



# Brevard Federation of Teachers Retired Chapter News "Retired, Not Expired"

Volume 28, Number 1  
Oct, 2023

## The President's Missive

--Joan Taddie

Welcome back to all our BFT-Retired members, and many thanks to Nancy Johnson, Susan Vincent, Cecily Cain and Rita Gynan for joining me at the BFT office where we put together and mailed 236 envelopes containing an invitation to our Open House at the Union office for each BFT teacher who retired at the end of 2022 and 2023. The Open House is scheduled for Thursday, September 28 from 3:00-5:00. There will be drinks and snacks and a \$25 VISA Gift Card giveaway for our newly retired BFT teachers every 15 minutes!

Our first BFT-R meeting of the new school year will be at the BFT office on Thursday, October 5. Our October meeting is traditionally our Political Luncheon, and we will have candidates attending the meeting who will talk to all of us about why they are running for office and answer any questions you may have for them. As of today, two candidates have confirmed that they will be attending this luncheon. Dan McDow is running for the US House of Representatives-Florida District 8 and Anthony Yantz is running for State Representative District 33. Bring a bag lunch at 11:30 and the BFT-R will supply desserts and drinks. The candidates will speak to you beginning at noon.

Sadly, voter apathy and disenchantment with the political process remain significant challenges that we face today. Many feel disconnected from politics or believe that their vote won't make a difference. However, this couldn't be farther from the truth. Your one vote is not just a mark on a ballot; it's a powerful tool that helps shape the present and future of your community and nation.

Every vote matters! Let us embrace this privilege, and let our votes define the destiny we seek for ourselves and the generations that follow.



### Next Meeting--Thur, Oct. 5, 2023

1007 Florida Ave, Rockledge

11:30 Brown bag lunch

12:00 Speakers: Political candidates

(No business meeting)

BFT-R will provide drinks, dessert & paper products



### Membership News

--Sheila Cootes

**We're very happy to welcome Anne Marie Monteparo as a new member. Anne Marie** taught VPK at Dr. W. J. Creel Elementary. She lists travel, reading and beach as her interests. **WELCOME, Anne Marie!**



The following are on the **2022-23 "Honor Roll"** (those members who have paid their 2022-23 dues since the last newsletter): **Jonathan Schuman** and **Lance Wallace**.

Just a reminder: dues for 2023-24 are not due until October of this year. **Please wait until then to send me your check.**

Membership questions? Just call or text (321) 427-7808 or e-mail ([scootes@earthlink.net](mailto:scootes@earthlink.net))

## **185 vacancies in the district means that students are left wanting**

**Anthony S. Colucci, Guest columnist, BFT President**

**Published in Florida Today Sept. 10, 2023**

I recently heard an impassioned veteran educator explain that she was “fighting to stay a teacher.”

As a classroom teacher for 16 years, I will tell you that being a teacher is worth the fight. Teaching can be an extremely exciting, rewarding, and fun career. The joy that comes from helping students become the best versions of themselves is truly priceless. Unfortunately, too many teachers are losing their battles to fight to stay in the profession. Which begs the question: What is causing educators to leave the field of education?

While many industries are struggling with staffing, the added workload caused by vacancies to teachers, who have a never ending and always growing list of expectations, is unmanageable. On August 31<sup>st</sup>, Brevard Public Schools was advertising 185 positions covered under the teachers’ contract. To be clear, this is not the result of poor recruitment. BPS does a good job of hiring teachers. But its track record on retention is another story.

It’s sometimes hard to grasp the magnitude of vacancies. To simplify, 185 vacancies mean *thousands* of students are not receiving the services they should be. It means that already overworked teachers are picking up the work for the unfilled positions. It means that the voter-approved class-size amendment is ignored, and students get less individualized attention. It means that a teacher has more parents to contact, papers to grade, and meetings to attend. These vacancies cause exceptional education teachers’ caseloads to become unwieldy.

Not only do these teachers have more Individual Education Plans to write, data to collect, and less planning time due to meetings, our students with disabilities are not getting the quality education they deserve. Knowing students are being shortchanged is disheartening and causing some to leave. Instructional vacancies lead to more instructional vacancies.

While overall, Brevard County residents are extremely supportive of our schools, our schools have become pawns in the culture wars. This has led to an underlying but pervasive view that teachers themselves are under attack. While our teachers are focused on teaching students state standards, the fear of using the wrong pronoun, a nickname, making a student feel “uncomfortable” while teaching history, or letting a student accidentally read a book that someone finds objectionable is always present.

On top of that, the accusations against teachers from all sides of the political spectrum are always lingering. Our school board meetings feel more like a barroom brawl at open mic night than a serious event that focuses on education. The climate of our schools is polluted by this.

Let’s face it, job opportunities abound in Brevard County. Many of these employers are eager to hire teachers who are reliable, hardworking, and have a wide range of skills. And, while average Florida teacher pay still ranks 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation, many employers are willing to pay more. Additionally, these jobs provide much more balance, flexibility, and work from home opportunities which are attractive to job seekers.

Meanwhile, Brevard Public Schools has fought tooth and nail against the opportunities it has for teachers to be flexible. Additionally, nearly every proposal at the bargaining table they made this year sought to take away much needed time that teachers use to plan lessons, grade papers, and contact parents. Many teachers are choosing less stressful and more lucrative job opportunities.

Our public-school teachers in Brevard work tirelessly to provide our children with the best education possible. Most would say they love teaching. Most would say they’re fighting to stay in the profession. However, the never-ending expectations, culture wars, and employment opportunities elsewhere are causing many of them to throw in the towel.

## Field Trips

--Lin Herz

### November Field Trip

On November 14, join us at historic Green Gables on U.S.1 in Melbourne for a traditional “Afternoon Tea” and a tour.

The tea includes finger sandwiches, mini quiche, scones, clotted cream, jam, cookies, and tea.

We will also have small group tours of the historic home on the Indian River Lagoon.

The cost of the tea and tour is \$25. The afternoon also includes a tour of the grounds and learning the history of when the “river” was the main mode of transportation. Seating is limited to 24-28 people.

Please reserve as soon as you can. Contact Lin Herz via text 321-960-8194 or email

lin32905@gmail.com, to RSVP and if you have questions. She will call you back if you have questions.

To find out more about Green Gables: <https://greengables.org/history>

Please send a **check made out to BFT/R** to Joan before October 31. Or bring cash payment to the November 2nd BFT/R meeting. (Remember only the first 28 will be able to participate.)

Joan Taddie

639 North Wildwood Lane

Melbourne Village, FL 32904

We’ll be having two additional trips this year, one in February and one in March. Please read the following descriptions of the possible trips. We’ll be deciding at our October meeting which places to go.

- 1) Scenic Boat Cruise through the pristine chain lakes of Winter Park. This is a narrated cruise through a lovely area. You learn about the history of the area, as well as what famous people lived in the houses. If we have 15-18 people we can have a boat just for our group. The cost is \$15 per person. We’ll be a block away from Park Avenue with an array of restaurants and shops.  
<https://www.scenicboattours.com/>
- 2) Leu Gardens -is a beautiful botanical garden. Admission includes the garden and historic Leu House Museum. If we have 10 people or more we can have a guided tour, which is \$17. If we choose Leu Gardens we’d go in February when the Camelias are in full bloom. There are many locally owned restaurants nearby for us to have lunch. <https://www.leugardens.org/>
- 3) Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition- located on International Drive. “Step back in time to April 1912 when you visit Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition in Orlando!” They have more than 300 artifacts, costumed actors, and full-scale room recreations. Cost is \$24.70. It takes about 2 hours to see the whole thing. If we would choose there are also guided tours available at an additional cost and at selected times through the week. These are thematic guided tours where an artifact specialist leads groups of up to 25 people through the exhibition providing a personalized experience. This costs an additional \$5 per person on top of ticket prices. <https://titanicorlando.com/>
- 4) Wild Florida is a drive through safari with over 100 exotic birds and animals. There are also shows throughout the day. You drive a 4-mile path across 170 acres of scenic landscapes. “Our wildlife and safari park presents a unique opportunity to bring you up close and personal with wild animals such as giraffes, zebra, eland antelope, scimitar oryx, American bison, mouflon sheep, and more!”  
<https://wildfloridairboats.com/drive-thru-safari-park/>

## Read, Recycle, and Reward Program

--Rita Hewett



We are in our 9th year of serving students in the Title 1 schools. We serve students in grades 1st, kindergarten, Pre-k and ESE primary students. We took off over a month to spend time with family and friends, but all summer long we collected books and stuffed animals. We have quite a collection of beautiful stuffed animals. I am sure children would love to cuddle up and read a book or have someone read to both of them.

We have added a few more retired teachers to volunteer with us. This will help get more books out to children faster. We are serving the south area schools this year. If you would like to be on our team to help children love reading, please get in touch with me. There is a job for everyone.

Rita Hewett

(321)720-3683

[rmhewett@yahoo.com](mailto:rmhewett@yahoo.com)



Congratulations to the winner of the \$500 Fran Shevenell Memorial Scholarship: Natalee Morton from Melbourne High.

Natalee's parents are both union members: her mother teaches at Dr. W.J. Creel Elementary & her father is a Melbourne firefighter.

Natalee plans to attend the University of Central Florida and major in Studio Art with an Education minor. Her future plan is to be a middle or high school Art teacher.

## Our Traditional Holiday Luncheon

This year our Holiday Luncheon will be at 11:30 on December 7 at the Tuscany Grill, a locally owned restaurant at the entrance to the Avenues in Viera. There will be a choice of 4 entrees, which will be served with house salad, Italian bread with pesto butter, soda or tea, and a cannoli for dessert:

**Salmon Acropolis** – “60 South” Salmon sautéed with artichokes, red peppers and sun-dried tomatoes, in lemon-white wine butter, served over fettuccine.

**Eggplant Rollatini** - Thin sliced battered eggplant stuffed with a garlic ricotta blend, baked and topped with mozzarella and served over spaghetti and marinara.

**Lasagna** - Pasta sheets layered with ground sirloin, ricotta and mozzarella cheeses and Italian herbs, baked in our homemade ragout and covered with melted mozzarella.

**Chicken Parmigiana** - Tender chicken breast breaded and baked in our homemade marinara with mozzarella cheese, served over spaghetti.

Cost is \$22 per person BFT/R will pay tax and gratuity. We are limited to 38 people. The first 38 to RSVP and send in their payment will have a spot.

RSVP by text to Lin Herz 321-960-8104 or email [lin32905@gmail.com](mailto:lin32905@gmail.com) to RSVP or ask any questions.

Send in your payment **check made out to BFT/R** to:

Joan Taddie

639 North Wildwood Lane

Melbourne Village, FL 32904

## **Volunteer Hours**

--Susan Vincent

URGENT CALL for Volunteer hours! I know we have a lot of retirees who have not sent in their volunteer hours. You don't have to volunteer at schools for your hours to count. You can send them to my email: [snv1@cfl.rr.com](mailto:snv1@cfl.rr.com). Please put volunteer hours in the subject line.



## Brevard Federation of Teachers-Retired Chapter News

### OFFICERS

### CALENDAR

**President:** Joan Taddie [jtaddie@cfl.rr.com](mailto:jtaddie@cfl.rr.com)  
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**Thur, Oct. 5 - BFT-R meeting at  
 BFT Office  
 1007 Florida Ave, Rockledge  
 -11:30 Brown bag lunch  
 -12:00 Speakers: Political candidates  
 -(no business meeting)**

**Next meeting - Nov. 2, 2023**

### Membership Application

I want to join BFT/R for the 2023-2024 school year and receive membership benefits. Enclosed please find a check payable to BFT/R for:

#### New Member

Annual dues \$76.00  
 Lifetime dues \$400.00  
 (state and national)

#### Renewing Member

Annual dues \$76.00 (For non-life members)  
 Local dues for Lifetime members **\$30 each year**  
 Lifetime dues \$400 (BFTR pays local dues 1<sup>st</sup> year)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
 Former School \_\_\_\_\_ Subject /Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_  
 Interests \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this form and mail it and your check to **Sheila Cootes, 3737 Sunward Dr., Merritt Island, FL 32953.**