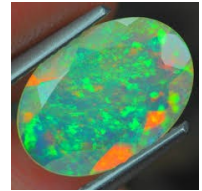


# GEMS



The Official Publication of Retired Educators Association of Idaho

Volume Number

## President's Message

Greeting from the President

March is Nutritional Awareness Month.

Tonight, I had a sinful \$58.00 dinner including wine and dessert. It was totally delicious—the best bite size steak here in the capital of bite size. You should see my guilt. As educators, how many of you saw poverty and hunger in the eyes of your students? As retired educators, how many of you know that you have former colleagues who are hungry, who do not eat well, who no longer cook well for themselves? My dinner was a true treat as we honored a neurosurgeon in our coffee group who turned 90 today. My morning serving as a retired educator packing “backpacks” for 252 kids was as an acute reminder of two things: 1. Retired educators like helping kids, and 2. There are so many to be helped.

Disparity in our society is unbelievable, and I am betting many of you go more easily to the grocery store with PERSI retirement funds tucked into your bank account than those living on Social Security alone. Many of us are in a position to help kids and certainly to attack food insecurity among the adults in our communities, yes even educators. If you are delivering meals, filling food pantries, giving good friends rides to the grocery store or senior center, congratulate yourselves humbly.

On the other hand, if you receive meals or go to a meal center in your community, be grateful for the services provided. As cuts linger in minds of legislatures and administrators nationwide, may you and your friends not be affected. Many of us have the gift of gab and the gift of communication to be able to contact legislators and leaders to underscore that it is fine for us to want to and to volunteer to help everyone eat, but they need to pass laws honoring the less fortunate among us, both school children and adults.

I hope I can savor the flavors of the night without too much guilt. I just hope I can do that with equal jubilation when

helping others receive vital food. I hope you will join in with me.

I have hidden from myself and the world for a couple months after my wife's death, but she would be disappointed if I were not to get my head and body back into living fruitfully. Part of that is plainly enjoying all of you. I wish there were a formula for dealing with grief. Mine is writing, in part. Way too many of us have experienced loss and there will be more opportunities for each of us to support our friends. I am offering a poem I wrote for me that may be published in the local paper that doesn't typically publish poetry (often pretty bad, I understand), but they have published some of mine over the years.

### THE ANATOMY OF GRIEF

I scoffed at the anatomy of grief.

What a fool I was.

It was obvious that Camus was right:

The heart has its own memory.

There has been a physical change, too.

My feet have lost direction.

My legs seem heavier than my heart.

My hair rages at the thought of being cut.

That was the forest where her fingers

wandered

with great abandonment and love.

My arms have shriveled and my skin

looks like water rippling in the cold

winds of reality.

The mirror is so unkind. My stroke-

distorted

mouth sags with grief-deflated muscles

longing for “good night” kisses.

My ears hear so much haunting silence.

And my hands are no longer mine.

Blood runs through a delta of veins

rising above wrinkled old-man skin.

The wedding ring does a dance around

the

boney finger, but my eyes no longer

dance and sparkle.

True, Camus, “the heart has its own

memory, and

I haven't forgotten...”

Yes, the anatomy of grief screams for

relief.

Will I find me?

Dr. Dennis Ohrtman

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## TRAVEL ADVENTURES 2026

### DISCOVER AMERICA'S 250<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

This is the next tour we have scheduled with Collette travel. It is called THE TOUR HEARD AROUND THE WORLD. The main point of interest is the Revolutionary War. This is a nine day tour. Four cities are included. Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. Some of the tour highlights are: Museum of the American Revolution, West Point Academy, Mt. Vernon, Arlington National Cemetery, NYC Panoramic Tour, and Lexington and Concord, to name a few. This is a level 2 tour and

includes 12 meals. 8 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 3 dinners. The dates are August 10-18 2026. An added excursion is the Broadway show, Hamilton and dinner. Deposits for registration are due by February 2, 2026. Final payment is due by May 12, 2026. Information is also available on our Retired Educator's Website. Want a trip that's not listed, contact Collette on line or by phone at 800-852-5655. Be sure to mention my name, Margaret Reimer, and tell them that you are a member of Retired Educator's of Idaho so your unit will get a commission.

You can also contact Margaret Reimer at [reimem8@gmail.com](mailto:reimem8@gmail.com) or call 208-887-6747.

## Executive Secretary's Message

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT

### Idaho Representatives:

Rep. Russ Fulcher 202-225-6611, 208-888-3188  
<https://fulcher.house.gov/>

Rep. Mike Simpson 202-225-5531, 334-1953,  
[www.simpson.house.gov](http://www.simpson.house.gov)

Sen. Mike Crapo 202-224-6142, 334-1776,  
[www.crapo.senate.gov](http://www.crapo.senate.gov)

Sen. James E. Risch 202-224-2752, 208-342-7985  
[www.risch.senate.gov](http://www.risch.senate.gov)

## News missing from the following:

Lower Snake River REA

SEIREA

IDAHO FALLS REA

Community Service

## **NIREA-North Idaho Retired Educators**

Greetings from North Central Idaho.

We have had a busy fall and beginning of winter. No snow yet, but we have had a major wind and rainstorm that came through and did a lot of damage to properties. In September, we welcomed the director and art director from the Pullman Regional Theater. We invited the Lewiston Rotary Club to watch the program. One point that was new to many of our members is that the Pullman Regional Theater is for profit and the actors, directors, and production staff are paid for their performances. In October, David Johnson, who is a local author and reporter for the newspaper, talked to the group about his column that interviewed people that he would pick out of the telephone book at random, interview them, and then write a weekly column about them. He was well received and we had many members come to

hear his story. Again, the Rotary members joined our meeting to hear David speak. Our November meeting is our annual live auction for the LCSC Scholarship. We had a very good turn-out for this meeting. We had a lively auction and raised the amount needed for the scholarship as well as donations for the Veterans Home and food bank. This is always a fun time and we always make the amount needed for the scholarship. Our December meeting had to be canceled due to the storm mentioned above. Schools were closed and the choir we had scheduled from Lewiston High School could not perform. Travel was strongly discouraged. We haven't met for January as yet. We have a program being presented by our local historian, Garry Bush. He will be giving us insight about the Chinese Altar in Lewiston. The year is going by fast. We enjoy our time together and look forward to the rest of the year.

Pat Hoch, RENCI, co-president

## **GEM County REA**

The retired educator's association in Emmett has been quite busy with our usual fall projects. The Ola Ladies' Club hosted our group for our September meeting. In October we held our warm clothing drive for local school children. Donated items such as sweatshirts, hats, mittens, and other types of clothing were delivered to the school nurses who will distribute them to needy children. Every November, our group partners with students, teachers, and administrators to provide items for the Christmas Cheer Basket project. Donations of canned goods and cash for turkeys and gifts go toward filling not actual baskets, but pick-up loads of Christmas

cheer! Deliveries to twenty families were made the week before Christmas. The generosity of all involved is much appreciated and awe-inspiring. Other projects include our ongoing drive for personal products and food items for food pantries at the middle school and high schools in the district. Our project for February and March is Books for Schools. New books and/or cash for books make up donations to the various school libraries in the district. We have also been meeting regularly to plan the Western Regional Conference to be held Tuesday, April 16th in Emmett. We are looking forward to hosting Lower Snake and BKM for this important meeting. More information on the Conference will be available in the near future.

## **Retired Educators of North Central Idaho- RENCI**

Greetings from North Central Idaho. We have had a busy fall and beginning of winter. No snow as yet, but we have had a major wind and rain storm that came through and did a lot of damage to properties. In September, we welcomed the director and art director from the Pullman Regional Theater. We invited the Lewiston Rotary Club to watch the program. One point that was new to many of our members is that the Pullman Regional Theater is for profit and the actors, directors, and production staff are paid for their performances. In October, David Johnson, who is a local author and reporter for the newspaper talked to the group about his column that interviewed people that he would pick out of the telephone book at random, interview them, and then write a weekly column about them. He was well received and we had many members come to hear his

## **Magic Valley REA**

Well, after taking the Summer off we finally met at Idaho Pizza here in Twin Falls on September 18th. We then adjourned to the local Genealogy Center to try register on a free genealogy site. Some of us were successful, but people like me forgot passwords, so we weren't able to register, but we tried. For October, we had a presentation from our local office on aging, they reaffirmed all the services Dennis described this last summer. We all received the Red Safety package to post on our refrigerators in case of an emergency. The United Way was to have a presenter, but they called us and informed us that the Twin Falls unit was closing. Wendy Davis, the Twin Falls Parks and Recreation Director, who was scheduled for November, stepped up and filled our Oc-

## **BOISE, KUNA, MERIDIAN REA-BKMREA**

The Retired Educator's Association of Boise, Kuna, and Meridian holds their meetings at the Eagle's Lodge in Boise on the second Tuesday of each month. This year the theme of our meetings is "HISTORY OF THE TREASURE VALLEY." In September, Bob Carter of the Boise Project spoke on the History of Irrigation in the Treasure Valley. Bob's slide presentation was relevant and informative since "water issues" have always been a high priority in the Western states. In October, Jane Ward-Engleking, an Idaho Senator currently serving on the Finance and Education Committees, shared status of current legislation relevant to the topic of education in our state. In November, Richard Durrant of Idaho Farm Bureau shared a very interesting presentation on water management and usage entitled the "History and Outlook for Farming in the Treasure Valley and Idaho." REA - BKM finished 2025 with a potluck celebration organized by members Don and Kerri Carlin. There were games, prizes, singing, and good will shared by all. There were door prizes, a cookie ex-

story. Again, the Rotary members joined our meeting to hear David speak. Our November meeting is our annual live auction for the LCSC Scholarship. We had a very good turn-out for this meeting. We had a lively auction and raised the amount needed for the scholarship as well as donations for the Veterans Home and food bank. This is always a fun time and we always make the amount needed for the scholarship. Our December meeting had to be canceled due to the storm mentioned above. Schools were closed and the choir we had scheduled from the Lewiston High School could not perform. Travel was strongly discouraged. We haven't met for January as yet. We have a program being presented by our local historian, Garry Bush. He will be giving us insight about the Chinese Altar in Lewiston. The year is going by fast. We enjoy our time together and look forward to the rest of the year.

Pat Hoch, RENCI, co-president

tober date. She filled us in on all construction going on in the parks and programs. We really appreciated her switching dates and then updating us. Looking for more presenters, I contacted Melissa Crane of Magic Valley Arts Council, who will be our February guest. She helped to schedule two more quests. Melissa Pease started a nonprofit Project Succeed to help elementary and middle school teachers and students with needed supplies. It is amazing, despite the increases in funding, etc., that the needs are still there. Housing is a real problem with some teachers actually living on the couches of fellow teachers. While we didn't meet in December, we still donated clothing items and credit cards for food to LoPasada.

Ed Arndt  
MVREA

change, and we were able to donate \$1000 to our local Food Bank from a silent auction. Our local chapter collects product and/or monetary donations for the Boise Food Bank or Giraffe Laugh on a monthly basis. Our members also donate eyeglasses, eyeglass cases, and hearing aids to the Lion's Club for recycling; as well as, retired American flags to the American Legion for appropriate disposal. This year our membership collected summer clothes of all sizes in good condition to be donated to people in Nicaragua; collected books for "Operation Wishbook" so elementary aged children received books for Christmas; and also supported our BSU Scholarship Fund by donating books to be "sold" at each meeting and/or provided items for the monthly "door prize" drawings. Finally, the membership is kept abreast of relevant events and provided with relative knowledge through the very informative monthly REA-BKM Newsletter.

Submitted by: Leigh Oliver  
REA-BKM President