



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter 2021

Snow finally has come; fortunately, we haven't had the huge amounts other parts of the country have had, nor the intense cold. (I cannot wrap my head around having temperatures of -20 degrees or lower!) I hope you had pleasant Winter Holidays. For November's National Education Week I had thought we could gather with signs on the sidewalk in front of the courthouse to thank teachers and staff, but it didn't seem like the best idea as the month progressed. Tentatively, we can do that in May for American Education Week.

Speaking of education, Casey Cep, author of *Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee*, has written an article titled "Harper Lee's Love Letter to Teaching." Casey said, "Please do mention I came through the public schools -- I'm very proud of that fact." Casey attended Chapel District Elementary School and Easton Middle School and graduated from Easton High School. "My little sister is also a special education teacher at Chapel District. We are very delighted to have an ongoing connection to TCPS." Excerpts from the article are in this newsletter, along with where to find the entire article.

Jerry Seiler and I attended an MRSPA Legislative Workshop via Zoom recently. Jerry's summary of the several-hour meeting is inside. It discusses pension/retirement information, legislative initiatives and bills, including regarding Telehealth topics, and more.

These past months have certainly had their challenges, but we all know that resilience is a trait we showed when working and we now access for our families, friends and community. Conditions will get better; it just takes time. Hopefully vaccinations will soon be more easily available for those that want them.

Though we were unable to have our holiday gathering in December, it is inspiring to learn how TCRSPA members have been supporting and contributing in a wide variety of areas.

Thank you for all you have been doing – caring for others, helping with virtual learning, volunteering, donating, creating, cooking; all the things you do to help make life better. I'm looking forward to the time we can get together again.

Wishing happiness and good health to you and yours,
Terry

A Love of Teaching

The following article, published online on Chalkbeat.org, was written by Talbot County resident Casey Cep, author of *"Furious Hours: Murder, Fraud, and the Last Trial of Harper Lee."* I saw many familiar faces when, prior to the pandemic, Casey discussed her novel locally and highlighted interesting information she had discovered in her research. Lest anyone think writing a non-fiction book is easy, the process does require a great deal of research and fact-checking. Thank you to Casey for all your hard work. The book is fascinating.

Harper Lee's Love Letter to Teaching (Excerpts) by Casey Cep

(The full article can be found at <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/10/2/21493174/harper-lee-article-love-letter-teaching-furious-hours>)

When I started on my book, I already knew that Lee had worked for *The School Executive* [an education trade magazine]. But I was shocked, when I began looking through the issues published in the time she was there, to find one with an article she had written. As an editor, Lee's name appears on issues throughout 1949, but on page 49 of the October issue is "Why I Entered Teaching," under her byline [Nelle Lee). Other than articles and columns for the college newspaper and some book reviews and stories for campus literary magazines, this was Lee's first "clip" — a big deal for someone who wanted to be a professional writer, even if it came from a magazine read only by educators and administrators, who paid three dollars a year for the privilege.

Lee was writing up a survey of some 57 people who all answered the question: "Why did you enter the teaching profession?" "Replies (and some retorts)," her article began, "came from classroom teachers, superintendents and assistant superintendents, principals, and students just entering the profession." Their answers in the late 1940s are probably not so different from what a similar survey might reveal today. Some were inspired by memories of teachers who had changed their lives, others by a love of children and young people. Some felt a patriotic calling to help educate good citizens, including a young veteran of World War II. In another sign of the times, some had taken aptitude and interests tests that suggested they would be good at teaching.

Many of the survey respondents had been drawn to teaching for the financial security, although a few, conversely, complained about the money. Among the three who regretted becoming teachers, Harper Lee quotes one who wrote: "It is difficult for me to throw myself into teaching at \$45 a week, when at present driving a truck and just dropping off packages for four hours a day I can earn \$75 dollars a week."

But those were some of the only complaints, and while Lee structured her article in a way that acknowledged the underpayment of teachers, she ended on the profession's most enduring virtues. "Teaching, if sincerely and honestly done, will give me an opportunity of giving my life a measure of significance," Lee quotes one of the educators saying. Another survey respondent she highlights, who quit his job in the international division of a large (continued next page)

corporation in order to teach, has the last word: “I have never been happier in my life. My work has been more than justified in terms of moral compensation. What greater satisfaction can one ask out of life?”

MRSPA LEGISLATIVE WORKSHOP – JANUARY 25, 2021

by Jerry Seiler

On January 25, 2021, the MRSPA held their Legislative Workshop via Zoom with over sixty-five participants in attendance. The session was hosted by George Denny, Jr., MRSPA President, who introduced several guest speakers to discuss various topics in their areas of expertise: Dr. Dean Kenderdine, Executive Director of the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System; Rebecca Ruff, Operating Budget Manager Department of Legislative Services; Tammy Bresnahan, AARP; Speaker of the House Delegate Adrienne Jones; Virginia Crespo, MRSPA Legislative Aid; Betty Weller, MRSPA Legislative Committee and Fred Evans, MRSPA Legislative Committee.

- Despite Covid, MRSPA is working well with no hiccups and retirees received their benefits. The MRSPA Business Continuity Plan was up and running virtually within one day of the quarantine becoming effective. There is online access to a portal on the MRSPA website for retirees to manage your retirement account.
- Various other topics discussed were the budget, COVID impact. Rebecca Ruff reported that the budget despite Covid is stabilized. The vote on the Blueprint for Maryland Schools Veto Override occurs in early February and its effects will be realized over time. The Governor plans to phase out paying the tax on retirement income and delay taxes on unemployment benefits.
- MRSPA Lobby Day is scheduled in March.
- Speaker of the House, Baltimore County summarized that various bills are currently in discussion/vote in Maryland State House/Senate for consideration such as 1) preserving Telehealth access; 2) appropriating \$100,000 in the annual budget for grants to certain nonprofit organizations or agencies to expand and establish aging-in-place programs for seniors; 3) altering the uses of the Rural Broadband Assistance Fund, establishing the Office of Broadband in the Department of Technology to assist local jurisdictions in improving access to high-speed internet; 4) prohibiting increases in long term care insurance premiums; 5) limiting management service fees on external investments and exempting certain fees incurred under a contract entered into prior to June 30, 2021; 6) establishing health outreach programs for cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s Disease and other types of dementia; 7) establishing a cause of action for certain financial exploitation of certain vulnerable adults (Maryland SAFE Act); 8) requiring nursing homes and assisted living programs to establish policies and procedures authorizing indoor visitation, consult with local health agencies when establishing policies and procedures; requiring essential caregiver to inform staff if essential caregiver develops certain health symptoms.
- These legislative actions and updates can be found on the MRSPA website at [mrspa.org/legislative-updates](https://www.mrspa.org/legislative-updates). In addition, the actual January 25, 2021 Zoom meeting can be found online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btwfdOOHm4Y>

Sunshine Committee News

In October we sent a "Thinking of You" card to TCPS Superintendent Dr. Kelly Griffith as she recovered from a recent knee surgery. All of our Emeritus and Shut-In members were remembered with Thanksgiving cards. We also sent a Sympathy card to the family of member Linda Roberts who passed away. Holiday cards were also sent to our Emeritus and Shut-In members.

Chair Brenda Davidson got a holiday card from Mrs. (Cynthia) Ramsey thanking us for her Christmas card. She wanted the group to know at age 98 she is doing well!

Brenda also said she had a lovely phone conversation with Emeritus member Mrs. Wanda Whedbee. She called to thank the group for remembering her with a sweet holiday card. She said she hadn't been out of her home since March but her family was taking good care of her. She was also excited to share that she was going to go out for a ride-by parade for her friend Mrs. Dobson who was celebrating her 100th birthday. Let's hope we all have a bit of those ladies' positive life spirit!

"We hope you'll consider sending a card to someone you've been thinking about, too. I just read an article that focused on "connections" during this difficult time (whether it be holiday or virus related) and it said that the sender never realizes the positive impact of a card and a stamp...but it's beyond the cost of both. Stay well!" – Brenda
Contact Brenda at bdavidson@goeaston.net or 410-310-9051 if you know of a member needing some sunshine or remembrance.

NEWS NOTES

Executive Board Meeting – February 23, 2021, 10-11 a.m. via Zoom. All members are welcome. (Please contact Terry Callahan at tacall@goeaston.net or 410-822-7194 for more information.)

Executive Board Open Positions:

Membership, Publicity, Consumer Connections, Teacher Academy Scholarship

Winter/Spring Luncheon – We are unable to host a luncheon at Chesapeake College at this time due to pandemic conditions and limitations.

TCPS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Vice-President Vickie Wilson is now a Board member of the Foundation! She says, "I'm also excited to be able to give back to TCPS by serving on the Education Foundation. Donations are being accepted and will go to support grants and scholarships for teachers, CTE scholarships and through the Digital Divide campaign will bring internet service to our underserved population of students. Please consider making a donation at <https://m-scf.networkforgood.com/projects/115959-tcps-education-foundation-annual-appeal>

In Memoriam – December 2019 to January 2021

Linda Jones (12/2/19) – Teachers' Assistant at Mt Pleasant Elementary School

Patricia Mavity (12/16/19) – Home Economics at Easton High School and Easton Middle School

Jane S. Barton (12/28/19) – (age 101), taught in St. Michaels

Joanne T. Murray (1/28/20)- Teacher at Easton Elementary School

Robert (Bob) Lee Tingle (6/19/20) – Principal in Elementary and Middle Schools for many years
in Talbot County

Carol C. Steward (7/14/20) – Teacher for 36 years at the Primary level

Janet Hope Messick (7/17/20) – Teacher of History at Easton Middle School for 30 years

Linda Roberts (11/24/20) – Instructional Assistant at Easton Elementary School

Lee Clay Weller (12/16/20) – Teacher and Principal at St. Michaels High School, also Supervisor
at TCPS

Billie Garnett Hendon (12/28/20) – Science teacher at EHS (began in 1960) for many years, then
served as Director of Data Processing at TCPS

Lawrence Niskey (1/19/21) – Long-time Talbot County High School Teacher

Connie Rathell (1/22/21) – Long-time English teacher, Easton Elementary School

Submitted by Dorothy Palmer, Necrology Chair

“We will sorely miss each colleague. We thank God for their longevity.”

TCRSPA Members Volunteer!

Even though there is a pandemic, members have been active in helping the community and beyond. Activities and organizations supported include:

- Talbot Humane – walking dogs and other activities
- Sewing masks (over 400 in total!)
- Wreaths for America (wreaths for veterans' cemetery)
- St Vincent De Paul (thrift shop and food pantry)
- CarePacks (food)
- Donating clothing to a women's shelter and WWII military books to DAR Library in D.C.
- Cemetery cleanup (Gen. Perry Benson Family)
- Packing/donating purses with personal care products for women experiencing domestic violence
- Clipping coupons for military families and women's shelter
- BAAM
- Frederick Douglass Honor Society
- NAACP
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority
- Multicultural Advisory Committee at Chesapeake College
- TCPS Education Foundation

Members – I'd be glad to have another list in the Spring issue, so please let me know if you have items to include. Thank you to Jerry, Vickie, Cheryl, Pat and Sue for your input on this list.

CONSUMER CONNECTION NEWS

STIMULUS PAYMENT SCAMS

- Identity thieves are trying to get your financial information. Some scammers will call, claiming to be from the IRS, asking for your personal information to process your stimulus payment. Some even ask for a fee to process your payment faster.
- Don't answer these calls. If you do pick up and find the caller asking these questions, hang up!

COVID-19 Unauthorized Testing Scams

- Illegal, unlicensed COVID-19 testing sites have popped up. These "Free Testing" sites (often outside of shopping centers or retail stores, as found in Baltimore City) are not following CDC protocols. The Office of the Attorney General is aware that the unauthorized testing sites are taking personal information, including social security numbers, driver's license information, dates of birth, health insurance information, and DNA—all of which can be used for identity theft. Anyone with questions or concerns about identity theft can contact the Maryland Attorney General's Identity Theft Unit at 410-576-6491. To report health scams, contact the Maryland Attorney General's Health Education and Advocacy Unit at 410-528-1840. Attorney General Frosh is encouraging consumers to visit covidtest.maryland.gov for a list of more than 240 approved COVID-19 testing sites in Maryland.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

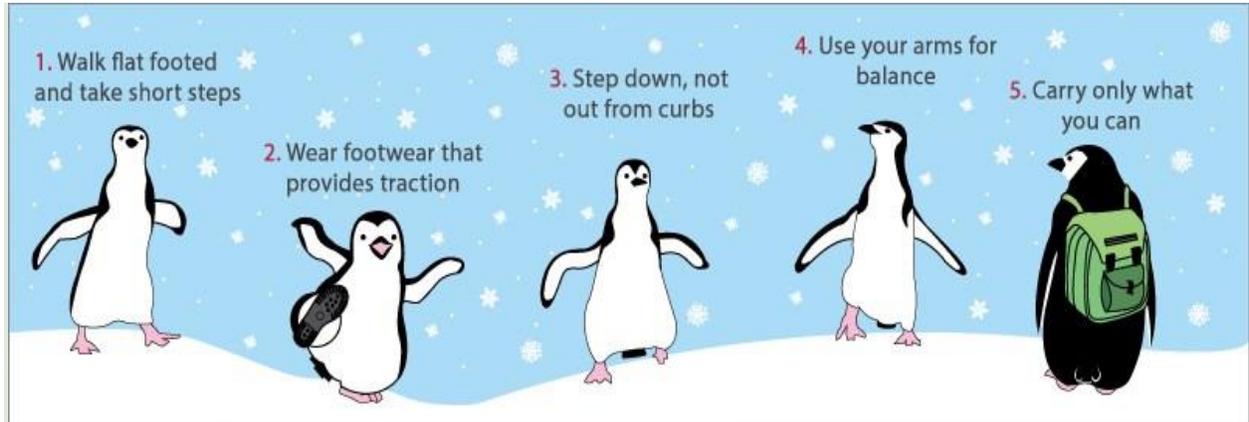
- There is also a page regarding shopping around for lower prescription drug prices, using online search tools such as GoodRx and Pharmacy Checker (which also lists legitimate, licensed pharmacies), coupons which may be available and drug discount cards.
- **Unused medicine is still a huge problem.** If you're not sure where to dispose of it, the U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration website can give a list of disposal locations nearby. You do not need to give any other information.
- For the entire consumer newsletter, go to <https://www.mrspa.org> then click the News and Events tab at the top, then scroll down to the Career Connections choices. This is from the January-February 2021 newsletter.
- **MRSPA recently hosted a "Preventing Scams and Fraud" webinar.** Access the information at www.mrspa.org. The link to the recording is on the Home Page, in the News section. Phone numbers for consumer, health, and identity theft issues are also given.

February Shopping

Home Goods – Presidents' Day Sales – good deals on appliances and home improvement materials; Tax Software Deals – best to get before March/April

Winter Weather Is Here!

Avoid slips and falls—walking like a penguin is great advice! It may sound silly, but it does work!



(Just some wintertime whimsy.)

**I made myself a snowball
As perfect as could be,
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,
And let it sleep with me.
I made it some pajamas,
And a pillow for its head,
Then last night it ran away,
But first, - it wet the bed!**

**---" Snowball"
Shel Silverstein**

TCRSPA Executive Officers

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