mrspa news
MARYLAND RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION
advocate serve connect
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Membership and You

By Leslie Heiderman Schell, Membership Chair



Membership is not about "the committee"; it is about YOU! Each of you joined MRSPA for a different reason. You viewed MRSPA membership as a natural next step in retirement, perhaps because others had joined before you. A friend or colleague invited you to join them on this retirement journey. As you contemplated retirement, you saw or heard a presentation that sparked your interest. Either way, we are so glad **YOU** are a member. Thank you! Now, as a member, you are part of "the committee." No, you do not need to attend a meeting. However, you are now an advocate for this wonderful association. Do you know what we (the committee) do? Let me explain.

Recruiting new members is just one part of your role in MRSPA. Even talking about MRSPA raises awareness that we exist. Many of your colleagues are familiar with your local association through local efforts to join. However, we have our own important talking points – our state pension. The Legislative Committee works tirelessly to monitor our pension benefits so, in retirement, what we have contributed over the years is there for us. The Legislative Committee reviews bills which could affect retirees and our pension benefits.

Retaining current members is another important part of your membership. When you encourage someone to join, your next step is to keep them aware of the many benefits MRSPA provides. Not feeling so sure about your information? Look no further than the MRSPA website! The MRSPA website has a wealth of information to help you recruit and retain members. You might learn something new from your last visit.

Regaining members is a new challenge. Sometimes our renewal form gets lost in the mail, like the kind on your desk! It is tossed out with "other stuff." Or it gets ignored. In a friendly chat with others, if you learn they haven't renewed, the tricky question becomes: Why? Listen to the response – economic times are uncertain, which may cause a failed renewal. However, there is a solution: **dues deduction!** Once a year, MRSPA dues are automatically deducted from your pension check. No check to write and no reminder to submit your dues–no hassle. It is done, and you are free to enjoy your membership.

Now that you know your role in MRSPA, you are equipped to help MRSPA (and your local committee) with the **three R's: Recruiting, Retaining, and Regaining.** Let me know what you are doing and what you think. You can contact me at lahschell@verizon.net. Let the MRSPA committee know how we can help.

From the President — *Alice Mitchell*



I bring you greetings with a smile. I am smiling because I am proud to serve you as President of the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association. Since taking office, I have traveled across this great state and have come to appreciate MRSPA's role in supporting retired school personnel throughout Maryland. My smile means I am committed to representing our members, protecting our retirement benefits, and ensuring our voices reach the people who make decisions affecting our future.

I have met many of you during my travels, and our strength comes from our members. For decades, MRSPA has advocated for retirement security and protected the interests of retired school personnel. As we prepare for another legislative session, we must keep our voices heard. I encourage you to get involved by staying informed, sharing your concerns, and participating in our advocacy efforts. Your involvement is valuable and strengthens our collective voice. Your involvement helps protect the benefits we worked so hard to earn.

I am smiling because MRSPA brings retirees together through service and community involvement. Across our state, we as volunteers give our time and talents to support students, educators, and their communities. Through our Foundation, scholarships, grants, and volunteer activities, we continue to make a meaningful difference. I am proud of you and your commitment to helping others.

I am smiling with excitement about the potential for growth in our organization. There is strength in numbers, and new members are key to our future. To help us stay strong, I encourage you to talk with people in your circle about MRSPA and the value we offer. Share our retirement advocacy work, explain our benefits to each other, and invite others to join us. Every new member strengthens our association and expands our ability to advocate for retired school personnel throughout Maryland. Every voice counts!

MRSPA News

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As President, I look forward to working with our Board of Directors, local association leaders, committee members, and members across the state. I welcome your ideas and encourage you to stay involved. Together, we can build on MRSPA's strong foundation, reach more retired school personnel, and continue moving our association forward.

Thank you for taking this journey with me. Your membership, support, and commitment to MRSPA mean so much. Together, we can protect our retirement security, support our communities, and keep MRSPA a strong voice for retired school personnel throughout Maryland.

Advocate, Serve, Connect

From the Executive Director



It is hard to believe how quickly the weeks have passed since I became MRSPA Executive Director on September 8! The transition has been a whirlwind of new faces, meetings, events, and plenty to learn. I am grateful to Wanda Ruffo Twigg for sharing her knowledge and helping me get off to a good start. I also want to thank our fantastic staff, Frankie McDonnell, Marylou Eastin, Janette Wysocki, and Lonna Siskind, for making all the trains run on time!

I enjoy meeting many of you and look forward to meeting more members in the months ahead. As I settle into my new role, I am focused on strengthening our legislative advocacy, protecting retirement security, increasing MRSPA's visibility, and growing our membership. These efforts will help keep our Association strong and ensure we continue serving and protecting Maryland's retired school personnel.

There are several ways to stay connected and make the most of your MRSPA membership. Check the newsletter for member discounts and special offers.

This winter's featured benefit is 15% off services at Valvoline, a great opportunity to prepare your vehicle for the colder months ahead. Visit the MRSPA website for more information on member benefits and savings and follow MRSPA on Facebook for weekly updates on events, benefits, news, and ways to get involved. We will continue sharing savings opportunities and updates on our ongoing work to protect your pension and retirement benefits. Refer to the ad on the last page of the newsletter.

You can help MRSPA grow and make a difference! Encourage a retired colleague or active school employee to learn about MRSPA and consider joining. I also welcome your ideas on how we can better serve our members and strengthen our Association.

Thank you for welcoming me to MRSPA. As the new kid on the block—or perhaps the new grasshopper—I know I have much to learn from you. I am ready to listen, learn, and roll up my sleeves. I look forward to working with you in the months ahead!

Legislative Update Tom Slater

MRSPA Legislative Committee Anticipates an Active Session

The 2027 Maryland General Assembly session is expected to be especially active following the election, with newly elected legislators eager to make an impact and veteran lawmakers pursuing legislative priorities.

Your MRSPA Legislative Committee meets every other week to review proposed bills and determine whether to support, oppose, monitor, or take no position based on the association's adopted priorities.

MRSPA's 2027 Legislative Priorities include:

- Protecting defined-benefit pensions and retirement security.
- Promoting affordable health care and prescription drugs.
- Reducing crime and violence against seniors.
- Strengthening public education and lifelong learning.
- Expanding digital access and technology training for seniors.
- Protecting voting rights and preventing identity theft, fraud, scams, and financial exploitation.
- Supporting services enabling seniors to age in place with health, independence, and financial security.
- Addressing rising long-term care insurance costs.

The committee will continue to keep members informed about its advocacy efforts on their behalf.

It is MRSPA Foundation Raffle Time!

Support the MRSPA Foundation!

Try Your Luck!

Support Maryland students and school staff while entering for a chance to win! The *MRSPA Foundation* supports Maryland schools through grants and scholarships. Your participation helps continue this important work.

Raffle Tickets: $10 for 1 ticket or $25 for 3 tickets

Win Great Prizes!



- **1st Prize:** $300 cash
- **2nd Prize:** Maryland-themed gift basket valued at $175
- **Five 3rd Prizes:** Themed baskets valued at $125 each—Cooking, Game Night, Wine Lover, Bookworm, and Sports Lover

Drawing: May 2027 Annual Business Meeting

It is Easy as 1-2-3!

Here IS all you need to do to enter the MRSPA Foundation Raffle!

1. Write your check to **MRSPA Foundation**.

2. Add a note on the FOR line: **MRSPA Foundation Raffle.**

3. Mail your signed check and completed form to: MRSPA, 8379 Piney Orchard Pkwy, Suite A, Odenton, MD 21113

Please mail your entry by March 20, 2027.

MRSPA Foundation Entry Form

Your Name:_____

Your Address:_____

Home Phone:_____ **Cell Phone:**_____

Email Address:_____

Spread Holiday Cheer to Children in Need!

Help make the holidays brighter for a child!

Please join us in spreading some holiday cheer by donating **new, unwrapped toys**. Every gift brings a little excitement, a smile, and the reminder someone cares.

How to Donate

Drop-off Location: MRSPA Office - 8379 Piney Orchard Parkway, Suite A - Odenton, MD 21113

Toy Collection Deadline: Wednesday, December 16, 2026

Please call **(410) 551-1517** before stopping by to ensure someone is available to accept your donation.

MRSPA Attends the Andrus Awards

On October 7, Karol Wolgemuth received the Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus Award from AARP Maryland for her outstanding community service. The annual award honors an MRSPA member who exemplifies the volunteer spirit of NRTA and AARP founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus.

As a member of the Saint Mary's County Public Schools Retiree Association (SMCPSRA), Karol volunteers approximately 60 hours each month. As Program and Luncheon Chair and a member of her local board, she organizes meetings, arranges speakers, and coordinates events.

Her community service spans Southern Maryland. She serves meals and prepares food boxes for families in need through Saint Mary's Caring Soup Kitchen. Through WARM (Wrapping Arms 'Round Many), she coordinates more than 20 churches providing shelter and meals to people experiencing homelessness during the winter months. At her church, she helps coordinate food donations and supports a pantry that serves more than 5,000 people each month.

Each November, Karol organizes a community Thanksgiving dinner for up to 200 people and arranges holiday meals for volunteer firefighters and other first responders. She also supports education and historical preservation by volunteering in the Leonardtown Middle School library and guiding students through the history of Historic Sotterley Plantation, including its complex history of slavery.

Karol's extraordinary dedication to helping others exemplifies Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus's legacy of service. **Congratulations, Karol, on this well-deserved recognition!**



Karol Wolgemuth, Andrus Award Winner; Alice Mitchell, MRSPA President

MRSPA Spotlight

MRSPA was proud to participate in the 2026 Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame (MSCHF) Awards, celebrating Maryland seniors who make outstanding contributions to their communities. MSCHF President and MRSPA Secretary Sharyn Doyle joined in recognizing the honorees and celebrating their dedication, leadership, and service to others.



Sharyn Doyle, MSCHF President and MRSPA Secretary; Alice Mitchell, MRSPA President; Maria Granone, MRSPA Executive Director



Tillie Barckley, MRSPA Past Vice President and Bylaws Chair

36th Annual Teacher of the Year Gala

MRSPA President Alice Mitchell, Ayana English-Brown, Dr. Debbie Chance, and Leslie Heiderman Schell attended the 36th Annual Maryland Teacher of the Year Gala in October. MRSPA supports Maryland educators and uses opportunities like the gala to build connections with teachers, raise awareness of the Association, and share information about retirement benefits and the MRSPA Foundation.

The event announced **Michael James**, English Department Chair at North Harford High School in Harford County, as the **2027 Maryland Teacher of the Year**.

Congratulations, Michael James! MRSPA celebrates your achievement and your dedication to Maryland students and education.



Alice Mitchell, MRSPA President; Ayana English-Brown, Retirement & Pension System Trustee; Dr. Debbie Chance, Area II North Director; Leslie Heiderman Schell, Membership Committee Chair

CareFirst Health Fair



Dr. Debbie Chance, Area III North Director; Dr. Caroll Visintainer, MRSPA Foundation Scholarship Committee

Scholarship Recipient



Tierra Morgan, recipient of an MRSPA Foundation scholarship; Carla Duls, Area II South Director

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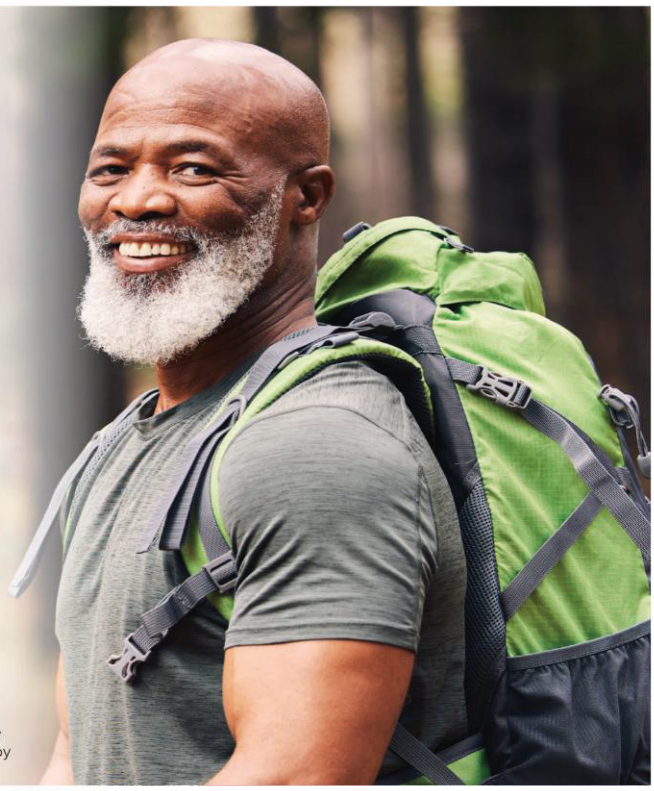

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MRSPA CALENDAR

December 2026

16……..Board of Directors Meeting

Dec. 23 – Jan. 3……Winter Break
MRSPA Office Closed

January 2027

13……Executive Committee Meeting

13……General Assembly Session Begins
Annapolis

18……Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
MRSPA Office Closed

26……MRSPA Legislative Workshop
Virtual

Fall is here, time to winterize your vehicle! Take advantage of your MRSPA member benefit at Valvoline Instant Oil Change and save **15% off the posted price**. No appointment needed!

Visit **mrspa.org** to download the flyer and present it to receive your discount. Get your vehicle ready for the colder months while saving money!

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