



Brevard Federation of Teachers

Retired Chapter News

“Retired, Not Expired”

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The President’s Missive

--Joan Taddie

As the saying goes, “**March comes in like a lion, and out like a lamb.**” March 2021 was no exception to this belief. **March 8** was International Woman’s Day 2021, and the theme this year was “Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.” It aimed to “celebrate the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.” **March 11** came roaring in right after that and made everyone stop in their tracks and reflect on the fact that **March 11, 2021** was the One Year Anniversary of the COVID-19 Pandemic! The numbers were staggering! Total COVID Cases in the US: 30,425,787. Total COVID Cases Globally: 122,946,178. Total COVID Deaths in the US: 554,104. Total COVID Deaths Globally: 2,714,683.

But as March gets closer to its end, we remember that **March 20** is the first day of Spring in 2021; a new beginning filled with hope that we may soon be able to socialize with our friends who, like us, are fully vaccinated. But most important of all...If we are fully vaccinated, we can hug our grandchildren again!

I have been keeping busy this month. I virtually attended the NEA-Retired Conference on March 14, 15, and 16. The title of the retired conference was, “Now More Than Ever, The Commitment Continues.” There were over 500 retired teachers attending from all over America. It was originally supposed to have been held in New Orleans, but COVID made that impossible. Because the conference was virtual, the fee for attending was only \$30 and FEA paid the fee for all the local presidents from Florida. NEA found an interesting way to make sure we had snacks and drinks as we “attended” all our sessions. We were all given a \$45 credit to go on a site called “Snackmagic.” We could click on whatever snack packages or drinks (including tea or coffee pods) that we wanted, and a box arrived at my house with the snacks along with beads, a mask and other souvenirs from New Orleans. The virtual opening night dinner was a recipe for Easy Jambalaya and a gin drink called Lavender 75. A chef guided us as we followed the recipes. After that, we could dance the night away in our homes to a live, virtual band called Kinfolk Brass Band. These times are so interesting!

I enjoyed the sessions offered by the conference. Two of my favorites were “Racial and Social Justice” and “Conversations With Friends: Developing a Stronger Peer Relationship.” These were both Zoom sessions, so I got to have personal conversations with just one or two other retired teachers from all over the USA. It was great to hear opinions from educators from so many different cultures and geographic locations. I had the opportunity to speak to the whole group about all the wonderful things BFTR does in our community! Were your ears buzzing?

Another project that I am involved with right now is that I am working with the Brevard Schools Foundation as a scholarship reviewer. I have 2 scholarships to review for the Jan Simpkins Memorial Scholarship. These students must be planning a career in cancer research or treatment. I have another 28 scholarships to review for the Sgt. Anthony Mulqueen Scholarship.

I want to close by thanking our own Nancy Johnson for agreeing to be our speaker last month. Nancy and her husband Oli have been volunteers with so many environmental organizations over the years that I knew we would learn about many hidden treasures here in Brevard that we can safely enjoy by hiking or kayaking! I received so many compliments, not only on Nancy’s knowledgeable presentation, but by the beautiful pictures in her powerpoint that made us want to get outside and surround ourselves with the beauty that exists so close to all our neighborhoods!

I wish you all a beautiful and calming Spring. See you on April Fool’s Day for our next General Membership meeting!



Next Meeting--Thur, Apr. 1, 2021 via ZOOM

11:00 Business Meeting

12:00 Guest Speaker: Dr. Sharon Packard

Topic: Self Care

You will be receiving an email that will give you the information you need to attend including our meeting ID#. Text or call Joan at 321-266-6006 if you need any help, or a practice session to figure out how to be admitted into the meeting. The meeting room will be open at 10:30 if you would like to get into the meeting earlier.

******* 2021 Florida Legislative Session Update *******

--Patty Farley

YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SENATE BILL 84 and SENATE BILL 1014

SB84 ends the Florida Retirement System (FRS) pension plan for new employees starting on July 1, 2022. All public employees who enroll in FRS on or after July 1, 2022, will be placed in the 401(k)-style plan instead.

The legislature has been trying to end our retirement plan for years and this may be the year it happens. The Capitol is on lock down due to covid making it hard to protest actions.

As a Florida retired teacher you know we worked for low wages with a promise of a retirement plan. Ask any child what happens when you only withdraw from the piggy bank. That bank becomes empty. Florida not only leads the nation in number of retired persons, it also leads the nation in retired persons living in poverty—it is time to end this national shame. Florida should be looking for ways to expand retirement security for more of its citizens instead of taking away retirement security from educators and other public workers.

Would you be financially secure if your pension is eliminated? Educators and public workers are a huge section of the work force for each of Florida’s 67 counties. The current retirees and future retirees make up a large consumer group that contribute to the financial security of each of those counties, too. Eliminating the Florida Retirement Pensions will devastate retired educators, but also hurt all local businesses where that money is now spent.

Call, email or write your Florida Senator and tell them to vote No on this destructive measure.

Senate Bill 1014 is a bill with no purpose EXCEPT to destroy teachers Unions. FEA is the strongest and biggest union in the state and this bill is out to bust the union by eliminating dues deduction from paychecks.

Depending on the county, educators might have more than 100 items they can have deducted from their payroll. From health insurance to United Way donations to gym memberships, educators are given the freedom to choose what to have deducted from their paycheck. This bill removes that freedom for union membership only. Our legislators should be in the business of ensuring and expanding freedom, not limiting it.

No one has asked for this bill – and it is not needed. Current law protects employees’ rights and allows them to join or terminate their membership at any time. All this bill will do is make it harder for individuals to exercise their constitutional right to join their union/employee (professional) organization.

If this bill were about helping or protecting public workers, it would apply to all public workers. That this bill only applies to educators and not police, firefighters and other public workers is a clear sign that the intent of this bill is to harm, not to help.

Please ask your Florida Senator to Vote No on this Bill also.

You can find contact info for your legislator at <https://feaweb.org/issues-action/find-your-legislator/>

Read, Recycle, and Reward Program

--Rita Hewett

More great news from our Book Program: our BFTR book volunteers have been fully vaccinated. We are still in need of more volunteers to help sort, clean, repair and match.

I called the Education Department at Eastern Florida State College. I talked to the Assistant Professor of Education, Kim Coluccio. She was very excited that we were looking for volunteers. Some of their education students need volunteer hours. She asked to tour our workroom at Clearlake Education Center. When she walked into our room she said, "Wow! Look at all of this." She was amazed at our operation. After she looked things over she said, "How did I not know about your program?" She even thought of having her class there for a lesson in how to select books and have them help us match. That same day we had our first student volunteer, Phoebe Vitek. We look forward to a partnership with Eastern Florida State College to mentor their students and help them with their volunteer hours.

We want to thank Tina Newman for her skills in sewing, repairing and washing our books and stuffed characters. We are also very thankful for 3 ladies who took us on as their project to sew for us. They are so creative in making bookmarks out of fancy cloth and foam for our early chapter book readers. These ladies also sew small shoulder bags, sports drawstring pouches and facemasks to match sports teams. We are so grateful for the many books and activity workbooks for our students. Thank you Julie Hagadern, Nancy Alderman and Martie Mueller for being so generous to help our students enjoy reading.



Student volunteer Phoebe Vitek(l) Part of our workroom & Ass't. Professor Kim Coluccio

Come and be a part of this growing, wonderful program. For more information please call me at (321) 720-3683.

Volunteer Hours

--Susan Vincent

Please send your volunteer hours to my email address, which is snv1@cfl.rr.com. Please put in the subject line that it is volunteer hours. I know that BFT retirees do volunteer. Let's start giving the hours to me so I can log them with the state.

Henegar Center Review

--Cecily Cain

Oh what a wonderful feeling! Oh, what a beautiful day!

We got to go on an outing! We got to go see a play!

For the first time in what seems like years, my daughter Meridith and I were approaching the outside ticket window at the Henegar Center to pick up our matinee tickets for the closing performance of "Once on this Island". For those of you who missed zooming in on Feb. membership meeting-- our speaker was Dominic Del Brocco, Executive and Artistic Director of the Henegar. He told us how the five community theaters got together to find working protocol to make opening the theaters safe.

Live shows--what a great way to break up our isolation. At the moment, my form of breaking isolation is wandering the aisles of the supermarket, and I can report that wandering the aisles in the theater is a good deal safer. Small groupings, empty seats on either side, rows staggered, everyone masked, and the play was delightful with a talented cast and beautifully staged.

During intermission Meridith took a run to the box office to purchase tickets for a one-weekend production of "Hedwig and The Angry Inch" (not based on a Roald Dahl story). So, fellow retirees, no matter where you live in the county, there is the opportunity to safely lift your spirits and keep the theaters going.

BFT-R Member Benefit

Free consultation with Attorney Michael Kahn
321-242-2564
482 N. Harbor City Blvd., Melbourne 32935
Discounted rate if he takes your case

Innovative Grant Report

Michael Broud, Heritage High School Automotive Repair Teacher, recently submitted a follow-up report on the Innovative Grant he received to assist his advanced automotive repair students to purchase and swap out “the old school clutch fan with an updated electric cooling fan system.” Mr. Broud said that the students achieved their goals and learned some valuable lessons, despite a few setbacks and roadblocks along the way. It taught the students several electrical and life lessons, plus it gave them a great deal of confidence to conquer their own electrical projects.

Way to go, Panther Automotive!



Update on Viera Wetlands

--Nancy Johnson

As part of my presentation at our March meeting, I talked about Viera Wetlands as a great place to see wildlife from your car. According to a March 20 article in Florida Today, access has now been restricted to bicycles & walkers only “for the foreseeable future”. Apparently cars keep getting in the way of staff from the water treatment plant who are required to conduct hourly water sampling and the dirt berm roads were not built for the amount of cars that use them. County officials will be reevaluating the public vehicle access to the wetlands in the coming weeks.

NEA Virtual Auction

The \$50 VISA gift card that BFT-R donated to the NEA Virtual Auction was won by Brenda Seehafer of Drake, ND (population 268) for a bid of \$110. Brenda is a Title 1 teacher in Rolla ND, and has been teaching for 16 years. She is also president of the Rolla Education Association and NEA Director.

April Program

--Lin Herz

Our speaker for April is Dr. Sharon Packard. Sharon is a licensed clinical psychologist who has worked in higher education and K-12 settings for more than 15 years. She will be speaking about the consequences chronic stress has on your mental and physical well-being and ways to combat that stress. You’ll learn how you can take better care of yourself, including indulging yourself, in various ways to improve your emotional and physical health during the pandemic and after.

FEA-Retired Election

Election Buddy will be sent out in an email Monday, March 22 announcing the FEA-Retired election. The electronic election will go live between March 22-April 5.

All delegates to the FEA-Delegate Assembly have been elected by acclamation, including Joan Taddie & Nancy Johnson.

Check your email. We don't want anyone to miss it! If you do NOT receive your electronic ballot, contact Joan Taddie.

FEA-Retired Annual Meeting 2021

As of this moment, the FEA-Retired annual meeting is scheduled to be held IN PERSON on Thursday, Oct. 14 at the Rosen Center in Orlando from 1:00-4:00. Brevard is allocated to have 2 delegates plus our President Joan Taddie & District Director Nancy Johnson. Delegates meet for lunch (paid for by BFT-R) at the Rosen Center at 11:30. If you would like to be a delegate, contact Joan Taddie by July 31. The first 2 to respond will be delegates, and the next 3 will be alternates, in case a delegate cannot attend.

BFT-R now has a Facebook page!

If you're on Facebook, check it out:

<https://www.facebook.com/Brevard-Federation-of-Teachers-Retired-106921664807940>



By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere. - *Billy Crystal*



Brevard Federation of Teachers-Retired Chapter News

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CALENDAR

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Thur, Apr. 1 - BFT-R meeting--on ZOOM
 11:00-12:00 Meeting
 12:00-12:30 Speaker--Dr. Sharon Packard on Self Care

Next meeting - May 6--on ZOOM

Membership Application

I want to join BFT/R for the 2020-2021 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)
 ____ Lifetime dues \$400.00
 (state and national)
 ____ Local dues \$30 (For lifetime members only)
 (Must be paid each 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.