

## MRSPA Legislative Committee

The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association's Legislative Committee, composed of members from throughout the state, is looking out for your interests in Annapolis and is your advocate. The first thing the committee does each year is review our legislative priorities. Our priorities this year include protecting well-earned pensions, enhancing health care, ensuring safety for seniors, supporting public education, promoting technological access for seniors, defending the right to vote, safeguarding consumer rights, helping seniors age in place, and addressing the rising cost of long-term care.

The Legislative Committee monitors bills introduced into the Maryland General Assembly. During this time the Legislative Committee meets frequently to determine whether the association should monitor, support, or oppose specific bills. Sometimes we write letters or testify in opposition or support of legislation, and occasionally ask our members to contact their legislators in regard to a specific bill. We will keep you informed. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Tom Slater  
Legislative Committee Chair



## Buck Receives AARP Andrus Award

On Wednesday, October 9, 2024, Barbara Buck was awarded a 2024 AARP Maryland Andrus Award for outstanding community service. The event took place at Kurtz's Beach in Pasadena.

AARP Maryland annually recognizes a member of MRSPA who exemplifies the volunteerism of NRTA (National Retired Teachers Association) and AARP founder Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus.



MRSPA President Betty Weller introduced the MRSPA award winner and shared Barbara's commitment to volunteering at almost 1,000 hours annually or 20 hours per week. Barbara is a member of the Cecil County Retired School Personnel Association where she is part of the Community Outreach Committee that collects donated school supplies, clothing, and snacks and helps deliver these to the school nurses across the county. Barbara also volunteers doing community clean-up of Hollingsworth Manor in Elkton while also serving as secretary of the Long Point Association. She also donates many hours to her church, teaching Sunday School, women's Bible study, and leading vacation Bible School's missions. Barbara also serves as Lay Leader of her church attending Council and Regional Conferences, writing cards, notes, and service announcements for members, and counts the weekly offering.

In addition, Barbara serves meals to the homeless at the Paris Foundation and helps buy and deliver holiday gifts, toys, and clothes for needy families at the Deep Roots homeless shelter. Barbara exemplifies the spirit of Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, and we could not be more proud of her.

Congratulations, Barbara!



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Betty Weller

We've turned the page on another calendar year. Some of us were glad to see 2024 go; others weren't so happy about its passing. Some of us are excited to see what 2025 will bring; others await the future with a bit of trepidation. One thing is certain...it doesn't matter how you feel about moving forward, it's going to happen. We can look forward to hearing a lot more about advances in technology (like AI), celestial events (eclipses, meteor showers, planetary movements), climate change, and who knows what else! The members of the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association can look forward this year to the 80<sup>th</sup> year since its founding. You may already know that a small group of teachers got together all those years ago over financial concerns. It's funny how the more things change, the more they stay the same. Over time, membership grew from about a couple of dozen people to thousands. The Maryland Retired School Personnel Association is still concerned about financial issues.

This month the Maryland Legislature convened for its annual session. In the second week over 600 bills have already been introduced. Not all of them are specifically about finances, but there are bills that will impact retired school personnel and other Marylanders. The MRSPA Legislative Committee is already meeting and discussing positions on bills that fit our legislative priorities. You can check out our legislative priorities on the [mrspa.org](http://mrspa.org) website. In April, at the end of the session, we'll celebrate our successes!

And what would an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday be without drawing attention to it? Our Membership and Public Relations Committees are working on a plan to get our name out there, to introduce us or perhaps reintroduce us to education personnel who are at or nearing retirement age. Folks don't join something if they don't know about it, what it does, or what they can get out of membership. There are opportunities:

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- to advocate (legislatively, for example) They say you are either at the table or you're on the menu. Be at the table!
- to serve (in schools, communities and all around)
- to connect with former and new colleagues. Make new friends, and keep the old!

In May, very close to the anniversary of our founding, we'll have our Annual Business Meeting. Those of us who attend will have the opportunity to celebrate together and hopefully look forward to many more years ahead.

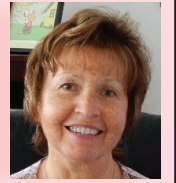
I'm sure there will be many other things that will happen in 2025, there always are. For me, I will look to 2025 for more peace and kindness in the world.

*(Continued on page 4)*

From the

## Executive Director

## Wanda Ruffo Twigg



*You can take the teacher out of the classroom...*

Once a Marine, always a Marine. You may have heard this saying if you know any US Marines or if like me you live anywhere near a military base. And of all the “former” Marines I know, they don’t typically like the use of the word “former”. At all. It is as if being a Marine is in their DNA. I get that.

While being a teacher or other school personnel is not the same as being a Marine, I think that the feeling is similar. I think being a first-year teacher was my own personal boot camp. I know I personally felt like I was storming a beach in my classroom sometimes. And certainly, there were days when the obstacles were great and varied, and we pushed through and held the line against the odds. We weren’t facing bullets and bombs, but the hormones, personalities, and sometimes anger and fear of children in a crowded, smelly setting were very real. Oh, and we had to deal with all of it in a 45-minute class period, while also teaching the content and being engaging, supportive, and professional. Just as we asked our students to get back up when they were knocked down, we did the same. We always fought the good fight and were proud to do it. We are proud to have done it.

This is also why I am so proud to work at MRSPA. I get to see firsthand how dedicated and selfless our members continue to be. How they still go the extra mile to keep their local running, to advocate to protect their pension and health benefits, to volunteer in their community, and to stay connected to their colleagues and schools. I have visited all our local associations and attended hundreds of meetings and events in my tenure with MRSPA, and I remain amazed at what MRSPA and our locals accomplish.

But I also know that I shouldn’t really be amazed or surprised. It is who our members are. It’s in their DNA. They’ve stormed the classroom beaches and came out the other side. They’ve impacted the lives of thousands of children and improved their communities, and they continue to do so because they don’t know how to do anything else. And they will keep being who they are because you can’t take the classroom out of the teacher (school personnel).

Thank you for your membership in MRSPA!



### 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.*

### Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

*We, the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association, are evolving to reflect the goals and aspirations of a contemporary organization. Through our shared values, we create an environment where all members are included, respected, and appreciated.*

## It's MRSPA Foundation Raffle Time!

The MRSPA Community Service and Scholarship Committees provide tremendous support to students and staff in our schools across Maryland. Therefore, we are seeking **donations** to the *MRSPA Foundation* so that we can continue our work. Again, this year, raffle tickets will be purchased solely through the MRSPA newsletter and through local association newsletters using the form below. All donations are tax deductible and come with our thanks and appreciation!

Your name will be entered into a drawing upon receipt of your donation based on this criterion: Donations of \$10 will earn 1 raffle ticket while donations of \$25 will earn 3 raffle tickets incrementally. MRSPA staff will write your name on the correct number of tickets and send your tickets stubs to you in the US Mail when we receive your check. The drawing will take place at the May 2025 Annual Business Meeting whether held in person or virtually. You can win the \$300 cash first prize, a Maryland themed basket valued at \$175 second prize, or one of 5 third place themed baskets valued at \$125: Cooking, Game Night, Wine Lover, Book Worm, and Sports Lover. Out-of-state winners will receive gift cards in lieu of basket contents.

Entering the drawing is fun and easy!

1. Make your check payable to **MRSPA Foundation**.
2. Write **MRSPA Foundation** on the FOR line.
3. Date and **sign** your check.
4. **Mail** check and completed form to MRSPA at 8379 Piney Orchard Parkway, Suite A, Odenton, MD 21113 **before March 21, 2025**.

Will you send a donation today?

Receipts and ticket stubs will be sent via US Mail.



### MRSPA Foundation

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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*(President, continued from page 2)*

I will hope for positive changes in the climate and greater understanding of what AI is, does, and how it can be used for good. Finally, I look to 2025 for growth in our organization. Abraham Lincoln said, "The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time." Let's make the most of 2025!

***Opportunities to Advocate,  
Serve, and Connect***

## Nominee for President-elect Alice Mitchell, Dorchester County



Alice retired from the Dorchester County Public Schools in 2009 after 25 years of service. During her career, she taught a variety of courses including math, General Science, Environmental Science, Introduction to Physics, and Introduction to Chemistry. In 1999-2000 she was honored as the Dorchester County Teacher of the Year. From 1999-2009 she served as an Assistant Administrator at Mace's Lane Middle School in Cambridge and North Dorchester Middle in Hurlock. In addition to the field of Education, Alice has also worked as a Certified Respiratory Therapy Technician, and held licenses in the fields of real estate, mortgages, health insurance, long term care insurance, and securities.

Following her retirement, Alice has been an active member of the Dorchester Retired School Personnel Association (DRSPA) and the Maryland Retired School Personnel Association (MRSPA).

Alice is currently serving as President of the local association and has served as chair of the MRSPA Member Benefits Committee. In addition, she is an associate member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 570, serving as Adjutant. She is also a member of NAACP and AARP.

In her spare time, Alice has maintained the grounds at the Cambridge Church of Christ, traveled to Charlotte Hall Veterans Home Assisted Living Facility to play bingo with the residents, and placed flags on Purple Heart recipients' graves at the Eastern Shore Veterans Cemetery. Alice has made *Cups of Kindness* wellness check contacts with selected Dorchester School retirees and participated with 4H activities at Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad sites, both locally and in Baltimore County. Recently, she was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Nanticoke Historical Preservation Alliance.

John Sisson, MRSPA Area III South Director states that "on the Lower Shore we have long observed and greatly admired the organizational flair and leadership skill of Alice Mitchell. She has directed a program of public service that has brought credit and recognition to our Dorchester affiliate and to MRSPA. Her membership is actively involved in

Association activities, and meetings are well attended. She is dedicated to our mission. She is focused, clear-headed and fair. Alice walks in the footsteps of Ethel Percy Andrus. She is prepared to serve as President-elect of MRSPA, and it is her time."

Alice cites her desire to improve the life of others as the driving force for all her endeavors, including serving as MRSPA President-elect. "I have spent my professional life trying to improve the quality of life for others. The opportunity to serve the MRSPA is a logical next step for me. When I started my career, I worked as a high school teacher providing my students with structure, rigor, and skills that prepared them for life. This was more than 40 years ago and when I see them now, I am reminded of the life lessons they learned in my class. I also spent time as a Respiratory Therapist in a hospital where I worked day and night to make sure that my patients were able to breathe, thus improving their quality of life. This was before I returned to my passion - education. As a teacher and then administrator I was always aware that school was a step on the road to "the real world." I made it my goal to give hope, opportunity, and dignity to each person in my building every day. The same is true now as a retired educator. In my role as Dorchester County president of DRSPA, I work to make sure that our members feel valued and get the respect that they are owed after years of service to others. This also means that I work to ensure that our members feel seen and enjoy their retirement with dignity. It is this same spirit that I plan to bring to MRSPA. Every retiree deserves to enjoy a good quality of life after working and I plan to make sure that it happens. Retirement doesn't mean the end of a career but the beginning of life with happiness and dignity."





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## Tracy Skalitzky

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Connected resources include:

- Elder Care Lawyers
- Caregiving Agencies
- Adult Medical Day Programs
- Real Estate Agents & Investors
- Home Health Companies
- Hospice
- Down Sizing Companies & Movers
- Financial Advisors





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**MRSPA CALENDAR**

- February 17.....Presidents' Day  
*MRSPA Office Closed*
- March 11.....Board of Directors Meeting  
*Hybrid*
- March 18.....Local Presidents' Meeting  
*Virtual*
- April 7.....Sine Die, End of G.A. Session  
*Annapolis*
- April 18-21.....Spring Break  
*MRSPA Office Closed*
- May 6.....Annual Business Meeting  
*Turf Valley, Ellicott City*



**MRSPA TRIPS AND TRAVEL  
 2024-2025**



**Pacific Wine Country**, May 10-17, 2025, Princess Cruise via Grand American Tours, Contact Amy Aaron, 800-423-0247.

**Canadian Maritimes & Coastal Wonders**, July 10-20, 2025, Collette Vacations via Travel Leaders/Action Travel, Contact Leigh Ann Keller, 301-645-1770 or 301-843-0887 or at [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

**Best of Scandinavia**, July 23 – August 1, 2025, Mayflower Tours via Travel Leaders/Action Travel, Contact Leigh Ann Keller, 301-645-1770 or 301-843-0887 or at [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

**Greek Isles & Italy: Santorini, Athens, and Florence**, September 1-11, 2025, Norwegian Cruise Lines via Grand American Tours, Contact Amy Aaron, 800-423-0247.

**National Parks of the Southwest**, September 14-23, 2025, Mayflower Cruises and Tours, Contact Liz Unger, 443-904-4540, or at [poppy4100@aol.com](mailto:poppy4100@aol.com), or Jean Rice, 727-403-6096, or at [jean@mayflowercruisesandtours.com](mailto:jean@mayflowercruisesandtours.com).

**New England Rails and Sails**, October 10-18, 2025, Mayflower Tours via Travel Leaders/Action Travel, Contact Leigh Ann Keller, 301-645-1770 or 301-843-0887, or at [admin@actiontraveltours.com](mailto:admin@actiontraveltours.com).

Check our website at [www.mrspa.org](http://www.mrspa.org), click *Travel* to locate more information on trips.

All MRSPA trips are open to MRSPA members, their family, and friends. Please use **Code: G5-28192 anytime** you travel with Grand Circle Tours to access a special deal for you and MRSPA, even if it's not a MRSPA sponsored trip.