

Berks County Association of School Retirees



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

What’s New for Seniors?



Russell J. Diesinger
BCASR President

NEXT MEETING!

Thursday,
September 18, 2025
at Berks Career &
Technology Center
West Campus –Leesport

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In my President’s Message for this edition of our newsletter I wanted to help clarify some of the changes being made to our taxes and social safety net that were passed recently. President Donald Trump signed legislation on July 4 (“The Big Beautiful Bill”) that will have a broad impact on taxes, health care coverage, nutrition assistance and other financial supports that many of us rely on.

The legislation will affect the financial lives of seniors in many ways, from a new temporary tax deduction for individuals 65 and older, to reduced funding for food assistance. Cuts to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA) funding could cause nearly 12 million people to lose their health insurance by 2034 according to a Congressional Budget Office analysis.

A key provision of the law provides targeted tax relief for older adults in the form of a \$6,000 “bonus” deduction that could offset federal taxes on Social Security benefits for some of us. The full deduction is available to taxpayers age 65 and older with a modified gross adjusted income of up to \$75,000 for an individual and \$150,000 for a couple filing jointly. Each spouse can take the deduction, for a total of \$12,000, if both are over age 65.

The deduction is reduced for higher earners, up to \$175,000 for a single-filer and \$250,000 for a couple. If your income exceeds these limits, you will not qualify for the bonus deduction.

You can claim this deduction even if you itemize deductions on your tax return. If you don’t itemize, you can add the bonus (\$6,000) to the existing standard deduction, which is already higher for taxpayers 65 and older. But you will only be able to do so for the next four years; the bonus deduction is set to expire in 2029.

Seniors who are paying off cars or are liable for local property taxes may also receive some short-term tax relief. The new legislation allows car owners to deduct up to \$10,000 in interest payments on loans for certain vehicles and increases the maximum SALT (state and local tax) deduction from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Both changes are temporary, expiring after four and five tax years, respectively. This new law will provide us with some temporary tax relief!

Russell J. Diesinger, President

BCASR Hosted Successful Retirement Workshop

On Saturday, March 22, 2025, BCASR hosted a Retirement Workshop to all school employees contemplating retirement with PSERS. The program included presentations by Kristen Holjes, PASR Executive Director; Wanda Tracey from Heath Options Program, medical insurance programs; and, Jonathan Moyer and Jessica King from Moyer Insurance & Financial Solutions.

BCASR Officers and Committee Chairs

Current Slate of Officers

President	Russell Diesinger	610-207-7384
Secretary	Brenda Stein	610-406-2313
Treasurer	Donna Spiers	610-376-5216
Past President	Candice Hartranft	484-256-7573

Standing Committee Chairs

Community Service	Sharon Heckman
Membership Recorder	Joanne Wojszwillo
Membership	Brenda Stein
Social Services Memorial Honor Fund	Joanne Wojszwillo
Educational Support	Sandy Heath
Berks County Community Foundation	Karen Braucher
Programs	Elizabeth Schmoyer
RECREO/Fundraising	Pamela Taylor
Retirement Planning	Candice Hartranft and Joanne Wojszwillo
Legislative & L-PEC	David Haughney
Membership Benefits & Services	Candice Hartranft
Public Relations	Russell Diesinger
Nominating	Candice Hartranft
Newsletter Editor	Brenda Stein

Berks County Sub-Chapter Presidents

BCASR currently has seven sub-chapters that serve the local school districts and communities throughout Berks County. Listed below are the current Presidents:

BORSEA (Boyertown/Oley SD)	Robert Trainer	bob73ste36@aol.com
East Penn (Brandywine/Fleetwood/Kutztown SD)	Joyce Sturtevant	jgtsturtevant@gmail.com
Hamburg/Schuylkill Valley	Vicki Dissinger	vickdiss@aol.com
Muhlenberg (includes Reading-Muhlenberg CTC)	Luanne Reese	lreese@comcast.net
Reading (includes Reading-Muhlenberg CTC)	Pat Reinik	creinik610@comcast.net
**South Berks (Governor Mifflin/Wilson/Wyomissing SD)		
TWEAD (Twin Valley/Exeter/Antietam/Daniel Boone SD)	Pat Beaton	wishe@ptd.net
Western Berks (Conrad Weiser/Tulpehocken)	Dennis B Harman	dennis1254harman@gmail.com

Note: School retirees from the Berks County Intermediate Unit, the Berks Career and Technology Centers, Reading Area Community College and Kutztown University are eligible to join any sub-chapter.

****The South Berks Chapter submitted their disbandment at the executive board meeting on May 15, 2025. Retirees from the three districts may join another subchapter with their current membership status.**

Updates from Subchapters

The Berks County subchapters' numerous activities are highlighted below:

Boyertown/Oley - The BORSEA chapter once again supported the Oley Valley Food Bank and Preston's Pantry with donations. A fundraising event is planned for October 14 and 15, 2025 at Vincenzo's Restaurant in Douglassville from 4:00 to 9:00 pm. A one-day trip is planned to Bethlehem on Thursday, December 4, 2025, and a multi-day trip to Maine is planned for September 10-16 in 2026.

East Penn (Brandywine/Fleetwood/Kutztown) - East Penn had a successful trip to Lancaster's Sight and Sound Theater to see "Noah" on April 16 and a buffet meal at the Hershey Farms Resort Restaurant. Food donations were made to the Kutztown Food Pantry, Friend, Inc. and Concern.



At the June meeting members enjoyed a program by Sister Carol Ann, magician from Alvernia University. The East Penn Chapter sponsored a grant this year to the Brandywine Library for a "Butterfly Program".

Hamburg Area/Schuylkill Valley—The March meeting was held at BCTC West Campus in Leesport. The June meeting was held at the Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Shoemakersville. Along with a presentation from Berks Eye, members donated 100 pairs of eyeglasses to the Bern Township Lions' Club. Monetary donations were given to the Educational Foundations of both the Hamburg Area and Schuylkill Valley school districts.



Muhlenberg—The April meeting featured "Hometown Heroes" presentation by Dennis Damiani. Members were entertained at the May meeting by the Muhlenberg High School Select Choir directed by Bill Snelling. Fundraising during the year included raffle baskets and 50/50 drawings to support the annual student scholarship. Meetings are held at Giannotti's Family Restaurant on Route 12.

Reading – Reading ASR members provided \$500 in gift cards and a \$400 donation to Mary's Shelter. This year members also donated books to Mary's Shelter. Members enjoyed a day trip to Wilbur Chocolates and the Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre in Lancaster to see the musical "Waitress" on April 3. The North West Middle School Chorus performed at the spring meeting. Meetings are held at the Breakfast Hut.

South Berks (Gov. Mifflin, Wilson, Wyomissing) - The March meeting featured Dieter Wolter who presented the program "Escape from Germany". The May meeting program was provided by Luanne Oatman from Berks Encore. Members volunteered to sort items and fill backpacks at Mary's Shelter. A monetary donation was made to each of the three district's educational foundations.

TWEAD (Twin Valley, Exeter, Antietam, Daniel Boone) - The chapter provided an educational grant to Tiffany Mell at the Owatin Elementary School (Exeter Twp SD) for their morning announcement program. Personal care items were donated to Mary's Shelter. The May meeting speaker was Niki Habecker who wrote a book, "Live, Love, and Belong" about her physically challenged son Josh. Concluding the year in June was a program about the historic Joanna Furnace.

(continued on page 7)

BCASR Fall General Membership Meeting

Thursday, September 18, 2025

Berks Career and Technology Center West Campus



- address: 1057 County Welfare Road, Leesport PA 19533
- phone: 610-374-4073

Breakfast Meeting Schedule

9:00—9:30 AM—Registration

9:30—10:30 AM—Breakfast

10:30-11:15 AM—Business Meeting*

11:15– 12:00 Noon—Program (to be announced)

***BUSINESS MEETING**—will include recognition of Laurretta Woodson Award recipients, Volunteer of the Year recipient, and the Social Services Memorial Honor Ceremony.

MENU– Breakfast pastries, scones, Danish, muffins, fresh fruit plate, QuicheLorraine/Complex Egg Cookery, sausage, buttermilk pancakes and maple syrup, home fries, and toast. Beverages include coffee, hot tea, orange juice, and water.

COMMUNITY SERVICE—Donations for “**Keystone Military Families**” will be collected. Items include non-perishable food items such as cereal, canned goods, paper products, and personal care items (soaps, toothpaste, combs, washcloths, etc.).

COST—\$20.00/person, payable to BCASR. Deadline for registration is September 2, 2025.

BCASR September 18, 2025 Meeting at BCTC East Campus—Oley PA

Send registration with payment to: Donna Spiers, 302 Park Avenue,
Temple, PA 19560.

Donna’s phone contact is: 610-376-5216

GUESTS ARE

WELCOME!

Please register any
guests who plan to
attend the meeting.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Deadline for registration is Tuesday, September 2, 2025

Lauretta Woodson Award Recipients for 2025

Recipients for this year's awards are from the Boyertown/Oley Valley Subchapter. Both candidates have been selected by school administrators in recognition of their dedicated service in schools.



Jenna Vogels, Professional Educator Award Recipient

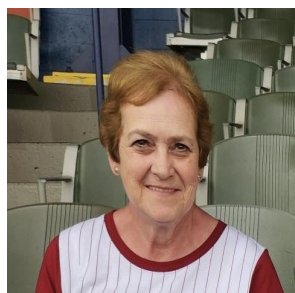
Jenna Vogels is the recipient of the 2025 Lauretta Woodson Professional Educator Award. Jenna has served as a kindergarten teacher and second grade teacher in the Boyertown Elementary School for 21 years. Jenna has made an impact on the lives of countless students and families. She continually goes above and beyond to provide her students with learning opportunities that enable them to reach their potential. The projects and writing assignments that get students excited about learning are frequent topics that parents celebrate. Among her peers, Jenna is willing to serve as partner or mentor to anyone who needs support. Jenna Vogels was nominated by Principal, Craig Kehl.



Sheri Keuscher, Educational Support Award Recipient

Sheri Keuscher is the recipient of the 2025 Lauretta Woodson Educational Support Award. Sheri has been at the Oley Valley School District for 17 years. She has served as a paraprofessional supporting students in the areas of academic support and behavior support. Sheri can adapt instructional materials and her own approach to support each student's needs. Sheri is dedicated to her job, students, and teachers. She is always open to a challenge and learn new strategies to support students. Sheri rises above the daily demands for the Oley Valley Elementary School students. She is a team player and always willing to help someone. Sheri Keuscher was recommended for the award by the Oley Valley Elementary School Principal, Matthew Broskey and the Director of Student Services, Mia Pietsch.

BCASR Volunteer of the Year Recipient for 2025



Etta M. Henry
Volunteer of the Year

Etta M. Henry was named the 2025 Volunteer of the Year Recipient. Etta is treasurer, membership chairman, and educational grants co-chairman for the Western Berks Association of School Retirees (subchapter of BCASR). She is active in the Combined Veterans Council of Berks County (CVC), the Women Veterans of Berks County (WVBC), the Mohnton Fish and Game Protective Association, and the Woman's Club of Exeter Township. Her volunteer service includes participating in patriotic events such as parades and ceremonies for Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, Vietnam Veteran's Day, 4th of July, and Armed Forces Day. She places American flags on 2,000 graves of veterans buried in the Laureldale cemetery prior to Memorial Day. She attends funerals of veterans and is a speaker at select organizations. Etta prepares the JROTC certificates each year to the recipients.

2025 Student Scholarship Winner



(left) Faith Constein, Recipient
(right) Karen Braucher, Chair

Antietam Middle-Senior High School senior Faith Constein is the recipient of BCASR's \$1,000 academic scholarship. Faith's achievements while in school included President of the Class of 2025, President of National Honors Society, Vice President of Student Council, a member of the Antietam musical productions, choir, jazz band, and the German American Partnership Program. She was also a member of the Modern Language Club and the International Thespian Society. Faith was also a member of the Varsity Tennis Team. Faith will attend West Chester University in the fall to major in Elementary Education to earn her bachelor's degree.

Teacher Grant Recipients for 2025

Two teacher grant recipients from the Berks County Community Foundation were awarded earlier this year:

- Brandywine Heights Intermediate and Middle School—A \$500 grant was given to support the "Garden to Lunch Table: Students Shaping Healthy School Lunches".
- Shiloh Hills Elementary School in Wilson School District- A \$500 grant was awarded to enhance the computer programming curriculum by integrating "Sphero Mini Robots" to foster problem-solving in the STEM program.

Teachers may submit requests for grants to the Berks County Community Foundation at www.bccf.org

BCASR 2-Day Trip to Hudson Valley

Members and guests interested in registering for the 2-day trip to Hudson Valley, New York, may contact Pamela Taylor at 610-374-3276 or pamelafrancotaylor@gmail.com. Dates of trip are October 14-15, 2025. Cost is \$594 per person with all inclusive meals, gratuities, and transportation. Tours include the Culinary Institute of America, Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site, and Brotherhood Winery. Deadline for registration is August 6, 2025.

BCASR Dine to Donate Fundraiser

A Dine to Donate fundraiser will be held on Tuesday, September 9, 2025 at the Outback Steak House, Paper Mill Road, Wyomissing from 4:00 to 8:00 pm. Proceeds will benefit Berks schools and students. (No coupon necessary to dine that evening.)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

PASR Benefits and Services Update

New Benefit—PASR has partnered with **Life Line Screening** to offer a special discounted rate on their screening services. Life Line Screening is a private pay, consumer direct service. LLS is the nation's leading mobile preventive health screening company focused on cardiovascular disease, risk of stroke, and more.

Visit pasr.org to see additional benefits and services available to members.

Members may use the QR code for PASR benefits shown here →



Continued from Page 3—Subchapter Updates

Western Berks—The March meeting was held at the Country Faire Restaurant in Myerstown. Speakers were PASR Executive Director Kristen Holjes and PASR President Mary Davis. Members planned a successful fundraiser at Barnes & Noble Book Store on Saturday, May 17. The May meeting honored those members who have passed during the year. Western Berks actively supports school grant programs in both the Conrad Weiser and Tulpehocken Area School Districts.

BCASR Charitable Donations

BCASR sponsored a collection of household items for “Blessed Beginnings” and donations of non-perishable foods for Berks EnCore Grocery Bingo Program and the Reading Food Pantry. The Berks Chapter supports the state’s Social Services Memorial Honor Fund with a monetary donation each year. The Berks Chapter provides funds for a student scholarship and teacher grants available through the Berks County Community Foundation.

April 24, 2025 Spring General Membership Meeting



Dr. Adelle Schade, Vice President of Total Experience Learning Institute

The April 24, 2025 General Membership Meeting was held at the McGlinn Conference Center on the campus of Alvernia University. Members enjoyed an Italian buffet meal followed by a presentation from Dr. Adelle Schade, Vice President of the Total Experience Learning ® (TExpL) at Alvernia University. Created in 2015, the institute provides student-focused programs with self-directed research projects across vitally important disciplines. The institute was named a top four STEM program in the U.S. TExpL is housed in the John R. Post Center at the Reading College Towne in downtown Reading. Contact for TExpL information is: Adelle.Schade@alvernia.edu

PASR 2025 House of Delegates—October 5-7, 2025

“Staying Alive in ‘25—Relax, Refresh, Renew”

Meeting every two years, the 2025 PASR House of Delegates is scheduled for October 5-7, 2025 at the Penn Stater Conference Center, State College, PA. This biennial event is a statewide conference with speakers and breakout sessions to reconnect with delegates for the purpose of sharing ideas for retirement planning, legislative issues, membership recruitment, and PASR services and benefits. The business of the conference will include election of officers for a two-year term, adoption of changes to state bylaws, and to take action on any vital issues pertaining to the association. The Berks chapter will be sending delegates to the conference this year to bring back ideas to share with our local membership.

BCASR Website—Members and guests have access to the BCASR website found on the PASR main screen. Use web address: www.pasr.org. Next select “Find a Chapter”, select “Eastern Region”, select “Berks”, select “Berks Website”. Items listed include upcoming meetings, newsletters, trips and fundraising, and membership forms.

BCASR NEWS

Berks Chapter of PASR

A publication of the Berks County Association of School Retirees.

BCASR
Brenda Stein, Editor
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Bernville, PA 19506

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**PASR Mission Statement—To serve
others in need and help one another
enjoy their retirement.**



Check on PASR with this QR Code!

Open your smartphone to the camera. Point the camera at the QR code to view the link to PASR. Click on the link.

Receive the BCASR Newsletter Electronically!

Members may sign up to receive the BCASR newsletter electronically for both the yearly March and August newsletters.

If you would like to join the group newsletter email, please send your email address to:

bstein425@gmail.com