



email: npcra@gmail.com

North Pinellas County *Retired Educators Association* NEWSLETTER



PO Box 4248, Clearwater, FL 33758

Vol. 50, Issue 4

MARCH/APRIL 2025

Our 50th Year!



Recent Events:

Tuesday, Jan. 14, *Happy New Year Luncheon, Clearwater Country Club.*

Tuesday, Feb 11, *Valentines Luncheon, Clearwater Country Club.*

Thursday, Feb. 13, *Cupid Crew Assembly and Delivery of Valentine's Day Roses to Nursing Homes*

Our Tuesday, March 11, luncheon honors St. Patrick's Day. Please come wearing something green to celebrate.

Our guest speaker will be Jerry Dilley, a former crew member of the USS Forrestal, who will tell us of the horrific events of July 1967, when the Forrestal caught fire in the Gulf of Tonkin.



The Forrestal burns in July 1967

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, March 11, *St. Patrick's Luncheon, 11 am, Clearwater Country Club. Wear your Irish green duds. Bring items of memorabilia for NPCREA's first 50 years.*

Tuesday, April 8, *Spring is Sprung Luncheon, 11 am, Clearwater Country Club. Wear pastel colors and flowers in your hair. Bring spring basket items to give to people at Coral Oaks assisted living.*

Please bring any photos or other items you may have that will help us remember and celebrate the first 50 years of NPCREA. We'll be having a big birthday bash in September 2025 when the new school year starts.

Also bring your appetite for corned beef and cabbage, salad, and cake for dessert. The Clearwater Country Club Salad is an alternate meal. Please RSVP by March 6 to eVite or to npcra@gmail.com

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



Who can believe that we are already in the month of March? One reason time seems to fly by is that we have been very busy helping members of our community.

In January your generosity helped students in Pinellas County who are facing homelessness. Members brought many school supplies,

which we dropped off at the Homeless Empowerment Project on Betty Lane in Clearwater after our luncheon. In February, so many of you came through once again for the Fatherhood Collaborative with baby items for single fathers. I can't tell you how grateful our speakers, Jerome and Genevieve, were to receive our help.

Through the efforts of member Nancy Whitlock, we were able to have our first annual Cupid Crew roses delivery. The efforts that Nancy put into planning the event, contacting the organization, finding two facilities and preparing the flowers for delivery, were amazing in themselves, but she accomplished almost all the final details at the same time she was recovering from knee surgery. You can't keep this woman and her positive attitude down. Nancy, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. This event couldn't have gone off as perfectly as it did, without your hours of preparation and organization.

I'd also like to thank all our members who took the time at the January luncheon to write out heartfelt messages in the Valentine's Day cards. Lastly, I want to thank the members of the "cupid crew" that joined me at Lakeside Oaks to deliver the lovely flowers. Prior to delivery, each flower was placed in a water vial, put into a pink flower sleeve and a Valentine ornament was added along with a bow. Nancy and her husband Bob delivered 65 roses to the Preserve in Clearwater. They were greeted at the door by eager staff members who were happy to assist in passing out the flowers.

Our visit to Lakeside Oaks was an entertaining event to be sure! I made giant hearts for us to wear, and Maura, Cheryl, Rick, Jane, Bobbie, Katrina, her husband Brian and I dressed in brightly colored pink and red shirts as we visited the mostly bedbound residents. They were greeted with giant balloons, cheery faces, beautiful roses, candy and Valentine cards. The residents could not have been more pleased. It is this type of service to the community that makes me so proud to be a member of NPCREA. We may be retired, but we are not through serving others!



Legislative News

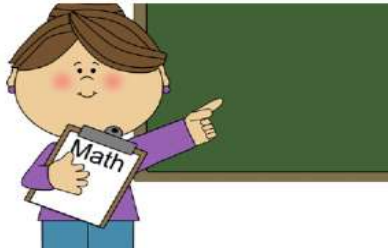
by Sharon Ozbun

On March 24-27 I will be in Tallahassee to meet with many of the legislators from Citrus, Hernando, Sumter, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough and Manatee counties. I have already contacted over 20 members of the Florida House and Senate to set up appointments to discuss issues that FREA is asking for support from legislators.

I will be discussing ideas regarding recruiting more teachers, concerns about our pension, the reinstatement of the COLA, insurance increases, and considering public school teachers as first responders in the safety of children on our school campuses across the state. I believe these issues will be of importance to bring to their attention as our state continues to struggle with retaining quality teachers and providing a first rate and safe education for all the children in our state.

My voice isn't the only voice from our district that can help make a difference. We need your help! Contact your legislator, representative and senator via email, postal mail, or by phone and explain to them how bringing back the COLA for educators would impact you specifically.

Explain how insurance increases are having a detrimental effect on your way of life as a retiree. Let them know why it would be important to start considering our educators as first responders based on their position of protecting our communities' children when danger comes to school campuses. Let your voice be heard!



...UPCOMING EVENTS

...Thank you, Patrons!



**Tuesday,
March 11,
11am**

Bring a friend and wear your green shirts and hats to Clearwater Country Club for our St. Patty's Day Luncheon.

Please bring any items or photos you may have that celebrate NPCREA and its 50 year history from 1975 to 2025. Our speaker will be Jerry Dilley, crew member of the USS Forrestal in 1967.

RSVP by March 6 to the Evite in your email or to npcrea@gmail.com.

Lunch will be corned beef and cabbage with small salad and cake for dessert. You may order the Clearwater Country Club salad as an alternate meal if you choose.

Tuesday, April 8, 11 am

Our Spring Fling!

Bring a friend and wear your favorite pastel colors. Please bring items for spring baskets for residents at Coral Oaks Assisted Living.

Our speaker will be Bernadette Homan of Care and Cure Initiative of Pasco/Pinellas; her topic, "Dealing with Dementia."

Luncheon will be Par 3 Salad with soup, rolls, and cookies for dessert. Please RSVP by April 3 to the Evite in your email or to npcrea@gmail.com. You may order the Clearwater Country Club salad as an alternate meal if you choose.



Thanks to all our wonderful patrons who have donated \$15 or more to defray the cost of printing our newsletters, directories, brochures, and flyers.

Anyone wishing to become a PATRON should send a check to NPCREA, P. O. Box 4248, Clearwater, Fl. 33758, or give a check to Linda McGeehan, our new Treasurer, or Rick Pope, our Patronage board member, at any meeting.

These wonderful 2024-5 patrons are:

Anonymous
Mary Blackmon
C-O'D Family
Michael Cook
Jeannette Crabbe
Martha Gray
Maura Hedrich
Herb Johnson

Nan Lanham
Linda McGeehan
Sharon Ozbun
Katrina Pershing
Carole Pope
Rick Pope
Richard Werling
Nancy Whitlock

...BRIDGE- A-RAMA



Bridge-a-Rama is played on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at 10:30 am.

More bridge players are needed. Call Phyllis Walls at 727.418.7025 for details.

At our January 14 Happy New Year Luncheon:

The meeting was called to order by President Sharon Ozbun at 11:30 am. Rick Pope led the Pledge of Allegiance. Marcia Lork gave the Thought for the Day, reminding us to say kind words every day to a person we meet so that at the end of each day we'll have made the world a better place.

Sharon asked everyone to fill out a Volunteer Services half sheet, accumulating volunteer hours for the month of January 2025. Please return the forms to Eldon Weaver.

Sharon also asked every member to pick up their 2025-6 Member Directory, sign their name as having received a bound copy, put their name on the front cover and take it home. Anyone living near an absent member is asked to take a bound copy of the Directory to them in order to save postage.

Michael Cook was unable to be at the meeting to tell us about new benefits available to FREA members. He had to attend the Region 2 Meeting in Brooksville to talk with all the units that were able to attend.

Treasurer's Report: Linda McGeehan reported a balance of \$8043.03 with \$2000 encumbered for scholarships. Balance available for use: \$6043.03.

Sharon gave a report of what may come up in the spring Florida Legislative session, including FRS pension funds and COLA increases. She also reminded us of the FREA Annual Convention at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort from May 20-22. Room rates are \$139 per night.

Second semester school supplies donated today will go to the Homeless Empowerment Project on Betty Lane. Lunch was lasagna, garlic stick, small salad, and ice cream sundae.

Attendees bid on items donated to the After Christmas Silent Auction. The most popular items were the gift baskets. Total proceeds collected amounted to \$352.

Members approved the minutes of the December 2024 member meeting with the following corrections: Michael Cook will not be telling us about the new benefits available to us through AMBA and FREA because he is in Brooksville, speaking to the members of other Region 2 units.



Carole Pope wins a basket delivered by crazy, happy Mike Ceraolo-O'Donnell



Karlton Ballard scores a travel set



Marcia Lork gets a set of spices delivered by Rick Pope

More Happy Winners:



Pam Dane wins a whole basket of goodies

*Please add to your new
2025 Member Directory:*

Catherine Fleeger
flec21@outlook.com
721.638.3816
2864 Bridlewood Drive
Palm Harbor, FL 34683

Jan Wallis
retirededucator@mac.com
727.409.2429
11628 Grove Place N.
Seminole, FL 33772

Scott Watson
phone: 801.707.8246

Nancy Zambito
zambitonancy@yahoo.com
727.742.1352
1212 Lagoon Road
Tarpon Springs, FL 34689



*Phyllis Walls wins some wine
delivered by Mike CO'D*



*Rosemarie CO'D gets a
mug from Katrina Pershing*



*Katrina, Cheryl, and Maura split
up a box of containers. Whee!*

At our Feb. 11 Valentine's Luncheon:

The meeting was called to order by President Sharon Ozbun at 11:30 am. Rick Pope led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mary Blackmon gave the Thought for the Day, reminding us of the inspiring words of Martin Luther King Jr.

Sharon gave a report of what may come up in the spring Florida Legislative session, including FRS pension funds and COLA increases. She also reminded us of the FREA Convention at the Renaissance World Golf Village from May 20-22.

Sharon reminded the members of Cupid Crew that their help is needed on Thursday, February 13, to prepare the Valentine's Day roses, cards, and ornaments for distribution to residents of an assisted living facility in Dunedin. Nancy Whitlock is in charge, though just having had a knee replacement.

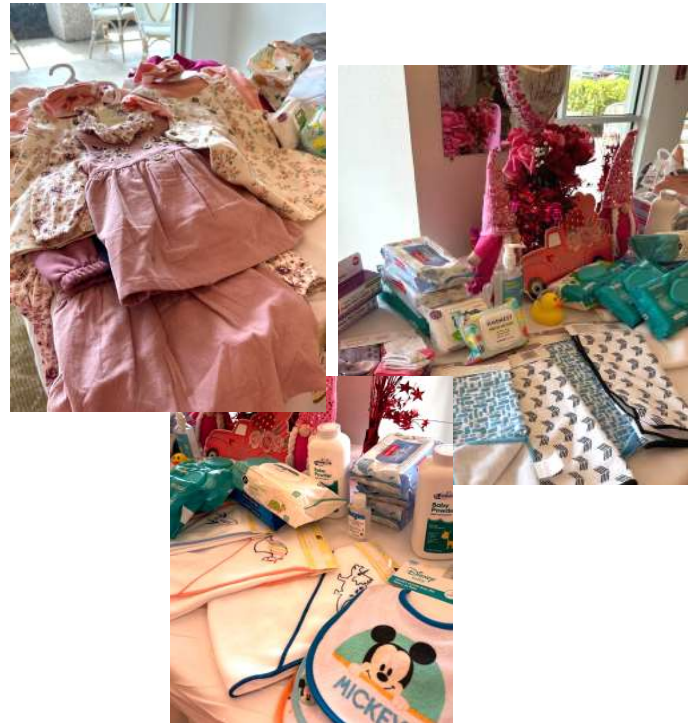


Speakers Genevieve O'Donoghue and Jerome Kynard of the Fatherhood Collaborative

Katrina Pershing introduced the speakers from the Fatherhood Collaborative, an initiative of Operation PAR. They are contacting any organization they can enlist to provide help for fathers taking care of their children. Baby items donated today will go to the Collaborative. Both speakers answered many questions from the luncheon attendees, and each received a certificate, an NPCREA coffee mug, and a check for the Fatherhood Collaborative from our Treasury.

NPCREA members signed to receive their new Member Directory if they didn't get one last month. Anyone living near an absent member is asked to take them a bound copy of the Directory to save postage.

Baby items collected for diaper bags in the Fatherhood Collaborative included these donations:



Sharon asked everyone to fill out a Volunteer Services half sheet, accumulating volunteer hours for the month of February 2025. Attendees returned the forms to Eldon Weaver.

Linda McGeehan reported a balance of \$8573.03 with \$2000 encumbered for scholarships. Balance available for use: \$6573.03. Lunch was chicken cordon bleu, scalloped potatoes, string beans, tomato bisque soup, and ice cream sundae.

Sharon Ozbun is preparing a Powerpoint presentation for our 50th Anniversary Celebration at the September meeting. Mary Blackmon turned in 45 years of NPCREA Newsletters, 50 years of meeting minutes, 9 scrapbooks, and 4 years of photos to assist Sharon in preparing the visual presentation. Luckily, Barbara Watts had stored many of these old records and a "North Pinellas" flag in her Largo home.

Please check your files to see if you may have kept some old photos or other memorabilia from our activities in the North Pinellas unit. Please bring items to the March or April luncheons to be included in the September celebration.



It's More Blessed to Give...

by Nancy Whitlock

A wonderful time was had by all who participated in our Cupid Crew Valentine's Day project. For those of you who don't know, here's the story.

Several years ago a florist in Baltimore had the opportunity to share some extra flowers on Valentine's Day with some older neighbors. Being a Vietnam vet and no stranger to loneliness, he was struck by the response elicited by his small act of kindness. As his business grew over the years, so did his Valentine's Day project. When news of this project reached AARP, it was adopted by their Wish of a Lifetime team and soon became a national program.

This year FREA chose several local chapters to participate in the Cupid Crew project. Ours was one of 38 chosen in December, and we got right to work. Our crew included Bobbie Alburtus, Rick Amstutz, Jane Creelman, Cheryl Good, Maura Hedrich, Sharon Ozbun, Katrina and Brian Pershing, Nancy and Bob Whitlock.

It was recommended that we limit our participation to 150 seniors, as Wish of a Lifetime would be able to send no more than that number of flowers. At our January meeting, many of our members wrote lovely notes on Valentines cards so that each person would have a lovely note to accompany their rose. At our January meeting, members composed 165 notes on valentine cards! Two local senior living centers were chosen, The Preserve at Clearwater, and Lakeside Oaks in Dunedin. Our plans were made.

On February 13, we delivered our finished product: 165 long stemmed roses in assorted colors. Each rose was in an attractive cellophane sleeve, tied with a ribbon, and with a cute valentine ornament and handwritten card attached. The residents were beyond thrilled, and those making the deliveries were so touched by the happiness they had brought. We hope to be chosen to be part of Cupid Crew again next year.



Some of the Cupid Crew: Bobbie Alburtus, Rick Amstutz, Jane Creelman, Cheryl Good, Sharon Ozbun, Katrina Pershing, and Maura Hedrich.



Members writing Valentine cards at the January luncheon.



In the Spotlight

Cheryl Good began volunteering as a young teen with the YMCA, following her mother's example of community service. There, teen girls were given opportunities to do community service and leadership through service and participation in a club/organization.



Cheryl Good

As an adult, she joined the Clearwater Junior Women's Club. She was an active community service volunteer in various activities including education and fundraising where she chaired Christmas Under the Oaks for many years. She was blessed to learn from the best and loved expanding her love for volunteer service.

As a parent, she was active in the PTA, volunteered in classrooms, and offered support to staff and classroom teachers throughout her daughters' school years.

Continuing her volunteer service at their neighborhood elementary school, Cheryl was encouraged to join the staff at Plumb Elementary where she remained for 14 years. During that time she continued her PTA service and became a PCS Mentor, working each year with students who could benefit from having a mentor at school.

In later years with PCS, she drew from her earlier training in fundraising to seek and obtain grants

and monetary awards to support Kings Highway Elementary where they started a school garden program. They also supported the Pre-K program with fully funded field trip opportunities, which allowed their students to take learning out of the classroom into real life.

She continued volunteering in the community and was a charter member of the North Pinellas Junior Women's Club, where community support in many areas of need continued both hands-on and behind the scenes in fundraising.

Most recently, since retiring she has become a member of Pinellas Education Employees Retired (PEER) as well as NPCREA. Volunteering with Feeding Tampa Bay introduced her to new areas of need in our community, along with joining the Clearwater High Band Boosters where she was elected to the Board.

Cheryl's focus on fundraising has given her so many opportunities to meet and work alongside other volunteers, many of whom have become friends!

Volunteering truly has been part of Cheryl Good's life. Starting at a young age, she began learning about the needs of our community. How to serve was instilled in her, and she enjoyed growing those skills. Retirement has opened many new doors for Cheryl to continue volunteering. In addition, she has encouraged friends and neighbors to seek out areas of need that interest them and to find opportunities to give back.

The Carwise Awards



February 26 was the 41st annual “Joseph L. Carwise Awards” ceremony held at Clearwater High School. Over 200 students from 5th grade, 8th grade, 11th grade, and 12th grade were honored at this ceremony. This was the third year the North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association participated as a Bronze Member of this scholarship evening.

The Joseph L. Carwise Awards recognize the academic achievements of Black students. The recipients of the awards are selected by the student's administrator, teachers, or counselor. The awards honor the legacy of Dr. Joseph Carwise, a former educator and city leader. Throughout his career, Dr. Carwise was confronted with many challenges, but handled them with integrity, justice, and love. Among Dr. Carwise's many attributes, he loved reaching out to others, ministering the word of God, and helping as many youths as possible.

The evening began with the Presentation of Colors and Pledge of Allegiance led by the Clearwater High School Marine Corps JROTC.. Pinellas County Schools Superintendent Kevin Hendrick gave a very positive acknowledgment to the students for their hard work and dedication to their studies. The keynote speaker, Dr. Tonjua Williams, President of Saint Petersburg College, gave an inspirational speech to the students regarding never giving up and understanding that it is never too late to get an education. She spoke to the students about her own experiences growing up and how she had to work hard for what she wanted in life. She emphasized that it was all worth the

struggle and encouraged the students to stick with it no matter what.

The Pinellas Education Foundation received donations from community organizations and businesses to provide the scholarships they gave to 5 outstanding seniors who had an average GPA of 4.5. Besides the scholarships, the foundation provided scholastic ribbons for elementary school fellows, medallions for middle school recipients, and honor chords and pins for high school students.

The sororities of Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta gave out three scholarships each to outstanding graduating seniors. The deserving students were ready to complete studies in fields such as accounting, biomedical, and pediatric research. The program was interlaced with musical performances by the Clearwater High School chorus. It was certainly heartwarming to see so many well-deserved awards given to hard-working students throughout our county and to see the smiles of pleasure on their parents' and grandparents' faces.



In the Spotlight



Bobbie Alburthus

This month's new member focus is spotlighting Bobbie Alburthus. Bobbie joined us officially in August of 2024, but came to a few luncheons prior to that and participated in several of our service projects by donating items that she knew we were collecting for local charities. Since joining, she has jumped

right in and volunteered to be a member of our Cupid Crew that delivered flowers to two assisted living facilities in February for Valentine's Day.

Bobbie was born in Detroit, Michigan, but moved with her family to the Clearwater/Dunedin area at the age of three. She attended Dunedin Elementary and graduated from Dunedin High School. She has seen many changes come into this area in terms of development and increase in schools.

Prior to becoming a teacher, Bobbie and her husband Ken owned a successful business in sales and manufacturing in the Dunedin area. After selling their business, Bobbie wanted to do something different, so she went back to college to get a degree in elementary education from St Leo University. After graduation, Bobbie taught kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and finally finished her career helping students from several grade levels to improve their reading skills.

Over Bobbie's 19-year career, she taught at Mittye P. Locke and Gulf Trace in Pasco County and then Dunedin and Highland Lakes in Pinellas County. Thinking back about the best parts of her teaching career, Bobbie said, "Being with the kids and teaching them to read was a highlight." She loved to see the light on their faces when they finally "got it."

When she was asked what type of advice she would give to someone thinking about going into education as a career, she said, "You need to love working with the kids, get with a good team, be flexible, and make it fun."

Bobbie and her husband Ken have three children. Her daughter Teri and partner, Tibor, live in nearby Pasco County with their wily American Standard poodles, Cooper and Rusty. Her son, Kevin, his wife Lauren, and their 3 children Elliot, Issac, and Zoey, live in Gainesville, and her stepdaughter Maria, her husband Brian, and their sons Max and Henry live in Arizona. All of them are doing well and have thriving, busy lives.



Bobbie with husband Ken and two grandchildren

Since retiring from teaching last year, Bobbie enjoys traveling and learning how to relax and enjoy the moments, such as napping in her recliner and loving on her golden retriever, Brody. In a few more weeks, Bobbie and Ken will be welcoming a golden puppy into their home.

Welcome to NPCREA, Bobbie. We look forward to getting to know you better!



North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association Membership Application



Unified Dues: \$60.00 Annually – July 1 to June 30

<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal of Membership	General Member - Circle One: Retired School Teacher/School Administrator/School Transportation School Maintenance, School Cafeteria. Other:
FREA Benefits are fully available to ALL FREA members be they Regular or Associate.	Associate Member Associate: Any person supporting the mission of the Association may apply for associate membership. (Associate members may not vote as a delegate.)
Circle One: Miss, Mrs., Ms., Mr., Dr., Other	Date:
Your Name:	Spouse's Name
Mailing Address Apt./Condo	Telephone—Cell phone preferred ()
City	State Zip County
E-mail address:	Your Month/Day/of Birth:
School District Retired From: Year Retired	Position Retired From

NPCREA and FREA are your advocates regarding your pension and the future of education in the State of Florida. Would you like to support our efforts on behalf of all present and future Retired Educators, and other beneficiaries of the Florida Retirement System like First Responders, etc.? This money will be used in a non-partisan way.

Yes, I would like to support FREA's Legislative Advocacy: \$ 4.00

Unified Dues for July 1—June 30: **\$60.00**

Yes, I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to Florida Retired Educators Foundation of \$5.00

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: NPCREA (North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association)

Mail to: NPCREA, P.O. Box 4248 Clearwater, FL 33758-4248

Have questions? Contact NPCREA: NPCREA@gmail.com

NPCREA has many active committees. All of our committees welcome new people, ideas and /or suggestions. The work of the committees listed below is explained at our meetings.

Please indicate your interest in one or more of them by checking the line by the committee. The chair will contact you personally.

Volunteer Services	Information Services	Newsletter
Hospitality	Legislative	Photography (Historian)
Sunshine	Name Tags	Retirement Planning
Phone Tree	Membership	Publicity/Website
Cultural Affairs	Nominating	Thought for the Day

**NORTH PINELLAS COUNTY
RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 4248
CLEARWATER, FL 33758-4248**



NPCREA LEADERS FOR 2024-25

PRESIDENT	SHARON OZBUN
VICE-PRESIDENT	KATRINA PERSHING
TREASURER	LINDA MCGEEHAN
RECORDING SECRETARY	MARY BLACKMON
CORRES. SECRETARY	MARCIA LORK
INFORMATION SPECIALIST	MAURA HEDRICH
MEMBERSHIP	CHERYL GOOD
PATRONAGE	RICK POPE
VOLUNTEER SERVICES	ELDON WEAVER
HISTORIAN/NEWSLETTER	MARY BLACKMON

Email Address: npcrea@gmail.com

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