

Annual MRSPA Legislative Workshop Held Virtually

The MRSPA annual Legislative Workshop was held Tuesday, January 26, 2021, via Zoom. Sixty-eight MRSPA members from across the state attended. Many were glad not to have to drive to Annapolis for the event.



The Workshop was hosted by the MRSPA Legislative Committee, chaired by Fred Evans, Montgomery County. He shared information about the difficulties of lobbying in a pandemic climate, while Virginia Crespo, MRSPA Legislative Aide, spoke about the new MRSPA Legislative Priority - Technology.

The pandemic brought into greater focus the digital divide that is affecting many seniors' ability to access telehealth, and news and information. Virginia also shared highlights of the committee's work on legislation so far this session.



Rebecca Ruff, Operating Budget Manager Department of Legislative Services, gave an excellent summary of what to expect in the 2021-2022 state budget, with an emphasis on the impact of declining state revenue because of the pandemic, the impact of a likely override of the Governor's veto of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, and federal stimulus aide to the state.



The retiring Executive Director of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System, R. Dean Kenderdine, updated members on the status and stability of the pension system. He shared how the system has not missed

a beat (or a payment) since the pandemic closed their office. He encouraged members to access the new portal to set up an account through the MSRA website. Following his remarks, MRSPA presented Dean with a gift to thank him and recognize his years of dedicated and professional service to our members and all state retirees.



Tammy Bresnahan, Associate State Director of Advocacy for AARP Maryland, shared AARP's legislative priorities for the 2021 General Assembly session. She highlighted areas where AARP MD and MRSPA could work together on legislation.

MRSPA Legislative Committee member Betty Weller, Kent County, gave an update on the status of the potential override of the 2020 veto of the Blueprint for Maryland Schools legislation. The override will likely occur when the House of Delegates returns to Annapolis for in-person meetings in early February. Then, other enabling legislation would also likely need to be passed to resume the implementation of the plans to increase funding for all Maryland public schools over the next 10 years. The recorded workshop is available on the Legislative Committee page on the MRSPA website.

The Legislative Committee will continue to meet every two weeks via Zoom to discuss legislation related to our legislative priorities and act as needed. Please check out the bi-weekly Legislative Update on our website at www.mrspa.org, click Legislative or when received via Constant Contact in your inbox. It's going to be another very busy session!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by George Denny



MRSPA "C's" You...

The challenge of writing a message 4-6 weeks in advance of publication is that so much can happen in the interim to undermine what I have written.

By the time you receive this newsletter, most likely Groundhog Day will have passed, but I have no idea as I write this, if the groundhog will see its shadow or not. The possibility also exists that given how things have been above-ground, the groundhog may have been too afraid to come out of its hole at all!

Then, perhaps Valentine's Day, too, has passed, but I know not how many people were allowed to share the day with their loved ones.

And finally, President's Day may have come and gone. But words of wisdom spoken by past presidents still remain. Abraham Lincoln said, "We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses." Given those options, let's rejoice that thorn bushes *do* have roses.

It appears that some "normalcy" is beginning to return to our daily lives. MRSPA locals have adapted to new ways to meet, communicate with their members and deliver services to their communities. Volunteerism has blossomed, with a myriad of community service projects underway around the state.

MRSPA committees continue to work on protecting our pension, adding and improving benefits and consumer education for our members, establishing legislative priorities for the current General Assembly session, monitoring legislation in Annapolis, communicating with our locals and much more.

MRSPA News

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

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Carla J. Duls

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The MRSPA staff has been working from their homes and in the office to meet the needs of our members and the demands of our organization. Kudos to them for their wholehearted devotion to their duties.

Planning is well underway for our Annual Business Meeting which will be held virtually in May. Officers will be elected, a budget adopted, awards bestowed, and the other business of MRSPA conducted.

All of these things are made possible through the talents and dedication of our state and local leaders - all

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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 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



Unprecedented. Are you tired of hearing this word? It seems that almost every day in 2020 we heard of something else being *unprecedented*. It is why we looked forward to 2021. We hoped that there would be fewer *unprecedented* events. We hoped that life would become somewhat more "normal." Yet, as I write this message, just 14 days into the new year, we continue to experience and witness *unprecedented* events, even more to process and to understand.

Whatever you are feeling during this time of flux, you are likely trying to get to a more "normal" place. To homeostasis. To a feeling of internal stability to offset the *unprecedented* external disturbances we have been experiencing since March 2020. Without really thinking about it, we have all been working to get back to that equilibrium we perceive as our "normal" life. It is what our internal systems do when disturbed.

Like you, we at MRSPA have been working very hard to maintain homeostasis. We are comforted by the ebb and flow of MRSPA daily business. Events and meetings continue virtually. Bills are paid, emails and phone calls are answered. Newsletters are written and distributed. Contact with legislators continues as does work in our 24 local affiliate associations. We continue to work for our members while coping with and working through the *unprecedented* events that surround us. Homeostasis.

As we all work toward homeostasis, I urge us to consider not going back to "normalcy" but rather, let us move forward to be better people, better Americans, better community members who help our fellow man through these *unprecedented* times and beyond. That we open our hearts and minds to others and reach out to those who may feel disconnected or that they do not belong. Those that may feel something has been taken from them or that they have been mistreated or maligned.

You will read about the new *MRSPA Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion* on page 4. We want all of our members to know they "belong" and are respected and understood. That they are all valuable members of our association, our community, and our country. We must continue working through the difficult times to get to a new and hopefully better homeostasis, especially in these *unprecedented* times.

We must strive to create a "more perfect Union" for all Americans.

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.

MRSPA ADOPTS STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

While participating in the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA) Presidents' Meeting this summer during the social unrest and marches for justice, I wondered if MRSPA had a statement that welcomed the diverse retirees from our state. My thoughts became words when I asked that question of the entire group.

It was determined that such a statement did not exist, so the Diversity Statement Work Group was formed by MRSPA President George Denny, Jr. Chaired by Dr. Debbie Chance (MRSPA Vice-President), the work group began its work in mid-November. Members participating in the group were George Denny, Jr., Janet Williams, Tillie Barckley, Fred Evans, Addie Kaufman, Marshall Peterson, and Wanda Twigg.

As Chairperson, Dr. Chance shared the purpose of the committee was to discuss and create a draft non-political statement of MRSPA's beliefs about diversity and inclusion that would be presented to the Board of Directors for their discussion and possible approval. This statement would be included in our annual Leadership Manual and in editions of our *MRSPA News* along with our Vision and Mission Statements. Sample statements from businesses and non-profits were shared and discussed. Dr. Chance also shared a quote from Audre Lord, "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." Throughout the meeting, the diverse group of members shared personal, powerful, and compelling stories of their experiences growing up in different decades, varied

school systems, and through MRSPA. By the conclusion of this meeting, the committee drafted a statement to consider and review at the next meeting.

At the next meeting, committee members discussed concepts and words that were important, such as inclusivity, equity, shared values, history, safety, and culture. The committee members also discussed an appropriate title and agreed upon **Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion**. By the conclusion of this meeting, a statement was finalized with 100% consensus.

"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."

It was a sincere pleasure to work with the committee members to create a statement that reflects the importance of welcoming all retirees, ensuring that all members feel empowered and safe in the organization, and all members' ideas and suggestions are valued.

Our statement was presented to the Board of Directors for discussion and approval at the December 2020 meeting. The statement was unanimously approved by the Board.

I thank MRSPA for asking me to participate in such an important task. The future of MRSPA is bright.

Addie Kaufman
Howard County (HEART) Co-President

1st	\$300	MRSPA Fund - Raffle Drawing Scholarships and Mini - Grants	\$10 = 1 ticket
2nd	MD themed basket		\$25 = 3 tickets
3rd	5 themed baskets		LAST CHANCE

Entering the drawing is fun and easy!

Make your check payable to **The Community Foundation of Frederick County**
Write **MRSPA Fund Donation** on the FOR line
Date and **sign** your check
Mail check and completed form to MRSPA at
8379 Piney Orchard Parkway, Suite A,
Odenton, MD 21113 **before February 28, 2021**

**Will you send a donation today?
Receipts will be sent via US Mail.**

MRSPA Fund Donation

Name: _____

Your Address: _____

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

Email Address for Receipt: _____

124 APPLY FOR MRSPA SCHOLARSHIPS

By the January 31, 2021 deadline, 124 applications for the three \$2000 MRSPA scholarships were received. The scholarships are open to uncertified teachers, paraprofessionals and other current public school system employees pursuing Maryland teacher certification as well as certified Maryland teachers pursuing Maryland certification in a different education specialty field such as school counselor, speech pathologist, school social worker, school psychologist and physical or occupational therapist are eligible.

With the rising cost of tuition and the financial struggle that students face, it is becoming more and more financially difficult

for school employees to get required certifications, and some find it necessary to work more than one job. The *MRSPA Fund* is designed to help those individuals. It is imperative that we continue to keep qualified 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.

Our fundraiser has been adapted to accommodate social distancing due to COVID-19. We continue to seek donations to the *MRSPA Fund* to continue our scholarship endeavors. To show

our appreciation, your name will be entered into a drawing upon receipt of your donation based on the following criterion: donations of \$10 will earn 1 raffle ticket while donations of \$25 will earn 3 raffle tickets incrementally. The drawing will take place at our virtual annual business meeting. 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. **Will you send a donation today before February 28, 2021?**

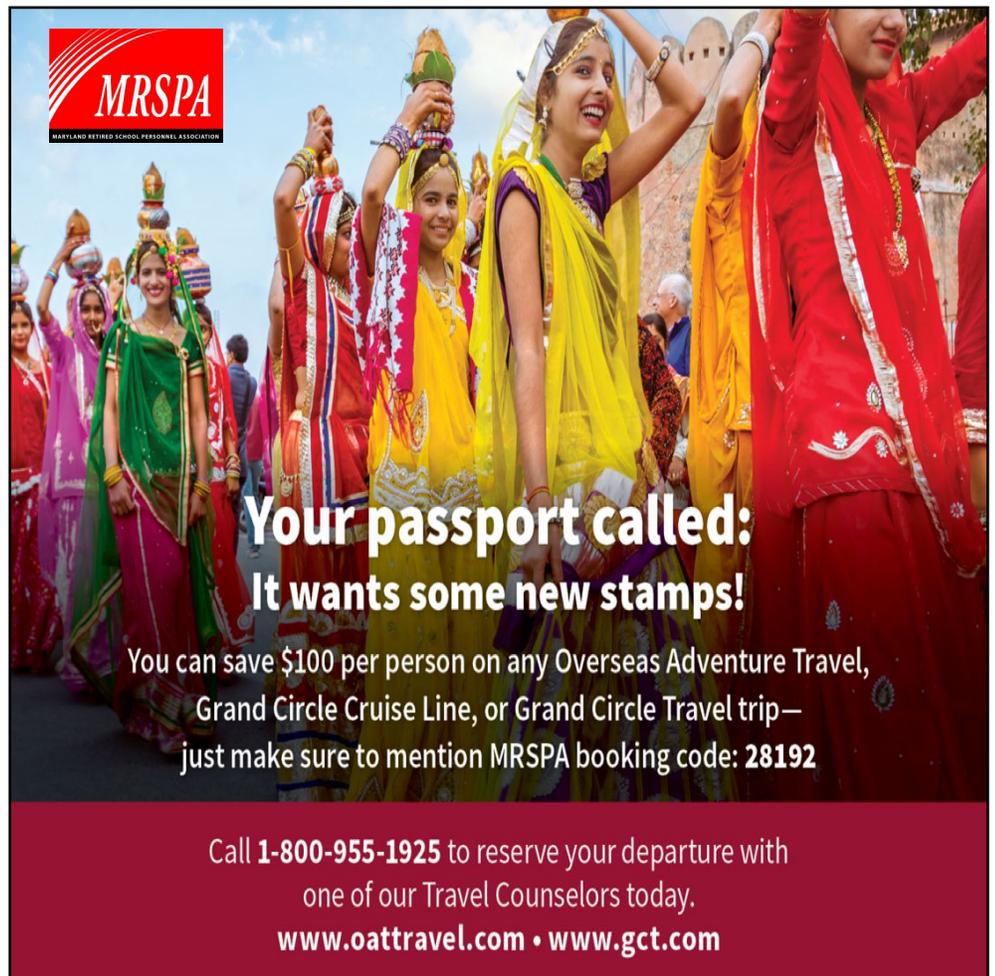
A profound thank you to all our regular raffle fundraising participants, past donors and to all who will be donating for the first time.

(President, continued from page 2)

volunteers. But we need *your* help. You may not want to serve on a committee or take a leadership position in your local. But you CAN help to recruit new members for MRSPA and your local at every opportunity. The more members we have, the stronger our voice when we petition state and local governments to protect our pensions and our health benefits.

As you work toward becoming more involved with MRSPA and your local, "Stop being afraid of what could go wrong and enjoy what could go right." (Anon)

Meanwhile, stay safe, help others, and look forward to a brighter tomorrow.



MRSPA
MARYLAND RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION

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AROUND THE STATE

WASHINGTON COUNTY



Cathy Grantham and Karen Teach (Co-Presidents WCREPA) present a check in the amount of \$2,000 to Amy Olack of **Meals on Wheels**.

WICOMICO COUNTY



Cheryl Kennedy, Sammy Everett, and Judy Davis, Community Service Chair, prepare to deliver goods donated by WREP to the **Salvation Army** Holiday Campaign.



MRSPA OFFICE

MRSPA collected for **Toys for Tots** again this each year. Despite the pandemic, MRSPA still collected a good number of toys for the drive.

HOWARD COUNTY



Sue Mascaro
HEART
Co-President

The Association of Retired Howard County Public School Personnel (HEART) held a Food Drive on December 10. Contributions were donated to the **Howard County Food Bank** and **Comfort Cases**.

ST. MARY'S COUNTY



Betsy Hundert delivers \$250 to **Margaret Brent Middle School** Principal, Glenna Edwards.



Karol Wolgemuth (SMCPSRA President) delivers \$250 to Dr. Deborah Dennie, the principal of **Leonardtwn Middle School**.



Deb Faller delivers \$250 to Dr. Wendy Zimmerman, principal of **Spring Ridge Middle School**.

Election of Officers to Be Held at ABM

The election of MRSPA officers will occur at the May 12, 2021, Virtual Annual Business Meeting. Positions to be filled this year are President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary. Candidates for these offices are very well-qualified and are familiar faces to MRSPA members, having served retired school personnel faithfully in a variety of capacities.



Nominee for MRSPA
President-Elect
2021-2022
Carla J. Duls

Carla Duls is the candidate for MRSPA President-Elect. An active member of the Anne Arundel Retired School Personnel Association since her retirement, she is a past president of the organization. She is currently the editor of the *AARSPA Informer*, the association newsletter, and AARSPA historian and archivist.

Carla is the former chair of MRSPA's Public Relations Committee on which she still serves, and is currently the editor of MRSPA's newsletter, *MRSPA News*. She is a member of both the Scholarship and Membership Committees. She also served as MRSPA Secretary and Area II North Director. In her roles as director and officer, she has been a member of the Finance Committee, Executive Committee and Board of Directors as well.

Rick Wiles, AARSPA's President, states, "Carla is highly regarded by her colleagues for her professionalism and attention to detail. She has a busy service schedule; however, Carla thrives on being busy."



Nominee for MRSPA
Treasurer
2021-2024
Dr. Stephen M. Raucher

Dr. Stephen M. Raucher is the nominee for MRSPA Treasurer. He is currently the treasurer of his local, Montgomery County Public School Retirees' Association, and served as the Insurance and Benefits Co-Chair from 2006-2012. From 2013-2016, he was the MCPSRA President.

Steve is currently the chair of MRSPA's Finance Committee, and as such, serves on the Board of Directors for the organization. He also chaired an ad hoc committee exploring and securing sources for non-dues revenue.

MCPSRA President, Dr. Carol Dahlberg, states, "Steve's attention to detail and his ability to clearly explain the financial records for MCRSPA make him an outstanding candidate for treasurer of MRSPA."



Nominee for MRSPA
Secretary
2021-2022
Janet K. Williams

Janet K. Williams, a member of the Association of Baltimore City Public School Retirees, Inc., is the nominee for MRSPA Secretary. In her local association, Janet has served two terms as ABCPSR's president.

Janet is a former chair of the MRSPA Scholarship Committee and is a member of the Travel Committee. Serving as MRSPA's Area II North Director for six years required her service on the Board of Directors, Executive Committee and Finance Committee. Janet is currently the secretary for MRSPA and is running again for a second one-year term.

**SAVE THE DATE
ABM**

**When: May 12, 2021
Where: Virtual**

**When: May 11, 2022
Where: Camelot by Martin's**



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MRSPA CALENDAR

- March 10..... MRSPA Board of Directors' Meeting
via Zoom
- March 17 Local Presidents' Meeting
via Zoom
- April 2 to 4 Spring Break
MRSPA Office Closed
- April 12 Sine Die, General Assembly Session Ends
Annapolis, MD
- May 12 Annual Business Meeting
via Zoom



MRSPA TRIPS AND TRAVEL 2021-2022



- Scandinavia & Russia**, Cruises Plus, June 28 – July 11, 2021, Contact Carl Love at (410) 530 – 1842, or CarlCruisesPlus1@gmail.com.
- Colorado Historic Trains**, Mayflower, July 23 – 31, 2021 departure options, Contact Debbie Martinez at (810) 797 – 5710 or (630) 673 – 0773 or Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com.
- Canadian Maritimes**, Grand Circle Travel, August 13, 2021, Contact Amanda Turrell at (386) 597 – 1380 or (386) 290 – 2997 or ATurrell@oattravel.com. **Code: GO- 28192.**
- Discover Scotland**, Collette, September 13 - 22, 2021, Contact Todd Bridges at (513) 289 – 1445 or (888) 637 – 5699 or tbridges@collette.com.
- New England Rails and Sails**, Mayflower Tours, October 1-9, 2021, Contact Debbie Martinez at (810) 797 – 5710 or (630) 673 – 0773 or Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com.
- Texas Cowboy Country**, Mayflower Tours, October 16 -24, 2021, Contact Debbie Martinez at (810) 797 – 5710 or (630) 673 – 0773 or Debbie@mayflowercruisesandtours.com.
- Greece: A Land of Gods & Heroes**, Aventura World, November 6 - 14, 2021, Contact Dora Ferreira at (201) 228 – 5266 or reservations@aventuraworld.com.
- Santa Fe Holiday**, Collette, November 28 - December 3, 2021, Contact Todd Bridges at (513) 289 – 1445 or (888) 637 – 5699 or tbridges@collette.com.
- Backroads of Iberia: Spain and Portugal**, Overseas Adventure Travel (Grand Circle Travel Small Group), April 2 - 17, 2022, Contact Amanda Turrell at (386) 597 – 1380 or (386) 290 – 2997 or ATurrell@oattravel.com. **Code: GO- 28192.**

These cancelled trips have been rescheduled. check our website at www.mrspa.org , click **Travel** to locate more information.

- Southwest National Parks**, September 5, 2021 (Grand Circle Travel)
- Oberammergau and Passion Play**, May 22-31, 2022, (Colette) (New Contract)
- Alaska Cruise/Tour**, July 8 - 20, 2022 (Cruise Plus)

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.