

The Publication Dedicated to Retired Florida Educators & School Personnel



Volume 53, Issue 1
Spring 2026

FREA BULLETIN



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Harriett Jenkins
FREA President

As we enter the final months of this administration, my heart is filled with gratitude and deep appreciation for each of you. Serving as your State President has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Your support, commitment, loyalty, and steadfast dedication have strengthened our Association and propelled us forward in meaningful and remarkable ways.

Together, we have proven that **teamwork truly makes the dream work**. Every challenge we faced became an opportunity for growth, and every obstacle was met with real-life solutions that made a meaningful difference. We have accomplished so much—not because of any one individual, but through the shared efforts of those who stood committed to the mission and future of FREA. May we continue

Continued on page 2

FREA Calendar 2026

March 9	FREF Scholarship Meeting—Zoom
March 11	Webinar: Guarding Your Nest Egg
March 16	FREF Collection of Items for Online Auction Begins
April 8	Webinar—Living Safely While Aging in Place
April 16	FREF Collection of Items for Online Auction Ends
April 20	Bidding for FREF Online Auction Begins
May 2	Bidding for FREF Online Auction Ends
May 11	FREF Annual Meeting—Zoom
May 12	Benefits, Executive Committee, FREA Board Meetings—Zoom
May 13	Webinar: Ready, Set, Go! Safe and Smart Summer Travel
May 25	Memorial Day—Office Closed
May 27	2026 FREA Virtual Convention
June 10	Webinar: What They Don't Tell You About Long Term Care
June 30	FREA Fiscal Year Ends

For more calendars [Please click Here](#)



Cupid Crew 2026

Congratulations to FREA members. We shined on the national stage! Almost 20 local units participated and delivered **5,580 roses!!!!** Here are some reviews from around the state.

Orange County REA prepared and delivered 250 roses to two nursing homes and to a few members who are alone at home. Claire Stephens is standing at the car, ready to begin delivery with the team.

North Pinellas CREA visited Lakeside Oaks with flowers, cookies and Valentines. Our crew brightened the day of so many people who normally are alone.

Pasco County REA was grateful to include Jean Imperatore's 9-year-old grandson this year on the Cupid Crew. Learning to be humble, benevolent and grateful starts and continues at any age. All seven of us worked hard and feel grateful for this opportunity.



Above: Hernando CREA Below: Seminole CREA



Article and photos continued on Page 3 and even more available in the March E-Newsletter

President Continued from page 1

strengthening that unity as we move forward.

When I began my presidency, our theme was **“Transforming Vision into Reality.”** You embraced that vision wholeheartedly, and together we turned ideas into action, and action into impact. This year, our theme, **“Each One, Reach One — Together We Thrive”**—has continued to guide our work. I pray that both themes will remain alive in your hearts and continue to shape the culture of our Association for years to come.

This is a great time to be a part of the Florida Retired Educators Association. We have made significant strides with our Florida Legislators, elevating our visibility and strengthening our advocacy. I encourage you to continue communicating our mission, our beliefs, and our needs. **Visibility in our communities matters. Unity will always win.** And proactive strategies will continue to build a better tomorrow for all retired educators.

As I prepare to pass the torch, I extend my heartfelt best wishes to every member of the incoming administration. May they lead with courage, clarity, integrity, and compassion. May they continue to build upon the strong foundation we have laid together. And may they always remember that leadership is not defined by position, but by purpose.

John Lewis taught us that *“Nothing can stop the power of a committed and determined people to make a difference in our society.”* You—our members—are that committed and determined force.

Thank you for the privilege of serving. Thank you for believing in our mission. Thank you for being the heartbeat of this Association. May we continue to grow, uplift, and thrive—together.

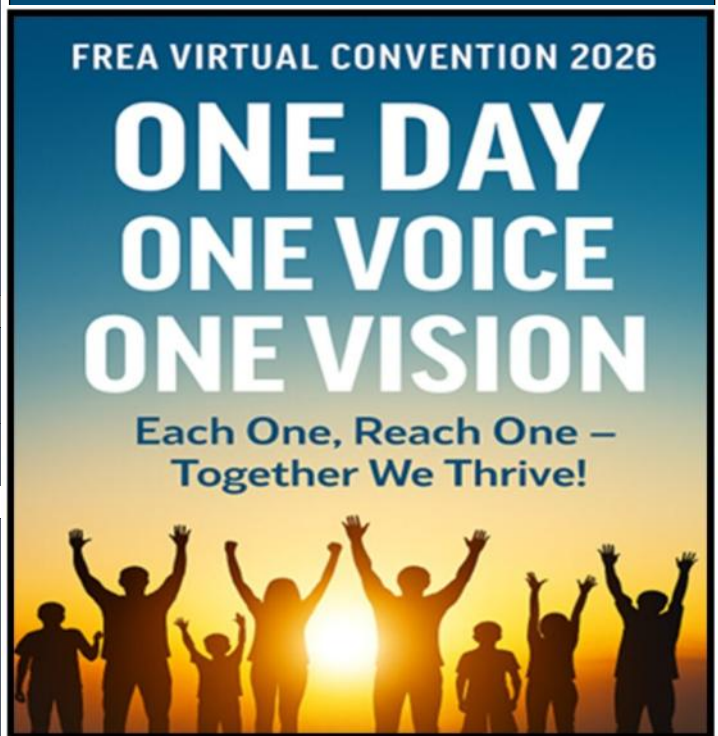
Harriett

Harriett M. Jenkins, President

Florida Retired Educators Association

FREA Executive Committee	
President	Harriett Jenkins St. Lucie CREA HarriettMJenkins@aol.com
President-Elect	Carrie Frye Seminole CREA cfrye@att.net
Secretary	Melanie Waite Santa Rosa CREA melanie7896@gmail.com
Treasurer	Gayle Hodges Orange CREA gayle.hodges1991@gmail.com
State Director	Linda Stephens Polk II REA lindawest0552@icloud.com
Exec. Committee District Director Representative 1-5	Donna Harper harper2paint@gmail.com
Exec. Committee District Director Representative 6-10	Pat Watkins patdanwat@msn.com
	Ex-Oficio
FREA Executive Director/ Newsletter Editor	Anne Fagan anne@frea.org

Save the Date ~ May 27, 2026
Convention Details on Page 3





Cecelia Solomon
FREA State Chair
Information Services
& Cupid Crew Chair

Broward County REA shared notes they received that prove why Cupid Crew is so worth our time and energy.

In their words..."Thanks to you and to BCREA for the lovely roses. I appreciate you taking the time to make the delivery and to visit. Happy Valentine's Day, Ann G."

"I want to thank you for bringing the beautiful flowers to me for Valentine's Day. It is so nice of you to remember me and to let me know that, even though I can't get to the meetings anymore, I am still part of our wonderful retirement association. Your thoughtfulness is very much appreciated, Betty O.."

Hernando County REA delivered to ten assisted living and long-term care facilities and a Senior Congregate Meal center. All roses were appreciated, and members had a wonderful time working with one another.

Thank you to all who participated. We truly believe that the purpose of Cupid Crew is as important to the givers as it is to the receivers. Cecelia

Ed. Note: If you would like to have all your pictures for Cupid Crew and your article write-up on the FREA website we would love to share. Please send to anne@frea.org as an article in **pdf. file** format. It can be however many pages you like, but must be a finished article in pdf format. We will add it to your Unit page on the website.



St. Lucie CREA



N. Pinellas REA



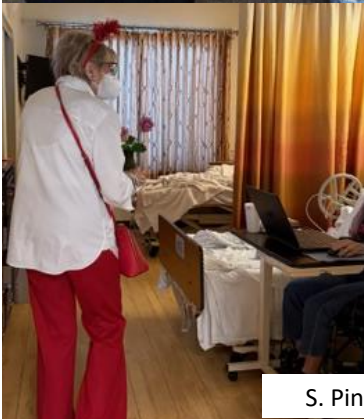
Hernando CREA



S. Pinellas REA



S. Pinellas REA



S. Pinellas REA

From Jan Wallis, Unit President: For a period of 3 days South Pinellas Retired Educators Association members worked on Cupid's Crew. From all members in attendance at our Thursday meeting making cards to go with the roses, to Friday's hands on crew cutting and assembling the roses in vases in my garage to the actual day of delivery to Freedom Square residents on valentine's day. An activity enjoyed and well executed by our members and so appreciated by the residents of Freedom Square!



Karla Brogdon
FREF Chair

The 1st Ever FREF Online Auction is Coming Soon To a Screen Near You!



Anne Fagan
Auction Chair

To go along with our Virtual Online Convention, the Foundation has set up an online auction site to support the wonderful work FREF does. All Units will still each contribute items or gift cards worth \$50.00, but...in lieu of creating baskets to be sent to Convention, they will send picture

(s) of each donated item along with a description. Then ALL FREA members (and friends and family), can go online and bid for the items. The winner will have it mailed directly to their home by the donor.

But Wait, There's More!

Anyone who would like to donate a creation or other item to the auction is welcome to do so. Our goal is to raise more money for the Foundation than has ever been raised before!

More Scholarships to Future Teachers, more Practicing Educator Grants to current Educators, and more Educators in Crisis grants to members who face a financial crisis.

Have Questions?

Please contact Auction Chair Anne Fagan
at the FREA Office: anne@frea.org or 727-577-6400

Auction Dates

- ★ **March 16 to April 16**—Submit item photos and info to the FREA Office using the Silent Auction Donation Form ([Click here for form](#)).
- ★ **DO NOT send items to the Office.** Items are to be mailed/shipped by the Seller. The Seller pays for the postage.
 - ☛ **Cost-saving hint for Donations: Are you an Amazon Prime Member?**
 - ⇒ Find an item you would like to donate on Amazon.
 - ⇒ **DO NOT buy it yet**, save it for later on Amazon.
 - ⇒ Send the photo and description in to the Office using the official form
 - ⇒ When the Office sends you the information on who won your item...
 - ⇒ Purchase the item and ship it **for free** directly to the winner from Amazon
- ★ **April 20 to May 2**—Auction is Open— A link will be sent to all FREA members. Share it and invite your friends & family to join in the fun for a good cause!
- ★ **Auction Closes May 2.**



Extravaganza Tickets

Need some extra cash? Purchase tickets at your Unit meetings to win between \$100—\$600.

For just \$10 a ticket, you earn two chances to win the following cash prizes:

\$500 - 1st Prize

\$300—2nd Prize

\$200—3rd Prize

\$100 Cash Prize to 1 winner in each FREA District



For a copy of the full size Donor Form below, please contact the FREA Office at 727-577-6400 or anne@frea.org.



Florida Retired Educator's Foundation FREF Online Silent Auction

Submission Date: April 16 to May 16

Thank you for your contribution to our online silent auction.
Please complete this form and **provide a picture or pictures of your item.**

Email to Anne Fagan, Auction Chair, at anne@frea.org

or mail to: FREF Auction

8950 9th St N #105

St. Petersburg, FL 33702

Donor Name: _____

Organization name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please provide a picture or pictures and a brief description of the item you are donating:

Approximate retail value: \$ _____

*We appreciate your Support!
Thank you!*

Ballot sent to Delegates Contains: • 2026-27 Proposed Budget • Nominations for District Director 1,2,4,5,7 (to appropriate District) and FREA President-Elect • Nominations from the Floor—Qualifications • Proposed Legislative Priorities		Timeline for Mail-outs and returns • Delegate Names to Office: March 1 • Ballots mailed to Delegates: April 23 • Ballots returned to Office: May 15 * Denotes Official/Required Convention Business	
Convention Materials to be emailed and placed online		• Convention Timeline • Program • Memorial Program	Convention Timeline Download Click Here
CONVENTION 2026 Timeline			
May 27, 2026	Activity	Presenter	
10:00 AM — 12:00PM			
10:00—10:30	Opening Session/Welcome/Introduction/Pledge of Allegiance	FREA President Harriett Jenkins	
10:30-10:35	Thought For the Day	First Gentleman Elvin Jenkins	
10:35-10:40	*Minutes	FREA Secretary Melanie Waite	
10:40-10:45	*Budget—Treasurer Presents results of Delegate Vote	FREA Treasurer Gayle Hodges	
10:45-11:05	* Nominees Announcement *Credentials Report *Election Results for President-Elect and District Directors 1,4,5,7	FREA Past President Edwinna Williams & Asonja Corbett, Parliamentarian/ Credentials Chair	
11:05-11:15	Break		
11:15-11:45	Volunteer of the Year Announcements—Awards and Certificates to be sent to the District Directors	FREA Volunteer Service Chair Monica Johnson	
	5th Grade Essay Contest—Posters and Reading by Chair		
11:45 to 12:45 Lunch			
Closing Session ~ 12:45 PM—3:00 PM			
12:45—12:50	Open	Harriett Jenkins	
12:50—1:20	FREA Memorial Service	FREA Memorial Services Chair: Sue Colton	
1:20 —1:35	*Installation of Officers	Edwinna Williams	
1:35—1:45	Legislative Report	State Legislative Co-Chairs: Linda Edson—Susan Darovec	
1:45—1:50	Membership Contest Winner	FREA Membership Chair Jody Scruggs	
1:50—2:15	FREF Certificates of Recognition, FREF Extravaganza Winners Presentation of AMBA Scholarship Check/AMBA Benefits Update	FREF State Chair Karla Brogdon Lexie Mowery	
2:15—2:40	Outgoing President Message—Attendance / Newcomer Awards	Harriett Jenkins	
2:40—3:00	Incoming President Message/Introduction of State Chair Officers	FREA Incoming President Carrie Frye	
Adjourn Convention 2026 ~ Carrie Frye, FREA President			

Important 2026 Zoom Convention Deadlines and Registration Dates

Timeline for Mail-outs and returns

- March 1—Delegate Names to Office from Unit Presidents
- April 23—Ballots mailed to Delegates
- May 15 - Ballots returned to Office

Timeline for Registrations

- April 1 – April 15: Group Host sends name to Office along with Unit name
- April 15—May 1: Group Registrations – Zoom Link sent to Speakers, Board Members, Trustees, Delegates, and to those who have sent in their names as Group Hosts.
- May 1—May 15: Individual Registration (Once the number of 100 registrations is reached, registration will close.
- May 15 midnight—Registration closes

Units Information For Registering Groups/:

- Each Unit picks a Group Host. They register under a group name.
- No limit to number of attendees in Group, but there will be only the group name registered using the email address of the Group Host.
- Each Unit determines how they want to register the people in their group. The Office is not involved, nor is there a standardized registration form.
- Information for the Newcomers and Attendance Awards will be sent to the President and copied to the Office.

Logging in to the Convention is merely clicking on the Zoom link.

IMPORTANT – Registration is on the Honor System

Registrations are Limited. If you are in the April 15-May 1 Group, please do not share the link with anyone else. That is unfair to individuals who must wait until the Individual registration date.

Information for Individual Registrations

- For individuals, they may register starting on May 1. The link will be sent to all FREA members in the May E-newsletter.

[Click Here to Download](#)

Cupid Crew Proves It. The Margaret Poppell Project Proves It. FREA Members Who Volunteer Prove It Every Day:

Volunteering is good for your mind and body - Benefits of volunteering

Volunteering provides many benefits to both mental and physical health.

Volunteering increases self-confidence.

Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity. And the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you are to have a positive view of your life and future goals.

Volunteering combats depression.

Reducing the risk of depression is another important benefit of volunteering. A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against stress and depression when you're going through challenging times. Working with pets and other animals has also been shown to improve mood and reduce stress and anxiety.

Volunteering helps you stay physically healthy.

Volunteering is good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial in older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not, even when considering factors like the health of the participants. Volunteering has also been shown to lessen symptoms of chronic pain or heart disease.

I have limited mobility—can I still volunteer?

Whether due to a lack of transportation, time constraints, a disability or other reasons, many people prefer to volunteer via phone or computer. There are many projects where you can help. Writing and graphic design lends itself to working at home, and in today's digital age many organizations might also need help with email and websites.

If you think home-based volunteering might be right for you, contact organizations you like and ask what some of the possibilities might be. Some volunteer organizations may require you to attend an initial training or periodical meetings. You also want to make sure that you are getting enough social contact, and that the organization is available to support you should you have questions.

Volunteering: The happiness effect

Helping others kindles happiness, as many studies have demonstrated. When researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of American adults, they found the more people volunteered, the happier they were, according to a study in Social Science and Medicine. Compared with people who never volunteered, the odds of being "very happy" rose

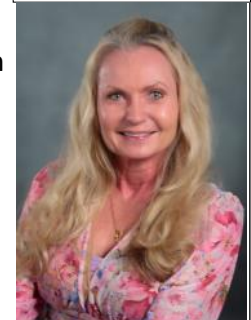
7% among those who volunteer monthly and 12% for people who volunteer every two to four weeks. Among weekly volunteers, 16% felt very happy—a hike in happiness comparable to having an income of \$75,000–\$100,000 versus \$20,000, say the researchers. ([reprinted from: https://www.wcsu.edu/community-engagement/benefits-of-volunteering/](https://www.wcsu.edu/community-engagement/benefits-of-volunteering/))



Jody Scruggs
FREA State
Membership Chair



Carrie Frye
FREA President-
Elect



Anne Fagan
FREA Executive
Director

5 Surprising Benefits of VOLUNTEERING

VOLUNTEERING MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE MORE TIME.
One feels more time affluent and less time-constrained from wasting the time they have.

VOLUNTEERING HELPS YOU DEVELOP NEW SKILLS
Skill based volunteering is an excellent opportunity to develop talents.

VOLUNTEERING HELPS YOU HAVE A HEALTHIER BODY.
Research shows lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression.

VOLUNTEERING HELPS YOU BUILD MORE EXPERIENCE.
Professionally volunteering in a different field makes one more marketable in a job search.

VOLUNTEERING MAKES YOU FEEL MORE LOVE.
Volunteering makes people happier, building empathy, strengthening social bonds and makes one smile - factors that increase the feeling of love.

Source: Forbes

To All FREA members,

Below is the form that will be used from this point forward for proposed FREA Bylaws/ Policy changes.

- ♦ This form will be placed on the website: <https://frea.org/frea-unit-and-district-forms/>
- ♦ Or it will be available upon request from the FREA Office: info@frea.org



Florida Retired Educators Association

Bylaws/Policy Proposal Form

Submitted by: _____ **Date:** _____ **Unit:** _____

Position/Title: _____ **Email:** _____ **Phone:** _____

Section I: Current Bylaws Reference

Article Number: _____ Section Number: _____

Current Wording (Insert exact wording from current Bylaws): _____

Section II: Proposed Change (Insert full, revised, or new wording):

Type of change: Add _____ Delete _____ Revise _____

Section III: Rationale for the change (Give a Rationale for the needed change)

A: Rationale _____

B: Monetary Impact (if any) _____

Section IV: Endorsements

Signature _____ Print _____ Title _____

Section V: Committee Review (Completed by Bylaws Committee)

Review Date: _____ Approve _____ Reject _____

Next Step: Committee will send review results to Executive Committee no later than 30 days.



Linda Edson
FREA State Legislative
Co-Chair

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



Susan Darovec
State Legislative
Co-Chair

Spring 2026 Legislative Overview

By Linda Edson and Susan Darovec

This November is a big election year for the state of Florida. Every member of the Florida House of Representatives, half of the State Senators, the Governor and some US Congress Representatives are up for re-election or termed out of office. Depending on the outcome of the November elections, the state could look very different. If you are happy with your elected officials, put them back in office. If you are not happy, investigate the other candidates. Whatever you decide, please remember to VOTE. Check with your local Supervisor of Elections to make sure you have all the appropriate documentation and you are eligible to vote. [Florida Division of Elections](https://www.floridadivisionofelections.com/) has local county election information links.

The FREA Legislative group worked this year to re-instate the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for all Florida Retirement System (FRS) employees. The purpose of COLA is to counteract the cost of inflation. Inflation in Florida averages around 3% a year. Those of us who retired prior to 2011 receive an annual 3% COLA on our pension. In 2011 the Florida Legislature voted to stop COLA to save the state money. It was decided the legislature would readdress COLA within 5 years. As of today, 15 years later, the FRS Employees do not have a COLA. If you worked for FRS prior to 2011, you would receive a portion of your COLA depending on your years of work before 2011. If you started working with FRS after 2011, you have NO COLA. This means your spending power upon retirement is impacted.

This summer your legislative group was busy visiting over half of the State Legislators in their home offices and explaining the need to bring back COLA. We showed them graphics on the impact on their local economy, the change in retirees' spending power and we gave them affordable solutions. We were well received and hoped a bill would be written. We worked with the Executive Director of FRS and encouraged legislators to call him and work out a plan. However, to our knowledge not one legislator called. Your Legislative Group is still fighting for this needed adjustment to our pensions!

Proclamation Presented to SLREA Members

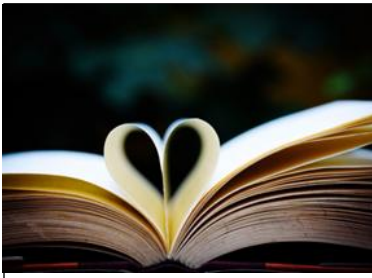
Superintendent Robbie Edwards presented Governor Ron Desantis' Retired Educators Proclamation to the members of SLREA in the absence of Mayor Wayne Hamlin. It was a wonderful time of sharing educational information. Thank you, Superintendent Edwards.



L-R Superintendent Robbie Edwards, Dorothy Bradley, Janice Mills, Deb Gornoski, Ann Johnson, Marilyn Loges, and Sharon Chamberlain attended the Proclamation Signing while Louise Green, Christie Mobley, and Clara Prine set up decor and snacks at the Day Heritage museum.

Because of the fact that no COLA bill had been written by either the House or the Senate, it was decided to postpone our group meeting in Tallahassee. It would not have been fiscally responsible of us to spend your FREA legislative contributions and dues on the trip at this time. We are still hopeful of having a bill written and introduced and passed next year. We are working toward having the FREA Legislative Committee at the Senate and House legislative committee meetings in January of 2027. We thank you in advance for your legislative contribution, when you pay your annual dues, as we continue the fight to reestablish a COLA for you and all FRS retirees.

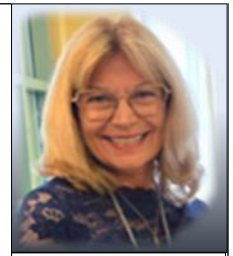
Linda and Sue



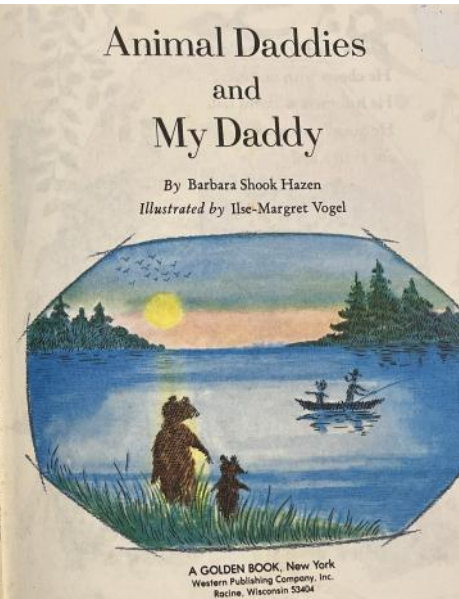
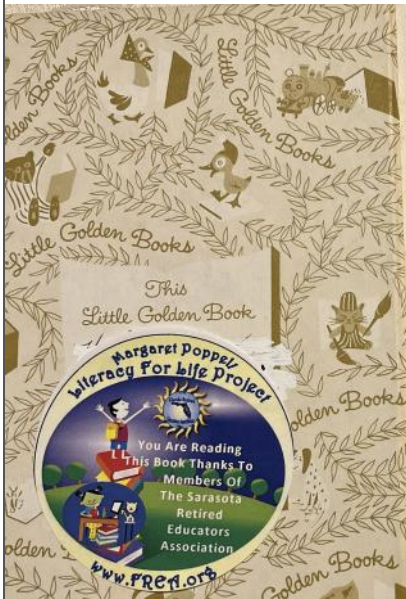
Volunteer Services Loves Literacy for Life!

Are you a lover of reading? Do you love to share your love of reading? Do you have books that you want to donate? Florida Retired Educator's Association is where you need to be.

FREA Volunteer Services units support the Margaret Poppell Literacy for Life Project as a wonderful way to donate books for readers of all ages. FREA Units collect books for beginning readers, school-aged children K – 12, veterans homes, and for adults, especially those who are in assisted living facilities where books may be limited or non-existent. Our units provide children's books for neighborhood book boxes for limited-literacy neighborhoods. Readers come in all ages and ethnicities and some read books in different languages. So donations of all kinds are welcome. We have even found that books on tape are very popular in nursing homes. WOW, what an opportunity to create a wonderful day for all of those who love books.



Monica Johnson
State Volunteer
Services



Excited? Are you ready to enrich someone's life through literacy? Find an FREA Unit near you by visiting the www.FREA.org website, and contact your area FREA unit. If your area does not have a local FREA Unit, email the FREA Office info@frea.org for information. Please join us in spreading the uplifting love of lifelong learning.

Thank you to all! *Monica*

"There is no such thing as a child who hates to read; there are only children who have not found the right book."
— Frank Serafini



FREA Units from every corner of the State embrace the giving spirit and energy of the Margaret Poppell Literacy for Life Project. These are just a few of the pictures of the project's amazing reach. Top left : One of the Unit personalized bookplates on a book given by Sarasota CREA. Bottom right, Escambia CREA Members gather for a Bookplate Party to ready their gift of literacy. Bottom left: Sandy Lefkowitz, of Broward CREA gets ready to deliver the books collected by her Unit.

Meet Your 2026-2028 District Director Nominees



District 1: Anita Schmitt—I have a special empathy for non-traditional students due to my own background. I was born in Germany and at the age of 5 was adopted by an American serviceman. In kindergarten, I was a non-English speaking student in an American classroom, with no ESL support. I was raised in Hawaii, which I consider to be home. There, I met my husband who was stationed on Oahu with the US Navy. He was the ONLY reason I was ever going to leave paradise. The next 30 years were spent moving around the world, which we loved, but it made our kids the typical transient military students. Their experience prepared me for dealing with my own students who had similar challenges. They both excelled in public education, and apparently inherited the bug to teach. My daughter currently teaches English in Japan and my son is a professor at UF. I feel so privileged to have been called to be a teacher, and am proud to be a part of the community of generous, compassionate, and devoted educators in Florida who step up to meet any challenge that impedes the optimum education our kids deserve. Though retired from the classroom, I always welcome opportunities to advance the profession and support my colleagues. In addition to being the Escambia Unit President, Anita served as FREA District Director 1 in 2020, and also as FREA State Director from 2022-2024.



District 2 - 2nd Term: Lamar Kirkland—Lamar Kirkland was born in Quincy, Florida, he is the son of the late Ernest Kirkland and Alfronia Bouie-Wilson. He attended the public schools of Gadsden County. He graduated from James A. Shanks High School in 1984. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served 22 honorable years, before retiring in April 2006. While on active duty, he completed his formal education as a non-traditional student. In 2009, Lamar earned an Educational Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. In May 2004, he earned his Master of Arts degree in Human Resources Development from Webster University. Lamar received two Bachelors of Arts degrees from Park University, Business Management, and Human Resource Management, both Cum Laude. Lamar received an Associate of Science degree in Business Administration from Georgia Military College and an Associate of Applied Science degree in Information Resource Management from the Community College of the Air Force. He was recently inducted into the Marquis Who's Who of America.

Lamar served in the education profession for 15 years. During that time, he served in many leadership capacities, including positions as Principal, Assistant Principal for Curriculum, Assistant Principal of Discipline, Physical Education teacher, Tallahassee Community College Quincy Center Manager, and interim City Manager, at Midway, Florida. Currently, he serves as a Cognia school accreditation team member and reports reviewer.

Lamar is married to his wife Germaine and is the father of three beautiful children; son Jalen Kirkland of Macon, Georgia, and daughters Cirsten Jones of Austin, Texas, and Kiersten Kirkland of Tallahassee, Florida.



District 4: Frank Pifer— I am currently serving as the President of Citrus CREA. Since my involvement with Citrus CREA, I have served on the Nominations Committee and as Literacy Chair. I have been responsible for completing the necessary paperwork for the 5th grade writing essay. I have met with every fifth grade teacher in all of our eleven schools and explained the program hoping to get more involvement. I then get our unit's involvement in the scoring and selecting our winning submission. I have implemented a change in how our meetings are conducted by bringing in speakers focused on an interest survey. I have also planned activities every other month to get to know each other better and to learn more about our area. I work with our district's Human Resource Dept. and contact every new retiree, sending them an informational packet detailing what FREA is-how they can help the local unit by joining. It has been an ongoing process but we are growing, even if it is slowly.

My involvement with Aldersgate Emmaus has been a spiritual growth for me. Since I did my Walk in October, 2015 I have worked two teams yearly (spring/fall). I have served as both an assistant table leader and table leader. I am responsible for building relationships with 5-6 other men from different congregations over a 72 hour period. I lead discussions following the talks presented by laity and clergy; presenting all 10 of the laity talks during this period. As the Board representative for Citrus/Hernando counties, I contact members in those districts to keep them informed of the plans for our community: an area from Gainesville to St. Petersburg, across Central Florida to Titusville. We are the oldest and largest Emmaus community in Florida. I have served as Secretary, Treasurer, and Community Lay Director. I am also the Community Trainer, certified by the Upper Room and responsible for training the leaders selected by the board for each of the 4 walks. Preparing their leadership notebooks, and training all of the Lay Directors, Assistant Lay Directors (3), Spiritual Directors, Music Directors, Board Representatives and Outside Coordinators. I serve on the Face-to-Face Board where I select/train leadership for this experience over a four day period targeting people 60 and over who are physically unable to attend a normal Emmaus weekend. Most recently I was the Lead Coach and responsible for recruiting and training, team members; logistics support required to ensure the event was successful.



District 5:-2nd Term: Dr. Don Leech—After 39 years in education, I retired from Valdosta State and Florida public schools. During my career I was a professor of leadership, associate dean, school principal, FL DOE school improvement team leader, district guidance services staff member, and chemistry and math teacher. I served in Baker, Duval, and Union County.

I currently teach leadership part-time at VSU and serve as the President and Legislative Chair of the Nassau CREA. Additionally, I am the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of the Schlechty Center and The National Superintendents Roundtable.

I hold a BS and MAT from Jacksonville University and an Ed.D. from the University of North Florida.

My wife Barbara is a retired librarian in and Volunteer Services Coordinator for NCREA. Our daughter Katelyn is a Spanish teacher. I enjoy spending time with family and friends and "playing at" golf.



District 7: Carolyn Duncan After 27 years, I returned to teaching and received quite a culture shock. I had taught after college and before IDEA and IEP's. Coming back to Exceptional Student Education required some catch up, as you can imagine. I worked at the high school level, then moved to middle school to become the ESE Department Chair. Each year it was a surprise if, or what, I would teach. At the high school I had fun sponsoring the Key Club. At middle school I started and sponsored the Builders Club. While there I also earned a master's degree in educational leadership. It is wonderful to maintain friendships from those years. These were the people who supported me and helped me navigate the complexities of education.

Volunteerism has been important throughout my life, beginning with teaching blind children to swim when I was in junior high school. In college I helped start a program through the Red Cross where we showed movies on school playgrounds during summer evenings. We decorated and drove a donated hearse to announce the movies! Tutoring has been a significant part of volunteering. For many years I have been tutoring adults in English as a Second Language through The Literacy Council of Sarasota. As a member of Sarasota Retired Educators Association, I have been honored to serve as Secretary and Co-President. I began Night on the Town activities to attend theaters. I have served various other committees. The friendships and opportunities available through SREA and FREA are so important to me. I have met amazing people.

Retirement has allowed my husband and me more time to travel. New Zealand and French Polynesia have been favorites, but everywhere we have been has offered incredible learning opportunities and lots of joy.



The St. Lucie CREA Cupid Crew is ready to spread some smiles using a box filled with hundreds of roses. Each rose will be wrapped in tissue, secured with a ribbon and handed with a handwritten card, a smile, and usually a hug, to the recipient who will know that they are not forgotten.



We Are Here to Grow FREA!

AMBA is excited to continue partnering with FREA Units across Florida in 2026. We would love to attend and speak at Unit meetings, luncheons, or special events anywhere in the state. To help support attendance and engagement, AMBA will send 500–1,000 postcards to members or non-members promoting your event, and we will also bring fun giveaways for attendees. Units can email me directly to coordinate scheduling. Lexie.Mowery@getamba.com or 561-722-1239.



Lexie Mowery
AVP Association
Relations & Marketing



Jeff Hesse (pictured at left and right with Broward and Palm Beach members) and I also want to extend our appreciation to the BCREA Scholarship Fundraiser Luncheon on 02/05/2026 and the Palm Beach County REA Chapter Meeting on 02/12/2026 for having us. We look forward to being at the upcoming BCREA Unit Meeting on 03/05/2026 and continuing to connect with members throughout 2026. We truly value our FREA partnership and appreciate the opportunity to be involved.



Our next webinar is scheduled for Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at 1:00 PM EST titled “Guarding Your Nest Egg: Smarter Ways to

Protect Your Savings.” You worked hard to build your savings—now make sure it lasts. This session uncovers the biggest financial threats retirees face and how to stay ahead of them.

You'll learn:

- The top 5 risks to retirement savings
- How to plan for inflation, healthcare costs, and more
- Smart strategies to keep your money working for you
- Protect your nest egg and enjoy the retirement you've earned.
- Here is the registration link: https://ambabenefits.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_rCRPE4VhTWywmkbjHw5npA

Our **April webinar is April 15 at 1:00 PM EST** and is on a subject important to all of us. Aging in Place— How to Live Safely in Your Home. Most retirees want to live at home for as long as possible. But very few homes are truly ready. This session will help you create a safer, more secure space so you can remain independent longer.

You'll learn:

- Easy home updates that make a big difference
- How to organize essential documents
- Ways to protect your savings while staying independent
- Build a safer future right where you are.

Here is the registration link: https://ambabenefits.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_gCeGX91uRxWh3CUzMa5ERA

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2	3	4	5
	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!
	8	9	10	11	12
	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!
	15	16	17	18	19
	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!
	22	23	24	25	26
	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!	BUSY!
	29	30	31		

Can't Attend the Webinar?

I am always amazed at how busy FREA members are. You can register for it anyway, and we will be happy to send you the link to the video recording. We also put them up on the website within 3 business days of the broadcast. After the webinar, the registration link for that webinar is changed to a YouTube link that is the recording of the webinar. www.frea.org/webinars

In Memory

October 27, 2025 ~ February 28, 2026

First Name	Last Name	Default City	Primary Business
Darline	Utry	Pompano Beach	Broward CREA
Jerry	Bryant	Cumming	Central Brevard REA
Bobby	Bell	Pensacola	Escambia CREA
Martha	Sanders	Pensacola	Escambia CREA
Nettie	Mc Culley	Pensacola Beach	Escambia CREA
Earlene	Knight	Monticello	Jefferson CREA
Kent	Watson	Monticello	Jefferson CREA
Mathye	Mc Cloud	Lamont	Jefferson CREA
Judith	Renwick	Tallahassee	Leon/Wakulla REA
Hank	Salzler	Jensen Beach	Martin CREA
David	Reams	Miami	Miami-Dade CREA
Mary Louise	Kelly	Clearwater	North Pinellas REA
Joyce	Johnson	Orlando	Orange CREA
Robert	Ford	Oviedo	Orange CREA
Bettye	Bryant	W Palm Beach	Palm Beach CREA
Judith	Deal	Greenacres	Palm Beach CREA
Sarah	Lawrence	W Palm Beach	Palm Beach CREA
Jean	Addington	Lakeland	Polk REA Unit I
Donald	Tutt	Orange City	West Volusia CREA
Dorothy	Gallagher	Palm Coast	Member at Large
Harold	Reddick	St Petersburg	Member at Large

**“NOT ALL OF US
CAN DO GREAT
THINGS. BUT WE
CAN DO SMALL
THINGS WITH GREAT
LOVE.”**

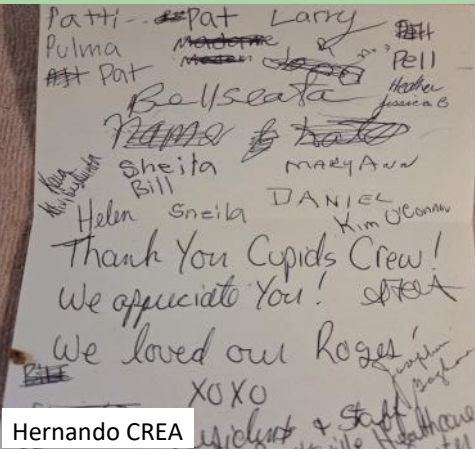
- MOTHER TERESA

We bid good-bye to those who go before us, and honor them by continuing in the tradition of Ethel Percy Andrus.

“To Serve, Not To Be Served”



North Pinellas CREA



Hernando CREA



Orange CREA



Florida Retired Educators
Association
8950 9th St. N #105
St. Petersburg, FL 33702
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



**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**

**FLORIDA RETIRED
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
(727) 577-6400
www.FREA.org — info@frea.org
**Bulletin submissions sent
to:
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.

FREA State Office

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The Final Word



Cupid Crew 2026 Delivers Smiles For Miles

Sue Colton, District 10 Director received this heartfelt note from one of our Cupid Crew recipients. Whether the appreciation was verbal or written, Cupid Crew participants both felt and gave the love to let many people know that they are of value and are still thought of.

"Thank you so very much for the lovely yellow roses that your member delivered to my villa on Valentine's Day. It was very thoughtful of the association to remember me in such a nice way. Those roses are still very much in bloom and are a complete delight for me, as I am somewhat incapacitated in walking very far. Physical therapy still visits me 2 times a week. Blessings to all of you always," Lee H.

The FREA Mission

- ♦ To safeguard the strength of the Florida Retirement System
- ♦ To support public education in Florida
- ♦ To provide fellowship opportunities
- ♦ To encourage community involvement
- ♦ To be a source of information and materials