

A Message from the President

Recently I was out of the country on a visit to Barcelona, Spain. Later, with my husband, I boarded a cruise ship and sailed to various Spanish and Portuguese islands in the Mediterranean before crossing the Atlantic to Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It was a wonderful trip!

During my voyage I discovered there were many retired educators aboard from the United States, the U.K. and Canada. Although they varied in age and the number of years retired, all were active, intellectually engaged and involved in a variety of activities that went beyond cruising. Indeed, some were volunteers in their communities while others worked with abused children. And some, in pursuit of travel and learning about other cultures, were involved in home exchanges with people from different parts of the world. They found this an economical way to live in different countries and immerse themselves in the language and cultures of various societies.

What distinguished these retirees was that all were active, engaged in lifelong learning in one way or another and all were concerned about what their states, provinces, or countries were proposing to do with retirement benefits. The concerns of these retired educators struck a cord of commonality and put a face on the magnitude of this global recession.

Life after retirement gives you time to do the things you want to do. You are your own boss. You can make your own decisions and decide how best to

FEA-R Fall Luncheon Focuses on Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a logical focus for those who gave years of their lives to support the learning of others and now have the time to pursue their own interests. Attendees at the first FEA-R Fall Luncheon, Nov. 9, had the opportunity to hear two speakers representing the best in area offerings for those who want to expand their own learning by exploring topics as varied as Problems of Global Security, Memoir Writing, Broadway, and U.S. Healthcare Reform.

Thom Clement, Executive Director of George Mason's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), and Marjorie Varner, Executive Director of Arlington Learning in Retirement Institute (ALRI), shared highlights of their respective learning programs. Several in attendance gave rave reviews of courses they have attended and endorsed similar programs, including one at Northern Virginia Community College.

OLLI has three locations in Northern Virginia and boasts "learning for the pure joy of learning" with no homework or exams. Classes are held between 9:30 and 3:30 on weekdays. One annual fee covers the next four class terms (eight weeks in the summer, and four weeks in the winter.)

ALRI is designed to meet "the continuing educational and social interests of anyone over age 50, regardless of their place of residence. Classes are held throughout Northern Virginia. To join, participants pay a one-time fee and are charged per class.

Those unable to attend the luncheon may explore each program online at www.oli.gmu.edu and at www.ArlingtonLRI.org.

Cont. on p. 2

VEA and NEA Convention Delegate Elections

Ballots for VEA and NEA Convention retiree delegates will be mailed on Jan. 7, 2011. VEA and NEA Convention delegate elections will be held from Jan. 10-21, 2011. If you have not received a ballot in time to mail it in by the Jan. 21 deadline, please call the VEA at 1-800-552-9554.

The endorsed candidates for the VEA convention are:

- John Duncan
- Dennis Pfennig

The endorsed candidates for the NEA convention are:

- John Duncan
- Marlene Parker
- Dennis Pfennig

It is not necessary to vote to fill all vacancies. You can choose to vote for only those endorsed. Ballots will be counted on Jan. 27, 2011, and candidates will be notified on Jan. 31, 2011.

FEA-Retired

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FEA-Retired Council 2010-11

Marlene Parker, President
Barbara Allen, Vice President

Larry Armentrout Mimi Dash Kathy Davis Jackie Dilley

John Duncan Cheryl Fulton Walt Mika Dennis Pfennig

use your time. Last month at the FEA-R Luncheon members heard about some of the opportunities for continuing their thirst for knowledge through taking classes free from the constraints of buying books and taking tests.

In meeting with newly retired employees at the FCPS retirement ceremony, I heard several people say I don't have to worry any more about benefits because I'm retiring. I'm safe. Don't be so sure. Read the articles written by members of our council and see how thinking like that can be dangerous.

Through FEA-R you have a council consisting of our association's top leaders. Your council's members work hard and are dedicated to providing you with timely information about your benefits, legislative and school board proposals and the political implications for retaining them. You can support them as they work for you by participating in Lobby Day, January 27, 2011.

As 2010 comes to end, I ask that you stay informed about the issues that could affect your retirement and commit to participate in FEA-R's activities. By understanding the issues and working together we can be a significant force.

Marlene Parker

Fall Luncheon *Cont. from p. 1*

Luncheon participants also filled out a survey about potential topics for future workshops to help the FEA-R Council plan additional opportunities. Members can now mark their calendars for the Annual Meeting and Luncheon scheduled for May 3. Time and place will be announced in a spring newsletter.

Prior to the presentation, the Council was introduced, along with its new officers: Marlene Parker, President; Barbara Allen, Vice-President, and Kathy Davis, Secretary. Outgoing President Dennis Pfennig was acknowledged for all his contributions, and outgoing Vice President Mimi Dash presented an overview of FEA-R's 2010-2011 activities.

Government Relations Team Chairperson Barbara Allen urged attendees to participate in the General Assembly Lobby Day on Jan. 27 to lobby for retiree issues.

Kathy Davis

Government Relations Team Fights for Retirees

To support FEA-R and FCRE's joint lobbying effort on behalf of retirees, the Government Relations Team (GRT) has developed a position statement to lobby our General Assembly members here at home before the 2011 session begins on Jan. 12, 2011. The document will also serve as the basis for our lobbying in Richmond on Jan. 27. Members should feel free to share this position statement with friends, colleagues or local elected officials:

- 1. Restore Virginia Retirement System (VRS) to a fully funded plan.**
 - REPAY last year's "loans" from VRS, plus interest.
 - MAINTAIN the defined benefit plan as the only retirement option for VRS employees.
- 2. Provide health insurance credit to all educational support professionals.**
- 3. Commit to significantly improving educator salaries by developing a comprehensive program to move Virginia forward.**
- 4. Oppose all voucher and tax credit plans for private and for home, K-12 education.**

Using public funds for private K-12 education reduces monies needed to ensure that Virginia's public school students receive a quality education. Studies of the use of vouchers and tax credits find that the primary beneficiaries are students from wealthier families, increasing the disparity between the "haves" and the "have nots."

Legislation to support:

Virginia Retirement System (VRS) study

The teacher fund stood at 106.2 percent funded in 2001 and is now funded at a 67.2 percent funding level. As the Pew Charitable Trust noted, "... Virginia's funds aren't in as healthy shape as they used to be, and the state has stumbled a bit in making its full annual contributions toward its long-term obligation." Has the continued underfunding been consistent with this constitutional mandate? VEA seeks a JLARC examination of this question.

Legislation to oppose:

Oppose efforts to undermine security of Virginia Retirement System (VRS)

Cont. on p. 3

Government Relation Team *Cont. from p. 2*

The VRS is a traditional pension plan, which means that the eventual benefits are predictable and designed to afford an income stream commensurate with a participant's years of service. Advantages of these traditional "defined-benefit" pensions include the fact that they are guaranteed, professionally managed and include cost-of-living adjustments.

Some legislators and administrative officials support a so-called "defined-contribution" alternative for VRS. Such accounts are more accurately described as "personal risk" accounts. They subject individual investors to market risks, and under such plans participants' retirement income would depend heavily on how astutely they invested their money. Under certain scenarios participants could outlive their retirement savings. PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates that a shift to a defined-contribution approach would lead to a 48 percent reduction in retirement benefits.

Would You Like to Participate in Advocating for Retiree Issues?

The Government Relations Team will meet on Jan. 20, 2011, at 10:00 a.m. at the Fairfax Education Association office, 3917 Old Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA.

On Jan. 27, 2011 all FCRE and FEA-R members are welcome to go on the FREE BUS trip to lobby our General Assembly members in Richmond. There will be two places where the bus will stop to pick up retirees before leaving for Richmond:

- Stop #1 is the parking lot at Fair Oaks Mall, close to the hotel that faces Rt. 50. The bus will leave at 6:00 a.m.
- Stop #2 is the parking lot of Little River United Church of Christ at 8410 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, across from Northern Virginia Community College. The bus will leave for Richmond from there at 6:30 a.m.

The bus will be returning to those stops between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.

If you are interested please come to our meeting on Jan. 20 and learn a little more about our agenda or please feel free to contact Barbara Allen at Barbarawallaceallen@yahoo.com or at 703-978-0470 and come along on the Lobby Day trip. It's fun!

Barbara Allen

Benefit Reminders: Safeguard your Health Insurance; Avoid 403b and IRA Fees

Dependent Documentation: Did you receive a notice from FCPS about your health insurance with the school system? If you did, don't ignore it. The school system is conducting an audit to make sure that ineligible people are not included on your policy. This study is being done on the advice of health insurance consultants that the system might be paying insurance for people who are not entitled to dependent coverage or are not legally married to the policy holder.

The audit was first mentioned in information mailed announcing open season on health plans held each fall. It was followed with letters to policy holders requesting information about persons covered who were not retirees of the school system.

The information required includes official copies of birth certificates or papers of adoption for children and marriage certificates for spouses. Our understanding is that official documents with stamps by the issuing government are required. In special circumstances exceptions are made if certain foreign governments are involved or other extraordinary problems exist. In those cases other documentation needs to be presented to substantiate the claim. Active school employees with non-employed persons on their policies also are required to provide records that would indicate eligibility.

Failure to provide this information will mean termination of a person's health insurance coverage.

403b accounts and regular IRAs: Were you 70.5 years old in 2009? If you were, last year's economic turmoil caused the government not to require your first withdrawal from your accounts; however, you must do so this year and have completed the withdrawal before January 1. You need to contact the firm that holds your account and arrange the required amount. You will owe income tax on the money withdrawn since it was originally saved pre-tax.

If you reached the 70.5 age in 2010, you also need to arrange a withdrawal; but you can wait as late as Tax Day, April 15, to complete your deduction and arrange for your tax payment.

Everyone at or past age 70.5 should check all possible accounts since many retirees have multiple accounts covered by these rules. Penalties are very costly for failure to meet these deadlines.

Walt Mika

Defined Benefits V. Defined Contribution Plans: The Threat Resurfaces

It appears that retirement plans are coming under increased scrutiny as school systems look for ways to “save” money. The superintendent always cites the high cost of employee benefits with a stress on retirement benefits as the first high ticket item in the school system budget.

We know all the reasons why saving our retirement systems is important, but we haven’t been able to do a great job of getting our message out. FEA and VEA are working to develop talking points that are easy for everyone to understand so that we can make community members see why these benefits are good for everyone.

For starters let’s remember that the retired community contributes to the economy. Without a retirement plan that allows one to continue to live in the community, that population becomes a drain on the economy instead of an asset. Furthermore, recent studies show that a defined contribution plan is NOT a savings to the system. This will be news to many proponents of those plans. Look for further information on this on the FEA or VEA websites in the future.

FEA-R Welcomes Dilley Return

Former council member Jackie Dilley has agreed to an appointment as FEA-R’s Education Support Professional representative. An early member of the council, Dilley served as secretary for several years after her retirement from Jeb Stuart High School. The FEA-R joins other association groups in its commitment to include ESPs on its governing body and welcomes her valuable contributions.

Did You Know?

One way to expand your world...

NEA Today lists the Educators Travel Network (ETN) as an affordable and innovative way for people to travel and see the world.

A one-year family membership is \$36 to join the Educators Bed and Breakfast travel network. The ETN is composed of a vast number of educators across the country who host other educators in their homes throughout the U.S. and abroad. Each night’s stay costs \$40. The cost for an entire home for two is \$50 a night. For more information go to www.educatorstravel.com.

Mimi Dash

Life after Retirement

How many times have you heard a retired educator say, “How did I ever find time to teach?” This is so true. When we retire, it’s like starting a new chapter in our lives with a multitude of possibilities.

First there are endless opportunities to volunteer for organizations that give you a chance to meet and work with others that have your similar interests. My passion for teaching and being a teacher advocate carries on with my involvement with FEA and the Fairfax Retired Teacher’s organizations.

Next, you have time for yourself. Have fun! Join the book clubs, fitness classes, card clubs, courses—some new activity that you always wanted to try and never had time. I have always enjoyed playing tennis and kept up the sport when teaching by trying to play twice a week and joining a team or two in the summer. Now, I can play nearly every day and belong to at least five different USTA teams that travel to various places during the week and give me the opportunity to go to districts, regionals, and even nationals!

Last, after all the volunteering, traveling, family time, and fun activities, you might decide you would like to work again—full or part time. The door really is wide open. Think about what interests you have and what you have a passion for. We all had this passion when we started teaching, right?!

For me it was fashion. Having taught business subjects my entire teaching career, I thought I might enjoy being a personal shopper or doing something in retail. Then, I happened to attend a CAbi party and the “light bulb” came on. This company gives you an opportunity to literally sell beautiful, designer women’s clothing in your home and/or via a traveling boutique. I now have that same feeling I had when I started teaching—I can’t believe someone is paying me to do something I have so much fun doing and love.

Think about it. As teachers we are trained salespeople in many ways. Whatever subject we taught, we loved it and wanted to share it with our students and see them grow. We also know the value of education and learning and know that if we stop we aren’t growing. What better way to continue our interests and passions by having your own business?

Life after retirement is wonderful. You can set the parameters and do anything you want. Consider having your own business. Teachers are natural entrepreneurs—we are organized, enthusiastic, caring, responsible, dedicated individuals. How did I find time to teach?

Cheryl Fulton