

MRPEA *THE* Guardian

Mississippi Retired Public Employees Association

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Message from Howell C. Garner, President



Thank you to MRPEA members who attended the **Annual Meeting at the Jackson Hilton on Monday, May 12**. We had a great crowd to hear the report by Mrs. Pat Robertson, Executive Director of PERS. Highlights of her report are provided on page 2 of this newsletter. Those in attendance also heard a report from **Tony Byrne**, Chairman of the Constitution & By-laws Committee. Members unanimously approved the committee recommendations for changes to be made to that document. **Lester Herrington**, Chair of the Nominating Committee presented the slate of officers and new Board members – they were elected without opposition (see list on p 2). Two new members are featured on page 5 & 6 of this newsletter. **Vice President Becky Cade** recognized the MRPEA Board members (both current & newly elected) and **Shelly Powers** from PERS Staff. Highlights of the **President's Report** to the Annual Meeting are included in this message below.

Thanks to our MRPEA Board members for their attendance at our May 12 quarterly meeting at 10 AM, as well as the Annual Meeting at 1:00 PM. Since our meeting in February, District Directors & Officers have been busy meeting with local groups of retirees to discuss MRPEA and to sign up new members. I was proud to meet with retirees from the Mississippi Employment Security Commission (MESC) a few weeks ago. Several of those present had questions about MRPEA and about the state retirement system in general. Thanks to **MESC President Curt Thompson** (newly elected MRPEA Board member) for the invitation to speak to this group. Several new members were signed up for MRPEA that day. MRPEA Board member **Don Atrium** is also a member of that group.

Continued on page 3

In this Issue...

Pat Robertson speaks to Annual Meeting

Message from President Howell C. Garner

Message from Vice Pres. Becky Cade

Feature Story on retiree Charlene Pierce

Committee Reports

Meet Your New MRPEA Board members

District Director Contact Information

Volume XVIII

Number 4

Summer 2014

Web Site www.mrpea.org

Pat Robertson speaks to MRPEA Annual Meeting



MRPEA members heard a report from Mrs. Pat Robertson, Executive Director of PERS.

Some of the major points made:

- **386,321 employees** in the system working for **900 employers**.
- Approximately **93,000 retirees** in the Mississippi state retirement system.
- More than **22,500 employees eligible to retire** right now.
- Assets as of June 30, 2013 were \$22 billion; **today's assets are \$24.5 billion**.
- **The return on investments** in FY 2013 was **13.4%**
- Over the past 30 years, **investment earnings** have accounted for **53% of financing of PERS**
- In FY 2013, **\$2 billion was paid out to retirees**; of that amount 93% stayed in MS.
- **Including COLA the average annual benefit** for retirees is **\$20,800**.

Mrs. Robertson discussed the fact that a report by a joint legislative committee on Performance Evaluation & Expenditure Review (PEER) had conducted a review of PERS and had issued Report # 583 in January of this year. Quoting from that

committee's review:

PERS has a prudent and disciplined process that relies on expert actuarial guidance built upon reasonable assumptions and targets for portfolio growth. Continued competent, prudent management gives PEER every indication that PERS is moving toward reducing both the amortization period for the system and reducing the unfunded accrued liability.

Mrs. Robertson answered several questions from the audience. Members were particularly interested in the changes in the Deferred Comp administration. Thanks to Mrs. Robertson for speaking to MRPEA members at the Annual Meeting and **thanks to the PERS Board and to Mrs. Robertson and her staff for their leadership in keeping our state retirement system strong!**

Annual Election of Board Members for 2014-2017:

District 3 Director Dr. Rick Young

Directors with term 2014-2017:

Mary Bowers
Joe Johnson
Dr. Ollie W. Johnson
Dale Sullivan
Curt Thompson

Newly Elected Director with term 2014-2016:

George Nash

If you are interested in serving as a member of the Board of Directors, you should contact the MRPEA office at mrpea@bellsouth.net so that your interest may be passed on to next year's Nominating Committee.

President's Message continued from page 1

MRPEA recently **surveyed candidates** who were seeking a **position on the PERS Board**. The survey asked candidates to respond to a few simple questions that could be used to determine each candidate's intentions to keep PERS strong. I was pleased that first the number of candidates responding to our survey was almost 100%, but I was mostly very glad that they **all indicated a strong desire to support current efforts to keep the state retirement system strong**. I continue to have confidence in the PERS Board and its leadership. I also believe we are getting good members elected to the PERS Board to replace those who are retiring. The **PERS Board's past leadership is attested in the report that Pat Robertson gave to those attending the Annual Meeting on May 12**. The highlights of that report on page 2 of this newsletter show that actions taken in recent years by the PERS Board are indeed making a difference!

As members left the Annual Meeting, I asked them to take a brochure with membership application attached to **invite friends to join MRPEA!**

Message from Vice President Becky Cade

It has been my pleasure to serve as your Vice-President this past year. I look forward to serving for a second year in that capacity. As a result of being a member of MRPEA I have grown to understand the sophistication of the system and to appreciate the leadership of the PERs Board and staff. Retirement benefit systems across the country continue to change. I am convinced our retirement benefits are on a positive track and currently need no additional adjustments. I encourage you to get involved in MRPEA and to learn more about our system. It not only provides support to our current retirees but also, is crucial in recruiting and retaining quality employees.

Report on May 12, 2014 Board of Directors Meeting

BOARD MEETING NOTES

The May 12 quarterly Board meeting was called to order by President Howell Garner, who called on Mr. James Young for the invocation.

The minutes from the February 10 meeting were approved as presented by Secretary Peggy Brewer, and the agenda was approved as presented.

The Board heard reports from District Directors, Committee Chairmen and from Officers. A synopsis of **Committee reports** is provided on page 4 of this newsletter.

Lester Herrington, chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented the recommendations for **new Board members for the term 2014-2017 as follows: Mary Bowers (renewed term), Joe Johnson, Ollie Johnson (renewed term), Dale Sullivan, & Curt Thompson**. The Committee recommended **George Nash** to complete the unfulfilled term of the late Billy H. Thames. **Dr. Rick Young** was approved to serve as **District 3 Director**, as appointed by President Garner. The slate of Board members was approved without opposition.

President Garner welcomed Mrs. Pat Robertson & Shelly Powers of PERS. Mrs. Robertson, Executive Director of PERS, gave an update on the status of PERS (see separate article this newsletter).

Mississippi Retired Public Employees Association

MRPEA

See the MRPEA Web page at

www.mrpea.org

MRPEA Website & Facebook Site

MRPEA members are encouraged to access information online through the MRPEA Website and/or on Facebook.

The website address is www.mrpea.org.

In order to access MRPEA on Facebook log into Facebook (www.facebook.com) and type in Mississippi Retired Public Employees Association.

Both sites allow members to access current MRPEA information. We hope members will find this to be useful. Examples of information on the sites include, but are not limited to, the following: PERS Facts; legislative activity in relation to your retirement; who your MRPEA officers and directors are; more about the organization itself; how to join; how to update your contact information; etc.

Let us know if you have suggestions on how to make the site more useful.

Just use the Contact MRPEA link on the website.

Let us hear from you!

Find the facts

If you have questions about your retirement system, go to www.pers.ms.gov where you will find the latest facts about PERS!

Committee Reports

Membership Committee - chaired by Ed LeGrand – Membership in MRPEA has been increased by 119 members since August 1, 2013, and we hope to continue to strengthen our membership over the next several months. We are working to reach current employees who are not yet retired. They are eligible to join MRPEA!

Constitution & By-Laws Committee chaired by Tony Byrne – the committee presented its recommendations for change to the Board. The Board had approved the recommendations at the February meeting, but since there were a few clerical changes, the Board approved the document as it had been prepared for the Annual Meeting. Unanimous approval was given.

Publications Committee chaired by Jane Dykes – Jane invited members of the Board to let her know of any news that should be included in future newsletters. The summer edition of *The Guardian* will feature a retiree.

Legislative Committee chaired by Lester Herrington – Lester reported that it had been a relatively quiet year in the capitol with regard to the retirement system. In response to a question by a Board member, he explained how to find out how legislators had voted on any piece of legislation, except bills which were passed by a voice vote.

Finance/Audit Committee – chaired by Sam Valentine. In Sam's absence due to a family emergency, President Garner reported that the committee had met with Sarajean Babin, Treasurer/Office Manager. He reported that progress had been made to provide better oversight of the financial matters of the organization.

Strategic Partners chaired by Mike Larsen – Committee members are continuing to look at ways to join efforts with other groups which are part of the PERS system. The goal is to have a network of groups working together by the end of this year.

Meet your new MRPEA Board members

We are fortunate to have outstanding members of the highest quality elected to the MRPEA Board. We featured new members of the Board this past year in issues of *The Guardian*. We will feature newly elected Board members in the next several issues of the newsletter! We welcome them to the MRPEA Board!

Dr. Rick Young District 3 Director

Dr. Rick Young brings a lot of experience to the position of District Director. He has been an educator for over 40 years and a member of the East Mississippi Community College team for over 39 years.

An alumnus of Wood Junior College, the University of Southern Mississippi, and Mississippi State University, Dr. Young holds a bachelor's degree in marketing, a master's degree in technology education, and a doctorate in educational leadership with a special emphasis in the administration of higher education.

Dr. Young began his professional career at Harrison Central High School in 1972, where he established a distributive education program. In 1974, he accepted a position with EMCC at the Golden Triangle Campus where he implemented a distribution and marketing technology program, while also working in public relations, evening extension classes, and workforce training.

In 1987, Dr. Young was named chief administrative officer, and later vice president of EMCC's Golden Triangle campus. Under his leadership, the Golden Triangle Campus posted a 454% enrollment increase between 1996 and 2003. Dr. Young was also instrumental in establishing the first Center for Manufacturing Technology Excellence in the state. A model then and now, the EMCC Workforce team leads

the state's 15 community colleges in delivery of workforce training.

In the ten years since Dr. Young was named president of EMCC, the college has worked to make education more accessible to the people in its six-county district. Dr. Young is dedicated to knocking down the barriers that stand between people and opportunity – whether it's creating better programs, offering classes in more locations, making education affordable, and scheduling evening classes for students who are holding down jobs, or improving the quality of EMCC's facilities. It is a commitment that he expects everyone in the EMCC family to share.

Curt Thompson

Curt Thompson brings a very wide variety of experiences to the MRPEA Board. He began working at an early age. He worked as a youngster from high school forward in service stations, in a diesel repair shop and other places where he gained skills as well as a good work ethic.

Thompson was an honor graduate from Hinds Community College, where he was a member of Phi Theta Kappa. He earned a BS degree from Mississippi College in Business Administration and a M.Ed. degree from Mississippi State University in Guidance Education.

Curt was employed by the Mississippi Employment Security Commission (MESC) in Jackson, Ms from February, 1969 until 2004. He served as the Executive Director from November, 2000 until his retirement in June, 2004. Prior to his service as Executive Director at MESC, Thompson worked as a Job Counselor in Biloxi for three years and as an Office Manager in Jackson for ten years. At MESC headquarters he also served as a Department Head.

While working at the Employment Security Commission, Curt was active in job affiliated

Continued on page 6

Curt Thompson - continued from page 5

associations, such as the International Association of Workforce Professionals, the Southeastern Employment and Training Association, and the Metro Jackson Chamber of Commerce and Society of Human Resource Professionals.

Thompson volunteers his time to the Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis, an association which is working on research and treatment options for people affiliated with this illness. His wife and sister-in-law both lost their lives to this disease.

Curt has been active in coaching and officiating in soccer for over 30 years. He has served in a variety of volunteer capacities in the Southwest Jackson Soccer League and the Clinton Soccer League. He is a State Emeritus Referee. He currently officiates in games for the 6-12 year old league in Richland.

DISTRICT DIRECTORS – CONTACT INFORMATION

The state is divided into eight districts to provide members easy access to individuals who serve on the Board. From time to time, members may wish to contact their District Director to inquire about an issue or to provide important information which may affect their retirement. Consequently, we are providing contact information for the eight District Directors below by county.

District ONE: [Wynona Winfield](mailto:Wynona.Winfield@bellshoth.net) - lcwjr@bellshoth.net H Phone # [601-268-6118](tel:601-268-6118) – Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Lamar, Pearl River, Perry, & Stone.

District TWO: [Tony Byrne](mailto:Tony.Byrne@cableone.net) - annetteb@cableone.net H Phone # [601-431-2250](tel:601-431-2250) – Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pike, Simpson Walthall & Wilkinson.

District THREE: [Dr. Rick Young](mailto:Dr.Rick.Young@bellsouth.net) - fryoung@bellsouth.net H Phone # 662-574-1971 – Clarke, Covington, Jasper, Jones, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, Smith & Wayne.

District FOUR: [Hilda Westbrook](mailto:Hilda.Westbrook@bellsouth.net) - H Phone # [601-856-6351](tel:601-856-6351) – Hinds, Madison, Rankin, Warren & Yazoo.

District FIVE: [Dr. Doss Brodnax](mailto:Dr.Doss.Brodnax@bellsouth.net) - dossmar@bellsouth.net H Phone # [662-323-9543](tel:662-323-9543) – Attala, Calhoun, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster & Winston.

District SIX: [Dr. Larry Bailey](mailto:Dr.Larry.Bailey@meast27@yahoo.com) - meast27@yahoo.com H Phone # [662-756-2435](tel:662-756-2435) – Bolivar, Carroll, Grenada, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Sharkey, Sunflower & Washington.

District SEVEN: [Robert A. McNeil](mailto:Robert.A.McNeil@comcast.net) - ramcneil@comcast.net H Phone # [662-680-9024](tel:662-680-9024) – Alcorn, Benton, Itawamba, Lee, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tippah, Tishomingo & Union.

District Eight: [Thomas E. Toney](mailto:Thomas.E.Toney@bellsouth.net) - thomasetoney@bellsouth.net H Phone # 662-563-3744 – Coahoma, Desoto, Lafayette, Marshall, Panola, Quitman, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica & Yalobusha.

Your District Director would like to hear from you with any questions or concerns or if you have information to share about the PERS system.

It is exciting to follow our fellow retirees to see how they stay busy after a life of service in state employment. This issue features **Charlene Pierce**.



Charlene Pierce enjoys retirement!

Charlene Pierce owns a home and lives primarily in Brandon, Mississippi. She retired in 2009 after serving as an Assistant Attorneys' General for 20 years. Charlene's legal career started in the prosecution of death penalty cases and later included work with MDOT, the Gaming Commission, Public Opinions and Education.

Like so many other retirees, Charlene spent much of her time during the early years of her retirement caring for an aging parent. However, she has also managed to enjoy many exciting travels around the US and abroad, having visited Alaska, England, Ireland and Scotland over the last several years.

A few years ago, she and her sister, Jamie McKlemurry (a Rankin County educator that is also semi-retired) decided to look for a cabin in Gatlinburg, TN. As a family, the Pierces had visited the Smokey's most every year. The whole family loved the parks, the snow, the nature walks and the shopping afforded in this beautiful part of the country. In 2011 she and Jamie made a leap of faith and found the perfect

cabin to purchase and call their own.

Now she, her friends and/or family spend much of their time in Great Smokey Mountains exploring the beautiful scenery that includes a plethora of animals, flowers, weather changes and lots and lots of activities from trail hiking, mountain climbing, parades, shopping along the craftsman's trail and/or the many discount places.

When she is in MS she spends a great deal of her time gardening in her yard, caring for her pets and serving in many capacities in her church. She also continues a lifelong passion for art through photography. In fact she even took some of the pictures used in this quarters' ***Guardian***. Charlene's life continues to be full and rewarding. Next trip up is Israel and Jordan. How special!! Best wishes to Charlene Pierce!

Contact us at mrpea.org or at mrpea@bellsouth.net if you have an interesting story to tell in your retirement. We will be featuring a retiree in future publications of *The Guardian*.

*Tell us your story!
We want to hear from you!*



We are so blessed to be able to be a part of a country where we have the freedom to pursue our dreams and to pursue new careers and opportunities which bring joy to our lives and to the lives of those we love! Thank you to our Veterans for their service to this great country!



P.O. Box 5580
Brandon, MS 39047

Prsrt Std
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MRPEA Membership Application

Annual Rate \$15 Life Single Rate \$250

Please PRINT the following information:

Name: _____ County: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Mail this form WITH check payable to MRPEA.
Send to P.O. Box 5580; Brandon, MS 39047-5580.

For questions, call 601.919.0670. E-mail us at MRPEA@bellsouth.net.