



Brevard Federation of Teachers Retired Chapter News “Retired, Not Expired”

Volume 30, Number 1
Oct. 2025

President’s Message

--Anne Marie Monteparo

Welcome back to all our retired members. Hope you all enjoyed your summer. Looking forward to seeing you at our monthly meetings and catching up. We have some great speakers and field trips planned for this year.

Jonathan Schuman has taken a teaching position and has stepped down from his BFTR Vice President role. Thank you, Jonathan, for your help last year and wish you luck!

In May, Nancy Rhodes and I attended the BFT Teacher Appreciation Party at Rising Tide and raffled off four \$25 gift certificates to teachers. We also distributed BFT Retired flyers.

Our 2025 Shevenell Memorial Scholarship winner, Sydney Stefurak, was presented with a \$500 check and certificate. She will be studying nursing at Florida State University.

Nancy Johnson and Nancy Rhodes will be attending the FEA Delegate Assembly and FEA Retired Annual meeting in Orlando on October 10 -11. I’m sure they will share their experience with us in November.



Next Meeting--Thur, Oct. 2, 2025

1007 Florida Ave, Rockledge

11:30 Brown bag lunch

12:00 Business meeting

12:30 Speaker: Ruth Rhodes, Elder Law Attorney

BFT-R will provide drinks, dessert & paper products

Dues are due in October

--\$30 for life member

--\$76 for non-life members

Make check payable to BFTR

Pay Sheila Cootes at the Oct. meeting or mail it to her using the form on page 5.

Upcoming Speakers and Field Trips

By Lin Herz

October Speaker

Ruth Rhodes, Board Certified Elder Law Attorney and founder of Rhodes Law, P.A., is passionate about helping seniors and their families plan ahead and find peace of mind. She and her team provide caring guidance with estate and Medicaid planning, guardianship, probate, establishing whether you need a trust and trust administration, and all related litigation and Elder Law matters so you can focus on what matters most to you.”

Ruth will also be sharing her knowledge at the October BFT/R meeting, where she will speak about the importance of estate planning, advanced directives, probate, when to have a trust, etc. and how to protect yourself and your loved ones from exploitation, scams, and identity theft.

We hope you'll join us at our October meeting, so you can benefit from this informative presentation and gain the tools you need to plan ahead with confidence.

October 21 – Tour of the Lawndale Historic Home & Museum

Step back in time with us on **Tuesday, October 21st at 11:00 a.m.** for a visit to the **Lawndale Historic Home and Museum** on the scenic river road, Rockledge Drive in Rockledge. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this gem captures the charm of life along the Indian River Lagoon in the late 1800s.

The museum features nearly 4,000 square feet of period-furnished living space, a charming carriage house, and more than an acre of scenic grounds. Its tranquil waterfront views and authentic furnishings bring history to life. We'll be taking guided tours in small groups of 6–8, allowing for a more personal experience with the home's fascinating stories.

After the tour, we'll head to **Cocoa Village** to have lunch together.

Details:

- **Tour length:** 45 minutes–1 hour
- **Cost:** \$10 per person (or \$8.00 if we have more than six participants). Pay at the door.
- **RSVP by:** **October 14th to Lin Herz by phone or text 321-960-8194**

November 19 – Stetson Mansion Christmas Spectacular

Experience the magic of the holiday season when we visit Deland's Stetson Mansion on November 19th for the celebrated “Christmas Spectacular Holiday Home Tour.” Built in 1886 for John B. Stetson, of Stetson hat fame, this estate was Florida's first luxury home. The home is recognized as one of USA Today's “10 Best Holiday Home Tours in the US” (It ranks #5 nationwide) and is Tripadvisor's #1 landmark attraction in Florida. Explore lavish interiors filled with original mosaic parquet flooring, thousands of antique glass panes, and an array of unique handcrafted details—plus the distinction of being Florida's first snowbird home, the first home with electricity, (Mr.Stetson was best friends with Thomas Edison) steam heat, indoor plumbing, and a call-bell system (like on Downton Abbey). Details:

- **Lunch in Deland:** before the tour
- **Guided Tour:** at 2:30 p.m.
- **Tour Cost:** \$34 (BFT/R will cover tax and booking fees)
- **Payment deadline:** October 24th

Please RSVP before October 24th

☐ **Please send checks (payable to BFT/R) to: Anne Marie Monteparo 1118 Wild Flower Dr. Melbourne, FL 32940**

☐ Carpools will be arranged. For questions, and to RSVP contact **Lin Herz** at 321-960-8194 or lin32905@gmail.com.

December 4 – Holiday Luncheon at Tuscany Grill

Celebrate the season with us at our annual **Holiday Luncheon** on **Thursday, December 4th at 11:30 a.m.** at the **Tuscany Grill**. The menu will feature the same selections as last year, cost \$22 per person. BFT/R will cover tax and tip. This annual gathering is a special way to end the year, sharing laughter and friendship with fellow retirees.

RSVP by November 24th to Lin. (More about the holiday gathering in next month's newsletter)

□ Whether you join us for history, holiday sparkle, or simply good company, we look forward to seeing you at these events.



Congratulations to Sydney Stefurak from Viera High School, winner of the 2025 BFT-R \$500 Fran Shevenell Memorial Scholarship. Sydney plans to attend Florida State University and major in Nursing. Her father is a teacher at Bayside High School.



Membership News

--Sheila Cootes

It still feels like summer BUT it's fall and your dues are due in October. Our first general membership meeting will be October 2 at the BFT office. We will have our usual "brown bag" lunch at 11:30. If you are coming, save a stamp and just hand me your check (made payable to BFTR). Reminder: even if you are a "life" member, you still owe local dues of \$30.

Life membership is \$400. We (BFTR) will pay your local dues the year you become a "life member." **Save \$46 per year (plus the \$30 we "give" you for that first year's local dues).** We will be glad to accept the \$400 amount in installments.

Annual membership is \$76 (\$30 of that amount stays with BFTR). Annual members, consider changing to the "life" status.

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

Phone Tree

--Rita Gynan

BFT-R sees our phone trees as a valuable resource for keeping in touch with our members. If you are not receiving a phone call or message after the newsletter is published, please let me know. Or, if you are interested in volunteering to be a caller, please contact:

Rita Gynan at 321-728-2946 or email me at fgynan@cfl.rr.com.

Volunteer Hours

--Susan Vincent

Please write in your volunteer hours on the sign-in sheet at our next meeting or email them to me. You don't have to volunteer at schools for your hours to count. You can also count your travel time. You can send them to my email: snv1@cfl.rr.com. Please put "volunteer hours" in the subject line.

Read, Recycle, and Reward Program

--Rita Hewett

Welcome back everyone. Lots of great surprises happened during the summer for our book program.

- Thanks to the BFT's newsletter sent out to members about our request for teachers to please donate their gently used early childhood books to our program. We were able to collect several retiring or changing position teacher's books for our program.
- Thanks to several thrift stores. Their employees and managers have gotten to know our routine trips to their stores looking for books and stuffed animals. We were able to get many of our items free or very cheap at their stores.
- Thanks to the BFTR we were able to finish using their donation of financial help with other supplies.
- Thanks to our volunteers, we have worked during the summer to prepare the items for our young readers. A lot of work goes into each book to make sure our children have wonderful books to read with a book buddy.
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We have started our 11th year in the south area schools.

This is our data for September:

Pre-K 108

Kindergarten 216

1st grade 263

ESE students 13

Total number of students 600

Total number of books given out. 1,200.

We have a job for everyone:

Vetting, sorting, cleaning, repairing, matching, and bagging. We need your help.

Volunteering on Monday or Thursday from 9:30am to 1:00pm at Palm Bay High School

If you would like to join us this year, please contact me.

Rita Hewett, Program Chair

(321) 720-3683





Florida Following Texas in Redistricting

Patty Farley

Florida is getting ready for a major redistricting process in 2025, driven by the political motivations of Donald Trump and demands from Ron Desantis.

Florida House Speaker Daniel Perez has announced the creation of a select committee to explore redistricting options. This committee aims to address potential changes to congressional maps ahead of the 2026 elections, with discussions expected to begin in the fall of 2025. While the legislature could wait until the regular session in January 2026, there is pressure to act sooner, possibly through a special session in mid-October 2025.

The redistricting process is contentious, with accusations from Democrats that the Republican-led efforts are aimed at consolidating power and diminishing Democratic representation. If the new maps are drawn favorably for Republicans, several Democratic incumbents could be at risk of losing their seats. The Republican-led panel could make Florida's Republican-favoring congressional map even more Republican. Florida's current congressional map favors Republicans. The state sends 20 GOP Representatives to Washington, D.C., and only eight Democrats. The Florida House has already created a committee to explore changing the map. House Speaker Daniel Perez has named its 11 members; eight are Republicans. Republican Rep. Mike Redondo of Miami will be its chairman. He's slated to become House speaker following the 2030 election.

There are also ongoing legal challenges related to previous redistricting efforts, with accusations of racial gerrymandering affecting several congressional and state legislative districts. These legal battles may influence the current redistricting discussions and outcomes.

DeSantis and Trump say they want a mid-decade Census count, but who will pay for it? Florida Taxpayers again?



Brevard Federation of Teachers-Retired Chapter News

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Elder Law Attorney**

Next meeting - November 6, 2025

Membership Application

I want to join BFT/R for the 2025-2026 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 1st 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.**