

"Association News" (from page 2)

Rallies, press conferences, letters to elected officials, speeches at board of education meetings, sign waving on street corners, working to rule...sound familiar? Once again, agreements with county government and the school system, which were signed last school year with great fanfare, are in jeopardy. Our active colleagues worked hard to negotiate a three-year agreement that would escalate the salary scale to bring Baltimore County educator salaries up to the levels of surrounding counties. BUT now... "there isn't enough money to fund it." As experienced educators, we have seen this movie before. When you see your active colleagues out there, show them your support—or even better, let the county executive and school officials know that as citizens, grandparents, and former teachers, you expect them to keep their word and fund the agreement.

State sponsors retiree meeting

Each spring, MSEA-R sponsors a conference for retired members who live all over Maryland and beyond. In the past, we have encouraged members who live near enough to attend, but our representation was mostly steering committee members. This year saw many more TABCO-R members present. We encourage more of you to consider joining us next time, to gain good information on a variety of topics and enjoy connecting with other retirees, from Maryland and beyond.

We were privileged to hear from NEA-Retired President Anita Gibson, via a speech to the general attendance, and in a special session in which members could discuss our state's unique issues and gather wisdom from this experienced leader.

Unfortunately, Maryland lags behind many other states in the quantity and quality of retiree involvement with active state leadership. We discussed ways to change this dynamic and improve the relationship between the state's retired members and state leadership.

Other sessions presented information on Maryland politics, identity theft prevention and caregiving issues, estate planning, and NEA member benefits. Important to all retirees is the status of our state pension benefits. We heard reports by two of the pension board trustees. The good news is that the pension is doing well and is secure at this point.

TABCO-R members are fortunate to have one of

Keep your word.

When you say you will do something and don't do it, you teach others (including yourself) that you cannot be trusted.

our own serving on the MSEA Retired Advisory Council (RAC), Julia Hinton-Van Hook. She was involved in the planning of this valuable event and she advocates for retirees at the state level.

Discounts and benefits for TABCO-R/MSEA-R/NEA-R members

If you haven't visited the NEA member benefits website lately (or ever), there are even more discounts available to you as a retired member. To access these, enter **neamb.com** in your search engine. When you reach the website, set up an account if you haven't used it previously, or enter your email address and password. Examples of discounts that you may want to try include:

- Movie tickets** (\$40.95 for a four pack of tickets for AMC theaters, valued at \$64.00—they do not expire), Broadway show tickets, and tickets for theme parks.

- Using the **NEA Discount Marketplace**, a Rakuten cashback shopping account can be set up, providing quarterly cash refunds based on online shopping (watch the short explanatory video).

- Travel discounts** (as a test, the price on a night at a hotel in Portsmouth, NH was \$117, including tax and fees vs. \$139 on Booking.com). Other travel discounts are available for car rental, flights, etc.

There are many services and insurances offered. For example, a member can add guaranteed issue life insurance of \$3000 for \$12.50 per month, or \$6000 for \$25.00 per month.

Explore the website—you may be surprised at what you will find—for members only!

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
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Treasurer Frank Soda, Secretary Seth Rich
and the TABCO Board of Directors
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TABCO-R MESSENGER RETIRED~NOT EXPIRED SPRING 2025 volume 10 number 1

Congratulations, 2024-2025 Retirees!

Welcome, fellow retirees! We honor your service to students and the community, and congratulate you on reaching the decision to move on to the next phase of your lives. This edition of the TABCO-R Messenger is dedicated to you! We invite you to join us as a member of the only retiree organization affiliated with TABCO, MSEA & NEA.. Our mission is to advocate for retiree rights and benefits and keep retired members "in the loop" about issues that affect them. Every member adds to the strength of TABCO-Retired!



Association News

By Angela Leitzer, bookends68@comcast.net

CHANGES COMING TO TABCO

Though we may feel comfortable with the status quo, change is inevitable. President Cindy Sexton is coming to the end of six years full of challenges and successes. With her term ending this July 31, current Vice President Kelly Olds has been elected to serve as president. Board member Lloyd Allen has been elected to serve as Vice President. Kelly, a career navigator at Lansdowne HS, has also served as chief negotiator for TABCO, and will transition to "full time release" TABCO president on August 1. Lloyd's BCPS position is special educator in mathematics at the Carver Center for Arts and Technology.

A new staff member, Tina Jimenez, has joined TABCO's administrative assistance team.

Sadly, other staffing changes resulted from the passing of two longtime TABCO support staff, Teresa McDowell, on March 13, and Jacque Gerhardt on May 20. Both are remembered fondly for their decades of faithful service to the Association.

CIGNA UPDATE

Our annual retirement fair for TABCO members retiring this year or within the next several years saw a large contingent of members connecting with representatives of healthcare organizations, as well as the pension system, and BCPS benefits, and financial advisors. A conversation with Cigna's representatives around future healthcare options was of interest. The rep who was present said that Cigna will *not* be carrying the Medicare Advantage plan, but will continue to offer the Medicare Surround plan (this is the preferred plan of most of our members).

We know that most of you want the Medicare Surround option to be preserved, and we have empha-

WHY JOIN ? (or renew ?)

Steering Committee member Ed Kitlowski suggested that hearing from some of our members about their motivations for joining TABCO-Retired might be interesting for those who are newly retired, or just haven't looked into retiree membership yet. He begins with his own story.

ED KITLOWSKI:

I retired from BCPS in 2016. On the last day of school, I got in my car and sat, as this would be the last time I left the school parking lot. It was the closing of 33 years of teaching. I imagine many people who teach share my experience that being a teacher was more than just an occupation—who I am is "teacher." Being a teacher manifested itself in many ways. For my summer jobs, I taught foreign students for several years and felt more enlivened. I taught in Poland one summer. I also taught at Howard Community College in a program called Project Access during the summer. So that day in June 2016 in the parking lot was significant.

I believe most people become teachers to make a difference. I always felt it was a privilege to be a part of so many people's lives. Being a teacher meant living a full life of emotions, sharing a life of triumphs and heartbreaks with thousands of people. I was going to miss that.

When I heard there was a group of retired BCPS teachers calling themselves TABCO-Retired, I contacted them. I had been a TABCO representative most of my career. There is a philosophic idea that underneath every complaint is a commitment to excellence. I was very committed to public education

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sized its importance repeatedly to BCPS. The Cigna statement is reassuring, but we will be inquiring about the school system's plans for the coming year, and continuing to advocate for having our choices of preferred plans.

DEFINING OUR MISSION

As a member of the TABCO Board of Directors, I have been working with others on updating the TABCO Policy Manual, which is a sister document to TABCO's bylaws. The policy manual defines in detail the policies and procedures of TABCO's operations. On May 2, the board of directors passed the updated language for TABCO-Retired.

With additional and more defined language, the retiree organization has strengthened our rights as members affiliated with TABCO and expanded our roles connected to the active organization. There are now clear guidelines. Among the important items are:

~Acting as an advocate for responding to retirees' concerns regarding rights and delayed compensation benefits guaranteed through their previous employment in BCPS."

~A sub-committee shall be created to carry out KidCare fundraising initiatives and basket raffle preparation.

~Retirement and financial planning workshops: The committee shall plan and coordinate retirement workshops with appropriate vendors.

~As a class of membership provided for in the TABCO Bylaws and by affiliation with MSEA and NEA, retired members shall be entitled to certain rights, such as attendance at TABCO activities as appropriate, and access to member benefits and discounts.

~TABCO-Retired member of the TABCO Board of Directors: To be eligible to run for the position of retired member of the Board of Directors, a person must have been a member of NEA-R, MSEA-R and TABCO-Retired for at least the three years preceding the election and be capable of attending board meetings, committee meetings, and other board events in person on a routine basis.

These additions to the policy manual (the new language is in red) work to solidify retired membership as both actual and valuable connections with TABCO. We owe a debt of gratitude to both TABCO Secretary Seth Rich, who has been the leader in the manual revision efforts, and for continued support from President Cindy Sexton. And the board of directors, as well, for confirming the updates.

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and TABCO-R looked like a way to express that, and it is. Our group makes a difference to retirees and to our friends and family still teaching. Our motto is 'retired, not expired.' For me, it is not possible to retire from a lifelong commitment. TABCO-R is a place to express that commitment."

CAROL SCHNEIDER: "I had been a member of TABCO for my entire career serving as our faculty rep for many of those years. When I retired it was a no-brainer—I signed up to become a lifetime member of "reTabco." That organization was rather inactive, but I was a member nonetheless. Ten years ago when TABCO-Retired was established, I was notified that I was considered a lifetime member. Needless to say, this has *not* been an inactive group! I have enjoyed the various activities from luncheons, to guest speakers, to trips. The newsletters are informative and keep me up on happenings at the local and state levels. Most of all, I appreciate the hard work done on behalf of retirees, especially sorting out that benefits fiasco. It is reassuring to know that there is help available from TABCO-R now just as TABCO was there for us in the past."

THERESA BISKER: "The reason why I joined TABCO-R is to keep updated on concerns I have with BCPS retirement issues. I find the friendly committee members informed on any problem I am having."

Why did YOU join TABCO-Retired? We would like to share your story. Please send your story or comment to us at bookends68@comcast.net for possible future publication.



Join TABCO-RETIRED

Your TABCO-Retired MEMBERSHIP

Membership renewals: The best time to renew your dues is in August, as the membership year runs from September to September. Annual dues remain at \$75. To avoid the trouble of sending a check each year, have your dues deducted from your pension once each year. You can authorize this by contacting Erin at MSEA: esakalas@mseane.org.

OPINION: Musings from a retired colleague

Dear Readers,

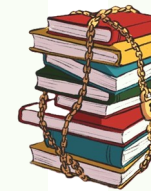
Consider these quotes for a moment. "...In every historical era, we find overwhelming evidence of the power of the written word, without which a high state of civilization and culture is inconceivable in any time or place." ~Robert B. Downs (from *Books That Changed the World*)

"...but he who destroys a good book kills reason by itself." ~John Milton

"The constitution does not allow for first and second class citizens." ~Wendell Wilkie

"Censorship is the greatest tragedy in American literature. It constricts the mind, teaches fear, and leaves only ignorance and ashes...The freedom to read is one of the most precious rights, do something to protect it." ~Norman Lear's *People for the American Way*.

For a while now, I have been ruminating upon the concepts of censorship, democracy, equality, intolerance and the like. I recently revisited Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (the temperature at which books burn). This book has a copyright date of 1953, but the afterword copyright, not until 1982. The *New York Times Book Review* wrote in part the following, "Frightening in its implications...Mr. Bradbury's account of this insane world, which bears many alarming resemblances to



our own, is fascinating."

Much that is going on in our country today concerns me and, at the least, gives me pause. As an avid reader, book-lover, and public school educator of young children for forty years, what is most concerning to me is book banning. It is a sobering statistic that there are now 10,000 banned books across the United States, not the least of which is *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Such has occurred within and across public and private schools and libraries. All of this leaves me trying to understand how we arrived at this moment in time. I have found solace within the contents of a variety of books. Perhaps, then it is appropriate to remember and consider the exchange between Frodo and Gandalf in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, which follows;

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo.

"So do I," said Gandalf, and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

For me, that is the power, influence, and comfort found in quality literature.

With regards to all, from one older adult to another.

Elizabeth Ceanfaglione

P.S. Keep the Faith.

Celebrating 40+ Years of Helping Kids

KidCare was approved at the representative assembly in 1980 and incorporated in 1981 as a fund to assist needy students enrolled in Baltimore County Public Schools. One hundred percent of the money donated goes to students and their families for needed items such as clothes, shoes, book bags, school supplies and coats. TABCO donates the administrative time to manage the funds.

In addition to individual fund drives such as the one at the annual Retirement & Recognition Dinner, KidCare relies mainly on payroll deduction from BCPS employees and donations from others. BCPS students need this assistance, and they need your help. Since its inception, KidCare has helped an estimated 13,738 students and given out an estimated \$711,000 to needy students. There is never a shortage of requests for assistance, and we don't want to turn down our most needy students.

So far this school year (2024-2025), \$21,440 has been spent to help 429 students. Last year (2023-2024), a total of \$48,585 in vouchers helped

664 BCPS students. If you want to help with KidCare, please consider making a donation to this worthy cause by sending a check to TABCO payable to KidCare.

By Roxann Russo

KIDCARE COMMITTEE

Retired members have taken on a new challenge! We approached the TABCO Board of Directors about TABCO-Retired taking on the planning of fundraising for KidCare via a sub-committee dedicated to the purpose, and received approval. Several wonderful retiree volunteers have taken on this responsibility and run with it! Serving as the co-chairs are Sonja Floyd and Tammy Mills, with Nicole Caple as secretary, and Phyllis Zarembo as member, and steering committee members Stephanie Foy and Roxann Russo serving as liaisons. The group worked to acquire many donations for the annual KidCare Basket Raffle for the 2025 Retirement & Recognition Dinner, and received 73 (many donated by retirees), raising \$3400 at that single event.



**KidCare
TABCO**
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION OF
BALTIMORE COUNTY