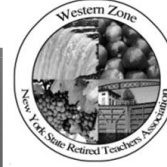




WESTERN CURRENTS



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

Volume 17, Number 1

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Winter 2018

President's Message



Greetings and Happy Holidays fellow NYSRTA members from Al Marabella (me), your new President. I thank you for trusting me with this most responsible position. It will be difficult to follow Doris Kirsch as she is a most diligent worker at any position she has occupied. But I'll try.

As you may know, the Western Zone of NYSRTA was responsible for organizing the state annual convention at Turning Stone Resort and Casino. This responsibility falls to WZ every 10 years. All state zones were present. The committee headed by Michelle Claus planned and executed the conference to the much deserved praise of those who attended. Here are some of the activities she and her committee were responsible for:

1. Offering assistance to delegates upon arrival and during the conference for rooms, activities, etc.
 2. Organizing agendas for meetings and meals (Meals were outstanding)
 3. Scheduling and staffing 10 morning sessions for delegates to attend. They included
 - a. Presentation by the Teachers' Retirement System.
 - b. Sessions about Western New York: Made in America, National Comedy Club, Buffalo Story (History), and 7 more just as interesting
 4. In the meantime Sandy Kelley was running the Basket Raffle with committee help.
 5. Did I say Judy Farmer set up a cocktail party?
- The afternoon business meeting was the state's responsibility.

The conference dinner and Trivia Contest to conclude the day's events were chaired by Beth Green, not to mention the table center pieces were baskets of WZ local

products with Audrey Seidel and Nancy White finding winners at each table.

Just a great job by all and many unmentioned must be wholeheartedly thanked for their efforts.

I'm assuming that readers are aware that increasing membership and keeping those already members is our most pressing concern. At the state level new President, Kevin Mulligan, is planning a market media blitz to increase membership by highlighting what NYSRTA has accomplished for retired teachers in the past.

1. Bringing the COLA at for some \$400 increase over the years
2. Getting the legislature to guarantee benefits given to retirees as a lifetime award with no alterations.
3. Defeating the option of having a Constitutional Convention that could change the pensions at the state level
4. Advocating for retirees, the only group that NYSRTA represents.

There is strength in numbers. The more retirees who belong to NYSRTA the stronger the voice it has to advocate for them.

I will be asking the units to personally contact those new retirees and those former retirees who are not members of NYSRTA. It's always nice to be asked personally by a friend or a fellow retiree. I would ask the membership chair in each unit to make this method as the primary means of contact for new retirees.

After our November meeting you may be receiving a form covering health insurance that the state is requesting. This will be distributed at the November meeting to Unit Presidents for distribution to members.

Please help in any way you can to solicit members.

Respectfully,
Al Marabella

**WESTERN ZONE
OFFICERS
2018-2019**

Elected Officers

President

Alphonse Marabella

1st Vice President

Judy F. Farmer

2nd Vice President

Michelle L. Claus

Treasurer

Don E. Lawrence

Recording Secretary

Audrey M. Seidel

Corresponding Secretary

Nancy White

Membership Secretary

Vacant

Past President

Doris R. Kirsch

At Large Directors

Term Expiring 2019

Betty P. Browne

Ronald A. Czapla

Elizabeth Egan

Anne G. Flansburg

Thomas A. Giambra

Beth Green

Maria Hager

Sandra W. Kelley

Suzanne Lach

Alphonse Marabella

Robert J. Metz

Marie Gerace Zafron

Term Expiring 2020

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Laura Fiorotto

Doris R. Kirsch

Don E. Lawrence

William D. Loockerman

Gail A. Niparts

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Theresa E. Pope

Marilyn Stephens

Marilyn K. Tota

Term Expiring 2021

Gary Beuth

June Beuth

Elaine DeLisle

Russell M. Gervasi

Patricia Keller

Judith A. Klug

Sara Rodland

Dolores A. Scanlon

Audrey M. Seidel

Nancy White

Ann Marie Wik

Irine D. Zinter

SPOTLIGHT ON



Anne Flansburg



Who is Anne Flansburg? Some would answer: She's the tall one who is kind and generous (to a fault) & friendly & hard working and much more. In our zone and the state organization she has always accepted whatever assignment that has been asked of her.

Anne's teaching career spans over 30 years. She started as a Math teacher at Lafayette high School in Buffalo. Her ability to organize was well recognized. She helped to raise funds for student activities. From there she went to Performing Arts and helped to establish a program in Math at U.B. for gifted and talented. But it was at Seneca Vocational where her career expanded into an assistant principal's role and finally as Principal of Seneca from where she retired.

She did not stop her activities however. In 1998 she joined the Western Zone of NYSRTA where she was chair of several committees at one time or another. Among others, she was chair of membership (a most important committee), remembrance committee (which commemorates deceased members), and travel (which she still heads). She was also nominated and elected to the position of Vice President and President of our Western Zone. She presently heads the DeCormier Trust which gives financial aid to retired teachers in need of monetary assistance to cover unexpected costs, e.g. new roof, unforeseen medical costs and the like.

We could also call her a patron of the arts, supporting the Kavinoky Theater and volunteering at Studio Arena, Artpark, and Shea's. She has been a volunteer tutor and Amherst Youth Board volunteer. She has hosted students from Switzerland, Japan and Russia.

Most of what is written concerned the local level of activity. But Anne has also participated in the state level of NYSRTA. She worked on committees who award certificates of honor at the state convention every October. As vice-chairman of membership, she has been tireless in striving to increase the membership in NYSRTA and members are the lifeblood of the organization.

All in all a pretty active woman and one who does not seek the limelight but deserves the admiration of all that know her and recognition for what she does.

**DIRECTORS/AREA
UNIT PRESIDENTS**

AMHERST

Joseph A. Podgorski

BUFFALO

Charles Peszynski

CHAUTAUQUA SOUTH

Nancy Anderson

EASTERN ERIE

Judy F. Farmer

GENESEE

James Owen

KENMORE

Mary Ann Kermis

LACKAWANNA

Tina Gambino

LANCASTER/DEPEW

Karen Gembar

NIAGARA EAST

Sandy W. Kelley

SPRINGVILLE GRIFFITH

INSTITUTE

Michelle L. Claus

WEST SENECA

Patricia W. Miceli

WILLIAMSVILLE

Therese C. Clarke

**Questions and/or comments may be forwarded to our Zone President,
Alphonse Marabella (716) 635-9530 or almarbs@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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Embrace Aging.

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.

Presbyterian Village at North Church, 214 Village Park Drive, Williamsville, NY 14221 • 716-631-3430

Lockport Presbyterian Home, 305-327 High Street, Lockport, NY 14094 • 716-434-8805

Ken-Ton Presbyterian Village, 3735 Delaware Ave., Kenmore, NY 14217 • 716-874-6070



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Betty Browne's Health Tip

Do You Need a Hearing Test?

This article was written by Dr. Burkey and appeared in the "Bottom Line Health" Publication. It contains good advice for everyone and especially retirees. If you have not had a hearing test recently, please consider getting one.

"The American Speech, Language and Hearing Association recommends a hearing test every 10 years for adults up to age 50 and every three years thereafter. A hearing test may be recommended sooner if you or your family are worried about your hearing loss; you have family history of hearing loss; you have a loud hobby, such as wood working or recreational shooting; and/or you work in an environment with loud music or noise. Hearing tests can be performed by an audiologist (specialist in hearing disorders) or an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor. Some insurance plans cover hearing test. Check with your provider.

Important: Tinnitus, random ringing or chirping in the ears when there is no actual sound, is often a sign of impending hearing loss. People who experience this condition should consider getting their hearing tested.

ENCRTA Fall Luncheon



Eastern Niagara County Retired Teachers Association had their fall luncheon on **Thursday, Oct. 11**, at the Lockport Town and Country Club with 55 members present. The Annual Basket Raffle netted over \$500.00 for our Scholarship Fund which awards scholarships to high school seniors from the six area school districts entering into the field of education. Members generously donated 44 baskets to this worthwhile community service project. Donations of socks for "Socktoberfest" and women's toiletries for the Lockport YWCA Women's Shelter were also collected. Donald Metz was welcomed as the new treasurer. Judy Schultz and Ginny Piskorowski were also welcomed as new Scholarship chair persons. Thanks were given to retiring treasurer, Patrick Kennedy and retiring Scholarship chairmen, George and Phyllis McKinney. Past Presidents of ENCRTA were also recognized.

Dr. Anna Barrett and Julie Shiavone, educators from Lockport School District presented a very inspiring and informative program on Global Partnerships, Inc., focusing on building communities, one child at a time. They shared slides and stories of their journey to Ghana. They, along with other teachers and students, have traveled to Ghana the past two springs to help the women and children of a small island village. Last year they helped finance the digging of a well, did teaching and teacher development at the school as well as take shoes and supplies for the students. The ENCRTA members were very generous in their donations to assist Dr. Barrett in the April 2019 trip to Ghana. This year they plan to build Latrines for the community of Azizakpe.



7-NIGHT CANADA & NEW ENGLAND CRUISE

September 22-29, 2019

Western Zone travel group members, under the direction of White Star Tours, are making plans with Norwegian Cruise Line for a seven night Canada and New England Cruise. Plan on joining us! IF you don't have a passport, apply for one today, as a **VALID PASSPORT IS REQUIRED**. If you must apply for a passport, send deposit, then verify with tour leader Betty Browne when the passport is received, should there be a difference in the way your name appears on the passport.

Cost covers: air-conditioned cabin with private shower and toilet, all meals on board the **NORWEGIAN ESCAPE**, morning and afternoon snacks, services of a cruise director, cabin steward, health and fitness center, nightly entertainment, Las Vegas style casino, swimming pool and sporting activities, room service available, port taxes, and round trip bus transfers to New York City Pier transportation. Optional shore excursions will be available at an additional cost.

DAY	PORT OF CALL	Arrive	Depart
Sunday	New York, NY		4:00 PM
Monday	At Sea		
Tuesday	Portland, ME	8:00 AM	5:00 PM
Wednesday	Bar Harbor, ME	8:00 AM	5:00 PM
Thursday	St. John, Bay of Fundy	7:00 AM	4:00 PM
Friday	Halifax, Nova Scotia	10:00 AM	8:00 PM
Saturday	At Sea		
Sunday	New York, NY	7:00 AM	

The price is \$1,369 for Inside Category IB (inside cabin) or \$1,669 for Balcony Category BB (balcony cabin) per person for double occupancy. Single occupancy price is \$2,099 (IB) and \$2,699 (BB). Triples are based on availability, with first two individuals paying regular price and third person paying \$959 less.

Two pickups for the initial destination of New York City will be scheduled, one in Williams-ville and one in Hamburg. Detailed flyers and reservation forms are available upon request from Betty Browne or Anne Flansburg, and also will be sent via e-mail. **Travel insurance** may be purchased from **National Tour Association**, and travel insurance protection is strongly encouraged.

The deadline for a **deposit of \$250 per person**, payable to: **Western Zone RTA**, is **March 20, 2019**. **For a reservation and registration form, or for additional information, please contact:** Betty Browne at 716-207-6152 or Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or anneflanswz@aol.com.

All e-mails and calls will be acknowledged.

DEPOSIT due by or before 3/20/19

BALANCE due by or before 5/29/19

Reserve quickly. We anticipate a sellout, and have a limited number of reserved cabins!

SAVANNAH, JEKYLL ISLAND, & BEAUFORT, SC TRIP

May 19-25, 2019

Join Western Zone members and Diamond Tours on a six night trip to Savannah, Jekyll Island, & Beaufort, SC., May 19-25, 2019. The price is \$699 per person for double occupancy, \$679 for triple occupancy and \$953 for single occupancy. Any questions, contact Judy Klug at 716-406-9885 or Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or anneflanswz@aol.com.

Cost includes: transportation, six nights lodging including four consecutive nights in the Savannah area, six breakfasts, and four dinners, as well as gratuities for meals, guides and bus driver. Participants will visit the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, PA, then continue the journey that will begin with a GUIDED TROLLEY TOUR OF SAVANNAH. See the sights while enjoying a GUIDED TOUR OF ST. SIMONS, as well as a GUIDED TRAM TOUR OF JEKYLL ISLAND, and enjoy an evening show at the Famous Savannah Theater. Tour Beaufort, SC – “Queen of the Carolina Sea Islands”, as well as the PARRIS ISLAND MARINE BASE, Field, and Museum, and much more! (MARINE base visitors MUST supply birthdate and gender, and also have identification). All e-mails and calls will be acknowledged. This trip requires a minimum to moderate amount of walking.

NOVEMBER 1 CELEBRATION

On November 1, 2018, at the Kirsch Kabin, we celebrated our past president of four years and the people that were willing to accept elected zone officer positions in the Western Zone. We also welcomed the new President of the Western Zone, Al Marabella. Pictured below are some of the attendees.



Judy and Jack Farmer, Mary Agnes and Al Marabella, Miriam and Don Lawrence, and Maria Hager.



Steve and Nancy White, Joe and Michelle Claus, Dick and Elaine DeLisle, Mary Simons, Linda Norton, and Doris Kirsch

Reporting the Western Zone Annual Meeting

by Patricia Keller

Western Zone celebrated 69 years of supporting retired educators on September 19, 2018 at Salvatore's Italian Gardens.

More than 30 vendors attended this meeting, interacting with WZ members about their businesses. At the end of the meeting, these vendors presented gift certificates or baskets to lucky retired members.

The keynote speaker was Steven Kramer, who spoke on "Legal Concern of Seniors". Kramer's recommendations were:

- (1) have a health care proxy
- (2) have a power of attorney
- (3) have a last will and testament

Citation Awards were given to Beth Green, Mary V. O'Leary, Theresa Pope, and Audrey Seidel. These awards are given to members who have shown outstanding leadership, service, participation and contributions to their local unit, community, and Western Zone.



Pictured left to right: Beth Green, Mary O'Leary, Theresa Pope, and Audrey Seidel

The "highlight" of the meeting was the dedication to Doris R. Kirsch. Doris graduated from SUNY Brockport with Summa Cum Laude honors. She began her teaching career in Holland Central Schools, and continued to teach for 33 years 7th grade Social Studies. After retirement, Doris became active in Western Zone Retired Teachers' Association, serving on committees, Recording Secretary, 2nd Vice President, and current President for four years. She served as Eastern Erie Unit President for 10 years. She has been recognized with two State and Zone awards: Certificate of Recognition (2015) and the Citation Award (2007). Doris has served as the host zone committee co-chair for NYSRTA Annual State Convention held at Turning Stone, October 17-19, 2018. Our theme was "Best in the West".



2018 Annual President's Appeal

As of this writing, the 2018 Annual President's Appeal begins. 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 Al Marabella at (716) 635-9530 or e-mail almarbs@gmail.com

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

Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____ E-Mail _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Local Unit _____ (if applicable)
Donation Amount: _____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$30 _____ \$50 _____ Other _____
Please make checks payable to:

**Western Zone-NYSRTA
P.O. Box 922
Williamsville, NY 14231**

Tis the season for celebration and giving!



The Springville / West Valley RTA is having their Holiday Party on December 7th, at 5 PM, at the Springville Country Club. Music provided by Charlie Porter and Lydia Herren, Springville graduates. A basket raffle, gift certificate drawing, and 50/50 split club drawing will support our 2 educational scholarships. The two scholarships are maintained by, the first scholarship, the retired teachers; and the second one, is given by the retired teachers and the active teachers (SFA).

Donations of toiletries and new socks are collected and given to the needy in our community and The Children's League.

We invite all to attend our Holiday Party. The cost is \$25 for the buffet. Information and reservations, call Michelle Claus, 716-649-3844.

NYSRTA Health Insurance Survey

- I. The purpose of this survey is to gather information from NYSRTA Zones and Units on managed school district(s) health care plans offered to retired educators. The information gathered from this survey will be critical in formulating a network of information for NYSRTA members across New York State. With the ever increasing costs of health insurance, it is imperative that we, the retired health insurance recipient, keep current with how our health insurance is managed.

It is hoped that the information initially gathered from this survey will establish a network for information to be periodically posted on the NYSRTA web site, as well as in York State, Zone and Unit newsletters would be another useful tool for keeping members informed of their retired health insurance benefits.

- II. Directions: Zone/Unit Presidents and Zone/Unit Health Care Program Chairperson(s) are asked to complete and /or distribute this survey to those Zone and/or Unit members who have a good working knowledge of their managed health care plan. Please return all completed surveys by December 15, 2018 to the attention of Kevin Mulligan, President of NYSRTA at 8 Airport Park Boulevard, Latham, NY 12110-6414.**

Name _____

Position in NYSRTA _____

Question #1. What Zone and/or Unit do you belong to? _____

Question #2. As a retiree do you have school district provided health Insurance? _____

Question #3. **IF YES** – Did the school district health insurance plan provide coverage for you before you became Medicare Eligible? _____

IF YES – Did the school district health insurance plan provide coverage for you after you became Medicare Eligible? _____

Question #4. Who manages your school district health insurance plan? _____

Example: In Northeastern Zone there are 17 school districts with the same health insurance plan(s). The 17 school districts belong to The Clinton, Essex, Warren and Washington BOCES Consortium which manages the Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthcare Plan. So NEZ answer

Is **CEWW BOCES Consortium**.

Question #5. Who in your Unit or Zone has a good working knowledge of your school district provided health insurance plan(s) as provided in answer to Question # 4. Please provide name or names, e-mail address(s) and phone number(s). It is hoped that the names provided to question #5 will make up the network of information specialists we are seeking for NYSRTA.

Name _____

Zone and/or Unit _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone #(s) _____

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this request. Should NYSRTA truly wish to serve retired educators we need to focus our attention to health insurance.

Kevin R. Mulligan – President of NYSRTA

Western Zone—NYSRTA

P.O. Box 922

Williamsville, NY 14231-0922

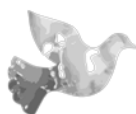
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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

Judy Farmer was awarded the Certificate of Recognition for Distinguished Service at the NYSRTA Convention in September. Judy serves EERTA as President, was just elected 1st VP of Western Zone, and is the Secretary of the State Organization along with multiple community and church leadership positions - family obligations. It is a well-deserved honor. We are very proud of Judy!

CONGRATULATIONS

Western Zone members are very happy to congratulate and support the newly elected officers of the NYSRTA Board of Directors.

The officers, elected at the October annual meeting of NYSRTA include: Kevin Mulligan – President, Senior Vice President - James Newell, Vice President for Friendly Service – Judith Corigliano, Vice President for Legislative Action – Gary Germain, Vice President for Membership – Lois Thornberg, Secretary – Judy Farmer, and Treasurer – President Emeritus Terry M. Trudeau.

President Mulligan, in his acceptance speech, stated that health care protection, as well as concerns and initiatives regarding health care for retirees will be a primary focus during his term as President. Many members of Western Zone have been negatively affected by changes made by a local Board of Education ruling that will alter retiree health benefits and coverage, and we anticipate NYSRTA support in reclaiming those benefits.

Sincere thanks are extended to Immediate Past President Angelo Grande and members of his Executive Board, who provided leadership and dedication during the last three years. Western Zone is especially proud that one of our members, Judy Farmer, was reelected as Secretary of NYSRTA, and congratulates her on a job well done!