



# North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association **NEWSLETTER**

Sept/Oct  
2025

Volume 51,  
Issue 1

**On Tuesday, Sept. 9,** please plan to attend our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration at Clearwater Country Club, starting at 11 am. We'll have games and prizes and a slideshow of our proudest accomplishments. Wear something in yellow or gold and your happy face to celebrate 50 years of NPCREA!



Please bring donations of children's socks, underpants, and shoes for Clothes to Kids in Clearwater. This charity, founded and maintained by two Clearwater High graduates, provides five outfits of school clothes for children in needy families of North Pinellas.

Luncheon will be lemon grilled chicken, scalloped potatoes, carrots, rolls, ice cream and cake. The CCC salad is an alternate meal if you prefer. The price this year is \$25, including tax and tip. Please bring cash or check.

A glorious Happy Birthday to NPCREA! Over the past 50 years it has provided countless educational speakers and opportunities for our members. It also helps members to keep abreast of retirement changes, to be active in the community, to meet a great group of people from around the country, and to give back to others. Here's to 50 more years for this fabulous retired educators unit!

**On Tuesday, Oct 14,** we'll hear about Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, a Tampa-area learning cooperative for adults aged 50+. Pam Tyler and/or Veronica Maxwell will enlighten us on how we can improve our lives and keep up with the times with continued learning opportunities. Please wear your favorite Halloween hat, tee shirt, or costume, and come prepared to laugh.



Luncheon will be stuffed shells, small salad, garlic stick, and brownie for dessert. The Clearwater Country Club salad is an alternate meal if you so choose.

**Tuesday, November 11,** will find us at Clearwater Country Club at 11 am wearing our red, white, and blue for Veterans' Day. Find these colors in your closet, or beg, borrow, or buy some red, white, and blue for this occasion. Navy veteran Susan Zysk will be our speaker.

Please bring items to donate for veterans at the Bay Pines Assisted Living in St. Pete: lap blankets, playing cards, slipper socks, toothbrushes, deodorant, word searches, candies, etc. We will write thank you notes for these veterans in assisted living.



Sharon Ozbun

## President's Corner

**1975...** That's the year North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association was formed. Area retired educators needed a unified, non-partisan voice to speak to the legislature on issues

related to state pensions, Social Security, Medicare, and other benefits. The North Pinellas chapter would serve as a **local advocate** for these issues.

What were you doing in 1975? I was living in Broward County, entering the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and thinking about becoming a history teacher when I grew up. I would have never guessed that 50 years later I would be living in Pinellas County.

**1985...** The North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association was 10 years old. They were helping to **maintain social connections for retirees**. For many, retirement can mean losing daily interaction with colleagues. NPCREA provided a way for former coworkers to stay in touch through regular meetings and social activities.

What were you doing in 1985? I had graduated from college and was starting my second year of teaching middle school 8<sup>th</sup> grade history in Pasco County. I would have never guessed at that time, that 40 years later I would be retired and living in Pinellas County.

**1995....** The North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association was 20 years old and was helping members **continue community service**. Many retired educators still feel a strong connection to their profession and community. NPCREA organized opportunities for members to continue contributing, such as volunteering or providing scholarships to aspiring teachers.

What were you doing in 1995? I was married, living in Hernando County, and giving birth to my

daughter, Jordan. I was entering my 12<sup>th</sup> year of teaching 8<sup>th</sup> grade American history at Bayonet Point Middle School in Pasco County. I still had no idea, that 30 years later I would be retired and living in Pinellas County.

**2005:** The North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association was 30 years old. They were actively involved in **disseminating information**. As an affiliate of the state-level Florida Retired Educators Association (FREA), NPCREA served to inform its members about relevant policy changes, programs, and opportunities.

What were you doing in 2005? I was teaching Geography and American History on a mega team of 220 kids at River Ridge Middle/High school and entering my 22<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching.

**2015:** The North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association was 40 years old. The monthly luncheons with excellent speakers helped **broaden the knowledge base** of our members as well as allowed them an opportunity to contribute to community programs.

What were you doing in 2015? I was now a widow whose kids had gone off to college and into the workforce. I was teaching civics at River Ridge Middle School and had entered the DROP program as I began my 32<sup>nd</sup> year of teaching.

**2025:** The North Pinellas CREA is 50 years old. We are still doing all the great things we have been doing since 1975 and coming up with even more ways to engage with one another. We have had amazing people who have stepped up to keep this organization moving forward and doing their best to encourage others as well.

What are you doing in 2025? I'm in Pinellas County in my fifth year of retirement, happily remarried, and involved in an amazing group that celebrates retired educators. My point is, we never know where life will take us, but we should embrace the adventure and look at what we're doing now and where we will be in the future.

# Blackboard Notices

## Prices are Going Up !

On the latest invitation for our luncheon, the price has risen. This was due to rising costs at the Clearwater Country Club. We did not receive notification of the price increase until the end of July, and this was in addition to the \$200 charge for the room. Fortunately, several generous members donated funds to allow us to cover the room charge for this year.

We may need to investigate another facility for 2026, and this will be a discussion for the Board of Directors. If you have any suggestions for a new luncheon facility, please let us know. We can't depend on the generosity of our donors to carry the room charge.

We need to plan now so that we are ready to schedule for the beginning of 2026. Scheduling monthly events can be tricky if done at the last minute. As each of you are aware when you are shopping for yourselves, food prices have risen and so have labor costs..

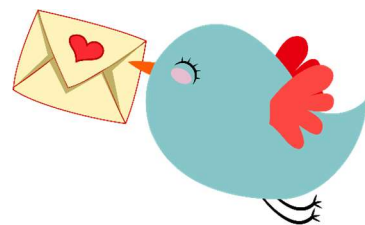
One of our options for next year is the Highland House, formerly the Dunedin Golf Club. They are interested in giving us the room as a non-profit without a fee and want to thank us as educators for the work that we have done for our community. While it is a little further for some of us to drive, it's an option to discuss.

If you have any ideas or suggestions regarding a location that can meet our needs, feel free to contact our president with your suggestions at [ozbunsharon@gmail.com](mailto:ozbunsharon@gmail.com).



## PATRONS

Thanks to all our wonderful patrons last year who donated \$15 or more to defray the cost of printing our newsletters, directories, brochures, and flyers. Anyone wishing to become a 2025-26 PATRON, please send a check to NPCREA, PO Box 4248, Clearwater 33758, or give a check to Linda McGeehan, our Treasurer, or Rick Pope, our Patronage Board Member, at any luncheon.



## 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.



## ***36 Members and Guests Don't Go "Back to Work"***

Friday, August 1, dawned bright and clear in North Pinellas County. But instead of heading back to work at our respective schools, we all drove to Capogna's Restaurant on Gulf to Bay Blvd. in Clearwater. We came to celebrate our retirement from school activities, to donate school supplies for the neediest kids in Pinellas County, to share our summer stories with friends and guests, and to eat the delicious Italian salads and entrees served up by the family at Capogna's Restaurant.

Everyone brought some school supplies to donate. Nancy Whitlock (left) and Helen Tatum sorted and arranged the donations, and Mary Blackmon took a photo of the many backpacks and school supplies:



Bob Stephens, past president of NPCREA, later delivered the donated school supplies to Elizabeth Shostak of Pinellas Education Foundation for their "Stuff the Bus" school supplies campaign.

Our president, Sharon Ozbun, stood up to make a happy announcement. The newly-required dining room rental fee at Clearwater Country Club (\$200 per meeting) is being donated by a group of our generous members. The donors did not wish to be named, but we thank them profusely as our schedule for 2025-26 was all set for the school year when the rental fee was imposed. Next year we may be able to find a less expensive room in which to meet and eat.



The food at Capogna's was delicious, and we had a great time talking with friends and guests. Most everyone was happy to that we didn't have to go back to work on August 1.







*Happy Retirees at Capognas*



# At the August 11 **NOT Back to Classes Breakfast**



Benedicts Restaurant on Belcher Road in Clearwater was our new breakfast place for the first day of school. Instead of welcoming classes, we reported for scrumptious breakfasts.

Thanks to Maura Hedrich we were able to have a private area at Benedict's, and the food was out of this world! If you were unable to make it to Benedict's, I recommend giving it a try for breakfast or lunch.



Our school supply donations for the Homeless Empowerment Project filled up the serving counter with pencils, pens, paper, binders, crayons, and such, and then we filled the chairs with more supplies and backpacks.



The morning was just wonderful, and we all had a chance to chat with members and their spouses. We hope that those of you who brought your spouses to breakfast will think about bringing them to our luncheons as well.

Here are some of our members and friends and spouses who got up early on Monday, August 11, to celebrate the start of a new school year and no need to go back to work.





We had at least 25 people for the breakfast and, as usual, their generosity was outstanding. We had a tremendous number of school supplies to hand over for those in need. Our friends right down the road at Homeless Empowerment Project are always in need of school supplies for the homeless families that live there until they can find affordable shelter. Megan Reiser was very thankful for the donations and said she is so happy that we have continued to help with HEP.



The school supplies were all delivered to Megan Reiser at the Homeless Empowerment Project on Betty Lane in Clearwater. They were so very happy to have them, as they struggle to provide school supplies and school clothing for children of homeless families, especially veterans' families, as their parents search for employment and affordable housing.



# Marie Grein

## Mama NPCREA

Marie Grein has been “Mama NPCREA” for 33



years since her retirement in 1992. After teaching in Middletown, Connecticut, for three years, she moved on to Dept. of Defense schools in Labrador, England, and Germany, then four more years in Connecticut. Finally realizing where the best lifestyle was to be had, she moved to Clearwater and taught math, science,

and social studies to fifth graders for 26 years at Belleair Elementary School.

After retiring in summer 1992, she joined North Pinellas CREA for their first meeting in September. In those days they met at a large motel on US 19 but soon moved to Stacey’s Buffet in Clearwater. She was immediately enlisted to be Vice President in 1993, planning programs for the group of retirees. No sooner did she plan her first year of programs than the president of NPCREA abruptly resigned, leaving Marie to be president.

As president in 1992-94, she was soon enlisted to accompany the District 6 Director as she traveled her route among the surrounding retired teacher groups in South Pinellas, Tarpon Springs, Oldsmar, Palm Harbor, West Pasco, and Hernando counties. When Marie completed two years as president of NPCREA, she became District 6 Director in 1995. She promoted District 6 yearly meetings beginning in 1996, first held at Faith United Church of Christ on Drew Street. She typed and then colored with crayons the programs for these yearly meetings!

From District Director, she was promoted to Vice President of Florida Retired Educators Association (FREA) in 2006 and became President of FREA from 2008-2010. She is proudest of the Mission Statement that she and past presidents Esther Twitchell and Cathy McCartney created:

The mission of FREA is to:

1. Safeguard the strength of the Florida Retirement System
2. Support public education in Florida
3. Provide fellowship opportunities
4. Encourage community involvement in education
5. Be a source of information and materials.

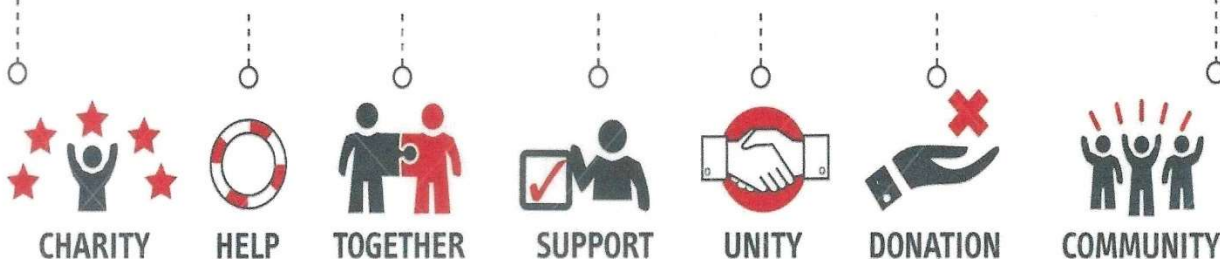
Her most vivid memories from 33 years of membership in NPCREA and FREA are meeting old friends at State Conventions, playing Bridge-O-Rama with Phyllis Walls, and winning first place in the FREA costume contest in a bikini coverup at State Convention. Best of all, she helped establish the Practicing Educator Grants of \$1000 given each year to educators with an innovative educational plan but no school funding. She donated the first \$1000, and continues to do so, while the FREF Foundation funds a second grant each year.

She served as NPCREA treasurer for over 20 years and FREA Treasurer for 15 years. Along the way, she was a member and president of the Clearwater Community Woman’s Club, a member of the Eleanor Roosevelt Chapter of Kappa Delta Pi, international honor society, and an officer of Alpha Delta Kappa, sorority of women educators. She’s especially proud of being a member of “The 99s,” international order of female pilots, serving as Governor in the Southeast region for two years.

She’s very special and truly the best “mama” that our North Pinellas retirees could wish for!



# VOLUNTEERING

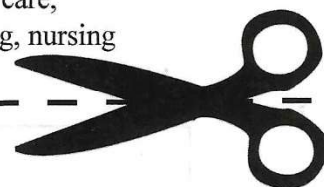


Mark your volunteer hours on a calendar so you can add them up and submit them to our Volunteer Services chairman at the end of each month or at the next meeting of NPCREA. Some more volunteer activities:

**Church-Related Work:** Bible study, singing in choir, collecting food and clothing for the needy, cleaning church or grounds, keeping the nursery, teaching Sunday School or Bible classes

**Civic/Community Service :** Providing for the needy, fundraising, food banks, thrift shops, serving as tour guides, registering voters, walking or running for charity, telephoning the elderly, cooking for the sick, recycling, donating time or goods to non-profit organizations

**Personal Help to Others (DO NOT INCLUDE relatives):** providing personal care, transportation, shopping, food, housekeeping, yard maintenance, odd jobs, babysitting, nursing



## VOLUNTEER SERVICES REPORT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Month(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Youth

Adult

Retired Educators Assn. \_\_\_\_\_

Community/Clubs \_\_\_\_\_

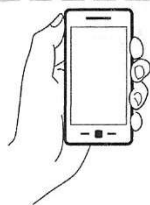
Hospital/Schools \_\_\_\_\_

Churches \_\_\_\_\_

Friends/Neighbors \_\_\_\_\_

All Others \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_



Phone to Mr. Eldon Weaver at 954.895.1073

or email to [pegasus\\_fl@yahoo.com](mailto:pegasus_fl@yahoo.com)

or cut out and bring to the meeting





## North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association Membership Application



Unified Dues: <b>\$60.00 Annually</b> — July 1 to June 30		
<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal of Membership	<b>General Member - Circle One:</b> 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.	<b>Associate Member</b> 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
<p><b>NPCREA</b> 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.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes, I would like to support FREA's Legislative Advocacy: \$ 4.00 Unified Dues for July 1—June 30: <b>\$60.00</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes, I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to Florida Retired Educators Foundation of \$5.00</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Total Enclosed \$ _____</p>		
<p><b>Please make checks payable to: NPCREA (North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association)</b> <b>Mail to: NPCREA, P.O. Box 4248 Clearwater, FL 33758-4248</b></p>		

Have questions? Contact NPCREA: [NPCREA@gmail.com](mailto:NPCREA@gmail.com)

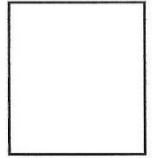
**NPCREA** has many active committees. All of our committees welcome new people, ideas and /or suggestions. The work of the committees listed below is explained at our meetings.

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**

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

**Email Address: [npcrea@gmail.com](mailto:npcrea@gmail.com)**

*NPCREA Newsletter is published six times each year by North Pinellas County Retired Educators Association, P.O. Box 4248, Clearwater, FL 33758. Newsletter staff: Editor, Mary Blackmon, 727-348-0771. Assembly and mailing: Marie Grein. Labels: FREA Office.*