

# NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

www.nsea.org/retired

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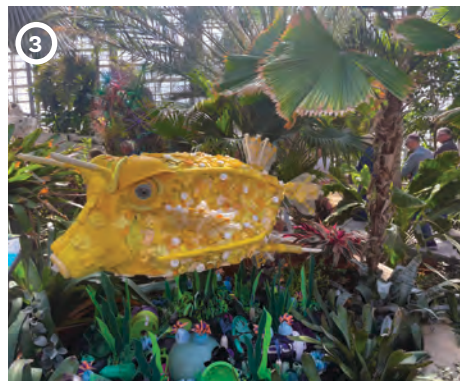
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If you are not receiving emails from the NSEA-Retired list or your email address has changed, send a message to dtonack@neb.rr.com.

## BARNACLES & BOTANICALS: Inside the Spring Conference



Inside Omaha's Lauritzen Gardens: 1. NSEA-Retired members tour a special exhibit titled "Washed Ashore." 2. Members view a seahorse sculpture made entirely of plastic pollution. 3. This yellow fish made of trash is part of a traveling exhibit displayed inside the gardens. Exhibit creators hope to inspire change in consumer habits to reduce the amount of single-use plastic used in everyday life.

NSEA-Retired members and guests enjoyed the annual spring conference held at Omaha's Lauritzen Gardens in late April. The program included a presentation by Director of Conservation James Locklear. His presentation titled "More Than Just a Pretty Place: The Conservation Vision of Lauritzen Gardens" took members through the history of the gardens and conservatory. Locklear also gave members and guests insight into future plans for the gardens.



**Locklear**

### Art to Save the Sea

Members viewed a special exhibit inside the gardens titled "Washed Ashore." The artwork is created from plastic pollution that has washed ashore from waterways. The sculptures represent marine life that is affected by pollution. Made entirely of debris found on beaches, the exhibit creators aim to encourage recycling and promote awareness.

The gigantic sculptures are created after the plastic pollution is collected, washed and sorted.

# BARNACLES & BOTANICALS: Inside the Spring Conference

## LOBBY DAY Retired Members at the Capitol



Benson



Marsh



Hayes



The NSEA-Retired held its annual Lobby Day at the Capitol in February. Members and guests were briefed on education issues by NSEA Director of Public Policy and Legislative Research Jason Hayes before meeting with senators in the State Capitol Rotunda. Members discussed issues involving funding needed for public schools, school safety and retirement. This year's event featured a virtual option allowing members who couldn't attend the in-person event to join by Zoom.

After meeting with senators, participants returned to the NSEA building for lunch and a presentation from Omaha Sen. Tony Vargas. Before his time in the legislature, Sen. Vargas was a teacher. He reflected on the value of the experience during his presentation.

From there an artist designs a sculpture and directs a group of volunteers and students in building it.

### A Closer Look

Take a closer look at the sculpture of the salmon jumping from the water (below). An incredible amount of creative detail is given to each piece. Artists don't use any paint or dye when creating the sculptures. The mosaic-like look is created with only the colors of trash that has been collected.

### Be Our Guest

Several guests were invited to speak at the conference including NSEA President Jenni Benson, who welcomed retirees and guests for the noon luncheon.

NEA-Retired Director Todd Crenshaw joined as a guest speaker to talk about grant opportunities for members. Crenshaw addressed the critical role retired members play advocating for public education through their legislative work.

NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes updated attendees on education bills that were discussed during the 90-day session. Hayes thanked retirees for their continued work on behalf of teachers, students and public schools.

### Entertainment

David Marsh with Humanities Nebraska provided lively music for the conference. His presentation "Music from the Plains," included music with spoons and an accordion.

### Silent Action

Donations were raised for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education through donated auction items. These funds are used to elect

and support public school champions on the federal level. The fund also supports coalitions that take up important issues affecting education and retired educators. Some of the donated items can be seen above (top right photo).



NSEA-Retired  
President De Tonack

Tonack testified in support of LB641, which will phase out state taxation on Social Security benefits.



# Retired Members Represent at Spring Delegate Assembly



Delegate Assembly Representatives (front, left to right): Carol Krejci, Walta Sue Dodd, Liz Rea, NSEA-Retired President Dr. De Tonack, Pat Etherton, Guy Roggenkamp. (Center, left to right): Dan Shiefelbein, Vice-President Roger Rea, Treasurer Arlene Rea, Jan Barnason, Margie Nowak, Ruby Davis. (Back left to right): Joy Brown, Chris Martin, Lisa Fricke, Janis Elliott and Maureen Nickels.

## A New Resolution

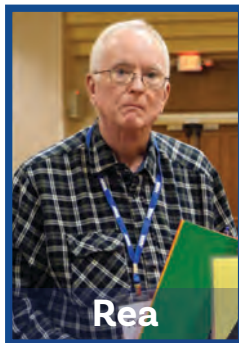
In late April, more than 200 NSEA members got down to business moving the association forward on a number of key issues. Seventeen NSEA-Retired members represented as delegates.

The assembly included much discussion on bylaws, resolutions and dues. Long-time Metro delegate Walta Sue Dodd and NSEA-Retired Vice President Roger Rea both took a turn at the microphone to weigh in on issues.

As part of their work, delegates unanimously passed a resolution opposing LB753's voucher tax scheme that will give public funds to private schools. The voucher tax scheme in LB753 is costly and will grow exponentially, taking funds that would otherwise be available to fund public schools and other state priorities.



Dodd



Rea

## Support Public Schools

A high energy rally to support Nebraska public schools was held Saturday and NSEA-Retired members

marched arm-in-arm with other delegates to the steps of the Nebraska State Capitol. In all, more than 400 Nebraskans gathered on the north steps of the State Capitol in a show of support for students, educators and public schools.

## Petition Drive Underway

Following the April Delegate Assembly, the governor signed LB753 into law triggering a coalition of public education supporters to launch a statewide, referendum petition drive. More than 62,000 signatures will need

to be collected to put the issue on the November 2024 General Election Ballot. NSEA-Retired will work with public school supporters and communities to give Nebraskans the opportunity to vote to repeal this harmful bill. Visit [supportourschoolsnebraska.org](http://supportourschoolsnebraska.org) to find a petition signing event or sign up to volunteer to collect signatures.



**NO LB753!**  
Retired Members at the Rally





**NSEA-RETIRED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (front, left to right): Treasurer Arlene Rea, Vice-President Roger Rea, President Dr. De Tonack and Secretary Dr. Sarah Brown. DISTRICT DIRECTORS (back, left to right): Joy Brown, Ruby Davis, Tom Black, Jan Barnason, Walta Sue Dodd, Margie Nowak, Pat Etherton and Maureen Nickels.**

## Leaders “Retiring” from the NSEA-Retired Board

NSEA-Retired Board members have had a productive year organizing the fall and spring conferences, hosting Lobby Day in February, supporting NSEA activities through CORE (Call On Retired Educators)—all while continuing to welcome new retirees.

Four NSEA-Retired leaders are now retiring from their positions: Tom Black, Maureen Nickels, Pat Etherton and De Tonack.

### Tom Black

Tom Black moved to West Point in 1962. Soon after joining the Cuming County Education Association (CCEA), Tom attended NSEA Delegate Assembly (DA) and began an DA attendance record made for the history books.

In 1964, Tom was elected President of CCEA and within the next year Wisner and West Point decided to form their own locals.

As Tom remembers it,

it was NSEA staff Dick Halama who helped form the West Point Education Association (WPEA). Noel Roberts later became their long-term NSEA staff contact.

Tom was President of WPEA for 10 years before he being elected to the NSEA Board of Directors in 1979.

Tom is not only a leader in his association but he is very involved in his community.

In the 1990s, West Point experienced a large influx of Latino residents. The Multicultural Action Committee, chaired by Tom, was formed to successfully include the residents in the business/resident community. He has served as a member of the Academic Freedom Coalition of Nebraska for many years and as a member of the West Point City Council from 2014 to 2018. Tom currently serves as a member of Goldenrod

Regional Housing Agency.

In addition to his local leadership, Tom has been active as a retired association member—both statewide and nationally.

Tom served on the NSEA Board of Directors from 1979-1995 and 2000-2005. This position included Elkhorn District Director from 1979-1985, NSEA Vice President 1986-1990, NEA Board of Directors from 1990-1995, and ex-officio member as President of NSEA-Retired 2000-2005.

Tom has been an NEA representative to 36 Representative Assemblies (1980-2017 minus 2016) and a representative to 65 Delegate Assemblies from 1962-2022 (5 years of double DAs).

Tom was editor of the NSEA-Retired page for NSEA's publication *The Voice* from 1998-2012 and then editor of the NSEA-Retired Advocate from 2006 to 2014. In several of those years Tom garnered NEA Retired first place and runner up awards.

Tom has served many years as an NSEA representative of the Teacher Education and School Accreditation Committee (TESAC) and as a member



**Tom Black  
NSEA-Retired**

of the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education: Advisory Board to the Nebraska Department of Education 1974-1996.

Tom's role for NSEA-Retired Board of Directors spanned from 1998 to this summer (2023): Vice President 1998-2000; President 2000-2005; Elkhorn District Member 2005-2011; Vice President 2011-2017; Elkhorn District Member 2021-2023. During that time, Tom was chair of the SEAN/NSEA-Retired Scholarship Committee.

### Pat Etherton

Pat Etherton has worn many hats for educators—literally! Of all Pat's volunteer activities, she believes reading to students dressed as the Cat in the Hat is her favorite volunteer project because she is passionate about the importance of reading to children.

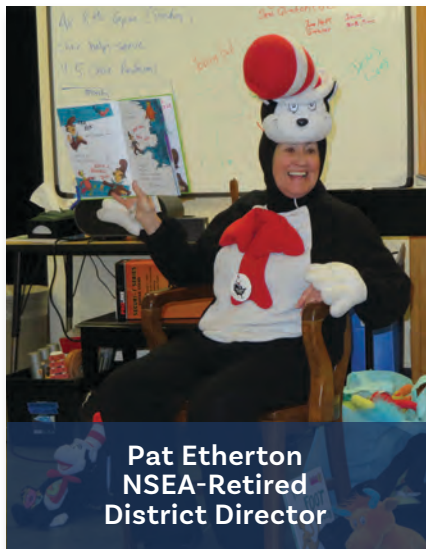
For 16 years through March 2020, Pat has represented the Lincoln Education Association and has read to the students at each school that invited her during Read Across America celebrations.

Until the pandemic hit, "The Cat" scheduled all day, every half hour, and read more than 90 times, at about 35 schools, to 6,000 students each year.

Pat has served as chief photographer at active and retired events throughout the years.

Pat retired after 38 years of teaching elementary and secondary students in Lincoln Public Schools. In 2004, Pat was elected to the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors for 6 years before being term-limited. After three years off, Pat was again elected, this time serving for nine years. That's a total of 15 years service!

Pat looks at her life as a puzzle made of pieces from these basic themes: God, family, friends, health and volunteering to give back to the community. Her philosophy is that if every morning you decide it is going to be a good day, it will be. Pat's recommendation to her retired friends is to get involved in their retired education groups, as they will



Pat Etherton  
NSEA-Retired  
District Director

receive far more than they give.

### Maureen Nickels

Maureen (Mo) Nickels has had an opportunity to work with NSEA and NSEA-Retired from many perspectives.

Maureen joined the association as a Student Education Association of Nebraska (now called Aspiring Educators) member her junior year at Kearney State College (now UNK) in 1972. She taught upper elementary with the Grand Island Public Schools and was a member of the Grand Island Education Association (GIEA) for 26 years.

During her teaching career she was active on the local level, serving as a building representative. She was next elected vice president and then president of GIEA.

Maureen served on both the Tri-Valley District Board and NSEA Board of Directors.

As a classroom teacher, she regularly attended NSEA DA and NEA RA.

In 2000, Maureen took a job with NSEA as an Organizational Specialist. She served in that capacity until her retirement in 2017.

One of Maureen's fondest memories of working with NSEA was being assigned to NSEA-Retired as a staff liaison. She had the opportunity to work alongside the leadership of Tom Black, Joe Higgins, and Roger Rea. During that time, she worked with GIEA retirees to charter the Platte Valley Retired

Education Association, of which she is a current member. Following retirement from NSEA, Maureen has served as the Sandhills District Retired Board representative since 2018.

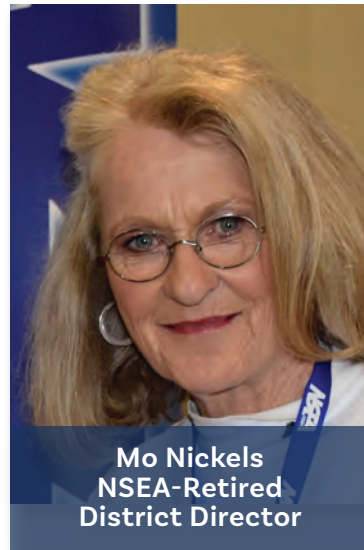
### Dr. De Tonack

Dr. De Tonack, is currently leading NSEA-Retired as President. De is thankful for the opportunity to serve for two consecutive terms these last 6 years. Her goals have been to grow membership and increase membership involvement, support various NSEA activities, and expand communication with retired members.

De began her teaching in Polk, Nebraska, and then moved with her husband Tom to teach in Kearney, Nebraska. While in Kearney, De served as association president and negotiator and also served as the Tri-Valley District representative for the NSEA-Board.

When Tom joined the NSEA staff in 1986, De moved to Lincoln. There she taught at a middle school, directed a new-teacher mentoring program, and worked with a science grant and NET to create nationally-awarded math videos and curriculum. She returned to Lincoln Public Schools to help create and teach at the LPS Science Focus Program, often nicknamed "The Zoo School." De also served a three-year term as Capitol District Representative on the NSEA-Retired Board before serving as President from 2017-2023. She continues to enjoy working with the Lincoln Education Association-Retired.

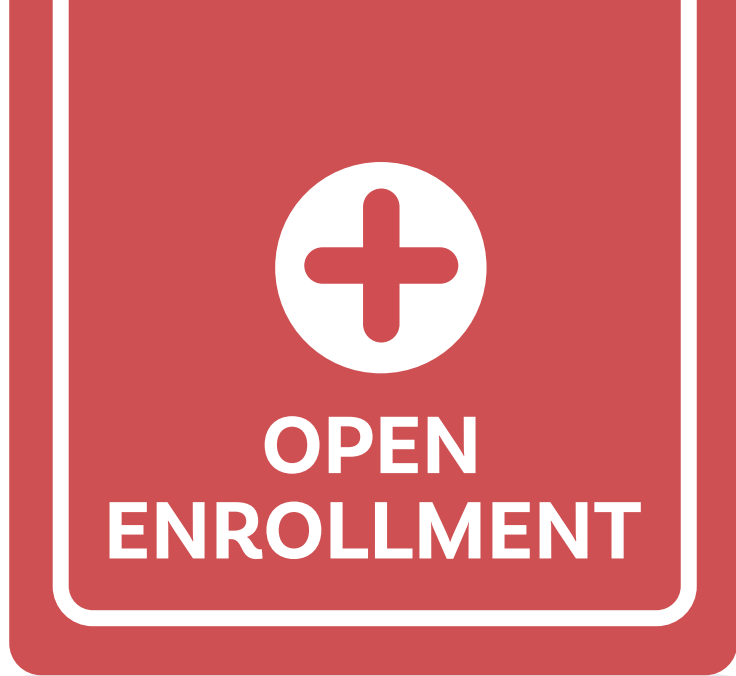
Maureen and De chose to donate their retirement gifts to the Nebraska Children's Fund, Tom to the Aspiring Educators' Retired Fund, and Pat to the "I've Got a Name Fund" of Lincoln.



Mo Nickels  
NSEA-Retired  
District Director



De Tonack  
NSEA-Retired  
President



## Tips for Navigating Medicare in 2023

Article By: Kate Ashford, Nerdwallet

- 1 Get neutral advice:** Start with someone who isn't trying to sell you something. The State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), for example, is a free service. There is also much information on [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov), including the ability to download the "Medicare & You" handbook.
- 2 Shop for insurance:** Make sure your doctors are in the network. Make sure your drugs are covered under Medicare D, renewable/or changeable every late fall.
- 3 Watch the calendar:** Signing up for Medicare is time sensitive. Check [Medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) for timelines, because initial enrollment is birthday-specific.
- 4 Read the fine print:** You may be able to delay signing up for Medicare Part A or Part B, depending on your situation. For example, if you are still working at age 65 and still covered by employer-provided health insurance, you may be able to wait to sign up.
- 5 Be careful of scammers:** Medicare does not call people to sell things. Medicare cannot enroll you in a plan over the phone unless you initiate the contact. Medicare will never call and ask for your Medicare number unless you have given them permission ahead of time.
- 6 An HSA and Medicare do not mix.** If you have a high-deductible health plan along with health-savings account (HSA), you cannot save to an HSA once you have enrolled in Medicare. However, an HSA can be a good retirement savings tool.
- 7** There is an advertising push for Medicare Advantage Plans. Be careful. The plans may be misleading.

### + WHAT'S NEW FOR MEDICARE IN 2023

- + Part B costs have gone down.** Medicare Part B covers the needs like doctor visits and durable medical equipment. Everyone pays a Part B monthly premium, including those with Medicare Advantage plans. In 2023, the Part B standard premium was set at \$164.90 per month, down from \$170.10. If you have a higher income, you pay more. The Part B deductible also lowered from \$233 per month in 2022 to \$226 in 2023.
- + Part A costs have gone up.** Medicare Part A hospital insurance covers inpatient stays in a hospital or skilled nursing facility. If you are collecting Social Security, you are automatically enrolled in Medicare Part A when you turn 65. Most people do not pay a premium for Part A, but for those who do, it increased to \$506 per month from \$499 in 2022. The deductible for a hospital stay is \$1,600 in 2023, up from \$1,556 in 2022.
- + Insulin costs are capped at \$35 per month** for Medicare beneficiaries.
- + If you sign up for Medicare the month of your 65th birthday or during the three months after, the coverage now starts the month after you sign up.** If you sign up during the general enrollment period from January 1 to March 31 each year, your coverage starts the next month.
- + Shingles and tetanus-diphtheria-whooping cough vaccines are covered.**

# LOCAL RETIRED PROGRAMS

## BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER



**WELCOMING**  
New Retirees!



**Top Picture:** Maxey Elementary retirees Suzanne Schoening and Linda Freye surrounded by Lincoln Retired members Lesa Christancy and Shelley Clayburn. Several Local Retired chapters have reached out to thank new educator retirees and to encourage membership of NSEA/NEA Retired.

**Bottom Picture:** Julie Erickson (Prescott) received “retiree M&M vitamins” and membership information from Lincoln Retired member Diane Lamb. The candy treats to serve as a welcome and ‘thank you’ to new retirees and include information on joining NSEA and NEA-Retirees, annual or lifetime.

Lincoln Education Association-Retired members meet 10 times during the year and have additional small groups meeting throughout the year.

In the middle of March, during the height of the Sandhill Crane migration from Texas to Canada, 12 LEA Retired members and their spouses enjoyed a two-day trip to view some of the 1 million cranes along the Platte River and surrounding areas between Kearney and Grand Island.

One of the first stops was the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer, where members toured the “Wings Over the Platte” exhibition which featured art depicting the great sandhill crane migration.

A member of the Grand Island Visitors’ Bureau shared a video about the four crane migrations across the United States.

Cranes mate for life and have a life span of 20 or more years. They return to the same nesting habitat year after year. Young chicks stay with their parents for two years and then search

out on their own to find their life-long mate.

Later in the day, a local guide took members along the Platte River between Grand Island and Alda to view the cranes feeding in the corn fields. Early the next morning the group visited the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center near Alda. In total quietness, the group watched and heard thousands of cranes calling and talking to each other as they prepared to leave the cold waters of the river sandbars.



**Pictured above (left to right):** LEA Retired members; Norma Daberkow and her husband Wes, Cindy

Paulson and her husband Owen, Jan Stamper and her husband Bob, Cheryl Svoboda and her husband Paul, along with Marynelle Green, Diane Knapp, Margie Nowak, Sheri Paden, Margaret Rasumussen, Arlene Rea, Pat Shepard and Linda Splichal participated in the Moostash Joe bus tour. \*Two former LEA members Sue Guild and Nancy Hlava were part of the bus tour but are not pictured.

Have an article idea for the NSEA-Retired Advocate or the NSEA Voice magazine?  
Send your idea to Dr. De Tonack at [dtonack@neb.rr.com](mailto:dtonack@neb.rr.com)

**SAVE THE DATE**

## NSEA-Retired Fall Conference



More details  
coming soon!



### Information Updated for More Than 2K Members

In January, NSEA-Retired mailed all members a letter requesting confirmation or updated contact information. Many members responded to the mailing and more than 2,000 corrections were found and made.

As part of this push to update the NSEA-Retired contacts, three names were drawn at random to win a \$50 Visa gift card. The winners were Theresa Tester, Carl Linnerson and Anne Haas.

Thank you to the many members who returned your contact information. Please continue to let NSEA-Retired know of any address changes by calling 402-475-7611 or emailing Samantha Vrbka at [samantha.vrbka@nsea.org](mailto:samantha.vrbka@nsea.org).