

"Association News" (from page 1)

committees are eligible for retired member service:

- Community Schools Champions
- Discipline Action Workgroup
- Early Career Educators
- Government Relations
- Membership
- Minority Affairs
- Racial Social Justice
- Retirement & Recognition
- Scholarship
- Sick Leave Bank
- Special Education Work Group (SWAG)

We understand that many members do not live within a reasonable travel distance of the TABCO office, making it impossible to serve on most of these committees, but some of these hold their meetings virtually, so don't hesitate to ask if you might want to join. **Those with an interest in serving on a committee may contact TABCO at 410-828-6403.**

SUMMER WORK

Though many take a break while school is out, TABCO staff and leadership continue attending to important issues, such as grievances, appeals, and arbitrations from the past year; and writing language for the upcoming contract campaign in which TABCO will seek to negotiate a new three-year contract with BCPS, including dealing with a new superintendent. William Heiser, who had been CFO for Anne Arundel County schools, was recently quickly hired to replace outgoing Myriam Rogers, who isn't completing the fourth year of her contract.

In addition, they are working on plans to connect with potential candidates in the upcoming elections; and establishing and training contract negotiations contacts at every work site.

Membership Reminders

By Mary Ellen Vecchioni

The 2026-2027 member registration form is included with the summer mailing of the *Messenger*. Members, and both current and prospective members need to remember that the membership year runs from September to September. (Those who joined in April or February would need to re-join in September, for example.) Annual dues remain at \$75. To avoid sending a check to MSEA each year, members might consider having their dues deducted from their pension once a year. This can be authorized by contacting Erin Sakalas at MSEA: esakalas@mseane.org

OTHER NOTES: Remember that **non-members** do not receive communications from TABCO-R and are not eligible for benefits provided through the Association.

The TABCO-R committee meets every month to discuss important issues that pertain to its members, and it is the committee's hope that our current members continue to remain TABCO-R members through the 2026-2027 membership year and beyond. Anyone knowing recent retirees, or maybe not-so-recent retirees, please inform them of the many benefits of membership to convince them to join. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP!**



TABCO TUTORING LIST

Retired members who might wish to earn a little \$\$ via tutoring may use this link to access a form to sign up: <https://forms.gle/Fw5bLRCmLJViQGK6>. This form collects name, personal contact information (email and phone), all subjects, grade levels, and tutoring location preferences. Requests for tutoring come in to TABCO sporadically. Kim Melfa keeps a spreadsheet based on grade/subject and emails a list of names with tutor names and personal contact information. From there the parent/guardian establishes contact with the tutor(s) to find a good match based on tutor services.

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, Tammy Mills,

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

Teachers Association of Baltimore County
President Kelly Olds, Vice President Lloyd Allen
Treasurer Frank Soda, Secretary Seth Rich
and the TABCO Board of Directors
Executive Director Ben Forstenzer

TABCO office: 410-828-6403 fax: 410-337-7081
1220 C, Suite 514 E. Joppa Rd. Towson, MD 21286
Contact person for TABCO-R at the TABCO office:
Kim Melfa, kmelfa@mseane.org



TABCO-R MESSENGER

RETIRED~NOT EXPIRED
SUMMER 2026
volume 11 number 2

Congratulations, 2025-2026 Retirees!



Welcome, fellow retirees! We honor your service to students and the community, and congratulate you on moving 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. To keep receiving communications from TABCO-RETIRED, see page 4. Every member adds to the strength of the voices of retired educators and to maintaining your benefits.

Association News

By Angela Leitzer

REVELATIONS

Every spring since 2016, we have sponsored an information fair that we call the "Pathway to Retirement," to provide our soon-to-be retiring colleagues with a place to engage with relevant representatives of BCPS, the state pension system, healthcare providers, etc., and to receive current, accurate information. This year, we received some unwelcome "revelations." The "Customer Service Center (CSC)" established by BCPS in February 2023 as its grand solution to address the lag in response time to both active and retired employees, abruptly closed prior to our event date of April 16, without any notification to TABCO. In addition, the PIN that had been promised to retired employees to allow access to the new "Oracle" records system **will not be** provided, contrary to the message provided to us that was printed in our winter edition. No explanation was offered, other than the word "*budget*." When asked why these decisions had not been shared with us we received another revelation—only the **non-Association** related groups (BCRSPA/MRSPA) had been notified.

As the **ONLY** retiree group within the official bargaining unit, we continue our efforts to represent the rights of retired members, while "somehow" the above mentioned AARP groups receive access. (Note: the Steering Committee of TABCO-Retired is composed of retired *school-based educators*, while



the BCRSPA leaders are primarily retired BCPS central office personnel.)

SO...WHERE TO GET ANSWERS?

For those who have healthcare questions, if eligible for Medicare, we have found RetireeFirst to be the most reliable source of information. RetireeFirst can be reached at 443-290-3114 or 833-550-1676.

Now that new leadership is coming to BCPS, we hope to see restoration in efficient retiree access to benefits information.

Sixty-two years of honoring educators

The annual event that honors retiring educators and presents awards to individuals and "friends of education" had a special speaker this year, MD Lt. Governor Aruna Miller. Her warm remarks were followed by recognition of those retiring this year and presentation of awards to both "rookies" and veterans who were nominated for their excellent accomplishments. The event is planned by the Retirement & Recognition Committee that includes both active and retired members.

INVITING YOU to share your skills

Much of the work of TABCO is accomplished through its committees, as evidenced by the amazing success of the all-retiree KidCare Committee (see page 2). Through discussion between the TABCO-R Committee and TABCO leadership, we agreed that retired members are an under-utilized resource of talent and experience. Though some of us work currently with TABCO's standing committees, there is space—and a need for other retired members to serve! There are many committees that would benefit from our skills and experience. The following

(See page 4, Association News)

Summer Reading



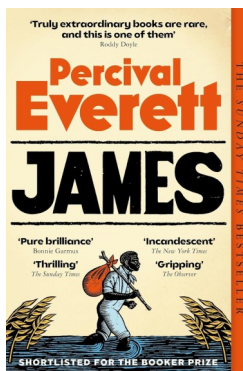
By Barbara Tyler

At its core *James* is a retelling of Twain's book about Huckleberry Finn, as told by Jim—but so much more. At the beginning of the story Jim finds out he is going to be sold by his owner and separated from his family. He decides to run away. He meets up with Huckleberry Finn who has faked his death to get away from his abusive father. These events set Jim and Huck off on adventures down the Mississippi River, resulting in colorful, dangerous, and at times tragic encounters with colorful, dangerous, and some friendly individuals who aid as well thwart Jim's goal. Jim and Huck are separated several times but eventually find each other as Jim tries to find the family he has lost. Along the way there are several plot twists that keep things interesting.

In an interview, Everett talked about his novel saying that *"I hope that no one thinks that my novel is about slavery. There's a difference between writing a story about people who happen to be slaves and writing a story about slavery."*

It is a helpful quote to understand the content of this novel. Jim is born a slave, and it is reflected in his condition and affects every aspect of how he has to act or adjust his behavior, but the types of things he contends with and the observations he makes extend beyond this being a story about slavery. And James is much more than a slave.

James won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, among others. It definitely lives up to those distinctions in my estimation and is not to be missed.



Fond farewell to a staunch supporter

By Cindy North

For more than twenty-five years, TABCO members at various events were greeted with smiles and hugs from Bernadette Stallknecht, also known as Bernie, but to most, just as "Mom." She was the actual mother of now retired member Nicole Caple, former building representative and Board of Directors member, who now is a member of TABCO-R and serves on the Kidcare Committee.

A Baltimore native, Bernie went to Patterson Park High School. She worked at local businesses as a keypunch operator, then in sales at Montgomery Ward and Hallmark stores, before becoming a school cafeteria worker and kindergarten assistant. Along the way, she married and raised four children, Michele, Eric, Nicole, and Todd.

When Nicole became a teacher, Bernie was there to help in whatever way she could. Then, when Nicole joined and began working as an active member of TABCO, Bernie "joined" too, pitching in to do things such as passing out Apple ballots and taking part in Kidcare fundraising walks.

Bernie was a regular presence at Association conventions such as the NEA Annual Representative Assemblies (seventeen, in fact), attending as a visitor when Nicole was a delegate. She proudly displayed the lanyards from each on the doorknob of her guest room at home, and would share with fam-

ily and friends all the adventures she had "touring" while Nicole was at the daily RA.

Bernie also loved to create baskets which she donated to the Dee Bundy Kidcare Basket raffle at the TABCO/ESPBC Recognition and Retirement Dinners held each May. She would start to make lists of themes for the next year, soon after the previous dinner was over. Nicole recalls her mother shopping throughout the year for items to put into specific baskets: Vera Bradley, Orioles, Rainbows (which contained different liqueurs of different flavors to achieve the "rainbow effect"), and others, completing between 5-8 baskets per year.

Sadly, Bernie passed away in March. When I recently met Nicole for brunch, to talk about her mother, I asked her to bring pictures and any items that could accompany this article. She slowly unfolded Bernie's favorite sweatshirt, which was proudly worn to countless events. It says, "Mother of a Teacher." She was "Mom" to many of us, and she will be greatly missed.



Team member moving on

As one of the most effective local retiree organizations in the state of Maryland, our growth over the past eleven years has benefited from the strength of TABCO, our access to its resources, and the support of its leadership and staff. Among these are the UniServ Directors (UDs), part of the TABCO team, whose work is vital to preserving TABCO's membership and its strength.

Among them, we acknowledge the years of service of UD Amy Maloney, who has retired this June. Her expertise is revered and will be keenly missed.

Amy served eight years as a TABCO UD, bringing with her a wide variety of experiences including teaching in Chicago, IL, Gambia, West Africa, and Osaka, Japan; legislative assistant to a senator; and working as a lobbyist for MSEA for 27 years.

Reflecting on her work as a UD, Amy said, *"I have been honored to be a part of TABCO and MSEA because they are among the strongest advocates for public education. I am especially proud of the support I have provided to members facing challenges caused by ineffective or poor leadership in their schools. One of the most difficult aspects of being a union advocate is knowing that some members hesitate to seek help because they fear retaliation from building leaders. Our union is strongest when we stand together, and I hope that, in some*



small way, my efforts have helped make our union stronger."

Like many of us as we retired, Amy has some travel plans—a trip in July to Red Rocks and Breckenridge, CO with her college roommates (who are all teachers). Then in August she will be in Chicago dropping her daughter off at college and visiting with family. Beyond that...long walks with her dog and "lots and lots of books to read." With much appreciation, we wish Amy a happy, healthy next chapter!

AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF A UNION ~ What is the job of a UniServ Director? THEY:

- ~Help members understand the contract.
- ~Help improve the contract.
- ~Help enforce the contract.
- ~Represent members to ensure they have all due process rights provided in the contract.
- ~Develop relationships with school leaders to solve problems and improve working conditions in the schools.
- ~Advise and support members to be their own advocates.
- ~Train members to start Education Councils and work with those Councils to bring forward positive solutions to improve working conditions.
- ~Counsel members who are often in difficult situations or distress and offer confidential advice and support.

Figures tell a success story

KidCare is already gearing up for the new school year. We will again host our four major events.

- ♦ Buck for Basics
- ♦ Mystery Raffle (at the Legislative Breakfast)
- ♦ KidCare Walk (April 3rd at Perry Hall Middle School, 9:00 am)
- ♦ Dee Bundy Basket Raffle (at the Retirement and Recognition Dinner)

This school year we met our goal of raising more than what was distributed. \$19,902.96 was given in vouchers for use by the families of needy students. A total of \$25,563.39 was raised, giving us a \$5660.43 surplus to begin the next school year.

Once again BCPS social workers did their part by raising over \$1500.

Thank you, retirees, for your generous support at the Fall Forum and for the many baskets that you donated for the Basket Raffle. We hope you will be able to support this worthy cause again this year.



Form a team and join us at the Walk where you can select an indoor (accessible) or outdoor path.

We'll keep you updated on the latest and greatest happening with KidCare. For more information or to get more involved, contact one of the KidCare Committee members of TABCO-Retired via bookends68@comcast.net or kmelfa@mseane.org Tammy Mills, Sonja Floyd, Nicole Caple, Roxann Russo, Phyllis Zaremba ~ all retired members working to support needy students!