



ECHOES

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Percy Andrus, founder of NRTA in 1947 and AARP in 1958, had as her theme, "To serve; not to be served." That same theme echoes among the members of the Executive Committee and PGCRTA committees who dedicate their time and talent to PGCRTA. The work carried on is appreciated.

Volunteering is an important activity in today's world, especially in the retired community. It can be done in many ways and in many places. We encourage you to advocate for public education, and dedicate time in your busy schedule to help a child or a group of children in a school of your choice. Our help is needed in many schools. But that isn't the only way or place where our talents as former educators can be used. Find the column in this newsletter that is titled COMMUNITY SERVICE. Doris Edwards and Shirley Johnson will share ideas and organizations that can benefit from our talents.

Carl Lancaster, a PGCRTA member and representative on the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Board, spoke at length about the fiscal structure of the system at our November 20th membership meeting. He assured us repeatedly that our money is safe, and that each of us will continue to receive our monthly allotted checks. Using graphs and overhead transparencies to display numerous facts and figures, Carl pointed out the assets of the retirement/pension fund (real estate, investments, and employee contributions). He also showed how the money is divided each month among teachers, state employees, judges, state police, law enforcement officers, local fire and police, and legislators. As of June 30, 2002, the total net assets were \$26.5 billion. This is a drop of \$3 billion from one year ago, but still within the range of allowing the system to meet its obligations. The economy seems to be improving slowly, an encouraging sign for the continued stability of the retirement/pension system.

Alveta S. Jones - President PGCRTA

ANNAPOLIS TRIP, MARCH 6, 2003

Interested in attending the March 7, 2003, trip to the PGCRTA Legislative Day in Annapolis? You may join the group until March 4th, by calling Jan Wundrow at 301-390-7324. The Executive Committee voted to set aside funds for this trip, so there will be NO CHARGE.

We are most pleased that Delegate James Proctor has very graciously sponsored PGCRTA members on this legislative day trip for the past three years and will do so again this March.

We will be leaving the PGCEA building by motorcoach at 8:45 am and returning about 2:45 pm. While in Annapolis, we will sit in on a legislative session, have lunch at the Lowe Office Building, where we will be joined by several of our county representatives, and then tour the Governor's House. In lieu of the tour, you may choose to observe some of the committee hearings in progress, look around the State House on your own, or wander down some of the cobble stone streets of our state capital (a street map will be provided). We will depart for home at 2:15 pm.

Remember, we are lobbyists for retired teachers and senior citizens across Maryland, so come along and voice your concerns, or approvals, to our state legislators.

ASSOCIATION NAME CHANGE

Since other retired employees of Prince George's Public Schools can be members of the Prince George's Retired Teachers Association, we are considering the renaming of the association to be inclusive of all prospective retirees. We invite you to submit any suggestions for a name change. Submit your suggestion by January 8, 2003, to Elinor Ford (202-526-2784) or Jannie Goldston (202-829-8868)

HEALTH BENEFITS CONCERN

When I expressed, at the November Executive Board meeting, my deep concern about Wellpoint's offer to purchase CareFirst, the Board members suggested I write an article for ECHOES.

Wellpoint is a for-profit health insurance company, whereas CareFirst, chartered by the Maryland General Assembly in 1987, is a non-profit with tax-exempt status since it would be concerned about the welfare of its members. Wellpoint has offered to purchase CareFirst for \$1.3 billion.

CareFirst is the health insurer incorporated in Maryland, the District, and Delaware and also has insurers in Northern Virginia. The three jurisdictions must approve the sale. At present all three seemingly have expressed a reluctance. Wellpoint has offered a bonus of \$33.2 million to the officers of CareFirst if the sale is approved. Mr. Jews, the CEO, would receive \$9 million. The General Assembly has legislated that the officers are prohibited from receiving any money from the sale. The Board of Directors of CareFirst, according to an article in the November 24 issue of THE BALTIMORE SUN, had approved the awarding of bonus and severance pay to CareFirst officers in the amount of \$119.6 million, if the sale is approved. Mr. Jews would receive \$39.4 million. A consultant has recommended to Insurance Commissioner Steven Larsen that the \$1.3 billion offer by Wellpoint is too low for the sale.

Commissioner Larsen has been conducting hearings on the sale and is planning to make his recommendations to the Maryland General Assembly in early January. He must try to determine whether the sale will provide the insurance people need. Will premiums or co-pays be increased? Too, will benefits be cut

for those insured by CareFirst?

In the 2002 session the General Assembly indicated through its passed legislation that it has some issues with the sale of CareFirst. Maryland is expecting a \$1.7 billion deficit in 2003. At Commissioner Larsen's hearing, Betty Ann White, MRTA Community Chair, reported that Wellpoint has offered \$65 million to the State. This may influence the decision making process.

MRTA and many other organizations concerned about health and public welfare have expressed opposition to the sale of CareFirst. Doctors and hospitals in Maryland - all but one are non-profit - have also expressed their concern about the sale of CareFirst because of its impact on the health care of the insured.

More than 4,600 Prince George's County Board of Education retirees are enrolled in CareFirst. Losing a non-profit health insurer is not beneficial to the public and should be strongly opposed. We must be duly concerned and each of us should let our elected representative in the General Assembly know that CareFirst should not be sold since it is not in the best interest of those insured by CareFirst.

At the November luncheon meeting, a motion was passed that the organization write a letter to Senator Ulysses Currie, Senate Chairman, Budget and Tax, urging him to oppose the sale of CareFirst.

Allan I. Chotiner
Professional Liaison

BITS AND PIECES

Joyce and Leroy Cowan traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas to attend a family reunion in July. While there, they participated in planned activities that included a walking tour of the historic downtown and a visit to the Little Rock Central High School Museum Center, which detailed events that led to the racial integration of the school in 1957 (a pivotal event in National Civil Rights History). Joyce and Leroy tell us that traveling in this part of the country was a worthwhile, educational experience. They learned that Arkansas boasts of four "C's": caves, colorful countryside, clean lakes and streams, and Bill Clinton !

Maude and Joseph Pinkney were in Los Angeles, California, in October, visiting their daughter and son and new daughter-in-law. While there, they saw a taping of "Dr. Phil and the Other Half". And attended the stage play, "Blue", starring Diana Carroll and Phylica Rashad.

Dara Wooton retired from Morningside Elementary in 1983, subbed until 1991, and taught for the next three years at Our Savior Christian School. Dara and her husband, Edwin, then relocated to Corbin, Kentucky, where she keeps busy playing organ for the Episcopal Church, doing some teaching, and playing Bridge each week. The Wooton's have a motor home and enjoy traveling. They have two children, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Judith Oarr has returned to work part time as a mentoring teacher to ten new teachers at North Western High School. She also enjoys volunteering as a story reader at the elementary school of her two grandchildren.

John Mathena retired as instrumental music

teacher from Andrews Air Force Base Elementary in 1982. Three years later, he and his wife moved to Easton, Maryland, where they enjoy the quieter pace of life. John has one daughter, who is a media specialist in Augusta County, VA.

Charlotte Faison visited Lisbon, Portugal and Barcelona, Spain in October. She toured the highlights in each city and even went to a concert featuring Flamingo Dancers !

Charlie Hudson organized two fun, interesting trips last October. On the first, he was accompanied by Howard and Lorraine Skidmore, Rose Ann Beason, and Jan Wundrow, as he led the group on a boat ride and tour of St. Clement's Island., the 1634 historic home site of the first Marylanders. Charlie's second group of travelers: Frances Wells, Mary Katharine Grafton, Rose Ann Beason, Shirley Johnson, and Doris Wiley, went north to the Canadian border for 5 days and 4 nights. There they toured historic Kingston, Ottawa, the unique Upper Canada Village, Thousand Islands Casino, and sailed on the St. Lawrence River — enjoying each new experience. Upon returning, Charlie and Ann embarked on another trip down the Inside Passage of the US to Florida, which they described as fantastic !

Evelyn Hirrel has found much to occupy her since retiring. She serves as President of the Kingswood Civic Association in Lanham and works as a researcher guidance volunteer at the Library of Congress. Evelyn also likes child-sitting.

Bob Kovalchik retired as a history and social studies teacher and baseball coach from Parkdale High School in 1991, and now works as a docent at the National Air and Space Museum and College Park Aviation Museum. Bob says this is the best job he's ever had, and

invites retirees to come visit either museum for a personalized tour !

Jannette and David Wundrow spent a week in late October, visiting family in cold, snowy Wisconsin.

Donald Conway, a very active member of the American Volkssport Association, has now walked his way through capital cities in 38 states, and accumulated 7500 KM. (WOW !)

In addition to all his travels for walking events, in December, Don and his wife, Joyce, went to Orlando, not to walk, but to celebrate the birth of their first grandchild - a boy!

Yvonne Koolhof retired from Applegrove Elementary in 1985, and moved with her husband, to Naples, Florida. There, Yvonne volunteers at the local school and does some tutoring, mostly in reading. Being an avid reader, she also writes, and has recently completed her first story of juvenile fiction, which she's waiting to have published ! Living beside a canal and growing native plants, Yvonne has become actively involved in the protection of our disappearing wetlands and the natural resource protection areas of the Everglades. She and Russ have enjoyed three Caribbean cruises and a marvelous trip to the United Kingdom. The Koolhof's will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary this year with their four children, six grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Isabella Macpherson and Wanda Antonacci went on quite an adventure to Holland and France. They flew from Dulles Airport to Amsterdam, where they boarded a ship for a nine day river cruise. They marveled at the many sights along the way - the numerous windmills, homes, and beautiful yards. Their cruise carried them back to Amsterdam, where they took a "bullet train" to Paris. For the next three days, Isabella and Wanda toured the

museums and attractions in and around the city. They both agreed that the trip was fun and educational too.

Marcella Mesarick and her friend, Joe Norris, had the unique pleasure of attending the annual reunion of Frederick Sasscer and Upper Marlboro Schools in early November. Marcella taught music at the school in the 1940's. While at the reunion, she enjoyed recalling past experiences with Marie Parisk, Mr. And Mrs. Ogden, and many of her former students.

Pam Enger and her husband, who now live in Ellsworth, Wisconsin, on a 437 acre farm, complete with beef cattle and a trout stream, enjoyed a wonderful trip back to Maryland in October. While here, Pam visited with several friends (including six "ex-cons"- retired Concord teachers), visited a doll crafter, and toured the National Symphony Orchestra's decorator Show House. Pam's mother returned to Wisconsin with her for a visit. On the trip back, they stopped to see family in Indiana and Missouri.

In our last issue we told of Bob Miller's honor of being inducted into the Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame. We must note that in addition, Bob was one of five selected for the GERI award, which means he was judged to have done extraordinary volunteer service . Again, congratulations to Bob.

At the November 20th PGCRTA luncheon meeting at the La Fontaine Bleu , we were pleasantly entertained by the Bowie High School's melodious 20 piece string orchestra - decked out in formal attire.

Jan Wundrow
1007 Packton Lane
Bowie, MD 20716
(dwundrow@erols.com)

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

It is good to see so many attendees at our meetings. We welcomed Marian Bachir, Jeanette Gordy, Sarah Proctor, and Carol W. Shepherd as first timers. Others who have not been before, plan now to come and join us. May we remind you to send us a change of address when you move. The post office does *not* forward ECHOES, and we have no way to find you when you move. Changes of address that we receive, we forward on to MRTA. Alice Hutchinson won the door prize at the November luncheon.

Jane Jones - Membership Chair

IN MEMORIAM

Members:

Evelyn Chambers	09-03-02
Shirley A. Harmon	10-01-02
Marion O. Hunt	10-23-02
Lucille S. McKay	10-05-02
Eleanor R. Sartori	09-25-02

Non-members:

Esther E. Barrett	09-18-02
Cecile Beall	09-18-02
Carolina S. Biba	08-02-02
Richard Bird	11-12-02
Jane Dove	10-10-02
Emma Falcone	10-10-02
Octavia Green	10-11-02
Jose A. Junguera	09-30-02
Mary H. Komesaruk	10-15-02
Catherine Krouse	10-07-02
Donna Krout	10-22-02
Clifford Martin	11-12-02
Irene Morris	08-31-02
Lena Norfolk	11-13-02
Blair P. Overton III	?
Melvin Richter	10-23-02
Robert Stroup	11-10-02
James Williams	08-19-02

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Community Service co-chairs are asking members to join this part of PGCRTA. We need you, the community needs you...GET INVOLVED !

If you need some ideas of projects, events, or organizations in which to volunteer , see the list below. In addition, the January meeting sponsors a non-perishable food drive. The foods collected will be distributed to an organization selected by the committee.

Ideas for Volunteering:

- An ongoing relationship with a caring adult
- Read to a child regularly
- Become an art pal to a young person
- Tutor students who have been ill and need help catching up
- Tutor an adult new reader
- Safe Places to Learn and Grow
- Volunteer to work in a shelter for battered women and children
- Volunteer to be a hall monitor
- Work with your church, or local service agency, to set up counseling sessions for at risk youth on staying alive
- A Healthy Start from Pre-natal through High School
- Volunteer to assist in counseling on nutrition, immunizations, discipline and good parenting practices
- Volunteer to provide healthy snacks to a local Pre-School
- Write a guide to healthy living and work with youth to write their own health plans

After you have gotten involved, we'll ask you to fill out a short form telling us which activities you found rewarding. This will help others to follow your lead.

Doris Edwards - Shirley Johnson
Co-Chairs

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

12741 Holiday Lane
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JANNETTE WUNDROW
1007 PACKTON LN
BOWIE MD 20716-1761



*****MEMBERSHIP MEETING*****

January 22, 2003

11:00 AM

PGCEA Building

Program;
Charles County Senior High Steppers

Light luncheon (no charge)

Collecting at this January meeting for Food
Banks: **NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS**



REMINDER:

Our meetings follow the school system policy for cancellation due to inclement weather. Listen to your radio and/or TV for announcements. Delayed opening will mean our meeting will go on as scheduled.

