



WESTERN CURRENTS



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

Volume 16, Number 1

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Winter 2017

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE ON ALTERNATIVE TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Thank you to all of you, individually and collectively, for your efforts in getting the defeat of the ConCon referendum. Special acknowledgement and gratitude is extended to NYSUT for its leadership and well organized campaign. Kudos to all involved.

What's next? If there was a valid argument in favor of having a Constitutional Convention it was that the current document could use some serious revision. It is lengthy (seven times longer than the Federal Constitution), practically unreadable in its "legalese" and rife with unnecessary, obsolete and antiquated provisions. If a Constitution is supposed to be a workable document that sets out the basic functions and powers of a government, our current state constitution misses the mark. Have you ever looked at it? Just google "NYS Constitution", sit back and be prepared to deal with a document that is far from reader friendly. One random example: Article III, Section 16 states that "No act shall be passed which shall provide that any existing law, or any part thereof, shall be made or deemed a part of said act, or which shall enact that any existing law, or part thereof, shall be applicable, except by inserting it in such act." HUH? Reading a few similar passages might be a sure cure for insomnia! All of Article XV is devoted to Canals. After teaching NYS and Local History for 33 years, I am fully aware of the importance of the Erie Canal and its subsidiaries in the growth of NYS and areas to the West. I recognize the commercial and recreational importance of the Barge Canal even today. We couldn't have the wonderful revival of Canalside without the original waterway. But do we really need an entire article on that topic in our State Constitution? I doubt that the word "canal" appears even once in the Federal Constitution.

Does the NYS Constitution need work - revision - updating? Absolutely, but holding a convention of 204 delegates, who would basically be elected through partisan or special group interests, would not be an effective or efficient way to make the necessary changes. The Legislature can use the Amendment process and put forth amendments calling for substantive changes as evidenced in Propositions 2 and 3 on the 2017 ballot. Is there no way to make editorial and language changes without the whole long process of amending the constitution or having a Constitutional Convention?

What's the feasibility of creating a special Task Force, made up of a workable number of non-politicos, who are given a specific charge to "clean up" the document's language, and have their recommendations made within a designated time frame? Truly, there would be a multitude of details that would need to be worked out. It would be a start. What have we got to lose, except a lot of verbiage and extraneous detail?

For now, we can relax and put the thought of another Constitutional Convention on the back burner for another 20 years. Even if I carry my Mother's longevity gene and live to be 93, I'll not be around when the next vote is taken in 2037. Thank God for small favors.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish each of you a most Joyous and Meaningful Holiday Season. May you and your families be blessed with good health, prosperity and happiness throughout the coming year.

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SPOTLIGHT ON



Charles (Chuck) Peszynski



Chuck is a small man with a quiet and gentle personality. However, his impact on education, NYSRTA, Western Zone, Buffalo Retired Teachers and his community is HUGE.

He attended St. Ann Elementary School and Bishop Ryan High School in Buffalo. His college years were spent at SUNY Buffalo. While there, Chuck earned a BA in history & government and a Master's degree in Social Studies Education. He was also chapter president, state president and northeast regional director of the Newman Foundation.

Chuck worked in the Buffalo Public School system for 35 years. He was also a part time instructor in Human Resources Management and Sociology at Bryant & Stratton Business Institute. During his years of teaching he was social studies department chairman, senior class advisor, computer scheduling coordinator and member of the social studies authorship & text book evaluation committee. Chuck was also active in the Buffalo Teachers Federation, serving as building delegate, delegate chairman and Federation representative to the District planning committee.

After retirement Chuck joined the NYSRTA, Western Zone and Buffalo Retired Teachers. In WZ Chuck has served on the board of directors for the past 13 years. He has served as Newsletter Editor, on the Annual Meeting Committee, 2nd VP, 1st VP and President. Recently he has taken over as chairman of the By-Laws Committee. Chuck has also served on many of the appointed WZ committees. In 2010 he was recognized for his outstanding contributions to WZ by receiving the Citation Award.

As a member of NYSRTA Chuck was VP in charge of Membership form 2005-2008, a member of Ad Hoc Marketing Committee and a member of the Leadership Training Workshop Committee. He has been a delegate to the NYSRTA annual convention for the past 13 years.

Chuck has been a member of Buffalo Retired Teachers (BRTA) since 1999. He has served on the Board of Directors, as 2nd VP, 1st VP, and has served as president since 2015.

He dedicates his life to helping others and is always willing to step up to any and every challenge. WZ is proud of Chuck's dedication and his many accomplishments. We are grateful for this opportunity to spotlight Chuck in Western Currents. He is a small man with a huge heart and a friend to all.

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**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:

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WASHINGTON, DC & SIGHT AND SOUND'S PERFORMANCE "JESUS" June 21-25, 2018

Join Western Zone members and White Star Tours to enjoy a five day trip to Washington, DC and to see the live performance of "JESUS" at the Sight and Sound's Millennium Theatre in Lancaster.

Cost includes: transportation, four nights lodging, four breakfasts, and four dinners, as well as gratuities for meals, guides and bus driver. Participants will enjoy a tram ride at Arlington, Guided Sightseeing Bus Tour, and Visit to seven Memorials, Guided bus tour of illuminated monuments, Smithsonian Institutes, Air & Space Museum, as well as a ticket to "JESUS" and a stop at Flight 93 Memorial, plus much more. The price is **\$694** per person for double occupancy, **\$664** for triple occupancy and **\$923** for single occupancy. Any questions, contact Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or anneflanswz@aol.com OR Betty Browne at 716-207-6152, OR Judy Klug at 716-632-6251. All e-mails and calls will be acknowledged.

Two pickups will be scheduled, and additional information will be provided. Detailed flyers are available upon request. **Optional travel insurance** may be purchased directly through Berkely Insurance at 1-800-388-1470. Choose Option #1, White Star operator #386097. You will be asked your cost of trip. The form will be sent or you can use a credit card to pay.

Please send a **deposit of \$50 per person**, payable to **Western Zone RTA** by or before **February 1, 2018**. (Reservations are accepted in order of date received.) The **balance** for this trip is due by **March 1, 2018**. Send completed form and check to: Betty Browne, 6025 Shore Blvd So. #415, Gulfport, FL 33707-5813.

-----DETACH and send to Betty Browne by or before February 1, 2018 -----

Deposit for WASHINGTON trip and Performance of " JESUS " (June 21-25, 2018)	
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Pickup location preferred (circle one)	Williamsville or Hamburg
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Awards Committee Report by Irine Zinter, Chairman



The Citation Award is given at the Annual Meeting of Western Zone in September. We are pleased to announce members who have shown consistent leadership qualities. The honorees, selected in 2017, are as follows: Betty Browne, Michelle Claus, and Ronald Czapla.

Each received a nomination from a Western Zone member and each completed a profile of his/her accomplishments. The profile is completed by Western Zone members recounting their pre-mid-and post teaching career. The profile has proven to be an excellent resource as it includes first-hand information known only to each individual candidate.

Along with our elected officers, there are committee chairs and members who contribute time and energy to maintain a quality organization. Each of our honorees has participated in one or more of these committees. We congratulate them.

2017 Annual President's Appeal

As of this writing, the Annual President's Appeal continues. Western Zone thanks all members who have made contributions and appeals to those who have not yet contributed to consider a donation.

WZ needs your voluntary contributions in order to:

- ✓ **Offer timely presentations such as the Constitutional Convention workshop.**
- ✓ Provide financial assistance to our needy members
- ✓ Continue the excellent work of the Friendly Service Committee
- ✓ Retain granting incentive awards to active teachers
- ✓ Present informative programs
- ✓ Maintain the publication of three newsletters per year

Should you have any questions regarding this appeal, please contact Doris Kirsch at 585-457-3315 or email her at wdkirsch@gmail.com.

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P.O. Box 922
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Spotlight on (Chuck) Peszynski

Continued from page 2

In the community he has been very involved in the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo serving as Membership Secretary, 2nd VP and member of the Board of Directors. Chuck has chaired the annual installation celebration, program book for the Polonaise Ball, By-Law Revision Committee, and Pulaski Day participation. He has traveled to Poland to teach English to students and adults with POMOST International. Being active in the League of Women voters he has been the lead facilitator for the "Leader Spark" Leadership Training Program and chairman of the By-Laws Revision Committee. Chuck is an usher at Studio Arena Theater and a 4th degree Knights of Columbus.

He met his wonderful wife, Loretta, while they were both teaching Social Studies at Bennett High School. She was as fully involved in education and her community as Chuck is. A small couple with a huge impact on everyone and everything they did. Sadly we lost Loretta last June. Chuck continues to serve WZ, NYSRTA, BRTA, and his community in Loretta's memory.



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July 3rd, 2017, the Buffalo Bisons hosted their annual Independence Eve Celebration at Coca-Cola Field. Among the attendees were 11 year old Ty Barber and 97 year old Richard Snethen. Ty had his baseball mitt and Richard was dressed in his full World War II uniform. They had not met yet.

Between innings, Ty caught a ball from the first baseman. When the game was over, Ty went up to Richard and gave him the baseball he had caught during the game. Ty was not prompted by anyone to do this act of kindness.

Ty told Channel 2, "I'm trying to be a role model and we really have to honor our veterans." Richard recalled later, "one of the treasured moments of my life, to tell you the truth."

Richard and Ty took a picture together and went their separate ways. Richard wrote a poem about that day. The poem is framed next to the ball and his photo with Ty Barber.

Ty and Richard were invited by the Bisons to come back and see a game together. In the middle of the game, the Bisons honored Ty and Richard on the video board in center field as they got a standing ovation.

Richard Snethen is a retired science teacher from the Springville-Griffith Institute Central School District and Ty attends Hamburg Middle School.



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Betty Browne's Health Tip:

ESSENTIAL MEDICAL TESTS

- **HEARING TEST:** If you have trouble hearing what people are saying or the TV is louder, you may have hearing loss and need an audiogram
- **EYE EXAM:** Eyes should be tested every year after the age of 65
- **DENTAL SCREENING:** Twice a year teeth checkups and cleaning should be done
- **HEART HEALTH TEST:** Especially important if you have high blood pressure, are overweight, smokes, or have family heart problems
- **COLONOSCOPY:** Should be done every 5 years, or sooner if there is a problem
- **MAMMOGRAM:** Breast X-ray should be done every year with manual exams done every year by your doctor
- **BONE-MINERAL DENSITY TEST:** Should be done after age 65 or sooner after menopause
- **MOLE SCREENING:** By age 30 you should begin to have annual skin checks. If basal-cell or squamous-cell has been found, you need to be examined twice a year
- **PAP SMEAR:** Your OB-GYN will screen you annually. If you have several normal Pap smears in a row, most doctors will skip a year

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Barbara O'Shea

We Remember the Day of President Kennedy's Assassination

Barbara O'Shea, WZ member and vendor at Annual Luncheon Meeting in Williamsville on September 20th is shown here with a book she recently co-authored titled, *We Remember the Day of President Kennedy's Assassination*. Western Zone retirees contributing articles were Therese Clarke, Michelle Claus, Dennis Priore, Beth Green, Don Flansburg, Audrey Seidel, and Charlotte Lasher.

The book is available at Amazon.

Springville/ West Valley Retired Teachers' Association



Michelle Claus

Our unit had their fall meeting on October 11, 2017, at the Springville Country Club. Menu choices reflected the fall season. The business meeting consisted of discussion of our Holiday Party on December 1st, with Donna Benstead, music teacher at our Springville Elementary School, as the entertainment and the Constitutional Convention vote on November 7th. Our speaker, Ginna O'Leary, a former Buffalo History Teacher, spoke about the various reasons to vote "no". We also started to plan our May 9th, 2018 meeting celebrating all retired teachers that have turned or are turning 80. Balloons as well as cake and memories will be celebrated next meeting. Please plan on attending one of our meetings. Call Michelle Claus at 716-649-3844 to make a reservation.

WESTERN ZONE TO HOST 2018 NYSRTA ANNUAL CONVENTION

October 17 - 19; Turning Stone Resort and Casino, Verona, NY



Each October the New York State Retired Teachers' Association holds its Convention and Annual Business Meeting. Each zone is represented by delegates, the numbers apportioned by the amount of zonal membership. Since Western Zone has the largest membership of the ten zones, it has the greatest representation. This currently approximates 35 delegates. The Annual Meeting is held for the purpose of conducting the business of the organization. The usual business agenda includes the adoption of the NYSRTA budget, election of the state officers, revision of the Bylaws, adoption of pertinent resolutions and filing of the reports of the various Standing Committees and Trusts. This Annual Meeting embodies the governance of NYSRTA and is subject to the standard rules of conducting business.

Held in conjunction with the Annual Business Meeting is the convention which is geared to entertainment, informational programs and social activities. On a rotating basis, a zone is designated as the host of each annual convention. This is the opportunity for the Host Zone to put its own individual stamp and character on the event. The Host Zone decides the theme, selects the Keynote Speaker, and organizes at least five workshops that emphasize the historic, cultural and economic strengths of the area, arranges an

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WESTERN ZONE TO HOST 2018 NYSRTA ANNUAL CONVENTION

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evening of entertainment, features local products and displays anything else that puts the zone in the limelight.

Western Zone will be the Host Zone in 2018. We are already well underway in making our plans and preparations. Our theme will be "Best in the West". Michelle Claus and Doris Kirsch are Co-Chairs of the whole event. Chairperson Beth Green, and her Workshop Committee, have already confirmed a Keynote Speaker, six workshop presenters and an evening of entertainment that will test the participants' knowledge of trivia. Several other sub-committees are working on the myriad of other details that need to be put in place. It is our intent to present Western NY at its very best, show casing the diversity that exists throughout the counties in our zone (Niagara, Erie, Genesee, Chautauqua, and Cattaraugus). You will receive updates of our plans and progress as the convention nears. There may well be a time when we will ask for your input and help, particularly through your units. It is our goal to sponsor a vibrant and meaningful convention, sending the 2018 attendees home with the feeling that the "Best" really does come from the West.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE!



Do you know of a retired educator or spouse of a retired educator, who is experiencing difficulty in meeting the increased daily expenses of everyday living, and has a need for financial assistance in paying fuel, medical, dental, homecare or other bills? Or, do you find yourself in such a situation? **There is assistance available!** In memory of the first President, Robert R. DeCormier of the New York State Retired Teachers' Association, NYSRTA established a fund that continues to provide financial aid to retired members and spousal members, who are facing this dilemma. In some cases, a monthly stipend is granted, which enables an individual to continue to meet the daily expenses of living. In other instances, a "special grant" is given that provides coverage for an unexpected financial burden.

Western Zone contributes annually to this Fund, in memory of the deceased members of our organization. If you know anyone that is a member of NYSRTA, and **is in need of financial assistance**, or **for additional information**, please contact Anne Flansburg at [716-863-3631](tel:716-863-3631). You may also download an application and/or learn more about the fund at www.nysrta.org. On the home page, click on "membership" and then "financial assistance". Please share this information with others who may not be familiar with this valuable resource.

Contributions to the Robert R DeCormier Fund are deeply appreciated. You may do so in memory of a deceased individual, or in honor of a special person or event, or as your donation to help support this very worthwhile fund. Especially during this season of "giving" we ask that you "give" to assist retired educators in financial need. The Trust is incorporated, and the IRS recognizes it as an independent 501(c)(3) nontaxable entity, hence contributions are tax deductible. Acknowledgement is sent to the donor, as well as to the individual or family who is being remembered.

Please send a check, made out to the DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund to: David Mapes, Treasurer, DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund, 6163 Vista Hill, Dansville, NY 14427. Be sure to include your name and address, as well as the individual to whom you wish the notification be sent, including his/her name and address. Every donation, large or small, is deeply appreciated, and it is a way to memorialize or honor a friend or family member. Your donation helps make a difference in the life of a needy colleague!

Western Zone—NYSRTA

P.O. Box 922

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HAPPY
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Do you know someone who is **NOT** a member of Western Zone? Encourage them to join or ask questions by calling... Ann Marie Wik at 716-228-2414 or email: amwik@rochester.rr.com Membership Secretary-Western Zone.

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