

NEA-Alaska/Retired

Summer 2023 • Volume XXXVI No. 3

A Bit Of NEA-Alaska/Retired History – Our Newsletter

The first issue of our retired newsletter, Volume 1, No. 1, was published in the winter of 1986-87. The editor was Merritt Olson. Much of the information pertained to the newly formed affiliate after a five-month membership drive which resulted in the enrollment of 288 retired members. The cost of lifetime retired membership was a total of \$300, \$100 for NEA-Retired Life dues and \$200 for NEA-Alaska/Retired life dues. The first election in November 1987 selected 11 members as delegates to the 1987 DA, presided over by Jean Krause, and Merritt Olson was elected as the first interim Region R director on the NEA-Alaska Board of Directors. A second election after the 1987 DA was held to elect a Region R director for the 1987-1988 term and to elect a Region R delegate to the 1987 Representative Assembly.

An article in this first newsletter reflects on the only time that the State was in arrears, for two fiscal years, on its contribution to the TRS system. For two budget cycles Governor Sheffield failed to include the state's obligation to provide full funding to TRS. By FY '87 the state was in arrears by \$16,000,000 due TRS. PERS was fully funded during this time. While the actuarial soundness of the fund was not threatened at the time (returns on investments were in excess of 25%), the long-term effect of losing earning power on that substantial amount is significant.

Merritt was editor until 1992 when Don Schulz, also from Anchorage, took over and content changed a bit. We had more travel articles and book reports as well as a report from the newly established Alaska Pension Investment Board (ASPIB). Merritt was one of the first two elected members to this board and submitted an article on ASPIB's actions for each newsletter. Merritt was also President of NEA-Alaska/Retired, 1991-1992.

Don served as editor until 1999 and wrote many interesting articles on his travels and on ways to travel economically. Dorothy Wells, who also served on ASPIB, wrote of work on the Board but also suggested many good books to include on our reading lists. Don also served as President of NEA-Alaska/Retired during part of this time as well as a trainer to present retirement seminars in many of the large locals.

In 1999 Jerry Patterson, from Juneau, became editor until 2002. As is true with many of our editors, Jerry had other duties. He served on the TRS Board and in 2002 became our retired President so he turned the job of editor over to Kristina Tornqvist of Palmer. Our membership continued to grow and we now had two Region R directors and two retired delegates to RA. Unfortunately from 2003 to 2005 we spent considerable time opposing efforts to implement a defined contribution retirement system so Kristina included many articles on that effort along with articles supporting the repeal of GPO/WEP. Kristina spent many hours with Barb Young, NEA-Alaska staff, formatting the issues and presenting

us a new type of paper, more photos, and additional reports from several boards.

Kristina provided us with many excellent reads and lots of information. In 2012, Barbara Stek of Anchorage took over as editor. Barb worked with Color Art Printing to produce an outstanding product and, because of technology, no longer needs to take the time of NEA-Alaska staff. We need to thank Barb and our other four editors for the countless hours they spent to provide us with current information. Now, of course, the newsletter is available by email, no more bundling by volunteers, and our organization has grown – almost 40 delegates to DA and four Region R reps on the state board.

And now we have our newest editor, Annie Baker, who will take over in the fall. Congratulations, Annie!!!

THANKS TO EDITORS, PAST AND PRESENT, FOR ALL YOUR WORK!

– *Gayle Harbo, NEA-Alaska/Retired Treasurer*

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NEA-Alaska/Retired Board**President**

Roxanne Abajian (2024)
PO Box 8996 • Ketchikan, AK 99901
907-617-8511
roxanne.abajian@gmail.com

Vice President

Trena Richardson (2024)
PO Box 2278 • Soldotna, AK 99669
907-252-2881
aktrena@gmail.com

Secretary

Barbara Stek (2024)
6101 Eastwood Ct. • Anchorage, AK 99504
907-338-2288
bwstekak@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Gayle Harbo (2024)
PO Box 10201 • Fairbanks, AK
99710 907-457-7815
sjharbo@yahoo.com

Directors-at-Large

Marilyn Pillifant (2024)
2436 Glenwood Street • Anchorage, AK 99508
907-301-4699
pilli@alaska.net

Pamela Lloyd (2024)
30238 White Spruce Ave • Sterling, AK 99672
907-242-6007
pamela.lloyd5@gmail.com

Susan Stitham (2025)
PO Box 337 • Ashland, OR 97520
907-347-1218
omm1961@gmail.com

**Region R Directors
NEA-Alaska Board**

Christine Villano (2024)
2142 Bridgewater Dr. • Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-452-6785/907-378-9969
christine.villano23@gmail.com

Judy Salo (2023)
PO Box 521123 • Big Lake, AK 99652
907-252-4672
jandrsalo@icloud.com

Trena Richardson (2025) | Barbara Stek (2024)

President's Message



As we head into the height of summer, it is time to consider if you are interested in being an NEA-Alaska/Retired delegate to the 2024 NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly (DA). I encourage any retired member, who is interested in engaging more with our organization, to complete and submit the nomination form included in this newsletter. You can also submit your nomination by email. Details about travel and reimbursement are also included in this issue. The past few years, our local,

NEA-Alaska/Retired, has seated about 35 elected retired delegates at DA. The number of allocated delegates from each local is based on membership.

The electronic election will be held in early October. Every NEA-Alaska/Retired member will receive an email with the link to vote. You can also go to the NEA-Alaska/Retired website and click the link to vote on the menu bar. Please make sure that NEA-Alaska has your correct and current email address. If you need to update your email, please contact associate staff Makana Bender at makana.bender@neaalaska.org or call the NEA-Alaska office: 907-274-0536.

On the October ballot you will also have the opportunity to vote on proposed changes to our NEA-Alaska/Retired Bylaws. The proposed changes:

- expand the duties of the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors
- determine who attends Policy Assembly
- establish an annual Policy Assembly and specify the authority of the Policy Assembly
- determine that delegates to Delegate Assembly and the Retired Policy Assembly are elected by the retired members at the same time, in one election.

1. **Article VI — Board of Directors.** This proposed change states that the Retired Board of Directors (officers, Directors-at-Large, and NEA-Alaska Region R Directors) attends the NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly and the NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly. Currently, there are nine members of the Retired Board of Directors; however, the four NEA-Alaska Region R Directors attend DA as state board delegates, and thus do not impact the number of retired delegates allocated to the retired membership.
2. **Article VII – Officers, Directors-At-Large, and NEA-Alaska Region R Directors.** These proposed changes specify that the NEA-Alaska/Retired President will attend and chair the retired caucus meetings and the Policy Assembly at DA. Another proposed change in Article VII states that the NEA-Alaska Region R Directors will also attend the Retired Policy Assembly as voting members.
3. **Article VIII — Policy Assembly.** This is an addition to our bylaws. It states that the NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly shall be held the day before the Delegate Assembly. The NEA-Alaska/Retired President shall chair the Policy Assembly. The Policy Assembly shall be empowered to submit motions and take positions on issues at DA; recommend bylaw changes to the membership; and make recommendations to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors for policies, programs, and activities for NEA-Alaska/Retired.
4. **Article IX — Elections.** This change states that election to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors by the NEA-Alaska/Retired members shall constitute election to the NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly and to the NEA-Alaska/Retired

Editor: Barbara Stek

This newsletter is the official publication of NEA-Alaska/Retired, printed three times a year. Retired members are encouraged to submit articles, as well as voice comments and concerns. Articles should be sent in Word via email to Annie Baker: annie_b@mac.com.

“President’s Message” Cont.

Policy Assembly. It also states that election of retired members to represent NEA-Alaska/Retired at Delegate Assembly shall constitute election to the NEA-Alaska/Retired Policy Assembly.

You can read the current NEA-Alaska/Retired Bylaws here: <https://nealaskaretired.files.wordpress.com/2023/07/bylaws-1-2022.pdf>

When information about the election and the changes to the Retired Bylaws is sent to you, you will receive the bylaws with the proposed changes.

Gratitude and thank you. After many years as editor of our NEA-Alaska/Retired newsletter, Barb Stek is taking a well-deserved retirement from this very important job.

We appreciate Barb’s years of service, her diligence, persistence, and editorial skills. Thank you, Barb!

NEA-Alaska Board of Directors

The NEA-Alaska Board retreat was held at Alyeska on June 7 and 8. Trena Richardson, our newest board member, Judy Salo, and I were in attendance as your representatives from NEA-Alaska/Retired. Roxanne Abajian and Christine Villano were unable to attend.

Reports were given by Vice President, Laura Capelle, and NEA Director, Kathy Simpler.

Each region reported on recent activities or issues. Contract settlements or disputes were noted in many areas. Educators in Mat-Su voted overwhelmingly to strike if negotiations continue to fail. Educator turnover is a big issue leading to many unfilled positions.

For Region R, Judy reported on the latest modernization efforts by RHPAB, including the possible elimination of the



Trena Richardson, Barbara Stek, Judy Salo

New Editor: With unanimous approval from the Retired Board of Directors our Communications Chair, Annie Baker, has been appointed to be the new editor. Annie will bring her many skills and her enthusiasm to support NEA-Alaska/Retired. I have no doubt Annie will continue the high-quality work of all previous editors.

I hope everyone is enjoying a lovely summer season. So far, we have had an unusually warm and sunny summer in Ketchikan. The garlic is almost ready to be harvested. The bears are roaming the yard waiting for the cherries to ripen. It will be a race between bear and human to see who gets to the cherries first. The deer are eating whatever they can access. The dahlias are blooming (on the deck and harder for deer to get to) and the bees are buzzing.

Until next time.

– Roxanne Abajian

lifetime maximum. Gayle Harbo, Pamela Lloyd, and Jacob Bera recently went to a legislative committee meeting in DC to speak on retiree issues. Our members continue to be involved in political action. We are also working on updating our by-laws.

Fran Linn provided us with her management report. The membership blitz for early enrollment was a success - 157 new members - yeah!! A coordinated bargaining conference was held.

Tom Klaameyer’s president’s report included these highlights:

- More to be done with GPO/WEP cadre
- PACE review on June 23 to include procedures with Rank Choice Ballot; increase PACE contributions from \$15 to \$24 (less for ESP)
- Racial and Social Justice: the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) met yesterday - they will have a table at DA to recruit members and build resources, have a strand at Fall and Spring Event; equity audit - build and deliver a survey with NEA’s help
- Professional and Leadership Growth: advertise to members and apply for a GPS (Great Public Schools) Grant to create programs to develop leaders; connect our own members in an ESP network

A committee of the board met to review the 11 NEA-Alaska New Educator Grant applications to ensure that criteria have been met. All grants were approved although the value of two grants was halved because of the grant guidelines.

We participated in an activity some of you may be familiar with: True Colors. It was interesting to learn that some of your

“NEA-Alaska Board of Directors” Cont.

firm personality beliefs may not actually be valid. We then had opportunities to interact with others on the board.

Matt Bennet, Associate Director of Organizing, spoke to us about year-round organizing. He cited the following which impact our union:

- Much dissatisfaction with the profession
- Even with Janus, the impact was not as noticeable
- Covid caused more loss than Janus
- 8700 members in NEA-Alaska - 86% certified, 27% ESPs
- ESPs have left the profession in larger numbers
- Most people who left were quits, not retirements
- Payroll deduction inability causes loss of membership
- What’s working in recruitment??

2023 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting | Orlando, Florida – June 29-30.

Reflections by Steve Click

Howard Maxwell and I were our two NEA-Alaska/Retired delegates to both the 2023 Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) and the NEA Representative Assembly (RA). The high point of this year’s RAM meeting was the 40th anniversary celebration of NEA-Retired.

Here are some highlights from the RAM, and please be sure to especially read the last few paragraphs of this article as they will refer you to NEA sites that give great tips for your advocacy in the coming months.

If you have ever been a delegate to our annual NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly, which takes place in Anchorage each January, you know that we usually have about 350 educator-delegates from across Alaska. The NEA RAM, meeting in person for the first time since 2020, had 325 registered attendees, with 299 voting delegates (as in, elected delegates to the NEA RA). NEA-Retired delegates from each state and an additional delegate from the Federal Education Association affiliate (think Overseas Education Association from years ago, with retired member educators working on US military worldwide installations) came together to do the business of NEA-Retired.

Forty years ago, with the beginning of NEA-Retired, membership was about 23,000. Currently we have a few more - over 323,000 retired members! We number about 1/10 of the total membership of NEA.

An important part of this annual meeting is to help raise funds for NEA’s political action committee (PAC). Our PAC is extremely important as we can use no dues monies on political action, and in today’s political climate across the country, we need to support candidates who believe in

- Early enrollment is working
- 14% growth in new member recruitment in Alaska
- Strengthen building reps
- We trust people who look like us

Potential members want a stronger voice, working conditions that value their time, and better compensation. Our ESPs are looking for economic justice, now and in retirement.

We need to develop lists of potential members so that we can organize our membership drives. Creative meetings and special events will draw folks in.

Our next state board meeting will be in September.

– *Barbara Stek*

a strong public school education system and who believe in what we as an association believe. Our support for candidates - from school board members to state legislators, all the way up to the US President - can include volunteering our time/resources and additionally with monetary support. At this RAM, well over \$20,000 was raised by a silent auction and a very energetic live auction. One bottle of a limited Jack Daniels whiskey was bought for \$1,379 and we actually raised



Howard Maxwell and Steve Click

“2023 NEA-Retired Annual Meeting” Cont.

another \$1,379 for the other bidder in the room, so that live auction was ended rather than going on with \$1 increments! Over \$18,000 was contributed through the online auction open to all retired members.

We sadly said our “goodbye” to the current NEA-Retired president, Sarah Borgman, with appreciation for her six years as president, as well as numerous other positions along the way. I worked with her on the NEA Resolutions Committee in the 1990s. Throughout the two long days of the RAM, President Sarah continued in her usual kindness and “let’s get this done” form. I paraphrase “quotes” from Sarah - We have accomplished so much because we have experienced and endured so much. We have dared to dream and dreams must turn into goals; we have dared to do something - and we have tasted victory.

We elected a new NEA-Retired president - Anita Gibson, Alabama. She will become president on September 1, along with other new and/or re-elected NEA-Retired Executive Council and NEA-R Board members.

We also had the election for our six positions on the NEA Resolutions Committee. There were twelve candidates, with the top six vote-getters being the members on the committee and the last six candidates being alternates. I ran for a position, gave my 2-minute speech and ended up earning 99 votes, elected as the first alternate. If I am elected by you to be a delegate at next year’s RA, I will run again for the NEA Resolutions Committee.

We had our NEA-R new business items to decide (e.g., updating the NEA-R website to be more “user friendly”). There was also a handful of bylaws. We spoke, debated, and had a paper ballot election Friday morning. More information can be found at: www.nea.org/nea-councils/nea-retired#2023-Retired-Annual-Meeting-Information.

Representative Assembly | July 2 - July 6, 2023

Steve Click and I were your elected delegates to the Retired Annual Meeting which precedes RA and to the full Representative Assembly. Daily NEA-Alaska Caucus meetings were held at 7am. I served on the daily Preview Committee which met at 6am to study official RA business and make recommendations for caucus positions on NBIs, Standing Rules, and Resolutions that would be coming to the RA Floor.

During the daily NEA-Alaska Caucus meetings, our 50+ Alaska delegates heard candidates and other visitors speak and worked hard on raising money for the NEA fund. Retired members are encouraged to give generously to the **NEAFund.org** and, if possible, make monthly contributions

Some of you may recall that we raised \$1,282 at our own NEA-Alaska 2023 Delegate Assembly to donate to the NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Scholarship program. Thanks to the generosity of many NEA-Retired members, five scholarships were awarded during the 2023 Retired Annual Meeting. Each scholarship amount was \$3,500, a significant contribution toward an aspiring educator’s higher education costs. From the first \$1,000 award to one recipient in 2002, the program has grown significantly and now has awarded over \$90,000 in scholarship money to 46 aspiring educators.

NEA-Alaska has continuously been advocating for the end of the Social Security penalties of the Government Pension Offset/Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP), and so has NEA-Retired and NEA. Our retired associations have been “educating” NEA active-members, community members, school boards members, state legislators, and most importantly Congressional members about the devastating effects these two measures have on so many public employees.

Our last major speaker was Mary Kusler, Senior Director, NEA Center for Advocacy. She offered that NEA is strongly advocating for the end of the GPO/WEP penalties, www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/action-center/take-action/fully-repeal-unfair-social-security-penalties. She also reiterated that we, the members of NEA, along with supportive community members and other groups “can’t win where we don’t play.” Please link to <https://educationvotes.nea.org/take-action/be-an-edactivist/> and share this information with your family and friends.

Howard and I both thank you for allowing us to be your voice at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting. Please contact either of us with any questions.

– Steve Click

(if you do not already do this, it’s easy - please consider).

We also spent time each day speaking with the Alaska Delegation, discussing the merits of joining NEA-Alaska/Retired as a pre-retired member. We were successful in boosting our membership as at least two and possibly as many as 5 new members joined or are likely to join.

Most importantly, our caucus spent many hours considering the NBIs, thereby arriving at caucus positions to take to the floor each day.

It was very hot and muggy in Orlando with temps in the mid 90s and “feels like” (heat index) over 100 every day. Thank

Cont. on pg 6

“Representative Assembly” Cont.

heavens for air conditioning! We were also hit by some doozy thunderstorms with wind, rain, lightning, and thunder (very intense!).

The floor sessions of RA were impressive as always. Being in the center with nearly 6000 educators and like-minded pro-labor individuals is always very inspiring and exhilarating. Much time was spent in debate and doing the members’ business (aka sausage making). Delegates also heard from several very significant and inspiring speakers including:

- President Joe Biden [live video feed] (joined by Jill)
- U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona
- Disability Rights Activist Helena Donato-Sapp
- NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson
- National Teacher of the Year
- National ESP of the Year
- Becky Pringle (NEA President)
- Kim Anderson (NEA Executive Director)

2023 Awards:**Rebecka Peterson**

*2023 National Teacher of the Year, Math Teacher
Oklahoma*

Pamella Johnson

*2023 NEA Education Support Professional of the Year
Academic and Behavioral Intervention Specialist
Washington State*

Derrick Johnson

*2023 NEA President’s Award Recipient—
NAACP President and CEO*

Freedom to Learn Rally

- Freedom to Teach • Freedom to Learn
- Freedom to Love • Freedom to Vote

There were many inspirational speakers including Alaska’s own Representative Maxine Dibert who spoke to the crowd of over 3000 and helped fire them up!

What are we gonna do? Whatever it takes!

We Say Gay, We Say Gay, We Say Gay

*Freedom to read whatever books students and teachers want,
especially books that teach about diversity and history all over the
world! Don’t abandon our most vulnerable kids!*

Academic Freedom! Don’t legislate curriculum!

LINK? <https://fb.watch/IBCJOrSpSk/>

It’s a little over 40 minutes, but if you want Maxine’s bit it is 36’30”-40’. The whole rally is worth a watch.

Other Notes:

There was a bit of shadow over the RA which was kind of the elephant in the room, all about availability of funds and the prevailing fear about losing automatic dues payroll deductions, which has already happened to 10+ states including Florida (states switching to E-dues). Many states including Alaska

have pending legislation to this effect and it is a clear and present danger to our growth (or lack thereof) and availability of dollars to put to work in our union. We were told by our Alaska NEA director, Kathy Simpler, and by many higher-ups that our contingency fund for NEA was endangered, and that we should/must keep it sensible and pragmatic. Lots of NBIs were defeated or referred in an effort to reduce costs and avoid using contingency funds. This, of course, caused some consternation and resentment. One other subjective/anecdotal observation: fiscal notes for NBI actions were notably a lot higher than in previous years (higher than just inflation).

** Total Cost of NBIs adopted at the 2023 RA: \$1,242,290

Total Cost of NBIs referred to committee: \$9,761,897

NBIs Reviewed in Preview, Caucus, and the Floor:

Because there were over 90 NBIs to consider, and because of the contentious budget debate overshadowing, by the final two days there were multiple bundling actions that resulted in issues being addressed by referring them to the appropriate committees for consideration after RA.

The GPO-WEP issue was more prevalent in NBIs last year, but the state presidents are meeting and pushing hard to move ahead with major lobbying efforts on the issue. Keep up the great work lobbying your legislators on the GPO-WEP issue!

Use this link for 2023 NBI information: <http://bit.ly/43I8LTq>

RA Election Results:

NEA President: Becky Pringle

Vice President: Princess Moss

Secretary-Treasurer: Noel Candelaria

Executive Committee: Shannon McCann and Mark Jewell

Shall the NEA endorse Joe Biden for re-election as President?

Yes (4,392) 84.30% **No** (818) 15.70%

ESP At-Large Board of Directors: Debra Ward-Mitchell, Brenda Johnson, Pamella Johnson, Ivory Smith, Gwendolyn Edwards, Cesar Carranza, Tarsha Lawson, Aneeka Ferrell

ESP At-Large Alternate to the Board of Directors Declared Elected: Tonya Scott-Cole

If you are interested in more information relating to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting or to the RA itself, please feel free to contact Steve Click or me.

— Howard Maxwell



Please make sure we have your current email address. Contact Makana Bender at 274-0536 to make changes.

Delegate Assembly 2024 Nominations

To be nominated for Delegate Assembly (DA), **January 11-13, 2024**, please complete this form including a few statements about yourself limited to 25 words.

An on-line election will be held in October. You will be notified of the results as early as possible. Nominations for the NEA-Alaska/Retired Board of Directors, including officers, and nominations for two-year appointments to the NEA-Alaska PACE Committee will be made during the caucus at DA.

The retired local will follow these reimbursement policies:

- **NEA-Alaska will reimburse costs associated with transportation:** airfare, mileage, cab fare between airport and hotel. Airfare will be reimbursed up to \$600 for out-of-state transportation based on coach class airfare. If traveling to Anchorage from within the state, NEA-Alaska will reimburse the full transportation cost based on coach class airfare.
- **NEA-Alaska/Retired will reimburse lodging and meals:** Lodging expenses are for hotel room and tax at the NEA-Alaska negotiated room rate based on double occupancy. Delegates will be reimbursed up to \$70 per diem for each day in travel status less any meals provided during DA. *(To be eligible for meal allowance, the traveler must be in travel status for three consecutive hours during these periods: midnight to 10:00am for breakfast, 10:00am to 3:00pm for lunch, and 3:00pm to midnight for dinner.)*

****Delegates must attend all caucus meetings including the Thursday, January 11, meeting as well as all sessions of DA to receive full reimbursement.**

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY NOMINATION FORM

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY: (Limit: 25 words)



To submit your nomination by email, send it to Associate Staff, Makana Bender at makana.bender@neaalaska.org and **cc to the president of NEA-Alaska/Retired at roxanne.abajian@gmail.com**

Be sure to include **'DA 2024 Retired Nomination'** in the subject line along with the information asked for on the form.

Emailed nominations must be received **no later than September 21, 2023**. If you mail the form, it must be received in the Anchorage office (at the address below) postmarked **no later than September 15, 2023**.

Makana will send you a confirmation email upon receipt of your nomination form. Be sure to check all your email folders, including your spam folder. It is your responsibility to ensure that your nomination form was received. To confirm that your form was received, please email Makana or call the NEA-Alaska office at 907-274-0536. You can also contact Roxanne at roxanne.abajian@gmail.com

For those sending their nomination form via USPS,

Send to: NEA-Alaska/Retired
Attn. Makana Bender
4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517





4100 Spenard Road
Anchorage, AK 99517

www.neaalaska.org or
email: info@neaalaska.org

The Nomination Form for Delegate Assembly is Inside!

Delegate Assembly 2024

I know it's only "summertime" (using the word loosely considering our Alaska weather), but we are looking forward to DA 2024. Barb George, Membership Chair, is excited about the giraffe theme as we invite educators to "Stand Tall with Us!" and become lifetime members of NEA-Alaska/Retired. For those of you who are submitting your nomination forms for DA, please think of some great giraffe (or other) items for our retired table giveaways.

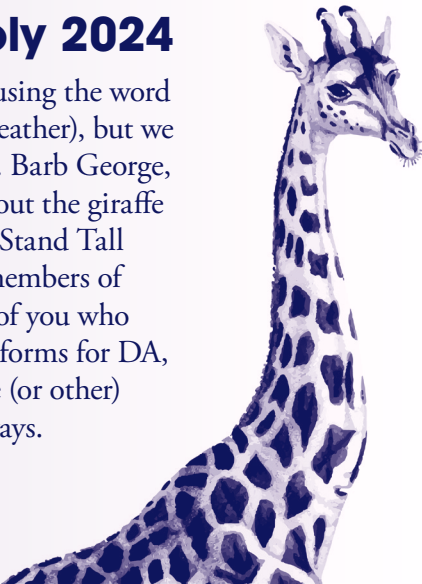


IMAGE BY RAWPIXEL.COM ON FREEPIK.COM

Help Us Find You!

Please make sure we have your current mailing address, phone number, and email address. Contact Makana Bender at 274-0536 to make any changes to your information.



Calendar of Events

September

- 28 NEA-Alaska/Retired Board meeting
- 29-30 NEA-Alaska State Board meeting

October

- 13-15 Fall Event

November

- 4 Virtual State Board meeting

January

- 9-10 NEA-Alaska State Board meeting
- 11-13 Delegate Assembly