



Best wishes for a joyous and prosperous New Year! Welcome to eNEWS - the PMEA Retired Member Network... an informal alliance and forum for interconnecting retired music educators and sharing their ideas, stories, successes, news, and views via this e-mail address. Thanks for staying involved in PMEA and our profession!

Time for more “political action?”

When is the PA budget going to pass? Despite recent signs for optimism, we've reached day 175 of the #pabudget **impasse without a budget**. Many see the advancement of SB 1073 with an amendment to fund FY 15-16 for only 11 months as merely an effort to delay revenue increases and reduce education funding.

Now is the time to write or call your PA legislators and the Governor to urge them to negotiate for a full budget, not a stop-gap version. Here is the note I sent to my representatives (**Governor Tom Wolf, Senator Guy Reschenthaler, and Representative John Maher**), a sample you can use to create your own correspondence:



Enough is enough!

I urge you to continue to negotiate for a full budget for Pennsylvania, not a limited, stop-gap version.

Politics and philosophical disagreements aside, with many school districts, nonprofits, and other service agencies now in distress, we must have a REAL PA budget passed immediately!

Please do not support the advancement of SB 1073 with an amendment to fund FY 15-16 for only 11 months. There should be increases in educational funding and the arts, NOT DECREASES!

I have no problem with raising taxes. What I cannot accept is a lack of leading, governing, and little or no compromising! Stop-gap measures will not solve the problem.

Do not abandon facing your responsibilities and DOING YOUR JOB... the reasons I voted for you!

FYI, it is easy to submit an e-mailed form to your elected PA officials using the Citizens for the Arts in PA website: <http://www.citizensfortheartsinpa.org/takeactionartsculture/>.

Paul K. Fox
1564 Hastings Mill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241
(412) 596-7937 or (412) 854-3459
paulkfox.usc@gmail.com <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/>



One retiree's reflections on New Year's resolutions

This article is a recent post at <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/category/retirement-resources/>.



Ushering in the New Year is all about pursuing new directions or a sort of "rebirth," making promises for self-improvements, and analyzing and revising our personal goals/visions... perhaps a little like the personal renaissance of **retirement**. According to **Wikipedia**, the tradition of making resolutions is rooted in history, with many examples:

- The Babylonians making promises to their gods at the start of each year "that they would return borrowed objects and pay their debts."
- The Romans giving tribute to the god Janus, for whom the month of January is named.
- The knights in the Medieval era taking the "peacock vow" at the end of Christmas season to "re-affirm their commitment to chivalry."
- At "watch night services," many Christians preparing for the year by praying and making New Year's resolutions.
- During Judaism's New Year, Rosh Hashanah through the High Holidays and culminating in Yom Kippur, reflecting upon "one's wrongdoings over the year" and seeking and offering forgiveness.

While success and happiness are in the eye of the beholder, many resolutions do not stand the light of several days... you'd be lucky to "stick with it" for more than several weeks! However, the **process of revival** - re-examining what is important in our lives, and placing effort in establishing new habits and plans - is just plain "good for you."



Here are **my top-ten recommendations to help you "grow" and enjoy a glorious 2016!**

1. Read at least **one new book each month**, in spite of our society's fascination with media, the web, movies, TV, etc. Multi-millionaires are known to reach out for new ideas, innovations, and leading-edge thoughts from recent publication releases.
2. Take time for **regular physical exercise** and to "smell the roses." For me, the three or four daily sessions of walking my dogs are extremely helpful for gathering my thoughts, calming my nerves, re-charging my batteries, and even brainstorming via speaking to **Siri** on my **Apple iPhone**. For example, using the **Evernote** (note-taking/sharing) app on my cell phone was the tool for creating this article's outline. I can even do it hands-free while I am driving (very carefully!), and with my "all thumbs" keyboarding skills, it sure beats typing everything out!

Paul K. Fox
1564 Hastings Mill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241
(412) 596-7937 or (412) 854-3459
paulkfox.usc@gmail.com <https://paulkfoxusc.wordpress.com/>



3. If you are fortunate enough to have grandchildren (your own or adopted ones), enjoy them! Not only is your generous super-competent **babysitting services** providing ever-so-essential caretaking of your love-ones, "playing with the kids" is wonderful for your own mood and mental health. "Keep around young people and you will stay forever young!" However, invest your time wisely. You deserve a life of your own and unstructured time off. It is easy to be taken advantage of, so don't let this childcare schedule dominate everything you do in your retirement.
4. If travel is your thing, get out there and "book it!" One of the great advantages of retirement is the capability to **go on trips while the kids are still in school**. One of my least favorite memories of a family vacation was going to Disney World over Christmas break... Overcrowding closed the Epcot parking lot by Noon on December 27, and my wife had to endure 45-minute lines to use the ladies' room.
5. If you really like being "out on the road" a lot, consider offering your services to local travel agents as a **music trip manager**. Many **PMEA retirees** have already assumed new part or (nearly) full-time jobs organizing music groups' out-of-town adjudications, festivals, workshops, and tours. Really, who is better qualified?
6. The single most satisfying pastime for all of us is to be or **do something creative**. With few exceptions, every day you need to find venue(s) to express yourself. This could mean **pulling out your instrument or singing**, with a renewed focus on exploring your musicianship, interpretation, composition, or improvisational skills. Creating new musical works, like adding to your own "**Mr. Holland's Opus**," can "make your day!" Other projects in creativity could involve conducting, acting, dancing, creating two or three-dimensional artworks, sewing, gardening, and my personal favorite, **writing**. Whether it is fiction or nonfiction, articles, books, poems, letters-to-editors - the activity is very personal - and possibly profitable? Try to assemble in words your long-practiced insights and experiences acquired working as a teacher. I am particularly inspired by the prospects of creating and posting blogs on just about any subject that motivates or moves me. Check out the opportunities that **WordPress.com** can give you. (I am not too shy to refer you to my own website, showing off my articles and "pet peeves" on the subjects of creativity in education, marketing professionalism, and retirement resources: www.paulkusc.wordpress.com).



7. At the very least, complete one new **"random act of kindness"** every week. Do the math! This would add 52 "good deeds" a year, and if every retired member adopted this resolution, that would total more than **22K caring moments** in 2016.
8. Every week for the rest of your life, spend some time **"giving back!"** Volunteer or share your hobbies, interests, or expertise helping out wherever it is most needed... in local churches, hospitals, charitable organizations, schools, pet sanctuaries, or senior care centers. I never understood why some enterprising entrepreneur does not buy a large piece of land to build a combined animal shelter, childcare center, and assisted-living facility, connected with easy access to each other... mutually beneficial opportunities for needy children, lonely seniors, and rescued pets for interaction with each other! That's a "win-win-win!"
9. Now that you have significantly more time on your hands than you ever had before, **advocate for music education**. It is not really up to somebody else to eloquently voice a thoughtful opinion about the essential need for music in the schools. Politics aside, writing to your congressman or senator is important, and who knows, might make a difference in proposing and passing upcoming legislation.
10. Stay involved in **PMEA**. Help new or recently transferred music teachers by joining the **PMEA Retiree Resource Registry**, the free (but priceless!) adviser/ consultant service (go to <http://www.pmea.net/retired-members/>). This is one way to get more involved at the state or district level as a judge of adjudications, guest conductor or accompanist for festivals, guest presenter or member on a panel discussion for conferences, workshops, or webinars, etc.



These are **New Year's resolutions** I can live with, and hopefully fulfill. Time will tell! I recall the words of Star War's **Yoda**: **"Try not. Do... or do not. There is no try."**

Coming soon... Retired Members' survey for summer conference

Put on your thinking caps! In an effort to encourage the involvement of music teacher retirees in PMEA, and perhaps even to sponsor a couple "just-for-fun" family events, in a future e-mail, I would like to poll your interest in activities for the summer conference (Seven Springs 2016) - everything from ensembles to a New York theater excursion!



Reminders and news from the PMEA website

- Make your reservations for a hotel room at the Hershey Lodge to attend the **PMEA In-Service Conference** on March 31-April 2. FYI, our retired members breakfast is usually on Friday morning (no foolin' - April 1!) More information is at <http://www.pmea.net/news/2016-pmea-annual-conference-hotel-reservation-information/>.
- Early-bird registration for the conference is \$10/retired member and onsite registration is \$15. See: <http://www.pmea.net/2015-pmea-annual-in-service-conference/>.
- There's still time to support PMEA right from your mobile phone! PMEA, with support from NAFME, has set up a text-to-give service, which allows for donations to be made via text message, through cell-phone carriers and the Mobile Giving Foundation. By texting "**MUSICED PA**" to "**20222**", a \$10.00 donation will be made to PMEA to help support its current scholarship/grant programs. The text-to-give program will be available through the end of December. See <http://www.pmea.net/news/support-pmea-on-giving-tuesday/>.
- The third edition of the **Retired Resource Registry** is now available. PMEA members hosting an event or looking for support in a specific area will use the registry and the R3 Help Index. If you are a retired member, would like to stay involved in PMEA and haven't yet completed the PMEA Retiree Resource Survey, be sure to do so at your earliest convenience. For more information, go to <http://www.pmea.net/news/retired-members-update-3/>.

What's going on in YOUR life?

To spotlight the recent accomplishments and "happenings" of retired members in our state journal *PMEA News* and future **eNEWS**, we need to hear from you. Send any updates about your travels, job appointments, special projects, "happy" retiree stories, your thoughts in response of current events or music education trends... anything newsy! Please stay connected via e-mail paulkfox.usc@gmail.com.

Happy trails, retirees! PKF

