

## 2022 Legislative Workshop Held Virtually

The annual MRSPA Legislative Workshop was held virtually on Wednesday January 26, 2022. Fifty-three MRSPA members from across the state attended. Members were treated to wonderful presentations from excellent speakers. George D. Denny, Jr., MRSPA President, welcomed members and guests.



Rebecca Ruff, Operating Budget Manager, Department of Legislative Services summarized what to expect in the 2022-2023

state budget with an emphasis on how the budget surplus might be spent or saved, and any specific impacts for increased pension funding.

New Maryland State Retirement and Pension System Executive Director, Martin Noven updated us on the status of the pension system. He referenced

the recent excellent market returns and answered questions from members about our COLA and any expected legislative issues this session.



Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland, shared



AARP's legislative priorities for the 2022 session. She highlighted areas where AARP MD and MRSPA will work together on legislation.

Adam Goldberg, Senior Legislative Representative National Retired Teachers Association, shared



what is happening in other states relative to pension attacks and work that other state

associations are doing to ward off attacks or seek COLAs for their members. Adam also reviewed NRTA's federal legislative priorities and gave a brief update on the status of pending legislation.

MRSPA's Legislative Committee continues to meet bi-weekly via Zoom during the General Assembly session to discuss proposed legislation related to our MRSPA Legislative Priorities and act as needed. Please check out the bi-weekly Legislative Update on our website at [www.mrspa.org](http://www.mrspa.org) and click the Legislation menu option. Or click the link when received via Constant Contact in your email. We expect another very busy session!

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by George D. Denny, Jr.



Someone once noted: *“Even though it is the shortest month of the year, February is jam-packed with events, including Groundhog Day, Valentine’s Day, and President’s Day! It is Black History month, as well as American Heart Month, Canned*

*Food Month, Grapefruit Month, and Hot Breakfast Month!”* --Anonymous. Those last three I looked up, and sure enough they exist!

One needs a good calendar to keep all those dates straight, much like the one in the MRSPA office. That is where state committee meetings, Board and Executive Committee meetings, the Leadership and Legislative workshops, the President’s meetings, the Annual Business Meeting, local meeting dates, and many other assemblages vital to the work of the state and local organizations are recorded. Each calendar entry reminds us of the great things our members are doing or will do. The MRSPA office staff maintain that calendar, and manage, somehow, to keep me headed in the right direction in the process!

The many volunteers who serve on various state and local committees are the backbone of all our associations. Without such dedicated members giving freely of their time and talents none of us would be able to serve all our members so successfully. Likewise, without dedicated members stepping up to take leadership positions at the state and the local levels we could not serve all our members effectively.

## MRSPA News

is published five times each year by the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association.

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One thing that has been clear over the past two years is that despite all the fear and trepidation caused by Covid, despite all the interruptions to our daily routines, despite all the hardships and losses we have endured, retirees from Maryland school systems have remained resilient. You have been creative in handling normally ordinary tasks in unordinary ways. You have adapted to the challenges of dealing with technology that previously may have been foreign to you. You have supported your family and friends during their times of need. You have donated food, money, and time to support needy causes. You have continued to serve your communities with scholarships and community service projects.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Why wait for the mail?

Receive MRSPA News up to two weeks earlier with email delivery!

If you'd like to receive MRSPA News via email, just let us know, and we'll

Add you to our electronic distribution list. You'll receive the publication faster AND help us reduce printing costs. Email your request to: [mrspa@mrspa.org](mailto:mrspa@mrspa.org) and put "Newsletter by Email" in the subject line of the email and please include your full name and your email address.



From the

# Executive Director Wanda Ruffo Twigg



When I was in elementary school, it seemed like I was always selling something. Girl Scout cookies, raffle tickets, stationary, Christmas Seals, and World's Finest Chocolate bars among other things. Since I was painfully shy, it was an ordeal for me to go door to door and ask people for money even though most were polite and bought something. When they didn't, they never yelled or got angry that I was bothering them. I hated asking people for money even though the money was used for good things for lots of people near and far, and once it even paid for horseback riding lessons for me. I had to get out of my comfort zone, and I did.



Fast forward many years and I am still asking people for money. In fact, I have spent much of my adult life asking local, state, and federal leaders for money. Money for schools, for students, for teachers, school support staff, and administrators. Money for membership dues in my local teachers association then, and now membership dues in MRSPA.

I have grown used to asking people for money as I understand the value and importance of membership in advocacy organizations and of advocating on behalf of others. Money is the lifeline for our schools and school staff and for us retirees, too. Indeed, that money supports our local and state economies as well. As the 2022 General Assembly session gets underway, know that MRSPA is here advocating for you. Your annual membership dues make that advocacy possible.

Like me in elementary school, it may be uncomfortable for you to ask others for money, too. Yet, there are thousands of retired school personnel out there who are not yet members of MRSPA. We could be so much stronger with those non-members included in our ranks. If you know any non-members, please consider breaking out of your comfort zone to ask them to join. Like my former neighbors, they won't get angry, though a few may say no. They can't say yes or no if we don't ask.

Thank you in advance for breaking out of your comfort zone to ask some retirees to join MRSPA!

## Vision Statement

*The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association inspires the dedication, commitment, skills and abilities of its members in service to fellow retirees and the entire community in an ever-changing world.*

## Mission Statement

*The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association is a nonprofit organization comprised of retired school system personnel. It serves as an advocate for retirees and provides expanding services to members, empowering them to enrich the quality of their lives. The Organization is dedicated to excellence in education and life-long learning. It promotes community service by its members through a myriad of volunteer activities.*

## Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

*We, the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, are evolving to reflect the goals and aspirations of a contemporary organization. Through our shared values, we create an environment where all members are included, respected, and appreciated.*

## Our Legislative Priorities for the New Year



The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association serves as an advocate for and provides services to members to empower them to enrich the quality of their lives. A significant part of our advocacy results from the activities of the

Legislative Committee. The Committee is comprised of members from all regions of the state. The role of the Committee is to inform members and local associations by monitoring legislation that may affect members, schools, and older persons. Our primary focus is the protection of our defined benefit pension and the sustaining of this benefit for current and future retired educators.

The Committee begins its work each August as we meet to discuss and update, as necessary, the Legislative Priorities for MRSPA for the coming session of the General Assembly (GA). We set the meeting schedule for the coming year and begin planning for the Legislative Workshop. This year we added a Civic Participation priority.

As we meet prior to and during the GA session, we discuss all legislation related to retirement/pensions and our other legislative priorities. The Committee determines if action is required.

After discussion of legislation, we take a position of support or opposition. Our position and reasons are then shared with the legislature through letters, testimony, and personal contact. These actions are published for our members as the Legislative

Update on the MRSPA website and emailed to members via Constant Contact.

As the Legislative Aide, I monitor bills that are filed, and share the relevant proposed legislation with the Committee. I then prepare the Legislative Update for the Committee and website. Committee members write the position letters and testimony. Then, the MRSPA staff and I prepare the letters for the legislators, and I deliver them to the appropriate committees. When needed, I testify before the committees of the General Assembly on specific legislation. As a retired high school government and history teacher, I love working with the MRSPA Legislative Committee and serving as the connection with state legislators.

Success of the MRSPA Legislative program is dependent upon teaming with the local associations. In addition to the Legislative Update, the MRSPA website ([mrspa.org](http://mrspa.org)) contains online resources such as links to the Maryland General Assembly and contact tools to communicate with local senators and representatives by legislative districts. We also provide talking points and sample letters for members to use to advocate for specific legislation. This is one of the great advantages of living in the digital age. YOU can affect the workings of the Legislature from any location in Maryland or beyond. are then shared with the legislature through letters, testimony, and personal contact. These actions are published for our members as the Legislative Update on the MRSPA website and emailed to members via Constant Contact. YOU can be an advocate!

Virginia Crespo, MRSPA Legislative Aide

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*(President's Message continued from page 2)*

We may not have gotten out of the woods yet with Covid and its many strains, but the end of the tunnel is in sight. I challenge each of you to keep doing the great things you are doing for your family and friends, for your fellow members and for your community. One day we all will look back on these times and marvel at what we accomplished because we worked together.

As we look forward to the coming of spring, I leave you with this thought: *"If you feel like you're losing everything, remember that trees lose their leaves every year and still they stand tall and wait for better days to come."* --Anonymous

Stand tall, better days are coming.

Best wishes and stay safe!  
George D. Denny, Jr.

# MRSPA Scholarships

By the January 31, 2022 deadline, 73 applications for the **four** \$2,000 MRSPA scholarships were received. The scholarships are open to uncertified teachers, paraprofessionals and other public school system employees pursuing Maryland teacher certification. Our scholarships are also open to certified Maryland teachers pursuing certification in a different education specialty field such as school counseling, speech pathology, school social work, school psychology, Raffle article and physical or occupational therapy.

With the rising cost of tuition and the financial struggle that students face, it is becoming more and more difficult for school employees to get required certifications, with

some working more than one job, as a result. The *MRSPA Fund* is designed to help those individuals. It is imperative that we do our part as retired educators to keep qualified active personnel in our schools.

MRSPA's *Fund* is managed by the Community Foundation of Frederick County. This *Fund* depends on the market value of the investments, the annual raffle fundraiser, and the generosity of our members. Please use the form below to purchase raffle tickets.

The MRSPA Scholarship Committee thanks our regular raffle participants, past donors, and all who will donate for the first time. We can't be successful without your generous donations!

# MRSPA Fund Raffle

The MRSPA Community Service and Scholarship Committees provide tremendous support to students and staff in schools across Maryland. In the past, funds for these scholarships and mini-grants were partially obtained through in-person sale of raffle tickets statewide. Last year, we sold raffle tickets via this newsletter and via local newsletters with great success. This year we are again seeking donations to the MRSPA Fund to continue our work. All donations are tax deductible and come with our thanks and appreciation!

To show our appreciation, your name will be entered into a drawing upon receipt of your donation. Donations of \$10 will earn 1 raffle ticket, and donations of \$25 will earn 3 raffle tickets incrementally. MRSPA staff will write your name on the correct number of tickets when we receive your check. The drawing will take place at the May 2022 Annual Business Meeting, whether held in person or virtually. You can win the \$300 cash first prize, a Maryland themed basket valued at \$150 second prize, or one of 5 third place themed baskets valued at \$75: Cooking, Spa, Wine Lover, Movie Night, and Sports

Lover. Out-of-state basket winners will receive gift cards in lieu of basket contents.

### Entering the drawing is fun and easy!

1. Make your **check payable** to "The Community Foundation of Frederick County"
2. Write MRSPA Fund Donation on the FOR line
3. Date and sign your check
4. Mail check and completed form to:  
MRSPA  
8379 Piney Orchard Parkway, Suite A,  
Odenton, MD 21113  
Due by March 22, 2022

Please, include the form below with your donation. Receipts will be sent via email or US Mail.



### MRSPA Fund Donation

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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## New Membership Cards Are in the Mail - Watch Out!

In the Fall and Winter 2021 *MRSPA News*, we informed members that our new plastic membership cards were to be delivered to you in the US Mail beginning in mid-November. Then, we told you that the cards were delayed in production and shipping. Please know that **the cards have been produced and are in the US Mail!** Delays with the postal service may still occur. These delays are out of our control.

Please be on the lookout for this important piece of mail. A photo of the envelope your card will arrive in is below for your information. **Do not throw it away thinking it is junk mail**, as we cannot send duplicate cards.

These new cards are permanent and can be kept in your purse or wallet for several years. If you didn't renew your membership for 2021-2022 before November 1, 2021, you will not receive a new card in this initial distribution. Plastic cards will be distributed quarterly to new or late renewing members. New members will receive a paper card to use until you receive your plastic card.

Your new card includes information on how to access the benefits of membership on the MRSPA website. The link to access this important information is: <https://www.mrspa.org/memberbenefits>. If you do not have a computer, you can call the MRSPA office to request member benefit information at 410-551-1517.

We hope you take advantage of your MRSPA member benefits and ask for your patience as you await the arrival of your new membership card.



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**MRSPA CALENDAR**

- February 15 ..... Legislative Committee Meeting  
*via Zoom*
- February 21 ..... President's Day  
*MRSPA Office Closed*
- March 1, 15, 29 ..... Legislative Committee Meetings  
*via Zoom*
- March 9 ..... Board of Directors Meeting  
*via Zoom*
- March 16..... Local Presidents' Meeting  
*via Zoom*
- April 11..... Sine Die, General Assembly Ends  
*Annapolis*
- May 11 ..... Annual Business Meeting  
*Camelot by Martin's*



**MRSPA TRIPS AND TRAVEL 2022**



**Backroads of Iberia: Spain and Portugal**, April 2 – 17, 2022, Overseas Adventure Travel (GrandCircle Travel Small Group) Contact Amanda Turrell at (386) 597-1380 or (386) 290-2997 or [ATurrell@oattravel.com](mailto:ATurrell@oattravel.com) Code: **GO- 28192**.

**Holland and Belgium Springtime River Cruise**, April 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at Action Travel at (301) 843-0887 or [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

**America's Music Cities Featuring Nashville, Memphis, & New Orleans**, May 20 – 27 or September 30- October 7, 2022.(Mayflower Cruises and Tours) Contact Debbie Martinez at (810) 797-5710 or (630) 673-0773 or [Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com](mailto:Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com).

**Oberammergau and Passion Play**, May 22 – 31, 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at ActionTravel at (301) 843-0887 or [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

**Alaska Cruise/Tour**, July 8 – 20, 2022 (Cruises Plus) Contact Judy Warsaw at (410) 494-1414 or [judycruisesplus@aol.com](mailto:judycruisesplus@aol.com).

**Mackinac Island**, October 1-9, 2022 (Collette) Contact Leigh Ann Keller at Action Travel at (301) 843-0887 or [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

Check our website at [www.mrspa.org](http://www.mrspa.org), click **Travel** to locate more information.

All MRSPA trips are open to MRSPA members, their family and friends. Please use **Code: GO-28192 anytime** you travel with Grand Circle Tours to access a special deal for you and MRSPA, even if it's not a MRSPA sponsored trip.