



AEA RETIRED
Protecting Our Future

THE CONDUIT

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www.azedretired.com

March 2024

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The 36th AEA-Retired Annual Meeting and AEA Delegate Assembly, May 10-12



After the December issue of The Conduit, many member leaders decided early to attend the **2024 AEA-Retired 36th Annual Meeting** as delegates, as candidates running for a board position or as member **guests**. We thank you for your Nominations Forms.

AEA Retired now extends an invitation to all of our membership to register for an amazing day on **May 10**. All participants will experience the business of the association and delegates will vote for future leaders. Members will hear presentations about ASRS, legislative updates, as well as other informative speakers. AEA Retired is honored to announce the Annual Meeting Keynote Speaker, Az Secretary of State, the honorable Adrian Fontes.



Calendar

- March**
- 12 AEA Retired Board Meeting 10am
- April**
- 9 AEA Retired Board Meeting 10am
- May**
- 10 AEA Retired Annual Meeting 9-4
- 10/11 AEADelegate Assembly

Check the last page for updates of your Chapter meetings.

Register for the 36th 2024 AEA Retired Annual Meeting May 10th New Venue: The Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel

100 N. 1st St. Phoenix, AZ, 85004

Hotel Registration for delegates is done by AEA and is not open yet. You will receive an email from AEA.

Registration Fee: \$55 Registration fee to help defray costs.

Valet Parking ONLY: \$10 per day, \$15 overnight stay. AEA Retired will reimburse valet fees.

Deadline to Register: April 26 by the end of the day

Click on this LINK to Register:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2024AnnualMeetingRegistration>

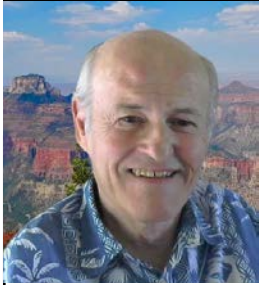
NOTE: Fee payment on-line is by credit card only. If you prefer, send a check before April 26, payable to **AEA Retired** to Anna Cicero, 910 W. Sycamore Pl., Chandler, AZ 85225.

Contact Anna Cicero, AEA President, at 480-600-1170 if you have questions.

It is time for all participants to REGISTER!

[Continued on page 11](#)

ASRS UPDATE BY STEVE RAMOS

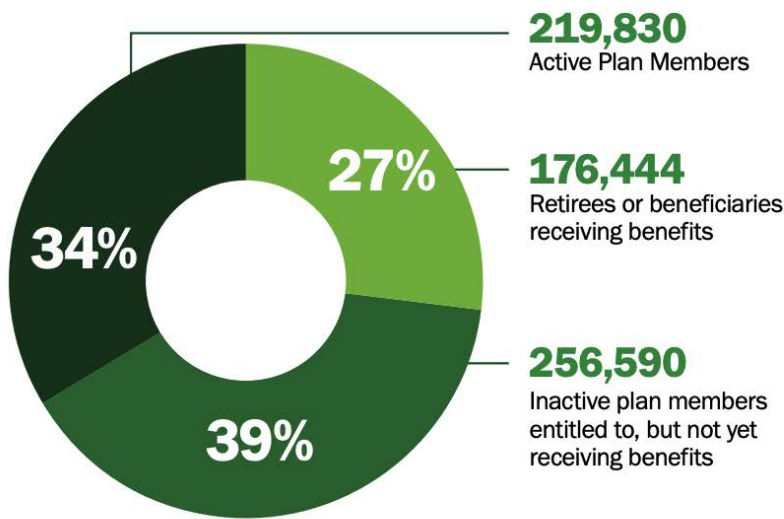


Strong economy in 2023-24 helps ASRS fund top \$52 billion and continues building PBI fund.

AEA Retired members don't have to pay ASRS contribution rates anymore, but our pensions are dependent on those rates being calculated correctly, in order to guarantee a lifetime of benefits for all ASRS members. In July, 2024, our working colleagues will see their ASRS contribution rate go down slightly. The new 12.27% contribution rate will be matched by their employer and includes a future Health Care Benefit, that many current retirees are using now to lower the cost of an ASRS Health or Dental Care Plan. That rate also includes Long Term Disability Insurance for our active ASRS members. A continued strong economy should see future ASRS contribution rates leveling off and then gradually beginning to fall.

A shortage of qualified educators in Arizona's public schools has led more school districts to offer employees at or nearing retirement, an opportunity to retire and then return to work. Some districts are now offering a return "at full pay and benefits." A number of years ago, AEA Retired raised concerns with ASRS about non-contributing retirees taking jobs that should be going to contributing new employees. ASRS quickly confirmed that a Return To Work (RTW) policy and an Alternative Contribution Rate (ACR) was needed to financially protect the ASRS pension. Today, ASRS employers are required to pay an ACR for every RTW employee. In July 2024, that rate will cost employers 10.19%.

Member Composition by Status



Member Averages

Active Members (2022)	
Active Plan Members	208,393
Avg Years of Service	9.5
Avg Annual Salary	\$54,426
Average Age	45.5
Retired Members (2022)	
Retired Plan Members	164,753
Avg Monthly Annuity	\$1,758
Avg Years of Service	19.4
Average Age	72.2

A good economy has helped ASRS record an 8.2% return on investments in fiscal year 2023, compared to only a 1.1% return in 2022. The ASRS Total Fund has now exceeded \$52 billion and our ASRS pension has a funded status of 73.1%. That "less than 100% funded status" is largely the result of stock market crashes in 2001-2002 and 2008-2009. ASRS wants members to know that the under-funded status is not being ignored. The current contribution rates are designed to return ASRS to 100% funded status in the future.

Were last year's returns good enough to trigger a Permanent Benefit Increase (PBI) for eligible retirees? When the 10-year average of the actuarial returns exceed 8%, excess earnings are placed into a separate fund for PBIs. That fund must reach a level where there are sufficient funds to pay all eligible retirees a permanent benefit increase. Only then will a permanent benefit increase be paid. As of June 30, 2023, there was a \$100.6 million balance in the reserve. Not enough for a PBI.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY ANNA CICERO

All Hands on Deck...the Fight is Real!

FIGHT is defined in Webster's Dictionary as "to take part in a physical struggle, to engage in and work hard to beat, to try to overcome a struggle, to gain by struggle or readiness to fight." This brought clarity in composing our Annual Meeting theme. The word "struggle" struck a chord since it was written in almost every fragment of the definition. I then reflected on the Arizona Education Association theme, our Union believes that "Your Fight is My Fight is OUR Fight." It calls for ownership of that fight. Yes folks, we are in this together. All Hands on Deck, the FIGHT is Real!



More specifically, the struggle is real. It is true that educators, students, support staff, benefits and working conditions have been part of the struggle. In my years of teaching, I was always optimistic that one day the conflict would end and common sense would result. To this day, I still wait while I watch new, ugly struggles surface. The FIGHT must continue as the political environment becomes darker and more aggressive and divisions mount. I fully embrace and take ownership of **OUR FIGHT**. This is an election year that is most critical to all and you are needed.

Retired educators will be joining hands with those in active service in the education arena. There are many ways members can contribute to the FIGHT. We must encourage sanity in our circle of friends. We must encourage voting with common sense. We must become co-conspirators in the fight for social justice and respect. We must never be silent or throw our hands up in the air and give up hope.

Each one of us, in small or big ways, can contribute as our health permits. Take part in your Association's events and opportunities to engage. Your Union waits for your response. Make some calls, do some weekend door knocking to speak to your neighbors, attend local school board events, support candidates with monetary donations, write some postcards, mail your personal opinions to your legislators, learn about the hurtful bills that have flooded the floor at the Capitol, use your RTS (Request To Speak), click on the useful links to websites below which lead to activities and provide useful information.

- [AEA Retired](#)
- [AEA – Arizona Education Association](#)
- [ARSC-Arizona Retirement Security Coalition](#)

- [AARA- Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans](#)
- [ASRS- Arizona State Retirement System](#)
- [CEBV- Civic Engagement Beyond Voting](#)

I know I will see many of you engaged in the 2024 Annual Meeting and AEA Delegate Assembly. Afterward, you will return home filled with motivation, optimism and knowledge to carry out the hard work needed to show real ownership of **OUR FIGHT!**

NOTE: These are the names of nominees at the time of publication. Other names may have been submitted after the printing deadline and will be included in balloting at the annual meeting. Other nominations may be submitted from the floor.

These are the nominees for Vice-President, a three year term:

- Maria Leyva
- Luci Messing

These are the nominees for Representative At-Large, a 3 year term:

- Marilyn Calhoun
- Marilyn Freed
- Ken Freed
- Sharin Manes
- Kathy Ramage White
- Susan Sommer
- Carol Wilson

These are the names submitted for the position of Delegate to the 2024 Annual Meeting

Frances	Banales	Julie	Horwin	Theresa	Riel
Daniel	Barlow	Janie	Hydrick	Nancy	Riley
Sylvia	Barlow	Bart	James	Judith	Robbins
Shirley	Boswell	Norma	Jimenez	Ron	Rossmann
Margaret	Bowerman	Deb	Larned	Ellen	Shamah
Marilyn	Calhoun	Maria	Leyva	Michele	Smith
Cynthia	Challberg-Hale	Steven	Linder	Susan	Sommer
Anna	Cicero	Sharin	Manes	Linda	Somo
Julie	Cieniawski	Barbara	Matteson	Cheryl	Stigleman
DeAnn	Cohn	Gary	Mehok	Carol	Trudgen
Peter	Coston	Lizzie	Menefee	Jacqueline	Van Epps
Cynthia	Couture	Luci	Messing	Sandra	Warns
Beth	Douthitt	Marshall	Militano	Carol P	Wilson
Janice	Dwosh	Jan	Nichols	Peggy	Yeargain
Jeanne	Erickson	Debra	Odle	Michael	Aicone
Marilyn	Freed	Cathy	Paredes	Suzan	Austin
Ken	Freed	Carmen	Peters	Kathy	Payner
George	Grexa	Nancy	Putman	Michael	Aicone
Kinora	Hernandez	Kathy	Ramage White	Suzan	Austin
Melanie	Hobden	Steve	Ramos	Frank	Ratey
William	Honaker	Lenny	Reed	Laurie	Bingenheim
		Bill	Rhodes		

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE BY LUCI MESSING

Proposed legislation keeping advocates busy



There is a whole lot happening at the State Legislature these days. AEA Retired has been there, meeting with senators and representatives from both parties. We had two very productive lobby days on January 17th and February 6th. Between the two days almost a hundred retirees participated, met face to face with two dozen legislators, attended committee hearings, and over 30 representatives joined us for lunch. AEA Retired is getting significant recognition for our work at the Capitol.

We also attended the special AEA days of action at the Capitol on February 14th and February 19th. We are currently planning to attend the AEA Education Days at the Capitol on March 13th and March 19th. Check your emails for information on registering for one or both days. It would be great to see you there.

AEA has set specific priorities for this legislative session. They are:

- Preventing cuts to K-12 public education and other vital services. Tax cuts for the rich and the ESA voucher program have created a massive budget deficit.
- Securing raises for ALL educators through a renewal of Proposition 123. There seems to be bipartisan interest to do this at the Capitol, but we will need to ensure that the raises include all educators, not just classroom teachers.
- Preventing even more duties and responsibilities from being added to educators' plates. State legislators of both parties are considering bills that would add new responsibilities for schools and educators without any funding to match. Even if well-intentioned, these bills are problematic. With funding so limited and schools so short-staffed, we need to be taking things off educators' plates, not adding more.

In addition to these issues, we have been closely monitoring any potential attack on our pensions. Thank you to Daniella Smith, our lobbyist with the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition, who does an incredible job for us at the Capitol.

Though over 800 bills have been introduced by both parties, only 12 Democratic bills have been scheduled for a committee hearing. There are currently three good bills that have passed out of committee and awaiting a vote of the full Senate.

- SB1566 would block school districts from forcing teachers to sign a contract for the next school year before March 15. School districts have been asking teachers to sign contracts earlier and earlier. The bill would put an end to the trend, forcing the districts to wait until teachers have a little more information about what the next year might look like.
- SB1392 would ensure that school districts put policies in place to protect the due process rights of support professionals, similar to the policies that already exist for classroom teachers.
- SB1465 would acknowledge teachers' professional expertise and address our retention crisis by making the K-5 literacy endorsement training and test optional.

Go to azleg.gov to find the contact information and ask your senator to vote yes on these bills if still possible.

Unfortunately, the Republican majority has put forth a number of really terrible bills. Too many to list here. We have confidence that Governor Hobbs will use her veto stamp to protect educators and the citizens of Arizona.

However, the majority party decided to do an end run around the Governor. They have introduced a slew of concurrent

resolutions that if passed will be on the November ballot and go directly to the voters. This is problematic and will clutter up the ballot, making it more difficult for citizens' initiatives to succeed.

We anticipate a drawn out legislative session since the budget will be heavily contested by both sides.

AEA retirees continue to be engaged and active in the legislative process.



Thank You!

"I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good." Martin Luther King, Junior

VEEP TALK BY KEN FREED

An End or a Beginning

This will be my last article in the Conduit as your Vice-President, as I have chosen not to seek another term. It has been wonderful working with the Conduit Editors, Jan and Bart, as well as your entire AEA Retired Board. All are hardworking and caring individuals. AEA Retired members, we are very lucky to have the leadership that is currently in place.

I want to use this venue to share my thanks for several of our Board Members. Some of these people you may not know, but they are vital to AEA Retired and to education in Arizona.

First, Luci Messing. Luci is a member of our Board, a member of the AEA Board and the AEA Retired Political Action Chair. What a trifecta! Luci has a way to cause you to come to lobby days and trainings and other political events that you don't want to come to, and at their conclusion, you say thank you.

Thanks Luci!

Next is NancyMicheleShirley. Clearly, this should be three people, but it's not. They are the membership chairs who are constantly coming up with ways to increase our membership. Their latest idea is for me to walk around the Delegate Assembly as a sandwich sign directing delegates to the AEA Retired site. Hopefully you have nominated yourself as a delegate so that you can see this spectacle. I can't wait! Thank you NancyMicheleShirley!

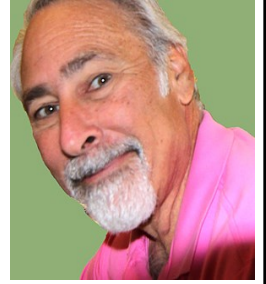
Steve Ramos is next on this hit parade. He has made himself an expert on the ASRS. Steve keeps us all informed on what is happening and how we can help to improve the retirement system. Just an FYI, at our Annual Meeting, we always have a presentation from the ASRS. I have asked that Steve make the presentation as he is always clear, concise and understandable. Thanks Steve!

I want to tell you a little bit about Susie Sommer. As you probably know, we have AEA Retired chapters throughout Arizona. I encourage you to attend a meeting and join in with others from your local area. Susie is in charge of coordinating all of the chapters and seeking people to start new chapters. Additionally, she is our Zoom master. If you need to have a meeting via Zoom, contact Susie and she arranges for it to happen. Thanks Susie!

Most of you know Linda Somo. I have known her for about 35 years, as she was President of MesaEA at the same time I was President of TucsonEA. You need to know, Linda and I don't always agree. However, we never fight. Linda explains why I am wrong and we discuss our different opinions. We are able to put away our differences and come to a conclusion that is the most beneficial to AEA Retired. I know that when we differ, or if we agree, Linda's position is well thought out and in the best interest of our organization. I always listen carefully when Linda speaks. Thank you Linda!

And finally, we have an at-large Board member who is my confidante, my conscience, and literally, my better half. I have had the good fortune to be married to Marilyn for over 55 years. (I think it's gonna last!) Thank you are words that can't begin to show my appreciation for this wonderful, beautiful person. I love you!

And now, on to new beginnings! Stay involved, stay in touch, stay in good health, and remember we did it all for the kids!



Member Benefits

by Nancy Putman, Shirley Boswell, Michele Smith



Membership in AEA Retired gives you the opportunity to continue getting discounts and savings through NEA Member Benefits. The first step is to set up an account on neamb.com/getstarted. Once you register, you can sign up for any or all of the great programs offered through NEA. The latest savings program is through **Rakuten**, where you can find the best discounts and get cash back on many name-brand products. Look for that at neamb.com/marketplace.

AEA Retired members are still eligible for the **NEA \$1000 complimentary life insurance** as an NEA member. Many members have taken advantage of auto and home insurance through **California Casualty**. Members who have switched auto insurance plans have saved an average of \$423 a year. Other insurance programs include life, hospital, wellness, and

pet insurance. Another insurance plan coming soon will be **Accident & Injury insurance**.

The newest incentive program is the NEA Discount Tickets Program. Discounts of up to 40% can be earned on tickets to theme parks, local attractions, Broadway shows, concerts, sporting events, ski resorts, and more. Go to neamb.com/dailydiscounts to find these discounts. Travel and vacation discounts can be found at **NEA Travel**. You can book hotels, airfare, car rentals, cruises, guided tours, and resorts. On your first visit, you will receive \$500 Travel Dollars to use like cash towards the cost of your trip. With all of these resources, you can get the most out of your member benefits in one easy place!

Racial and Social Justice Committee

By Janice Dwosh



AEA Retired leaders are continuing to discuss racial and social justice issues impacting education. In November, the equity survey of our leaders regarding book bans and diverse literature in the classroom was discussed. Leaders continue to be aware of these issues, but still need to use their voices to help others get involved. Some ways to get involved include; attending meetings of AEA

Retired chapters, local AEA active associations, school boards, and local pro-education groups and legislators. Some of you may pursue running for office, and of course, voting for pro-public education candidates. Community organizations, like libraries and partnerships with other groups, are another way to distribute information and have one-on-one discussions.

The RSJ Committee chair recently met with Mr. Lloyd Hopkins, community leader and founder of the Million Dollar Teacher Project (MDTP). Hopkins is a former educator and executive director of the foundation which supports, recognizes and compensates educators in the classroom for their amazing efforts. He was an appointed member of the Arizona Governor's Educator Retention Task Force, and truly believes that public education is the key to success for all students! Our discussion included how elimination of book bans and inclusion of diverse literature is so critical for all students, giving them windows and mirrors to themselves and families. Here is the MDTP website where you can get involved, donate, or just let others know about this opportunity to support Arizona educators.

<https://mdtproject.org/>. We need more people like Hopkins supporting public education!

In addition, the past few months have been busy for over 100 NEA members, including retired members and the RSJ chairperson. The NEA Virtual Book Club supporting Disability Rights and Inclusion began in October with the member-led discussion of *Demystifying Disability* by Emily Ladau. In January, we began *The Pretty One* by Keah Brown, with the author visiting us on Zoom for the February session. In April, the group will discuss *What Matters: Reflections on Disability, Community, and Love* by Janice Fialka. These book discussions bring new educators, veterans and retirees together to listen, learn and advocate for meaningful change, to challenge ableism and biases, and become allies of individuals with disabilities. This is a part of the equity justice fight we need for all students and educators!

Finally, we ask for you join the RSJ committee and or book club to assist us with your ideas and voices in this important work to support racial and social justice. The book discussion group meets every 4-6 weeks on Zoom and discusses a wide variety of diverse RSJ fiction and non-fiction literature. Our committee meets every few months in person at AEA Headquarters or by Zoom. Please contact Janice at jdwosh27@gmail.com if you are interested in joining. Member participation and engagement is critical!

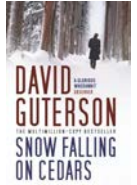
Book Corner

By Ann Myers



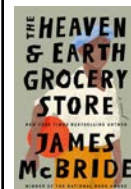
Do you remember Snoopy from the Peanuts comic strip typing out "It was a dark and stormy night?" Charles Schulz was referring to the beginning sentence of an 1830 book by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton generally considered to be the most gosh awful first sentence in English literature. It's a 58 word sentence that wanders here and there before finally coming to the period.

Our book group discussed *Snow Falling on Cedars* by David Guterson. Reading it, I felt like I was in a Bulwer-Lytton writing contest. Mr. Guterson wins the prize for an 84 count sentence that at the very least sticks to the topic, but a few breaths are needed to get to the end.



Writing style aside, there's a compelling story. It's set on an island off the coast of Washington state in the years following World War II. A white fisherman has been found dead and without much investigation, a Japanese man is charged with his murder. The trial is followed by a journalist, Ishmael, who as a teenager was in love with Hatsue, the wife of the accused man. It's a story of discrimination, prejudice, and long lasting bitterness.

The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store by James McBride is my favorite of this year's books. In this story, the reader lands in the middle of 1930s Chicken Hill, a small town of mixed ethnicities near Philadelphia. We meet new characters as if we



walked down the streets of Chicken Hill. There are Moshe and his wife Chona, a Jewish couple who own a dance hall and the grocery store. They live on the money from the dance hall because Chona, who manages the grocery store, freely gives credit to the cash strapped residents but never asks for payment. Chona is beloved by most of Chicken

Hill except by Doc Roberts, a member of the local Ku Klux Klan.

Addie and her husband Nate are employed by Moshe as housekeeper and handyman. Addie is related to most of Negro Chicken Hill while Nate has a mysterious past. They take in Addie's young nephew, Dodo, who is "deaf and dumb" and try to protect him from being sent to the Pennhurst Insane Asylum.

Then there's Bernice with her many children and their unknown father who could be one or both of the shoemaker twins, Irv and Marv Skrupselis. Her brother, Fatty, asks her no questions because, "I like breathing."

Amid all of the many more characters and their storylines, there is love and laughter and gossip; a little sadness, and a profound sense of humanity. I didn't want this book to end, but when it did, McBride tied up the many loose ends into a perfect ending - one where Right wins out in just the way you want.

The AEA Retired Racial/Social Justice book group will be reading *Never Caught: The Washington's Relentless Pursuit of Runaway Slave Ona Judge* by Erica Armstrong Dunbar. This is a true story that has not been told in school history classes. We meet virtually on Zoom about every 6 weeks. Contact me, Ann Myers 480-510-8098 or azann@mac.com for more information. We'd love to have you be a part of our discussions.

Adrian Fontes, Arizona Secretary of State, to be Keynote Speaker at Annual Meeting



In 2022, Adrian Fontes was elected as Arizona's 21st Secretary of State. Secretary Fontes is a proud Arizona native, an honorable veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, and the father of three daughters, who has spent a lifetime defending our Democracy.

Secretary Fontes served on active duty from 1992 to 1996 and was nominated for a meritorious commission. His service to our country taught

him the importance of dedication, discipline, and sacrifice to forcefully fight for the American dream.

After graduating from law school, Secretary Fontes spent his career advocating for justice and fighting for the disadvantaged — first as a prosecutor with the Denver District Attorney, then at the Maricopa County Attorney's office. He later led the International Prosecution Unit at the Arizona Attorney General's Office. He practiced law for 15 years before running for office in 2016 when he was elected Maricopa County Recorder.

As Recorder, Secretary Fontes revolutionized the election system by ensuring every eligible Arizonan had the access they needed to vote. Adrian enhanced ballot tracking technology and increased process transparency, winning awards from election organizations across the country.

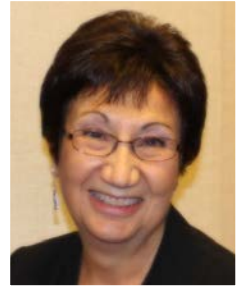
In 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 crisis and civil unrest, Maricopa County saw record voter turnout, and record numbers of new registered voters. Secretary Fontes later testified before Congress about threats facing election officials.

Secretary Fontes is committed to preserving integrity in our elections, making voting easier for registered voters, and ensuring that Arizona's business community has a non-partisan partner in the Secretary's office.

Arizona Alliance Keeps Busy Protecting Seniors

By Linda Somo, President
Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans

The Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans (AARA) is a coalition of 49,000 retired workers from many unions, including AEA Retired. As the state affiliate of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), the main purpose of AARA is to protect and strengthen Social Security, Medicare, & Medicaid, and to advocate for senior issues, such as the right to vote.



Currently, the AARA is an Intervenor in four separate lawsuits in the state that seek to limit or inhibit the ability of seniors and others to cast their ballots in free and fair elections. AARA seeks to stop these lawsuits from being successful. Additionally, AARA has partnered with other organizations to help seniors, and others, to learn about President Biden's Affordable Clean Energy Plan, which created many ways to save money on energy costs, and also help save our planet for generations to come. This is being accomplished through a series of presentations throughout the state, the first of which was on March 9, in Chandler. The next one is scheduled for April in the West Valley (date and venue TBD).

In keeping with the AARA's tradition of celebrating Women's History Month, a Celebration of Women in Organized Labor is scheduled for Friday, March 15, at the UA Local 469 meeting hall in Phoenix. Featured speakers will include Teresa D'Asaro, UFCW Local 99, Beatriz Topete, Unite Here Local 11, and Alana Billingsley, APFA. Each of these amazing women will share their stories of being on the frontlines of the labor movement. Registration is required to attend.

In partnership with AEA Retired, the AARA is also a part of the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition (ARSC), which protects our state retirement pension program. Watch for more information about AARA's activities in future issues of *The Conduit*.



Nancy Putman Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award Winner



AEA Retired is pleased to announce Nancy Putnam is the 2024 Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award winner. The AEA Retired Board of Directors selected the winner at a February board meeting and applauds her 48 years of outstanding service to the association, public education, and the community. Presentation of the award will be at the Annual Meeting in May.

Nancy earned her bachelor's in elementary education and a master's degree in Elementary Supervision at Stephen F. Austin State University. She taught first grade in four different states before settling in Arizona at Washington Elementary School district in Phoenix, where she participated in the Washington District Education Association, holding offices of Vice-President, President and Membership Chair. Previously, In Tyler, Texas, she presided as local president and served on the Board of Directors of the Texas State Teachers Association. She was a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly for twenty-six years.

Throughout her teaching career, Nancy has held many leadership positions and has been awarded many honors. She serves as an At-Large Board Member on the AEA Retired Executive Board; chairs the Membership Outreach Committee; is a member of the Budget, Awards, Legislative, and the AEA Finance and Revenue Committees.

She received the Teacher of the Year in Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District in 1987 in Texas, and the Lamp of Learning Award in Washington Elementary School District (WESD) in 2003. She was president of the Washington Education Foundation.

As a member of Delta Kappa Gamma for twenty years, she served as Vice President, Membership Chair, Scholarship Chair and Awards Chair. She also headed the Washington Education Foundation as president. She is an avid bowler, which led her to start the Annual Bowl-a-Thon which raised over \$400,000 for grants to be given to employees of WESD

Nancy continues her efforts in the community. She volunteers at a memory center in Mesa, where her sister resides. Each year she dresses as the Cat in the Hat on Dr. Seuss Day and reads to a classroom of students for the Read Across America campaign. She volunteers with the Mesa School district, supporting candidates, overrides, and bond elections by stuffing envelopes or writing post cards, she's there, helping friends of education. Her lawn proudly displays signs for Red for Ed and endorsed candidates for AEA and Mesa Schools.

Her favorite aspect of teaching has always been the joy of teaching a child to read and making a difference in her student's lives.

Congratulations, Nancy!

An abandoned school gets a new life.

The ghosts of Hill Street School in Globe, Arizona must be whispering happy cheers lately. Built in 1921, it functioned as a lively educational building for 85 years. Standing abandoned, boarded up, and fenced now, the school became the object of freaky stories of ghosts roaming halls.



Architecturally, Hill Street School was considered by many to be a beautiful structure.

Globe is a mining town east of Phoenix, a short 90-minute drive from Phoenix.

The school has been rescued from destruction, perhaps, by a developer who has proposed turning the school into affordable housing for senior citizens. This repurposing project will get underway in June. The housing will have 64 apartment units. The old school's basketball court will be converted into a multi-purpose community space with a track on the second floor upgraded as a walking path.

The developer is an affordable housing planner with expertise in historical preservation and is trying to save as many vintage elements as possible.

Construction is predicted to finish in the Fall of 2024 and waiting lists for apartments will be available in January of 2025. To qualify to live in the development, a person must earn within 30% to 60% of the Area Median Income of Gila County. That income range would be roughly between \$13,400 and \$26,800 for a single person. Rents would be kept in keeping with the income levels.



Top: Hill Street school prior to remodelling

Left: School after exterior renovations

Below: Historic Downtown Globe



Source: Sarah Lapidus, *The Arizona Republic*, October 23, 2023 and *Echoes of the Southwest*

He made my century


By Janie Hydrick



I was at a Tempe coalition of faith groups, non-profits, and community-based organizations. A young man came up with "Brian" on his name tag. He was one of my 4th-5th graders at MacArthur Elementary in the 1990s and remembered our overnights in the library and reading up in the trees at the park across the street. I asked him what he was doing now, and he told me he was President and CEO of Landings Credit Union! He sent the lovely email of us around to all of his employees later that day, and one of his employees forwarded it to me!

Here is Brian's email:

I feel like we are lucky to work with and serve some amazing educators, and I always love when I to talk to teachers and administrators from the districts we serve. This morning I was at a meeting with community leaders in Tempe and ran into my 4th and 5th grade teacher, who happens to be involved with the Kiwanis Club of Tempe. She was always one of my favorite teachers, with so many memorable experiences from those years, and it was lovely to see her still involved in the community. Gotta give it up to the wonderful teachers that help shape us, our kids, and our communities!

I seriously told him he had made my century 

Barb Joseph

A Friend at the State Capitol

Entering the old State Capitol museum building, Barbara Joseph will greet you with a broad smile. She began



volunteering at the information desk 12 years ago, following retirement from the PUHSD. She is such an asset; she was named Volunteer of the Year in 2017.

Barb is originally from Iowa where she earned an A.A. degree in education at Clinton Community College, a B.A. in Library Science from the University of Northern Iowa. She was librarian at her

hometown high school for 15 years before moving to Phoenix. Barb began her career in Arizona at PUHSD as librarian for 23 years at South Mountain, Camelback, North, Maryvale, and Trevor Browne.

In addition to her skills as a librarian and educator, she is an accomplished seamstress, producing wedding gowns for lucky brides; costumes for team mascots, folklorico groups and stage plays.

Barb and her husband, Tim, are passionate about traveling. Both are Diamondbacks fans with season tickets. Barb is an AEA Retired member. Say "hi!" next time you're at the State Capitol!

Mourning Two Icons of the AEA Community

Arizona lost two iconic educators at the beginning of this year. Marion Pickens and Connie Wittig were highly regarded, strong advocates of public education. Both were members and leaders in AEA and AEA Retired. Both contributed to the communities in many ways.

Marion was born in Hawaii and witnessed the Pear Harbor attack as a small child. After her family moved to Michigan, they later took residence in Tucson where she lived most of her life. She earned a B.A. in Political Science in 1955 from UCLA and two master's degrees from the University of Arizona in 1971 and 1974. She taught for 22 years in TUSD and was President of TEA, Vice President of AEA and an Arizona State Representative 1990 – 1992 and 1994 – 2002. She volunteered for many respected organizations after retirement.



Connie Wittig hailed from Iowa, but early in life, moved to Arizona where she graduated from Glendale Union High School and received a bachelor's degree from Northern Arizona University. She was employed for almost three decades in the Paradise Valley Unified School District, from 1969 to 1996. During that time, she served as Registrar at Greenway Middle School and Principal's Secretary at Campo Bello Elementary School. She was a leader in the Paradise Valley Support Employee Association having served as treasurer, president, and secretary. She was active in the NEA, AEA and AEA Retired, where she was elected as the first non-certified person on the Executive Board. She was always on the front-line to support and promote public education.

Our hearts go out to the families and friends of these two respected and admired public school servants. You will be missed. Rest in peace!



The Conduit



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The Conduit Editors
Jan Nichols and Bart James



Mesa/East Valley Chapter



Lobby Day and Capitol Rally Photos



[Continued from page one](#)

What else is on the Annual Mtg. Agenda?

- Meet leaders who create action plans to complete AEA Retired goals
- Introduction of AEA Delegate Assembly theme by AEA President Marisol Garcia, "Your Fight is My Fight is OUR Fight!"
- Keynote Speaker: Adrian Fontes, Arizona Secretary of State
- Updates on ASRS, Social Security, and Medicare developments
- Updates on political action, legislative policy, alliances and coalitions like ARSC and AARA
- Honoring the winner of the Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award
- Voting for Vice President and six At-Large Board members
- Nominate yourself from the floor, join a committee, meet a new friend
- Enjoy a plated lunch while building relationships with colleagues
- Win door prizes, bid on useful and beautiful silent auction items and WIN our traditional Quilt
- Introduction of past presidents and other guests who truly amplify our voices



Quilt Raffle Win this Beautiful Quilt!



Tickets are \$3 each
The best way to win is 30 tickets
for \$30
That's \$1 per ticket
Cash or Check Only!



Tickets available at the AEA Retired table,
or buy tickets from any AEA Retired Board Member.

Drawing will be held during the AEA Delegate Assembly
Winner need not be present to win.

Send your email address to

julie.horwin@gmail.com

Win \$100



If we already have your e-mail address, you are entered in the \$100 AEA-Retired Raffle.

Good luck!

AEA-RETIRED POLO SHIRT

3.8-ounce, 100% polyester double-knit mesh
3-button placket with pearlized buttons
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Men's: Flat knit collar Women's: Johnny collar
Both are available in sizes XS to 3X, and in Red or Purple

The logo can also be added to any shirt you have.



\$40 each Orders due March 31, 2023

Contact Marshall Militano
(602) 882-3260
mmilitano1@gmail.com

Courage is not having the strength to go on, its going on when you don't have the strength

Theodore Roosevelt

AEA Retired, YOUR STATEWIDE LOCAL
Affiliated with Arizona Education Association
345 East Palm Lane
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

AEA Retired Chapter News

Chapters bring AEA Retired together. This year we expect to meet in person. Some chapters may choose to add a virtual meeting now and then or offer Zoom meetings as well. Each chapter governs itself in order to meet the needs of its members. Meetings usually include information programs and time for socializing with friends and colleagues. This is a great way to keep in touch with the latest issues in our community. Any one interested in forming a new chapter should contact Chapter Coordinator **Susan Sommer**, (623) 628-1935, ssommer114@aol.com.

All AEA Retired members are eligible to join a chapter where they worked or currently live.

When Chapters meet via Zoom, connection is a simple process. All you need to do is click the link you receive from your Chapter Chair via e-mail. We welcome your attendance and participation.

Glendale/West Valley Chapter: This year our meetings are being held in person at 10 am at Dillon's KCBBQ-Arrowhead, 20585 N 59th Ave, Glendale, AZ 85308 We enjoy food and good conversation. Meetings will be on March 21, May 16, a June date is TBD. For more information call, text or email **Marshall Militano** at 602-882-3260 or mmilitano1@gmail.com.

Greater Tucson Area Chapter: We are meeting the third Tuesday of the month, August through May. Meetings begin at 10am at the Southern AEA office, 6873 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson, AZ, 85704. Please e-mail Chapter Chair **Peter Coston** at pcoston1@cox.net for Zoom meeting links.

Kyrene Chapter: The Hub Grill and Bar, 14205 South 50th Street, Phoenix, keeps active and retired educators connected and having fun. Food and drinks keep our camaraderie fueled. Join us March 22 at 4:30pm. Wherever you worked or work as an educator, we welcome you. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at hydrick@aol.com.

Mesa/East Valley Chapter: Election Season! Get up close and personal with local candidates. We luncheon at Mi Amigos Restaurant, 1264 South Gilbert Road, Mesa. Join us at 11:00am on May 14 for food, drinks, camaraderie, and candidates. Wherever you worked or work as an educator, we welcome you. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at hydrick@aol.com

Phoenix Chapter: Suzan Austin and Gary Mehok re-initiated this chapter in September. Meeting dates are March 27 and April 15 from 11am to 1pm at the Beatitudes, 1610 W. Glendale Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85021. Contact **Suzan Austin** at suzanaustin@cox.net or **Gary Mehok** at lojo40@cox.net for more information.

Scottsdale/Paradise Valley Chapter: Until further notice, all meetings will be held on the **third Monday** of each month from 11:00 to 1, September through April (excluding December). If you're not on our mailing list, please contact **Nancy Riley** at 480-600-8559 or rileyfam@cox.net.

Southeast Arizona Chapter: The Southeast Arizona AEA-Retired Chapter is located in Cochise County and is comprised of districts in Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Huachuca City, Naco, Palominas, Elgin, and Ft. Huachuca, and retirees from other states who have moved to Cochise County. Please contact Sally if you would like to be added to the email contact list, our only method of communication. Contact Chapter Chair **Sally Rosén** at 520-249-0233, azcatsally@aol.com for details.

Interstate/Flagstaff/Northern Arizona/Reservation Chapter (INFARC). Meetings will be held on the third Thursday of the month at 2pm (MST). Meetings will be held on Zoom. Please contact Daniel Barlow at dsjbarlow@yahoo.com. A link will be sent to you to connect to the meetings.

For more about AEA Retired, visit the website at www.azedretired.com.