

Legislative Committee Gives Updates at Workshop



L to R: Virginia Crespo, MRSPA Legislative Aide; Charles Gable, MRSPA Vice-President; Ann Marie Downey, MRSPA President; Dr. David Hornbeck, Co-Founder "Strong Schools Maryland"; Jim Campbell, President, AARP Maryland; and Wanda Twigg, MRSPA Executive Director

At its annual workshop in Annapolis, MRSPA's Legislative Committee brought local leaders up-to-date on issues in the Maryland General Assembly, which convened on January 9, 2019, at noon.

At the November 14 workshop in the Miller Senate Office building, attendees learned about Lobbying 101 from **Virginia Crespo**, MRSPA's legislative aide. During the legislative session, MRSPA Committee members and other local leaders monitor legislation that may affect retired school personnel pensions, health benefits, and quality of life issues.

An "Overview of Maryland's Budget and Issues" was presented by **Dr. David B. Juppee**, senior operating budget manager for the Department of Legislative Services. Dr. Juppee reported on potential issues for the 2019 General Assembly: K-12 Funding (Kirwan Commission), Medicare Part D State Retiree Prescription Drugs, Sports Gaming (would have to be a Constitutional Amendment in 2020 election), Opioid Abuse, Use of General Fund Surplus/Long-term Structural Balance, and Higher Education Oversight.

The executive director of the Maryland Retirement and Pension system, **R. Dean Kenderline**, explained that his agency is in the final phase of a technology update which will allow members to access their retirement funds, just as they can with a bank account or credit union. Mr. Kenderline also reported that Maryland has joined some other states to form "Principles for a Responsible Manufacturing of Civilian Firearms" so that responsible standards can be established.

Dr. David Hornbeck, co-founder of "Strong Schools Maryland" and former state superintendent of schools, reported on the Kirwan Commission and his public grass roots campaign of Teams of Ten to develop and support policies that result in on-time graduation of all students prepared to succeed in college without remediation, secure a job that is satisfying and pays enough to support a family, and to engage in effective citizenship. Dr. Hornbeck was an architect of Kentucky's comprehensive education reform that resulted in that state moving from 48th to 33rd in the nation in student performance.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Connecting, Protecting, and Making a Difference

Happy 2019! As usual, the beginning of a new calendar year brings about the “New Year’s Resolution Discussion”. This year, something I saw online really resonated with me, and it may with you, too. A child asked her mother, “What exactly is a New Year’s Resolution?” The mother replied, “It’s just a ‘To Do List’ for the first week of January.” I think that often this is an accurate explanation, where great goals for self-improvement are developed, but after the initial enthusiasm wanes, the list goes by the wayside or, even worse, into the “frustration-because-that-never-works” category.

I think this phenomenon can happen in other aspects of life — even within organizations. MRSPA is making an effort to ward off an ebb of enthusiasm for the membership and communication goals that were addressed at the Leadership Conference in September when local and state leaders met. Coming away from that training, participants were eager to try some new approaches and have had positive results. To maintain momentum, MRSPA’s Public Relations and Membership Chairs (Carla Duls and Ruth Clendaniel), in conjunction with Area Directors and local presidents, scheduled January workshops throughout the state to “bring it home” and to tailor strategies to the specific needs of the locals. Again, at these workshops, participants were encouraged by each other, sharing ideas to try fresh perspectives to our common challenges with membership growth.

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Returning to the resolution analogy, we need to avoid the idea that MRSPA’s membership growth initiative will be the equivalent of the “To-Do List” for January’s first week. I encourage each leader and member to sustain the organization with renewed and ongoing dedication to membership growth, for through our strength in numbers, MRSPA will continue **Connecting, Protecting, and Making a Difference.**

**Ann Marie Downey,
President**

VISION STATEMENT

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association inspires the dedication, commitment, skills and abilities of its members in service to fellow retirees and the entire community in an ever-changing world.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association is a nonprofit organization comprised of retired school system personnel. It serves as an advocate for retirees and provides expanding services to members, empowering them to enrich the quality of their lives. The organization is dedicated to excellence in education and life-long learning. It promotes community service by its members through a myriad of volunteer activities.

From the

Executive Director

Wanda Ruffo Twigg



Happy 2019! As you know, our primary focus at MRSPA is the protection of your defined benefit pension and retirement benefits. The MRSPA Legislative Aide and Committee diligently monitor all new proposed legislation to ensure prompt action should changes to your promised benefits be proffered. If you are unfamiliar with the MRSPA Legislative Priorities, they are in the Legislative section of the MRSPA website.

The 2019 Maryland General Assembly session began on January 9, 2019. There are 60 new members of the Assembly as a result of the 2018 election, with 17 in the Senate and 43 in the House. Introductory letters from MRSPA were hand-delivered to new and returning members in January. As the MRSPA Legislative Committee continues to meet bi-weekly throughout the session, a new Legislative Update will be created and added to the Members Only section of our website for your information and review. If you want to be “in the know” about proposed legislation that could have an impact on your life and livelihood, please remember to check the website every two weeks for the important updates.

If you have never logged onto the MRSPA website, you will need permission to get into the Members Only part of the site. Go to www.mrspa.org and follow the instructions on the home page for access to the site. It's fast and easy. The Legislative section of the website also contains information on the General Assembly, links to your delegates and senators, how a bill becomes a law, and other pertinent information. While you are on the website, take a minute and look at the Pension Information section. It has a

variety of educational graphics and articles that you will find interesting, especially if you enjoy pointing out to others why retirement with a defined benefit pension is so important.

Many of you likely recall the Thornton Commission of the early 2000s that brought a billion new dollars in funding to k-12 public education after much advocacy and hard-fought battles in the legislature. This year, the Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education will submit a report to the 2019 General Assembly with recommendations on funding and other policy areas for pre-k to grade 12 public schools. Billions more in education funding is likely on the table, but further work is needed on the funding formula(s). Please monitor information coming out of the Kirwan Commission closely, check the MRSPA Legislative Updates regularly and be ready to act when the MRSPA Legislative Committee asks! Together we can help protect your pension and public education funding.

MRSPA Board Endorses Haines



At the December 5, 2018 meeting, the MRSPA Board of Directors endorsed the candidacy of Kenneth B. Haines to become the elected Trustee on the Maryland State Retirement & Pension System (MSRPS) representing retired public school personnel. Haines retired from the Prince George's County Schools in 2016. A full biography will appear in the spring edition of the MRSPA News.

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Annual Business Meeting Features MRSPA Elections

President-elect and Secretary positions will be filled during the May 8, 2019, Annual Business Meeting at the Bowie Comfort Inn, 4500 Crain Highway, Bowie, MD.



Nominee for
President-elect
Catherine
DeFord
Baltimore City

Catherine retired from the Baltimore City Public Schools as a principal in 2003 with 15 years experience in administration and supervision. She also worked as an elementary teacher and math resource teacher before moving into administration. Upon her retirement she became active in both the Association of Baltimore City Public School Retirees (ABCPSR) and the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA).

Catherine has served ABCPSR in several capacities, including President-elect and President from 2011-2015. She currently serves as the liaison between the local association and the public school system. She continues to be active in her sorority serving as state and national President.

Catherine has previously served on several committees at the state level. She served as a member and Chair of the Pre-Retirement committee as well as a member of the Convention and Scholarship committees. Catherine also served on the first search committee for MRSPA's Executive Director.

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Nominee for
President-elect
George Denny,
Prince Georges
County

George retired from the Prince George's County Public Schools with 34 years of service in 2000. He retired as a vice principal and then returned for two more years as a scheduler. Before becoming a vice principal, he was a junior high school teacher, a guidance counselor at both the junior high school and high school levels, as well as an administrative assistant at the junior high level.

Upon his retirement he became an active member of the Prince George's Public School Retirees Association (PGPSRA) and the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA).

George has served the local association as President, Immediate Past President and currently as President-elect. He has served his local community in an elected office as a council member and Mayor for many years.

Recently George represented PGPSRA on the latest search committee for MRSPA's Executive Director. He is currently serving on the Member Benefits Committee as its Chair and is a member of the Board of Directors.

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Nominee for
Secretary
Carla Duls
Anne Arundel
County

Since her retirement in 2000 from the Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Carla has been an active member of first, the Anne Arundel Retired Teachers Association (AARTA), and then the Anne Arundel Retired School Personnel Association (AARSPA) as well as the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association.

Carla served the local association as secretary for four years before becoming President-elect and then serving one term as AARTA President. Currently, she is a member of the Community Service Committee, *AARSPA from the Heart*, and serves as co-captain of the association's Walk to End Alzheimer's team. Carla volunteers as a docent for the Annearrundell Free School and serves as the AARSPA archivist and historian. She is also the editor of the *AARSPA Informer* and serves as the AARSPA representative to the United Seniors of Maryland (USM).

At the state level, Carla currently serves as a member of the Scholarship and Membership Committees as well as Chair of the Public Relations Committee. She has served as Area II North

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**Catherine DeFord
Nominee for
President-elect**

On the nomination form from ABCPSR, the President of the local summarized Catherine's qualifications "as a person with excellent leadership skills while serving in various organizations."

In support of her nomination, Catherine says, "I wish to be elected President-elect of MRSPA because I have the desire and interest to serve in this leadership position. I am knowledgeable about the programs, committees and activities of this organization, have served on many of the committees, and have demonstrated good leadership and interpersonal relationship skills that will enable me as well as the Association to meet with success."

Catherine adds, "Serving in this position would afford me the opportunity to work with others to sustain the mission of MRSPA. New ideas and changes will be solicited from members and implemented. Strategies will be developed to increase membership and provide effective benefits. Plans will be generated to increase the visibility and viability of MRSPA as we plan ways to meet the challenges of the 21st Century."

**George Denny
Nominee for
President-elect**

The PGPSRA President summarized his nomination characterizing him as a person who possesses the qualities and abilities needed for a President-elect and that he easily utilizes the technical and communication skills needed in this position.

George adds "During the time that I have had the opportunity to work with the MRSPA staff, officers, committee chairs and committee members, I have grown to appreciate the hard work and selfless efforts they each provide to attain objectives and plan programs that will enhance the quality of life of all our members. Many have volunteered for years to assure the success of the organization. It seemed to me that if I could help to continue their efforts, that is what I should do."

Furthermore, George stated, "During my term as President I would hope to use my time and energy to build upon the successful goals of the current President, Past President and the Board of Directors, seek input from members to further enhance those goals, provide assistance with programs, and work to achieve the desired goal of increasing membership statewide. I would work cooperatively with each unit to help them attain their individual goals."

**Carla Duls
Nominee for
Secretary**

Director and a three-year term as secretary.

In addition, Carla is an active member of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), serving as President and newsletter editor for the Annapolis chapter.

Carla wishes to become MRSPA secretary because she believes strongly in the mission of MRSPA to advocate for its members, to provide opportunities for its members to enrich their lives, and to better members' communities through volunteerism.



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Scholarship Applications Due by January 31, 2019

Current school employees seeking teacher certification or a new certification in another education field may apply for one of three \$2000 MRSPA scholarships.

Scholarship applications may be submitted online from January 1 to January 31, 2019, by setting up an online account and by securing a copy (official or unofficial) of your college transcript. The name of the institution must be clearly visible and a minimum 2.5 GPA at the time of the application is required. Additional information is provided by logging onto website: www.frederickcountygives.org.

MRSPA's Scholarship Fund is managed by The Community Foundation of Frederick County. This fund depends on the market value of its investments, annual raffle fundraiser, and the generosity of our members.

With the rising cost of tuition and the financial struggle that students face, it is becoming more and more difficult for current school employees to get required certifications, even though they are employed. Some are working more than one job. The MRSPA Scholarship Fund is designed to help those individuals. It is imperative that we continue to keep qualified personnel in our schools.

Uncertified teachers, paraprofessionals and other current public school system employees pursuing Maryland teacher certification may apply for one of the three \$2000 scholarships.

In addition, certified Maryland teachers pursuing Maryland certification in a different education specialty field such as school counselor, speech pathologist, school social worker, school psychologist and physical or occupational therapist are eligible.

Three \$2000 scholarships will be awarded at MRSPA's Annual Business Meeting on May 8, 2019.

A profound thank you goes to all of our regular raffle fundraising participants and past donors and to all who will be donating for the first time.

Matilda Barckley, Scholarship Committee Chair

Scholarship Recipients Thankful for Assistance

In May 2018, MRSPA awarded 3 scholarships to current public-school employees in Maryland. Here is what the winners said about the importance of their MRSPA scholarships to the successful completion of their studies.



Pauline Baek, a middle school history teacher in Howard County, stated, "I am honestly not sure how I would have been able to complete this graduate program without the generosity of this MRSPA scholarship. Thank you again for your investment in my career."



Jill Holley, a special education paraprofessional in Cecil County working toward a teaching degree in Mid-level English Education, states, "I am excited, determined, and a little nervous to begin a new chapter in my life. Thanks to the MRSPA award, my path was made a little easier towards reaching my goals."



Patricia Simpson, a high school special education teacher in Somerset County enrolled in a Master of Education program with a concentration in differentiated instruction, states, "I'm honored that you have confidence in my abilities and have chosen me for the award. The scholarship is going to expedite obtaining my master's, which will benefit the students I teach."

MRSPA scholarship raffle tickets are currently for sale. Please contact your local president or the MRSPA office if you would like to purchase some tickets and take a chance on winning one of our great prizes. You do not have to be a member to buy a ticket and you do not have to be present at the Annual Business meeting to win.

MEMBER BENEFITS UPDATE

MRSPA members soon will benefit from two new services approved by the Board of Directors in December.

Stress Free Solutions for Seniors provides moving services, which include helping member clients to pack and/or unpack their household possessions during a move, decluttering and other activities associated with downsizing or relocating. They offer MRSPA members free consultation, 10% off their entire downsizing full service (magic wand) package, and four hours of complimentary unpacking services if members utilize the moving service. The company is located in Frederick, Maryland and provides services all over Maryland and parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

The **Hometown Heroes** program offers benefits to MRSPA member home buyers and sellers. Home buyers get a 20% commission rebate from realtor partners, \$750 rebate and no cost pre-approval from lender partners, and \$200 savings on credit restoration services. Home sellers get a

20% commission rebate from the realtor partner. The program has the ability to connect members with realtors and lenders in most areas of the country.

Members will be receiving additional information about these new programs in the coming months.

Meanwhile, the Board also voted to **discontinue** the **Abenity** member discount program at the end of the current contract. Through Abenity, participating members could receive discounts on restaurants, services, movies, trips and much more. The cost of the program to MRSPA is \$3,000 per year. A data study of the effectiveness and viability of the program over the past year revealed that despite heavy and extensive marketing efforts to improve participation in late 2017, only about 200 of our 13,000+ members actually use the program. Therefore, the Abenity program will be **discontinued**, effective March 31, 2019.

George Denny,
Member Benefits Committee Chair



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MRSPA CALENDAR

- February 12 Legislative Committee Meeting
MRSPA Odenton Office
- February 18 President’s Day
MRSPA Office Closed
- February 26Legislative Committee Meeting
MRSPA Odenton Office
- March 6.....Board of DirectorsMeeting
MRSPA Odenton Office
- March 12 Legislative Committee Meeting
MRSPA Odenton Office
- March 13Local President’s Meeting
MRSPA Odenton Office
- March 26.....Legislative Committee Meeting
MRSPA Odenton Office

MRSPA 2019 TRIPS

- | | |
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| Kingdoms of Southeast Asia: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos
1-800-848-3273 (Collette) | February 18 - March 9, 2019 |
| London Explorer
1-800-848-3273 (Collette) | March 23 - 31, 2019 |
| From the Alps to the Adriatic: Italy, Slovenia, and Croatia
1-201-228-5228 (Adventura World) | April 1 - 9, 2019 |
| America’s Music Cities: New Orleans’ Jazz Fest, Memphis, and Nashville
1-800-848-3273 (Collette) | April 26 - May 3, 2019 |
| France Culinary Delights: Paris to Normandy Cruise
1-800-322-6677 (Vantage Travel) | June 18 - July 1, 2019 |
| Best of Chile and Argentina During the Solar Eclipse
1-201-228-5228 (Adventura World) | June 30 - July 11, 2019 |
| Best of the Canadian Rockies: Calgary to Vancouver
1-800-221-2610 (Grand Circle Travel) | July 25 - August 8, 2019 |
| Viking River Cruises “Romantic Danube”: Nuremberg, Krems, Vienna, and Budapest
1-301-384-3402 (Beyond the Sea Travel) | October 6 - 13, 2019 |
| New England and Cape Cod Autumn Foliage
1-810-797-5710 or 1-443-904-4540 (Mayflower) | October 8 - 15, 2019 |
| Imperial Cities with Oberammergau Passion Play: Budapest, Vienna, and Prague
1-410-296-8330 (Collette) | August 5 - 15, 2020 |