

# MEA-Retired Tribune

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January, 2022

## A healthy, happy, hopeful toast to you in 2022

Welcome to 2022. I hope that you and your loved ones were able to enjoy the holiday season in ways that were special and safe. Watching a handful of individuals on a nearby golf course hit a few balls a week and a half ago—a week after the temperature in Traverse City was 66 degrees at 4 a.m. on December 16 and two weeks after I measured 13 inches of snow at my house—actually did make me long for what I used to call seasonal weather in this part of the state: several inches of fluffy snow on the ground for a while.

Snow seems to be only one issue for those trying to fly home from their holiday destinations. COVID is number one in that department, with other weather challenges as factors as well. Some students waiting for rescheduled flights are looking at once again attending classes virtually, at least for a little while. A few medical experts are saying that if schools are taking the appropriate measures and students are vaccinated, going back to school is the right choice.

2022. The new year greeted us with challenges and with hope. It's a mid-term election year, and MEA-Retired members will be actively working to get pro public-education candidates elected and re-elected. New medications to help with the COVID adventure are emerging. I enjoyed paying under \$3 a gallon at the gas pump last week. I also think of a few examples that may or may not point to having a little fun with this new year, or at least with the number itself. One of my brothers-in-law is excited since his lucky number has long been 22, a friend's brother turns 60 on 2-22-22 and I began my rookie year teaching the week I turned 22. All good.

A friend's grandson asked me the other day if 2022 is a leap year, and I said we'd have to wait until 2024 for that. We don't have to wait until then to maybe take a leap forward. We may be retired, but we're lifelong learners, passionate advocates and valued loved ones. A 2022 toast—probably whole wheat, given my ever-wavering New Year's goal of a healthier diet—to all!

**From mea.org:**

## **Oxford EA President Jim Gibbons thanks others, looks to future while searching for answers following tragedy**

“As some schools in our community reopen today(December 10, 2021), I want to express our sincere thanks for the massive outreach of support for Oxford's students, parents, educators, administrators and the community at large. We are changed forever by the events of the past 11 days, but to know that so many are standing with us provides more comfort than I can possibly say.

“Even doing this statement is hard for me as an Oxford High School educator, the husband of another OHS teacher, and the parent of OHS students. My colleagues and I ask for and appreciate the media's

patience as we work through our grief and trauma. There are many stories that need to be told about what happened on Nov. 30 to save lives, but the pain is immense. We will do the best we can to tell those stories over time.

“For today, I want to thank the first responders who rushed to our aid last week and the law enforcement officials who have worked through the aftermath, including those who are working to learn exactly what happened. All of us want answers – but no answers will take away this pain, which is why I’m so appreciative of recent comments that the outcome of these investigations needs to focus on ensuring we know what happened so we can learn from this tragedy.

“One of the things we are learning is that the active shooter training and quick action of teachers, support staff and administrators in Oxford High School saved lives last week. When my colleagues are ready, we will tell those stories, both so our community can heal and so that others can learn how best to deal with the unthinkable if it happens to them.

“In closing, I’ve spoken with my counterparts in Parkland, Newtown and other schools that have fallen victim to senseless acts of violence. My colleagues and I are now part of an unwanted fellowship of educators. But together, with our friends, family, and colleagues here across Michigan, we will move ahead and ensure our students have a safe space to succeed and thrive in the years ahead.”

#### From ORS:

### **Updates regarding calls, seminars, Silver Sneakers benefit**

*We had our quarterly meeting (virtual) with health care liaisons from ORS in early December. Below is information that we hope you will find helpful.*

- **Update from Customer Service:** We have seen an increase of 400-500 calls per day that we have answered as part of the MILogin migration. January is our busiest month of the year for retirees, due to insurance and tax rate changes, as well as 1099R's. Things could remain busy in the call center for a bit. If members are having issues with the recent MILogin transition, we have created a step-by-step instruction guide that is available on the main page of our website at <https://www.michigan.gov/ors>. Direct link to the instructions can be found here and some miAccount FAQs are located here.
- **Healthcare Updates:** Fall 2021 Retiree Education Seminar that was launched October 12 concluded December 15. Presentation videos will continue to be available on ORS YouTube channel. Benefit books and handouts will continue to be available on vendors' MPERS-specific websites. The seminar website now contains a redirect with links to the various websites.
- **Update from BCBSM:** The Silver Sneakers benefit went into effect 1/1/22. Representatives will walk members through the process of obtaining their SilverSneakers ID number, help find locations and provide details on how to access the online tools. Members can use the instructions that the reps provided prior to 1/1/22 to get their SilverSneakers ID number and then either visit a fitness location or access the online tools.

**From ssa.gov:**

## **Update on Social Security local office reentry plans**

We want to give you an update on our preparations for returning our employees to local Social Security offices, a process called reentry.

You may have seen a proposed reentry date of January 3, 2022 in the draft reentry plan that we provided to our unions, or in the media. While some executives reentered on December 1, we have not set a reentry date for the rest of the agency.

Please share information with your clients that the best way to reach us is online at [SSA.gov](https://ssa.gov), or by [calling our National 800 Number or a local Social Security office](#). We are taking steps to increase in-person help for people unable to complete their business online or by phone. We continue to increase in-person appointments for limited, critical issues, and to hold voluntary hearings by online video and phone.

We will keep you updated on our reentry process.

## **Sarah Says: From NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman**

Have you made any New Year's resolutions? I have: I'm resolved not to make any! That doesn't mean I don't have any GOALS...far be it! I also have to-do lists that go on and on, but honestly without an updated calendar and lists, I don't think I'd move ahead very fast or at all. Yes, I have those days when for some reason I'm a slow starter, but my lists and obligations mark my days and hours. I asked for the opportunity to serve, and that's what I will do. Whether you make specific resolutions or not isn't the issue. The big picture calls for you to dream as the poet said, "First to dream and then to do; that's the way to make a dream come true." I simply challenge you to try something new; to challenge yourself to volunteer; to pick up the phone and call someone for a wellness check-in or to invite someone to join you in an association activity. You can doubtless add other possibilities, but let's not ever be idle or give-in or give up. Just give it everything you have!