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aceamsea.org

A full color electronic version of this newsletter can be found on our website.

February 2026

The



Advocate

President's Message >>>

Welcome new ACEA Member!

Unit 1

Christa Brakeall

CW

RESCHEDULED TO FEBRUARY 19!

ACEA ESP "Chat and Chew"

THURSDAY
FEBRUARY 19
4:15 PM

MONTHLY
MEETING

ACEA OFFICE



Join us for snacks and relaxed discussions with union leaders and fellow professionals!

This event is open to all Unit 4 members so bring an ESP colleague or friend along!

Please let us know of any allergies, dietary restrictions, or accessibility needs in advance.

RSVP by email at awalz@mseanea.org or by calling the ACEA office at 301-729-8280

The Valentine Edition

While we usually love our profession, and are generally loved in return (as evidenced by all of those valentines that elementary educators get at this time of the year), changing circumstances cause us to question the depth of this love. This seemed to be how many of us were recently feeling with the uncontrollable weather and the need to shift to virtual learning for not one, not two, but four days in a row!


Yet, even in the midst of what I believe continues to be the most challenging era in the history of public education with funding concerns, artificial intelligence impacts, along with other significant changes and considerations, you remain committed and true to your students and your profession. Educators have been true examples of collaboration, integrity, problem-solving, self-sacrifice and remain the reason that our students still have access to a free and appropriate public education with the promise of a brighter future.

While you may not receive the traditional paper valentines, we hope that those moments in your day when your hard work is evident through your students engagement, understanding, and success causes your heart to fill with love and satisfaction. For starters, please accept this "valentine" as a token of our love and pride for all of our ACEA members. It is an honor to serve such a loyal and dedicated group of educators. Happy Valentine's Day!

In solidarity and service,

Kim

ksloane@mseanea.org

THIS ISN'T A BIG "I LOVE YOU STATEMENT" OR ANYTHING. NOT THAT I DON'T LIKE YOU. I DO. BUT NOT CRAZY MUCH OR ANYTHING. JUST A NORMAL, MEDIUM-SIZED LIKE. BECAUSE YOU'RE PRETTY AWESOME AND GOOD AT STUFF AND I THINK YOU'RE COOL. SO YEAH... THAT MAYBE GOT OUT OF HAND. 

The Language of Love

Communication is vital to any good and lasting relationship. With this in mind, ACEA periodically evaluates and considers how to improve communications with our members. It remains clear that our ACEA Building Representatives are absolutely the most important and effective way to do this through short meetings and newsletters, and we love them for their service to their colleagues. While we send periodic email updates, many don't open these, or they go to junk/spam, or are not viewed in a timely fashion. So, as part of the more recent discussions, we decided to start a new Facebook Group for ACEA Members ONLY where we can share more quickly the information intended only for our members. If you haven't yet joined this group, please scan the QR Code below to request access and which will be granted once your membership is verified.



And don't forget that you can also access the newsletters in full-color on our website aceamsea.org under the "Local News" tab, and we will begin to post it to our new ACEA Member Facebook Group page as well. We believe this will not only provide multiple means of access for our members, but will also help keep this line item within it's line item budget.

ESP of the YEAR Nominations

For the last 9 years, ACEA has participated in the MSEA/NEA program honoring our Education Support Professionals. Now it is time to honor another ESP/ACEA member who has supported our students, classroom, schools, and association. Our ESPs include most secretaries, instructional assistants, and IT technicians. To nominate one of your ESP colleagues in this manner, complete the nomination form and return it to ACEA by February 27. The nomination forms can be found and printed from our website at <https://aceamsea.org/> by clicking on the button link with the title "ESP of the Year" from the HOME page, completing the form electronically at <https://forms.gle/UQt219s4Y75U3v1W8> or by contacting ACEA by email (derickson@mseanea.org) or calling 301-729-8280.



ESP's of the Year



2017 Debbie Belfoure
 2018 Mary "Syd" Sibley
 2019 Christine Rephann
 2020 Ann Abe
 2021 Shelly Fitzgerald
 2022 Sherry Zembower
 2023 Peggy Bass
 2024 Stewart Monroe, Jr.
 2025 Stephanie Scaletta
 2026 ??????????????

CBTP
 West Side
 CCTE
 Cash Valley
 Westernport
 South Penn
 Mount Savage
 CCTE
 South Penn



GOTTA LOVE 'EM!

NEA Member Benefits

at

<https://www.neamb.com>

NEA Member Benefits Annual Giveaway!

Prizes: 5-night all-inclusive resort certificate and \$150 in Vacation Cash (3 winners)

Enter the All-Inclusive Adventure Sweepstakes by March 30, 2026, for a chance to win a 5-night all-inclusive resort stay at one of the following locations: Puerto Plata, Cancun, Los Cabos, Mazatlán, Puerto Morelos or Cozumel.

FOR THE LOVE OF EDUCATION!



This new year is off and running in all directions- and it is only February! Here at ACEA, we are busy with local negotiations and keeping an eye on legislative work at the local, state, and federal levels. This year, a \$10.2 billion investment from the MD government has been figured into the proposed FY 2027 budget, with \$9.1 billion in PK-12 direct aid and \$1.1 billion in educator pension costs. Other items in the proposed budget include:

- A 16% increase in money for community schools
- A 49% increase in funding for full-day prekindergarten
- A 17% increase for special education services funding
- \$19.4 million for the continuation of the Grow Your Own program

Schools in Allegany County are facing challenges due to cuts in federal funding: \$3.172 million removed for students in poverty and \$2.87 million removed for students receiving special education services. The state is working to fill the gap left by federal cuts to ensure that our school system, educators, and students have the resources they deserve! If you want to get involved by lobbying, talking with representatives, or visiting Annapolis, reach out to the office and let us know-we would love to have you join us in our work lifting the needs of Allegany County! Lobbying opportunities are scheduled for Monday, February 16 and Monday, March 2. Reach out to ACEA for more details.