



RENY
RETIREDCEDUCATORS OF NY

WESTERN CURRENTS

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

Volume 18, Number 3

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Summer 2020



President's Message

Life has certainly changed since my last article. It is my sincere hope that in spite of all that has occurred

in our world, each of you have survived without serious complications. You have been foremost in our thoughts and actions.

Your Board of Directors has not held a meeting since December 2019, but we have stayed in contact and have made every effort to continue our mission to serve you. The decision has been made to postpone the Western Zone Annual Meeting, which was scheduled for September 16, 2020 at Salvatore's. We want to do our part to keep our members safe and healthy. All business: elections, reports, awards, etc., for 2020 and 2021 will be conducted at the Western Zone 2021 Annual Meeting.

As per our constitution, the current officers will remain in their positions until such time as an election can be held. All Committee chairpersons will also remain in their positions. Your Board of

Directors will insure that a budget for 2021 is in place.

Unfortunately, many of our committees have been unable to meet. They will resume their functions as soon as possible. But, thankfully, the Friendly Service Committee and the DeCormier Fund have been able to continue to give support and financial aid to our members in need.

Since I also serve as the Secretary of RENY, Western Zone has been represented at the RENY Board of Directors' meetings by our Second Vice-president, Michelle Claus. Those meetings have been held via teleconference in April, June, and July. The RENY Annual Meeting and Conference, which was scheduled for October 2020, has been postponed.

We are doing our best to keep Western Zone functioning while keeping you safe.

WZ President,

Judith Farmer

WesternZoneRENY@gmail.com

MEMORIALS

Charles T. Peszynski

December 18, 1941 – April 14, 2020



Western Zone Officers

President

Judith F. Farmer

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2nd Vice President

Michelle Claus

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Recording Secretary

Audrey Seidel

Corresponding Secretary

Nancy White

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Karen Gembar

Past President

Alphonse Marabella

Charles T. Peszynski, a beloved Western Zone member, was active on the State, Zone and Unit level. His dedication to the cause of retired educators will long be remembered and appreciated.

On the State level, Chuck served as Membership Chairman and State Bylaws Chairman, as well as advisor on the State Resolutions Committee. His background as a Social Studies teacher enabled him to review changing rules and to apply them to the present.

He hosted leadership seminars in Western Zone, and served as President from 2011-2014. Chuck was involved in many activities, and was Chairman of WZ Bylaws Committee. He was a member of several zone committees, including the Teacher Grant, Health Insurance, Nomination and Scholarship Grant.

Chuck also served as President of his local unit, the Buffalo Retired Association (BRTA), of which he was an active member.

His dedication extended to the community serving as President of the Polish Arts Club of Buffalo (PACB). He enjoyed music and singing, as well as hunting and fishing, and served as a leader for the Studio Arena Theatre in Buffalo for many years.

Chuck received the State Certificate of Recognition in 2013, and the Western Zone Citation Award in 2009. His warmth, dedication, and friendship will live on and influence many in the years ahead. Western Zone members mourn the loss of Charles Peszynski, and are grateful for his many contributions to NYSRTA, Western Zone, Buffalo Retired Teachers, and his community.

Zone Unit Presidents

Amherst RTA

Joseph Podgorski

Buffalo RTA

Tom Giambra

Eastern Erie RTA

Judy Farmer

Genesee RTA

James Owen

Kenmore RTA

Joan Costello

Lackawanna RTA

Tina Gambino

Lancaster/Depew RTA

Karen Gembar

Eastern Niagara RTA

Sandy Kelley

Springville/West Valley RTA

Michelle Claus

West Seneca RTA

Patricia Miceli

Williamsville RTA

Therese Clarke

- Continued page 3 -

Questions and/or comments may be forwarded to our Zone President,
Judy Farmer (716) 652-9210 or jfarmer2@rochester.rr.com

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

Michelle L. Claus, Advertising
(716) 649-3844

Diane Brady, Layout
(716) 496-5390

Memorials

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Memorial for Linda J. Schumacher

April 2, 1943- June 11, 2020

It is said that “life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the number of moments that take our breath away”. Linda Schumacher, a Western Zone Board of Director for many years, and an honorary member since 2011, certainly had a life filled with, and shared with others, innumerable breath-taking moments! Her service and dedication have been an influence on countless teachers, students and many cherished friends.

Linda attended SUNY Cortland College, earning her Bachelor’s Degree in Physical Education and then her Master’s in Special Education from SUNY Buffalo State College. She was a physical education teacher at Springville-Griffith Institute CSD, where she co-founded the SWAT Team (Springville Waves Aquatic Team), served as basketball and swimming coach, and filled in wherever and whenever she was needed. Upon her retirement, she joined her local retiree unit and the New York State Retired Teachers’ Association.

Almost immediately, Linda began her second active career as a “retired teacher”, again with innumerable breath-taking moments! She accepted the position of secretary for her local, and was elected a Board member of her zone. On the zone level, she served three years as corresponding secretary and another three years as recording secretary. She was a member of various committees, including Membership, Friendly Service, Community Service, Annual Convention and Remembrance. In 2008 Linda, together with two other Western Zone members, received a prestigious award and National Recognition for her outstanding volunteer service. The National Retired Educational Association and AARP honored her dedication and service, as well as her leadership in Western Zone’s Community Service efforts and accomplishments.

Linda and her husband Dave (who passed away in 2009) met at the Erie County Fair, where their love of horses brought them together. Later, together with their two daughters, they cared for horses on their one hundred acre horse farm, and even after his death she took care of the horses on a daily basis. In 2011 Linda went to live with her daughter in South Carolina and became an honorary board of director for Western Zone. Linda was known and will always be remembered for her smile, kind words and favorite expression, “okey-dokey”. Her breath-taking moments filled all who were fortunate enough to cross her path, with peace and happiness!

UNITS PROVIDE RECOGNITION TO HS SENIORS AND HELP THEIR COMMUNITIES

Western Zone supports educators, active and retired, students, and our communities. Units raise money to support the senior scholarships in their respective districts. Scholarships are financial awards to further their education. They are awarded based upon each unit's criteria. The scholarship is given for a reason, usually academic, and/or agreeing to follow a teaching career.

Members of Western Zone are proud to support high school graduates that have chosen the field of education. They have that twinkle in their eye when speaking about education.

Award money is not repaid and has been raised by the members of the unit. We pass that love of teaching torch to the bright students that want to be lifelong learners and teachers.

"Teachers teach because they care. It requires long hours, patience, and care," a quote from Horace Mann, public education promoter during his lifetime. This has been clearly evident during the last few months of this school year.

Below are the recipients of the 2020 scholarships and their respective school districts.

- The Buffalo Retired Teachers Association (BRTA) presently does not have this information available.
- The Buffalo Retired Administrators Association (BRAA) presently does not have this information available.
- The Eastern Erie (EERTA) unit has given more than \$55,000 in four districts since inception. Starting in 1994, the scholarship amount was \$100 each, it is now \$700 per recipient.
 - Izabella Riccione - Alden
 - James Hasselbeck - East Aurora
 - Mackenzie Morgan - Holland
 - Daniel Schiffhauer – Iroquois
 - Abigail Pruetz – Amelia Szymanski Memorial Scholarship (administered by EERTA)
- The Genesee County unit awarded one \$500 scholarship this year. The name is not available at this time.
- Lackawanna RTA awarded two \$1000 scholarships to the following:
 - Kelci Kolodziej
 - Adam Tarnowski
- Eastern Niagara RTA gives \$500 to one graduating senior of each of the six school districts. The recipients are as follows:
 - Christian McGee – Barker
 - Heather Chatt – Lockport
 - Madeleine Myers – Newfane
 - Danielle Guinn – Royalton Hartland
 - Grace Vieaux – Starpoint
 - Anna Stevenson – Wilson

- Springville / West Valley RTA gives two scholarships. One scholarship is for \$1000 to a senior whose career is in education. The second scholarship is funded by the active teachers and the retired teachers. This scholarship is \$1000 also.
 - Samantha Yetter
 - Jesse Fisher

All of our units support their schools, educators, students, retirees, and communities. Our members donate, volunteer, and care for each other. Below are some units and their unique ways to serve and care for their community.

- ❖ Kenmore REA members volunteer in the schools including the area colleges. They volunteer with Meals on Wheels, The City Mission, Salvation Army, Goodwill, and Hospice to name a few. These members have a commitment to lifelong learning through travel and other various avenues. Luncheons are twice a year and welcome new members at these meetings.
- ❖ Genesee County RTA members donate and participate in 50/50 split clubs to raise money for the scholarship they give each year. A charity group is selected yearly with donations being collected and delivered.
- ❖ Amherst RTA donates to the Amherst Central Alumni Association for teacher driven projects.
- ❖ Eastern Erie RTA funds their scholarships through donations and 50/50 raffles. Community service projects include collecting books for children, non-perishable food, toiletries, socks, and items for nursing homes to give as prizes to residents playing games.
- ❖ West Seneca RTA collects canned goods and non-perishable food to the area Food Bank.
- ❖ Eastern Niagara County RTA has a basket raffle and 50/50 split club to help support their scholarships. Unit members also make generous donations during the year. Community service projects include Project Flight collection of new books for children, women's toiletries for the Lockport Women's Shelter, and used eyeglasses for the Lion's Club. They also participate in the "Socktober" project and donate annually to the DeCormier fund as well as Sister Mary Loretto's Memorial Soup Kitchen.
- ❖ Williamsville RTA members contribute to the Williamsville Education Foundation, an organization that grants special project funds to active district teachers.

Eastern Erie Retired Teachers' Report

The Eastern Erie Retired Teachers held their latest meeting on February 11, 2020 at The Columns Banquet Facility in Elma, New York. We had about 30 members in attendance. The May meeting was to be our election meeting, but of course, we had to cancel due to Covid-19. All current officers remain in place until we are able to meet again and conduct business. I am happy to report that, in spite of the restrictions and social distancing, our Scholarship Committee found a way to choose recipients and get the awards to the school districts we represent. EERTA anticipates being able to have our fall meeting on October 7, 2020. All the plans are in place. We, like many others, have our fingers crossed.

ROBERT R. DECORMIER MEMORIAL TRUST FUND

The recent Coronavirus Outbreak may impact the financial stability and cause additional expenses for many people. Do you know any ZONE member that has been impacted by this virus or for any other reason is in need of financial assistance? Assistance can be given for a long term need or perhaps for an unexpected financial difficulty. PLEASE refer them to the DeCormier Trust, as we have funds available to assist. Money has been given to members for unplanned expenses, such as: dental work, hearing aids, heating bills, roof repair, house maintenance, health bills and other such needs. The money given is a grant, and no reimbursement is ever requested nor expected from the individual applying.

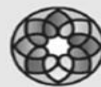
The DeCormier Trust has funds available. You or the individual may download an application from the RENY website (<https://retirededucatorsny.org>), listed under DeCormier Trust or under “financial need”. For additional information, or to request an application, please have the individual or yourself contact Anne Flansburg at [716-863-3631](tel:716-863-3631), or at anneflanswz@aol.com.



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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WESTERN ZONE 2020 TRIPS

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the safety of our members as well as in the interest of public health, we have CANCELLED the **New York City/Esther** and the **Hills Are Alive** planned 2020 trips. Deposits and payments, as well as any insurance that was purchased, have been refunded.

The trips were organized and had memorable experiences planned, and we know that many people were disappointed. The safety and well-being of our members and their loved ones who join us on our Western Zone trips has always been and continues to be of primary concern to the three group leaders and to the tour companies we use. Travel creates memories that last a lifetime, and we are sharing good news! **The Hills Are Alive Trip is rescheduled for September 27 – October 1, 2021**, and the price will remain the same. Details and reservations will be shared in a few months, but reserve those dates on your calendar!

Betty Browne, Anne Flansburg, and Judy Klug

Nominations Committee Update

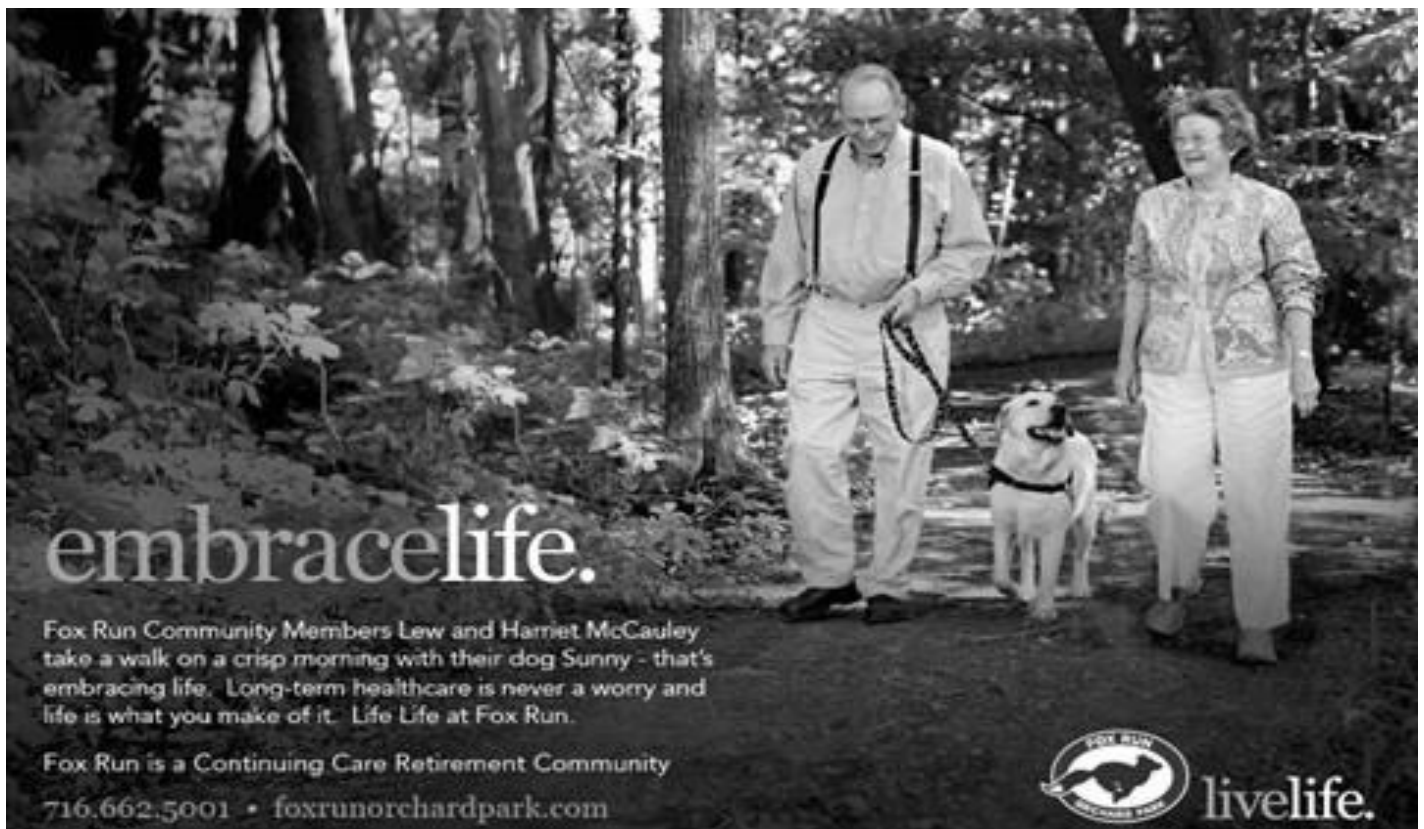
Due to the coronavirus necessitating the postponement of Western Zone's annual meeting to 2021, changes will occur regarding the election of officers and the Board of Directors.

Officers will be elected by the Directors as soon as circumstances allow for a safe WZ meeting. The nominated candidates are:

President:	Judith Farmer
1 st Vice Pres.:	Doris Kirsch
2 nd Vice Pres.:	Michelle Claus
Treasurer:	Don Lawrence
Recording Sec.:	Audrey Seidel
Corresponding Sec.:	Nancy White
Membership Sec.:	Karen Gembar
Past President:	Alphonse Marabella

The election of Directors will be conducted during the Annual business meeting to be held in September of 2021. The Current 2020 Directors are: Georgann Bemis, John Cardarella, Laura Fiorotto, Doris Kirsch, Don Lawrence, Gail Niparts, Stanley Nowak, Mary O'Leary, Theresa Pope, Marilyn Stephens, and Marilyn Tota who will continue to serve until the 2021 election takes place.


We are always in need of interested members to serve on committees and in leadership positions. Should you have any questions regarding these important matters, please contact Ginna O'Leary at: www.golry.72x@gmail.com



embracelife.

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Eastern Niagara County Retired Teachers

by Sandy Kelley, President

Due the COVID-19 virus and the many restrictions put in place by NY State our May & July Unit meetings were postponed. Our May speaker, Karen Wielinski has kindly consented to do her program at our October 8, 2020 meeting. Karen's Clarence home was destroyed in the Colgan Air Flight 3407 crash in 2009. She has written a book entitled "One on the Ground" in memory of her husband who was killed while in their home. Karen related what it was like the night of the crash and how she and her daughter miraculously got out of the rubble unharmed. The book also documents the years following the crash. She has emerged from this tragedy and is an inspiration to all who hear her story. Hopefully, we will be able to meet in October as planned. Our July speaker, John Baronich has consented to do his program, "Freedom to Paddle", an interesting slide show of his Erie Canal adventure, paddling his canoe from Buffalo to Albany as the fur trader, Jacques, at one of our 2021 meetings.

Thanks to the diligent work by our Scholarship Committee Chairs, Judy Schultz and Ginny Piskorowski, we were able to award our six \$500.00 scholarships to seniors from the six school districts represented in our Unit. These deserving individuals will be pursuing a career in education. Many thanks to our Unit members who have donated to the Scholarship fund during the last year, whether it be donating baskets for our annual Basket Raffle, attending our meetings or making a generous monetary contribution. Without your help we could not continue this very worthwhile project.

Congratulation letters and an invitation to join ENCRTA at our fall luncheon were sent to all 2020 retirees from our six school districts as well as Orleans/Niagara BOCES and DeSales Catholic.

We would welcome any RENY /WZ members who live in Niagara County to join our Unit and share in our Community Service endeavors as well as enjoy the inspiring and interesting programs. Our Unit dues are \$15.00 annually. For more information or to be included on the Unit's mailing list, please email me at rlkelley48@gmail.com or call at (716)830-9569.

Please stay safe, wear your masks and practice social distancing so we can get back to our regular activities and meetings. I found this saying by Jane Lee Logan, and thought it was very appropriate for these difficult times.

"Never Lose Hope"

"The Butterfly is proof that beauty can emerge from something completely falling apart"

Amherst Retired Teachers' Report

Amherst RTA Newsletter Chair, Laura Loehr, sent their spring newsletter by email only, as their board could not meet to put it together for mailing. They had to cancel their spring meeting, which had been planned as a brunch to see if that type of meeting would attract more interest



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Williamsville Association of Retired Teachers (W.A.R.T.S)

A message from your officers

Once the “New York Pause” was declared, restaurants were closed indefinitely, and group events were no longer permitted, we quickly realized any WARTS gathering would not be on the horizon. Not being able to get together certainly weakens our organization, but we look forward to coming back stronger than ever.

As everyone seems to be saying, we, too, encourage you to “Stay safe”. When circumstances permit, we will be anxious to plan our next highly anticipated get-together.

Greetings to all Williamsville teachers and students, past and present.



Williamsville Education Foundation

June 15, 2018 at 8:33 AM ·

Therese Clarke, President of Williamsville Association of Retired Teachers, Jeff Katz, Foundation president, Judy Klug, Carolyn Giambra, Jose Alvarez, Alvarez & Bremer Travel shown here in the photo. The Retired Teachers Association made their annual donation to our Foundation this month at their luncheon. Thank you so much for your continued support of our students!

W Z President's Appeal

Thank you so much for your contributions to the Annual Appeal. With your help, your donation helped to raise over \$1,800 that ensures that your Western Zone continues to advocate for active and retired teachers. For example, we awarded two grants to local public school teachers who proposed creative, student engaged projects. Western Zone wouldn't be able to fulfill its mission of activism on the state and local levels to help meet the needs of retired and active teachers without the generosity of members like you. The following people have donated since March of 2020. Again, many thanks to all who have donated to this appeal throughout the past year.

Michelle Claus

Ellen Conrad

Teresa Holtz

Marie Ferguson

Roger Gilbert in memory of Loretta Peszynski

Marianne Kaczmarek

Helen Peterson

Esther Pezzino

Judith Toner

Elizabeth Zarbo

Recognizing Depression in Older People

Many changes can occur in the lives of older individuals. They may experience new living arrangements, death of a spouse or close friend or develop a new health condition. Most will recover from these changes after a period of adjustment and their lives will return to normal. However, a few may continue to experience sadness, anxiety and frustration for a much longer period of time. If these are interfering with one's normal everyday activities and don't subside in a few weeks, then depression may be present.

Here are a few more signs that depression may be present:

- Losing interest or enjoyment in activities
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Lower energy and feeling more tired than usual
- A change in eating habits and unexplained weight change
- Trouble focusing or making good decisions
- Trouble sleeping or sleep pattern changes
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Unexplained body pain, such as headaches or stomach aches, that don't respond to treatment

If you or a friend is experiencing many of these signs, please seek the advice of your doctor or a mental health provider. Depression is a medical condition and can be easily treated.

Here are few things you can do to help a friend who may be suffering from depression:

- Encourage your friend to be honest about their feelings and remind them that such feelings are not a sign of weakness
- Be patient and positive
- Be a good listener
- Encourage your friend to do something with you such as take a walk or other activity you enjoy
- Never ignore negative remarks

Especially during these stressful and uncertain times of COVID -19 restrictions many of us are feeling anxious. Please remember to check in with your friends and neighbors even if it is only a quick phone call or e-mail. Your concern may have a very positive effect not only for them, but for you also.

Remember: Wear masks and stay safe!

Beechwood Continuing Care

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110 beautifully appointed apartments – all with a balcony or patio. Residents enjoy a luxurious yet neighborly lifestyle complete with 5 star dining service and heated underground parking. Known for its extraordinary décor, verdant campus and attention to personal service, Asbury offers the freedom and security of retirement living.

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Beechwood Homes is the only skilled care community in WNY that has completely integrated person-centered care in a household setting. Each household has 12-18 residents that enjoy their own living room, country kitchen and dining room including a hospice household. Over 65 nursing homes and assisted living communities from around the country have visited Beechwood to learn how they can make this culture change journey. *Seeing is believing!*



*To learn more about any of Beechwood Continuing Care communities, call 716-810-7370.
www.beechwoodcare.org*

Western Zone—NYSRTA

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In this very trying and stressful time we want to remind our WZ members to stay strong, practice social distancing and be safe!

SAVE THE DATE!

RENY/ Western Zone Annual Meeting September 15, 2021 at Salvatore's Conference Center.