Twenty KEA-Retired members went to Boston for the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in June, and 14 stayed for the NEA Representative Assembly. Here is what they did.

by Gayle Greer

NEA-Retired President Tom Curran called the 2017 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. on June 27th. Twenty KEA-Retired members were in attendance at this meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. Tom was positive in his remarks although everyone was aware of the problems education and educators are facing.

We elected Sarah Borgman of Indiana president of NEA-Retired, a national organization of over 317,000 members. She is past president of ISTA Retired and a member of the NEA-Retired Executive Council. John Jensen will continue as vice president and Martha Karlovetz as Secretary. Six NEA Resolutions Committee members and alternates were also elected.

We heard from NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia, NEA Vice President Becky Pringle, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss, General Council Alice O’Brien, NEA Government Relations Director Mary Kusler and Executive Director John Stocks. Each was direct with their remarks emphasizing the importance of keeping the pressure on our elected leaders in Washington and at home concerning policies that affect education and families. In Lily’s words, “We’ve got to fiercely look into the face of our current reality . . We can win. We have power. And they know it.” She reminded us that when members were asked to contact senators about the nominee for Education Secretary, we made one and half million phone calls and contacts forcing a tie vote causing the Vice President, for the first time ever on a cabinet nomination, to break the tie. We have the power. As retirees we must be involved in the fight.

KEA-Retired received the Membership Growth Award for the largest numerical increase in membership. We have won this award three times, which means we are ineligible to win again in the near future. Because of KEA’s continuous membership policy membership in KEA-Retired will continue to increase substantially each year.

Over the course of the two-day meeting scholarships were presented, funds were collected for future scholarships, funds were collected for The Fund for Children and Education, reports were given and new business items were adopted. As the gavel came down on the KEA-Retired meeting, fourteen Kentucky delegates prepared for the NEA Representative Assembly.

Many retirees participated in the LEGACY Project with Student NEA members. The LEGACY Project is a community engagement and fair-type event held each year during the NEA Annual Meeting in a community in or near the host city, in which NEA Student Program members, in conjunction with community students and members, local organizations, NEA-Retired and affiliates, engage with children and other members of the community.
The special legislative session on state employee pensions is coming, and we must be ready to fight

The elephant in the room continues to loom! As you recall, Governor Bevin in his February State of the Commonwealth address declared that there would be a special session in 2017 to deal with tax and pension reform. In June he sent a letter to the legislators that said any special session would happen sometime after August 15. Well today is August 15 and we still do not know if there will be a special session or when it will be. The Governor has even hinted at two special sessions; the first one to deal with pension reform followed by a second special session to deal with tax reform.

What we do know for sure:

Public school employees are starting back to school with the future of their pension uncertain. After six months of rhetoric they have legitimate concerns about what could happen to the pension they have been promised. They are rightfully worried, but we also know that they will not let any of this affect their performance of their duty. They will still give their all for their students.

There are 13,500 teachers in the Commonwealth who are eligible to retire. If they are forced into a position where it is in their best interest retire to protect their pension the impact on public education is ominous. To quote Kayne Ishmael, “There are 42,040 teachers in Kentucky. You do the math, that’s slightly over 32% of Kentucky’s teachers who are eligible to retire. The recent rhetoric about taking away benefits like compensation for unused sick leave at retirement must stop! Imagine the impact on class size and quality of instruction if nearly a third of Kentucky’s most experienced teachers retired after the school year had already started.”

School has started back. Our public school employees cannot attend weekday committee meetings and legislative sessions. We must be their voice and carry their message by making a physical appearance at the state capitol. We need to send email and leave phone messages that public school employees cannot do during their work day.

Things can happen rapidly in Frankfort and the response must be swift. I encourage you to add your name to the ROC (Retirees On Call) list so that we can alert you to developments and let you know what actions need to be taken.

We must be our own voice! Any changes to current and future employee pensions would most likely impact our current retirement system. For example, placing new hires in a 401K type system cuts crucial funding to sustain our current retirement systems.

We must be our own voice! The “inviolable contract” is only secure if they indeed do not violate it. Yes it will be litigated and our chances of winning that litigation are good, but how long will that litigation take and what happens in the meantime?

The time to speak is now! I know many of you have set up back home meetings with your legislators to discuss these issues, and I thank you. We need to continue to do so. We cannot afford to wait until there is a special session or the regular session starts to deliver our message. We must build those relationships now. Get to know your legislators and make sure they know you. They should have your faces and names in their head when they are dealing with pending legislation and they should know how that legislation will impact you.

This is an issue that needs to be resolved! We must find a solution to shore up and protect our underfunded pensions. The longer we delay the more serious the problem gets.

The issue of pension reform is way too crucial to be resolved in a five-day special session. It is deserves all the time needed to debate and explore all options before our legislators make important decisions that will impact over half a million Kentuckians and their families.

If you are looking for that knight in shining armor that is going to come to the rescue you can find them in any mirror. Do not underestimate the impact you can make! This issue is way too important to leave entirely to your legislators to make crucial decisions without ever hearing from you.

We all need to do our part in getting that elephant out of the room! Reach out and make sure your legislator knows who you are. Talk to them. Email them. Leave phone messages for them. Add your name to the ROC List.

It is going to take time and it is going to take effort, but together we can do this!
Congratulations to KEA-Retired member Joyce Dotson, who knew that the picture above from our last issue was of KEA President Wayne Harvey (at left) and new Kentucky State Representative Jody Richards, talking at a KEA legislative forum about the 1978 session of the Kentucky General Assembly. Joyce won a prize package of KEA-Retired merchandise.

This month it may be your turn. Can you identify the three people in the picture below, and tell us what they might have been meeting about?

Send your answer in an email message to kathryn.whitlock@kea.org. If your answer is the first, or the best, we will send you a prize package of KEA-Retired merchandise just like the one Joyce won.

Good luck!
We in the Kentucky delegation to the NEA RA began our caucus meetings at 7:00 a.m. on the first day, June 30. We began by electing KEA President Stephanie Winkler Chair of the delegation and KEA Vice President Eddie Campbell Vice Chair. The RA began at 10:00 a.m. The keynote speech by NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia was the highlight of the first day. Lily is a dynamic speaker. She did not hold back explaining that she would not meet with U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos until the Secretary answered some very basic questions.

Lily said, “Let me say this to all of you as clearly as I can, so that even if you disagree with me, you understand what is in my heart: I will not allow the National Education Association to be used by Donald Trump or Betsy DeVos. I do not trust their motives. I do not believe their alternative facts. I see no reason to assume they will do what is best for our students and their families. There will be no photo op.”

During the RA Lily was reelected president, Becky Pringle was reelected vice president and Princess Moss was reelected secretary-treasurer. George Sheridan and Hanna Vaandering were elected to the NEA Executive Committee. Sequanna Taylor, Donna West, Vallerie Fisher, Tracy Phillips, Brenda Johnson, Margaret Powell, Karen Barnes and Julie Wickersham were elected ESP-at-Large representatives.

We also voted on constitutional amendments, policy statements (including the controversial charter school policy), resolutions, and 159 New Business Items (including one which was put forth by our own Mickey McCoy and, sadly, not adopted). We heard inspiring speeches from Teacher of the Year Sidney Chaffee, ESP of the Year Saul Ramos, and 2017 Friend of Education, LaVar Burton. (Listen to all speeches and read all new business items that were adopted on ra.nea.org.)

Throughout the convention, youth poets were spotlighted. The performance was called Woke Voices. These young people were amazing. We were again made aware of the reason educators do what they do. Working with students is a privilege and we see the future in their words.

Kentucky retirees represented you in Boston this summer at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA RA

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The KEA Delegate Assembly will be held April 4-6, 2018 at Louisville Marriott Downtown. KEA-Retired may have as many as 105 delegates to the assembly. (The exact number will be known when membership is verified on November 15, 2017).

If you wish to serve as a KEA-Retired delegate to the KEA DA, fill out the nomination form on page 5 and return it to Kathy Whitlock, KEA-Retired Associate Staff. Nominations must be postmarked no later than October 6, 2017.

KEA-Retired Delegates to the Delegate Assembly will receive up to $300 plus mileage at the (currently 54 cents per mile). Receipts are needed for every expense. Delegates must attend all sessions.

Nominations are also open for delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. The NEA RA will be held in Minneapolis, MN, June 30 – July 5, 2018. Delegates are also expected to attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting which will be held in Minneapolis immediately prior to the NEA RA. KEA-Retired may have as many as 15 delegates to the NEA RA. (The KEA-Retired President is an automatic delegate).

If you wish to serve as a KEA-Retired delegate to the NEA RA, fill out the nomination form on page 5 and return it (postmarked no later than October 6, 2017) to Kathy Whitlock, KEA-Retired Associate Staff.

KEA-Retired delegates to the NEA RA will receive up to $1610 toward expenses for attending the NEA RA and up to $700 toward expenses for attending the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting. Receipts are required for all expenses occurred from the meetings. A written report is required with the expense voucher. Participants are expected to attend all sessions of the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, all sessions of the NEA RA and any caucuses held by the Kentucky delegation.
**KEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY NOMINATION FORM**

NAME ________________________________ SS# (last 4 digits) ________________  
ADDRESS ______________________________ Email address: ________________________  
CITY, STATE, ZIP ________________  
PHONE ________________ SIGNATURE OF CANDIDATE ____________________  

*My signature indicates that I understand and accept the stipend policy for KEA-Retired delegates to the KEA DA.*

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (30-WORD LIMIT) ____________________

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**KEA-Retired Stipend Policy:**  
If elected, delegate’s expenses will be reimbursed up to $300 (plus mileage) in return for attendance at ALL delegate business sessions and retired caucus meetings.

Complete and return this form by October 6, 2017 to:  
KEA-Retired Delegate Elections  
401 Capitol Avenue  
Frankfort KY 40601

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**NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY NOMINATION FORM**

NAME ________________________________  
SS# (last 4 digits) __________ KEA-Retired District ________________  
ADDRESS ______________________________ Email address: ________________________  
CITY, STATE, ZIP ________________  
PHONE ________________ SIGNATURE OF CANDIDATE ____________________  

*My signature indicates that I understand and accept the stipend policy for KEA-Retired delegates to the KEA DA.*

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION (30-WORD LIMIT) ____________________

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**KEA-Retired Stipend Policy:**  
If elected, delegate’s expenses will be reimbursed up to $1,610 (plus mileage) in return for attendance at ALL delegate business sessions and Kentucky caucus meetings.

Complete and return this form by October 6, 2017 to:  
KEA-Retired Delegate Elections  
401 Capitol Avenue  
Frankfort KY 40601
I am grateful for all the positive feedback I have received about BOOMER from readers of this newsletter. I am very glad that so many of you have found it entertaining or informative. But I would like to do something new with this space for a while, and I am going to need your help. I want you to, in effect, write this column for me.

How will you do that? By answering this simple (or perhaps not-so-simple) question: What are you doing as a retired educator?

If you would have told me what I would be doing after I retired from teaching and coaching I would have thought you were joking. For 30 plus years I coached and taught Physical Education in Daviess County Public Schools. After retiring I worked in retail until I was hired at Owensboro Christian Church in the Recreation Ministry.

As the years passed an opportunity opened up to work in short term missionary work. This opened up what has become a yearly trip to Poland to coach basketball and witness to kids of all ages. I have also been to Guatemala twice to work at an orphanage near Guatemala City.

In Poland I have given out many of my old KEA t-shirts. The kids just see the word Kentucky and not the education part. These activities have been very fulfilling as I am retired, but do not consider myself older. Sometimes, though, I am reminded that I am like a box of Rice Krispies: I “snap, crackle and pop.”

So, again: What are you doing as a retiree? Are you working or volunteering in your major area of concentration. I’ve told you only briefly about what I have been up to, because I wanted to get to the important part of this column. I want to know what YOU are doing. I want to know how you are filling your days in this “second life” after public education.

Please send me a short explanation of what you are doing in retirement. Write a story that we can publish here in TODAY/TOMORROW, and send it to wildcat860@aol.com. Your story may motivate another retiree to get active, or to pursue a long-delayed dream. We never know how we may positively influence a colleague, neighbor or friend—or someone who just sees us once.

I can’t wait to hear from you, and to read your stories.

Now it’s your turn to tell your retirement story
Read Across America Reading Events at NEA RA promoted ‘recognizing and celebrating our differences’

by Charlotte Benton

To promote the importance and fun of summer reading, NEA’s Read Across America hosted author visits, story times and activities for 6 to 10-year-old children participating in summer camp at the 2017 NEA Representative Assembly at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, as part of their Read Across America Summer Reading Events.

Janet Costa Bates (author of Seaside Dream) and F. Zia (who wrote Hot, Hot Roti for Dada-Ji) read their books to the campers. Afterwards, RAA staff and volunteers led small breakout groups in special activities based on the theme and learnings from each of the books. In addition, these authors conducted a book signing and book giveaway on July 2 and 3 at the RAA booth.

On July 3, while serving as a NEA-Retired Kentucky delegate to the RA, I participated in these events. I met Ms. Bates, who wrote Seaside Dream with illustrator Lambert Davis. Bates said, “Recognizing and celebrating our differences permits people of all backgrounds to understand more about ourselves and how we see and connect with others.”

A key theme in Seaside Dream is understanding different cultures. Through the celebration of traditions, we can understand the culture of others, and not assume one culture is superior to another. We live in an increasingly diverse and global world and need to work with others who may be different from us as we navigate our lives. The story of Grandma and Cora show us the value of cultural customs, and how we can integrate them into our everyday lives. As you read this book, use the tips included to guide your discussion, and make this story come to life.

After meeting Ms. Bates and seeing her book, I got to listen as she enthusiastically read Seaside Dream to a group of Representative Assembly summer campers aged 6-10. After reading, Ms. Bates joined individual groups and activities relating to the book to help the book come alive.

My group was asked to draw a picture, write a letter or make a card for someone and tell them how special they are and how much they mean to us. We were asked to hand deliver the card or letter, or send it in the mail.

Your Representatives in Boston: KEA-Retired delegates to the 2017 NEA Representative Assembly this summer included (from left to right) Fred Hester; Arletta Kennedy; Jim Sproult; Jon Henrickson; Kathy Hobbs; Brenda McGown; Charlotte Benton; Fred Tilsley; Janet Carrico; Joyce Dotson; Tom Denton and Gayle Greer.
FIRST DISTRICT: The calendar dates for First District KEA-Retired have been set for the coming year, 2017-18, all at the UniServ Paducah office. They are: September 11th, tentatively one p.m.; November 13th, February 19th, and May 14th. These latter three meetings will all begin at 11:30 a.m. More particulars will be forthcoming as to programs and luncheon items. Members please reserve these dates in your calendar.

The last 2016-17 FDEA KEA Retired was held in May with Terry Reeves of Cruise Planners presenting the program. Under new business items Charlotte Benton, Vice President, assumed the unexpired term of President due to a vacancy in that office. It also was announced that three of our local members, Arletta Kennedy, Kathy Hobbs, and Charlotte Benton were elected as delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in Boston. Also, Richard Blish was asked to design and create one of his segmented bowls for KEA Retired to enter for the live auction at the national convention.

CENTRAL DISTRICT: We held our last meeting of the year May 9, 2017. Thank you to JoAnn Bright and Ann Caldwell for a great lunch. KEA-Retired president Tom Denton gave an update on the legislative session. Tom reminded us of the importance of staying in touch with our legislators. It is important for them to know how we feel about education issues. Officers elected were: Gayle Greer, President; Debbie Herdt, Vice President; Janet Cartmell, Secretary; Fred Tilsley, Treasurer. Dates and times of upcoming meetings were set: Thursday, September 14, 2017, 5:30 pm food provided, KEA Lexington Office; Thursday, January 11, 2018, 1:00 pm pot luck, KEA Lexington Office; Thursday, May 10, 2018. An election for KEA-Retired Board members from Central District was held in June. Elected to the board were Sharron Oxendine and JoAnn Bright. JoAnn is a retired KESPA member from Fayette County.

KEA-Retired members donated a total of 84 backpacks, tote bags, and suitcases to Central District at the KEA-Retired Annual Meeting in April. These items were given to a foster child advocate in Lexington who distributes them to foster children in 117 counties in Kentucky to use when they move from home to home. Our next meeting on September 14th will be a welcome to all new members of KEA-Retired/Central District. All members welcome. Come enjoy the camaraderie, get caught up on issues important to retirees, and partake of good food.