



RENEY
RETIREDCEDUCATORS OF NY

WESTERN CURRENTS

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

Volume 19, Number 3

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Summer 2021



President's Message

Thank you to all the wonderful retired educators who are members of the

Western Zone. You have supported your officers and Board of Directors, who have worked diligently to keep the organization viable. You have navigated the COVID 19 Pandemic and all its medical and social guidelines. Now you are becoming actively involved again.

Many Units have remained in contact with their members and have even continued their Community Service Projects and Scholarship Programs during this historic time. Some have held luncheons and meetings again while others are just now making plans to do so. It will take time, but I truly believe that in a year from now we will be

planning to hold our Western Zone 2022 Annual Meeting.

It has been my privilege to serve as your Zone President these past two years. It was a difficult time, but not impossible. I had a lot help and encouragement from many of you. However, it is time for me to turn over the reins of leadership to a new team. You will be introduced to them in the winter edition of this newsletter. Rest assured I will remain involved as your Past President and member of the Western Zone Board of Directors. I have faith in our organization and believe that we can remain strong.

WZ President,
Judith Farmer
WesternZoneRENY@gmail.com

SPOTLIGHT ON



Western Zone Officers

President

Judith F. Farmer

1st Vice President

Doris R. Kirsch

2nd Vice President

Michelle Claus

Treasurer

Don E. Lawrence

Recording Secretary

Audrey Seidel

Corresponding Secretary

Nancy White

Membership Secretary

Karen Gembar

Past President

Alphonse Marabella



Audrey Seidel and Nancy White

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

Audrey Seidel graduated from the University of Buffalo in the 1960's and immediately joined the Peace Corps. She left Western New York to be stationed in Malambo, Columbia, South America, helping with community improvements. Audrey, the oldest, has three siblings, Mary, Barbara, and Paul, who has passed. Upon returning to WNY, she taught at St. James School, Maryvale schools, and finally teaching American History at Springville-Griffith Institute High School for 23 years. Audrey also had various extra-curricular jobs while at Springville. Upon retirement in 2007, she became

Nancy White graduated from Fredonia State majoring in Spanish education. She began her teaching career in Clymer, New York as a part-time Spanish teacher. Nancy met her husband, Steven, and they married in 1975 and have three sons; Christopher, Nathan, and Nicholas. Sadly, Nathan passed away six years ago. They have twin boy grandsons, Nathan and Oliver.

Nancy began her Springville-Griffith Institute High School teaching job in 1978, soon taking on extra-curricular jobs including the Spanish Club and.

Continued on page 3

Spotlight On

Continued from page 2



more active with the Returning Peace Corps Volunteers.

Her many Peace Corps involvements were:

- Vive-Thanksgiving Dinner
- Martin Luther King Day of Caring
- Welcome newly returned/sending off Peace Corps volunteers Lights for third-world countries fundraiser-giving solar lights to those in need

Audrey became the local president of Springville/West Valley Retired Teachers' Association for seven years.

She donates and volunteers often to the following groups:

- Hospice Volunteer
- Christmas Tree remembrance trees for those that died of cancer
- Pancho Billa backpack volunteer-helping to fill over 5,000 backpacks for students in Buffalo and El Paso.
- Oishei Children's Hospital volunteer in the Ronald McDonald House Charities respite room for families of children hospitalized

Audrey is an avid reader of all types of books. She is also a detail-oriented person. Audrey applies herself working judiciously until the task is complete.

Yearbook editor/advisor She enjoys football and baseball. These are the games her sons participated in as young children.

Nancy was awarded the National Honor Society Teacher of the Year, and the District Teacher of the Year during her 32 years at Springville Schools. In all the years she taught, every student passed the New York State Regents exam in Spanish. Nancy became a part time Spanish teacher at Genesee Community College/Arcade campus teaching one evening a week. Her routine would be to prepare at Springville for the next day, drive to McDonald's and have a Happy Meal, and teach that evening at the Arcade Community College.

Nancy has taught many students Spanish, young and adult. When she is seen outside of school, past students always greet her as "senora". Some former students have gone onto being Spanish teachers themselves, crediting senora with finding the love of the Spanish language and culture.

Audrey and Nancy have many similarities. They both care deeply for their family, friends, volunteering, retired educators, and helping to make the world a better place. They loved their professions as teachers, relating many aspects of life. They have the belief; look out for the other person and do whatever you can to help. Two caring people evidenced by the fact: as soon as someone meets Audrey or Nancy, they fall in love with them!

Yearly, when it was time to prepare their classrooms, these ladies would glow in the excitement of new students, past students, and teaching their favorite subjects.

These retired teachers also put the same excitement and dedication to Western Zone.

Thank you Audrey and Nancy!

Western Zone Spring Trip to Pa

Pictured are the 36 individuals, as well as the driver Bert, who enjoyed a four day Western Zone trip to Philadelphia, Lancaster and Hershey. The Philadelphia historical portion included a three hour historic tour, as well as visits to the National Constitution Center, Museum of the American Revolution, and Betsy Ross House.



The Amish Lancaster portion included a three hour bus tour of the area, shopping in the Amish stores, and experiencing the magnificent performance of ESTHER at the Sight and Sound Theatre. On the final day, a historic Hershey tour was enjoyed, as well as the Chocolate Tour Ride. White Star Tours helped make this an exciting and memorable experience for all.

The next trip, **HILLS ARE ALIVE**, planned for Sept 27- Oct 1, 2021, will include Vermont and New Hampshire.

Western Zone Executive Committee

What do you find yourself saying to someone you haven't seen in over a year, since the start of the pandemic? How are you? What's new? What did you do during the pandemic? Well, little by little, we are finally able to open the door a bit and see our world in a more normal way, some of us without masks on. Since the world seems to be opening up some, we would like to recognize our WZ Executive Committee for all their hard work, diligence, and fortitude during this unprecedented time of the pandemic "year". Due to the leadership of Western Zone, our members can rest assured that we are doing our best to take care of our "house".

President Judy Farmer led Western Zone via e-mail updates, phone calls, in-person Executive Committee meetings, and her involvement at the state level with RENY. She also shared information including Bylaws proposed changes.

1st and 2nd Vice-Presidents, Doris Kirsch and Michelle Claus have both worked tirelessly and closely with the President and various committee members to also ensure that our zone was focusing on its members and how we could function without any formal meetings.

Don Lawrence, our Treasurer, has watched over our finances to ensure that we are financially sound. He has presented monthly reports to the Executive Committee and proposed a WZ 2021-22 budget. He also suggested that WZ explore the possibility of updating our webpage.

Our Recording and Corresponding Secretaries, Audrey Seidel and Nancy White have attended Executive Committee meetings, kept the record of the zone's business and actions, and corresponded with members that don't have e-mail.

Western Zone Membership Chair, Karen Gembar and committee member, Michelle Claus are contacting members and potential members through a survey in order to find ways to serve our retirees better. In this way we are hoping to increase our membership. Individuals interested in becoming a new member of RENY/WZ can contact Karen at WesternZoneRENY@gmail.com.

In addition to our officers, various activities were completed by WZ members. Beth Green updated our WZ handbook for 2021-22. Handbooks were sent out to the WZ Board of Directors. Ron Czapla and his committee, met in order to coordinate the distribution of applications for the RENY Hudson- Kramer Memorial Grant. From these applications a winner will be selected for WZ. In order to promote our state organization, many of our members have placed posters in various public locations and bumper stickers as well to spread word about RENY.

Where would we be without our leaders moving us forward? Thanks to our Executive Committee for keeping us afloat and leading us onward.

We would also like to honor and send our best birthday wishes to two special ladies. Janice Weitz will celebrate her 100th birthday August 13th and Allie Withers will be 98 on July 22. We wish them both the happiest of birthdays.



Standing: Nancy White, Audrey Seidel, Judy Farmer and Karen Gembar
Seated: Don Lawrence, Doris Kirsch and Michelle Claus

Eastern Erie Retired Teachers Association (EERTA)

As with all other units, we have not been able to meet since February 2020. Our Scholarship Committee has kept busy and did award four scholarships to the 2020 graduates of the districts represented by our unit. They are now working on the 2021 scholarships and have delivered the applications to the school districts.

Unfortunately, our unit has suffered the loss of our dear Vincy O'Donnell. Vincy was responsible for making arrangements for our meetings at The Columns as well as emailing the newsletter to our members. She was faithful in her duties, but more importantly she was a warm, loving presence at our meetings. We are planning to honor her in a special way and would appreciate input from our unit members as to ways to accomplish that.

We are hoping to be able to hold our October 2021 meeting.

Judith Farmer
President



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Eastern Niagara County Retired Teachers (ENCRTA)

Even during the COVID pandemic ENCRTA was able to continue with community service projects, 2020 and 2021 Scholarship awards, donating to Lockport Salvation Army and the Robert R. DeCormier Fund as well as remembering the ENCRTA members in need of prayers with cards. Quarterly newsletters were sent and recent retirees received "Congratulation" letters in both 2020 and 2021.

ENCRTA was able to hold the May and July 2021 meetings at the Lockport Town and Country Club. There were 30 people, (wearing masks and maintaining social distancing) present at the May meeting. Scholarship Chairs, Ginnie Piskorowski and Judy Schultz announced the 2021 high school scholarship recipients. They are **Madison Gancasz** and **Chloe Lee** from Barker; **Abigail Alex** from Lockport; **Molly Handrich** from Newfane; **Renee Lehman** from Royalton Hartland; **Anna Stein** from Starpoint and **Megan Musall** from Wilson. Each year ENCRTA provides \$3000.00 in scholarships to area seniors who are

pursuing a career in education. Our guest speaker, John Baronich, was awesome. He shared his experience of paddling the Eire Canal from Buffalo to Albany dressed as the fur trader, Jacques. We will definitely have him back to do another one of his presentations.

The May meeting was attended by 56 people. COVID restrictions had been dropped. So it was wonderful not to have to wear masks and be able to see all those beautiful smiles! There were 6 recent retirees in attendance, as well as Anne Flansburg, chairman of the Robert R. DeCormier Trust Fund. Anne explained the purpose of the fund and encouraged members to let her know if they know of any retired educator who may be in need of financial assistance. Members brought women's toiletries for the YWCA Women's Shelter, used eyeglasses for the local Lion's Club and books for "Project Flight". Our guest speaker was Karen Wielinski, whose 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 in the crash 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. She had copies of her book available. Everyone enjoyed her touching and riveting presentation. We are looking forward to having Karen do another book talk when her new book is published. ENCRTA made a donation to the Douglas C. Wielinski Scholarship Fund in honor of Karen.

ENCRTA's next meeting will be October 7, 2021. It is the annual Basket Raffle with proceeds going toward the Scholarship Fund. Members are asked to bring new socks of any size for WZ's Socktober project.

Sandy Kelley
President

Bylaws Committee Report

Following is a copy of the report from the RENY Bylaws Committee that appeared in the Spring 2021 issue of *York State*. Please read it carefully and consider the follow-up comments as to how these proposed changes will impact Western Zone and your unit.

"The Bylaws Committee is presenting two proposed bylaw changes for consideration at the 2021 Annual Meeting. **Proposition ZUUORENY** (Zone/Unit use of RENY) **2020** and **Proposition ASZAUM** (Association, State, Zone and Unit membership) **2020** as requested by President **Kevin Mulligan** and the Board of Directors at the April 2020 Board of Directors meeting. The proposed bylaws were presented at the July Board of Directors meeting and approved by the Board. The proposed Bylaws now go to the zones for approval. If 2/3 of the zones approve them then they will be presented for approval at the 2021 Annual Meeting. The rationale for **Proposition ZUUORTENY** (Zone/Unit use of RENY) **2020** is that a considerable amount of money has been spent to create and market a new name for NYSRTA - RENY, and the creation of a new logo, therefore all zones and units need to adhere to the use of RENY and the new logo. Zones need to change their names to RENY/Zone name (example: RENY/Central Zone). Unit names would be RENY/Unit name (Example: RENY/Cayuga County). Any checking accounts, stationary (sic), etc. with the old names could still be used but new orders would have to have the new name. Rationale for **Proposition ASZAUM** (Association, State, Zone and Unit Membership) **2020** is that based on the fact that a considerable number of unit members are not dues paying members of the Association and that in some zones

and units there are elected officers and committee chairs that are not members of the Association the following Bylaws changes are being proposed. All unit members must also be dues paying member of the State Association.

Respectfully submitted, **William Tenity** - CZ Chair, Bylaws Committee"

Follow up comments: After consideration of the proposals, there is no objection to **Proposition ZUUORENY** (Zone/Unit Use of RENY) **2020**. It is a unified method of incorporating the new RENY name into Zone and Unit identification. **Proposition ASZAUM** (Association, State, Zone and Unit Membership) **2020** carries with it some serious consequences to Unit Membership. If the proposal is adopted, all unit members must also be dues paying members of RENY and all unit officers and committee chairs must be dues paying members of RENY, as well. When this was discussed at the RENY Board of Directors meeting, it was stated that the change would only impact NEW members. That language does not appear in the final proposal. Think about what this requirement will do to the make-up and vitality of your unit. It could be devastating.

Your Western Zone Board of Directors will vote on these proposals at the September 15, 2021 Board Meeting. If 2/3 (seven) of the ten zones approve the recommendations they will be brought to the Annual Meeting of RENY to be held in October. No further action will be taken on proposals that receive less than seven zone approvals. Those proposals receiving seven or more favorable votes will be voted on at the RENY Annual meeting and will need the approval of 2/3 of the credentialed delegates for adoption.

If you have any questions/concerns, please feel free to contact your WZ Officers, Directors or me directly at 585-457-3315 or wdkirsch@gmail.com.

Doris R. Kirsch, WZ Past President
WZ Bylaws Committee Chair



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Pictured - Lew & Harriet McCauley with their dog Sunny

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Summer Health Tips

1. As we all know yard work can be strenuous. It is important to stretch your shoulders, hips and knees before starting the task. A quick warm up will get the blood flowing to your muscles and joints. Also remember to not do too much at one time.
2. It is also important to stay hydrated during the hot, humid summer months. The best beverage for beating the heat is water. Cutting back on added sugar beverages reduces your risk of certain health conditions. So drink lots of regular or sparkling water to stay hydrated and refreshed.

Robert R. DeCormier Trust

Congratulations to Beth Green, a Western Zone member, who was recently nominated and elected as a trustee of the Robert R. DeCormier Trust of RENY. She has also accepted the position of secretary for the Trust, and is responsible for correspondence as well as recording minutes of the meetings. Beth, who was a teacher of business at Chautauqua Central, retired from the now merged Chautauqua Central and Mayville Central Schools. She was a former president of the Southern Chautauqua County Retired Teachers' Association and presently serves as handbook editor for the Western Zone, as well as a member of the Remembrance Committee. Beth was a workshop chair for the State annual meeting in 2018. Beth and her husband Dennis have two sons. She serves on several Boards for local organizations as well as her Church. Additionally, she enjoys a monthly book club, plays bridge weekly, is a dedicated walker and loves to travel.

The Robert R DeCormier Trust, of which Beth is the secretary, was named after Robert R DeCormier, the first President of NYSRTA. It was established over fifty years ago to assist retired educators in need. If you know anyone that is in financial distress, please have them contact Anne Flansburg at anneflanswz@aol.com or 716-863-3631. Grants are given to help pay utility bills, medical expenses, home repairs, and any other need a person may experience.

Introduction to RENY / Western Zone Survey

The New York State Retired Teachers' Association (NYSRTA), dba RENY (Retired Educators of New York) is the only state wide organization that works exclusively for retired educators. The association is comprised of ten geographical areas, called zones. Western Zone is one of these areas and has the largest membership, presently about 2700. Erie, Niagara, Genesee, Cattaraugus, and Chautauqua counties are in the Western Zone.

While other teacher and administrative groups work primarily for active teachers and administrators, respectively, our focus is on all educator retirees.

We appreciate you taking time to complete the attached, short survey. Your responses will help us better understand your needs and improve our organization.

IF you have not taken this survey, please separate it from the Western Currents Newsletter. Fill the survey out and mail to: Karen Gembar, 4550 Martingale Court, East Aurora, NY, 14052. **OR** copy and paste this link in your computer, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LWYBGS7> Fill out the survey and you are done! Thank you in advance.

Survey. Please put an x inside the box(es) next to your answers

Q1 Are you a member of RENY – Retired Educators of New York, also known as, New York State Retired Teachers' Association?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ unsure

Q2 Are you a member of a unit of RENY/ Western Zone? If so, which one?

☐ Amherst ☐ Lancaster / Depew
☐ Buffalo ☐ Eastern Niagara County
☐ Eastern Erie County ☐ Springville / West Valley
☐ Genesee County ☐ West Seneca
☐ Kenmore ☐ Williamsville
☐ Lackawanna ☐ Not a unit member
☐ Unit not listed here. I will provide contact information (Question 7) for future unit identity.

Q3 Do you want a voice in legislations, State and Federal?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q4 Our organization offers opportunities for retired educators to be engaged. Please check the boxes that you might like to participate.

☐ Interested in community minded service and donations
☐ Socialize with fellow educators
☐ Protect state and federal benefits of retirees
☐ Support scholarship awards to high school seniors
☐ Be supportive of non-partisan legislative advocacy
☐ Support active teachers through Zone sponsored awards
☐ Support retirees in financial distress
☐ Be a member of a Friendly Service Committee
☐ Work for the improvement of public education

Q5 Do you feel supporting active teachers in your community is important to retired educators?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q6 Are you interested in traveling with other retired educators (social outings)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q7 If you are interested in becoming a RENY/ Western Zone member, please provide contact information below.

Full Name:_____

Email:_____

Address: Street:_____

City:_____State:_____Zip Code:_____

Phone number_____

Thank you for completing this survey.

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Western Zone—NYSRTA

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