



# The Apple Corps

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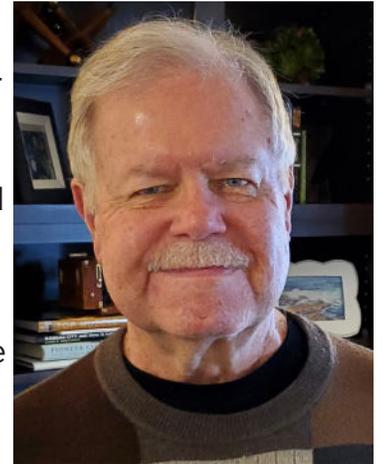
Kansas National  
Education Association  
*Retired*

## President's Perspective

The "Winter Blahs." We've all been there. The cold dreary weather often brings with it freezing precipitation of some type and howling winds. We just want to stay inside by a fireplace (if we are so lucky to have one) and sip our hot chocolate or coffee. And take naps.

As retired folk we can do what we want, and it's just easier not to do much in the winter months. But because we are usually so active, those few months of relative inactivity often lead us to...the winter blahs. Not much better word we could use. We are bored and restless. We want to be doing and helping and traveling and visiting. But sometimes all that must wait. But association work doesn't pause during those months. There's still business to be done and elections to be held and contact with legislators to happen.

In this issue you will see the business of the association, but you will also hear from many of our members about how they "beat" the winter blahs. And you may also find some ways you can participate in our endeavors, even from the comfort of your home. The best part about mid-winter is that spring is near. That brings symbolic rebirth, and new bursts of activity. Meanwhile let's do what we can to keep in contact with each other and support one another. And watch for spring!



**-Bob Thesman, KNEA-R President**

### KPERS LOBBY DAY



On Feb. 8, an estimated 50 KPERS Retirees met with their legislators and advocated for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to our KPERS Retirement Benefits.

These retirees included retired educators, firefighters, law enforcement and state employees. Some retirees attended committee hearings and and generally had a good time visiting and meeting fellow retirees or just exploring the Capitol, our "House."



## Beating the Winter Blahs

**Here are a few ways KNEA-R members beat the winter blahs:**

This winter I have forced paper white bulbs, and amaryllis bulbs to bloom. A couple of my orchid plants have buds soon to bloom, too. These blossoms give me something to look forward to.

I enjoy doing quilting, hand embroidery, reading large print books and audio books (thanks to my public library. You can also download from the State Library), and I love my Hallmark movies.

I'm usually too busy to get the winter blahs. What I do look forward to, though, are days when the weather turns warmer and I can get out and enjoy being outdoors and taking a walk.

My winter blahs reliever is helping feed senior citizens, sending out meals or serving them in person at the library. I feel like I'm accomplishing something and also getting to "see" people.

I know that most people across the state do not have access to an indoor pool, but I swim and take water aerobics classes to help with my winter blahs.

I keep myself very busy, and I watch birds as I paint and draw in my art studio.

Reach out to have a face-to-face with someone you haven't seen for a while!

Beating winter blahs: going to aquafit classes at the community center, playing bingo at parks and rec events, watching movies, visiting casinos.

KU Basketball! I know every mile post on the Kansas Turnpike between Andover and Lawrence. Rock Chalk!

To take away the winter blahs - I still like to go to the golf course and walk 9 holes and run the cart the last 9 and play a round of golf. And if the weather doesn't cooperate, then a good book is always great to read.

## Beating the Winter Blahs

To get rid of the winter blahs, I go to the school where I taught and help with the Kiwanis Kid Club.

To get over the winter "blahs" I go to my grandkids' basketball or volleyball games and school programs! (Or work on grants, attend tourism meetings, or try to think of center-pieces for Kansas Teacher Hall of Fame induction tables.)

## COORDINATING COUNCIL REPORT

The KNEA-Retired Coordinating Council met for their second meeting of the year by Zoom on Feb. 7. Other than the routine business of approving minutes and budgets, the Council heard a lengthy report from the KNEA Government Relations staff informing us of the current state of education legislation in the Kansas Capitol, including proposed KPERS improvements. We also heard plans for the upcoming KNEA RA, reports from KNEA-R representatives on NEA-Retired committees, and a report on the recent actions of the KNEA Board of Directors. We discussed our main project for this year which will be an every member survey of Retired members, in an attempt to determine where we should best direct our efforts. There is a member of the Coordinating Council from every Uniserv District and they can provide you with any details of our meetings.



## KNEA Board Report

The KNEA Board of Director's meeting in December was all about preparation for the 2023 KNEA Representative Assembly in April.

The board participated in an open hearing for the proposed operational budget and then later during the meeting voted to support it. Proposed constitution and by-law changes were discussed. **KNEA by-law 1.f** will be of particular interest to retired members. In fact, membership recruitment concerns expressed by retirees across Kansas spurred KNEA-Retired Executive Committee and Coordinating Council to begin the process for this by-law change. It's all about retiree membership eligibility and loosening some of the restrictions. In an over-simplification of the proposed language, the change drops the requirement of membership that year just prior to retirement and/or reduces overall KNEA active membership requirement from 10 to five years. If adopted at the RA, you'll be learning more about this change in the next Apple Corps.

Do you remember, about a decade or two ago before most of us retired, the prediction of the vast teacher shortage in the United States? It shouldn't have been a surprise that it really happened, but perhaps the extent of the shortage was. KNEA, in partnership with Wisconsin NEA, received an NEA Safe & Just Schools grant to try to address in part the shortages. This grant's focus is to increase the number of Educators Rising in Kansas (Think "Future Teachers of America" in our day!) especially emphasizing the potential teaching pool in rural areas and minority secondary school students.

An interesting discussion at the board meeting occurred right after the information of the grant mentioned above was received. Aspiring Educators (a.k.a. student members) have joined KNEA during their college years for various reasons.

## KNEA Board Report (con't)

Some know that education is their vocation and therefore KNEA is their professional organization from the start. Others may like the discount/member benefits or the snacks at the chapter meetings. Still others may appreciate the professional development opportunities. There's a variety of reasons for joining as an Aspiring Educator.

However, one of the most important reasons students join, if not early in their program of studies, then most certainly right before student teaching, is the liability insurance. Student teachers are just as vulnerable as active teachers. Maybe even more so. KNEA board members spoke of their own or neighboring districts that are so hungry for a body to fill one of their many openings, that student teachers are being placed on the payroll the moment they walk in the door. They are paid as a teacher, a full-time sub or a para while they are student teaching. The cooperating teacher is in another classroom filled with his or her students. The issue then is this: What about liability insurance?

Student teachers have been unpaid and that's a requirement of the insurance. But what now? Can they become active members? Well, technically they aren't yet licensed so that may be iffy. On the other hand, we have classrooms being staffed by people, though well intentioned, who may have a high school education at the least. Or a person who's never had an education methods class and is now responsible for quality instruction, maintaining order, providing appropriate interventions to vulnerable students. So what's best? Pay or not pay? Paying a person who has no education prep classes but not the person who has hours and hours of specific classroom training as well as observation hours? Pay someone who's never created a lesson plan but not a person who could do so sleeping? It's a classic quandry.

I leave you with those pressing questions, Apple Corps readers. Perhaps this could be a discussion at your next local meeting.

**-Judy Johnson, KNEA-Retired,  
KNEA Board of Directors**

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Coordinating Council  
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How KNEA-R members  
beat the winter blahs

**In This Issue:**



Kansas National  
Education Association



**The Apple Corps**

Kansas NEA Retired

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