

Preparing for & fostering “living the dream!”

# PMEA Retired Member Network eNEWS

Winter Issue – December 4, 2024

Pennsylvania Music Educators Association

“Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else.” – Fred Rogers

## Happy Holidays!

### FEATURES

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### EDITOR'S NOTE

#### How are you doing?

Retirees, those soon-to- retire, collegiates, and active members: Join in celebrating & contributing to the *combined might* of our expertise, endowments, and encouragements that only your TEAM PMEA has to offer!

Send us your news, views, stories, and even *funnies* for the next edition of this forum.

Do you have any “hints or hacks” to share with our colleagues? Please contribute YOUR articles, notices, or suggestions!

**We want to hear from you!**

That’s why “we” are here! PKF

## Transitioning to a Meaningful Retirement... The Greatest Life Passage!

Hope this e-publications finds you happy, healthy, financially secure, and fully engaged in the good work of teaching and making “life-long music!”

Welcome to a new edition of **eNEWS – the PMEA Retired Member Network** – an informal alliance and forum for interconnecting pre- and in-service music educators and retirees sharing their ideas, updates, successes, and perspectives! Thanks for lending your support and staying involved in the profession!

**In PMEA, let’s continue to connect, communicate, & collaborate!**

Do you embrace AI? Of course you do... every day. “Artistic Intelligence!” But, what about that other AI... the artificial one? Not so much?

As much as I resist many of the challenges of the latest technological “revolutions” driving our day-to-day interactions (e.g., the must-do Apple update on my devices, or the loss of my favorite sheet music program *Finale*), I guess we have no choice but to try to keep up:

“If you can't beat them, join them!” As much as I am allergic to almost anything “artificial” (except the Splenda in my coffee), I did try my hand at using a little AI to write an article about “retirement transitioning,” providing all the links for further reading & research sources. Interested in the results? Check out page 8.

My role as your Retirement Coordinator is two-fold: to recount, represent, and revitalize the activities of our post full-time employed music educators, and... to assist in the training of those professionals who will retire over the next decade. Leaving the daily drudgery of paperwork, meetings, deadlines, and other *administrivia* brings instant stress reduction and FREEDOM, but most of us will undergo a few emotional ups and downs “Crossing the Rubicon” to retirement. We’re all here to help... and preparing for “pulling your pin” should begin NOW. Active Members: If you are planning to leave your job over the next five years, join me and a panel of happily retired members at the upcoming PMEA Annual Conference in the Poconos for the Friday, April 11 session “Retirement 101 – The Who-What-When-Where-Why-How of Retiree Stories & Strategies.” Surround yourself with the people who have successfully made it through this life passage!

RETIREES – STAY ACTIVE IN PMEA! The super-power of PMEA is the SHARING of our combined clearinghouse and reservoir of experience and talent. The PMEA website archives contacts, links, webinars, documents, etc. – everything conveniently in one place: <https://www.pmea.net/>.

**Join us in making a difference in PA music education!**



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1564 Hastings Mill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241-2860  
412-596-7937 <https://www.pmea.net/retired-members/>

Deadline for the next issue

**March 1, 2025**

Send “stuff” to:

[paulkfox.usc@gmail.com](mailto:paulkfox.usc@gmail.com)



## Here Come the 2025 Music Conferences! Places to Go & People to Meet In-Person!

<https://www.pmea.net/pmea-annual-in-service-conference/>

For some of us, it's a just chance to catch-up with our colleagues, see our friends, and socialize. Others are more focused and take advantage of the near-perfect opportunity to network with other professionals, perhaps seeking new working relationships, partnerships, or even employment. Many are on a look-out for newly published music, that perfect music lesson or teaching strategy, technology tools, fund-raisers, advance educational venues, or much-needed equipment to purchase for our

ensembles or classrooms. Most come to hear/see the "state of the art" in music education – concerts, demonstrations, keynote speeches, panel discussions, exhibits, research presentations, and workshops. PMEA's PD Council would likely submit that the primary purpose of a conference is for professional self-improvement... What did Stephen Covey call it? His Habit #7 of "sharpening the saw" – to build a balanced program of self-renewal in the four areas of your life: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. Covey would insist we embrace "the process that empowers us to move on an upward spiral of growth and change, of continuous improvement." So, in short, conferences help us "grow" – to revive, re-inspire, re-energize, rejuvenate, re-direct, and re-motivate all of us – pre-service, active in-service, and retired teachers towards making successful new connections, updating our knowledge and skills, and forming new goals.

**This is how we "keep up" with all the new standards, benchmarks, and cutting-edge advances, and meet the "movers-and-shakers," visionaries, and leaders in the profession!**

Your music education colleagues in the state and our PMEA and NAFME staff and officers have been busy planning numerous inspiring professional development projects and programs. Here's a "snapshot" of the "big" Conferences! Soak these up in 2025! *We'll leave the light on for you!*

- **PMEA Annual Conference in Kalahari/Poconos April 9-12, 2025**  
<https://www.pmea.net/pmea-annual-in-service-conference/>
- NAFME Eastern Division Conference in Hartford, CT April 24-27, 2025  
<https://cmea.org/professional-resources/cmea-org-easterndivision2025/>

## Retired Members – Why Should We Attend the PMEA Conference?

by Paul K. Fox, PMEA State Retired Member Coordinator

Retirees are a valuable resource to PMEA!

Join us at the Kalahari Resort in the Poconos for the chance to "catch-up," connect, collaborate and communicate with other colleagues throughout the Commonwealth! (a plethora of "C's!")

Our experienced retired members are among the best-trained (but unofficial) mentors in PMEA. Facing many years of "boots on the ground," we have at our fingertips numerous strategies to solve problems in education. Frankly, in my opinion, we have a lot to offer "the future of the profession!"

In addition, as a benefit to our informal connections with them, active educators who plan to retire over the 1-5 years can learn valuable techniques from us for a smooth transition to post-full-time employment and successfully reinvent, reprogram, and "recharge" themselves to modifying those essential elements of *purpose, structure, and community* throughout their "golden years!"

**Let's "break bread" together and enjoy the annual PMEA Retired Member Breakfast on Friday morning.**

Also on April 11, can you serve on the retiree panel and help me present the Retirement 101 session?

Plans are also underway to sponsor (possibly on Thursday) a "coffee & conversation" corner or an "ask the expert" lounge. Spaces and the schedule are packed, but if it possible, Abi is trying to fit in an informal sitting area with retirees and mentors as "friendly folks" to serve as "gurus" for PCMEA members, newcomers to a music education specialty, or recent transfers to the field.

Finally, stay tuned for other opportunities to volunteer... including serving as presiding chairs for concerts or sessions.



## It's Time to Rest, Refresh, and PLAY a Little! PMEA Annual Conference Returns to the Kalahari Resort!

<https://www.pmea.net/pmea-annual-in-service-conference/>

Retired, collegiate, corporate and active members need to *let down their hair* a bit... or wear a bathing cap!

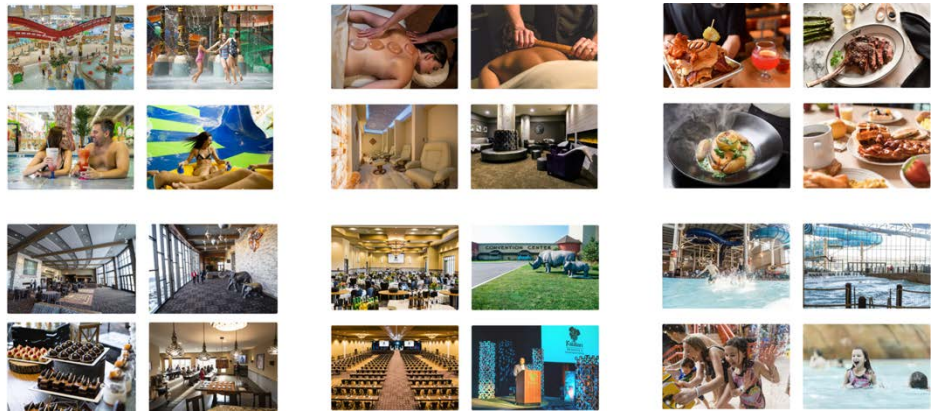
First, mark these dates on your spring calendar: **April 9-12, 2025.**

Now go ask your spouse, grandchildren, nieces/nephews, other fun-loving family members, or friends if they are available to join you for a *three-day escape to the Poconos*, "the world's largest indoor waterpark" at the Kalahari Resort!

Experience great music of all types, unique professional development, re-connections with PA colleagues, and entertainment all wrapped up in one location. And best yet, each spacious hotel room allows you to register up to four people with access to all the resort's amenities for no extra charge!

More details on the keynoters, clinicians, performers, and the conference schedule will be coming soon

Now, inquiry minds may be asking: Will this year be the first time you see PMEA Retired Member Coordinator Paul Fox ride one of water slides? How about you? Do YOU have enough courage to hold your nose and take the plunge?



### WHAT ELSE IS IN THE POCONOS?

- With "Pocono" meaning the "stream between two mountains," the region encompasses 2,400 square miles of lakes, rivers and woodlands just waiting to be discovered.
- Are you a little adventurous? Explore numerous opportunities to hike, bike, bird watch, ski, fish, and photograph the wildlife, waterfalls, and other breath-taking landscapes.
- Visit the White Mills Art Factory on 7326 Palmyra Highway (Route 6) as they celebrate multi-artist, multi-media displays Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Try your luck at the Mount Airy Casino Resort Spa.
- Or be a "wandering tourist" and take a car trip to nearby Stroudsburg, Milford, Jim Thorpe, Honesdale, Lake Wallenpaupack, Hawley, Skytop, Bushkill, Lake Harmony, or Tannersville.



- Check out this Poconos website: <https://www.poconomountains.com/plan-your-vacation/explore-our-area/>.



## HELP! WE'RE LOOKING FOR RETIREE PANEL MEMBERS

### Retirement Session at the Conference

<https://www.pmea.net/pmea-annual-in-service-conference/>

*Retirement 101 – The Who-What-When-Where-Why-How of Retiree Stories & Strategies* workshop will be presented on Friday, April 11, 2024. Active and retired members alike are invited to this brainstorming session.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE SOON-TO-RETIRE WORKSHOP

Retired members (volunteers needed!) and experts on gerontology share their experiences – insights, stories, and strategies – for a happy, healthy, and life-fulfilling retirement.

#### GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Attendees will review, self-assess, and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the following personal goals development, life-planning, emotional growth and stability, and positive habits of individual health and wellness:

1. Definitions and philosophy of and approaches to retirement
2. Post-employment transitional issues
3. Strategies for retirement planning
4. Activities to achieve a work/life balance, purpose, community, and structure in retirement
5. Additional research and resources towards self-realization and preparation for joy, vitality, and meaning throughout the "Next Phase" of life.

#### TARGETED AUDIENCE

Often emphasized in the retired member coordinator's articles on preparing for post-employment in *PMEA News*, this session is especially geared to people who are contemplating making a full retirement over the next several years. There is no "secret formula" for happiness and being ready for becoming a "senior citizen." It is unique and personalized to the individual. However, there are common pratfalls and a few "bumps" along the way that current retired members may be able to help forewarn their still-working colleagues.

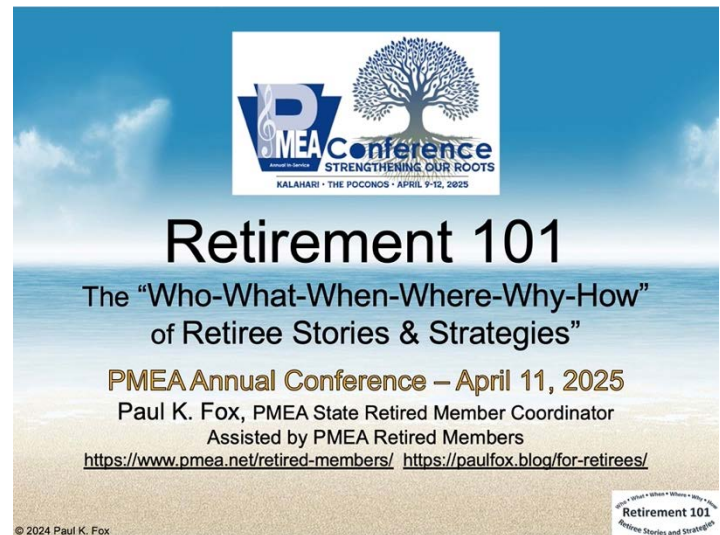
#### PLANS FOR PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

This session is a hybrid of all four types of presentation styles: lecture, demonstration, panel, and participatory. Research, resources, and practical advice on retirement preparation and transitioning this life passage will be shared by the speaker (now in his ninth year of retirement) along with retired members in the audience. The slide "chapters" ("who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how") are arranged in random-access so the attendees can freely direct the order of the topics for discussion. Significant time for Q & A and dialogue on retiree stories and strategies will be scheduled.

#### WANTED – Retirement Anecdotes and Tips!

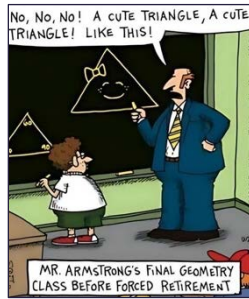
Our PMEA Retired Member panel should sit in and offer their wisdom. Consider answering questions like these:

1. Have you found happiness and success in retirement?
2. What "new" hobbies, volunteer projects, trips, family connections, and encore careers have you been exploring?
3. What did you do to reinvent yourself and how did you satisfy those "big three" goals of post-full-time employment: finding purpose, structure, and community?
4. How did you navigate the early phases of retirement? imagination, anticipation, liberation, etc.
5. What were some of the transitional "ups and downs" you experienced and how did you cope with them?
6. What are you still doing in music and education?



## Graffiti – Inspiration and “The Funnies”

from our retired and active members surfing the “Net” – Send your humorous or thoughtful clippings to [paulkfox.usc@gmail.com](mailto:paulkfox.usc@gmail.com).



Laziness kills ambition  
 Anger kills wisdom  
 Fear kills dreams  
 Ego kills growth  
 Jealousy kills peace  
 Doubt kills confidence

Now read that right to left.



### YOU MIGHT BE OLD IF...

1 POINT FOR EACH

1. Used a rotary phone	13. Sent a fax
2. Used a floppy disk	14. Used MySpace
3. Used a typewriter	15. Used dial up to access the internet
4. Taken photos with a film camera	16. Had an encyclopedia
5. Had a CD collection	17. Used a phone book
6. Made a mix tape	18. Sent postcards
7. Owned a walkman	19. Sent handwritten letters
8. Had a VHS recorder	20. Used a paper map
9. Had to repair a tape cassette	21. Owned a pager
10. Rented movies at Blockbuster	22. Wrote a cheque
11. Played an Atari	23. Removed the cd player from your car
12. Listened to music on a boombox	24. Used a record player
	25. Used MSN messenger

## New Hobbies You Could Try

<b>FUN</b>	Ice Skating Bingo Homebrewing Boogie Boarding Mixology Stand-Up Comedy Trampoline Street Art Walking Tours Sunrise Photography Board Game Marathon	<b>INDOOR</b>	Knitting Indoor Rock Climbing Still Life Painting Jewelry-Making Pirates Chess Skipping Organizing a Film Club Bowling Winemaking
<b>CREATIVE</b>	Songwriting Drawing Calligraphy Wreath-Making Candle-Making Writing Science Fiction Learning Magic Electronic Music Making Cosplay Playing Dungeons and Dragons	<b>ONLINE</b>	Video Gaming Watching E-Sports Learning Languages Family Tree Mapping Building a Facebook Community Video Editing
<b>LOW-COST</b>	Start a YouTube Channel Dancing Nail Art Journaling Writing Poetry Become a Social Media Influencer Callisthenics Workouts Scrapbooking Thrifting Litter Picking	<b>CRAFT</b>	Furniture Upcycling Embroidery Crochet Glass Etching Leatherworking Woodworking Pottery Soap-Making Repairing Toys Making Greetings Cards
<b>PAID</b>	Photography Investing Podcasting Coding Translating Blogging Content Writing Crypto Trading Buying and Selling Real Estate Mystery Shopping	<b>FOODIE</b>	Chocolate-Making Pasta-Making Bread-Baking Wine and Cheese Tasting Jam-Making Distilling Gin Taking Cooking Skills Courses Start a Food Instagram Channel Tending to an Indoor Herb Garden Cooking Recipes from Around the World
<b>INTERESTING</b>	Start a Collection Local Sightseeing Learn a Musical Instrument Glassblowing Reading Egyptian Hieroglyphs Meteorite Hunting Astrophotography Drone Racing Become a Beauty Influencer Solve Puzzles	<b>ACTIVE</b>	Yoga Fun Running Zumba Swimming Surfing Tennis Rock Climbing Camping Ultimate Frisbee Sandboarding
<b>OUTDOOR</b>	Fishing Gardening Birdwatching Hiking Geocaching Paddleboarding Running Dog Walking Basketball Cycling	<b>GLOBAL</b>	Japanese Carpentry Irish Quilting Persian Calligraphy Korean Karaoke Origami Grow Bonsai Trees Ax Throwing Manga Art Yodeling

..... Ordinary & Happy .....



## Soon-to-Retire Corner – Semi-Annual Book Review

### “Pack Lightly – Making Sense of the Second Half of Your Life”

Did you know that, according to authors Dr. Lisa B. Cowley and Victor R. Westgate in the introduction to their book *Pack Lightly*, “One in five people or 20% of the population in the United States will be 65 or older by 2030. By 2056, those who are 65 years and older are projected to surpass the population of those under 18 years old?”

They continue with their life mission and the theme of the book:

“In the first half of your life, there were many expectations to achieve certain goals - education, career choices, whether to marry and have a family. The desire to achieve certain goals drives the engine. For example, as a young person, where you live may be influenced by family of origin, a job or your partner's job, and less about your true desire in deciding where you put down roots.”

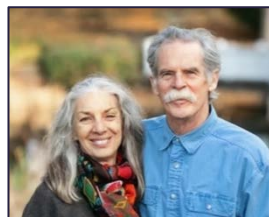
“Now, in the second half of your life, you may still choose to live close to your family, but these decisions are not driven by what others expect of you, rather, they are based on what sustains you. There is an opportunity for an opening, and perhaps, a brand-new shift of consciousness. Now, it is the process, or journey, that is as valuable or more so than achieving goals. Things that motivated you, such as how many degrees you have or how much money you make, doesn't matter as much in this stage of life. Immersing yourself into a project, contributing in your own unique way to make the world a better place, learning something for the first time, or picking up a hobby that you left behind in the busy first half of your life, takes on greater importance. Where attention on the first half of your life is often on obtaining things while growing up, the second half of life is about freedom to experience things while growing into yourself. The shift concerning your perception of time is not about a deficit on a daily basis, but an understanding that your total days on this earth are growing shorter as you age.”

What a new book find! I thought I had seen just about everything written on the subject of retirement and getting prepared for our upcoming post-employment *bliss*. It started when, out-of-the-blue, I received an emailed offer to share their articles and websites. Later, I discovered both Dr. Lisa B Cowley, a holistic chiropractor and nutritional counselor of 25 years, along with her husband and co-author Victor R Westgate, a High School educator of 34 years, have assisted thousands of individuals in discovering their purpose and meaning in their lives.

All of you should drop everything and check out their website, a literal treasure chest of blog posts: [www.joyinaging.com](http://www.joyinaging.com)

#### Chapters in the Book

1. Sense of Place
2. Sense of Direction
3. Sense of Connection
4. Sense of Time
5. Sense of Body
6. Sense of Mind
7. Sense of Spirit
8. Sense of Grace

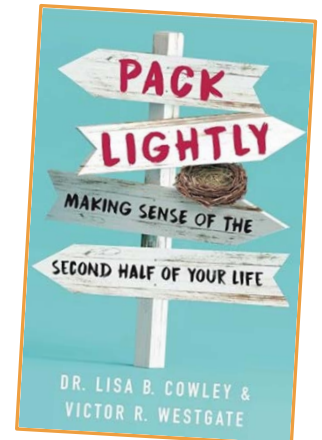


#### Exercises Described in the Book

- Finding Your Sense of Purpose
- Release What's Holding You Back
- How to Be Kind to Yourself and Others
- What Do I Really Want

#### Fox's Favorite Section (Inspirational!)

The last chapter discussed how we should embed memories in the heart and minds of those we leave behind. They recommend reaching out to your elderly relatives (and have you do this, too) and write a journal of responses to questions of the lifelong challenges they/we faced in their/our lives.



#### From the Back Cover...

*Developed from more than five years of travel, interviews, research and personal experiences, Pack Lightly is a practical roadmap for redefining one's purpose.*

- Find encouragement through relatable research
- Reinvent yourself with honest, trusted guidance
- Become empowered by preparing for your journey

#### Quotes from the Retirees They Interviewed

“I am more interested in a life of quality, rather than the number of years I live.”

“Live a long, healthy, independent life for as long as possible, which is why I exercise my mind and body and keep my weight under control.”

“Do not stay in a miserable or toxic relationship.”  
“Adaptation is the key to longevity.”

“Hang out with people who are curious.”

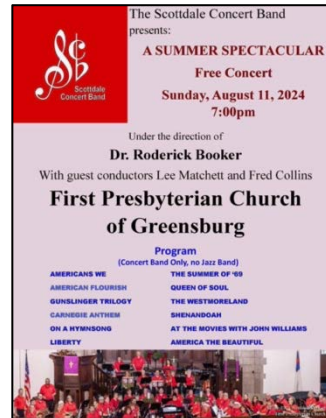
“Walk your dog five times per day, even if you don't have a dog.”

## Heard Through the "Vintage" Grapevine

Most retirees would tell you that, "It's a good thing I'm no longer working full-time... otherwise I'd never have enough time to get everything done!" Our retired music teachers are truly busy. However, it is also hard for all of us to keep in touch! One lament of your Retired Member Coordinator is his having to "troll the Internet" and capture "rumors" like these! What's the lesson here? Please email [paulkfox.usc@gmail.com](mailto:paulkfox.usc@gmail.com) "what's happening in YOUR LIFE," OR you might see an unflattering photograph from social media or a Google-search post here! Tell us about your grandchild(ren), pets, a fun vacation trip, new hobby, household renovation, musical pursuit, or ??? Most important: We need pictures! (They say a thousand words!).



**Julie Allport**  
(District 12) had a special celebration!



We were invited to the final summer concert of **Scottsdale Concert Band** on August 11 directed by **Dr. Roderick Booker** (District 1) and assisted by Fredrick Collins and **Lee Matchett** at the First Presbyterian Church of Greensburg.



**Natalie Ozeas**  
(District 1) was featured on several local TV newscasts for her dedication to music education in the Pittsburgh area.

"This awesome book is for beginning music teachers and teachers who have taught for 35 years and everyone in between."

– **Lisa Simon:**  
*Elementary General Music Teacher*  
Linden Elementary School  
Gayman Elementary School

**Mark Appiotti** (District 11) has written the book, *Balancing the Baton*. A portion of the proceeds will help fund the Ronald W. Lamar Memorial Scholarship.

Did you miss **Gene Hoffmaster's** (District 4) Golden Anniversary?

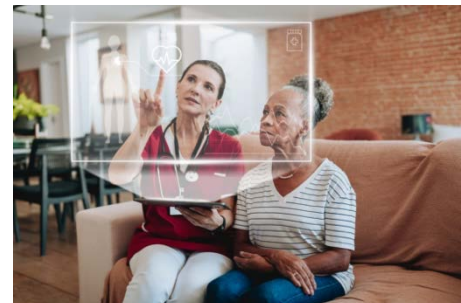


Have you seen a tuba player dance? **Montgomery County Concert Band's** Spring Concert on May 1 featured these works plus *Goodnight Moon* and *Celtic Wedding...* under the direction of **Chuck Neidhardt** (District 11).

## AI's Version of "The Big Transition" a.k.a. Retirement

*Editor's Note: Is this the future of journalism? Well, try it yourself. All I did was searched "retirement transitioning" on Google and received the following response from "AI Overview." What I did like about it was the plethora of additional links to explore and further study these essential concepts on-our-own.*

The transition to retirement is a major life change that can involve a range of emotions. Some people may feel relief and excitement, while others may experience loss or an identity crisis. Here are some tips for transitioning to retirement: <https://kohud.kendal.org/2024/01/10/what-is-sudden-retirement-syndrome/>



- **Embrace change:** Adjust your attitude, build resilience, and accept things you can't change.  
<https://www.helpguide.org/aging/healthy-aging/adjusting-to-retirement>
- **Redefine your identity:** Consider what you want to do in retirement and set new goals.  
<https://retirees.uw.edu/resources/retirement-transitions/the-retirement-process-a-psychological-and-emotional-journey>
- **Reduce your hours:** If possible, gradually reduce your hours instead of suddenly stopping work.  
<https://archerim.com/7-tips-to-a-happy-retirement-transition/>
- **Prioritize what's important:** Focus on what you want to do and make sure you're enjoying your time.  
<https://www.boldin.com/retirement/transition-to-retirement-exceptional-tips/>
- **Strengthen your social network:** Attend cultural events or other activities to meet new people.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9UPHUb36jc&t=682s>
- **Consider a retirement transition program:** You can enroll in a program to help with the transition.  
<https://www.boldin.com/retirement/transition-to-retirement-exceptional-tips/>

## The Latest on Retirement @ paulfox.blog

Blogs for retired educators and soon-to-retirees

Bookends Part 5: <https://paulfox.blog/2024/11/17/our-next-chapter/>

T-Minus 12 Months to Year 70:

<https://paulfox.blog/2024/04/28/update-bigger-better-things/>

Old: <https://paulfox.blog/2024/01/23/old/>

25 Steps for Retirement Planning:

<https://paulfox.blog/2023/09/12/25-steps-for-estate-planning/>

Creative Ways for Musicians to Make Money Beyond Gigs:

<https://paulfox.blog/2023/06/28/monetizing-our-skills-passions/>

### A Retiree's Short List of Things-To-Do!

#### Encore Careers

1. **Higher Education** (music education methods, supervision of student teachers, etc.)
2. **Music Industry** (instrumental rental, repairs, merchandizing, etc.)
3. **Travel** (tour leader, festival organizer, vacation planner, etc.)
4. **Music Performance** (gigging, private teaching, guest conducting, accompanying, etc.)

#### Volunteering in...

5. **Music Education** (mentoring students or new teachers, coaching, directing community groups, serving professional associations/PMEA, etc.)
6. **Non-Profits** (escorting at hospitals, assisting animal shelters, food banks, libraries, hospice organizations, etc.)
7. **Community Service** (enlisting as special advocate for abused or neglected children, giving guided tours as a docent in museums, etc.)

## PMEA Retired Member Resources – Membership Has Its Privileges!

You Are Free to Use These Tools at <https://www.pmea.net/retired-members/>

The How-To-Retire Webinar: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LluJ\\_0ctC4o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LluJ_0ctC4o)

PMEA News Articles on Retirement: <https://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/PMEA-Retiree-Library-s081223.pdf>

Prepping for Post-Employment: <https://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Retire-Prep-Revised-102219.pdf>

Retired Member Network eNEWS archives: <https://www.pmea.net/retired-member-network-e-news-archive/>

Retiree Book Review Index: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bGkx4rqDE2m3JunmMailp2pThkSTWS1xWoiKIk3\\_qWA/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bGkx4rqDE2m3JunmMailp2pThkSTWS1xWoiKIk3_qWA/)

Retirement Planning – It's Not About the Money:

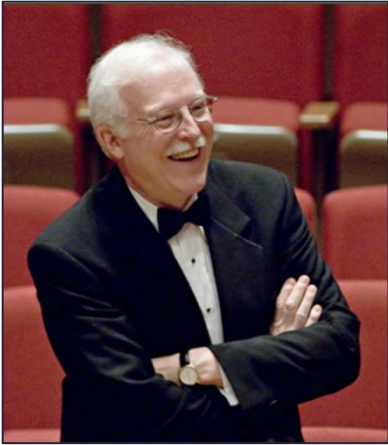
<https://www.pmea.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Retirement-Planning-Its-Not-About-the-Money.pdf>

Ultimate Retiree Resource Guide:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rz9tTHD0pXWeUBJJgogrWit3O2fEw2G\\_dYTsTWjmCE/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Rz9tTHD0pXWeUBJJgogrWit3O2fEw2G_dYTsTWjmCE/edit?usp=sharing)



## John Thomson In Memoriam



*With great sadness, I am sharing the news that John passed away from a long illness this morning. My sons and I know that he touched lives of many with his dedication, spirit and kindness. Right now we have a deep hole in our hearts that will take a very long time to heal. we greatly appreciate your prayers as we struggle to go on without him. We will plan a celebration of life in the future.*

*With love, Susan (and Bryan and Will).*

On November 12, 2024, PMEA Hall of Famer John A. Thomson passed away peacefully surrounded by his family from CMML, a very rare form of leukemia.

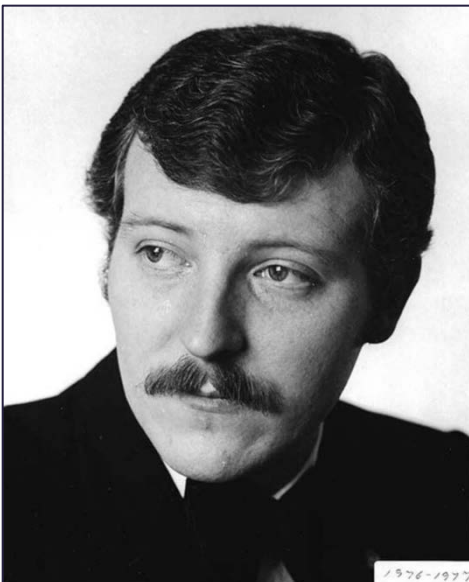
A product of the excellent North Hills High School (Pittsburgh) band program, our esteemed colleague was a gifted conductor and teacher, a Carnegie-Mellon University graduate with a bachelor's and master's degree in trombone performance and music education, and a PhD in music education from Northwestern University.

John Thomson was the Director of Bands at East Allegheny High School (Pittsburgh) from 1967 to 1981. Under his direction, East Allegheny bands presented feature performances at the 1976 Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic, the 1975 Music Educators National Conference Eastern Division meeting, two Mideast instrumental music conferences in 1973 and 1977, and three Pennsylvania Music Education Association state events in 1970, 1975 and 1980. In 1982, he moved to Wilmette, Illinois, and became the Director Bands at New Trier High School (Winnetka, Illinois) and continued his long-standing achievements in the commissioning of new works, guest performances at conferences, festival conducting, and concert tours. For 23 summers, he conducted student and staff bands at the prestigious Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Twin Lake, Michigan and directed the camp's 1992 international band on their four-week performance tour in Europe.

An active clinician, guest conductor, and adjudicator, Mr. Thomson served as Contributing Editor and New Music Reviewer for the INSTRUMENTALIST magazine, and following his New Trier retirement, he contributed 10 years as Adjunct Professor in Music Education at Roosevelt University in Chicago, where he observed student teachers for Northwestern University and University of Illinois.

The family has mentioned that a celebration of life may be planned for the Pittsburgh area in the spring.

To learn more about Mr. Thomson and his amazing impact on our profession, please visit his professional website at <http://www.johnathomson.com/> where you can view his discography, selected programs, commissions, sample repertoire, writings, interviews, clinic presentation, audio clips, and podcasts.



"I just found out about the passing of my high school band director, **John Thomson**. He helped me greatly and instilled a standard of musical excellence that I will always strive for. I also teach with his example in mind. The educators most special to me go above and beyond, giving beyond the scheduled meeting times. Mr. Thomson and **Michael Kumer** would take extra time to expose me to the classics, jazz, contemporary percussion ensemble and New Music that inform my work. Thanks, Sir and safe travels."  
– Jeff Watts



East Allegheny High School  
Marching Band, Color Guard &  
Majorettes – Fall 1980  
North Versailles, Pennsylvania