \$50 cash.
2. Your unit may wish to donate a group of gift cards (with a total of at least \$50 in value). You can either arrange those in a display and **bring them with you or send them to FREF at the FREA Office** and we will make a display. Each Unit's donated gift card(s) will be assigned a number and awarded just like the baskets.
3. Your unit may wish to donate \$50 worth of Lottery scratch-offs. You can either arrange those in a display and **bring them with you or send them to FREF at the FREA Office** and we will make a display. Each Unit's group of lottery tickets will be assigned a number and awarded just like the baskets.
4. Give your unit basket to a neighboring unit member who will be driving up.

Questions? Concerns? Please do not hesitate to contact me at (941) 722-4692 or at [brogdon1@msn.com](mailto:brogdon1@msn.com).



### Build a “They Continue to Care” Legacy for your departed loved one.

When loved ones pass, family members may donate to FREF in their memory. i.e. Include in obituary, “In lieu of flowers, please donate to FREF”.

Your loved one's legacy will live on in the Foundation.

## FREA District Director Nominees for 2025



**Deb Gornoski—District 3 Nominee:** Deb retired from Suwannee County Middle School where she started as a substitute teacher in 1974. Deb’s educational background is an AA degree from Polk State University and a BA in Elementary Education from University of South Florida. She became a paraprofessional in 1975 and started teaching in 1977. Except for a few months off here and there to have her children, Deb continued to teach various subjects in the public schools and two private schools. Not in historical order, she taught all academic subjects in first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. In the early 90s, she moved with the sixth grade to middle school, teaching there for almost half of her career, much of it in social studies however, there were years that she also taught language arts. Her final public school position was seventh grade economics. Deb was the team leader at middle school and administrative assistant at a private school for the last two years of her career. She served as President of the Suwannee/Lafayette CREA as president for four years. Due to her husband’s ill health, she could not attend state FREA activities. She has served decades in various aspects of ministry. Four years ago, Deb started an outreach ministry at a strip club, visiting once a month with gifts and Gospel of John booklets for the ladies. She is the North Florida Regional Director of the Christian Women Connection and an author and public speaker. Deb is a widow and has three sons, three daughters-in-law, and ten grandchildren.

**Deb’s Favorite Quote:** Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me." John 14:6



**Emily Berry—District 6 Nominee:** Emily is nominated for her second term as District 6 Director. Retired from Hernando County School District. She graduated from University of Wisconsin, Madison. Emily taught Jr. High Civics, Second grade, Math lab instructor K-5, and retired as a Testing coordinator, Leadership team member, and Data analysis specialist. Emily was the founding member of the Hernando County REA, where she served as President for four years, Nomination chair and FREF chair. Emily is married and has 1 child. "Over my career, I have had the opportunity to work with many wonderful people and in very interesting positions. I love my retirement and I look forward to meeting new people. I like to keep things simple. Thank you for this opportunity to learn and serve."



**Sheila King—District 8 Nominee:** Sheila is nominated for her first term as the District 8 Director, and has served since July of 2024 as the appointed District 8 Director. She received her BA in Music from Michigan State, and did post-grad work at the Universities of: Memphis, South Florida, and Western Carolina. Sheila retired as the Apollo Elementary School Music Teacher in the Brevard school system after teaching 45 years in various places: College Station, Tx; Laramie, WY; Houston, TX; Gaithersburg, MD; and Titusville, FL. Her types of musical teachings were also varied: Choral, Elementary Music, Levels I,II,III, Master Class; and World Music Drumming. Sheila has been active in the W. Brevard FREA Unit, serving as: Scholarship Chair, Vice President, and President, in addition to attending Symposiums and serving as a Delegate for multiple Conventions. In addition to teaching music in schools, Sheila has been a church organist, pianist, and Choir director for 60 years. She is also a Past President and member of the Florida Music Educators Association and was voted Brevard County Teacher of the Year in 2004. **Sheila’s Favorite Quote:** "Always leave it better than you found it."



**Bonita Williams—District 9 Nominee:** Bonita is nominated for her 2nd term as the District 9 Director. "Since graduating from Florida A&M University in 1974, I have been a distinguished and award-winning educator and coach in Saint Lucie County, serving as Dean of Students at Fort Pierce Central High School for 35 years, doubling as Head Coach of the Track and Cheerleader teams. I'm an active philanthropist in the Fort Pierce community with youth groups and other service organizations, receiving numerous honors for committed volunteer work. I'm a life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., with 50 years of proud dedicated service as well as the President of the St. Lucie County FAMU Alumni Chapter. I also have the esteemed pleasure of serving as an Associate Charter member of Jack & Jill of America Treasure Coast Chapter."



**Sue Colton—District 10 Nominee:** Sue is nominated for her second term as District 10 Director. Sue received her BA in Elementary Education, M.Ed. Early Childhood Education and Administration/Supervision (the University of Florida and Florida Atlantic University). She taught: Elementary Pre-K-5; Reading Specialist. She served as Assistant Principal; Principal, Forest Hills Elementary; Chairperson, Broward County Elementary School Principals; Planned/Opened a new Entrepreneurial School, Parkside Elementary Pre-K-6, as Principal in 2000; Served as Director of Leadership Development for three years and received a \$1.6 million U.S. Department of Education Leadership Grant to redesign district leadership continuum to meet new State Leadership Standards. Sue was serving as the Proud Principal of Parkside Elementary at the time of her retirement. In BCREA she served as: the 2021-2023 President; President-Elect/Vice President; Legislative Chair. FREA State activities and offices held: FREA Legislative Team, District 10; Hosted District 10 Leadership

Symposium, 2022; Chair of the Memorial Service FREA State Convention, 2023. Sue is a published author and has received numerous awards: 1999 Florida State Commissioner’s Principal Award for Outstanding Leadership; 2000 Florida’s National Distinguished Principal (U.S.D.O.E. and NAESP); "Awesome Alto" Broward County Elementary Singing Principals; 2013 Broward Education Foundation Inaugural Distinguished Alumni Hall-of-Fame Award; 2018 Published Author: Principal’s Passion: A Quest for Quality Public Education; 2019 Appointed to Broward Education Foundation Board of Directors.

**A quote from Sue’s book:** "Seek first to understand, and then to be understood." Stephen Covey

## FREF Trustee Nominees for 2025



**Bonnie Justice—Trustee Nominee for District 1—2nd Term** Bonnie is nominated for her 2nd Term as an FREF Trustee. Bonnie started her higher education goals in 1975 at the University of Western Florida, and then continued on to her Masters at the University of Florida until her daughters Lottie and Lorrie were born. Her degree is in SLD K-12, and Elementary Ed 1-8 and she taught for 34 years in several counties: Suwannee, Escambia, and Santa

Rosa. (Ed Note: I do not know what the acronyms mean, so they are as written, presuming that FREA members will know because this is your vernacular. Please address all questions to Bonnie.) Her subjects were: SLD Resource, self-contained VE, and she was the "North End Unit" for EH/VE with emphasis on Adjudicated Felons and students with Emotional/Behavioral Issues. All academics. She retired as the Department Chair and ESE Teacher. Bonnie is a member of Santa Rosa CREA, is very active in her Unit, and has served as: Secretary, Historian, and Social Chair. She assists with luncheon set-up and clean-up, food drives, judging the 5th Grade Essay Contest, Scholarship Auction, Plant Sale, and many other tasks. For FREA, she has been several times: the "3rd set of hands" that have been needed at Convention, plus being a reader for the Memorial Service, and serving as a Host upon the request of State VS Chair Harriett Jenkins. In Bonnie's words: "Because I did not feel worthy to be an educator, to stand among the ranks of those for whom I still hold the utmost respect, I became a geology major. I love the earth and its breathtaking splendor! Then, while on a glacier-hiking field trip in Canada, I had a stunning and unmistakable revelation to become a teacher. My desire was to work with the "underdogs" and I got my wish! I had an amazingly blessed career that enriched my life. I simply cannot imagine having done anything else!"

**Gil Gamache—Trustee Nominee for District 2—3rd Term** Gil is nominated for his 3rd term as the Trustee for District 2.

February 12, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Gilles Gamache has been an active member and past President of the Leon Wakulla Retired Educators Association since September 2013.

He retired after 26 years of service, 12 in Broward County as a classroom teacher of French, Spanish and German at Dillard High School and 14 years teaching French and Spanish in Leon County at Chiles High School.

A true teacher advocate, Gilles served on numerous committees both with the local Broward County Classroom Teachers Association and the Florida Education Association and served as Vice President of the Broward CTA from 1973 to 1975.

He served as a University Supervisor at Florida State University during the Spring Term of 2017 charged with observing and evaluating graduating seniors who were finishing their last year before entering the classroom as new educators.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Gilles has been a respected travel counselor, holding this second duty from the first week he started at Dillard in 1969. He and his wife Joanne owned and operated Transit Travel in Pompano Beach and also have owned and operated Sun World Travel, Inc. in Tallahassee since 1981. With the help of an excellent staff of travel counselors over the years, Sun World is now the oldest and largest travel agency in Tallahassee.

With his excellent performance both in and out of the classroom and his experience operating a successful business enterprise, Gilles would be an asset to the FREA Board of Trustees.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Connie Beaudoin-Tate  
FREA District 2 Director  
Past President Leon Wakulla Retired Educators Association



**Carson Ealy, Jr.— Trustee Nominee For District 3—3rd Term**

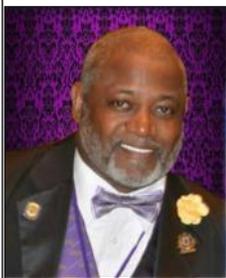
Carson is nominated for his 3rd term as the Trustee for District 3. Carson retired from Gadsden County School District Quincy, Florida with 38.5 years of teaching experience in Mathematics, Physics and Reading. Carson earned both his Bachelor of Science, and his Master of Science Degrees from Florida A&M University. He served as the Science Department Chair teaching Biology, Physics, and Reading – High School. He was FREA District 3 Director and is the Gadsden CREA Treasurer, Chair of Volunteer Services and Information Services.

In 1996 and 1997, Carson was named the Gadsden County Teacher of the Year. He also worked as a Peer Reviewer-DOE, Florida League Teacher. NCATE/DOE Site Visiting Team for Stetson University-DeLand, Florida, and Gadsden County Coordinator of FAMU – NASA MASTAP Project

**Sandra Doughman—Trustee Nominee for District 4—2nd Term** Sandra started her education career once she finished raising her 2 children. For 20 years her subjects included: Elementary, ESE Inclusion, Middle School, District Reading Specialist, Intensive Reading and Language Arts: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th grades, ESE Inclusion, Drop Out Prevention: 4th Grade. When Sandra retired, she was teaching Intensive Reading and Language Arts for the 6th Grade. Sandra is a very active member of the Citrus CREA Unit and has served as: President, Vice President, Secretary, Membership Chair, and Newsletter Chair. She recently organized a thrilling CCREA project, promoting the Margaret Poppell Literacy For Life Program. "Our CCREA unit came together (joining with our local Education Foundation and Library Friends) and gathered books, sorted, labeled, and put the word out for teachers that books for their classroom libraries were available as well as teacher instructional materials." She also spearheaded a Membership Drive at the local Alzheimer's Walk plus other ideas in the works to promote membership. In Sandra's words: "For me, an unusual happening was after my youngest graduated high school, I didn't handle "Empty Nest" very well. Although I was working in and had a strong background in business (formerly an owner), it just wasn't satisfying and I was led to go into education. Having had my AA before marrying, I jumped into completing my Bachelor's in Education, Master's in Educational Leadership and National Board Certification. While doing the degrees, I traveled into a whole new realm of life: teaching!"



## FREF Trustee Nominees for 2025 –continued



### Harry B. Williams, Jr.—Trustee Nominee for District 9—2nd Term

Mr. Harry Belafonte Williams has been a servant of Saint Lucie County for over 55 years. His Service covers the entire realm of Family, Faith, Fraternity, and Community. He has been married to his wife Bonita for over 47 years and they have two children and three grandchildren. He retired from the profession of Education at Fort Pierce Central where he served as chairman of the Math department, team leader, selected as Teacher of the year three times, county zone finalist two times, News Tribune Coach of the year for Wrestling and Football, Treasure coast conference coach of the year, Youth group sponsors award, Omega man of the year three times, Saint Lucie county Distinguished Minority Educator of the year and Saint Lucie county Teacher of the year. He served as a Eucharistic Minister and a Minister of welcome at Saint Lucie Catholic church and a member of the Knights of Columbus. It is his service to his community

through his Fraternity that he enjoys the most. Serving as a sponsor for the Lamplighters youth group demands many hours of service. Adopt a road project, adopt a family project, feed the hungry, college tours, civil rights tours along with countless hours of mentoring not only the young men in the youth group but countless students as well as adults in his community.

His energy level is tireless as he has served the Florida Statewide Organization of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity as State chairman for several committees.

When he takes a deep breath, he then goes to the park and coaches Little league baseball and continues to Mentor the youth of Saint Lucie county. He continues to enlighten the educational opportunities of students by serving as the President of Saint Lucie County Retired Educators Association. He is a member of the first graduating class of Fort Pierce Central High School. He graduated from Florida A&M University with a BS Degree in Health, Physical Education and Recreation with Certifications in Math, Drivers Education and Naval ROTC and has been recognized as a 'Distinguished Alumni' in the category of "Community Service". He is a former Captain in the United States Marine Corp. Mr. Harry Belafonte Williams is a Golden Example of what Service is intended to be. **Harry's favorite quote: "To Serve Thee E'er Will Be Our Aim."**



**75 - Karen Owens, President, Charlotte County Retired Educators—right**

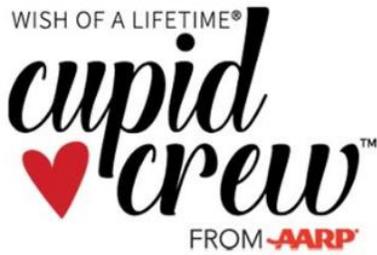
Our small Cupid Crew gathered on

the 13th to prep and address the cards. There were four of us. On the 14th, we delivered the roses to the Douglas T. Jacobson Veterans Nursing Home. We spent time with each veteran as we delivered and discussed their service. It was a wonderful experience. I found out afterward that one of the Crew members called another of our retired educators and told her how great the experience was—very positive comments. This was our first time doing the project, and we look forward to applying again.

**82 - Kerry McRea, Seminole CREA—Past Unit President and Carrie Frye, FREA President-Elect—right**

Hello from Seminole CREA!! We had a wonderful time distributing Valentine's Day smiles, cards and 250 roses!! What a wonderful community





truly worthwhile experience.

project!

**84 - Cheryl Stepp, Osceola CREA  
President - right**

Our small group in Osceola made a wonderful difference to residents in five assisted living facilities. We had a great time preparing and delivering the roses. I think we got as much love as we gave. A



**86N - Sheila King, District 8 Director  
and North Brevard REA President—  
left**

Members joined with 20 members from two Alpha Delta Kappa chapters to partner with AARP'S Wish of a Lifetime "Cupid Crew" campaign. We delivered 300 roses to the staff and residents at three Titusville nursing home facilities. Handmade Valentine's Day cards from students at a local elementary school included origami and crocheted hearts. Roses were unpacked, cut, inserted into water vials & cellophane sleeves, with cards tied with ribbons and ready for delivery. It was certainly a great day of

"LOVE"! We will do gladly do it again next year with even more LOVE!

**94 - Bonita Williams— District 9 Director  
- right.** St. Lucie County Retired Educators Association on the move again with Cupid Crew at Sandgate Gardens Rehab and Nursing Center for Valentine's Day.

**95 – Judith Walters, Martin CREA—  
below**

Members had a great time prepping the



roses for delivery. We had several meetings to make plans on how to proceed, so, when the 400 roses arrived, we were ready. We were able to meet at the Meals on Wheels area of our Senior Center. Our Cupid Crew quickly worked on trimming the roses, checking for any thorns and then placing the roses in water vials and tying a red ribbon with a valentine card to each rose.

We made quick work of the task while enjoying each other's company. Within a few hours our roses were ready to be delivered by the Meals on Wheels Crew to all our local shut ins who receive meals. All went smoothly and the recipients were delighted to know they were thought of. We are looking



<b>Monday, May 19</b>	
12:00 - 6:00	Registration
Various Times	Anything Goes Basket—Gathering Room
12:00 - 4:00	Trustees Meeting
3:00 - 4:00	Benefits Committee meeting
4:15 - 5:15	Executive Committee meeting
6:30 - 9:00	FREA Board of Directors Dinner Meeting
<b>Tuesday, May 20 - Set the World Ablaze Color of the Day—Red</b>	
8:00 - 4:00	Registration
9:00 - 12:00	District Director/State Chair Meeting
11:30 - 1:00	Past Presidents Council Lunch Meeting
1:00 - 3:15	Opening General Session 1 • 2:00—Keynote Speaker
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30—4:15	District Meetings (10)
4:15	Break
5:00 –6:30	Design Your Own Trophy Teambuilding Contest AMBA Welcome Reception
6:30 - 9:30	Dinner, Karaoke and Dancing—Award for Trophy Contest
<b>Wednesday, May 21—Chilling With Purpose Color of the Day—White</b>	
Breakfast on your own	
9:00 - 10:00	General Session 2
10:00 - 11:25	Break-out Sessions
11:25-11:35	Break
11:35	General Session Resumes • 5th Grade Essay Award • Volunteer Awards
12:00 - 1:25	Plated Lunch/Lunch on Your Own
1:40 - 2:15	Memorial Service—Doors close at 1:40 PM-no admittance after that time.
2:15	Relax, Recharge, Take a Break
5:30 - 6:30	Evening Reception
6:30 - 9:30	Dinner, Trivia Contest, and Dancing
<b>Thursday, May 22—Blueprints for the Future Color of the Day—Blue</b>	
Breakfast on your own	
8:45 - 9:15	Closing Session • Installation of Officers
9:15-10:00	• Awards • Prizes • FREF Extravaganza Drawing • Closing Remarks—Adjournment

## 2025 Convention Timeline

This timeline is for attendees to plan times of arrival and departure according to the functions they are attending. A fully detailed timeline with Breakout Session details, Keynote Speaker information, the below contests, and all other Convention Event details are on the website.

[www.frea.org/convention](http://www.frea.org/convention)



### 2025 Teambuilding Trophy Contest Get Your Creative On!

1. Each District has a table.
2. Each Unit brings all materials to make their trophy. (If spray painted, spray pieces ahead of time, bring unassembled.)
3. 1 winner per District.
4. 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place prizes awarded.

## Anything Goes

is the FREF Basket Theme for 2025. Grow the FREF Scholarship/Grant Fund and go home with a cool, original basket or an any-size-fits-all Gift Card.



# In Memory

October 31, 2024 ~ March 1, 2025

First Name	Last Name	City	FREA Unit
Billie Jean	Merkerson	Pensacola	Escambia CREA
Lillian	Coleman	Flomaton	Escambia CREA
Inez	Holt	Quincy	Gadsden CREA
Dorothy	Binger	Tallahassee	Leon/Wakulla REA
Helen	Arnold	Tallahassee	Leon/Wakulla REA
Mamie	Franklin	Madison	Madison CREA
Janet	Ross	Stuart	Martin CREA
Rosa	Jones	Fernandina Bch	Nassau CREA
Erma	Johnson	Clearwater	North Pinellas REA
Margaret	Glode	Palm Harbor	North Pinellas REA
Betty	Stone	Nashville	Orange CREA
Tom	Ard	Orlando	Orange CREA
Katie	Butler	West Palm Beach	Palm Beach CREA
La Rue	Dahlberg	Jupiter	Palm Beach CREA
Martha P	Jones	West Palm Beach	Palm Beach CREA
Earnestine	Williams	Milton	Santa Rosa CREA
Susanna	Austin	Sarasota	Sarasota REA
Alice	Johnson	Bushnell	Sumter CREA
William A	Stephens	Webster	Sumter CREA
Marge	Piernick	Clearwater Beach	TOP of Pinellas REA
Lorraine	Mc Farland	De Funiak Springs	Walton CREA
Ann	Gerard	Deland	West Volusia CREA
<b>Members at Large</b>			
Edward	McIntyre	Pembroke Pines	
Elizabeth	Wall	Leesburg	
Maureen	Sullivan	Homosassa	
Vera	Walker	Lake Placid	

*“We don’t know the route of our last journey; otherwise, we could have made a road there too.”*

*Sajikumar*



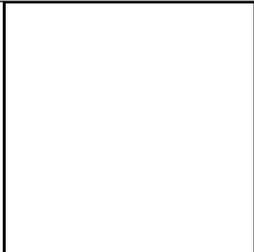
**Janet Ross**

August 1, 1940 to  
January 19, 2025

As the first line in Jan’s obit reads, “Even the best trips have an end date.” Janet Ross served as an FREF Trustee from 2015 to 2019. We remember her for her big smile, fun conversations, and busy fingers which were always knitting something for someone. She sold her creations to help the FREF Scholarship Fund. You can read her full obituary [here](#). One of the notable parts of Jan’s life was her love for travel gifted to her by her father, and passed on by her to following generations. . From her obituary: “Jan recalled fondly when she was young how her father would take her and her brother on car trips to Yellowstone, Pikes Peak, the Smoky Mountains, and the Black Hills during summer breaks from school. She recreated those kinds of adventures with her own kids via canoe trips, camping, hiking, and driving trips to New York and D.C. At the age of 45, she got her first passport. Having majored in French, Jan had always dreamed of traveling to Paris, France and she finally got her chance! She loved it. By the time her grandkids were older, Jan was, by all definitions, a “seasoned traveler”. It was one of her greatest joys to invite each grandchild on a trip abroad to a country of their choosing. She ignited an appetite for travel that has already transcended generations. All in all, Jan traveled to over 20 countries in her lifetime, stepping foot on every continent except Antarctica (which she waved at from the southernmost tip of New Zealand).” Jan’s travel has not ended, she has just embarked on the greatest journey of all. Travel well dear friend.



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 St. Petersburg, FL 33702  
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**We are a Non-Partisan, Non-Political organization. We support those who support our Mission, and include all voices in our membership.**  
**All FREA Members, General or Associate, regardless of which state they come from, may utilize FREA Benefits.**

There is strength in numbers, and FREA needs YOU to join to make our voices stronger together!  
[www.FREA.org/AboutUs](http://www.FREA.org/AboutUs)

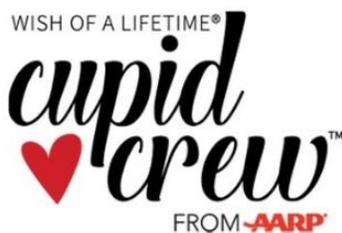
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[info@frea.org](mailto:info@frea.org)  
**or text photos to**  
**727-310-7035**

EDITOR'S NOTE: The editor has exercised the privilege of editing Bulletin material where space was limited or when similar information was received.

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**The Final Word...with Love**



*"To Serve, Not to Be Served."*  
 Ethel Percy Andrus  
 Founder, NRTA/AARP



forward to another year as a Cupid Crew!

**104 - Sue Colton, District 10 Director**

For the second year, the Broward County Retired Educators Association (BCREA) partnered with AARP's Wish of A Lifetime **Cupid Crew** campaign and the Florida Retired Educators Association (FREA). We eagerly embellished and delightfully delivered 300 roses and hand-made Valentine's Day cards, spreading love and joy to those human hearts across our community who need to feel