

RENY
RETIREDCEDUCATORS OF NY

WESTERN CURRENTS

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

Volume 21, Number 2

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Spring 2023



Greetings from Your President

Happy Spring! The birds are chirping and the flowers are beginning to grow. WZ members have been busy during the winter months. Most committees have met and have plans for this year.

- Our membership committee met in January, February, and March to work on a Membership dues Thank You refund. This \$10 refund is given by Western Zone to you when you continue your membership another year. It is also given to new memberships. Everyone that joins for the first time or extends their membership another year or more will receive \$10 for each yearly membership. This offer is for one year.
- Our Legislative Action Committee has also met during this time period. George and Marilyn Stephens and myself represented Western Zone at several RENY (state) zoom meetings. These meetings included representatives from our ten zones. The topics were centered around education and improvement of retiree's quality of life. The five legislative priorities decided upon are:
 1. Support the reintroduction of bills to protect retired public employees' health benefits under which we retired.

2. Support Governor Hochul's plan to rebuild NY's teacher workforce with an emphasis on recruiting and retaining teachers throughout the state to resolve the ongoing teacher shortage.
3. Support legislation to create an elder abuse registry, expand mandated reporting of abuse and increase training regarding elder abuse prevention.
4. Support increased mental health services for all students.
5. Support the Public Pension COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) computation formula to have older retirees receive a much needed pension increase.

Our Western Zone Legislative Action Committee sent letters, spoke on the phone, zoomed, and/or visited assemblymen and state senators during the month of March discussing these topics.

- The Teacher Grant Committee formerly chaired by Ron Czapla and now by Maria Hager led the committee to choose 2 schools that applied for these Grants of \$500 each. These grants involved students completing a project with their teacher(s). The article is in this Western Currents.

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Michelle Claus
RENY/Western Zone President
716-481-5279 email: joeclaus@msn.com

SPOTLIGHT ON

Spotlight on Doris Kirsch



Western Zone Officers

President
Michelle Claus

1st Vice President
Doris R. Kirsch

2nd Vice President
Maria Hager

Treasurer
Don E. Lawrence

Recording Secretary
Nancy White &
Carol Cascio

Corresponding Secretary
Audrey Seidel

Membership Secretary
Karen Gembar

Past President
Judy Farmer

If you need someone to be your mentor, your guide, look here. If you need someone with the answers, the history, or someone to get the job done - **Doris R. Kirsch** is your woman.

Doris is a doer and shaker, graduating from SUNY College at



Brockport with Summa Cum Laude honors.

She was a dedicated, hardworking, creative teacher for more than 30 years at the Holland Middle School, teaching 7th grade Social Studies - New York State. How appropriate it was teaching New York State History for Doris. She related the

curriculum to her experiences, passed her enthusiasm to students and peers, to understand and appreciate history. One of her classroom goals was to read a NYS road map and be able to refold it!

Doris wrote on her Western Zone profile sheet her reasons for becoming and remaining a Western Zone Board Member. I quote, "It seemed like the logical step to take after being a union activist while teaching. I need to stay involved in education. I am willing to serve in any way possible".

Doris has been in many Western Zone committees, as well as the following officer positions; Recording Secretary, 2nd Vice President, 1st Vice President, and President for 4 years. She also, while serving in some of these Western Zone positions, has been the Eastern Erie unit president for 10 years. At the state level, she has served as previous chair and current member of the Resolutions Committee. She is our Western Zone bylaws chair. Doris also served as the host zone committee co-chair of our 2018 NYSRTA Annual State Convention. She has been recognized in many ways including these two state and zone awards; Certificate of Recognition (2015) and Citation Award (2007).

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Zone Unit Presidents

Amherst RTA
Joseph Podgorski

Buffalo RTA
Tom Giambra

Eastern Erie RTA
Judy Farmer

Genesee RTA
Marcia Riley

Kenmore RTA
Joan Costello

Lackawanna RTA
Tina Gambino

Lancaster/Depew RTA
Karen Gembar

Eastern Niagara RTA
Sandy Kelley

Springville/West Valley RTA
Sharon Barley

West Seneca RTA
Patricia Miceli

Williamsville RTA
Therese Clarke

Spotlight On

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Doris is active outside of New York State Retired Teachers' Association activities. She was President of the Holland Teachers' Association for years. A representative delegate at the NEA-New York conference, active years as well as retired teacher years. She and her late husband annually chaired the annual chicken dinner fundraiser sponsored by the local volunteer fire department. Bill and Doris also provided an entire turkey dinner for every funeral breakfast at St. Mary's Church in Strykersville.

Doris has a large family including her brother, brother and sister in laws, many nieces and nephews. Her large family traveled to Strykersville to help her celebrate an important birthday in March of this year. Doris' other families also helped celebrate her birthday this year. Many of these families of Eastern Erie RTA, Western Zone, NYSRTA and her "drivers" family attended this celebration.

Doris, a leader, persuasive with a positive attitude, has a sense of knowing what is best for Western Zone and NYSRTA.

Thank you, Doris R. Kirsch, for your knowledge, guidance, hard work, leadership, and dedication. We are lucky to have you!

President's Message

Continued from page 1

The Founders' Fund distributed checks to area Meals on Wheels town pantries and Feed More WNY, Network in Aging, Seneca Nations office for the Aging, South Buffalo Community Table, Lovejoy Outreach and Food Pantry and other deserving groups. These donations totaled \$6000.

- The Travel Committee leaders are Anne Flansburg and Ann Marie Wik. They both work with a travel agency to offer worthwhile trips. This September trip is to New York City. Information is in this Western Currents.
- The Friendly Service Committee chair is Tom Giambra. He is in charge of the members that send cards (birthday, sympathy, thinking of you, holiday, and others) to Western Zone members. This committee works tirelessly, all year long, to give thought to our members.

This is only six committees that I have highlighted this time. You could be a member of RENY/Western Zone. A special Thank You offer is in this newsletter. Please ask your retiree friends to join.

Thank you to all that support our mission for education and retired educators.

Enjoy the spring!

Citation Awards - September 21, 2022 Presentation

Each year, in September, at our Annual Western Zone meeting, a Citation Award is presented to member(s) who have shown outstanding contributions, leadership, participation, and service to Western Zone and their units and communities.

Our 2022 award recipients are John Cardarella, Russell Gervasi, and Nancy White.

John Cardarella joined RENY in 2007 after retiring from the Ken-Ton School District where he served as an educator for 35 years. John is currently assistant treasurer, chairman of the Founders' Fund, and Investment Committee. John is also a member of our Finance and Budget Committee.



Russ Gervasi joined NYSRTA (RENY) in 1999, soon after he retired from 34 years of teaching. Russ is the 1st Vice President of the Buffalo Retired Teachers' Association (BRTA). Russ is our webmaster and Western Zone advertising director. He also is a member of our Split Club. Russ is an important part of our team.

Nancy White retired in 2010 from Springville Central Schools after 35 years of teaching in the Western New York area. She has achieved several national awards including the Walmart Teacher of the Year. Nancy is a Friendly Service and Awards Committee member, co-secretary of Western Zone, and co-chair of the Public Relations Committee. Nancy is always helping Board of Directors members in some way.



Our Western Zone Annual Meeting will take place on September 20, 2023 at Alton's Banquet Facility, 2221 Transit Road, Elma, NY. The cost will include mini breakfast, program, Western Zone Annual Meeting, and luncheon. Reservation forms including cost will be in the Western Currents Newsletter this summer.

Health Information

By Vicki Smith, Health Committee Chair.

Curious about CBD? Cannabidiol (CBD) comes from the hemp plant. It can be found in two forms, full-spectrum CBD and CBD isolate. The full-spectrum form can contain a small amount of THC, the molecule that produces a psychoactive or "high" sensation. CBD isolate does not contain THC, so it does not get the user high.

CBD is commonly taken to control pain and calm inflammation. It may be used to treat disorders of several body organs. It can be purchased in pill, oil, cream, and balm forms. Proper dosage is based on the user's weight and severity of symptoms. It is also pet friendly.



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Pictured - Lew & Harriet McCauley with their dog Sunny

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. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR RENY MEMBERS

Do you know of a retired educator, or the 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 yourself? **There is assistance available!** In memory of its first President, Robert R. DeCormier of the Retired Educators of New York, RENY established a fund that continues to provide financial aid to retired members and spouses who are members of RENY and 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.

If you know anyone that is a member of RENY and **is in need of financial assistance**, or for **additional information**, please contact the Chair, Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631. You may also download an application and/or learn more about the fund at RetiredEducatorsNY.org. On the home page, click on “Membership” and then “Financial Assistance” under “Member Benefits”. Please share this information with others who may not be familiar with this valuable resource.

Reny/Western Zone 2022-23 Grant Awards

RENY/Western Zone awards two \$500 grants to teachers in public, private and parochial schools in our area (Cattaraugus, Chatauqua, Erie, Genesee and Niagara Counties) biannually. One grant is awarded for a teacher-generated classroom-related learning activity, the other for an out-of-classroom cultural presentation by students.

Alden Central School teachers Erin Griggs and Michelle Mattheus won the grant award for their proposal: “Struggling Reader Book Sets for Grades 3, 4 & 5” for the purchase of a series of books to improve the reading skills of upper elementary struggling readers by having a variety of books available at their reading levels. Several readers per skill level would allow students to engage in small group read-aloud instructions and to provide for independent reading instruction to increase decoding skills, to improve fluency and comprehension and increase interest in reading.

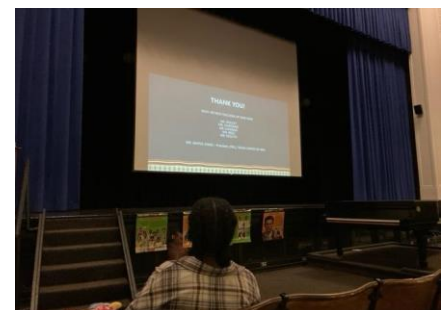
Ms. Griggs and Ms. Mattheus were recognized for receiving the grant at the WZ December board meeting. They were accompanied by their principal, Mr. John Mikulski. The Alden retired teachers in attendance were especially proud of these young professionals.



Middle Early College High School (a Buffalo public school housed at Bennett High School) teacher, Pamela Brown, envisioned presenting “The History of Step” with the establishment of a student-directed Step Drill Team, culminating in a cultural performance for students, staff and family members during Black History Month. Cross-cultural research involving the social studies, art and music departments would result in an audio-visual presentation. The award was used to purchase the boots required for the Step team.

The full “History of Step” program presented on February 14 highlighted the students showing the drill routines they created as well as other students sharing a slide presentation with the information they learned from the cross-cultural classroom work. The program was thoroughly enjoyed by President, Michelle Claus, and board member, Stan Nowak.

Congratulations to these excellent representatives of our profession!



Locally Owned ~ Not-for-Profit Senior Care Community



Beechwood Continuing Care is considered the premier not-for-profit senior care community in WNY. From luxury independent apartment living to state-of-the-art short-term rehabilitation...our communities have something for everyone.

Below is a list of all our communities. Please feel free to reach out to learn more about all we have to offer. We are just a phone call away!



Independent Living Communities

Asbury Pointe Retirement Community

50 Stahl Road ♦ Amherst, NY 14068
Phone - 716-810-7500



Presbyterian Village at North Church

214 Village Park Drive ♦ Williamsville, NY 14221
Phone - 716-810-7475



Ken-Ton Presbyterian Village

3735 Delaware Avenue ♦ Kenmore, NY 14217
Phone - 716-810-7478



Skilled Nursing &
Sub-Acute Short Term Rehabilitation

Beechwood Homes

100 Stahl Road ♦ Amherst, NY 14068
Phone - 716-810-7000



Wesley Rehabilitation Center

2235 Millersport Highway ♦ Amherst, NY 14068
Phone - 716-810-7000



www.beechwoodcare.org

FOUNDERS' FUND

John Cardarella
Chairman Founders' Fund

This year we were able to donate \$6000.00 to local Meals on Wheels, Network in Aging of WNY, Aurora Senior Center and South Buffalo Community Table. Also, we added Lovejoy Outreach and Food Pantry, which was recommended by a WZ Board Member. They are active in ZIP Code 14206 and parts of Sloan.

With the help of Michelle Claus (Springville), Vicki Smith (Jamestown), Dolores Scanlon (Lovejoy Outreach) and Karen Schlum (Niagara County) checks were hand delivered. Also, checks were hand delivered to South Buffalo Community Table and Genesee County, Batavia. The Genesee County Batavia Meals on Wheels site has 170 participants in their program, with a majority of their routes being in rural areas. In total we hand delivered 6 checks. The remaining checks were mailed out.

The Founders' Fund Distribution Committee consists of the following: Vicki Smith, Dolores Scanlon, Rob Roy Griffith and John Cardarella.

Pictures of the Founders Fund distributions and recipients:



Left to right:

Mindi Doran-Nutrition Coordinator of Home Delivered Meals Program
Karen Schlum Newfane retired Teacher & Western Zone/RENY Member
Darlene S DiCarlo - Director of the Niagara County Office of the Aging.



MOW Batavia Drivers: Randa, Donna, Cindy & Colleen



Batavia Cook, Laural L

More pictures of the Founders Fund distributions and recipients:



Peggy Hess
Springville-West Valley
MOW Volunteer
Care & Concern



South Buffalo
Community Table
volunteer, Linda C

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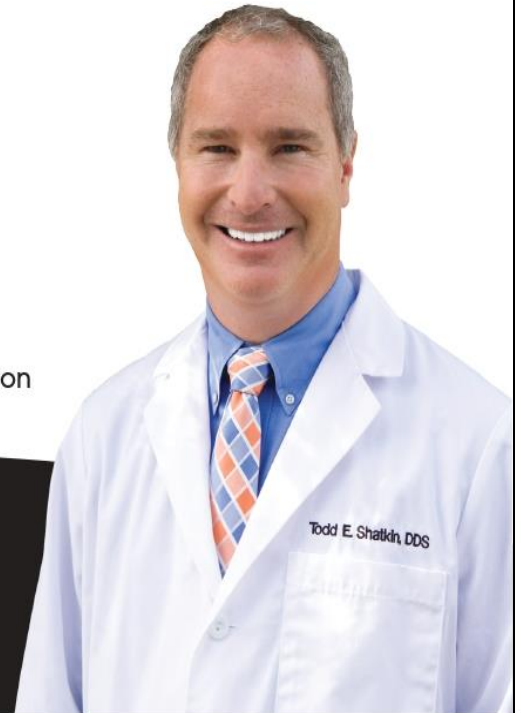
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WESTERN ZONE NEW YORK CITY TRIP

September 26-29, 2023

Join a memorable four day, three night Western Zone **NEW YORK CITY** trip, featuring the “City that Never Sleeps”.

Enjoy a **ferry ride cruise** to **Liberty Island** with an audio tour of the Island and a visit to the **NEW** Statue of Liberty Museum. The Museum features three interactive galleries that will inspire a new sense of appreciation for the struggles and freedoms of early Americans. Cruise to **Ellis Island**, where an audio tour will enable you to relive the immigrant experience, detailing its historical and personal accounts. Admission to the **National 9/11 Memorial Museum**, dedicated to those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001 is also included.

This trip will feature a guided tour of **Upper Manhattan**, highlighting Rockefeller and Lincoln Centers, United Nations and St. Patrick’s Cathedral. A **Lower Manhattan** tour will include famous buildings and districts such as SoHo, Little Italy, Chinatown, Garment and Financial Districts, and Ground Zero.

The price is **\$705** per person for **triple** occupancy, **\$725** per person for **double** occupancy, and **\$1,000** for **single** occupancy. Cost includes: bus transportation, 3 nights lodging, 3 breakfasts, 2 dinners in Manhattan, ferry ride, as well as entrance to all museums and the self guided audio tour. Gratuities for meals, tour guides, luggage handling and bus driver are also included. **Optional cancellation and travel insurance** may be purchased for \$59 (double or triple) or \$71 (single).

For information regarding the trip, and to obtain reservation forms and/or travel insurance, you may contact **Anne Flansburg** at 716-863-3631 or email at anneflanswz@aol.com OR contact **Ann Marie Wik** at 716-228-2414 or email at amwik@rochester.rr.com

A **deposit of \$100 per person**, should be paid by or before **June 10, 2023** (Reservations accepted in order of date received.) The **balance** for this trip is due by **July 15, 2023**. This exciting and memorable trip promises to be a “sell out” and participants will share long lasting memories of “The Big Apple”, so call ahead to reserve early and get additional details.



WESTERN ZONE SPECIAL OFFER

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024

Membership Inflation Deduction

RENY Western Zone would like to reward you for your membership with a \$10.00 rebate check. Active and Retired Educators WZ: is open to all educators within the 5 counties within WZ: Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee and Niagara.

Easy: ALL you have to do is renew your RENY membership OR become a new member during the time frame.

RENY will contact our WZ Membership VP and you will receive a check in the mail from WZ.

Please fill out RENY Annual Membership Enrollment form or respond to RENY Renewal notifications.



RENY
RETIRED EDUCATORS OF NY

Retired Educators of NY ANNUAL Member Enrollment Form

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

County of Residence: _____

Phone number(s): _____

Birth Date: _____

Circle one: Retired Educator - Year Retired _____

Active Educator

Associate (non-certified support staff) - Year Retired _____

County and State you retired from: _____

School, District, or University retired from: _____

Referred by: _____

Spouse Enrollment

Spouse Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Email: _____

Payment Options

Please include a check made out to RENY for \$30 yearly / \$450 lifetime per person. Mail to: RENY, PO Box 490, Amsterdam, NY 12010 or call 518-482-3509

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Western Zone—NYSRTA

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Save the Date: Western Zone Annual Meeting, September 20, 2023. Details to follow in the Summer Western Currents.

Please be current on your RENY dues. Any questions, please call/text/email Michelle Claus, 716-481-5279. joeclaus@msn.com