



WESTERN CURRENTS



NEWSLETTER of the WESTERN ZONE of the NEW YORK STATE RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

Volume 14, Number 1

www.wzretiredteachers.org

December 2015

President's Message

Promised Pensions are Guaranteed



Doris R. Kirsch

In 1921 the NYS Legislature established the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYS-TRS or simply TRS) in order to provide retirement, disability and death benefits to eligible NYS public teachers and administrators.

The MISSION of the TRS is: "To provide our members with a secure pension."

The VISION of the TRS is: "To be the model for pension fund excellence and exceptional customer service."

The NYSTRS has remained true to this mission and vision.

The NYSTRS serves nearly 268,000 active members and more than 158,000 retirees and beneficiaries. It is the second largest public retirement system in NYS and one of the ten largest retirement funds in the nation, managing more than \$110 billion in assets. This is a well-funded Defined Benefit Plan which guarantees a specific pension amount throughout the lifetime of the retiree. Over the past 20 years, NYSTRS has paid out over \$83.2 billion in benefits while collecting \$21.3 billion in employee and employer contributions. During this same period, the System's net assets have grown from \$47 billion to \$110 billion with 85% of the income generated by investment returns. The TRS invests in several diverse asset classes allowing the System to earn high long-term rates of return within appropriate risk levels. In turn, this enables the System to consistently and continuously pay guaranteed benefits to mem-

bers and their beneficiaries at the lowest possible cost to the participating employers and tax payers that fund them.

The bottom line is this: NYSTRS retirees have received benefits in full and with-out fail since 1921. It now becomes our responsibility to see that the promises spelled out in the NYSTRS Mission and Vision Statements are extended well into the future.

Are you aware that there are substantial amounts of money in "unclaimed" or "abandoned" TRS accounts? What is the source of these funds? When individuals left teaching, thereby terminating their membership in the TRS, they may have left behind funds which they had contributed to the System while they were teaching. These unclaimed funds can be claimed ANYTIME by the former teacher or his/her beneficiary or estate. If you know of anyone who has left teaching (even 20-30 years ago) you might want to advise them of the availability of these funds. Go to nystrs.org, scroll down to the very bottom of the page and click on "unclaimed funds". You can then access a lengthy list of former educators and the last school district in which they were employed. Phone numbers and directions on how to claim these benefits are also provided. Interested parties might want to call 800-348-7298 for additional information and assistance. As I browsed through the list, I noted several entries from our Western Zone area. Perhaps some of our colleagues are in the position to garner a few extra dollars in time for the Holiday Season. Hey, you never know!

On that note of hope and expectation, I want to wish each of you and your loved ones a most joyous and blessed Holiday Season and a New Year filled with good health and happiness.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

Allie Withers



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If you have a conversation with Allie N. Withers, a retired educator and certified social worker from Jamestown, NY, you will find a lady, at the age of 92, with many past accomplishments. She spent 26 years in the classroom and has been retired for 37 years. Allie graduated from Frewsburg High School in 1941, from Fredonia State Teachers College in 1945 and from the University of Buffalo, School of Social Work in 1952.

She is very proud of her Swedish heritage and is a

member of Vasa Order of America Thule Lodge #127. In 2002 she received the Jamestown Community College's Award of Merit for teaching conversational Swedish at the college for 15 years; thus keeping alive the legacy of the Swedish language and culture. She is a member of Ingjald Viking Lodge #65 and is a member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

Allie is a member of New York State Retired Teachers Association and has held numerous positions in Western Zone. For many years she served as a delegate at the annual NYSRTA Convention. At present Allie is an Honorary Board member of Western Zone. She is also a member of Southern Chautauqua County Retired Teachers' Association and has held the offices of Vice President and President.

Continued on page 5

**Questions and/or comments may be forwarded to our Zone President,
Doris Kirsch, at (585) 457-3315 or wdorsch@gmail.com**

WESTERN CURRENTS is the official newsletter of the Western Zone, New York State Retired Teachers' Association, Inc., PO Box 922, Williamsville, NY 14231-0922 and is published three times yearly in April, August and December. Members are invited to submit articles for publication on topics that would be of interest to their fellow retirees. Advertising is also welcomed from both members and non-members. For additional information on copy guidelines and advertising format and rates, contact the editors:

Sandra W. Kelley, Editor
(716) 772-7807

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(716) 649-3844

Robert J. Metz, Layout
(716) 662-0734

FUTURE -- Mark your calendars! Plans are being made, and reservation forms will be in the next issue of CURRENTS, for a fabulous summer trip to Chicago in August 2016 and a fall trip that will feature Gettysburg and the Amish Lands of Lancaster, including "SAMSON" from October 2 - 5, 2016.

For additional information, contact Anne Flansburg at anneflanswz@aol.com or 716-863-3631.

PLEASE HELP US CONTINUE ON OUR MISSION BY FILLING OUT THE FORM BELOW AND SENDING IT WITH YOUR CHECK TO THE ADDRESS INDICATED.

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2016 TRIPS WITH THE BUFFALO RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

From time to time, members of the Western Zone of the New York State Retired Teachers Assn., of which the Buffalo Retired Teachers Assn. (BRTA) is a member, have asked to know of the current trips BRTA is sponsoring. Most, if not all, of those listed are partnered with Collette Vacations. Our pricing is at cost. Collette is always able to get us great accommodations at 4 and 5 star hotels. All trips are guided from arrival at the destination to departure. Here are our current offerings:

Feb. 8—16, 2016:	Tour of Tropical Costa Rica
June 7—13, 2016:	Trip to South Dakota Monuments & the Bad Lands
Sept. 22—Oct. 3, 2016:	Discover Poland, a country that truly loves America & its people

If interested in any of these trips check out the Buffalo Retired Teachers Assn. web site at www.bрта.biz or contact Al Marabella, Travel Chair, at 716-635-9530 or almarbs@gmail.com

Early bookings receive discounts.

CALLING ALL GOLFERS



This is an open invitation to all Golfers, both male and female. The Buffalo Retired Teachers Golf Tournament will be held at Terry Hills Golf Course on Tuesday, June 7, 2016. Shotgun start begins at 12:30 pm and includes 18 holes of golf with cart and lunch at the turn and a steak dinner after golf. Prizes are included.

- Cost is \$75 per golfer. Contact Steve Parada at 716-472-0277 or sra-da48@yahoo.com



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SPOTLIGHT ON ALLIE WITHERS

Continued from page 2

In addition to the retired teachers' organizations, Allie is an active member of the Elizabeth Warren Marvin Community House, a social organization for women in the Jamestown area. She is also a member of the West Side Ladies and has held the office of president. As a member of the Busti Historical Society, Allie portrayed the "Teacher of a one room country school house" for 14 years during the annual Busti Apple Festival.

With all of these achievements you soon realize that Allie's main focus is on the present and looking positively towards the future. She continues to work on various committees. You may even see her name in the local newspaper for her bowling scores on the Senior Bowling League. She also plays cards weekly at Brookdale at Lakewood with the Jamestown Senior Citizen's singles group.

Allie's husband, Sydney, also an educator passed away in 1997. They have one son, Dr. David Withers.

As she will tell you, even though she gave up driving her own car several years ago, "If someone asks me to go somewhere I am ready to go!" She enjoys her own apartment and loves to cook. We salute Allie for her zest for life and for the years of service to Western Zone. We also thank Roger Gilbert for providing this information about Allie.

EASTERN NIAGARA COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS

Eastern Niagara County Retired Teachers Association had their fall luncheon on Thursday, Oct. 8, at the Lockport Town and Country Club. There were 54 members in attendance. The Annual Basket Raffle netted \$375 for our Scholarship Fund which awards scholarships to high school seniors from the six area school districts entering into the field of education.

Gena Snyder, representing the Lions' Club, was present to accept a donation of used eye glasses that the Association has been collecting as one of their Service Projects. She gave a very informative talk on what the Lions Club does with the used glasses explaining that they are cleaned, categorized, organized and given to needy persons when the members go on their mission trips overseas. It is a very worthwhile endeavor and Eastern Niagara County Retired Teachers are pleased to be part of this program.

Alexandra Murphy, owner of Murphy Orchards in Burt, gave a wonderful presentation on the history of the farm and how it played a major part in the "Underground Railroad" during the Civil War.

The next meeting will be Thursday, Dec. 10 at the Lockport Town and Country Club. Registration begins at 10:30 with a business meeting at 11:00 followed by lunch and Christmas music by the Lockport Jazz Ensemble under the direction of Paul Allison.



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The desire to evade an entire season of life is bound to leave us all questioning what is important. You do not need to question, though. You have nothing to evade, no empty promise to cling loosely to. You do not grieve for life past. You are too busy embracing your life today. Aging is not the enemy. Underestimating it is. Others might think it is time to slow down. Good luck convincing your heart.

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Legislative Action Committee

Judy Klug, Chair

The New York State Retired Teachers' Association's Legislative Action Committee will meet in Utica on November 16 and 17 to plan for the 2016 State and Federal Legislative Agenda. Topics to be considered will include any resolutions passed at the Annual Meeting on October 28 & 29. In April, 2016, local advocates will be meeting with their respective state legislators on behalf of all retired educators. In summer, 2016, advocates will be meeting with the federal legislators.

We are in need of volunteers to advocate with their respective state senators and assemblymen/women and US senators and congressmen regarding issues of importance to all retired educators. People are needed to contact Assemblymen Schimminger (AD 140), Jane Corwin (AD 144), John Ceretto (AD 145), David DiPietro (AD 147) and Sean Ryan (AD 149). The others are covered.

Anyone who is able and willing to be an advocate for the Western Zone RTA should contact Judy Klug (state leg.) at 632-6251 or Loretta Peszynski (federal leg.) at 631-3717.

Being an advocate involves calling, emailing, writing or visiting your representative, senator or assemblyman/woman. It only takes about a half hour of your time for each visit. A training session will be held in the spring. The only requirement is that you be a member of NYSRTA.

With the prospect of a Constitutional Convention in 2017 in New York and threats to Social Security and Medicare and our state pensions, it is important to develop a personal connection with your legislators if we are to be heard regarding any issues of importance to retired educators. We want to keep the protection our pensions have in our current Constitution. Please keep informed about the happenings regarding these issues and volunteer to be an advocate.

Monthly Health Tip....

From Betty Brown, WZ Health Care Representative

Vaccinations are important for both children and adults. Over time immunity can fade. Also, aging makes us more susceptible to serious diseases, such as the flu and pneumonia. Talk to your doctor about immunizations you may need as an adult.

CONGRATULATIONS to WZ MEMBERS

Congratulations to our President Doris Kirsch, who was the recipient of the Certificate of Recognition at the 2015 NYSRTA Convention. Also, congratulations are in order for Judy Farmer who was elected as NYSRTA Secretary after a close election.

WZ is very proud of these two special ladies!!



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Annual President's Appeal

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RETIRED TEACHERS CARE ALL YEAR

Michelle Claus, Springville/West Valley RTA

The Springville-West Valley Retired Teachers Association has been working all year to give care and concern to our fellow man. Our Friendly Service Committee Chairman Dianna Havens and our secretary Nancy White, are responsible for leading us in "helping others". We are constantly adding other projects to our list, donating monetarily, giving "goods", and time.

Some of our projects this year have included collecting toiletries and personal items for the Springville Food Pantry, collecting books for children that do not have their own to read, donating to Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, and donating canned/dry goods to the Springville Food Pantry at Holiday time. Western Zone, of which we are a member, gave a \$500 check to Springville kindergarten teacher, Helen Williams (now retired), to make the kindergarten musical a reality.

At our two meetings a year, we also have a split club, donation plate, and holiday basket raffle to support the \$1,000 scholarship given to a senior student declaring education as his/her major. Our members give their support by sending cards for birthday milestones, and holidays, making phone calls, visiting, and caring.

BILTMORE ESTATE & NORTH CAROLINA'S BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN TRIP

June 5-10, 2016

Join Western Zone members and Diamond Tours to visit the spectacular BILTMORE ESTATE in Asheville, NC. Experience this "must see" destination as well as the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountain area, while enjoying a fun-filled, educational, and memorable six day trip. Family and friends of Western Zone members are welcome, so please share this information with them.

The trip cost includes: motor coach transportation, five nights lodging including three consecutive nights in the Asheville area, five breakfasts, three dinners, and gratuities for standard meals, guides and bus driver. Enjoy a guided tour of Asheville, a full day visit to the Biltmore Estate which is the largest privately owned home in America, a guided drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway which is known as "America's favorite drive", and much more. A side trip will be included on route to the destination.

The price is only \$519 per person for double occupancy, \$499 for triple occupancy and \$669 for single occupancy. All hotel rooms are non-smoking, unless requested otherwise. Reservations are now being accepted by completing the form below and enclosing a \$50 deposit per person. Remember – this trip is on a "**first paid-first served**" deposit basis, and dependent on getting adequate reservations for the bus. Once the bus is filled, additional payees will be put on a waiting list, and will be notified accordingly. Seats will be limited, so reserve quickly! Optional travel insurance is available, and strongly encouraged, but not included in the cost of the trip package.

If there are any questions, please contact Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or anne-flanswz@aol.com. All e-mails and calls will be acknowledged.

Please send a deposit of \$50 per person, payable to Western Zone RTA by or before **January 15, 2016**. (Remember, reservations are accepted in the order of date received.) The balance for this trip is due by **March 15, 2016**, payable to Western Zone RTA and sent to address below. To guarantee a reservation for this trip, send completed form and deposit check NOW to:

Anne Flansburg 8011 SW 109th Pl Rd Ocala FL 34481-9600

-----DETACH and send to Anne Flansburg by or before January 15, 2016-----

Western Zone RTA – Deposit for trip to BILTMORE ESTATE June 5-10, 2016

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A Tribute to Paul Randall... November 16, 1924-August 10, 2015



Senator Robert Dole and Paul Randall

Paul Randall graduated from North Collins High School, Alfred State, and Buffalo State Colleges. There are many “firsts” that Paul established for students and fellow teachers. He introduced these programs at his place of employment, Springville-Griffith Institute Central Schools and his home town, Springville. Paul was a Special Education teacher through and through. His school had the first Driver Education Program for handicapped students. His class went on a Special Education field trip to Washington, D.C. using funds the students earned through sales. He was co-founder of the League of the Handicapped which is now The Children’s League in Springville. Paul loved all aspects of teaching children.

He began the GI Employees Federal Credit Union and was president for 17 years. A Board member and President of: Bertrand Chaffee Hospital, Jennie B. Nursing Home and Springville Youth Incorporated. Paul Randall was also the President of the Springville-GI Faculty Association, and President of the Springville-Griffith Institute RTA, a unit of the Western Zone of the NYSRTA for many years.

Paul has given us many of our rights as teachers and we will miss him.

Michelle Claus, President
Springville-GI/West Valley RTA