



North Pinellas County *Retired Educators Association* NEWSLETTER



email: npcrea@gmail.com

PO Box 4248, Clearwater, FL 33758

Vol. 49, Issue 6

JULY/AUGUST 2024

Recent Events:

MAY 7 --- Our NPCREA Country Fair
May 14-16 – Our FREA Convention 2024

Upcoming Events:

Fri, August 2 - Not Back to Work Luncheon
Tue, August 13 -- Not Back to School Breakfast

Be prepared to answer:

*Where are some places you have been
this year? What was best?*



NPCREA was well represented at the FREA Convention on May 14-16 at Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel. Pictured above, front row (l-r), Rosemarie and Michael Ceraolo-O'Donnell and Sharon Ozbun. Second row (l-r) Sue Frey, Mary Blackmon, Marie Grein, Linda McGeehan, Marcia Lork, Jane Lee, Bob and Val Stephens. Also attending but absent when the photo was taken: Lora Mills, Eldon Weaver, Doris Watters, and Mary Lou Kelly. So all told, North Pinellas had 15 members who made it over to Pasco County to take part in our yearly convocation.

Coming up in August, our Not Back to Work get-togethers, complete with good friends, good food, and large piles of donated school supplies for needy students. Plan now to attend:

Friday, August 2, NOT BACK TO WORK at Capogna's Dugout Restaurant at 1653 Gulf to Bay Blvd. in Clearwater, 11 am-1 pm. Choose the \$5 special Italian spaghetti lunch with salad and bread, or select from Capogna's menu at menu prices. Start now gathering school supplies from the grocery store, Dollar Tree, Walmart, or wherever they are on sale. Donations will be delivered to Pinellas Education Foundation on Starkey Road in Largo after the luncheon.

Invite friends, especially retired educators, to join us on **Tuesday, Aug. 13, 9-11 am** for our **NOT BACK TO CLASSES** breakfast at Tiffany's Restaurant, 35100 US 19 N. in Palm Harbor. Though teachers will welcome students to classes on Monday, we will oversleep and go to breakfast on Tuesday the 13th. Please bring school supplies to donate to the Mattie Williams Neighborhood Center in Safety Harbor.

We had fun and learned a great deal about legislation affecting retired educators, as well as benefits available to us through FREA and AMBA, and techniques for improving our email messages. Some of us won prizes in the drawings, and some of us shed a tear at the memorial service for FREA members who passed on in 2023-24. We honored the 10 district Volunteers of the Year, cheered for a 5th grader who read aloud her outstanding essay, and checked out the display boards chronicling the many activities of 40 units over the year.

(See details and photos, pp. 4-7)

The President's Corner 2023-24



Sharon Ozbun

Welcome to the summer edition of NPCREA's *Newsletter*. I hope everyone is having a wonderful summer and that many of you are traveling or getting out to area attractions. As we head into the second month of our summer break, please remember that we are having our NOT BACK TO SCHOOL events in August. While others are going back to school, we will be having two events to aid students who need help preparing for the new school year. I encourage all of you to join us and bring in some school supplies to help this cause.

Our first event will be on Friday, August 2, at Capogna's Dugout, 1653 Gulf to Bay Blvd in Clearwater. This will be the first day back to work for instructional staff as they prepare for a brand-new school year. We meet at 11 am for lunch. The owners of Capogna's will be serving their hearty spaghetti meal again this year for \$5 plus tax and tip, or you may order from the menu. We would love for you to join us and bring friends. We will be "Stuffing the Bus" with classroom supplies. After lunch, our Past President Bob Stephens will bring our donated school supplies to the Pinellas Education Foundation on Starkey Road in Largo.

Our second event will be "Breakfast at Tiffany's" on Tuesday, August 13. Tiffany's Restaurant is located at 35000 US 19 in Palm Harbor. We will be meeting at 9AM in their backroom. Those of you who still watch the school calendar diligently can hold off emailing to let me know school starts on the 12th. Since Tiffany's is closed on Mondays, we are "oversleeping" for the first day of school and breakfasting on Tuesday. School supplies collected at this event will be given to the Mattie Williams Neighborhood Center in Safety Harbor.

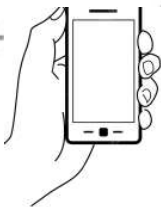
Start collecting school supplies now. You'll be amazed at how quickly they will pile up. Ask your neighbors if they would grab a school supply when they go to the grocery store, Dollar Tree, or Walmart. Last year we collected an amazing number of supplies at both events; I hope that we can continue showing our support to both organizations again this year.



VOLUNTEER SERVICES REPORT

Name: _____ **Month(s):** _____

	<u><i>Youth</i></u>	<u><i>Adult</i></u>
<i>Retired Educators Assn.</i>	_____	_____
<i>Community/Clubs</i>	_____	_____
<i>Hospital/Schools</i>	_____	_____
<i>Churches</i>	_____	_____
<i>Friends/Neighbors</i>	_____	_____
<i>All Others</i>	_____	_____
TOTAL	_____	_____

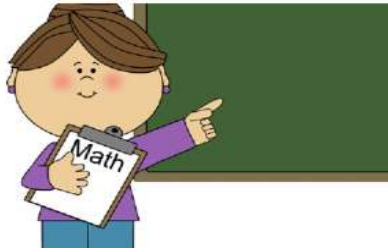


Phone to Mr. Eldon Weaver at 954.895.1073

or email to pegasus_fl@yahoo.com

or cut out and bring to the meeting





...UPCOMING EVENTS

...PATRONS WANTED

Friday, August 2, 11 am-1

pm

Not Back to Work Lunch

Bring a friend and your appetite to Capogna's Dugout Restaurant in Clearwater for our "Not Back to Work Lunch." Also bring school supplies for kids who need help getting ready for school. They will be delivered to Pinellas Education Foundation after the lunch

Tuesday, August 13, 9-11 am

Not Back to Classes Breakfast.

Bring a friend and some more school supplies for needy kids. And come prepared for great breakfast choices at Tiffany's Restaurant on US 19 in Palm Harbor. School supplies will go to Mattie Williams Neighborhood Center in Safety Harbor.

Tuesday, September 10, 11 am

Our First Meeting of the New

School Year! Come dressed in your school colors. Bring a friend dressed in their school colors. Our speaker is Paige Kroupa, an athlete team leader for Special Olympics. Our lunch will be lemon-grilled chicken, scalloped potatoes, carrots, rolls, and chocolate mousse. Mark your calendar now and find those old high school or college t-shirts, jackets, and caps. If you were a cheerleader, bring pom poms. If you were an athlete, wear your letter sweater. Let's have fun at our Back to School Meeting.

Please consider becoming an NPCREA PATRON for fiscal year 2024-25. The cost is \$15 and helps to defray the cost of printing our newsletters, directories, brochures, and flyers.

Anyone wishing to become a PATRON should send a check to NPCREA, P. O. Box 4248, Clearwater, Fl. 33758, or give a check to Linda McGeehan, our new Treasurer, or Rick Pope, our Patronage board member, at any meeting.

Last school year's patrons were:

Maura Hedrich
Phyllis Walls
Carole Pope
Linda McGeehan
Kali Crum
Rick Pope
Barbara Seiler
Herb Johnson
Margaret DeMeza
Jamie Foster,
Richard Werling II
Marie Grein
Mary Lou Kelly
Ceraolo-O'Donnell family

...BRIDGE-A-RAMA



Bridge-a-Rama is played on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at 9 am.

More bridge players are needed. Call Phyllis Walls at 727.418.7025 for details.

Convention Wrap Up

By Sharon Ozbun



Nine members of the North Pinellas and Pasco units prepared FREA Convention packets on May 9. (pictured left to right) Maura Hedrich, Mary Lou Kelly, Marie Grein, Jane Lee, Phyllis Walls, Sharon Ozbun, Mary Blackmon, Val and Bob Stephens, along with FREA Executive Director Anne Fagan.

At Saddlebrook Resort in Wesley Chapel the next week, the FREA Convention was certainly one to remember! We enjoyed three days of meeting other retired educators from all over the state, listening to motivational speakers, recognizing outstanding fifth graders who placed in the statewide essay contest, acknowledging the scholarships of graduating seniors going into the field of education, celebrating our district volunteers of the year, honoring our members who have passed, and of course being involved in typical convention “shenanigans.”

There was a great deal of hustle and bustle at the registration table, but we were well represented with members from NPCREA as well as the Pasco unit working there. As members arrived at the Convention, they were given a lovely tote bag, resort materials, credentials, and their pre-ordered convention tee-shirt.

At the opening session, we were reminded during our “Thought of the Day” that retirement is NOT for sitting on the couch and watching the paint dry. We were encouraged to go out and find our passion and become involved in our community. As a member of NPCREA, I can say we are doing just that!

Each unit brought with them a display board showing all the different activities that their organization was involved in during the year. Fear not, North Pinellas, we represented well with a board full of happy shiny faces enjoying the monthly meetings, showing the activities and projects we are involved in, as well as the informative speakers we have each month.



(left to right) Hernando, North Pinellas, and Pasco counties activity display boards



In the afternoon, we had the opportunity to hear from Dr. Simmie Raiford. With a career in public education spanning nearly 40 years, Dr. Raiford has served as an elementary school teacher and principal, district level professional development director, state level legislative policy analyst, and university faculty member. Since 2010, her work has centered on supporting transformation efforts in chronically low performing schools.

Dr. Raiford spoke about knowing and understanding what type of communicator we are versus others. It was an interactive discussion as we followed along and determined our personal style as well as the style of others. She spoke about communication and the importance of not only what we say, but how others perception of the message can be lost because we don't all communicate in the same manner or with the same purpose. I guess it makes it easier for us to now understand why we repeated ourselves so often in the classroom.



District 6 representatives from Hernando, Pasco, and North and South Pinellas

After Dr. Raiford's presentation, we split off into our individual district meetings, and I can tell you that NPCREA was well represented. We had 15 people from our unit at the convention! We met with the Hernando, Pasco, and South Pinellas groups and had a chance to hear from our District Director, Emily Berry, who invited us to attend the October symposium with District 4 in Crystal River on October 8. The symposium gives units the opportunity to meet our new leadership team, headed by our newly inducted FREA President Harriet Jenkins and our President-Elect Carrie Frye.

After our district meetings, we had a chance to go back to our villas to freshen up and get ready for the "Tropical Southern Nights" themed dinner. A reception was held by AMBA. Randomly selected "creativity teams" participated in the "Feathering your Flamingo!" contest. Contestants created a one-of-a-kind exotic bird made with a flamingo yard bird and various crafts.



While teamed up with two ladies from the Daytona Beach area, I helped create "Feisty Fiona and the Mingos." Want to guess who won a blue ribbon?

While I do have photographic proof of our amazing win, I told my partners that they could take home the flamingo as bragging rights for their unit.



After the Flamingo contest we headed to dinner at the Lagoon Pavilion. We had a filling Tex-Mex buffet and some great tropical music to dance to. People arrived in their tropical wear ready to dance. Lots of pictures were taken at our NPCREA photo area. Bob and Val took to the dance floor, helping to make all of us smile and appreciate the love they share. The evening wrapped up around 9, as we had an early day to be ready for.

Wednesday morning brought about a budget vote for an increase in state dues. It had been several years since an increase, and the budget needed some extra dollars. As of July 1, 2024, our overall dues will increase by \$10. Members were reminded that if they renew before the July 1 deadline, they will not see an increase in this year's dues.

Next we then had the opportunity to attend three breakout sessions. One of them was put on by AMBA. They introduced attendees to Medical Air Transport Association (MASA). They let us know how to protect ourselves from high emergency transportation bills at home or while traveling.



AMBA representatives Chris Gluck and Lexie Mowery

A second choice was “Elevate your Unit’s Emails with Constant Contact.” Gretchen Ellison, president of the Miami-Dade REA unit, discussed ways to make email messages more enticing and to increase readability of material we send out. One of the more interesting parts of her presentation occurred when she discussed how an AI component of the program could enhance your presentation.



She considered herself to be a good writer but found that her messages became more impactful with a little AI writing coaching.

The third session, and probably most influential, was the FRS legislative group led by Linda Edson and George Ellis. What else can I say, these are two human legislative dynamos! They discussed what went on in Tallahassee this year, how we need to work on being ready for next year, and to VOTE when it is time. Questions were taken from the audience, and we were reminded to check the FREA website for up-to-date information. As one of your legislative liaisons, I along with Bob Stephens will bring more information to our meetings in the coming year as we continue to work on improving benefits and pension security.



(l-r) Larry Carmichael, George Ellis, Linda Edson, Sharon Ozbun, Joe Flanagan, and Sue Colton

As we gathered back in the main room, prior to lunch, we could see that we had some newly arrived guests. Winners of the 5th grade essay contest had joined us along with their parents. The first place winner was not able to make it to the convention because of the distance, so we heard from the second place winner. Oh my, the essay was amazing; it must have been very difficult to decide the difference between first and second place. Winners received a certificate, a cash prize, and even a stipend to help pay for expenses to travel to the convention.

Next, we had a lovely presentation in honor of the Margaret Poppell book project. Each unit was asked to bring in books for a donation to be made to a local veteran’s organization. The books collected, and there were many, were for readers of all ages and abilities.



A group of retired veterans accepted the donated books for delivery to veterans’ organizations and hospitals.



We ended the morning session by honoring the ten “District Volunteers of the Year.” I received the District 6 Volunteer of the Year award from our new FREA president, Harriet Jenkins.

Afterward, a very large check was unveiled showing that the hours of work of FREA volunteers last year was worth over \$8 million to make our communities a better place. Your efforts are priceless!

After lunch, members had a little bit of time on their own, and then the FREA memorial services began led by Broward President Susan Colton. The theme this year was "Butterfly Flying Home." Those attending read poetry and lit candles in remembrance of each of FREA's 172 members who had passed away during the year.

The afternoon concluded with a session for District Directors, Unit Presidents, Vice Presidents, and Treasurers, so that they could learn a little bit more about the jobs they would be taking over at the beginning of July. Then everyone hurried to get ready for the 70th Annual Gala held at the Lagoon Pavilion.

The evening started out on the patio, and then a delicious buffet and dance music awaited us for the remainder of the evening. Lots of glittery outfits and smiling faces were seen at the gala.



North Pinellas was definitely well represented with 15 members of our unit attending all or most of the sessions. Check out our Facebook page for many other photos from the Convention.

Our final morning started around 8:30 am with opening remarks from outgoing president, Edwina Williams, and our newly elected president, Harriett Jenkins. We had the installation of presidents and



district directors and then the moment we were all waiting for, those Extravaganza drawings.

Guess who pulled the tickets? Yes, it was Bob Stephens. Want to know whose ticket he picked? It was Val Stephens! She won \$300. How's that for some amazing luck?



Our unit basket was won by a lovely woman from Martin County, who was getting ready to have a tropical flamingo party when she returned home.



Overall, I would say it was a very good conference, and we hope that next year even more of us will be able to attend the FREA Convention. It will be held in Saint Augustine from May 20-22 at the World Golf Village Renaissance Resort. Mark your calendars; you don't want to miss it. I know I'll be there!

At our Annual Country Fair

May 7 was our annual Country Fair luncheon and installation of officers. Members and guests arrived at Clearwater Country Club prepared to WIN, WIN, WIN one or more of the great prizes donated by local merchants and our generous members.



President Bob Stephens crowned Sharon Ozbun to be “queen” of NPCREA and promised to attend future meetings as a “Special Events Director.” Then he introduced three more officers recently elected to serve a two-year term from 2024-2026.

Next, Rick Pope, Bob Stephens, and Mike Ceraolo-O’Donnell delivered the 40 donated gifts to the lucky winners of the \$1 per ticket Country Fair Treasure Hunt. Some of the lucky winners were:



Richard Werley won a “man bag,” the perfect accessory to go with his western hat.



New officers (left to right) Mary Blackmon, Secretary and Historian, Linda McGeehan, Treasurer, Katrina Pershing, Vice President, and Sharon Ozbun, President

New president, Sharon Ozbun, thanked Bob Stephens and Marie Grein for their many years of outstanding service to NPCREA. She handed them gift cards as members and guests gave Bob and Marie a standing ovation for their many years of dedicated leadership.



Our new vice president, Katrina Pershing won a first aid kit.



Nan Lanham won a pair of swan vases.

on Tuesday, May 7, 2024

We all had fun, and the events raised \$804 for our treasury and scholarships.

Lunch was barbecued chicken, cole slaw, baked beans, and apple pie.

And finally the **Country Fair Super Drawing** winners were awarded their prizes:

Lisa Porter won rounds of golf for four from Clearwater Country Club

Sharon Ozbun won two Rays Baseball game box seat tickets plus parking pass and also a massage at a Center for Massage

Marcia Lork won a Publix gift card

Margaret Miller won a Longhorn Steakhouse card

Bob Stephens won Target and Publix cards

Mary Blackmon won an Outback card

Sharilyn Gipson won gifts from Fantastic Sams

Phyllis Walls won a Clearwater Family Restaurant card

Helen Tantum won a Cheesecake Factory card

Rick Werley won an Anthony's Coal Fired Pizza card

Bobbie Alburtus won Rusty Bellies and Harp's of Trinity gift cards

Katrina Pershing won a Clearsky gift card

Karlton Ballard won two bottles of fine wine

**Totals: Country Fair Super Drawing \$575
Country Fair Treasure Hunt, \$229**

Way to go, NPCREA leaders and members!
Special thanks to Bob Stephens who planned and executed these special events

Rick Pope delivered a framed \$10 bill to Phyllis Walls



Gaby Postler won a

pair of ceramic birds



Rosemarie Ceraolo-

O'Donnell won a new pair of water shoes



FREA Legislative Update



As many of you know, the Florida Retired Educators Association (FREA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization made up of educators, school personnel, and citizens who care about public education and the protection of the retiree benefits that are earned through the Florida Retirement System.

One of the important aspects of our association is communicating with our state legislators regarding our three main priorities:

- Restore, enhance, and protect retiree Earned Benefits from the Florida Retirement System.
- Promote accountability in Florida Public School. Promote equitable funding and uniform standards for all educational facilities and organizations that receive state tax dollars.
- Advocate health and welfare issues for seniors that will ensure retirement with dignity (empowering people to choose how they live as they age); including, but not limited to, support for Social Security and Medicare Benefits, Health Insurance, Cost of Living Adjustment, and Affordable and Accessible Housing.

As you can probably tell from the broad nature of the above statements, we are able to cover a variety of issues that can fall under the umbrella of these three priorities.

Prior to going to Tallahassee, we meet as a group via Zoom and discuss strategies regarding communicating with our local legislators and letting them know who we are and what we would like them to focus on regarding education.

We have also spoken with legislators about teacher shortages throughout the state and have tried to offer ideas for recruiting future educators to help solve Florida's short- and long-term teacher shortages. Some of these ideas include:

- Provide college graduates with the same benefits and incentives as working teachers so they are attracted to the profession.
- Strengthen benefits for working educators: healthcare, pensions, and cost-of-living adjustments.
- Provide retired teachers with the same benefits and incentives as working teachers so they return to the classroom.
- Enact legislation to pay teachers more so they stay in the profession.
- Increase funding to universities and schools of education to boost student enrollment.
- Provide high schools with funds for future teacher academies and for fast track dual enrollment opportunities.
- Develop a marketing campaign such as "Be A Teacher That Makes the Difference."

As members of FREA and active citizens, we encourage you to know who your representatives are and to contact them with your ideas and your support of educational issues. Write letters to the editor of our local papers. Remind people about the importance of keeping quality educators in the classroom. Most importantly, always remember to vote. It doesn't matter which party you belong to, but what is important is that you vote for what you believe in.



North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association Membership Application



Unified Dues: \$50.00 Annually – July 1 to June 30

<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal of Membership	General Member - Circle One: Retired School Teacher/School Administrator/School Transportation School Maintenance, School Cafeteria. Other:
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FREA Benefits are fully available to ALL FREA members be they Regular or Associate.	Associate Member Associate: Any person supporting the mission of the Association may apply for associate membership. (Associate members may not vote as a delegate.)
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Circle One: Miss, Mrs., Ms., Mr., Dr., Other	Date:
Your Name:	Spouse's Name
Mailing Address Apt./Condo	Telephone—Cell phone preferred ()
City	State Zip County
E-mail address:	Your Month/Day/of Birth:
School District Retired From:	Year Retired
Position Retired From	

NPCREA and FREA are your advocates regarding your pension and the future of education in the State of Florida. Would you like to support our efforts on behalf of all present and future Retired Educators, and other beneficiaries of the Florida Retirement System like First Responders, etc.? This money will be used in a non-partisan way.

Yes, I would like to support FREA's Legislative Advocacy: \$ 4.00
 Unified Dues for July 1—June 30: **\$50.00**

Yes, I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to Florida Retired Educators Foundation of \$5.00

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: NPCREA (North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association)
Mail to: NPCREA, P.O. Box 4248 Clearwater, FL 33758-4248

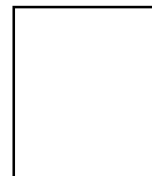
Have questions? **Contact NPCREA: NPCREA@gmail.com**

NPCREA has many active committees. All of our committees welcome new people, ideas and /or suggestions. The work of the committees listed below is explained at our meetings.

Please indicate your interest in one or more of them by checking the line by the committee. The chair will contact you personally.

Volunteer Services		Information Services		Newsletter	
Hospitality		Legislative		Photography (Historian)	
Sunshine		Name Tags		Retirement Planning	
Phone Tree		Membership		Publicity/Website	
Cultural Affairs		Nominating		Thought for the Day	

**NORTH PINELLAS COUNTY
RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 4248
CLEARWATER, FL 33758-4248**



NPCREA LEADERS FOR 2024-25

PRESIDENT	SHARON OZBUN
VICE-PRESIDENT	KATRINA PERSHING
TREASURER	LINDA MCGEEHAN
RECORDING SECRETARY	MARY BLACKMON
CORRES. SECRETARY	MARCIA LORK
INFORMATION SPECIALIST	MAURA HEDRICH
MEMBERSHIP	CHERYL GOOD
PATRONAGE	RICK POPE
VOLUNTEER SERVICES	ELDON WEAVER
HISTORIAN/NEWSLETTER	MARY BLACKMON

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