

your \$



The FIRE and the FUND

How one family turned tragedy
into triumph for their community

your retirement

SPECIAL RETIREMENT SECTION: Helping make your money work for you in retirement—plus important tips and resources

your insurance

Facts about long-term care and new Q&A videos

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Wrapping up 50 years and celebrating student artists
Members helping members





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Let's get social!



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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

DAVE KIJEK

Sharing good things with others



This issue of our magazine is packed with so many good things! Amy and Spence Wagner know first-hand what it's like in the days after a devastating house fire, so they took what was a

tragedy for their family and started a fundraiser to make it a little easier for others in the same situation. You can help them with their efforts. Read more of their story on page 4.

In the five years since we interviewed her, educator Joanna Rizzotto still has a passion for teaching. Learn what keeps her energized, her hopes for education,

and how Member Benefits has helped her plan for retirement.

We've also launched a special section of the magazine just for retirees (and those planning to retire soon) with helpful tips and important information. Learn about changes coming to required minimum distributions, how we can offer support to help turn your retirement savings account balance into income during retirement, and more. Be sure to read the whole section starting on page 7.

We're wrapping up our 50th year in business, and we had quite a celebration in August at Olin Park in Madison. Not only did we mark our anniversary with about 150 others, but we also celebrated our student art winners. It was fantastic to meet many of the students and their

parents, hear their stories, and celebrate their accomplishments. Watch for information on our next Student Art Contest next spring, and read more about the party on page 14.

And pick up some insurance basics to help you make informed decisions. In this issue, learn more about long-term care insurance, home insurance, and what to consider for your college student.

Lastly, you can help others by letting them know about our programs to help them build a better financial future. Please share those good things with them.

Here's to 50 more years of helping you build a better financial future.

Dave

YOUR ACCOUNT

IRA and 403(b) news

Back to school, back to saving

It's a new school year and a good time to review your retirement account. Visit [yourMONEY](#) online or call us at 1-800-279-4030 for assistance.

- **Increase your 403(b) contributions** by completing a new Salary Reduction Agreement.
- **Review and update your beneficiaries.** Beneficiaries named on your retirement account supersede your will.
- **Update** your address, review your portfolio, and rebalance your investment allocation.

Prudential Guaranteed Investment

The 2023 Prudential Guaranteed Investment credited rate of return* in the 403(b) and IRA will be announced on October 28. More information on the fund can be found at [weabenefits.com/pru](#).

Mark these deadlines on your calendar

403(b) and IRA conversions/transfers/rollovers/exchanges

To ensure conversions, incoming transfers, rollovers, and exchanges are forwarded to the payer company by year-end, all completed paperwork (including TPA approval) must be received by **December 2**.

Qualified Charitable Contribution (QCD) requests

If you receive your required minimum distribution in December but would like to submit QCDs to offset it, your QCD forms must be received in good order by **November 21**.

Postdated checks

We are unable to accept IRA contribution checks written and received this tax year (2022) for next tax year (2023). Postdated checks will be returned.

Withdrawal requests and outgoing funds forms

Any withdrawal request received in good order (including TPA approval) by **December 9** will be processed for this year. If you want your distribution processed in year 2023, do not send it in until after January 3, 2023. Member Benefits does not hold onto future-dated forms.

View the *Special Tax Notice Regarding 403(b) Distributions* at [weabenefits.com/retirementforms](#) for more information.

Are you saving enough in your 403(b)?

The employee contribution limit for the 403(b) increased to \$20,500 in 2022. Employees age 50 and older can contribute an additional \$6,500 for a total of \$27,000 per year. More information at [weabenefits.com/limits](#).

Information current as of 10/01/22, see [weabenefits.com](#) for updates. This magazine is for informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute individualized investment, legal, financial, or tax advice. Certain recommendations or guidelines may not be appropriate for everyone. Consult your personal advisor or attorney for advice specific to your unique circumstances before taking action.

The Trustee Custodian for the WEA Member Benefits IRA accounts is Newport Trust Company. Certain state residency requirements may apply.

The 403(b) retirement program is offered by the WEA TSA Trust. TSA and IRA program registered representatives are licensed through WEA Investment Services, Inc., member FINRA. If you choose to invest in the 403(b) or IRA programs, fees will apply. Consider all expenses before investing. Mutual fund management and redemption fees may apply.

*Interest is compounded daily to produce a yield net of Prudential's administrative fee of 0.60%. PRIAC is compensated in connection with this product by deducting an amount for investment expenses and risk from the investment experience of certain assets held in PRIAC's general account. For more information, go to [weabenefits.com/pru](#).



Friends help friends save for the future

Get them started with a 403(b)!

Know someone who could benefit from saving with a 403(b)? Get them connected with us!

If you've been reading our magazine for a while, you know just how important having a mentor has been to so many educators—that special person that helped them get started on the road to saving for retirement. Every member we've talked to has been so appreciative of the colleague who took the time to let them know why it was important to start saving, even if they only started with a small amount each month. And it made a difference in their life.

[403bwise.org](#), a nonprofit organization that provides objective 403(b) information to K-12 educators, gives our 403(b) a "grade A" rating as a vendor.

*"WEA Member Benefits has been a great fit for serving our district employees. Their high-quality customer service level, along with their expansive product line, make it easy for our employees to navigate personal finance and financial planning for the short- and long-term. They are truly an organization where the customer comes first!"**

Terrance Slack, District Administrator
School District of Wisconsin Dells

Refer a friend to us! Let them know about our 403(b) program here at Member Benefits and help us share our vision of "Every Member Financially Secure."

»[weabenefits.com/referral](#)

*The above testimonial may not be representative of the investment experience of every customer.

The FIRE and the FUND

How one family's devastating house fire experience led to the creation of something really good for their community.



Photos from the Wagner fire.



It can happen to anyone. This is what Amy and Spence Wagner learned on April 15, 2020, as they watched their home go up in flames.

For two hours they stood outside in the cold with nothing but the clothes on their back, watching as 27 years of memories were destroyed.

The evening of the fire, Amy and Spence were enjoying the company of their son Jake, daughter-in-law Kirby, and Mac, their 3-week-old grandson.

Jake and his family were living with them short-term while he awaited the beginning of his medical residency.

"We had just finished dinner. The kids were putting Mac to bed. Spence and I had settled in to watch TV. It was a cold April night, so Spence lit a fire in our fireplace. I recall talking about how fortunate we were that even though the pandemic had closed us in at home, we had Jake and his family with us," says Amy.

Not far into their TV program, Amy noticed light reflecting in their stained-glass front door, but thought it was from the fire. At that very moment, she said, the smoke detectors started blaring.

"I realized then the flames were in the window of our attached garage. Spence ran to the door that leads to the garage to find smoke billowing from the top of the door and began shouting, 'Everyone out! Everyone out!'"

Watching it burn

They left with only the clothes on their backs and their cell phones. "We didn't even have shoes on. Kirby had Mac wrapped in a blanket and Jake leashed the dog. Thankfully, everyone got out safely," Amy recounts.

It was 8:11 p.m. when the call was made to the fire department. The Wagners stood across the street in their neighbors' front yard as a window exploded and flames rose into the air.

"Spence was going to try to move the cars away from the house, but by the time he got to the edge of our driveway, the garage doors collapsed and engulfed our cars. It happened so fast."

In a few moments, deputy sheriffs and numerous fire departments arrived, and several hours later the fire was out and the investigative team entered the house to search for the cause. The conclusion was that faulty wiring in the inner wall of the garage likely started the fire.

Feeling the love

With no home to go back to, neighbors took in Spence and Amy. Jake and his family stayed with his brother Luke. Although they had someplace to stay, they didn't have any essentials like shoes, coats, toothbrushes, combs, etc. "There is nothing in my experience more humbling than to have everything you need one moment and then gone the next," Amy recalls.

The Wagners were fortunate to have an outpouring of support from their neighbors and community, making the next few weeks easier. Their generosity gave them shelter, transportation, meals, clothing, and other basic necessities.

"We recognized how lucky we were. When you are devastated in this way, it is difficult to even know what you need. You're a little numb from the experience, but people rallied to help us get on our feet."

The aftermath: Picking up the pieces

The Wagners have their home insurance with Member Benefits. Bob Manor, Senior Claims Specialist, handled their claim. (Bob retired in August 2022 after 25 years with Member Benefits.) "Bob met with us within a day or two of the fire. He was always just a phone call away to answer any of our questions. He worked with us and the claims adjuster to put our home and lives back together. When there were bumps in the road, Bob was on it to get things resolved as quickly as possible. He was great to work with," says Amy.

"All fire claims are so hard. People don't realize the emotional toll an event like this takes," Bob said. "It's really not just about putting your house back together, it's dealing with the grief of all that's lost, the lack of normalcy, and the stress of working through it all. As a claims adjuster, my job is not just paperwork. It's also about understanding the trauma the member has experienced and providing emotional support while trying to restore their lives as quickly as possible."

The home was considered a total loss and the Wagners had to rebuild. They

were officially with no fixed abode. They stayed with their neighbors for a week but needed more permanent housing while their home was demolished and then rebuilt. This proved difficult because of the pandemic shutdown.

Amy adds, "We finally found an Airbnb in the community adjacent to our hometown. We were in this location from Memorial Day 2020 until we moved into our new home in March of 2021."

Out of the ashes comes something good

The Wagners knew their lives would never be the same and felt they couldn't just move back into their home and let things end there. Amy explains, "We both really believe in paying it forward. We learned so much from our experience that we really believed we were in a good position to help others who go through the same thing."

The idea of paying it forward materialized into the creation of the **Wagner Family Fire Fund** (The Fund). Its sole purpose is to provide immediate assistance to families in Kenosha County who lose their home to a fire.

| continued on page 6



Amy and Spence Wagner in front of their new home.

| continued from page 5

"There's no guide book telling you what to expect when you lose your home to fire," Amy states. "Through The Fund, we can offer relief the day of the disaster, assistance throughout the rebuilding process, and that sense of community that we were so lucky to have."

With the help of fire departments in their area, they distribute "go bags" to individuals or families who are displaced by a house fire. The go bags contain all the things the Wagners needed immediately after the fire: shampoo, conditioner, body wash, comb, brush, deodorant, toothbrushes and toothpaste, gift cards to area restaurants for meals, a two night stay at Country Inn & Suites, gift cards for clothing

and other essentials, socks, a mental health kit, coloring books and crayons, and a guidebook they created, which is set up like a step-by-step workbook.

"When our fire fund kicked off on August 28th of 2021, we raised enough money to provide go bags to the fire houses in western Kenosha County.

Within a week of our kick off, we had a bag go out to a family," Amy says. "We recently held our first anniversary fundraiser in Bristol featuring food, beer and wine, a silent auction, kids' games, and more."

Other fundraising efforts came from a Safe Quarters campaign in area schools where students collected quarters for their fund, and from Antioch Pizza in Paddock Lake where they received 10% of proceeds from a day's sales.

Texas Roadhouse in Kenosha is hosting another fundraiser on October 20th.

Amy and her family are looking to do more good in the future. "The Wagner Family Fire Fund now covers all of Kenosha County. Eventually,

we hope to get

to a point where we can provide help to renters who are displaced by fire. We are working our way there.

"We've made a lot of progress in a short time with The Fund, and with such a supportive community, we are confident we will be able to help more people through the trauma of a fire."



Property and casualty insurance programs are underwritten by WEA Property & Casualty Insurance Company. The terms and conditions of your coverage are exclusively controlled by your written policy. Please refer to your policy for details. Certain policy exclusions and limitations may apply.



Friends help friends stay financially secure

Having the right insurance coverage can help you protect your assets from an unforeseen accident. Having the right insurance company means you'll have the support you need when you have to file a claim. You've insured all you've worked for with a company you can trust...now let your colleagues know about us! And your family may also be eligible for our insurance. Tell them they can:

- ▶ Call **1-800-279-4030**
- ▶ Set up a personal consultation weabenefits.com/consult
- ▶ Get an insurance quote weabenefits.com/quote



PROFILE

Members Amy and Spence Wagner have been married for 36 years. They have five grown children and five grandchildren. "We are a very close-knit family," Amy says. A recently retired teacher, she taught reading and language arts at Bristol school for 18 years. Amy also taught speech communications, was involved with the gifted and talented program, coached the speech team, directed the school play, headed up the English Festival, and served as a union rep. Spence works in wholesale produce sales.

YOUR RETIREMENT

WELCOME!

Whether you are in retirement or retirement is just a school year away, this section of the magazine is for you! These next few pages are full of important information, tips, and resources designed to support you and your family during this part of your financial journey.

We are here to help you to and through retirement.

How can you keep your money working for you in retirement?

yourINCOME PATH™ can help!

Two questions we are often asked include: "Will I run out of money in retirement?" and "How do I make sure I don't run out of money in retirement?" Member Benefits offers several strategies to help you manage your assets in retirement through **yourINCOME PATH**.

► What is **yourINCOME PATH**?

yourINCOME PATH is the suite of options and support we offer to help turn your retirement savings account balance into income during retirement. Examples include a range of flexible withdrawal options to meet cash flow needs, required minimum distribution (RMD) support, qualified charitable distributions (QCD), Roth conversion strategies, and more. *There are no additional costs for these services.*

► Why is it important to have an income strategy in retirement?

An income strategy is crucial to keep your money working for you in retirement, even as you start to withdraw from your retirement account(s).

Retirement income strategies aren't one-size-fits all. We offer several income management options to fit your unique goals and needs during retirement.

► Retirement income management strategies

Scheduled payment options can take two different forms. **Systematic payments** allow you to choose the dollar amount and payment frequency (monthly, quarterly, two times per year, or annually) that works best for your situation. The payment date is fixed, processing on the 10th of each month (or closest business day thereafter), and payments continue until your account balance is zero.

With **declining balance payments**, our system automatically calculates the number and dollar amount of payments based on your responses to the following questions:

1. *How long do you need your income to last?*
2. *What frequency of distribution do you want (monthly, quarterly, 2x per year, or annually)?*

The payment amount correlates to your account balance and is recalculated at the time of each distribution. With this option, your balance will be zero at the end of the term you select.

We also offer **full and partial lump-sum payment options**. You can withdraw some or all of your savings as needed. Funds can be distributed via ACH, directly deposited into a savings or checking account, or distributed via a physical check.



Check out the complimentary calculators in our Learning Center!

Use these resources to help build your retirement income strategies.

Ask yourself some of these questions:

Do I need the money now or later?

What are my goals and needs in retirement?

How long do I need to make my money last?

Check out our Impact of Withdrawals Calculator (under "Savings"), designed to help determine how much of your savings remains after a series of withdrawals.

Visit weabenefits.com/calculators to explore what calculators are available!

Scan here



Our team can work with account holders to set up an **RMD schedule** that will automatically recalculate and distribute according to your instructions on file.

For additional payment and income management options with *yourINCOME PATH*, including QCDs, Roth conversions, and more check out:

weabenefits.com/yourincomepath

If you don't need to use your RMD right now, ask us about a Personal Investment Account (PIA). PIAs provide an opportunity to reinvest the money from your RMD.

► How do I figure out my strategy?

If you already know what strategy you want to use, give our Member Service Representatives a call at 1-800-279-4030, ext. 8567, and they can get everything set up for you. We do not charge for these services.

► Not sure what your next steps are? Need some financial planning tips?

Our financial planners are a great resource if you need more support in defining your strategy. Free and fee-based services are available. **Give us a call 1-800-279-4030, ext. 6730.**

► Why Member Benefits?

Member Benefits provides these services at no additional cost.* You have the power to start, stop, or adjust your income at any time. We are focused on the best interests of our participants and provide the benefit of "strength in numbers" through the purchasing power of a large group plan. There are no sales costs or hidden fees associated with any of our investment options. Our low-cost structure makes our program a great place to consolidate your retirement savings accounts. For example, you can roll over assets from other retirement accounts (such as 401(a)/401(k), 403(b), and Traditional IRA funds) into one, easy-to-manage account.

Helping you become financially secure at every stage in life is our priority. Member Benefits is here to see you to and through retirement.

All financial advisory services are offered through WEA Financial Advisors, Inc., an SEC registered investment advisor. The Trustee Custodian for the WEA Member Benefits IRA accounts is Newport Trust Company. The 403(b) retirement program is offered by the WEA TSA Trust. TSA and IRA program registered representatives are licensed through WEA Investment Services, Inc., member FINRA. This article is for informational purposes only and is not intended to constitute individualized investment, legal, financial, or tax advice. Certain recommendations or guidelines may not be appropriate for everyone. Consult your personal advisor or attorney for advice specific to your unique circumstances before taking action. *If you choose to invest in the WEA Tax Sheltered Annuity or WEA Member Benefits IRA program, fees will apply. Consider all expenses before investing.

3 ways to make your insurance work for you in retirement!



Personal Legal Protection™

Our home policyholders can use this FREE online service to prepare wills, estate planning docs, and other essential legal documents.

Umbrella Insurance

Umbrella liability insurance is designed to put an extra layer of protection between your assets and a potential lawsuit.

Long-term care plans and life insurance

Life insurance and long-term care plans aren't just for you. They play a big part in your family's financial stability!

Preparing your loved ones for when you pass.

Talking about death is never an easy conversation to have, but preparing loved ones for the future can help ease the stress of the situation when the time arrives. We put together a list that may help prepare and guide your conversations with loved ones.

Add a trusted contact to your account(s).

This allows us to communicate with your trusted contact if we cannot reach you and helps prevent fraud attempts.

Review and (if necessary) update your beneficiary designations.

The beneficiary designation(s) listed on your retirement savings accounts override your will, so it's important to keep them updated. To review your beneficiary designations, call us, log in to your online account, or review your quarterly statement.



To download your FREE eBook visit
weabenefits.com/resource/loss
or SCAN HERE





Required Minimum Distributions (RMD)

There have been changes surrounding RMDs in the past few years, and more could be coming. Let's break it down and talk about what changes took place in 2020, and what changes may be coming.

What happened in 2020?

The Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act was enacted on December 20, 2019, with many provisions effective beginning January 1, 2020. The law included changes to RMDs for both account holders and their beneficiaries.*

Account owners who turned age 70½ after December 31, 2019, now start taking their RMDs at age 72. The SECURE Act provides additional time to do Roth IRA conversions without having to worry about the impact of RMDs. However, once RMDs begin, those RMDs cannot be converted to a Roth IRA.

Certain beneficiaries who inherit from someone who died after December 31, 2019, must take the money out and pay any taxes due within 10 years. The rule generally exempts surviving spouses, minors, and some others (eligible designated beneficiaries (EDBs)). The 10-year rule only affects beneficiary accounts of those not considered EDBs. EDB account

owners can still stretch their accounts according to their life expectancy.

For more in-depth information about the 2020 provisions that impact beneficiary accounts, visit weabenefits.com/secure-act-2020-faqs.

**This provision is not retroactive, so it does not affect those who inherited a retirement account and/or IRA in 2019 or in prior years.*

What changes might be coming?

At this time, no action is needed. In March 2022, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Securing a Strong Retirement Act of 2022. In June, The Enhancing American Retirement Now (EARN) Act and the Retirement Improvement and Savings Enhancement to Supplement Healthy Investment for the Nest Egg (RISE & SHINE) Act achieved approval. These three bills are collectively known as the SECURE Act 2.0. There are similarities between all three bills that must be reconciled into one bill before a vote on the final bill.



Some of the proposed provisions** that may impact retirees or those close to retirement include:

***Subject to change through the legislative process.*

1. The age required to begin taking RMDs may be pushed back from age 72 to age 73, then age 74 starting in 2029, and to age 75 in 2032.
2. Employees between the ages of 62 and 64 would be able to contribute additional catch-up contributions up to \$10,000 to their employer retirement plan. This is an increase from the current age 50 catch-up contribution of \$6,500.
3. All age-based catch-up contributions made to a retirement plan would be required to be designated as Roth contributions and will be subject to the Roth rules for distribution purposes.
4. Part of the RISE and SHINE Act includes a provision that would amend the cash-out limit from \$5,000 to \$7,000. Employers would be allowed to transfer employee's retirement accounts out of the employer plan to an IRA if their balance is between \$1,000 and \$7,000. Very few school districts have a cash out provision in their plan.
5. Reducing the required years of service from three to two for part-time employees to be allowed to participate in an employer's retirement savings plan.

Questions or concerns? Let's talk!



RISSpecialists@weabenefits.com



1-800-279-4030

YOUR INSURANCE

Why you should care about LONG-TERM CARE

WHO should care about long-term care?

Everyone! People are living longer lives. When you live a long life, the likelihood you'll need long-term health care is increased. But younger people may also need long-term care due to an accident, illness, or injury, which can change your needs—sometimes suddenly. The best time to think about long-term care is before you need it.

WHAT is long-term care?

Long-term care involves a variety of services designed to meet a person's health or personal care needs. They help people live as independently and safely as possible when they can no longer perform everyday activities on their own. Care may be needed for a short or long period of time.



Q&A VIDEOS

Learn more about long-term care by viewing our quick Q&A videos at weabenefits.com/ltcvideos.

WHERE can I receive care?

Most long-term care is provided at home by unpaid family members and friends, but is also provided in facilities such as a nursing home or adult day care center. It can be provided in different places by different caregivers, and may also include services such as meals and transportation services.

WHY should I have a long-term care plan?

Everyone has a long-term care plan. The question is, "Have I *defined* my long-term care plan?"

If you have not looked into the options available, then you are on the **default plan**. That means when something happens, you'll have no choice but to spend down your own assets.

In contrast, having a **defined plan** keeps you in control of where you get your care and who provides it to you. It also allows you to protect and preserve the assets you've worked so hard for over the years. And with a Wisconsin Partnership plan, you have the added benefit of guaranteed asset protection.

HOW can I pay for long-term care insurance?

It may seem obvious, but many people don't think about it clearly—one way or another, when you need care, it has to be paid for. Resources to pay for care include Medicare, Medicaid, health insurance, personal savings, and long-term care insurance (LTCi).

Medicare does not cover long-term care but may cover some costs of short-term

care in a nursing home after a hospital stay. Medicaid requires you to spend down your assets to meet federal and state requirements to become eligible. Most health insurance policies do not cover most long-term care costs. And paying out of your own pocket risks depleting a lifetime of savings.

If you ever need any type of long-term care, LTCi may help cover the cost. One big advantage is that policies can be tailored to suit your personal situation. When deciding which coverage you'll need, consider:

- How much you can afford to contribute toward the expense of your care.
- How long you might need long-term care services.



- How much will time pass before you need to start receiving benefits from the policy.
- Anticipated costs.

WHEN should I consider purchasing insurance?

There is no "right" age to purchase LTCi, but most people typically start long-term care planning between the ages of 48 and 64. The younger you are, the less expensive it is—and the better chance you have of securing a preferred health rating for the life of the policy for an even lower rate.

It pays to speak to a long-term care insurance professional such as our partners at Associates of Clifton Park (AoCP). That's because costs and discounts can vary among insurers, acceptable health conditions can vary, and covered care and long-term care policy benefits can vary. LTCi company ratings are also an important factor in your decision. AoCP has years of expertise and can help you make informed decisions about your LTCi options.

Request a quote or get more information

- » weabenefits.com/ltc
- » **1-800-893-1621**
- » weabenefits@longtcare.com

Sources: National Institute of Aging, American Association for Long-Term Care Insurance, Associates of Clifton Park. The long-term care insurance program is administered by Associates of Clifton Park. Long-term care (LTC) insurance products are underwritten by multiple LTC insurers.

YOUR STORY

Q & A WITH JOANNA RIZZOTTO

Five years ago, Joanna shared why she chose to have a 403(b) with us and her appreciation about the stability and access to financial information that we provide.

In our final member story for Member Benefits' 50th anniversary, we catch up with where Joanna is at today.

The first thing you notice about Joanna Rizzotto is her smile. You can't help but be drawn in. She is shrouded in an aura of positive energy. It's been five years since the last interview, but her hug and cheery greeting are familiar—it's like meeting up with an old friend. "Your hair! You changed it," I say. "Always!" she laughs. "I change it up often. My hair is naturally very dark, so it's a process to get to the lighter color. But once I get to bleach blond, I can easily hop to the fun colors. The kids sometimes make suggestions."

I discover she isn't joking about her hair as I look through a brochure she gave me about the REAL Academy—the program that she operates and teaches at in the South Milwaukee High School. In a photo, she is in a circle with her teenage students. She's the one with purple hair.

And so, our "catching up" begins. The conversation reflects her passion for teaching, love for her students, concerns about her profession, and hope for the future. It's the perfect prelude to the school year as well as the last in the "where are they now" member-story

series we started in January as part of WEA Member Benefits' 50th anniversary celebration.

How long have you been with the REAL Academy? What is it?

I have been a public school teacher for 27 years and operating the REAL Academy for 11 years. I love it. It's an alternative program with a holistic approach to learning—we focus on personal well-being and learning and cultivate a safe space where students know they belong and practice healthy communication.

In our last interview, you had such an eloquent way of describing the students (teens) you teach and how you feel about what you do. You said...

As a high school teacher, I feel honored to work with students during this transitional time in their lives. Teens are largely mischaracterized. I find them to be compassionate, creative, generous, and very curious about the world. I get energy from their thoughts and ideas. Teaching is a very human profession and I'm fortunate to be surrounded by great people.



...But that was five years ago, and we've since had the experience with COVID. Can you speak to its impact? Would your statement be different now?

COVID, of course, had an impact on everything. It provided me and my students the opportunity to really put our skills into practice. As a program that focuses on the integration of well-being and learning—not one or the other—we were able to stay connected as a community, take care of ourselves, and continue growing during the closures. The transition back to school was difficult. We had to regain our stamina—physical and social habits needed tending to.

I still stand by what I said about the students in 2017. I find it fascinating to observe and study how they see the world and respond to it. I can tell you this—they are seeking harmony and connection, and they remind me that "schooling" must be dynamic and relevant.

In 2017, you were very active in the union. Are you today?

Yes. In fact, I ran for Vice President of WEAC this past spring. I did not win, but I came close! Locally and regionally, I am part of my executive boards. I am still focused on membership. I love being a part of my union because we define issues facing public education and develop solutions together.

COVID certainly altered education in the classroom, adding stress for educators and increased financial pressures. What do you see as the greatest financial challenges for educators today?

The greatest financial challenges today are that salaries generally are not keeping up with inflation. Last year the Consumer Price Index was 4.7%. Some districts adjusted salaries to reflect that, but others could not. In my district, my inflationary salary increase was .03%. It's been 1% or below for the past ten years.

It's also a concern that teachers are not incentivized to continue their education. Most of my early-career education friends are not pursuing master's degrees because the cost of a degree outweighs any financial gains they might receive. And sadly, many do not see themselves retiring from education. The financial challenges contribute to the teacher recruitment and retention problem.

Personally, what's the greatest financial challenge you've had in the last five years?

I've had three!

1. My husband was unemployed for five months during the pandemic. He works as a camera operator for professional sports, and when all the leagues were shut down, so was his source of income.
2. Financing our son's college education.
3. My mom developed dementia and I am her primary caretaker. I also provide financial support for her needs which total about \$500 a month.

Have you made any financial changes you didn't expect or plan to make?

Yes. In May of 2020, we refinanced our mortgage to a much lower rate and reduced the term of our loan to generate savings. I also put off buying a new vehicle. I'm still driving my '05 minivan with over 200,000 miles on it!

Before COVID, you were instrumental in bringing financial education to your district. You spoke about how important having access to trusted information and programs is for public school employees. You said...

"Time and again, staff had a good experience with Member Benefits, trusted it and had faith in the fact that it was specifically designed to support public school employees. When people come to the Member Benefits presentations, they always walk away feeling hopeful—really feeling good. People who are educators want to be educators. So having this support from an organization dedicated to our profession makes that job easier."

...But in-person presentations came to a halt for the last two years. Do you expect to bring them back this year? What do you think would be topics of interest?

I can remember the last in-person financial session we had in December of 2019. It was packed! COVID put an end to that. I continued to pass on information within the union and through our district newsletter to colleagues, but we lost a lot of ground in our efforts to help staff feel financially secure.

I'd be open to in-person presentations, although I think most people now prefer anything after school to be virtual. I don't have a pulse yet on what would be interesting to people. Hopefully, we can find a way to do it.

I always find connecting with Member Benefits helpful and worthwhile. It has this built-in credibility of being for public employees school employees. I still contribute to my 403(b) and am sure to encourage educators to set them up for themselves.

Any new insights or advice for educators today? How about for young people who are thinking about going into education?

We need to reinvest in the human side of education.

Educators today need to support each other and stay connected. When looking for power, don't necessarily look up the chain of command—look around. Your colleagues understand and will help you.

I still encourage young people to join the profession. We need good people. Our students deserve more great school experiences.

How old are your children now? How have you shared your financial experiences and knowledge with them?

My "kids" are now 21, a senior in college, and 16, a junior in high school.

We share information about saving, budgeting, loans, and saving for retirement. More so with our son because he is close to graduating from college and is more interested. He is responsible for a portion of his educational costs, so he works full-time every summer to meet his obligation.

My daughter will be getting a job this school year and we're starting to talk about future schooling and careers.

Our kids know that their parents both appreciate the living we have been able to make based on our skill set and education, and that we do not live beyond our means.

What does the future hold for Joanna?

The future looks good. I am grateful to have a happy, healthy family. I plan to continue my career in education and work for improvements that will draw young, talented people into the profession. Things can and will change, if we come together and put in the work.

YOUR KIOSK

CELEBRATING student artists and an anniversary milestone

On August 18, 2022, we had two great things to celebrate—our student artist contest winners *and* our company's 50th anniversary!

About 150 people joined us at the Olin Park pavilion for food, a silent auction and raffle, giveaways, and camaraderie. Member Benefits President and CEO David Kijek took us on a trip down memory lane as we acknowledged 50 years of serving our members through our mission, "To advance and protect the financial well-being of public education employees and their families."

Then it was time to honor this year's winners of our annual Student Art Contest. Steve Goldberg, Executive Director of WEA Member Benefits Foundation, Inc., introduced each student who attended the gathering, read their artist statement, and presented them with their prize. It was moving and inspiring to everyone to hear the thoughts and feelings that these young students put in to creating their art. We are so proud to be able to showcase their talent and acknowledge their efforts.

Ryan Demers, a Wisconsin educator who owns Mr. D's Atomic Catering (mrdatomic.com), provided our delicious food. Ryan has been teaching for 19 years, 11 in Pewaukee. He teaches Family and Consumer Sciences, including Culinary, Advanced Culinary, Pro Start, and Foundations of Restaurant Management. Says Ryan, "I appreciate the opportunity to cater an event for WEA Member Benefits—it was great to take care of a company that looks out for educators!"

Our staff thanks everyone who attended our gathering. And we thank each and every one of our members for placing their trust in us. We're looking forward to the next 50 years of serving you!



yourSTORY: MEMBERS HELPING MEMBERS

Want more member stories? As part of our 50th anniversary celebration, we contacted some of the members we've highlighted in past *your\$* magazines. Learn what they've been up to, financial lessons they've learned over the years, and helpful advice they still have to share with you to help you make your own best financial decisions. Visit weabenefits.com/yourstory.

HOME INSURANCE BASICS

Home insurance isn't just something you buy to get a mortgage—it's asset protection for one of the most expensive assets you will own. Review some basics about home insurance to help you make informed decisions about your options and coverages.



What does home insurance cover?

- **Coverage for the structure of your home** is based on current market costs for materials and labor to rebuild your home in the event of a total loss. Don't confuse this amount with assessment values, new home prices, appraised value, or current real estate prices for comparable homes.
- **Coverage for personal belongings** includes everything inside your home. Use a home inventory checklist like the one in our free Personal Property Home Inventory eBook (weabenefits.com/ebooks), take pictures or video to help you keep track, and verify the make and condition of items.
- **Liability coverage** protects you from claims resulting from injuries and damage you cause to other people. This coverage is intended to protect you on and off your premises. For example, someone steps in a hole in your yard and breaks an ankle or your runaway grocery cart knocks someone down, causing injury.
- **Additional living expenses** pays for costs you might incur if you are forced out of your home because of a covered loss such as fire.

Schedule high value items

Scheduled personal property coverage is an optional endorsement you can add to your home insurance that provides coverage for a greater number of risks, and may increase the coverage limits on specific high-value items. This also provides protection from certain types of accidental loss such as droppage or mysterious disappearance. A deductible may apply to some items.

Review your coverages periodically

Make sure your home insurance coverage is keeping up with costs for rebuilding—don't try to save on premium costs by shortchanging your coverage. This is the primary reason homeowners find themselves without enough coverage when they need it. Increasing your deductible is a better way to manage your premium costs.



Why choose Member Benefits for your home insurance?

While many companies offer home insurance, ours is the only one created exclusively for Wisconsin public school employees like you.

Member Benefits' home policy highlights

Guaranteed Replacement Cost	For homes built during or after 1950
Extended Replacement Cost	For homes built before 1950
Loss on School Premises	Up to \$2000 for loss of personal property at school. All peril, no deductible!
Loss of Prep Materials	Up to \$500. No deductible!

Not all policies are the same. We can help you understand the protection available and strike the right balance between coverage and price.

1-800-279-4030 • weabenefits.com/consults

College student Q&A

Here are some FAQs we receive from parents about how their insurance extends to their kids in college. Our answers assume you carry your insurance with us.

Q. Does having a child away at college affect my auto insurance?

A. Yes. If your dependent child is at a school 100 miles or more away from home without a car, we may be able to adjust your rate for that driver and reduce your premium. If they take a vehicle with them, give us a call to update your policy.

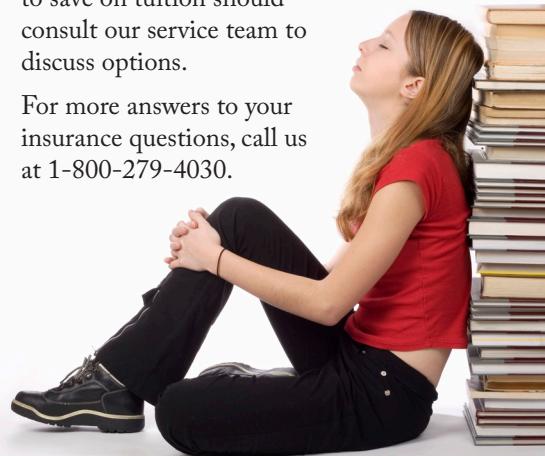
Q. Are my child's belongings covered under my home insurance while they're at college?

A. Yes. With your WEA Property & Casualty Insurance Company's home policy, your child is covered up to 10% of the personal property limit on your policy (subject to deductibles and coverages in your policy).

Q. My insured college student left his laptop at the library and it was stolen. Is it covered?

A. Your child's belongings are covered up to 10% of the personal property limit while temporarily away at school, assuming they come home during the summer. Students who enter into apartment leases, stay full time at campus, or are attempting to change state residency to save on tuition should consult our service team to discuss options.

For more answers to your insurance questions, call us at 1-800-279-4030.



Property and casualty insurance programs are underwritten by WEA Property & Casualty Insurance Company. The terms and conditions of your coverage are exclusively controlled by your written policy. Please refer to your policy for details. Certain policy exclusions and limitations may apply.



Friends tell friends about MEMBER BENEFITS

DON'T KEEP US A SECRET!

As you continue into the school year, we would love it if you would refer us to your colleagues.

Our products and services are built by educators, for educators. Let them know about our **RETIREMENT SAVINGS**, **FINANCIAL PLANNING**, and **PERSONAL INSURANCE** programs and services.



403(b) / IRA
Financial Planning



Auto Insurance



Home Insurance



Umbrella
Insurance



Long-Term Care /
Life Insurance... and more!

weabenefits.com/referral

The life insurance program is offered and administered by Associates of Clifton Park. Life insurance products are underwritten by multiple life insurance carriers. All financial advisory services are offered through WEA Financial Advisors, Inc., an SEC registered investment advisor. Program disclosures can be found at weabenefits.com/disclosures.