

The New York State  
Retired Teachers' Association, Inc.

# YORK state

## Highlights

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Working together to support and strengthen the quality of life for all retired educators, their families, and communities.



**Angelo Grande \*CR**  
*President's Message*

I hope that spring has finally arrived by the time you receive this issue of **YORK STATE**.

I would like to thank our newly elected officers, who

started off the new NYSRTA year with flying colors. The new officers are: Kevin Mulligan, Brian Sherman, **Harriet Beers\*CR** and Judith Farmer.

At the beginning of November Kevin Mulligan, Brian Sherman and I met at the NYSUT headquarters in Albany for a meeting with Karen Magee, the new NYSUT President. In addition to some of our elected officers, Janice Mullins from the Legislative Action Committee and Rod Sherman, our NYSUT liaison were at the meeting. It was a productive meeting and we

were able to discuss the common interests of both of our organizations. Recently Brian Sherman, Janice Mullins, and Kathi Bassett followed-up on that initial meeting and met with the NYSUT legislative staff to discuss our common legislative issues as well as the possible 2017 Constitutional Convention. We continue to support NYSUT in their efforts and have been invited to participate in their upcoming training sessions for their local councils and we are also active in our coalition

with the Alliance and RPEA to stop the 2017 Constitutional Convention.

At present, two of the most crucial issues facing our Association are **Membership** and our current **Financial Status**. These issues have been discussed for the past ten years by every Past President and as your current President, I and the Board will continue to address these issues. In his President's Message in the 2008 Spring Issue of **YORK STATE**, President Ron Wilson introduced us to the critical issues of

membership and the financial issues facing NYSRTA. We are now embarking on a program to reduce costs without hurting the organization as a whole. We must work to get a balanced budget. In order to balance the budget, we must cut costs and increase revenue. In February I sent out my President's Appeal Letter. To date the response to the Appeal Letter has been a great success. **If you haven't already, please don't forget to send in your donation.**

As mentioned above, we are also dealing with the issue of the **2017 Constitutional Convention**. This can hurt teachers, as well all state employees. In the mid-west, we have

*continued on page 5*



**Legislative Action Committee visits NYSUT**

## Newly Elected NYSRTA Officers



**Senior VP**  
Kevin Mulligan



**VP Legislative Action**  
Brian Sherman



**VP Friendly Service**  
Harriet Beers\*CR



**VP Membership**  
Salvatore Sedita



**Secretary**  
Judith Farmer



**Treasurer, Pres. Emeritus**  
Terry Trudeau\*CR

# Annual Convention and Workshop Committee Update

Kevin Mulligan, Senior Vice President and Chair of the Workshop Committee

I am very happy to report that all the workshops for the 2016 NYSRTA Convention have been procured, as of April 11, 2016. The host zone, Central Western Zone led by Co-Presidents Jane Behnk and Sandy Kushner have done an outstanding job in coordinating efforts to provide a keynote speaker, Eleanor Stearns depicting

Elizabeth Cady Stanton. They also have provided five wonderful workshops providing much insight to the theme "WINE, WOMEN and WATERWAYS".

## WINE, WOMEN AND WATERWAYS

In addition, Workshop Committee members Gwynne Bodle, Alice Galvin, Diane Hahn \*CR, and Pat Newell have put together some other workshops that will provide the

life tools of creativity, balance, and pension security, as well as the challenges of being the "Keepers of Academic Freedom".

The Workshop Committee wishes to thank the advisement of President **Angelo Grande \*CR**, Rosalie Oliver (Eastern Zone President) and Kathi Bassett (NYSRTA Senior Administrative Assistant). Their time, knowledge and experience proved to be most helpful in the planning success of this committee. Thank you.

## Friendly Service Harriet Beers \*CR, Vice President



Our FRIENDLY SERVICE is alive and well, thanks to the hard work and diligence of the Zone and Unit Friendly Service Chairs in the ten zones of NYSRTA.

Good things come in small packages and the cards, phone calls, and personal visits to a shut-in are the 'small' packages that go out to wish our members a speedy recovery, good

health, sympathy, or birthday wishes, congratulations on a graduation, or new grandchild. Nothing is more rewarding to a Friendly Service worker than to hear from a recipient that he or she was happy to be remembered.

Friendly Service has over 18,000 members - all of you who are members of our State Association. We depend on each one of you to let us know when there is a colleague who would benefit by hearing from us. It is never too late to make a NEW

YEAR'S RESOLUTION!!! By this time, many of the ones we made in January have been forgotten, so we ask you to make this one: If each member of NYSRTA would give the name of a colleague who would appreciate being remembered to your Friendly Service worker—just ONE name from each of you would mean another 18,000 contacts. Let's try to make this a banner year—we can only do it with your help.

## A Dental HMO for the Members of NYSRTA

NYSRTA Dental Insurance  
Underwritten by Cigna Dental

This NYSRTA Sponsored Dental program is a Dental HMO that lets you pick a network dentist who provides you with most routine services at no charge to you (exams, x-rays, and cleanings).

There are no waiting periods, deductibles, or annual dollar maximums.

Cigna's network of participating dentists focus on the preventive aspects of dental care. Your network general dentist will manage your overall dental care, and provide referrals for more complex procedures requiring a dental specialist.

All network dentists are required to meet Cigna Dental's quality program criteria. They have been evaluated for professional credentials and compliance with government health standards. Offices are visited periodically to verify that all standards are being met, providing an ongoing endorsement of quality.

To enroll or request more information, contact an insurance representative at 1-866-478-8907.

Or visit us online at [pearlcarroll.com/nysrta](http://pearlcarroll.com/nysrta)



# DEADLINE! DEADLINE! DEADLINE!

## TO ALL MEMBERS - IMPORTANT DUE DATES TO ADHERE TO

### **JUNE 1, 2016 – CERTIFICATE of RECOGNITION**



Applications were mailed to each Zone President and all information on nominees must be returned by this date to: Jackie Moller \*CR, Chair, 588 Stoneleigh Road, Oneida, NY 13421-1814. This special award is given to NYSRTA members to single out and honor professionals who have contributed significantly to The Association. Nominees must be qualified living candidates who have served at The Association, Zone, and Unit levels, and have made contributions to the community as a whole. Zones or individuals may make nominations; but, each application must be signed by the Zone President for approval.

### **JUNE 11, 2016 – RESOLUTIONS**



All proposed resolutions **must** be submitted to the State Chair of the Resolutions Committee “thirty (30) days before the July Executive Committee Meeting”. The date of that meeting is July 11, 2016. Thirty days prior to that date is **Saturday, June 11, 2016**, provides for a full thirty days between the due date and the date of the State Executive Committee meeting.

When submitting proposals, please adhere to all of the guidelines that are clearly spelled out on **pgs. 78-80** of the Leader’s Manual. Each proposal should be on a separate page with the proper attestation and signed and dated by the zone president at the top. Each proposal should specify which NYSRTA objective(s) is being addressed in the proposal. These are found in Article II of the Bylaws. A signed hard copy must be sent to me, **Gayla LePage (189 County Route 16, North Bangor, NY 12966)** along with an electronically transmitted copy to [luer913@hotmail.com](mailto:luer913@hotmail.com).

Zones considering the submission of a proposed resolution should:

1. Examine, in depth, whether the intent (purpose, aim, action required, or the like) is clearly an expression of one or more to the Article II of the By-Laws. Is the intent something that should be expressed as a resolution, something that requires a By-Law change, something that necessitates action by the STATE Executive Committee, or a change by another committee or agency?
2. Research thoroughly the proposed resolutions.
3. Make certain the “Whereas” statements and the “Resolved” are clearly stated. This is extremely important as the Legislative Action Committee will return to us or table the unclear proposed resolutions.
4. Submit the proposed resolutions as early as your zone’s schedule permits, allowing time for review by the Zones’ Resolution Chairs as well as by appropriate NYSRTA committees.
5. Submit up to but no more than three (3) resolutions for consideration in a given year.

I have not received any resolutions to date. I know there are many issues out there, so please get those to me soon.

### **MAY 31, 2016 – NOMINATIONS**



The following vacancy will exist for 2016-2017: **Vice President for Membership**

**Any member wishing to be considered for nomination must apply by the deadline date of May 31, 2016, by filing a letter of intent and a complete resume to: Emily F. Castine \*CR, Nominations Chair, 1483 Lake Shore Road, Chazy, NY 12921**

**It is also required for any candidate to have his/her Zone President send a letter of endorsement to the Chair by this same deadline. All other endorsements should be from members of The Association. Any materials received after May 31, 2016 will not be reviewed or considered.**

If interested in this position, please contact your Zone President and/or your Zone Nominations person. You may also contact The NYSRTA Nominations Chair for this information. Now is the time to think about service to NYSRTA.

**Interviews for this position will be scheduled for July 11, 2016, at the Radisson Hotel, Utica, NY beginning at 2 PM.**

*(Note: All other Elected Officers are eligible to serve for the next year. All Officers are elected for a one-year term and may be elected to serve for three consecutive terms. The only exceptions are the Treasurer who is not subject to term limits and the Secretary who serves for six consecutive terms, as approved by the Annual Convention of 2016.)*



## Membership *Salvatore Sedita, Chair of Membership*

It's that time of year again when zones and units should be gearing up for their recruiting drives. Remember, there are some important things that need to be done in order to have a successful recruitment season. They are the following:

**1.** Zone Membership Chairs need to organize and hold their annual recruitment workshops for units and individuals in the zone who will be doing the recruitment. Remember – involve as many people in the zone/unit as possible. The more members involved, the more successful will be the effort.

**2.** Zone Membership Chairs and unit membership Chairs need to contact school districts to ascertain the names (and addresses if possible) of retirees for the current school year. If districts decline to release the addresses of new retirees, there are several ways to find them out. Perhaps some current members who recently

retired from a district still have contacts in the district who can get those addresses for you. They may be able to get current faculty lists (which include addresses) from teachers in schools in the district. "White Pages" searches on the internet sometimes gives the needed addresses. If your public library has copies of the Polk City Directories, those publications list all residents in the geographic area by name and give addresses and telephone numbers.

**3.** Once the names and addresses of new retirees are completed, zone and Unit Membership Chairs need to put the zone's/unit's recruitment drive into motion. Again, as many members as possible should be encouraged to participate. If possible, a one-to-one recruitment effort is most effective.

**4.** Zone and Unit Membership Chairs should include in the recruitment effort two other groups to be

recruited. These are those educators who have retired in the past but have not yet joined. The second group is those members who have let their membership lapse and are no longer active members. Work to bring them back into the fold.

Since zone membership chairs are expected each year to report the names and addresses of that year's retirees, those lists are available from NYSRTA headquarters. If you need them, contact Kathy Bassett at the office. Her email address is kbassett@nysrta.org. Zone and unit members are encouraged to contact your Membership Chairs to offer to get involved in this year's recruitment effort. Recruitment is everyone's job, and with everyone involved, success will be guaranteed.



As per the March 2016 Executive Board vote, NYSRTA will produce 2 electronic issues and 2 printed issues of YORK STATE each year.

The article submission schedule for these will be:

**Spring (electronic) .....April 30**

**Summer (mailed) .....July 13**

**Fall (electronic) .....August 25**

**Winter (mailed) .....November 4**

There is no need to sign up for the electronic issues, if you regularly receive emails from NYSRTA, you are already on our list.

As usual, all issues will be available at [nysrta.org](http://nysrta.org).



### Have you changed your email address recently?

As a group, overall, NYSRTA members have a very high change-of-email-address rate. Who knew we had so many progressive computer users! We try to keep up with those changes by adding a request for email address updates to renewals and to The President's Appeal. However, we are finding that members change their email addresses more frequently than those correspondences keep pace with.

The best way to insure that you continue to receive email correspondence from us is to contact the office at 518-482-3509 whenever you change your address.



## Nominations Committee

*Emily Castine \*CR, Chair*

The open position for 2016-2017 is:  
**Vice President for Membership**

Applications for this key leadership position are encouraged from every zone.

The following officers have agreed to continue in their current positions for 2016-2017:

President, Angelo Grande  
Senior Vice President, Kevin Mulligan  
Vice President for Friendly Service, Harriet Beers  
Vice President for Legislative Action, Brian Sherman  
Secretary, Judy Farmer  
Treasurer, Terry Trudeau

Candidates wishing to run for the open positions, or candidates desiring to oppose one of the incumbents should submit a **letter of intent** and a **current resume** along with a **letter of endorsement from his/her zone president**. Other supporting letters from NYSRTA members may be included. These materials must be submitted to:

Mrs. Emily Castine  
Chair of the Nominations Committee  
1483 Lake Shore Rd.  
Chazy, NY 12921

**Submissions must be received no later than May 31, 2016. There will be no exceptions.**

**The Nominations Committee will meet on Monday, July 11, 2016, at 2 PM.** Prior to that meeting, each member of the Nominations Committee will have been provided with copies of the applications sent to Chair. Candidates will present themselves to the Nominations Committee on the 11th. The committee will interview each candidate and then make recommendations for each position. **If a member of the Nominations Committee is not able to attend, his/her zone president should send the name of the alternate via a letter or e-mail message to the Chair.**

### *President's Message ~ Angelo Grande \*CR*

*continued from page 1*

seen attacks/reductions on established pension plans and attempts to diminish collective bargaining rights. This Convention could very well include a focus on the same. In today's economics, the public could be faced with costs of over \$200 million to run this convention. I suggest you vote NO when asked to have a Constitutional Convention, in November, 2017. If you were to vote yes, this convention may run for two years into 2019.

Working with SAANYS and NYSUT, we were also successful in

keeping our current Medicare Reimbursement levels as is, but we will need to watch this item in the future.

While passing through Albany, I stopped to examine two possible venues for our State Convention; however, they proved insufficient for our needs. Leigh Powell and I will also be investigating a venue in Saratoga Springs.

**Remember our current focus, Save our Pensions and Save NYSRTA. Only You can make it happen. United We Stand Divided We Fall.**

## Long-Term Care Insurance Program

The NYS Retired Teachers' Association has approved a discounted Long Term Care Insurance Program to be offered to its members and their family members.

This program is designed to help protect you, your family and your retirement security. Protection is available should you need care at home, in an assisted living facility, or nursing home.

To request information on this program visit  
[www.nyltcb.com/nysrta/](http://www.nyltcb.com/nysrta/)  
or call  
(800) 695-8224, ext. 154.

This program offers special discounts not available to the general public for you and your family members including:

- spouse / partner
- children
- parents
- grandparents

If you would like to forward this to a family member please feel free to do so.

Brian M. Johnson, CLTC, NYLTCB  
11 Executive Park Dr.,  
Clifton Park, NY 12065  
[bjohnson@nyltcb.com](mailto:bjohnson@nyltcb.com)

## The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for September 2016 through August 2017 benefit payments is 1.0%

As a result, an eligible retired member with an annual benefit of \$18,000 or more will receive a maximum increase of \$15 per month beginning with the September 2016 payment. (Eligible members receiving an annual benefit under \$18,000 will receive a lesser monthly increase.)

This latest COLA will bring the cumulative maximum monthly increase since COLA legislation was enacted in 2001 to \$312 (see chart below).

New York's permanent, automatic COLA is designed to help offset inflation's adverse effects on the fixed retirement benefits of the state's public retirees. By law, the COLA is calculated by taking 50% of the March-to-March Consumer Price Index increase (rounded up to the next higher one-tenth of 1%) and multiplying it by the first \$18,000 of the retirement benefit. The CPI increased from March 2015 to March 2016 (.85%). Since the cost-of-living adjustment percentage cannot be less than 1.0% or exceed 3.0%, the percentage increase will be 1.0%.

### COLA Eligibility

To be eligible for a COLA, you must either be:

- At least age 62 and retired at least five years; or,
- At least age 55 and retired at least 10 years; or,
- A retiree receiving a NYSTRS disability benefit for at least five years (regardless of age); or,
- A surviving spouse of an eligible retiree receiving a lifetime benefit. (By law, the spouse receives an increase equal to one-half the COLA the retiree would have received.)



Retirees who become eligible for the COLA after September will receive their adjustment when first eligible.

### COLA Percentages and Maximum Increases

COLA Effective Date	CPI Increase	COLA	Maximum Monthly Increase*
September 2001	2.92%	1.5%	\$22.50
September 2002	1.48%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2003	3.02%	1.6%	\$24.00
September 2004	1.74%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2005	3.15%	1.6%	\$24.00
September 2006	3.36%	1.7%	\$25.50
September 2007	2.78%	1.4%	\$21.00

September 2008	3.98%	2.0%	\$30.00
September 2009	-0.38%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2010	2.31%	1.2%	\$18.00
September 2011	2.68%	1.4%	\$21.00
September 2012	2.65%	1.4%	\$21.00
September 2013	1.47%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2014	1.51%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2015	-0.07%	1.0%	\$15.00
September 2016	0.85%	1.0%	\$15.00

*\*Maximum monthly increase for eligible retirees with an annual benefit of \$18,000. Retirees receiving an annual benefit less than \$18,000 received a lesser monthly increase.*

on Facebook: [NYS Retired Teachers Association](#)

# The NYSRTA presents...

## Travel Preview 2016



### Alaska Discovery

13 Days • 21 Meals • **July 19 - July 31, 2016**

**Highlights:** Anchorage, McKinley, Luxury Domed Rail, Denali National Park, Music of Denali Dinner Theatre, Tundra Wilderness Tour, Whittier, Hubbard Glacier, Glacier Bay, Skagway, Juneau, Ketchikan, Inside Passage

**Double \$5199\***

Other cabin categories available. Call for details.

Refer to booking #710826

**BOOK NOW  
& SAVE UP TO \$100  
per person**

### Discover Switzerland, Austria & Bavaria

10 Days • 12 Meals • **September 7 - September 16, 2016**

**Highlights:** Bern, Chateau de Chillon, Montreux, GoldenPass Panoramic Train, Gstaad, Lucerne, Innsbruck, Austrian Alps, Salzburg, Mirabell Gardens, St. Peter's Restaurant, Bavaria, Oberammergau, Tyrolean Folklore Show

**Double \$3799\***

Book by 3/8 and **SAVE \$100** per person!\*\*

Refer to booking #709239

### California Coast

9 Days • 11 Meals • **October 16 - October 24, 2016**

**Highlights:** San Francisco, Choice of Cruise on San Francisco Bay or City Tour of San Francisco, Yosemite National Park, Monterey, 17-Mile Drive, Big Sur, Hearst Castle, Santa Barbara, Long Beach

**Double \$3499\***

Book by 4/16 and **SAVE \$50** per person!\*\*

Refer to booking #708549

**Watch your email for webinar invitations!**  
For more information, call Collette at **800.581.8942**  
and refer to the corresponding booking number

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\*Rate is per person and includes roundtrip air from a New York Intl Airport, air taxes and fees/surcharges, and hotel transfers. Alaska includes port taxes. Airfare: For your convenience, we offer airfare for purchase with all tour packages. If you purchase an air-inclusive program, your airfare will be quoted inclusive of all fuel, taxes and fees. Your rates are subject to change until paid in full. Seats are limited and may not be available on every flight or departure date. Checked Baggage Charges: Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies. \*\*Book by savings valid on air-inclusive bookings only.

CST# 2006766-20 UBN# 601220855 Nevada Seller of Travel Registration No. 2003-0279



## Central Zone

*Mary Radloff, Public Relations*

Central Zone units were undaunted by a long, brutal winter. Each county continued activities to carry on the mission of service not only to members but also to the community. Food pantries, shelters, schools, the elderly, the homebound and many other groups received their support. Committees have met to plan spring meetings and to revitalize efforts to solicit new members.

New Co-Presidents **Florence Barnett** and **Barbara Finley** begin their tenure with strong emphasis on recruiting and retaining members. They have planned an All-Committee Day for April 21, at the Rusty Rail in Canastota. Membership will no doubt be a major topic of concern at this event. This special meeting provides an opportunity for county leaders to meet in small groups. Sharing common problems and especially sharing successful solutions make this annual gathering a worthwhile effort to maintain our organization as a vital, important entity in the service to retired educators in New York State.

We are thankful to former president **William Tenity** whose skill leadership led us through many years. We are pleased that he will continue to serve on the NYSRTA Executive Board as Chair of the Bylaws Committee.

## Central Western Zone

*Phyllis Dunlap, Public Relations*

Welcome Happy Spring. The 2016 NYSRTA Convention will be held October 26th-28th at the Turning Stone in Verona, NY. The host zone this year will be OUR Central Western Zone. The new Co-Presidents of our CWZ are Jane Behnk (Steuben) and Sandy Kushner (Wyoming). What a job for them as new Co-Presidents. We decided on "Wine (Trail), Women (rights) and Waterways" (Finger Lakes and the Erie Canal) to represent our zone. We have Julie Ann Severson and Julee Acomb, retired art teachers from Wayland-Cohocton designing the cover for the Convention booklet and we have asked each county (10) to send us great photos to put in the booklet. You will see why we love our CWZ.



**Doris Whitney**

On a sad note, we have lost two of our leaders in CWZ. January 21, 2016 Doris Whitney entered into God's rest. At almost 90 years old she was still very active in her Livingston county, zone and state. She will be truly missed by all.



**Francis Ramsey**

On February 9, 2016 Francis Carol Ramsey also entered peacefully into rest at age 82. She and her husband of 58 years, John W. Ramsey Jr. (Jay) were also very active in their Wayne county, zone and state. We will miss her, also.

In CWZ, we welcome new Bylaw's Chair, Sharon White (Wayne) but we will miss Kitty Braddon (Ontario) and Mary Prince-Walter (Ontario) who are retiring as Membership Chairs. This is a vital part of our zone and we are hoping a new Chair or Co-Chairs will step up soon. We hope to add to our membership many new retiring teachers. This is what keeps our counties, zones and state going.

Happy summer and see you in the autumn at the NYSRTA Convention!

## Eastern Zone

*Pamela Love, Public Relations*

I will start with the sad news that one of our most loyal members over many years, Milan Krychniak, passed away in December of 2015. Milan was Treasurer of his local unit for a significant number of years for TARTA which became Rensselaer County Retired Teachers, and was very involved with state legislation for Eastern Zone for many years and was assistant Treasurer for NYSRTA under Jack Hickey and Frank Meyer. He received a State Certificate of Recognition.

As I write this report, many of the local units are getting ready to have their

Spring Luncheons. Margaret King, President of the Albany Unit said they will be awarding two scholarships of \$1000 each at their luncheon in June. The recipients are two seniors from Voorheesville High School who plan to become teachers.

Irene Hauser, President of the Fulton Unit said that they have presented \$500 to Erin Kelly, an active teacher in the Johnstown Public School System so that she may complete her Professional teacher certification.

Rosalie Oliver, President of Eastern Zone, said that the Zone has received a Certificate of Participation from NYSRTA's Community Service Chair.

## The Schenectady County Retired Teachers Association

(SCRTA) is a unique organization. Our trusts were created to provide monetary support to retired teachers from all private and public schools in Schenectady County.

Our Fall Luncheon was held in October at the Turf Inn in Scotia, New York. Our members had opportunities to bid on many items at our very successful Silent Auction.



**Barbara McSwain, Pauline Davi, Bev Glover, retiring SCRTA officers, received flowers**

SCRTA honored the following retired officers: President, Pauline Davi; Assistant President, Barbara McSwain; Vice President, Peg Cimino; Vice President, Barbara Foti and Secretary, Bev Glover; for their time and dedication to this organization.

At the luncheon, the following slate of officers were also presented to the membership: President, Linda Snyder; Assistant President, Stella Courtney; First Vice President, Rose Marie McLean; Second Vice President, Sylvia Brancatelli; Secretary, Jocelyn Pranis; Treasurer, Carol Fischer; and Historian





**SCRTA Silent Auction**

Mary Ellen Johnson, Guest speaker, Mary Zawacki, curator of Schenectady County Historical Society/Mabee Farm Historical Site, described how immigrants from Poland, Italy and Germany were motivated to find job opportunities in the Schenectady region.

The Schenectady County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) will hold its **Spring Luncheon on Thursday, May 19, 2016** at the Turf Tavern in Scotia, NY. A social gathering begins at 11:30 with lunch following at 12:00.

At this luncheon, Monica Krug will be the recipient of the "Aspiring Teacher Award". She is a graduating senior representing the Duanesburg Central School District.

This award is funded by our membership dues to a graduating senior in Schenectady County. The award rotates yearly through the six public Schenectady County school Districts.

Our guest speakers for this luncheon will be Stacy Clifford and Joe Poisinelli, our new financial advisors from Holistic Wealth and Empire State Asset Management.

## *Long Island Zone*

*Eileen Holmes, Public Relations*

The Long Island Zone has embraced two community service projects this Spring. Working with a Riverhead Library program, LIZ members will be involved in "Operation Veronica", collecting all types of manufacturer's coupons for distribution to military families to use at PX stores on bases overseas. In these PX's the coupons are valid 60 days beyond their printed expiration date, providing time for

collection and shipping.

In March, the LIZ made a monetary donation to Newsday Charities, a McCormick Foundation fund that distributes aid to 28 dedicated nonprofit agencies on Long Island. These agencies, including Bethany House, The Salvation Army, Island Harvest, Family Service League and Child Abuse Prevention Services work towards improving the lives of Long Island's neediest children and families.

WestEnd Retired Teachers' held two successful luncheon/meetings. On November 10th, the eve of Veteran's Day and to honor the 240th birthday of the Marine Corps, WERTA's guest speaker was Lawrence M. Pinto, a retired USMC World War II veteran who served in Saipan, Okinawa and Iwo Jima. In an enlightening and inspiring presentation, Mr. Pinto shared many of his wartime experiences and discussed how he and other WW II vets continue to perform community services by visiting schools and instructing students on proper flag etiquette and respect.

In March WERTA's Spring luncheon/meeting featured guest speaker Marion Rizzo, a licensed antiques dealer. Ms. Rizzo spoke about 'what's in and what's not' in gold, silver and antique markets and also made some appraisals of items that members had brought for her to examine.

On the east end of the island, EERTA members enjoyed three impressive, well-attended get-togethers. In November, the Election Day luncheon featured retiree members Jim and Diana Davies leading a sing-along. Community Service Chair Robert Svoboda announced that an EERTA donation had been given to William Floyd HS (Mastic, NY) to aid a needy student or family at holiday time.

In December, EERTA's annual holiday luncheon was a big success, with over 50 members joining in the festivities. Scholarship Chair Larry Strickland introduced Robin Webster and presented her with a \$1,000 scholarship. Robin is student teaching, pursuing a Master's degree in Childhood Education at LI University and look-

ing forward to having her own classroom.

Later in December, EERTA's Shelter Island Town Director Virginia Schultz held her annual Christmas covered dish luncheon. Virginia has been hosting this holiday party for many years and it's become famous for the unique assortment of foods that are served and Virginia's famous desserts!

## *North Central Zone* *Nancy Roberts & Patricia Newell,* *Public Relations Co-Chairs*

The spring weather may be slightly unpredictable, but one thing is for certain...the NCZ is springing ahead into exciting activities.

NCZ volunteers will man a booth at the WPBS-TV's "Ready, Set, Fun 2016 Bookfest". It will be held on May 7th at the Bruce M. Wright Memorial Conference Center in Watertown. This project is under the direction of Community Service Chair Pat Dietrich with Burt Phillips serving as the event coordinator. What a pleasure it is to hand out brand new books to children and also to oversee a gently used book exchange. It's all part of a wonderful literacy promotion!

We are looking forward to our Spring Scholarship Luncheon at the Ramada Inn in Watertown on June 7th. The highlight of this luncheon will be the awarding of educational scholarships. Two \$1,000 scholarships are being awarded in partnership with the Northern New York Community Foundation. Our NCZ Scholarship Committee under the leadership of Chair John Gaffney has been very busy. John is assisted by Dr. George Forbes, Willis Haller, Marianne Malatino, Mary Lee O'Brien, and Tom Van Emmerick. They have the challenging task of selecting the winners from a pool of highly qualified candidates.

They are pleased to announce that this year's winners are Claire E. Sheley, a graduating senior from Thousand Islands Central, and Meghan E. Pano-wicz, a senior from Lowville Academy



Claire Sheley Meghan Panowicz

and Central School. These outstanding young ladies and their parents will be our invited guests at the June 7th luncheon. NCZ will also present the \$1,000 NYSRTA Florence Coulter Kramer Award for Educational Professionals at this luncheon. Kathy Van Ness from the North Country Library System will speak on its outreach services to luncheon attendees.

Several community service projects directed by Pat Dietrich will also be featured on June 7th. NCZ members will be able to purchase raffle tickets to support the "Love Your Public Library" campaign. A non-perishable food drive for the Jefferson County food pantries will also be underway. Linda Holley and Patty Crandall who serve on the Hospitality Committee will be on hand to greet members and assist with details.

As the weather warms, we will also see more NYSRTA WALKERS taking to the sidewalks and trails. NCZ members have been walking indoors or in sunny locations such as Myrtle Beach & Florida over the winter months!

## DATES TO REMEMBER

\*Spring Executive Council Meeting: Thursday, April 28, 2016 at the Teachers' Center, 10-12 noon

\*Spring Zone Scholarship Luncheon: Tuesday, June 7, 2016, at the Ramada Inn, Watertown

\*Summer Executive Council Meeting: Thursday, August 4, 2016 at the Teachers' Center, 10-12 noon.

## Northern Zone

Linda Crosby, Public Relations

During a wild winter storm in January, many NZ members traveled to Gouverneur to celebrate the 90th birthday of a much loved and admired friend, **Agnes Hudson\*CR**. Family and friends gathered around Agnes at a festive party planned by her son, Scott. Happy Birthday, Agnes!! In honor of her birthday,



Agnes Hudson arrives at her surprise 90th birthday party

of NYSRTA.

In March, Rae Louise Tate and Linda Crosby attended the State Executive Board meeting in Utica where many significant decisions made by the board will help preserve the Association's future. Our own NZ executive board had very productive meetings in December, January and February that solidified plans for 2016 membership meetings and events. We meet again in May to finish preparations for the June membership meeting. Any NZ member is welcome at all executive board meetings.

Our Spring Meeting on June 8 will feature an exciting new event! Joe Russo has organized gentle raft rides on Star Lake with the help of local boat-owning friends. Grab your boat shoes, sunhat and join us! Alice Galvin made all the arrangements for the meeting/luncheon at The Haven in Star Lake where SUNY Potsdam once had their camp. For our community service project, we will be accepting donations for the Franklin County Association of Retired Citizens for their fund to help with the expenses of volunteer drivers who transport

the Malone, NY residents of The Alice Hyde Medical Center's assisted living residence, the Alice Center, to medical appointments. We will also accept donations for our scholarship program. Watch your mail for the arrival of the NZ newsletter and meeting reservation form.

Alice Galvin has been attending Convention 2016 planning meetings in addition to mapping out, with the help of NZ executive board members, preliminary plans for hosting the 2017 convention. We hope you will attend both conventions and volunteer to help us in 2017! NZ Convention 2017 Co-Chairs are Alice and Gayla LePage.

Our Fall NZ membership meeting in September will feature a guest speaker, Karen Flewelling, from Saratoga Springs, NY, who will talk about her fundraising efforts and direct site supervision of well building and fistula operations in needy communities. She will be working in Ethiopia and Tanzania for the spring of 2016. More details will be forthcoming.

## Southern Zone

Mary Lou Wood, Public Relations

As I write this newsletter and look out my kitchen window, there is a white-out. My poor cat is looking out her favorite window and wondering where the bird feeder went, not sure what's happening! It was not a nice April Fools joke! April is supposed to bring sun, warmth, robins, tulips, and daffodils. My daffodils are frozen! We can't complain, we did have a mild winter.

Don Cutton and our scholarship committee have mailed applications to school districts, and will be reviewing applications, and choosing a recipient. This person must be an educator who will benefit from this scholarship.

Mildred Rugur has celebrated her 100+ birthday. We are so fortunate



Mildred Rugur





nate to have such an active member in our units and zone. Mildred keeps us informed of the new legislation that we should be aware of.

Our units are actively searching for a teacher active in his/her unit, and zone, and a member of NYSRTA to be awarded our Special Recognition Award. That person will be awarded with a certificate and gift at our annual zone meeting in September.

We are sorry to say that we have lost another valuable member of our Zone—Helene Combopiano. Helene was very active in her unit as President and as

Public Relations person, and then Health Care Coordinator for the Southern Zone. We will miss her smile and her bubbly personality.



**Tony and Helene Combopiano**

## South Eastern Zone

*Mary Ellen Colombo, Public Relations*

Hello to all and happy spring...soon I hope. We are facing an important and interesting election—unprecedented in many regards. However, you are feeling about the issues, I would like to share a few headlines from Bill Maher's show from various organizations including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA.

- ★Almost half of Americans live with unhealthy levels of air pollution. - *American Lung Association*
- ★The world has lost more than half of its wildlife in the last 40 years. - *World Wildlife Fund*
- ★Most coastal cities will face routine flooding in our lifetimes. - *National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*
- ★Seas are rising at the fastest rate in the last 28 centuries (almost 3,000 years). - *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.*

★Scientists warn of perilous climate shift within decades, not centuries. - *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics journal of science*

★Numbers of managed honey bee colonies plummeting. - *USDA*

★Melting ice sheets changing the way the Earth wobbles on its axis, says NASA.

★Climate related death of coral around the world alarms scientists. - *CoralWatch, Australia's University of Queensland*

★Wildfires, once confined to a season, burn earlier and longer. - *United States Forest Service*

★Great Barrier Reef: Half of natural wonder is dead or dying and it is on the brink of extinction. - *National Coral Bleaching Taskforce*

We all need to think about this a bit. We need to do our part in researching the importance of each candidate's platform. And, please do not forget to exercise your right to vote!

Wishing everyone a happy, productive summer!

## Western Zone

*Michelle Claus, Public Relations*

Our Legislative Action Committee, chaired by Judy Klug, has been busy seeking support for the Minimum Pension Bump Up Bill. Judy has been on this committee for years. She has always been interested in political priorities and she schedules meetings with state and local elected officials, then reporting to us. One of her passions is to make legislators aware of the work NYSRTA does for retirees. Judy makes the elected officials aware of what legislative priorities we need enacted. Judy traveled to Utica this March to attend the state Legislative Action Committee meeting. The Chairs from all ten zones met with NYSRTA President **Angelo Grande**



**Pat Keller, Vicki Smith, Ginna O'Leary, Stan Nowak, Beth Green**

\***CR**, and David Keefe, retiree rep & VP for the Teacher's Retirement System (NYSTRS). Discussion of how to show our support for the Minimum Pension Bump Up Bill was part of the agenda. Our members have written letters to their Assembly persons and New York State Senators showing support for this bill. The bill states that a retiree would have a minimum retirement amount. All who retired prior to July 1, 1980 would receive \$550 per year of NYS service, up to a maximum of thirty-five years, increased to a maximum of \$19,250.

For example, a member who retired in 1978, had an income of about \$16,000, which makes their current pension approximately \$12,000 a year. With this new bill, the retiree would have a yearly pension of \$19,250.

If you would like to support this bill, NYSRTA and your local retirees, please write a letter of support. Letters must be sent by June 1st. To find your legislators, please use the websites below.

Assemblyman: [www.assembly.ny.us](http://www.assembly.ny.us)  
NYS Senator: [nysenate.gov](http://nysenate.gov)

## OUR 107 YEAR YOUNG WESTERN ZONE MEMBER

*Compiled by Sandra Kelley*

What began as a routine task for Anne Flansburg turned into a delightful personal adventure! The address of Hazel Nilson, a Western Zone member was in question as she was listed as living in Wisconsin. Upon Googling Hazel (oh the joys of the Internet) a



**Hazel Nilson**



2015 article written by Mr. Paul Mitchell about Hazel was found, mentioning that she was moving to an assisted living facility in NH, to be closer to family members. He was more than happy to give his permission to use any part of his article we chose. Anne's superb detective skills

didn't end there. She Googled the assisted living facility, found a phone number and called. When she inquired about Hazel, the receptionist she was speaking to said, "Oh, Hazel. She is in the next room. Just a minute and I will get her for you." This resulted in a 15 minute delightful conversation with Hazel, and pictures of Hazel were sent via email.

Hazel turned 107 on August 21, 2015. She went to school in Indianapolis, where she and her husband, "Swede", met and were both physical education majors. They got their first job offers in the Buffalo Public School District, where they spent their entire careers. She retired from Kensington High School in 1965. After retirement, Hazel and her husband, Swede, moved to Stone Lake, WI and spent most winters in warmer climates. Can you imagine being retired for 50 years!

In the article Hazel commented, "I would recommend assisted living to anyone. You have to adjust to it, because if you don't, then you're sad." Hazel has made many friends in her new home. "We are in the same boat," she said, "all mentally sharp people who have gotten older".

Once a teacher, always a teacher! Hazel teaches an exercise session for residents every day, called "Sit and Be Fit". "When I lead the exercise class," she said, "people have a ball. In the class, people stretch and move in their chairs or wheelchairs."

"People can be happy wherever they are," Hazel said. "It's all about attitude. You have to accept life as it is, and enjoy people, and life will be

**People can be happy wherever they are. It's all about attitude. You have to accept life as it is, and enjoy people, and life will be great.**

**~Hazel Nilson~**

great." She's met a few people who haven't learned that lesson. Hazel said, "Some don't accept being old, but it's no use. You can't change it."

H a z e l is the proud mother of two boys, a grandmother of six, and boasts of

thirteen great-grandchildren. Hazel stated that she has received birthday and greeting cards from Western Zone Friendly Service throughout the years and that each time she does, it makes her feel at home again.

This charming, delightful and young at heart retired teacher, Hazel has the honor of being the oldest known member of Western Zone. We can all take a lesson from her... "Accept life as it is, enjoy people and life will be great"!

## NEWLY ELECTED NYSRTA RECORDING SECRETARY

Judy Farmer is a busy lady! She has recently taken on more responsibility as she was elected as Secretary of NYSRTA at the annual convention in October 2015.

Judy graduated from West Seneca High School in 1962, earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Bob Jones University in 1966 and a Master of Science degree from Canisius College in 1994. She taught at the Iroquois Central School district for 31 years, retiring in 2005. While there, she was the corresponding secretary of the Iroquois Faculty Association and a member of the Negotiation Team.

After retirement, Judy joined NYSRTA. She is a board member of Western Zone and has served as corresponding and recording secretary. Judy is also a member of Eastern Erie Retired Teachers' Association and presently serves as the president and a member of the Legislative Action Committee.

Judy is one of our unofficial mentors. New members of WZ are often welcomed by her and she makes sure

new members have the supplies/information needed to participate in our meetings. In addition, Judy is a strong advocate for Western Zone and NYSRTA.

The old adage holds true – if you need something done ask a busy person. As you can see, Judy is a busy person who is always ready to take on more responsibility and help in any way she can. She was recognized

for her many talents and devotion to WZ at the 2015 Annual Meeting by receiving the Citation Award. We are proud to have Judy as a WZ board member, Recording Secretary of NYSRTA and most of all as a friend. She is well deserving of our praise and we are delighted to have her represent Western Zone as our NYSRTA Recording Secretary.



Judy Farmer

## The Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund

Anne Flansburg \*CR, Chair

The Robert R DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund, established to assist retired educators in financial need, appropriated \$57,602 in financial assistance to needy members of NYSRTA during the year 2015. The money was given to the recipients by means of monthly stipends and/or emergency grants.

In 2015, the total received from zones, units and individuals was \$14,370. The expenditures of the Trust (sad to say) outweighed the donations by \$29,878. In order to meet the needs of our retirees, the Fund distributed almost 30 thousand dollars more than it received, so was forced to draw on the principal. We count on continued support, through donations. Contributions from zones, units, and individuals enable the Fund to continue assisting our less fortunate colleagues.

In 2015, donations were made "in memory of" 43 deceased individuals or groups and "in honor of" 4 members or groups. What a beautiful way to memorialize a deceased friend, as well as to honor an accomplishment or service! A receipt is sent to the donor, acknowledging the tax deductible donation to the DeCormier Fund, which is a 501(c)(3) entity. In addition, a personal note is sent to the family of the individual (if in memory of a deceased family member) or to the individual being honored.

Please consider sending a donation. This will enable us to continue to offer financial assistance to colleagues in financial need. Send a check payable to

the Robert DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund, to: Robert DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund, NYSRTA, 8 Airport Blvd., Latham NY 12110-6414.



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# Congratulations to Bob Joyce!

Congratulations to **Bob (Robert) Joyce \*CR**, (NEZ) who was honored at a ceremony in Washington, DC on May 14th as part of an Honor Flight from Plattsburgh. A local group sent ten World War II veterans and four Korean War veterans to visit the monuments in Washington, DC. After a send-off ceremony attended by friends and government officials in Plattsburgh and a parade to the airport, Bob (accompanied by his son Chris) and his nine veteran companions returned from DC to a "Heroes Welcome" on the oval at the old Plattsburgh AFB. There the honorees received a "mail call" with congratulatory letters from friends and officials, and received an Honor Flight jacket and cap.

Bob, a retiree from the CEWW BOCES where he spent thirty-seven

years is a NYSRTA Certificate of Recognition (\*CR) recipient and lives in Plattsburgh with his lovely wife Mary. Bob joined the military after high school and was sent to Korea during the latter part of WWII. A member of the Army Reserve, he returned to Korea serving as a Sergeant in the 1st Artillery during the Korean War. You can send him a congratulatory e-mail at [rejoyce7646@gmail.com](mailto:rejoyce7646@gmail.com).

Honor Flight is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing veterans with honor and closure. Their mission is to transport

America's veterans to Washington, DC to visit those memorials dedicated to honor the service and sacrifices of themselves and their friends ([www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org)).



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## We celebrated Music in Our Schools Month®

March has been officially designated by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) for the observance of Music In Our Schools Month® (MIOSM®), the time of year when music education becomes the focus of schools across the nation. MIOSM began as a single statewide celebration in 1973, and has grown over the decades to encompass a day, then a week, and then in 1985 to become a month long celebration of school music.

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on FaceBook: [NYS Retired Teachers Association](#)