

MTA
The voice of
our retired
members

REPORTER

RETIREE DAY at the Summer Conference



JUNE 2026

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MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

2 Heritage Drive, 8th Floor
Quincy, MA 02171-2119
800-392-6175
massteacher.org

RETIRED MEMBERS COMMITTEE

CO-CHAIRS

Kathy Greeley, Cambridge
Rick Last, Northampton

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Marguerite Foster Franklin,**
Springfield
Shelly Fraser,* Framingham
Ora Gladstone, Boston
Brenda Johnson,**** Weymouth
Andrei Joseph,**** Chestnut Hill
Dale Melcher, Northampton
Bob Miller,** Brookline
Rafael Moure-Eraso, Medford
Phyllis Neufeld, Burlington
Bonnie Page,** Tewksbury
Amy Wolpin, Florence

RETIRED MEMBERS ORGANIZER

Jessica Wender-Shubow
jwendershubow@massteacher.org
508-944-0239

MTA COMMUNICATIONS

Amanda Torres-Price, Director
Mary MacDonald, Editor
Veronica Sosa-Dunetz, Design
Laura Mullen, Editorial Assistant

MTA MEMBER BENEFITS, INC.

800-336-0990
www.mtabenefits.com

MTA MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

617-878-8118
800-392-6175

- * Elected by the Board
- ** MTA Board of Directors
- *** President's Designee
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A DIVERSE UNION
of EDUCATION
WORKERS



Message From the Co-Chairs

By Kathy Greeley and Rick Last

The Massachusetts Teachers Association is the biggest union in New England, with nearly 117,000 members. Each Spring, elected delegates from around the state gather at the MTA's Annual Meeting to discuss, debate and decide on issues that impact our lives as educators and as citizens of this Commonwealth. This year, nearly 1,200 people gathered in Boston, while some 200 others joined in on Zoom. About 150 Retired educators also participated. While our adversaries, those who want to undermine public education, like to claim that the MTA is a "special interest" group, the Annual Meeting contradicts that view. In fact, the MTA is guided by a profound democratic process.

Every local in the MTA is asked and eligible to send delegates to the Annual Meeting. This gathering is now hybrid, so that even people who cannot travel, for whatever reason, can participate in debate and vote on Zoom. Any MTA member can run to be a delegate. Any MTA member can propose a change in union Bylaws or introduce a New Business Item, aka an NBI. Every delegate at the Annual Meeting has the opportunity to 1) ask questions about proposals, 2) speak in favor of ideas, or 3) speak against them, and 4) vote. A delegate can make an amendment to an amendment. We've even had amendments to an amendment of an amendment! And a delegate can call for a vote by moving to end debate. In the end, the entire body votes the idea up or down.



As Winston Churchill famously said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried." Democracy is messy and can be slow and exasperating. If you have ever been to an Annual Meeting, you know just how challenging things can get. But there also can be a profound sense of joy and energy to see such a deliberative process at work.

This year's Annual Meeting was no different. Because of the election of new MTA leadership, particularly for president and vice president, there was a lot of passion flying around. There were moments of joy and moments of frustration. Not all business items were addressed (they never are), but a budget was approved, a number of amendments to Bylaws were voted on (some of those impacted retirees), several NBIs were debated and approved, or rejected, and we had an election for new officers, new Board and Executive Committee members, and for the Retired Members Committee.

In addition to electing Matt Bach and Deb Gesualdo as the new president and vice president, delegates re-



elected four members of the RMC – Ora Gladstone, Rafael Moure-Eraso, Rick Last and me (Kathy Greeley). Everyone is excited to be able to continue the work of this RMC. In addition, Barbara Madeloni, the MTA's president from 2024-2018, was elected to replace Andrei Joseph, who is term-limited, as our Executive Committee representative.

The delegates accepted an amendment to the Bylaws increasing the dues of MTA Retired members who pay annually from \$30 to \$35, while decreasing the MTA dues of retired ESP members who pay annually from \$30 to \$25. The RMC supported this change, recognizing the challenges ESPs face in receiving a fair wage.

IN BRIEF

Delegates rejected another Bylaw amendment by a nearly 85 percent to 15 percent split. It would have made Retired delegates to Annual Meeting ineligible to vote on any items with budgetary or financial implications. RMC members were ready and raring to argue against this proposal, but it quickly went down in defeat.

Another vote that directly impacts retirees was contained in the budget. The RMC, through Andrei Joseph, proposed that the MTA grant every newly retired potential member a one-year gift membership, including MTA and NEA dues. The RMC was thrilled that this was accepted by delegates.

As in any democratic process, there were winners and losers in the issues and elections decided at Annual Meeting. That can feel hard. But at the end of the day, literally, new MTA President-elect Bach said some very important words. "While it may not feel this way at the moment, I believe that there is far more here that unites us than divides us," Bach said. "I know this is hard to believe, after two days of the hard work of Annual Meeting, but we all have more in common in this room, as education workers and activists and union members, than appears when we're in the vigorous debate that we're in. We have common goals for the common good. We're going to get to work."

As we watch the guardrails protecting democracy in our country being dismantled every day, we in the MTA need to stay united in fighting for our members, our students and families, our communities, and for a just and equal society. Retirees, you have a critical role to play in this fight. There are lots of ways to get involved – with the Wisdom Warriors, the fight for a dignified retirement, mentoring new teachers of color, and more. We hope you will join us. ■

Contact Kathy Greeley at kegreeley@gmail.com. Contact Rick Last at ricklewislast@gmail.com.

IF YOU HAVE SOME NEWS

from your local retired group that you wish to share, please send it to Jessica Wender-Shubow at JWenderShubow@massteacher.org.

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR NEWS, make sure to visit and bookmark massteacher.org/retired.

Get Involved!

The Retired Members Committee has several subcommittees that are looking for members who want to make a difference.

JOIN TODAY



massteacher.org/retired

Executive Committee / Board Report

By Andrei Joseph Photographs by Eric Haynes

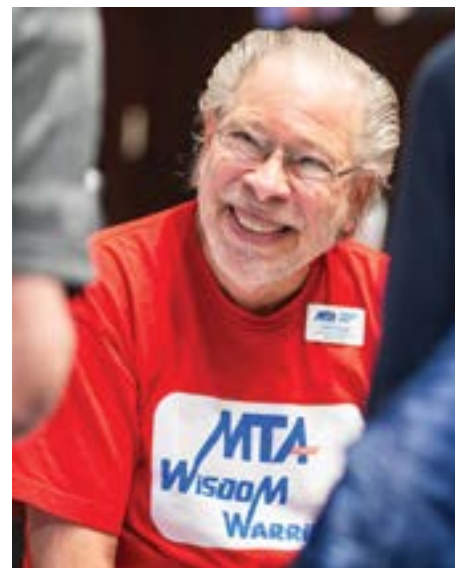
Early in May, drawn by a three-way race for the presidency of our union, over a thousand delegates gathered at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston. Joined by several hundred more delegates “attending” online, our Annual Meeting crackled with the mess and wonder of democracy. It is an event like no other. We are an organization like no other. A 146-page budget book with our \$59 million budget listed line-by-line. Nine microphones: green to support a motion; red to oppose; yellow to question process and procedure (and to cut the line and sneak in an argument under a pointed rhetorical question.) It isn’t always pretty. But it says something that our professional parliamentarian, Jim Slaughter, a perennial attendee, receives universally warm applause.

Initiatives brought by your Retired Members Committee achieved robust support. We introduced and passed a Bylaw change that increased the MTA dues of retired teacher-unit members from \$30 to \$35, while reducing the annual dues for retired Education Support Professionals from \$30 to \$25. Retired dues had not changed in 19 years. This step toward equity received 93% support from the delegates.

A second triumph was the inclusion of \$63,000 in the larger union budget to fund a free first-year of retired membership for all members across the state. This had won earlier support from the Board of Directors. While there was the usual considerable debate regarding the budget, none of the attempted amendments addressed this overture. Eventually, the budget, including this provision, passed with 72% support. An ill-advised Bylaw change which would have prevented retirees from voting on the union budget received only 15% support.

The nature and implementation of democracy is a recurrent theme at Annual Meetings. Many delegates become frustrated when we are unable to address multiple New Business Items. Motions included moving agenda items such as awards to the first day, when fewer delegates have arrived, limiting speaker time from three to two minutes (to one?), limiting the number of yellow cards (points of order) before debate could begin, and requiring that a certain amount of time be spent addressing NBIs. Running out of time, we began to take undebated straw polls on multiple NBIs which would be referred to the Board of Directors. Of course, this idea, too, was debated. Under Roberts Rules of Order, straw polls have zero standing. Once again, the value – or constraint – of remote participation incubated different perspectives. The technology to integrate both forms of participation remains taxing.

An even larger debate about democracy appears on the horizon: how should our president and



vice president be elected. Some are fine with the current system of representative democracy, where elected delegates make the decision. Others are determined to have all MTA members across the Commonwealth vote, believing that this form of direct democracy is superior. Currently, there are no regulations that would clarify that proposal. The prospect of unlimited funding of a candidate, perhaps from hostile sources, prevented an easy adoption of this change. You can expect reports and committees and continuing debate in the coming years.

Full details of actions taken at the Annual Meeting can be found on the MTA website: massteacher.org/meetingagendasandactions.

GOVERNANCE REPORT

A Final Note

Because of term limits, I am stepping off after six years as your representative on the Executive Committee. With your indulgence, I will take some space here for some broader observations. Over these years our union has repeatedly faced two major difficulties: our members and their elected representatives have had very different perspectives on Palestine and Israel and the role that our union should take. And, similar to many other organizations, we are hampered by the damage inflicted by the racism that divides us. We struggle to appreciate each other, recognize the pain, build trust and find our common humanity.

Despite these challenges, recent years have seen substantive accomplishments both internally and externally in our union. Internally, we have reorganized our structure, creating new positions and divisions, paying particular attention to strengthening our field organizing and support for locals. We have developed a deep commitment to our ESPs, including a statewide campaign for an ESP Bill of Rights that has become a national model. We have enhanced transparency by posting meeting agendas in advance on the MTA website and quickly sharing decisions made with all members. Forty-two percent of our regular, full-time staff are people of color. This exceeds the percentage of people of color in Massachusetts.



Externally, we are building a true social justice union, joining coalitions and doing our share on issues ranging from rent control to gun control, from reproductive rights to standardized testing. We battle the cruel thuggery of the current federal government, which threatens children and shatters families. Most concretely, we were instrumental in achieving a measure of income tax justice by requiring millionaires and billionaires to pay more of their fair share. Because of our union, every child in Massachusetts is guaranteed a breakfast and lunch. We should be proud.

I would like to thank the Retired Members Committee for its collaboration as well as every retiree who emailed or called with support or complaints. More than once, respectful disagreement revealed common values and a path forward. Our staff is filled with wise, hard-working, helpful people. Fulfilling this role has meant a lot to me. Thank you for the opportunity.

Finally, we live in dangerous, challenging times. We cannot afford the luxury of despair. We turn toward hope, toward kindness and compassion, toward love, toward each other. It is time for “good trouble.” I’ll see you out there. ■

Contact Andrei Joseph at ajoseph@rcn.com.

Differentiated Dues, Free First Year for Retired Members

By Mary MacDonald Photographs by Eric Haynes

The 2026 Annual Meeting of Delegates, which wrapped up May 9, included several changes affecting Retired members.

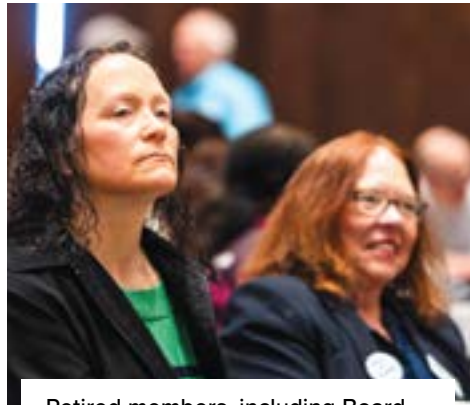
For the first time in two decades, Retired members will pay a differentiated dues level. A Bylaws change, sought on behalf of the Retired Members Committee, increased the MTA dues of retired members who pay annually to \$35, a \$5 increase. Retired Education Support Professionals, under the same change, will pay \$25, a \$5 decrease.

The annual MTA dues for Retired members were last changed in 2007. At the age of 80, members who have been paying annually for a retired membership no longer have to pay dues to the MTA, but are required to maintain NEA dues, which are set by the NEA Board of Directors. The changes do not affect lifetime memberships.

In other actions, the \$58.9 million operating budget approved by delegates for the upcoming fiscal year will include motivation for newly retired members to join MTA Retired: a free first year of MTA and NEA dues.

The Board of Directors recommended the dues-free year for newly Retired members at the request of the Retired Members Committee. The thinking is it will be a long-term investment in the union for both political and solidarity purposes, according to the recommendation to delegates.

Active members who are retiring will be automatically enrolled by MTA membership as members of MTA Retired for the first year. Members should let their local president know that they plan to retire. The free first-



Retired members, including Board member Bonnie Page, right, listened to speakers at the Retiree Breakfast.



Retired Members Committee members Marguerite Foster Franklin and Rafael Moure-Eraso chatted over breakfast.



The Retiree Breakfast for Retired Delegates has become an annual tradition at Annual Meeting.



Ferd Wulkan, a retired professor, listened to candidates for the Retired Members Committee speak at the breakfast.

year of dues is for this budget year; future years will depend on actions taken by Annual Meeting delegates.

Other efforts to dramatically increase MTA dues for Retired members or block their delegates' ability to participate in approval of the budget or New Business Items with financial impacts were rejected. A Bylaw change that would have increased

MTA Retired member dues to \$50 was rejected by delegates in a 745-237 vote. Delegates also voted down the proposal to exclude Retired members from participating in the budget or NBI votes with financial implications. ■

For more information on actions taken at the Annual Meeting, members may visit massteacher.org/meetingagendasandactions.

Election Results: Retired Members Committee, Executive Committee

By Mary MacDonald



Barbara Madeloni

A competitive race resulted in the re-election of four Retired members to the MTA Retired Members Committee at the 2026 Annual Meeting of Delegates.

Kathy Greeley, of Cambridge, received 80 votes in the six-way race. Rick Last, of Northampton, received 70 votes. Rafael Moure-Eraso, of Medford, received 68 votes and Ora Gladstone, of Boston, received 67. Each will serve a new two-year term beginning July 1.

Two additional candidates, Tracey Pratt and Edward C. Nelson, received 43 and 39 votes, respectively. A seventh candidate dropped out before the Annual Meeting.

Because four seats on the committee were open this year, the four highest vote-getters were declared elected.

In another competitive race, Barbara Madeloni was elected to the Statewide Retired Member seat on the MTA Executive Committee. Madeloni received 60 votes from Retired delegates, surpassing Ruth Allen, who received 48 votes; Joni Cederholm,

who received 19 votes; and Amy Graff, who received 15 votes.

Madeloni, who was MTA president from 2014-2018, said following her election she is committed to working with Retired members to build the collective power of the union.

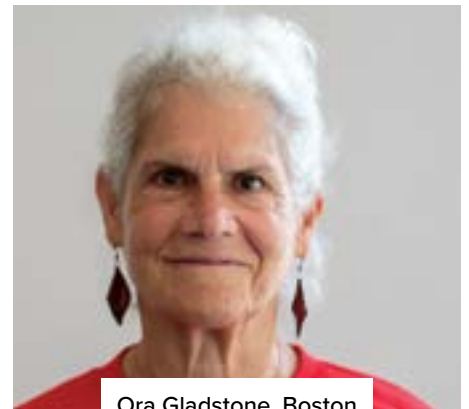
“We need to be thinking across our positions at this moment and understanding that the threats we are experiencing are shared threats, both to public education, to workers’ rights, to our well-being in retirement and,

of course, to the very possibility of democracy.”

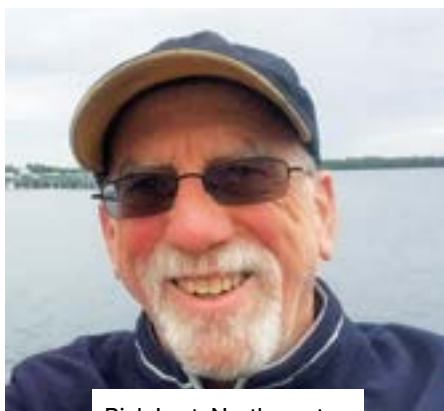
“Part of my hope is that we can move past seeing ourselves in one position and think about where does our power lie, as a union, and ... what is our role (as retirees) in terms of helping to leverage the power that we have in the union, in order to push back against these assaults and in order to push forward for our vision for our union and for public schools and the Commonwealth.”



Kathy Greeley, Cambridge



Ora Gladstone, Boston



Rick Last, Northampton



Rafael Moure-Eraso, Medford

Retired members who won re-election said they had worked hard over the past several years to create new opportunities for Retired members to get more involved in active union work, including through the formation of multiple subcommittees that are focused on specific missions. These include an ESP organizing committee, a mentorship program that matches retired members of color with new educators of color, expansion of the Wisdom Warriors action group and establishment of a popular monthly speaker series.

Greeley, who will serve her third term on the Retired Members Committee, is the current co-chair of the RMC. She said in her candidate statement, "I have helped to organize and empower retirees in many different ways over the past four years. Retirees play a critical role in our union in fighting for the rights of our educators and protecting our public schools, the foundation of our democracy."

Last, who is the current co-chair of the committee, retired after 28 years of teaching in Holyoke and Amherst. Following his election, Last said he was thrilled to be re-elected to a third term. "I am looking forward to continue our work, being responsive to the entire retired membership, ensuring that their voices are heard in the context of our work." ■

For complete election results, please visit recent news posts on massteacher.org.

JESSICA WENDER-SHUBOW

Meet the new MTA Retired member organizer



Jessica Wender-Shubow, the new MTA Retired member organizer, has had a long career in public education, organizing and union leadership, including facilitating targeted membership campaigns.

She joined the MTA staff in 2024 after serving as the Brookline Educators Union president on full release for 12 years. She most recently was a field representative-organizer working in the southeast region of the state.

She previously served on the MTA Board of Directors and Executive Committee and is a former high school social studies teacher. As president of the BEU, she co-coordinated the 1,150-member local through its successful strike in May 2022.

Wender-Shubow is a graduate of Barnard College and Brown University and holds a Ph.D. in American Civilization.

She started working with Retired members in March and looks forward to strengthening their engagement in the union.

Say hello to Jess, or leave a suggestion, by emailing her at jWenderShubow@massteacher.org. ■

PHOTOGRAPH: ERIC HAYNES

How Not to Die After a Fall

By Elaine T. Koury Photographs by Eric Haynes

Approximately one third of seniors who fall and break a bone die within a year.

Many websites give advice about how to organize your life and living space to prevent falling, but this article is not about that. It is about what to do to stay alive if you do fall and break something. This is about making sure that you are in the 66 percent who survive that critical first year.

In early October I fell off a stool, broke a bone in my right foot, another in my right ankle, two bones in my left arm, and damaged one of the vertebrae in my lower back. So, I speak from experience.

It quickly became clear to me that if the fall doesn't kill you, surviving after the fall just might. Part of why people die is not the broken bones, but the cataclysmic changes to their lives while trying to heal. After a bad fall, you probably cannot prepare your own food or shop for your own groceries, so your diet depends on others (a huge change for me.)

Sleep is interrupted by pain and accommodating broken bones. Exercise is extremely limited; even walking may be impossible. Oh, and did I mention that you probably will be unable to drive? This means that whatever you used to do that took you

out of your home, no longer happens. So, you spend hours at home alone, pretty much immobile. We generally accept that diet, sleep, exercise and social connections support health. Recovering from a bad fall interferes with all four of those main pillars of health.

So, here is my advice, particularly for the 38 percent of older people in Massachusetts who live alone.

Before You Leave the Hospital

Tell everyone you see that you live alone. (They may forget to ask.) Also tell them everything that hurts. In my case, the emergency room concentrated on the grotesquely displaced bones in my wrist and missed everything else. So, I had to make separate visits back to get X-rays and care for my foot, ankle and back. Depending on the severity of your injuries, you may go home or to a rehabilitation facility. Since the ER only found the wrist breaks, I went home. Medicare will pay for home help, but **ONLY** if prescribed by a physician and only if you are 65 or older. You need that prescription for home-based care as soon as possible, or you will be abandoned in those early difficult days, and unable to help yourself in very important ways.

Don't Listen to Shaming Comments

An outrageous number of people will scold you, heap shame upon you, or otherwise even outright call you stupid! You did not intend to fall. You



Elaine Koury is a retired English and performing arts teacher and administrator.

Koury is recovering from a fall at her home.

were most likely going about your daily business when you suddenly found yourself on the floor. Wasting energy on shame steals brain space from healing thoughts. If you are feeling low or emotionally overwhelmed (which can happen...this is tough stuff!), you can call 988, a free confidential crisis line that is available 24/7 nationally and provides “support for youth and adults who are in any kind of emotional crisis.”

Accept That Everything Will be Different

Everything will change for an unspecified length of time. If you had plans, cancel them. You need to put all your energy into saving your life. Don't think that a doctor, home health agency or insurance protocol will think of everything. It is up to you. You will need to organize and keep track of lots of appointments, medications and life-sustaining issues at a time when you are hurting. Lots of things that used to be easy will become very difficult (like bathing, getting food, and eating.) And everything takes more time! There will be lots of things to figure out but hang in there. You can do it!

Ask For Help

If you are lucky enough to have nearby relatives or friends, they likely will be willing to help. I finally started keeping a list of everything I needed as it came up, so that when someone randomly called or stopped by, I could go right to my list and remember what I needed. (This sounds obvious, but when you are in pain, disabled and without energy, it is a challenge.) I have been truly lucky! Friends have reached out, driven me to surgeon and chiropractor appointments, helped me figure out what services my insurance would pay for, cooked me homemade soup



“ I had previously been reluctant to ask for help, but I had to get over that.” Elaine T. Koury

and other goodies, food shopped for me, set up my living room for sleeping (since I could not climb the stairs), helped me bathe and wash my hair, and other kindnesses too many to name.

You will need this help either from friends or from elder services. I had previously been reluctant to ask for help, but I had to get over that. Now I am ever more thankful and appreciative of these wonderful people in my life.

Get the Professional Help You Need

I have seen a hand/wrist surgeon, a foot/ankle surgeon, my excellent chiropractor, my wonderful primary care physician, a physical therapist, two brilliant occupational therapists and a wonderful neighborhood pharmacist. I discovered that my pharmacy delivers! I could see my PCP

via telehealth. In addition, Cambridge Health Alliance, my health system, has a program that allowed my PCP to set me up with a nursing care manager, a kind, well-informed nurse who helped get information for me, connected me with home physical and occupational therapy services, got me a prescription when I needed it, and was available to answer all manner of health and services questions.

You likely are going to need lots of help, especially when you begin your recovery. You can get help at home, but your doctor has to help you with that prescription. Also, ask your doctors, right away, for referrals for physical and occupational therapy, because you likely will start out on a long waiting list before they can see you. I had a couple of wonderful therapists come to my house before I could get to outpatient

NAVIGATING CHANGE



therapy, then I lucked out because Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital is near me. (Learn now what outpatient therapy is available near you.) All the professionals contribute in their own ways.

Rest – a Lot

I was surprisingly weak for over a month after I fell. Your body is busy trying to heal, so it can't be bothered with the usual things, like sitting up. (It took me weeks before I didn't have to have a serious conversation with myself coaxing myself to a sitting position from lying down, let alone getting out of bed to get to the bathroom!)

Stay Ahead of the Pain

I found cannabidiol (CBD) to be helpful, since I am sensitive to using ibuprofen and acetaminophen. Talk realistically with your doctors about options.

Use Available Services

Even if you don't have a strong personal network, professionals and community services can become part of your support system. The nurse care manager introduced me to the idea of the eight circles of wellness: physical, emotional, social, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, occupational and financial. When any one of these gets out of balance — as with a bad fall — it can rock the other seven. So be open to needing many kinds of help. For instance, by calling the Council on Aging, Somerville seniors can get free rides to doctor appointments with two days' notice. Your area may offer similar services.

Getting Meals is a Serious Challenge

If you have low or high income, Somerville Cambridge Elder Services offers all kinds of help. (There is a sliding scale for incomes in between, but it is a steep slide, and since the Big Beautiful Bill and federal cuts, Meals-on-Wheels is no longer free or available as a single service.) Check your area's elder services for their offerings.

DoorDash and other delivery services are expensive. Let your friends and family know that cooking and meal delivery are one of the best ways to help. At one point, a friend brought me the makings for two days of turkey sandwiches (everything already cut!) and it felt like Christmas.

Keep Telling Yourself You Will Be OK

This is perhaps the most important advice. Determine that you will be in the 66 percent! A positive attitude can actually improve your outcome. Give yourself grace when you are exhausted, by telling yourself

that your exhaustion is a function of your body working hard to heal itself. Banish negative thoughts about your future. You WILL walk again, play the piano again, whatever is important to you. Just be patient and look forward to those days, rather than mourning days you may have lost or slipping into depression. Determine that you will solve whatever problems and challenges arise, maybe not immediately, but eventually.

Do What You Can Do

Do what you can, even if it is limited by disability or energy. I helped edit a friend's book. It took quite a while but it was worth the one-handed typing effort.

Finally, laugh! Talk with people who make you laugh. Think of it as a prescription you write for yourself. Try to listen to the news sparingly, and only to the headlines. I liked watching reruns of "All in the Family."

As I write this, I am 15 weeks into my first year, post-fall. So far so good, still in the 66 percent!

Best of luck to you. Keep living! ■

Koury is a 2024 recipient of the Honor Our Own Award, bestowed by the MTA Retired Members Committee. She retired after a 30-plus year career as an English and performing arts teacher and administrator in Boston, San Francisco and Cambridge.

HONOR OUR OWN

A W A R D S

Is there an MTA retired member who: Encouraged you professionally?
Fostered your involvement in the MTA? Inspired you as an active retired member?
Mentored you as a beginning educator or helped you as a student?



The Honor Our Own Award honors members of MTA Retired for their outstanding influence on students, beginning educators and association members, as well as their work supporting union goals, both as an active and a retired member. To nominate a retired educator, please complete the nomination form and provide a written statement of why you believe the candidate meets the guidelines for the award.

GUIDELINES

Nominees must be retired members of the MTA.

Retired preK-12, ESPs and higher education members are eligible.

Please explain why the nominee should be honored. Consider the following about the nominee when you are writing your submission.

- 1 Professional responsibilities and personal achievements.
- 2 Leadership, creativity or innovation.
- 3 Impact of the nominee's professionalism on the school community, the students, the association and/or the community.
- 4 Advocacy for association members, the profession and public education.
- 5 Improving the image of public education.

For a digital nomination form, please visit massteacher.org/honorourown.



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of EDUCATION
WORKERS



HONOR OUR OWN

A W A R D S

1 Complete the nomination form.

NOMINEE INFORMATION

☐ Nominee is a member of MTA Retired.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

SUBMITTED BY (Please check one)

☐ Member of _____ Association

☐ MTA Retired

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email _____

2 Attach a written explanation of 250-500 words on why the nominee meets the guidelines for the award.

3 Mail or email the completed application.

HONOR OUR OWN AWARD

Jessica Wender-Shubow. Southeast Office, 756 Orchard St., 3rd Floor
Raynham, MA. 02767

honorourown@massteacher.org



Please visit massteacher.org/honorourown for a fillable form that you can download and email.

Materials must be received by the MTA no later than **August 15.**



For the first time, Summer Conference will have a day dedicated to sessions of interest to Retired members.

New Focus for Retired Members at **SUMMER CONFERENCE**

By Mary MacDonald Photographs by Eric Haynes

This year's Summer Conference will feature a focused day of programming for Retired members, on Monday, July 27.

This is a critical time for those who care about education and democracy. Retired members are in a unique position to make a difference in this struggle. The Retiree Day schedule includes sessions on working together to protect your retirement; mentoring new educators of color; running a retired network for your union local; and writing effectively for media.

The unifying theme of the day is to energize and organize Retired members and further the priorities of the MTA in protecting public education, the rights of

educators and the dignity of retired professionals.

MTA Summer Conference will run from Sunday, July 26, through Wednesday, July 29. Retiree Day will be Monday, July 27, with activities and sessions from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

To help defray any costs, Retired members are eligible for one complimentary night of lodging at the UMass dorms and a day of meals from the award-winning UMass Dining through reimbursement.

The sessions are aimed at Retired members, but organizers hope that educators still working in schools or on campuses also participate.

Bill Forster, a retired member from Cambridge, is a presenter whose

session will cover how to create a retired network for a local. His hope, he said, is to get four to five people who can go back to their locals and start a network for retirees.

The purpose is not social, he said, but to strengthen solidarity and keep people involved in education and union issues. The network he founded, Cambridge Public Schools Retired Network, has about 480 members and was actively involved in the recent health care fight over Group Insurance Commission price increases.

He estimated that half of the network members sent emails or made phone calls to the GIC commission members, which made a big difference. The commission

ACTIVISM SPOTLIGHT

“Educators are teachers, but they also love learning. It’s not just the teaching aspect; it’s the learning aspect. Going to Summer Conference is a great learning opportunity.”

Bob Miller

ultimately did not enact a series of copay and cost increases.

“It’s very easy to start a network; it’s hard to keep it from becoming a social, Facebook kind of thing,” Forster said. “This is designed to keep retired members connected to their union.”

Bob Miller, a retired member of the MTA Board of Directors, will present on issues surrounding retirement and how members can advocate for union priorities, including a stronger COLA. Miller is a member of the Retired Members Committee and is chair of its Dignified Retirement Subcommittee.

He said many retired educators are feeling the impact of rising prices in health care, groceries and other essentials. The COLA is applied to only the first \$13,000 of an educator’s pension, which means the pension loses its real value over time due to inflation.

Retiree Day at Summer Conference is a chance for Retired members and active members nearing the end of their professional careers to meet people with shared goals, he said. “Educators are teachers, but they also love learning,” Miller said. “It’s not just the teaching aspect;



it's the learning aspect. Going to Summer Conference is a great learning opportunity.”■

Registration has opened for the Summer Conference. Please visit massteacher.org/summer to register. More than 100 sessions are offered this year, including professional development, union skills and anti-oppression education.

More than 100 sessions are available for active and retired educators at Summer Conference this year.



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Details and applications for our reimbursement grants and the new For the Love of Books program are online at massteacher.org/masschild.



First Wednesday Speakers Series

By Amy Wolpin and Dale Melcher

The RMC First Wednesday Speaker Series continues to bring experts in their fields to address a wide range of issues of interest to our Retired members. In March, Audrey Watters, whose work focuses on the history and politics of education technologies, shared stories about artificial intelligence in our lives and in our schools. Watters, a journalist specializing in technology, emphasized that AI is neither artificial, nor intelligent, nor is it new. Those forcing its adoption are resoundingly anti-worker, said Watters, and because educators' working conditions are, of course, students' learning conditions, that makes the technology resoundingly anti-education as well.

Our April speaker was Amy Meltzer, who gave a wonderful presentation on Gardening for Biodiversity with Native Plants: Providing Habitat for Pollinators, Birds and Other Essential Wildlife. Meltzer is the co-chair of the Massachusetts Pollinator Network (<https://masspollinatornetwork.org/>.)

The presentation was jam-packed with so many tips and ideas to improve and enrich home gardening to support plants, insects and animals. Meltzer encouraged us to replace at least 70 percent of our lawns with native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees. Mow lawns every 2-3 weeks, once the grass reaches a height of 3-4 inches. Leaving grass clippings on the lawn is good for the grass and provides habitats for insects. Likewise in the fall — skip the cleanup! Leaves are the best fertilizer and in the spring only clean up leaves where needed. Meltzer also answered our questions about ticks that are often found in transition areas, like wood chips between woods and lawns.

In May, a panel from the MTA Community Schools Initiative and staff at the McCarthy School in Framingham presented on Community Schools: a Whole Child, Whole-School Transformation Strategy. Community schools are public schools that partner with families and community organizations to support the whole child

and family — academically, socially, emotionally and physically. They are guided by shared leadership, bringing together families, educators, students and community partners to shape priorities and solutions.

We heard from MTA staff members Andrew King, coordinator of the MTA's Community Schools initiative, and Ariana Foster, a regional organizer, about the union's work with Framingham educators and staff. Chris Mulroney, president of the Framingham Teachers Association, Vice Principal Sara Machkowsky, reading teacher Meghan Surprise, and Family Support Coordinator Roseanne Akerman shared the work being done at McCarthy.

Poverty and non-economic barriers create challenges for both young learners and their educators. McCarthy has embraced what its staff called the four pillars of their vision for a community school: integrated wraparound supports, strong family and community engagement, collaborative decision-making and ownership, and rigorous, culturally connected instruction — a high bar for sure. McCarthy already had in place a home-visit program, some wraparound services, communication systems like ParentSquare and an expanded learning time program, which they continue to build on. ■

We encourage you to listen to any of these programs you may have missed. Recordings of these programs will soon be available on the MTA retiree webpage, at massteacher.org/retired. We would love to hear from you about any topics you would like to see addressed in the future. Email your suggestions to Dale Melcher at daleannmelcher@gmail.com.





A Smarter Way to Navigate Caregiving in Retirement

Retirement is often a time to enjoy family, personal interests, travel and the plans you may have postponed during your working years. But for a growing number of retirees, this stage of life also brings a new and often-unexpected responsibility: caregiving.

Maybe it starts with driving a spouse to appointments, checking in more often on an aging parent, or helping a close friend with everyday tasks. At first, many people don't think of these moments as caregiving. They simply see themselves as being there for someone they love.

Today, more than 53 million Americans care for an adult loved one, with nearly 1-in-5 caregivers age 65 or older. On average, family caregivers spend 24 hours each week providing

care. At the same time, retirees are balancing their own physical, emotional and financial well-being. As demands grow, many experience increased stress and exhaustion while managing responsibilities that can become increasingly complex over time.

Often, the hardest part isn't just providing care — it's knowing where to start. Without the right resources, caregiving can quickly become difficult to manage alone.

To help you navigate these challenges, MTA Benefits now offers YourCare360, a no-cost care support platform designed to make caregiving easier through a wide range of features including confidential health assessments, fall prevention programs, organizational tools,

provider directories, local assistance services, and more.

Whether you are exploring in-home care, evaluating senior living communities, facing a serious illness, or planning for your own future, YourCare360 offers support at every stage of the caregiving journey. You can also explore additional services from trusted partners, including in-home care, the distribution of belongings, and flexible insurance solutions that can help provide financial protection. Special member pricing and offers may also be available.

When you don't know where to turn, caregiving can feel isolating and overwhelming, often bringing stress, exhaustion and uncertainty. With YourCare360, members have access to experienced care advocates who deliver compassionate, one-on-one guidance every step of the way. You can also schedule a complimentary consultation with a caregiving expert to discuss your situation and learn more about personalized care planning services designed to provide reassurance to both you and the person you're caring for.

As needs evolve, having someone you can continue to turn to can make a significant difference. Care Advocates can help you adjust plans, work through new challenges, and feel more confident.

You've spent your career supporting others. And while caring for an adult loved one may not have been part of your retirement plans, you don't have to navigate it alone. YourCare360 makes it easier to move forward with confidence and focus on the people who matter most. ■

To learn more about YourCare360, visit **MTA.YourCare360.com** or call **(888) 490-0034**.



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