

# MEA-Retired

THE COMMITMENT CONTINUES

## Michigan Retirement Report

July 2020  
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### Barb Schram elected to national board



**Where/When/What regarding your employment/history in public education:** I began my teaching career in Paw Paw, MI teaching 1st grade for two years, which was what I needed to apply to go overseas to teach. I got a position in Bangkok, Thailand teaching reading. I missed the classroom and by the second year I was teaching 1st grade again. After teaching in Bangkok I then came back to Grand Ledge, MI and was hired in the lower grades where I taught Developmental Kindergarten through 3rd grade for the rest of my teaching career.

**Involvement in MEA-Retired and NEA Retired:** During my teaching career, I was an active member in the local teacher association, the Michigan Education Association (MEA), and the National Education Association (NEA). Now that I am retired, I have maintained my involvement in the local retired chapter, Eaton County Educational Employees-Retired (ECEE-Retired),

MEA-Retired, and NEA Retired and hold other positions within these groups. I have been fortunate to attend seven Education International conferences.

**What will being a newly-elected NEA Member Benefits board member entail:** The NEA Member Benefits Board meets four times a year. As a member of the board, I will be made aware of the entire Member Benefits program, how the different companies are vetted, how decisions are made relative to all Member Benefits programs, and how NEA members are first and foremost in the minds of this great division of NEA.

**Why involvement in MEA/NEA Retired is important:** It is important for two reasons. First, it is important because it keeps people active, involved and connected to what is going on in education, in the world, and in life. If you are involved, you don't tend to become stagnant

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# Ch-Ch-Changes...

*Kay Walker Telma, MEA-Retired President*

*I watch the ripples change their size  
But never leave the stream of warm impermanence and  
So the days float through my eyes  
But still the days seem the same*

"Changes," from David Bowie's album *Hunky Dory*, December, 1971



Although you may be reading this sometime in September, our publishing schedule means that I am typing my thoughts in mid-July. The morning news programs are reminding me that today is Tax Day, three months later than in a typical year. All done. Whew.

The three-month extension of the deadline to file tax returns is only one of the countless changes that we have been experiencing since the COVID-19 "adventure" began for us earlier this year. We've become accustomed to wearing masks in public places; trying new recipes and relying on those that are tried, true and comforting; becoming a bit more technologically savvy and using "zoom" as a verb more frequently in our conversations as a result. We miss seeing family, friends and coworkers in person. We might even have a couple airline credits for trips we did not feel safe taking. We REALLY miss handshakes and hugs.

I don't personally know anyone who has contracted the virus. I, like many, have been careful; while I do venture

out every week or ten days to the grocery store, I go to smaller stores that check for masks, allow fewer customers and adhere to safety precautions. I have been to a couple of restaurants that have outdoor seating and use all disposables. While I have been socially distant in person with a handful of family and friends, they have all also been "COVID Cautious" in their day-to-day life in recent months.

We just don't know where this "adventure" will take us in both the near and distant future. We'll be able to sit outside at our homes, parks or restaurants maybe through early October; who knows when the first snowflakes will appear. Schools in several large metropolitan areas have already announced that all instruction will be online when students begin their next academic year.

Technology has allowed us to stay connected in many ways. I have friends whose children may work from home indefinitely. NEA, NEA-Retired, MEA and MEA-Retired

have all had meetings on a variety of platforms with anywhere from three or four to several thousand people being connected, and these meetings have actually worked quite well, with few glitches. The more we work with these platforms, the more comfortable and more likely we are to use them.

Take advantage of the time we have to connect with others virtually. Many of us have family or friends who would be happy to guide us in using Zoom, Facebook Messenger, Google Meet FaceTime or other ways of connecting virtually. As I mentioned in our last issue, staying connected and engaged with others is vital to our health and well-being. Embracing our love of lifelong learning in this way will help us be healthy and happy for years to come.

On whatever path this adventure is taking us, join me in becoming one of the proverbial "old dogs" who learn new tricks. It's actually kind of fun. ♦

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## Protect yourself from Medicare scams

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General is alerting the public about Medicare/Medicaid fraud schemes related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Avoid being a victim by heeding the following suggestions:

- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for their Medicare or Medicaid numbers.
  - Do not respond to, or open hyperlinks in, text messages about COVID-19 from unknown individuals.
  - Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites.
- If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately online or call 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477). ♦

# Steve Cook left legacy of leadership

The MEA family mourned the loss of one of its own in mid-May when former MEA President Steve Cook passed away after battling a non-COVID-19 illness. After serving as president of the Lansing Education Assistants, Steve was elected as MEA Secretary-Treasurer, then Vice President and President, ably serving the members of Michigan's largest union of education employees in those roles for a combined 26 years. He was an officer for an NEA state affiliate longer than anyone in history.

After retiring in 2017, Steve stayed involved as a member of MEA/NEA-Retired, serving as a delegate to the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting.

While Steve spent decades serving those in public education and enjoyed hunting, fishing, reading and cheering for the MSU Spartans in his off-hours, his love for wife Sarah and son Wayne truly made his life complete.

"Steve was a fierce believer in the collective power of both public

education and unions to change lives," said MEA President Paula Herbart. "He was a resolute leader who always stood up for what he believed was right for school employees and students. His loyalty—to both his union and to those lucky enough to call him a friend—was his trademark.

"The labor movement and the cause of public education are both worse off today for losing a champion in Steve Cook." ♦

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## Delegates participate in virtual "Meeting Week"

COVID-19 didn't stop over 7000 members of NEA and NEA-Retired from gathering at the first NEA Virtual Representative Assembly. The event, held July 2-3, was originally scheduled to happen at Atlanta's Georgia World Congress Center. Although there was an abbreviated agenda with some usual business being put on hold, attendees had an opportunity to hear speeches from NEA officers and candidates for office, listen to a presentation of the proposed budget and speeches from

the three NEA officers. The second day of the RA included time with former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic candidate for President and a heartfelt tribute to outgoing NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, who has been an NEA officer for the past 18 years.

The virtual RA was at the end of a busy week for the 37 MEA-Retired delegates since they also participated in the first Virtual NEA-Retired Annual Meeting on Monday and Tuesday, June 29-30. Attendees were

welcomed to the meeting with NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia singing the national anthem, had an opportunity to discuss a bylaw amendment and then listened to speeches from candidates for NEA-Retired positions. and were inspired by NEA President Sarah Borgman to safely and creatively carry on the work of the organization.

Because of the ongoing pandemic, both NEA and NEA-Retired are conducting elections for various positions by mail this year. ♦

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## Sarah Says

### *NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman*

As I write we are fast approaching the Fourth of July. It may be later when you read this, but the old phrase, "Home of the Free because of the Brave," keeps going over in my mind. There is so much chaos and unrest in our country today that it actually is scary to even turn on the news. However, we can't really turn our backs on reality. So what is it we can

do? What should I be saying when the conversation turns to the horrid, the unthinkable, the bias, the hate? Today I'm not sure except I know I cannot keep silent. Silence gives consent and it makes a coward of me. You and I have a voice, and we must use it!

We are waiting to see which, if any schools in our area will open. Today

I read where all summer schools will be closed this summer here. What needs to be said and done to help our colleagues and students be ready for a safe environment, one free of racial and social injustice when schools do open? Remember we are partners with the educators on the job so we must be ready. Together we can make a difference. ♦

## Continued from cover

or disinterested in what is happening. Secondly, it is important to be involved for the purpose of public education. If you are involved, you can do everything from becoming a mentor, to bringing in cookies or a snack once in a while. The opportunities are endless and the future of public education depends on the involvement and support of everyone.

### Electing pro-education

**candidates:** If public education is important then pro-education candidates are important. Every decision affecting public schools is a political decision. Working with other educators and education advocates, we hope the upcoming fall elections will result in a national government that puts public schools, public school employees, and

students back at the forefront of national education policy.

**As a lifelong learner, what has been something that you have learned recently?** I have learned how to get on Zoom calls and I am now learning how to initiate Zoom calls. It has been quite a challenge and something that was extremely important to learn during this “mostly stay at home” time. Several summer meetings were converted to virtual settings and learning Zoom kept me connected to the organizations of which I am a part.

### Favorite activity with loved ones:

We enjoy getting together at events and holidays and always make each one as memorable as possible. We have even created some extra holidays and times to enjoy together such as Black Friday shopping, Spring Vacation Week and summer cottage time at the lake.

**A unique talent or spare time interests (actually spare time doesn't exist anymore):** I have changed from teaching Kindergarten to teaching adults how to run their own business. In essence I have become a Business Coach and have trained at least 10 people on how to run their own small businesses. I feel exactly like I did when I was teaching, and the students learned something new and became successful and proficient.

### A piece of advice to those still in public education:

Stay involved and stay in education. It is a wonderfully satisfying career, especially and uniquely satisfying when you meet your students after they have grown up and are in careers of their own. Teaching changes lives. Stay in it and you, too, will make an impact on more lives than you can imagine. ♦

## ORS newsletter available on website

The Michigan Office of Retirement Services publishes the *Connections* retiree newsletter in June and December each year. It usually arrives with your direct deposit statement in those months.

Beginning with the June 2020 issue of *Connections*, however, ORS discontinued sending the newsletter by U.S. mail. You may download your own copy of *Connections* from the

ORS website ([michigan.gov/orsschools](http://michigan.gov/orsschools)). This will save the state significant costs for printing and mailing, but you will receive the same high-quality information ORS normally sends in an electronic format that can be easily printed for future reference.

The June issue contains valuable financial information about your pension fund. This issue also

contains a feature about a retiree, an article about stock market volatility, and information about working after retirement.

If you have not already done so, you can download your June 2020 issue of *Connections* today.

Past issues of *Connections* are also available on our website. ♦

## MEA-Retired

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The *Michigan Retirement Report* is the official voice of the Michigan Education Association-Retired. It is published five times a year in East Lansing and is sent to all pre-retired and retired members of MEA-Retired.