

# MSEA/NEA ELECTIONS

Any member of TABCO-Retired is eligible to run for these positions:

- **MSEA Retired Advisory Council** (*"The MSEA Retired Advisory Council makes recommendations to the MSEA Board of Directors and helps to implement goals, objectives, and program priorities that help support and engage MSEA's Retired members."*)
- **MSEA Retired Delegate to NEA RA 2024**

Nomination forms may be found on the MSEA website, <https://marylandeducators.org/> under Membership, Elections and Nominations. Nominations are due via online form by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 17.

Voting begins on January 29 and results are posted online on March 19, 2024.

**2024 NEA Representative Assembly**

The 2024 NEA Representative Assembly (RA) will be held July 3-7 in Philadelphia, PA. (NEA-Retired members elected as delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly are automatically voting delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting.)

## Serving our active colleagues

"Pathway to Retirement" is a TABCO-Retired project designed to assist our active colleagues in making informed decisions about their options as they consider retirement. Held each spring, it brings representatives of healthcare plans, the pension system, BCPS Office of Benefits & Retirement, and financial and legal advisors together, making it a one-stop information fair for educators. As seen in the photos below from our 2023 event, it was well attended.



TABCO-Retired is a class of membership that is affiliated with MSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired

**TABCO-R Steering Committee Members:**

Chairperson: Angela Leitzer

Elizabeth Ceanfaglione, Stephanie Foy

Julia Hinton-VanHook, Edward Kitlowski, Cindy North

Roxann Russo, Barbara Tyler,

Mary Ellen Vecchioni, Cheryl Vourvoulas

Messenger Editors: Stephanie Foy, Angela Leitzer

To reach the TABCO-Retired Steering Committee, email: [bookends68@comcast.net](mailto:bookends68@comcast.net)

## EDITORIAL

### BABY STEPS...

Change moves slowly when it comes to attitudes toward retired members, which are entrenched in the Bylaws of our education institutions. For the first time, progress has been made at the state level toward recognizing that retired members deserve an official voice in the decision-making process. A newly minted amendment allows a retired member to serve as an "observer" to the Board of Directors. The following statement is posted on the MSEA website

*"At the 2023 MSEA Representative Assembly, a Bylaw amendment passed that permits a retired member representative to serve as an observer on the MSEA Board of Directors. This position is elected annually and may serve up to three (3) one-year terms that commence on September 1 of each year. This official observer position is permitted to be recognized to speak at general meetings of the MSEA Board of Directors."*

Valerie Coll, a retired teacher of Montgomery County Public Schools, was elected to serve in this position, receiving 87 votes of the total 240 votes split between four candidates. (Only 240 votes cast in a statewide election. What does that say about us as voters?)

Baby steps, though a small effort made towards the completion of a much larger task, are steps in the right direction. Best of luck to Ms. Coll as she inaugurates this new position.



**Teachers Association of Baltimore County**

President Cindy Sexton, Vice-President: Kelly Olds

Treasurer: John R. Wilkins, Secretary: Frank Soda

and the TABCO Board of Directors

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# TABCO-R MESSENGER

RETIRED~NOT EXPIRED  
AUTUMN 2023  
volume 8 number 3



WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT RETIREE BENEFITS

## Register to attend the 9th Annual TABCO-RETIRED FALL FORUM:

*"Keeping Your Health & Wealth"*

Speakers to include

BCPS Office of Benefits & Retirement  
& Baltimore County Police Department  
Wednesday, November 1, 2023

9:00 a.m.~ 1:30 p.m.

Arrive between 9:00 ~ 9:30 a.m.

Program begins at 9:30

To be held in the meeting room at  
TABCO Headquarters



**Register on Eventbrite at this link:**

<https://9thAnnualFallForum-Nov-1-2023.eventbrite.com>

(This is also being emailed to members.)

**NOTE: Registration closes on Wednesday  
October 25, at 4:00 p.m.**

This is a free event for TABCO-RETIRED MEMBERS  
(members may bring one guest for \$5)

- ◆ Morning coffee & tea & light snack will be available
- ◆ Box lunch from Santoni's will be provided after the program (choice of sandwich when you register)
- ◆ Drawings for several door prizes
- ◆ Annual Book Exchange! —bring some you want to share, or just pick up free books from the contribu-

## News & notes for the new season

By Angela Leitzer

### FALL FORUM

"Keeping Your Health & Wealth" is this year's theme for the annual Fall Forum, our member meeting that aspires to both inform and enrich, as well as to provide a time to connect with other retired members. The "keeping your health" portion will include hearing from the BCPS department that oversees our various healthcare benefits and providing time to ask questions. Following up on the article in the last *Messenger*, a member of the Baltimore County Police Department, whose specialty is fraud related crimes, will share how to protect our "wealth."

### 2024 ENROLLMENT

Autumn brings the opportunity to renew or change our negotiated benefits; to consider our needs for 2024. As the current retiree benefits enrollment period begins, there is much good news.

Good news is that three medical options remain available and provide choices for us. As we have communicated with BCPS and Retiree First personnel, TABCO-R leaders have advocated for retaining those choices. Our fears about being automatically pushed into the less favorable Medicare Advantage plan (labeled as "True Choice" in the enrollment guide) did not materialize. Unless one wishes to make a change, one's previous choice is being carried over. Other good news includes improvements in the enrollment guides, the ability to access those online, and the development of the BCPS Customer Service Center, making it easier to speak with an actual human being when questions arise.

Thanks to the many previous personal interactions with Dr. Myriam Rogers (now superintendent, but during her tenure as Deputy Superintendent, then Dr. Yarbrough), TABCO-R leadership has developed positive connections with BCPS personnel in the Office of Benefits and Retirement. They have provided resources and personnel for both our spring and fall events.

On the other hand, an item of bad news is the removal of the opportunity to revisit one's choice of a medical plan until the following year, unless a major "life change" occurs. When Labor First (now renamed Retiree First) was brought in as a management company, one of the initial "perks" was that the medical plan could be changed at any time. Last year, we were able to hold on to at least one change opportunity for "any reason," but this is now completely eliminated, except for "life changes," such as marriage, birth/adoption, loss of coverage, or death.

### AARP DILEMMA

Another piece of "bad" news from our perspective is that the AARP groups, MRSPA and BCRSPA, are still being given free advertising in the enrollment guides. Those who do not know the history behind these groups often confuse them with TABCO-Retired. As most members understand, TABCO-R is the only retiree group

See "News & notes for the new season," page 3





# READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

By Barbara Tyler

A woman chemist in the 1950's? Not unknown but definitely unusual. That's what first drew me in to *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. The main character, Elizabeth Zott, is the strong woman character that I appreciate, be it in fiction or nonfiction. Since it is fiction there are several times when reality must be suspended such as when Mad, Elizabeth's daughter, is reading Dickens at age three or Elizabeth teaching her dog, "6:30," hundreds of words that he seems to understand.

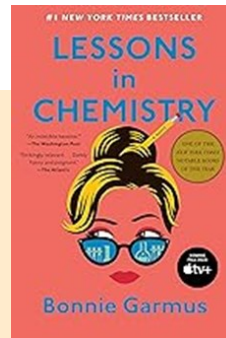
After being fired from her job as a chemist in a research lab for being unmarried and pregnant (not the real reason) Elizabeth embarks on a career as the star of *Dinner at Six*, an afternoon cooking show on local TV. She insists on wearing a lab coat and pants while she teaches her viewers the chemistry of cooking. It becomes a big hit much to the chagrin of her bosses who want her to wear tight fitting clothes and fancy aprons.

There are some troubling issues included in the book such as role expectations of women in the 1950's, the su-

periority of the male bosses, rape, and atheism. I give the book 4 out of 5 stars.

*Lessons in Chemistry* has been on my radar for a while but I did not attempt to read it until I saw that Apple TV is airing a series based in the book. Personally, I like to read the book first before watching the movie so I went to the BCPL website to reserve the book and found that there were many people ahead of me on the reserve list. I bit the bullet and used my Amazon points and purchased my own copy. I don't regret buying a copy but it is not a book I want to keep on my bookshelf so I will be putting it in the book exchange at the Fall Forum on November 1.

If you want to add your opinion of *Lessons in Chemistry* or want to share with us a book you have read, email Angie at bookends68@comcast.net and it can be shared in the next issue of the *Messenger*.



## Monitoring BOE reveals both best & worst of times

By Edward Kitlowski

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness..." Thus begins *A Tale of Two Cities*, set during the French Revolution. The ending of the introduction is ironic foreshadowing: "in short, the period was so far like the present period." Perhaps Walt Kelly, the cartoonist of the comic strip *Pogo*, summed it up best with his piece, "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Education and school boards are not excluded from controversy. Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) has a new Superintendent, Dr. Rogers (formerly Yarbrough), who has experience in the system as both a teacher and most recently as deputy superintendent. TABCO and TABCO-R worked closely with her to correct the retiree health benefit deduction errors. The recently formed Board of Education (BOE) appear to be very satisfied with the direction of the work and the effort Dr. Rogers has already brought to the job. She, along with several members of her staff, presented a plan for improving the system for which the board members expressed gratitude.

However, noticeable in monitoring the BOE meetings, is that one issue that has not been specifically addressed is student behavior. Anecdotal evidence via interviews with teachers suggest there is an increase in disruptive and dangerous behavior in schools. The Baltimore Banner reported, "Baltimore County Police responded to hundreds of calls to

high schools for assaults, rapes, disruptive behavior and deadly weapons violations..." The National Association of School Resource Officers reported 97 gun-related incidents in schools between August and October. In 2019 in the same time period, there were only 29 incidents.

Concurrently, data suggests youth crime is increasing. Montgomery County police reported an 85% increase in car jackings and a 220% increase in handgun violence. Recently, a 15-year-old was arrested as a participant in Baltimore City's largest mass shooting. During the past legislative session, the Youth Equity and Safety Act was passed, which was intended to reform the juvenile justice system. Since then, several legislators who supported the bill are calling for it to be amended. Delegate Karen Toles (D) from Prince Georges County stated her position, "We need to stop making excuses for these kids, they know exactly what they're doing."

What is not part of the conversation is that many of those juveniles committing serious crimes are also students. At one point, this writer taught at Kenwood High School. In 2005, William Basset, a teacher at St. Paul's School was shot and killed by a student who attended Kenwood. Last year, a gun was found in the backpack of a Kenwood student.

As legislators look to amend the Youth Equity and Safety Act, they need to expand the conversation to include schools.

[See page 50, *Teaching While Scared*, in the October neaToday magazine, for more on violence in the classroom.]

## "News & notes for the new season" (from page 1)

affiliated with TABCO, MSEA and NEA, the only group that has bargaining power through TABCO. Decades ago, a group of retirees formed a social group and called themselves "ReTabco," though they had no official function or relationship to TABCO. The group now connected to AARP, called Baltimore County Retired School Personnel (BCRSPA) has a bad habit of using that old "ReTabco" name, although they were asked to cease doing so several years ago by TABCO leadership. Recently, a new member of TABCO-Retired spoke out at a member meeting about how she had been misled by the AARP group. I sometimes get messages from folks who receive the BCRSPA mailings and are confused. Those who choose to join that group are, of course, free to do so—but they should understand what it is and what it is not.

Another important point is that unless one joins a TABCO/MSEA/NEA affiliate, any benefits associated with membership will no longer be available—things like insurances, discounts and other Association benefits.

## SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

By Cindy North

"Gonna Take a Sentimental Journey"... This is the title to a song from my (very) long ago childhood, but it came to mind recently. I joined with seven college friends, returning to Nashville, Tennessee, where we met more than fifty years ago on the campus of what was then known as George Peabody College for Teachers. Now known as the education school of Vanderbilt, there are several new or remodeled buildings on the campus. But the dorm where we met and lived together still stands, and it was to that place that we gathered a few weeks ago.

We call ourselves "The P-Buds" and we have kept in touch for all the years since our graduation, each of us pursuing teaching careers, some in elementary, some secondary, several in special education, and at least one in music and physical education. Although two of our group still live in the area, at least two had not been back in the five decades since. The highlight of our small, personal reunion was a private guided tour of the campus, including getting into our old dorm. You can imagine the memories that washed over us as we sat in the former parlor of a building originally built more than one hundred twenty years ago.

But there was more to our time in Nashville than just walking around our beloved campus. Each day brought something to see or do; that's what makes Nashville a great town to visit. One day, we enjoyed a cruise on the General Jackson, an authentic steamboat that sails the Cumberland River from its mooring near the Opryland Hotel to downtown and back. While gently sailing on a beautiful fall day, we had a delicious lunch and were entertained watching the "Tennessee Legends" music show in the large ballroom. That evening, tickets to the Grand Ole Opry allowed good seats to live music with several

## ENGAGING WITH OUR ACTIVE COLLEAGUES

We are seeing great progress in strengthening our connections with active TABCO. We have been welcomed to attend TABCO Board of Directors meetings and many of us are serving on other TABCO committees, while retiree Ed Kitlowski is assisting in monitoring BC Board of Education activities. We have a long-term project in progress to review and archive decades of TABCO documents. The give and take of our relationship with active TABCO derives great strength and support from President Cindy Sexton.

## MEMBERSHIP

Last, but definitely not least, TABCO-R membership continues to increase! We hear that many members are sharing the importance of membership with their retired friends. Without the strength and support of the retiree community, our goals could not succeed. **Members are the foundation and the purpose!**



well-known stars.

Another day that week, we savored a lavish, elegant afternoon tea at the Hermitage Hotel. This hotel is famous not only for Teddy Roosevelt declaring their Maxwell House coffee was "good to the last drop," but because it was the place where the women who were instrumental in securing women's right to vote gathered in August, 1920, to lobby legislators and to witness the ratification of the 19th Amendment, as Tennessee was the last state needed to do so.

Nashville is not only the "Home of Country Music," and the Country Music Hall of Fame, but it is also the city of a magnificent symphony orchestra, which hosts concerts in Centennial Park, site of a full-scale replica of the Parthenon from Greece and a 42-foot statue of the goddess, Athena. Nearby, is the world-famous Frist Museum, named after the founder of the first HMO in the US, and housed in the original US Post Office Building. A bit farther out, along Harding Pike is Belle Meade Mansion, where the first American horse to win the English Derby, Iroquois, was born and bred.

Our reunion of P-Buds ended with dinner at the Loveless Cafe, out off Highway 100, right across the road from the end (or beginning, depending on your point of view) of the Natchez Trace Parkway, which stretches all the way south to Natchez, Mississippi. Loveless Cafe has hosted many celebrities from all genres of music, from country to rock to rap, including Paul McCartney, Dolly Parton, and Taylor Swift to name a few who have come—probably as we did—for the delicious country ham and biscuits.

We had a wonderful time being together in our "old stomping grounds," and I bet you would enjoy a visit to Nashville, too.

