

MEA-Retired Tribune

April, 2024

Members connect, give and win at annual meeting

Nearly 150 members, MEA staff and leadership and guests were part of the 2024 MEA-Retired Annual Meeting held at Eagle Eye at Hawk Hollow. The event, held March 26 at this lovely venue for the second year in a row, offered delegates from throughout the state the opportunity to hear from MEA and MEA-Retired leadership, approve next year's budget, cast votes for MEA-PAC delegates and connect with longtime friends.

We look forward to this—the largest gathering of lifetime MEA/NEA members of the year—and appreciate everyone who made it happen. From leaders to staff to member-volunteers to the outstanding Eagle Eye family, all contributed to its success. 2024 marks the 40th anniversary of MEA-Retired, and both featured speaker MEA Chief of Staff Blake Mazurek and MEA President Chandra Madafferri helped celebrate with congratulatory messages and a framed tribute. MEA Interim Senior Executive Director Earl Wiman mixed news from MEA with a dose of charm and humor. MEA Secretary-Treasurer Aaron Eling added additional thanks to retirees for their countless contributions. Important updates from the Capitol were shared by both UniServ Consultant/Political and Member Organizer Jessica Lumbreras and Field Services Consultant/MEA-Retired Liaison Paul Helder. MEA-Retired activist Diana Irons and her team coordinated the annual PAC “bag auction” that encouraged members to give and raised well over \$5000 for MEA-PAC following an informative and entertaining presentation by PAC Captain Bridget Fox.

We send our heartfelt thanks to all who were pieces of this puzzle; we could not do it without you. In addition to the aforementioned individuals, thanks to Jim Cunningham, Colleen Ford, Michelle Gushen, and the Region 6 “Chorale” for their valuable contributions to the opening of our gathering. Longtime Event Chair Anne Good worked with leadership and staff and enabled attendees to check in to the event easily.

Without question, the meeting could not have happened without the work of our valued, fabulous administrative assistant Lisa Fox. From working closely with the staff at Eagle Eye on every detail to coordinating reservations from delegates, speakers and other guests to disseminating all relevant documents and taking care of last-minute details, she is a gift to our organization.

Many thanks to all who took the time represent members of your chapters and regions at the event. We trust that it was a day well-spent, and we look forward to seeing many of you next year. For those who like to mark your calendars way ahead of time, the 2024 Annual Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 25. See you then!

Delegates to MEA and NEA RA, regions win seats in election

The MEA-Retired Annual Election was held February 5-16 with most members voting online and over three dozen submitting paper ballots. Thanks to Elections Chair Judy Daley and members Linda Min and Barb Schram for meeting at MEA Headquarters to count paper ballots and to MEA IT's Sande Nightingale and the MEA Help Center team for assisting members during the two weeks of voting.

Results of the election:

MEA Representative Assembly Delegates for the three-year term effective 9/1/24-8/31/27: Karen Abella, Al Beamish, Drew Campbell, Susan Flis, Jay Holtvluwer, Michael Koen, Ken Krause, Sally McNamara, Elaine Miller, Betty Ong, Kathleen Trongo, Larry Schulte.

NEA Representative Assembly Delegates for the term effective immediately through 8/31/26: Karen Abella, Drew Campbell, Elias Chapa, Bridget Fox, Liz Hubert, Sid Kardon, Pam Kellar, Michael Koen, Sally McNamara, Isabell Nazar, Millie Lambert, Keith Swets.

Region Directors for a two-year term effective 9/1/24-8/31/26: Region 2 Director: Joanne Hoekstra, Region 2 Alternate Director: Bill Beson, Region 8 Director: Liz Hubert.

Join the MEA-Retired Lobby Team in mid-May

MEA-Retired's Legislative and Political Involvement Committee (LPIC) has been working closely with MEA staff to get the "daytime face of MEA" in downtown Lansing to meet with state legislators. LPIC Committee Chair Rick Catherman invites members interested in being part of the MEA-Retired Lobby Team to save the date of Wed., May 15 to participate in an MEA-Retired Lobby Team Event.

The tentative schedule for the day is the following:

9:00am - Meet at a hotel or restaurant near the capitol building for breakfast with MEA-Retired Lobbyist Dr. David Michelson and a briefing on the goals for the day. Dr. Michelson will cover the meal.

9:30am-12 noon - Meetings, in teams, with state lawmakers

12:30pm - meet at a specific location for a quick debrief of the day.

Mileage will be covered by MEA-Retired LPIC budget funds.

If you are interested in participating, contact Rick as soon as possible at swmgrowpro@gmail.com.

From ORS:

Updates on health care

MEA-Retired President Kay Walker Telma and Vice-President Judy Daley participated in the quarterly meeting with the Office of Retirement Services liaisons to health care providers. The meeting, held April 2, featured ORS's Danyelle Stoddard with updates on various topics.

We thank Danyelle for organizing these meetings and for providing a summary of the information she shared.

Just a reminder to members to get in touch with any member of the leadership team with concerns about health care providers so that we can share them with our contacts at ORS.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 20.

General Healthcare Updates

- Strategic Initiative Planning

ORS and healthcare consultants are currently working on strategic initiative package containing plan changes for 2025. As done in the past, the initial draft initiative package will be presented to the Board in May, there will be an opportunity for public review and feedback, and the changes will ultimately be taken to the Board for approval in July.

- Vaccine Coverage Updates

Effective 3/1/24, we made some changes to the vaccine coverage:

- We removed member cost share for a couple infrequently used vaccines for both Medicare and Non-Medicare. Now all covered vaccines have no member cost share.
- We expanded vaccine **access** for the **Non-Medicare** plan. In response to recent escalations about places to access vaccines with no upfront costs (particularly out-of-state), we have made the list of covered vaccines payable under **both** Non-Medicare medical and prescription drug plans. Previously, certain vaccines were covered under the medical plan and others were covered under the prescription drug plan (this distinction still exists for Medicare). Now, for **Non-Medicare**, the full list of covered vaccines is covered by both Blue Cross and Optum.

Vaccine Guides are posted on each vendor's MPSERS website. If members have questions about their benefits—which vaccines are covered, where to access vaccines, how to be reimbursed, if needed—they should be directed to the carriers.

- Spring *Best of Health*

Mailed 3/29.

- Dependent Coverage to Age 26

Reminder that ORS' insurance eligibility rules have been updated to allow coverage until the end of the month in which a child turns 26. This is not dependent on child being a full-time student, dependent for tax purposes or unmarried. This has been communicated on our website, Facebook, Best of Health and

through targeted emails. If members have questions on this topic, please direct them to ORS Customer Service.

Until August 31, 2024, ORS will consider this to be a qualifying event and coverage for children can begin the first of the month after ORS receives the enrollment request. For enrollment requests received September 1, 2024 or later, coverage would begin the first of the sixth month after ORS receives the request.

As a result of this change, ORS will no longer require annual student certification (proof that children are attending school). No student certification forms will be sent to members.

- Verification of Coverage

As a reminder, we are no longer conducting the annual Verification of Coverage campaign. The Coordination of Benefits processes that have been in place since at least last year will continue unchanged.

For the Medicare plan, both BCBSM and Optum have COB processes in place to comply with Medicare rules. For BCBSM, this does not involve any member outreach or involvement. They receive information directly from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. For Optum, they are required to send letters to members who are identified as having other drug coverage by Medicare. Members are expected to review and report whether any updates are needed. If no response, it is assumed the coverage information Medicare has on file is correct. In both cases, member's enrollment will not be affected, only the order in which claims process.

For the Non-Medicare plan, BCBSM is administering a COB Questionnaire. Contract holders are sent letters annually (less frequently if coverage isn't being utilized), to identify other coverage they and their family members may have. The letters are triggered by claims, so only those using their coverage will receive a letter. Members need to respond and provide information about other coverage or confirm they have no other coverage. Claims will be held from payment while a response is pending. If members do not respond, their claims reject until a response is received. Their enrollment is not affected, but whether or not their claims process and pay is dependent upon them responding to the letter.

Questions

Kay: Received a letter from a dental office in Midland concerning lack of increase in rates. Also hearing similar concerns from members.

We have been working closely with Delta Dental to monitor this. They have a committee in place to monitor and address this situation and have planned rate increases for providers. 4 scheduled rate increases have occurred since 2022. It's a balancing act between paying dentists adequately for the services they provide without increasing costs too much for members and the plans.

We are also monitoring the participation rate of dentists in the Delta Dental network. While some dentists are choosing to leave the network over rates, new dentists are being added to the network to maintain adequate access to providers. While members may be frustrated that their specific provider is not participating, that doesn't mean there are not qualified providers within a reasonable distance. Delta Dental can assist members with finding in-network providers if they need to switch.