



ECHOES

THE PRINCE GEORGE'S PUBLIC SCHOOL RETIREES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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January 2011

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Only our friend, Maryland Senator-Elect Joanne Benson, can talk the way she does. At times preacher-like, politician-like and neighbor-like, Joanne conveyed to our members at our November 18th meeting her clear stand as an advocate for public education, active and retired educators, and the children we teach. As such, we will be counting on her assistance and words of advice as the proposal to transfer the cost of the State Teachers' Retirement & Pension System (STR&PS) to the counties as put forth by Senators Mike Miller (Prince George's & Calvert Cos.) and Richard Madaleno (Montgomery Co.) is debated in the halls of Annapolis.

Please know that through PGPSRA and MRSPA, your interests are being represented. At legislative workshops, committee/ commission hearings and in personal conversations, the message is the same: "The STR&PS is a state program. We, the employees contributed our share of the cost. The legislature needs to stop taking monies statutorily obligated to the STR&PS and begin making up the deficiency it has created."

Recently Senator Madaleno and other legislators have become fond of saying that the money was taken from the TR&PS to fund the Thornton Commission. The facts don't support them. Fact: The 2002 legislature meeting in the winter of 2002 approved Governor Glendening's

taking of \$78 million due to the State Employees' and State Teachers' Retirement and Pension Systems. The very first funding of the Thornton Commission occurred when Governor Ehrlich included it in his FY 2004 state budget. *Moreover, taking funds obligated to fund employee and teacher pensions to fund other state programs, regardless of what these programs are, does not relieve the legislature of its long-standing, statutory obligation to fund its employer's share of the pension costs.*

Our next General Membership Meeting is one you won't want to miss! The meeting will be at PGCEA in Forestville, on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. Dr. William Hite, Superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools, will be our guest speaker. Dr. Hite last addressed our members in November 2009 and impressed everyone as a leader with a great deal of personal integrity. The January 26th meeting is still early in the legislative session, and we look forward to hearing Dr. Hite's remarks as he discusses the successes, works-in-progress and anticipated challenges that are part of the PGCPSS record. We encourage your presence to hear his remarks in January.

Carl Lancaster, President

SAVE THE DATE!
September 13 – 15, 2011
MRSPA 2011 Convention
Wisp Resort
McHenry, MD
www.wispresort.com

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The Maryland General Assembly convened on January 11, 2011, and will conclude on April 11th. Nearly all of our county's Maryland Senators and Delegates were returned to office. Two moved from delegate to senator positions: Joanne Benson and Victor Ramirez. United States Senators Barbara Mikulski and Ben Cardin, along with Congressional Representatives Steny Hoyer and Donna Edwards, were re-elected. Prince George's County elected a new County Executive, Rushern Baker, and a new County Sheriff, Melvin High.

It is important that we continue to express our firm opposition to the shifting of 50% of the state retirement funding to the local jurisdictions. As we've mentioned before, if counties are forced to pay into the retirement fund, they must cut costs in other ways. We don't want to see our health care benefits reduced or eliminated. In September Governor O'Malley established the Public Employees and Retirees Benefits and Sustainability Commission (as directed by the 2009-2010 Legislature) to study and make recommendations on all aspects of state funded benefits and pensions provided to state employees and teachers. A report from the Commission will be made public in January.

We are eagerly awaiting the Joint Committee on Pensions recommendation regarding a COLA for this coming July. A positive Consumer Price Index (CPI) is expected for the year that ended December 31, 2010. This should mean a slight positive adjustment in our July retirement checks, after compensating for the negative COLA of last year.

Our annual PGPSRA Legislative Day Trip to Annapolis is planned for Wednesday, March 16, 2011. I encourage you to accompany the group to let our legislators know of your concern for our pensions and health care. We will leave the PGCEA office at 8:45 a.m. and return about 2:30 p.m. While in Annapolis, we will sit in on short sessions of both the House and Senate and tour the Governor's Mansion. All of our Prince George's legislators will be invited to join us for an informal sandwich/cookie lunch and to speak briefly to our members in attendance. There is no charge for the trip. Please contact me (Jannette Wundrow) at 301.390.7324 if you plan to attend this important PGPSRA event, which is sponsored by Delegate James Proctor.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

We thank you for encouraging your friends and colleagues to join with us. Remember our motto:
NUMBERS COUNT!

Members are reminded that the dues deduction form can only be used when you are joining both the PGPSRA local and the MRSPA state organization. If you desire additional information, please contact Lorraine Johnson at 301.336.1173.

The Membership Committee thanks Pat Tompkins for stepping in and performing yeoman's work with the Membership Committee's activities at our November meeting when the chair was unable to attend.

Congratulations to the November door prize winners: Judy Ott, Robert Lennon, Senator Joanne Benson, Marlene Smith, John Sisson, Dan Williams, Essie Brown, Brenda Thomas, and Carolyn Sullivan.

Lorraine Johnson, Membership Chair

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer's Report – November 2010

Opening Balances:

Checking	\$26575.72
Savings Account:	\$3017.70
Checking Account:	
Receipts:	\$1200.15
Expenditures:	\$742.40

Savings Account: No Activity

Balance as of November 30:

Checking Account:	\$27033.47
Savings Account:	\$3019.70
Total Assets:	\$30053.17

E. Vest, Treasurer

It has been suggested that our members become more involved in the legislative process in Annapolis. Therefore, I invite you to join me on two Wednesday mornings – January 19th and February 16th – in Annapolis to go door to door to our county legislators’ offices, announce who you are, and why we retired school employees need their help. I will print out a “Fact Sheet” to leave in each office, and arrange at least two face to face meetings during each visit with legislators, to present our concerns. You will need to drive individually (or car pool) and be inside the Miller Office Building by 8:45 a.m. each of the Wednesdays. A problem that may arise is that the legislators may get called into early morning caucuses, and we will not be able to speak with them directly. In which case, we will speak with office assistants, who will convey our message.

The annual United Seniors of Maryland Rally will be held at St. John’s College in Annapolis on Tuesday, January 25, 2011. This is always an interesting all day meeting with invited speakers: Governor O’Malley, Senate President Miller, House Speaker Busch, Secretary of Aging Lawlah, and a representative from the Social Security Administration. Further information may be obtained at the website: www.unitedseniors.net. Contact me at 301.390.7324 if you are interested in attending.

An appreciative thank-you goes to everyone who has contacted legislators in the past to voice our PGPSRA and MRSPA legislative concerns. We will be calling on you again during this legislative session. Watch for list-serve announcements that Dr. Vest sends out. Remember to check our PGPSRA.org and MRSPA.org websites.

Jannette Wundrow, Legislative Chair

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Nominations are still being sought for PGPSRA offices for next year. We are looking for a President-Elect, Treasurer, Recording Secretary, and Corresponding Secretary. Thus far, no nominations have been received. Consequently, we are asking each of you to give serious thought to our need for strong, effective leadership during these uncertain times and to send the names of your nominees to me at 301.627.1097 as soon as possible.

Bonnie Brose, Nominations Chair

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

The 2011 scholarship applications from the Prince George's Scholarship Fund, Inc. will be delivered to all senior high schools via the Pony during the week of January 3rd. Completed applications are to be sent to the Scholarship Board by February 25th.

Members of the PGPSRA Scholarship Committee will be contacting and/or visiting all senior high schools in January, encouraging all counselors to advertise our scholarship information.

Our committee is encouraging members to share our scholarship information with persons who you know will be graduating in 2011. The chairperson will have applications available at the January general meeting.

We will continue our 50/50 raffle at the general meetings, and members are encouraged to make donations to the PGPSRA Scholarship Fund.

Alveta S. Jones, Scholarship Chair



COMMUNITY SERVICE

The holiday season, with all its busyness, has come and gone very quickly. Although we find ourselves in the dawning of a new year, we must maintain the spirit of the season by doing unto others as we would like done to us, respecting the dignity of those whom we assist and working together for even greater accomplishments.

The adoption of Concord Elementary School and Drew Freeman Middle School has been confirmed as two of the expected four schools to be serviced by this committee during the 2010-2011 school year.

Share Baskets, which contain fresh produce and other healthy food items, were distributed to families for Thanksgiving and also will be issued for a healthy, hearty Christmas meal.

We've expanded our collection of **Back to School Supplies** to include a **Coat Drive** in January. We appeal to you, the general membership, to donate **new coats** of various sizes for elementary age children. Supplies to be donated include toiletries, small articles of clothing (caps, gloves, undies), laundry detergent, combs and brushes. If you are unable to shop for any of the aforementioned items, a monetary contribution would be greatly appreciated and we will do the leg work. Please bring your contributions to the January meeting.

We believe that our work encourages and strengthens those we serve and will result in better citizenry.

Gretel James, Newsletter Writer

LIAISON/ PROFESSIONAL

Excerpts from President Obama's Message Regarding Recent Health Care Legislation (11 – 22 – 10)

“Over the last few years, many Americans have seen their health insurance premiums skyrocket, while the quality of their health care declined. One of the reasons I pushed so hard to pass health care reform this year was to make sure that American consumers get what they pay for when it comes to health care.”

“Today we are launching a new provision of the Affordable Care Act that does exactly that. Next year, insurance companies will be required to spend at least 80 percent of the health insurance premiums you pay on your health care, instead of overhead costs like advertising and executive compensation. If they don't, they will be required to give you a rebate or cut your premiums starting in 2012.”

“Here are just a few ways the Affordable Care Act is helping you and your family.

- **HealthCare.gov.** This new website helps you find private health insurance that's right for you and your family and now allows you to compare pricing for the options available to you. In 2014, there will be many more affordable private plan choices.
- **Patient's Bill of Rights.** Insurance companies can no longer place lifetime limits on your care. If you're a young adult under age 26, you can stay on your parents' plan, and if your child has a pre-existing condition, insurance companies can't deny his or her coverage.
Pre-Existing Insurance Plan. If you have a pre-existing condition and are having a problem finding coverage, the Affordable Care Act created a special insurance plan just for you.
- **Help for Small Businesses.** If you're a small business owner, you may be eligible for tax credits to help provide insurance for your employees.
- **Free Preventive Care.** If you are purchasing a new plan, you'll get preventive care like cancer screenings, well-baby and well-child check-ups and blood pressure or diabetes tests for free.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Wednesday January 5, 2011
PGPSRA Executive Board Meeting
PGCEA Building

Wednesday, January 19, 2011
Individual Visits to State Legislators
Annapolis

Tuesday, January 25, 2011
United Seniors of Maryland Rally
Annapolis

Wednesday, January 26, 2011
PGPSRA General Meeting
PGCEA Building

Wednesday March 16, 2011
PGPSRA Annual Legislative Day
(Bus Trip)
Annapolis

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Make a difference in the life of a Laurel child! Side by Side, a faith-based nonprofit organization, is recruiting volunteers to work with Laurel elementary school students as tutors, homework coaches, story-time readers, or Family Academy children's activity assistants. A half-day of training and ongoing professional support will be provided for those interested in becoming tutors and homework coaches. Service credits can be earned by high school students. For more information or to apply, contact Side by Side at www.sidebysidelaurel.org or call Linda at 301.931.1399.

Visit our website at www.pgpsra.org.

BITS AND PIECES

Happy **January** birthday wishes to Anita Yates of Richmond, Virginia, who will be celebrating her 92nd birthday on the 9th.

Happy **February** birthday wishes to Philip Robinson of Mitchellville, MD, who will be marking his 96th birthday on the 6th; and to Orine Cypert of Florence, Alabama, who will be celebrating her 94th birthday on the 13th; and to Catherine Mitchell of Silver Spring, MD, who will be having her 93rd birthday on Valentine's Day.

Paula Kaufman retired from H. W. Wheatley Special Center in 2004. A few years ago, she and her husband David moved to Sarasota, FL, where they especially enjoy the warm, sunny winter months. Paula volunteers at her local elementary school with vision testing, and she and her husband serve as ushers at the Osolo Repertory Theater and participate in their community's civic organization. The Kaufmans have taken several Caribbean cruises, sailed the Panama Canal, and taken a trip to Italy. They have two adult daughters and two grandchildren in Annapolis, whom they often entertain in Sarasota and whom they travel back to Maryland to visit.

Jacquelyn (McGee) Faison retired from High Point High School in 1996. She has since relocated to Palm Coast, FL, where she serves as tutor, mentor, and caregiver. She enjoys cruising. Jacquelyn married Robert Faison in October 1997. She has one daughter, one step-daughter, two granddaughters, and six step-grandchildren.

To contribute to BITS AND PIECES, contact Jannette Wundrow at 1007 Packton Lane, Bowie, MD 20716 or at jannetewundrow@comcast.net.

SPREADING LITERACY BY KEEPING BOOKS ALIVE

For over 15 years, Books for International Goodwill (B.I.G.) has successfully recycled used books for productive use by those who need books for schools and libraries to improve literacy in developing communities around the world. B.I.G. is a non-profit entity sponsored by the Parole Rotary Club of Annapolis. They have collected and shipped over 4 million books - some to Indian Reservations here in the United States, but mostly to needy communities in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

If you have books that you want to get rid of, B.I.G. asks you to consider donating them to their book recycling project to help others less fortunate improve their education and welfare.

The B.I.G. Annapolis Warehouse and Drop-off Shed is located at 2000 Capital Drive, Annapolis, MD 21401. You may contact them at www.parole-rotary.org, or contact our own Dan Williams for more information.

NECROLOGY

William M. Altemus, PhD. 02 – 27 – 10
Richard Steven Brown
Frederick Beyers 10 – 15 – 10
Shirley S. Hagans 11 – 17 – 10
Dr. Wilhelmina S. Mason 10 – 23 – 10
William F. Sauer

Jannie Goldston, Chair

PGPSRA MEETING/LUNCHEON

Date: January 26, 2011
Time: 11:00 a.m.
Place: PGCEA Center
Cost: \$11.00 (Box Lunch)

Please send your check, payable to PGPSRA, for the appropriate amount to Dr. Edward Vest, 7908 Klovstad Drive, Fort Washington, MD 20744-1729. The reservation deadline is January 19, 2011.

LUNCHEON RESERVATION FORM

January 2011

Name: _____

Lunches Ordered: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

Names of Guests: _____

QUOTES TO REMEMBER – 2011

* Take a day to heal from the lies you've told and the ones that have been told to you.
Maya Angelou

* The most sacred place isn't the church or the temple, it's the temple of the body. That's where the spirit lives.
Susan Taylor

* Deal with yourself as an individual worthy of respect and make everyone else deal with you in the same way.
Nikki Giovanni

* Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.
Proverbs 4: 23 - 24

* To be who you are and to become what you are capable of is the only goal worth living.
Alvin Ailey

Rose Miller, Inspirational Reader

WATCH YOUR CREDIT CARDS

According to Consumer Reports it is important to check your credit cards even after federal reforms. Fees have climbed and interest rates have increased. This is because banks are trying to offset costs associated with the new law.

Rewards cards usually have higher rates particularly if you carry a balance. You would probably be better off with a non-reward, lower rate card if you don't pay your cards off every month.

From *Consumer Connection* (MRSPA)

INCLEMENT WEATHER: Our meetings follow the Prince George's Public Schools' policy for cancellation due to inclement weather. Listen to your radio and/or TV for announcements. However, a delayed opening means that our meeting will go as scheduled.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ECHOES

February 1, 2011

ahutchinson00@hotmail.com