OREGON RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

CHALKBOARD

The OREA Newsletter **2026 Fall Issue**

OREA Officers 2026-28

Lona Odom-Co-President
4604 SW Perkins Ave.
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-379-3714
lonaodom@gmail.com

Deb Scaravilli - Co-President
3630 Collier Lane
Klamath Falls, OR 97603
541-884-6905
vicdebscaravilli@gmail.com

Kathleen Walker-Henderson - VP
4218 Meadows Drive
Klamath Falls, OR 97603
541-884-4779
hendersonk@charter.net

Heidi DeCorte - Secretary
2501 NW 1st St. Bend, OR 97703
541-329-3618
heidi.decorte@getamba.com

Vic Scaravilli - Treasurer
3630 Collier Lane
Klamath Falls, OR 97603
541-884-6905
vicdebscaravilli@gmail.com

Bonita Fillmore - Past-President
1803 Lancaster Ave.
Klamath Falls, OR 97601
541-884-2374
bfillmore556@gmail.com

Lona Odom-Membership Chair
See above for information

Deb Scaravilli - Chalkboard Editor
See above for information

Paul Zastrow - Ex. Director
5690 Collins Rd.
Hood River, OR 97031
541-354-1002;503-754-4318
pzastrow@gorge.net

OREA Website:
www.oreaweb.com

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER



We're well into fall, and as I reminisce about my favorite season, I'm drawn to the many memories from my youth in Colorado with the rich colrs and crisp fall mornings. I long for the Sunday drives with my parents to enjoy the gorgeous fall foliage and the finale - stopping for pie!

Once again, I am looking forward to serving as a co-president alongside Deb Scaravilli and the other board members whose goal is to keep our state organization strong. It was encouraging to report the numbers of new members your units gained this past year with each unit reporting at least one new member. Keep up the good work!

Don't forget to check out the recently revised website where you might even find yourself among the photos! The goal was to make the site more user friendly and to capture the essence of OREA with updated information. We appreciate our AMBA partners for hosting the website. Go to: oreaweb.com

And now as Thanksgiving and Christmas are drawing near, I wish you a season filled the same warmth, joy, and light you spent your career bringing to others.

Happy Holidays!
Lona Odom,
OREA Co-President

Unit News

Unit 20 - Mid-Columbia

Good things are happening with Unit 20 in the Mid-Columbia area!



In September, we invited the Hood River Valley High School Athletic Director, Sean Mailey, to speak at our meeting. He spoke about ways we could support our students, coaches, and athletic programs. He shared about the importance of volunteering for local events and attending the athletic contests. It was very exciting to learn that senior citizens are granted free admission!

Our October meeting was very informative regarding The Dalles School District. Sandy Harris and Stephanie Bowen from the district office shed new light on the challenges of school safety. With aging buildings, it is exremely difficult to provide adequate protection for all students and employees. It is challenging to lock all doors and remain compliant with fire safety standards. However, the district remains diligent in applying for grants to have monies dedicated for repairs and general upkeep of buildings. Our group was very interested to learn how The Dalles School District is rising to the challenges that school safety and protection bring especially in light of the Silver Rail Elementary School shooting.

As fall progresses, we continue to emphasize the need to recruit new members. Ideas have been shared regarding ways to recruit and involve recent retirees. We also continue to collect pull tabs for donations to the Ronald McDonald House in Bend. Our members remain very supportive and spend many hours volunteering in our local communities.

Submitted by Linda Drew and Sue Hukari, Unit 20 Co-Presidents

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Unit 9 - Pendleton

The speaker for our October meeting was Kate Brizendine. She works for the Oregon Department of Human Services. She spoke about the variety of services the DHS in Pendleton provides - everything from aging and people with disabilities to child welfare. Kate's main job is to be a liaison for people in need of these services. Unit 9 has donated money to Kate in the past.



There is a waiting room at DHS for kids who are in need of placement into foster care. She said the toys in the room were old and worn out. Kate reported that the money we provided helped replenish the supply of toys. She also said that because of the variety of programs she is involved with, there is always a need for clothes, hygiene products and many other items.

After the meeting, we had a discussion about adding the local DHS office to our support projects. It was voted on and approved. In the future, as needs arise, we will offer support with donations of money and supplies.

Submitted by Larry Brizendine, President, Unit 9

Unit News

Unit 1 - Portland

Collective effervescence is a concept I ran across recently in the book, Read This When Things Fall Apart by Kelly Hayes. It is that warm, fuzzy feeling one gets from being part of a group. It is this feeling that we get in Unit 1 that helps keep members engaged and makes our group appealing to potential members.

Our unit has an agreement with Portland Parks and Recreation to design and implement our own van excursions. We have been to museums, a chocolate factory, art expositions, and to the coast.



The latest excursion was to attend the play "Big Fish" put on by the theatrical program at Gresham Sam Barlow High School. We were going to use the Portland Parks and Recreation van until we found out the cost would be $30 per person.

The solution to our dilemna was to collectively reach out to our participants to see if we could develop a carpool with persons willing and able to drive at night. We had a delightful meal at The Olive Garden and then attended a fantastic play - together. It was a **collective effervescence** moment that we will remember for a long time.

Our members have an additional reason to continue being members. We were also able to recruit a non-member to consider joining our band of pilgrims! 'Tis the season you know.....

Submitted by Pat Eck, President, Unit 1

Unit 13 - Central Oregon



Author Jane Kirkpatrick was our guest speaker at Unit 13's October meeting. Although she and her husband established a homestead on the John Day River 30 years ago, she currently lives in Redmond. She published her first book in 1991 and has published 37 books to-date. Most of her books are historical fiction, focusing on stories about people who settled in, or live in Oregon, including A Light in the Wilderness, which is a story about Leticia Carson, a former slave in 1840-1850's who traveled from Missouri and settled in the Willamette Valley - Leticia Carson Elementary School is located in Corvallis, Oregon.

Submitted by Cathleen Lemke-Wallace

2026-2028 OREA State Officers

Co-Presidents

Lona Odom

From Colorado to Kansas to Oregon...here's my journey! I grew up on a farm in a small town in western Colorado with my parents and a variety of pets throughout the years. Yes, I was an only child! In the fall of 1967, I relocated 900 miles from home to attend college in Ottawa, Kansas. After a couple of years trying to figure out what I was truly interested in, a friend recommended Home Economics classes, which became my career path.

Thanks to the college library and a map of Oregon, I landed a job in Pendleton teaching junior high for 31 years. I took early retirement in 2002 fulfilling a promise I had made to myself to retire still liking my job and most of all, students!

In 1974, a new teacher (Foster) joined the staff of our junior high and the rest is history! Our immediate family consists of a son and his wife and granddaughter who live in North Carolina, and our daughter, her husband and grandson who reside in Walla Walla, Washington.



Favorite free time activites include sewing/crafts, word games and travel. My involvement with OREA began in 2002 at the local level and shortly thereafter, at the state level. I seem to have made the rounds though all of the state OREA offices except treasurer!

Deborah Scaravilli

I moved around a lot as a child so I vowed that as an adult I would stay in one place...and I did! After graduating from Southern Oregon College, I took a Title 1 position at Klamath Union High School in Klamath Falls and have stayed here ever since. Having two credentials - one in reading and the other in history - proved to be advantageous because when they dropped the Title 1 position at KUHS, after I taught for 25 years, I became a history teacher, which was my dream job! I retired after 30 years of teaching in the same school and joined OREA in Klamath because my mom was involved. I love the OREA mission of volunteering, which I do a lot of. I am involved in many singing and parish groups in the Basin. I love to read and crochet. I have delivered Meals-on-Wheels for 9 years.

I have been married to Vic for 28 years and we enjoy traveling and ministering together. We have two fur babies and I am privileged to have my mom, who is almost 95, live with us.

Vice-President

Kathleen Walker-Henderson



Education has been an important part of my life for a long time. In 1972, I headed to Monmouth for an elementary education degree. I came back to Klamath Falls in 1975 and worked in preschool until teaching 5th grade at Peterson Elementary and moving to Stearns when my son was born in 1981. In 2005, I had the opportunity to teach Early Childhood at Klamath Community College as an adjunct until 2020. Now I volunteer for the KCC Foundation, helping to raise money for scholarships.

OREA is an important organization to me. I have always enjoyed volunteering. I enjoyed doing church music, teaching Sunday School and being the tithing clerk along with coaching T-ball, minor boys' baseball, score-keeping and timing for swim meets.

Leadership is interesting work and I hope to serve you well with ideas to help us grow and advocate for quality education for the children of Oregon.

2026-2028 OREA State Officers

Secretary

Heidi DeCorte



I am your Local AMBA representative, member of Unit 13, and the State Secretary for the Oregon Retired Educators Association. I have been working in the Medicare field since 2011 and joined AMBA in 2022. I'm looking forward to getting to know everyone and having the opportunity to serve our OREA members.

I recently celebrated my 20th wedding anniversary and my husband and I have two adult children and two dogs who keep us busy and entertained! When I'm not working, I enjoy spending time outdoors hiking, gardening, cooking and reading. I especially enjoy staying active, spending time with family and making the most of the beautiful area we are fortunate to call home.

I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to be part of the OREA community and to serve its members. AMBA has been serving educators and public employees since 1987 and is the only company endorsed by the the National Retired Teachers Association to assist its members with their insurance needs. As your local AMBA respresentative, my goal is to provide personalized service, guidance, and support while helping you understand the benefits and insurance options available to you. I want to make sure you feel comfortable, informed and confident when making decisions about your coverage. If you ever have questions, about the benefits offered throuh AMBA or need assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out (541-329-3618).

Treasurer

Victor Scaravilli



I grew up in Silicon Valley specifically, San Jose, California, where I graduated from San Jose State University with a Bachelors of Science in Manufacturing Engineering. With that degree, I worked in several metal-manufacturing companies involved in machining metal products for the electronics industry. While in high school, I started a part-time taxidermy business specializing in gamebirds. After a slow-down in the economy when I lost my job, I had an opportunity to work with a professor at Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. After moving there I began working on a project with him While there, I purchased a mini-storage business with my brother and owned it for about 20 years.

Now that I have retired from my career and have sold the mini-storage business, I still have my taxidermy business. I currently teach classes for adults three nights a week at our local Catholic parish, St. Pius X. In addition, I travel to different parts of Oregon as well as the United States to facilitate evangelization retreats. In my spare time, I like to fish and hunt gamebirds.

Since I have background in finances from my taxidermy and mini-storage businesses, I volunteered to be the treasurer for our local OREA unit and the state OREA organization.

2026-2028 OREA State Officers

Executive Director

Paul Zastrow



I am a native Oregonian - 3rd generation from mom and 4th from a part of my father. I was born and raised in Foster - a little backwater community near Sweet Home. There were 6 kids in the family - most happily dysfunctional! For elementary school, we all went to Foster Grade School, the 'richest' only elementary district in Oregon at the time, with a property tax of $0.08 per $1,000.00.

High school found me at Sweet Home Union High, tuitioned by Foster to them! I participated in all sorts of extra-curricular activities - sports, academics and even thespian endeavors. I graduated with honors and went to Oregon State University where I graduated with 2 majors - Science Education and Geology with a minor in Art. I knew in the 8th grade I wanted to become a science teacher.

Graduation found me getting a job for 2 years in Oakridge, Oregon. The stories I could tell - weak administrators and too many new teachers to effectuate positive change in middle school kids! I decided I needed to get out of a town that did not really value what I was doing and on to Hood River where I spent 29 years teaching science and a little math, as well as receiving a double Masters from OSU. I retired in 1997 and the rest is learning to perfect retirement!

Past-President

Bonita Fillmore



I was born and raised in the Klamath Basin, graduating from Sacred Heart High School. I received a bachelor's degree in Secondary Education with a major in Art from Southern Oregon College in 1974. After substituting for a year or so, I focused on raising my family. In 1985, I returned to SOC to update my credentials and work on a master's degree with a specialty in library/media, receiving the degree in 1990.

I started teaching in Bonanza as a media specialist in 1986 and transferred to Shasta Elementary's media center to be in Klamath Falls and closer to my sons' activities. I helped to reopen Altamont Elementary by planning and ordering all the books, setting up the library there. The next year, the media program was cut in the district and I worked at the public library for five months. The following school year, I was hired to coordinate the library programs in the county's 18 schools. I ended my career teaching art at various schools. I retired in 2010 and was invited to join OREA.

I have served in OREA as State President, State Vice-President and on several state committees. Locally, I have served as Unit 5 President and Vice-President and on various committees. I have been a member of Unit 5's Just For Fun Singers (formerly Kitchen Band) for years. OREA has been a joy in my retirement for the connection with active, positive senior educators.

Criterion Schoolhouse News



After eight years and the expenditure of $85,494.83, the Criterion Schoolhouse has been declared fully restored. The Save the Criterion School Committee wants to thank all of the volunteers and donors for helping make this adventure possible. The Criterion Schoolhouse website has been updated. Please check it out!

Planning for the future includes, in part:

1. Putting together a maintenance plan to include a schedule and checklist for inspections.
2. Building relationships/partnerships with the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon legislators-champions, Oregon Retired Educators-Retired, etc.
3. Work on access to a 501(c)(3) for future donations now that the Oregon Fair Foundation is no longer a partner. Note: donations should be sent to Pat Eck, 11502 SE Washington Street, Portland, OR 97216. Unit 1 (Portland) has set-up a Nonprofit Money Market account for donations. Please make checks payable to OREA Unit 1, wth the comment line "for the Criterion Schoolhouse project." Thank you.

Submitted by Pat Eck, Criterion Schoolhouse Committee

Paulitics



The 'Blue Wave' hit Oregon just a bit, with increased Democratic numbers in both the Oregon House and Senate by one apiece. The D's have a supermajority, meaning they have a lot of control, but are still needing assistance from the Republicans to pass most legislation. Some compromising will be the message and hopefully, there will be no walkouts during this long session of the legislature.

I belong to several legislative action committees - the Oregon Education Association's Legislative Advisory Committee; the Oregon Association of Education Service Districts Legislative Committee and others. Surprisingly, they all aspire to achieve mostly the same goals - things like increasing the % of SPED students from 12% to 15% with increased funding, Poverty Formula Reform, ensuring that any money increase means increased numbers of employees actually working with our students, further disconnects of Oregon taxes from the federal system, looking at the arena of both absenteeism and truancy, and looking at the 'how' to work with AI.

Finally, there may be a push to create a Millionaire's Tax by initiative petition that may appear on the ballot in 2028.

Submitted by Paul Zastrow, OREA State Executive Director