

# THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

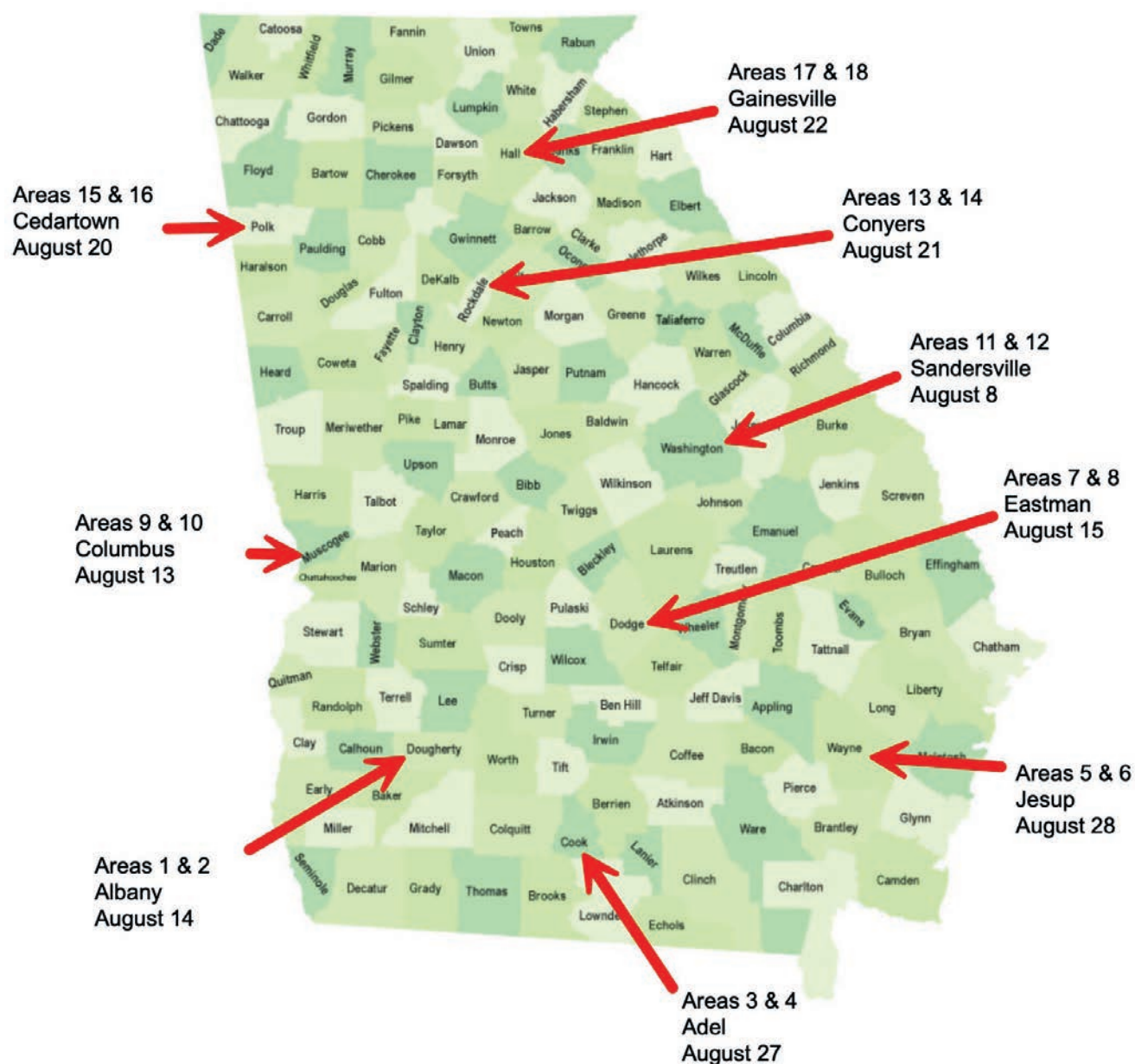


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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

FALL 2024

## On the Road AGAIN!



The GRE A Travel Team, also known as Grant's Gearheads, of President Shirley Grant, President-Elect Geraldine Reid, Executive Director Bill Sloan, and Director of Communications Johnny Smith spent four weeks on the road crisscrossing the state for our annual Area Meetings. Hurricane Debby slowed us but did not stop us! GRE A Photographers Janet Graham and Joe Moore met us each day at the meeting location. We were joined by TRS Representative Mike Zarem, assisted by Dr. Candace Jackson and Winston Buckley, along with AMBA representatives Cristen Cochran, Lisa McKenzie, Debbie Scarborough and LeeAnn Sturtz. We had a GRE A-t time talking with local units and connecting names with faces. It was wonderful seeing all the areas embracing this year's theme of "Hats Off to Educators!"

## A Message from the President

by Shirley Grant, President



Shirley Grant

Happy Fall Y'all and Hats Off to All GREA members. August was a busy month for our GREA traveling team which consisted of Dr. Bill Sloan, Johnny Smith, Geraldine Reid, Mike Zarem, an AMBA Representative, a Make-A-Wish Volunteer, and myself. We traveled many miles from one end of the state to the other as we met nine times with two areas at each meeting.

Each Area Director in charge of the planning for these meetings did an outstanding job with decorations, the meal, the program, and even informing members about wearing their hats. Thank you so much for focusing on my theme, HATS OFF TO EDUCATORS, because it was such a joy to see so many kinds of hats. After all, as educators, we do wear many kinds of hats, don't we?

The acronym REAL (Retired Educators Are Leaders) simply defines the core of GREA because this describes you as members. All of you are leaders every day as you engage in Fellowship, Service, and Support for GREA.

Our retirement system continues to be in good hands based on facts reported by Dr. Buster Evans and representatives from TRS. Currently our retirement system ranks 23rd in the nation with hopes of moving higher in the future.

If we are all working together as a team, we can accomplish a job worth doing, and a success worth reaching. The mission statement for my humanitarian project, Make-A-Wish, simply says, "Together we create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses."

For this reason, my wish is that each of your units will become involved and help me raise the suggested funds for your area so that our final check next May will be one that GREA will be proud. Each donation moves us closer to granting the wish of every eligible child. The goal for 2024-2025 is 500 wishes.

It has truly been an honor and privilege to serve as your GREA president thus far, and I look forward to the completion of my duties and responsibilities for 2024-2025. I will be seeing many of you as I visit your scheduled meeting dates. Also, the Fall Conference is coming up in October at Brasstown Resort in Blairsville, GA. Until then, stay safe, and I leave you with this thought, one of the best parts about being retired is never having to request time off!

PROUD PARTNER OF



## A Word from the President-elect

by Geraldine Reide, President-elect.



Geraldine Reide

It is my privilege and honor to serve you as your President-Elect. My name is Geraldine Reid. My friends call me "Jerry." I was born in Ohio, and I am the fourth child out of six siblings. I went to kindergarten through 12th grades and attended Ohio University in Athens, Ohio and received a BS in Elementary Education K-8.

After receiving my degree in Elementary Education, I moved to Georgia to begin my career in the field of education. My highest degree is Education Specialist Educational Administration and Supervision, I taught 3rd grade to 8th grades. I taught 31 years and retired in 2009.

I joined Georgia Retired Educators Association and my local Tri-County Glascock McDuffie and Warren REA. On the local level Tri-County REA I served as President-Elect and President for five different years. On the state level I served as an Area Director 12 for four years and elected to the Georgia Retired Educators Museum.

My late husband Johnny Martin Reid, Jr. was the love of my life. We traveled to all the continents with the exception of Antarctica. We also camped all over the United States. We celebrated 28 years of marriage.

One of my greatest achievements was in March of 2008 when I was invited to the Roundtable in Oxford, England to attend the session on Early Childhood Education. During the Roundtable I lead a discussion group. The sessions were held in the Rhodes House. Only scholars are invited into this house.

I look forward to serve as President-Elect to unite retired educators in Georgia for fellowship, support, educational/community service, and to improve benefits for all retired educators through cooperation with local, state, and national organizations.

## TRS News - Returns, Retiring, and Returning

by L.C. (Buster) Evans, Ed.D.

September 2024



Buster Evans

Hello to our GREA friends across Georgia! First, let me say that it was great to see some of our retirees recently at the GREA area 7 and 8 meeting! Having spent both my childhood and much of my adult work life in middle Georgia, I have so many wonderful friends in that area, and reuniting with several during my visit was such a pleasure. Additionally, our other TRS team members who got to spend time with the GREA regional attendees have shared what a wonderful experience that this was for them as well. Thanks for your continued friendship and hospitality! In this article, I want to give you an update on

Returns, Retiring, and Returning. Read on with me, please, to see where we go with this!

**Returns.** I am not sure that I've ever met anyone who genuinely didn't want to make more money. Oh, some are more driven than others, but having enough money to live, pay our bills, and help others is important. Making money on the investments of our retirement system, or for one's other retirement investments for that matter, is important. As far as I am aware, most every retirement plan, be it a Defined Benefit or Defined Contribution (401K, etc.), depends on making a return on its investments in order to be sustainable for current and future retirees. This has been a really good year for most investors, and it has been a really good year for our retirement system. Our year ending return on our investments was 14.5% which marks two consecutive years of double-digit returns! Such returns on our investments helps to enhance our plan's ability to continue to pay benefits, COLA's, and improve its funding ratio! Based on the success of other retirement plans whose returns I have seen in recent weeks, it certainly appears that our returns will be among the best in the nation. That's good news for all of us!

**Retiring.** I want to heartily congratulate the new 2024 retirees. Some 6,500 new retirees have joined the ranks of being a "retired educator." The number of our new retirees this year went up by approximately 177 retirees; however, this follows two consecutive years of declines in the number of people retiring in our system. This is a special, and hopefully, rewarding and happy time of life for an educator. For the rest of your lives, you can cherish the knowledge that you have influenced the lives of literally thousands of young people in your educational careers while also receiving a monthly benefit if you are a TRS retiree. You've educated professionals in all walks of the work life who have transitioned into being successful adults. I can think of no life work that is of greater importance. Thank you for your service as an educator!

**Returning.** As a retired educator, you should be aware that in both Georgia and across the nation, there is an ongoing teacher shortage. One of the ways this teacher shortage is partially alleviated is through allowing retirees to return to work and continue to draw their retirement benefit. Seemingly seeing more states, including Georgia, have relaxed return to work rules to help with the teacher shortage. We have had approximately 382 retired teachers return to work last year as a full-time teacher in a critical needs field in accordance with the provision set forth in Georgia law.

Interestingly, we have had a record number of retirees return to work part-time this past year. A whopping 15,000 retired educators have been approved to return to work under these part time work provisions. Retired educators serve an extremely valuable function in helping to ensure that we have quality educators in Georgia's classrooms. We hypothesize that this number has increased due to 1) higher

than normal inflation over the past few years, and 2) the continued and growing teacher shortage in our state and nation.

In closing, let me say a sincere "thank you" for your work as a Georgia educator! Thank you for the privilege that our team has in serving you as a retired educator. Finally, remember one of my favorite quotes: "retired educators are some of the happiest people I know!"

## Ramblin' Around with the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



*William Sloan*

Good morning GREA members! There is just a hint of Fall weather in the air today. It is feeling good in Northeast Georgia! I always look forward to the changing of the seasons as it is very distinct in our area. Some leaves are already trying to change a little and some are already falling. I like the fall weather the best of any.

We just finished nine area meetings, and they all were super! The first time I can ever remember having to work around a hurricane but luckily, we were able to reschedule two of our meetings that were postponed for 3 weeks. Thanks to all of you who attended and especially to those area directors and local units that oversaw the meetings. Food and Hospitality was tremendous. Our traveling crew of eight people greatly enjoyed seeing all of you.

President Grant's agenda of "Hats of to Educators" has been warmly received. I love the way you have adopted her theme and seeing people wearing their different hats. You all looked great! She chose to wear hats this year rather than T-shirts. It was a wonderful idea, and our members seem to really like it. Many local units have done their own T-Shirts this year and they looked great at the area meetings. In the future that might be the way to go and let each unit design their own shirts and pass the business on to your local business community!

Membership has started to grow again after a slow period after Covid! We are ahead of last year's pace by over one hundred new members above this time last year. I especially want to thank AMBA for their continuous efforts to help us gain members. The political power that a large membership provides is essential for our organization.

Thanks to Dr. Buster Evans, TRS Executive Director, and his staff for their outstanding efforts to make our TRS system one of the best in the nation. We have assets of over \$109 billion dollars, and you never have to worry about your pension. It is safe!

Please continue to pray for the entire Apalachee High School community in Barrow County. The mass shooting was a horrible event, and it will be years in the recover stage. The effect of this event was far reaching as the wife of the Coach, who lost his life, teaches at a school here in Hall

County where my granddaughter goes to school. It had a tremendous effect on that student body.

Being a teacher today has a far different feel than when most of us were there. This is just another good reason for us to continue to say thank you to our active educators! Being a teacher is hard and they deserve respect and thanks for what they do every day! GREA gives each local unit \$250 to spend on local educators in each community. This is a small amount, but the GREA staff hopes to continue increasing this each year. You can help us support our active teachers by helping recruit new members for GREA. New members bring more dues money which in return can be sent back to local units to say thanks to active educators.

GREA is a wonderful organization that is full of wonderful retirees who do great things in our communities. Your GREA leadership team thanks you for it and hopes you will continue to make a difference. It is always a great day to be retired in Georgia!

## GRE Foundation

by Barbara Wilcher, President



Barbara Wilcher

On behalf of the Georgia Retired Educators Foundation, Inc., I would like to thank all local units and individuals who contributed to the Silent Auction at the GREA Convention by supplying items, by making a purchase or by making a monetary donation. With your help, we raised a little over \$4,300 dollars. Hat's Off

to GREA!

The GRE Foundation will oversee the Silent Auction again, and we are asking for your support. I am asking that each GREA Convention attendee make at least a \$20 donation to the GRE Foundation if you are not the highest bidder on an item. This will help us reach our goal of awarding 20 scholarships annually. When purchasing items at the silent auction, **we can only accept cash or check.**

Please remember to mail all contributions to the GRE Foundation to Dr. William Gardner, 11 Springer Way, Rocky Face, Georgia 30740. Also, please feel free to bring several items for the auction. It has been said that "One man's junk is another man's treasure." In other words, you might not be able to use the items you donate, but someone else can.

The GRE Foundation is in dire need of new members. Due to health reasons, several members need to resign from the board. If you are interested in serving, please contact Patricia Bassett at 478-837-3237, or [patriciajune6@gmail.com](mailto:patriciajune6@gmail.com); or me, Barbara T. Wilcher at 706-361-3418, or via email at [Watusi50@att.net](mailto:Watusi50@att.net). This is a three-year commitment. All expenses are out of pocket.

Again, thank you for supporting the GRE Foundation, Inc. **Hat's off to each of you!**

## News From GREA Local Units

**Ben Hill-Irwin REA** held their planning meeting, July 25, 2024, for the 2024-2025 year. Members in attendance discussed several ideas for a GREAT year ahead. Each meeting will be held the 2nd Wednesday of September, October, November, February, March and April, at 10:30 A.M. Looking forward to a GREAT! year.

**Bibb REA** members were told to "Get on the Bus." We did and rode successfully through the year of 2023-2024. Several members served as delegates and attended the 64th convention in Athens, GA. Now we say "Hats Off to Educators" for 2024-2025. The executive leadership meeting was held on July 19, 2024, to implement plans for the upcoming year. We attended the Area 7 & 8 workshop in Eastman, GA. It was a very informative meeting of fellowship and learning. We wore hats to support our State President, Shirley Grant. A delicious lunch was enjoyed by all attendees. We are now geared up to host a reception for the newly retired educators of Bibb County. They will receive certificates, membership forms, and information for joining BREA and GREA. Bibb REA was deeply saddened by the passing of our beloved Past President Dr. Joyce T. Wesley on August 28, 2024. Dr. Wesley served on several committees in BREA and GREA. Namely, she served on GREA Necrology and the 2018 convention planning committee. She was a great asset to BREA until her health failed. Our membership meetings will be held the second Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon. Looking forward to a great 2025 year.

**Bulloch REA's** membership committee has diligently been working on recruiting new members this summer. Our planning meeting was held on Wednesday, July 17 with the following 10 members in attendance: Julie Lanier, Beth Persinger, Johnny Tremble, Gwendolyn Yarbrough, Sarah Hines, Priscilla Clifton, Pam Bland, Wilhemina Walker, Alison Goggans, and Glennera Martin. Lots of great ideas discussed for the upcoming year! Gwendolyn Yarbrough, Johnny Tremble, and Pam Bland attended the Area Meeting for 5 and 6 on Wednesday, August 28 in Jesup, GA. We heard valuable information from the speakers and enjoyed a delicious meal and fellowship with other REA members. The Bulloch Retired Educators Scholarship Foundation, Inc. (BRESFI) committee kicked off the new year with a Zoom meeting on Thursday, September 5. Our first Bulloch REA meeting of the 2024-25 year will be on Wednesday, September 11 at 11:30 a.m. at Pittman Park United Methodist Church. We are excited to hear from our two speakers Liz Corbett, founder of The Button, and Fay Blythe, Georgia's top school nurse from Statesboro! Also, it will be fun to see members wearing their cool hats! A reminder for attendees to please bring their "dollars for scholars" to the meeting. Bulloch REA...Let's work extra hard to raise funds for "Make a Wish Georgia" which is state president, Shirley Grant's, humanitarian project. This is such a worthwhile association that helps grant the wishes of critically ill children between the ages 2 ½ to 18 years old!!!

**Burke County REA** members attended the XI & XII Area Meeting on August 8th at Oconee Fall Line Technical College. We all wore hats and marched in the “Hat Parade.” Our first meeting was held Sept. 5th and hats were on again! The speaker was Sheriff Alphonso Williams who shared vital information regarding “Crime Prevention for Seniors.” We will continue to strive for “Unit of Distinction.”

**Chatham REA** held its Transition/Leadership Planning meeting for the 2024-2025 year on July 29, 2024. Chatham REA was well represented at the GREA Area 5 & 6 meeting held in Jesup, GA on August 28, 2024. The first Chatham REA meeting will be held on September 9, 2024, where President, Princetta Simmons will present the GREA and Chatham REA goals, the Unit activities, and the schedule of Volunteer and Service Projects. A “Welcome to Chatham REA” reception for new Retirees will be held in October. Chatham REA Members continue to be actively engaged in community projects. Throughout the year, members collect school supplies for students, donate clothing and other items for children and adults to local shelters, and provide snacks to Educators during Staff Planning Days. Chatham REA members will also volunteer in October at P.A.C.K. (People of Action Caring for Kids), an organization that helps children in crisis situations. Chatham REA is looking forward to a busy and exciting year!

**Cherokee REA** enjoyed their first meeting of the new season Wednesday, September 4, at Reinhardt University while wearing their favorite sports team hat wear. The program opened with the Cherokee High School Air Force JROTC color guard leading with the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a slide show and remarks from cadets regarding programs they are involved in at the school. EF2 Realty personnel shared information on how they return money to schools or school programs their buyers choose with special emphasis on providing for our school system preschool, Ralph Bunche Center, in Canton. This was followed by remarks from LeeAnn Sturtz, AMBA benefits advisor, celebrating educators for all the many hats worn by them. A video clip of local business owner, Mr. Marco Rossi, who championed a fundraiser for Woodstock Wishes, was presented to encourage members to embrace this year’s humanitarian project, Make a Wish Georgia, which was selected by GREA President Shirley Grant. A buffet lunch and prizes were enjoyed by the members.

**Coweta REA** is ready to tip our hats to all educators—past, present, and future—with a full calendar of programs and activities to offer support, service, and fellowship within our unit and the community. Our first big project, of course, was to assist Area Directors Marietta Webb (9) and Sherry Taylor (10) in hosting the August 13th joint meeting in Columbus. Held at a beautifully, it featured informative speeches by the GREA travel team and concluded with a delicious Southern meal. At CARE’s September 10th meeting, a new slate of officers was installed for 2024-2026, and both old and new retirees were celebrated with a salad luncheon (This unit thrives on food and fellowship). Each monthly meeting will emphasize a theme and service project that supports

President Shirley Grant’s goals as well as her logo and GREA’s motto: September—Membership; October—Public Safety; November—Veterans; December—Christmas Bazaar (Create and Bake); January—Backpack Buddies; February—Make a Wish; March—Barbecue Scholarship Fundraiser; April—Teacher Appreciation; and May—Congratulations Scholarship Recipients. Until next time, pardon us, we are off shopping for hats.

**Dalton Whitfield Murray REA** President Gary Cochran, President Elect Pete Adams, Past President Sandra Derrick, and CRM Marketing Agnes Richmond met in June to plan for the upcoming newsletter agenda for 2024-2025. DWMREA members Gary Cochran and Sandra Derrick attended the GREA unit president’s meeting in July in Dalton. GREA Unit 16 Area Director, Becky Oliver, presided at the meeting. Richard Rogers, France Adams, and Pete Adams attended the GREA Area 15/16 meeting in August in Cedartown.

**Dooly County REA** is off to a great start. We are so excited about this year’s theme (Hats off to Educators). We would like to take our Hats Off to our very own Educator, Sharron Marcus. Mrs. Marcus is now a published author. She has published a book entitled the Joy of Teaching. It is available on Amazon. This is a great book for new teachers, as well as experienced teachers. DREA encourages you to purchase this book and add it to your personal library.

**Dougherty County REA** attended the Georgia Retired Educators Association Annual Areas I & II meeting for the 2024 - 2025 year on Wednesday, August 14, 2024. This informative meeting was held at the Albany Technical College in the Kirkland Conference Center. The GREA State Officials provided very informative material in the areas of retirement, benefits, legislative decisions, and other pertinent information. All local unit members wore hats in honor of the work that is done by educators everywhere.

**Effingham REA** began the new year with an annual banquet in September to celebrate our 50th Anniversary of Effingham County Retired Educators. We had 65 in attendance to honor this great milestone! Many past presidents were recognized for their leadership and dedication in building a firm foundation for our unit, and for their continued support in maintaining a strong and healthy unit. We held our election of officers for the 2024-2025 year. Our new President is Beth Kight, President-Elect is Debbie Snooks, Secretary is Suellen Exley, and Treasurer is Wallace Blackstock. We welcomed our new Area Director, Gwendolyn Yarborough, and look forward to working with her. It’s GREAT to be in EREA!

**Fannin County REA** met on July 17th and welcomed J.K. Davenport from the Fannin County Sheriff’s Office. He presented an informative program on “Common Fraud and Scams Targeting Seniors” and fielded several questions from members. Membership chair Becky Oliver welcomed two new members Kim Stube and Ron Bolin.

**Fayette County REA** met on September 12 with a rousing performance by the Executive Committee. The Fabulous

FCREA Chorale performed a lively rendition of “There’s No Teachers Like Our Teachers!”, sung to the tune of “There’s No Business Like Show Business”. The Chorale entertained our group, complete with canes and top hats! AMBA also provided brunch and an informative session about their services. What a great way to kick off the new year! Hats Off to Teachers!

**Floyd-Rome REA** had a great year with four members attending the GREA state convention in Athens. Our May meeting was held at the Spires at Berry College with a memorial service by the Necrology committee and installation of officers by our Area 15 Director, Frank Hutcheson. We had a record attendance of 91 for the year at this meeting. We also had five members to attend The Area 15 and Area 16 Cluster meeting at the Cherokee Golf and Country Club in Cedartown, hosted by Haralson/Bremen REA.

**Grady REA** recently hosted Occupational therapist Megan Beall of Cairo Physical Therapy (CPT) at their spring meeting. Beall shared information about the various services that CPT offers, which include therapy in the fields of physical, occupational, and speech therapy. Optimum health goals are a challenge for everyone because they are impacted by uncontrollable facts such as stress, disease, disasters, accidents, birth disorders, and more. The many therapies offered at CPT assist in strengthening self and healing through instruction, assistance, challenging exercise, and positive interactions with staff. In addition to exercise, electrical stimulation to reeducate the muscles and dry needling are also available.

**Griffin-Spalding REA** is excited to begin our year as a 2023-2024 Unit of Distinction, led by our venerable president, Mrs. Leola Hill! We are looking forward to starting our year in September with a program of member education centered around AMBA, goals for the year, the new handbook and we will conduct our memorial. We will place renewed emphasis on recruiting new members and reclaiming inactive members. Nine members attended the Areas 9 and 10 meeting: Sandra Drake, Frances Dunham, Charlotte Eady, Leola Hill, Portia Lacy, Edna Lightfoot, Florence Lyons and Suzette McClure. Additionally, several members participated in “Day One in the District” to welcome students back to school. Hats off to each volunteer!

**Gwinnett REA** says join us this year for our luncheons and programs to make life more enjoyable. Most are held at Sugarloaf Country Club. Send us a message if you would like an invitation. We are one of the largest school districts in Georgia with amazing retirees. Our retirees have great team spirit and want to share the joy of being retired with others. Our programs this year will include health, fitness, finance and information to keep us current on issues. We will have speakers from various areas including updates from legislators. Join us for some fun events in 2024. We will be walking to end Alzheimer’s on October 26th. It starts and ends in Suwanee Town Center. To walk with us register at Alzheimer’s walk for team GCREA! Walk is free. If you wish you can donate to the Alzheimer’s Foundation. Then in November we will

have a fundraiser auction that is always so much fun. So many interesting items! We can send you an invitation if you want to have fun and buy great items and baskets! The best thing about our meetings are you don’t have to go to work at sunrise in the morning!

**Lamar REA** attended our Areas 7 and 8 Meeting held on August 15th at the Terry L. Coleman Conference Center (1670 College Street) Eastman, GA. It was hosted by Dodge Retired Educators Association where Dr. Melinda Dennis is President. Eight Lamar REA members attended- President Hester Cooper, Margaret Flewellyn, Janet Graham, Merrra Lyons, Barbara Minter, Linda Olivier, Kelly Turner, and Kay Washington. Each Unit provided a door prize. Margaret Flewellyn (Lamar REA) was the recipient of one of the prizes. Each attendee was encouraged to wear a hat. Dawn Evans (Dodge REA) and several members of Dodge REA shared a book by Eileen Spinelli, Do You Have a Hat? There were also several speakers during this meeting including, GREA President, Shirley Grant; GREA President-Elect, Geraldine Reid; GREA Director Communications, Johnny Smith; REA Executive Director, Dr. Bill Sloan; From Teacher Retirement System of Georgia, Dr. Candance Jackson; and from AMBA Lisa McKenzie and Debbie Scarborough. We enjoyed a wonderful lunch and then traveled back home. Hats Off to Dodge REA for providing a wonderful venue and planning a most informative meeting!

**Muscogee REA** members attended and participated in the Area 9 and 10 District GREA Meeting held Tuesday, August 13, 2024. Dr. Marietta Webb, Area 9 Director welcomed everyone to the meeting as well as Ms. Sherry Taylor, Area 10 Director, Dr. David Lewis, Muscogee County School District Superintendent, and Dr. Mary Avery, President of Muscogee REA. Speakers included GREA President Mrs. Shirley Grant, GREA President-Elect Mrs. Geraldine Reid, TRS representative Candice Jackson, Executive Director of GREA Dr. Bill Sloan, GREA Communications Director Mr. Johnny Smith, AMBA representative Ms. LeAnn Sturtz, and Make A Wish Foundation Representative Gina Dewberry. An invocation was given by the Reverend Thad Haygood, Senior Pastor at St. Luke Church, and everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by the St. Luke Church Food Service Staff.

**Oglethorpe County REA** held our first meeting of the 2024-2025 year on August 13th at Countryside Catering in Winterville, GA after a very productive planning meeting in June. We welcomed our new member present, Denakae Jenkins, as well as several of our faithful friends. We celebrated our new president, Shirley Grant’s theme for this year – Hats off to Educators! – and discussed her goals for GREA, specially Make a Wish – Georgia. We chose our new scholarship readers for this year, discussed our new Blessings and Brags Bag recipient for this year. (Local Goal) We chose to donate to the Oglethorpe County Library summer program. We also discussed our guests for the year and began to plan for OCEA’s 50th anniversary in April. All members were encouraged to volunteer more within the schools as readers, mentors, or whatever support may be needed. We ended our meeting

with a great homemade lunch and spent the remainder of our time catching up and making table center pieces for the Area 17 & 18 Meeting. Looking forward to our next meeting on October 8th when we will be given a CPR demonstration by Dawn Scarborough and hear from Oglethorpe County Schools district nurse, Kristina Turner, about the grant for the new student clinic.

**Polk REA** held their first meeting of the 2024-2025 year with 34 in attendance. Over 200 composition books were donated by members this month that will be distributed at a Back-to-School event sponsored by Polk School District. The first program of the year was presented by Leanne Ferguson on Fitness for Seniors. Members learned breathing exercises, tension exercises and simple routines using resistance bands. Ms. Ferguson was assisted by Ms. Kitty York, a participant in Ms. Ferguson's aerobics class and a Polk School District retired educator. Past-President Dr. Sherri Garrett explained the "Hats off to Educators" theme and our plans to wear themed hats at each monthly meeting. It was a great first meeting of the year!!

**Rockdale REA** has had an active time summer. Our new co-presidents, Mary Greco and Robin Berry, were installed at our June. Their most immediate project was planning the Area 13 and 14 Meeting that was held in August at Rockdale. The meeting was a success. Rockdale had 14 of its members present on the day of the meeting to help with running things. Conyers mayor Vince Evans welcomed everyone to Conyers. Area 14 Director Terri Adkins introduced the speakers that included GREA President Shirley Grant, GREA President-elect Geraldine Reid, Make-a-Wish representative Shaun Reid, TRS Representative Mike Zarem, and AMBA representative Lisa McKenzie. Also speaking from the GREA office were Director of Communications Johnny Smith and Executive Director Bill Sloan. RREA continues to work on our local service projects. Our "Welcome to Rockdale" committee, in early August delivered over 100 "Goodie Bags" to elementary teachers new to Rockdale. RREA continues to collect and donate food items to Rockdale Emergency Relief, having donated 200 food items since April 1st. Our "Pink Pig" collection of money at our meetings has totaled \$127 since April 1st. Seventy-two dollars collected at our April to July meetings was donated to the Rockdale Emergency Relief Food Bank. The \$55 collected at our August meeting was donate to a different local service organization, Shelley's Kids. RREA continues "Dress Up" days for our monthly meetings. We also have continued to close of monthly meetings with our "Game Time" activity.

**Tri-County REA** held our first meeting of 2024-2025 year on September 5 at 10:30 a.m. at Thomson-McDuffie Library in Thomson, Georgia. Dr. Denise Pennywell, Tri-County REA's president called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Valerie Marshall, our Treasurer, provided a variety of snacks, chips and drinks for everyone before the start of the meeting. We were blessed with a beautiful devotion from Georgia Sturgis. It was a great pleasure to have as our guest speaker Johnny Smith, GREA's Director of Communication who provided us with helpful information

concerning communication. Along with twenty-one members, the meeting also included our Area 12 Director, Dr. Roger Williams and GREA's President-Elect Geraldine Reid. After the business session, reports were given by each committee chair. Tri-County's meeting concluded with the giving away of awesome door prizes! Our next meeting will be Thursday, October 3, 2025. Tri-County REA invites you to join us as we fellowship, serve, and support our local communities.

**Valdosta Lowndes REA** Executive Board met three times during the summer break to plan the calendar for 2-2024-2025 and prepare the proposed budget to present at our first meeting scheduled for Monday, September 9th. On June 25, President Stephanie Bivins and President Elect Dr. Beverley Richardson-Blake attended the Area 3 President's Meeting to discuss the details found in the GREA Local Unit Planning Guide 2024-2025 with Area 3 Director, Nancy Taylor. In August, the following members attended the Areas 3 and 4 Meeting in Adel: Beverley Richardson-Blake, Charlie Oliver, Laverne Richardson, Susan Roberson, and Sharon Walker. Hats off to these retired educators! The Valdosta Lowndes Retired Educators Association is looking forward to a productive year.

**"Hats Off to Educators"** is the theme this year for the Georgia Retired Educators Association. **Waycross-Ware County REA** "tipped their hats" for a great welcome back to school at Daffodil Pre-K School. Waycross-Ware County Retired Educators adopted Daffodil Pre-School this year and welcomed the staff back with a delicious breakfast. The retired educators are looking forward to providing a variety of services to the teachers, students, and staff at Daffodil to make the theme **"Hats Off to Educators"** become a reality. Karen Ethridge, the newly elected incoming president, is looking forward to a successful year of service in the community.

**Wayne County REA** had a planning meeting in July and came up with some excellent programs for this year. Several of our members attended the Area 5/6 meeting, which was held in Jesup on August 28th after being rescheduled because of bad weather from Tropical Storm Debby. Our unit has already reached 7% membership increase due to the hard work of June Thomas, our recruitment chairperson. Our first meeting is Monday, September 9, and our Area 5 Director Edna Shurley will be in attendance. We will also hear from Wayne County Tourism's upcoming events, and the Wayne County Retired Educator of the Year will be announced. We are looking forward to meeting our new members!



# GREA 2024 Area Meetings *On the Road Again!*

Areas 1-2

Areas 3-4



Areas 5-6





Areas 7-8



Areas 9-10



Areas 11-12



Areas 13-14



Areas 15-16



Areas 17-18



# GRE Foundation, Inc. Scholarship Winners

The GRE Foundation is happy to announce the ten winners of this year's \$1000 scholarships. Profiles of the winners are available on the GREA website (<https://www.garetirededucators.org/index.php/foundation>). Congratulations to all the scholarship winners.



Minderva Albornas



Katie Buckley



Haley Buxton



Jamie Calloway



Tyler Henry



Erin Hurst



Kimberly Jones



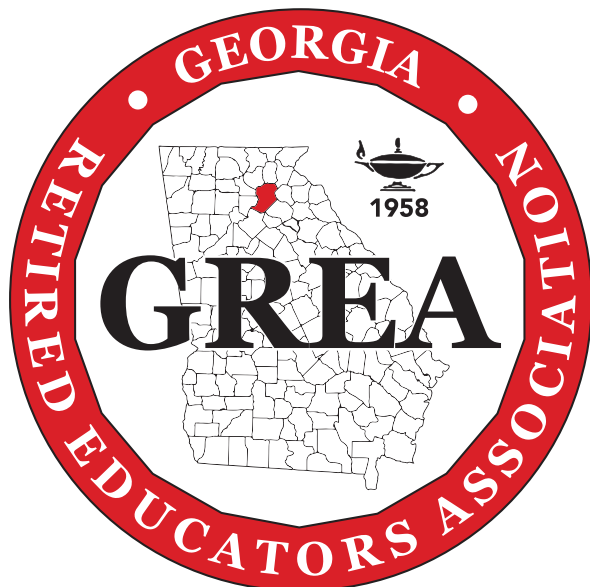
Kiara Pierre



Whitney Phillips



Cheyla Snyder



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## Retired Educators Day in Georgia

It has become a tradition in Georgia for the first Sunday in November to be designated Retired Educators Day. Thanks so much to our Governor, Brian Kemp, for continuing the tradition. He has declared November 3, 2024, as a day to recognize the 145,000+ retirees all across Georgia for their lasting contributions to our state.

## GREA

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Postal rates are rising, so if you do not wish to receive the *Bulletin* or would like to receive it via email, please let us know by emailing us at [greas3@greas3.org](mailto:greas3@greas3.org) and we will be happy to put you on the email list. Thank you for considering getting your *Bulletin* by email.

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### GREA BULLETIN

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*The Only Organization That Concentrates Exclusively On The  
Welfare of Retired Educators of Georgia*  
Johnny Smith, Editor

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