



RENY
RETIREDCEDUCATORS OF NY

WESTERN CURRENTS

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

Volume 22, Number 1

www.wzretiredteachers.org

Winter 2023

Greetings from Your President



Happy Thanksgiving from Western Zone

I am thankful for all our members. You might be a member of one of our nine units where you live or worked; Eastern Niagara, Eastern Erie, Genesee County, Kenmore, Lackawanna, Springville/West Valley, and West Seneca. You might be a member of Western Zone also. We have 47 members on our Board of Directors. There are 5 openings on our Board. Please call me if you are interested. You can attend a meeting as our guest. Try us out! Our Western Zone members are involved in our many projects. Some of these committees/projects are: legislative endeavors, friendly service, and active teacher grants.

Our annual dues are \$30 per year until 12/20/23. As of January 1, 2024, our NEW yearly dues increase to \$39 per year. In both cases, you will receive a \$10 inflation rebate from Western Zone. Anyone who wants to take advantage of our lifetime dues before December 20, 2023, the cost is

\$450. You will receive a \$150 inflation rebate from Western Zone. These offers must be received by **RENY by December 20, 2023**. Membership forms are on the last two pages of this newsletter. Please note, our dues have not increased for ten years.

The state annual meeting took place October 11-13, 2023. Western Zone had 22 delegate representatives at this conference. Thank you to all who attended. A lively exchange of information and thoughts was important for our ten zones. More information on the annual meeting is in this newsletter.

Our Western Zone Annual Meeting took place on September 20 of this year. I was excited to see many of you in attendance. Thank you to those who attended. See the article attached.

Our next Western Currents newsletter will be coming February 2024! Ask your friends to join, become a lifetime member! The cost to you before December 20, 2023 will pay for itself in 7.7 years. I am thankful for all you do for Western Zone.

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

SPOTLIGHT ON

Spotlight on Victoria Smith



Western Zone Officers

President
Michelle Claus

1st Vice President
Carol Cascio

2nd Vice President
Maria Hager

Treasurer
Don E. Lawrence

Recording Secretary
Nancy White

Corresponding Secretary
Audrey Seidel

Vice President for Membership
Karen Gembar

Past President
Judy Farmer

Victoria Smith, known as Vicki to all, has always been a person who gives of herself. During her teaching career of 34 years, all at her alma mater, she taught grades 1, 3, 4 and 5. She was always a devoted teacher and also a person who wanted to be very involved with her school and community. While growing up, Vicki was a Girl Scout and then after college, she was a Girl Scout leader for several years. In addition to her teaching duties, Vicki was an officer in the teachers' union.

Vicki is an active member in her church. She is the Secretary for the church Cemetery Committee. She is also Secretary for the Clymer Historical Society. The importance of maintaining the historical records of her hometown is important to her. She has also worked as an election inspector at the election poles in Chautauqua County. Another interest has been being in a local bowling league. In addition to teaching, Vicki worked from time to time at the local ski resort, Peek'n Peak, just like many of the people she has known her entire life. She has always been proud of her roots and has enjoyed being involved in the area.

Vicki has been blessed with a very strong family. She is one of 6 siblings, who although all are adults now, still make time to meet for dinner once a week at a local restaurant. That's incredible. We all are so busy, but making time for family always has been a priority in her life.

Vicki graduated from her alma mater Clymer Central in 1967 as

Zone Unit Presidents

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

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Spotlight

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the class salutatorian. She graduated Cum Laude with a BS degree in elementary education from SUNY at Geneseo College in 1971 and received her Masters of Science in Education from SUNY at Fredonia in 1975.

Vicki retired from Clymer Central School in 2005 and stills stays connected to former colleagues and enjoys getting together with them for lunch. Since retirement Vicki has continued to be involved with teachers outside of her community. She was treasurer for her WZ unit in Chautauqua County, was an alternate delegate on the WZ Board of Directors. and is currently a WZ Board of Director. Vicki has frequently attended the state conference and has been an active participant in many committees over the years, including the Split Club, legislation, nominations, and health care. Vicki also is on the Founders' Fund Distribution Committee, delivering donations in Chautauqua Co. She's an individual who contributes, quietly at times, and takes pride in lending a hand. Vicki's contributions and dedication to Western Zone made her the perfect recipient for the 2023 WZ Citation Award presented at the WZ Annual meeting in September. Congratulations to a well deserving WZ board member!

Vicki has been a lifelong resident in the Clymer school district in Chautauqua County, but recently has moved to Erie, Pa. Although she is living there, she still enjoys remaining active in her hometown and New York State organizations, including RENY/Western Zone.

Vicki's most admirable characteristics are her strong loyalty to family, friends, and colleagues as well as her many continuing contributions to various organizations and her community. She helps others in a meaningful way, and those who know her, appreciate her many caring ways. WZ is proud to "Spotlight" Vicki in this edition of Western Currents.

2023 RENY ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

On October 11, delegates from Western Zone made their way to Turning Stone Resort and Casino for the 72nd Annual Meeting of The New York State Retired Teachers' Association. This year's meeting was hosted by RENY North Central Zone.

In addition to participating in the Election of Officers for RENY, WZ Delegates heard reports from RENY's Standing Committees, reviewed and voted on 2 proposed changes to RENY's bylaws as well as the 2024 RENY Budget. Delegates were also asked to vote on 2 resolutions.

The Nomination Committee, led by our own Judy Farmer, presented a great slate of officers which included Dr. James Newell as President, Gayla LePage as Vice President, Mary Lou Wood as Secretary and Leigh Powell as Treasurer. All of these candidates were re-elected to the positions they held in 2022 and all promised to continue their hard work on our behalf.

The funding of RENY was a big topic during the Annual Meeting and was reflected in 2 proposed changes to the Bylaws. Passing easily was a proposal to change the wording of Article V, Section 9, Line 13 to read, "Make all investments of Association funds in accordance with the investment policy of the Board of Directors through the Finance and Budget Committee."

In the preparation of RENY's 2024 Budget, the Board of Directors voted to increase the membership dues to \$40. Proposition #2 had to do with the sharing of the membership dues with the zones. In the past RENY has returned 1/3 of the dues, or \$10 per member, to their local zone. The suggested change would reduce the portion of dues returned to 1/4. While RENY will get \$10 more per member, the zone share would remain the same. This proposition generated many comments from the floor, both for and against, and was defeated. RENY will continue to return 1/3 of each member's dues to the local zone. Dues will be increased to \$39.00 for annual membership in 2024.

RENY's 2024 budget of \$332,250 includes a net deficit of \$63,750.00. Although many delegates spoke about the need to cut expenses and increase membership, the budget was passed.

Two very important resolutions were also voted on and now will be recommended. The first resolution directs RENY to "seek federal legislation that Medicare provides coverage for vision, hearing, dental care, Emergency Care and Urgent Care". The second resolution directs RENY to "seek retirement Tier Equity by encouraging New York State Legislators to amend Teacher Retirement Tiers 5 and 6 to be more in line with the benefits found in Tier 4.

Western Zone Delegates to the Annual Meeting most certainly benefitted from interaction with delegates from other zones and most especially appreciated the opportunity to share ideas and concerns with our RENY state leadership.

Carol Cascio

WESTERN ZONE ANNOUNCES TRAVEL PLANS FOR 2024

Join the Western Zone Travel group **June 3 to June 5, 2024**, on an exciting and educational trip to the Lancaster, PA area. While there, experience the original live production of **DANIEL**, one of the Bible's most hope-filled stories presented at the famous **Sight and Sound Theatre**. From the fiery furnace to the infamous den of lions, you will be spellbound by this production of **DANIEL**. We will have dinner on day one at **Shady Maple Smorgasbord** - the largest buffet in the USA, and on day two, share in a dinner prepared and served in an **Amish homestead**.

A **Strasburg Rail Road** will provide us with a 45minute train ride through the scenic Dutch countryside. The **Lil' Country Store & Miniature Horse Farm** and shopping will be offered, as well as a **guided tour** of the Amish Country, with stops at craft and bake shops.

Triple occupancy is \$519, double \$549 and single \$699. The cost includes all gratuities, bus transportation, 2 nights lodging, 2 breakfasts, both dinners mentioned above, admission to all the events, luggage handling, and taxes. Travel insurance is optional and available at additional cost.

A **deposit** of \$100 per person is **due January 28, 2024** and the **remainder due March 28, 2024**. Pickups will be in Hamburg, Williamsville and possibly Batavia. If you are interested in the trip and/or travel insurance, and have not received information via email, please contact Anne Flansburg at anneflanswz@aol.com or by phone 716-863-3631 for additional information and reservation forms.

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Reserve September 23 – 27, 2024 for a fun-filled and informative trip to **Mackinac Island**, which will include **Frankenmuth** and the **Upper Peninsula**. Additional information and reservation information will be available in the **February** issue of **CURRENTS**. This trip will include Bonner's Christmas Wonderland, Soo Locks Boat Cruise, Horse-Drawn Carriage tour of Mackinac Island, Hydro-jet Ferry Ride, Tahquamenon Falls, and other great sights of interest.

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Health News

Have you ever noticed that there always seems to be a medical issue in the spotlight? While the experts tell us that Covid will probably always be with us, like the flu, its importance seems to be fading, and it is on the back burner in the minds of many. Once we get a handle on something with successful treatments, it's like a void has opened, and a new medical condition steps up to fill it. Now that condition appears to be RSV. RSV, or Respiratory Syncytial Virus, used to be thought of as a pediatric ailment, but now seniors are also a prime target. Like other respiratory illnesses, this highly contagious disease is spread through touching an infected surface and transferring the virus to the eyes, nose, or mouth or by droplets from a cough or sneeze that travel through the air to a new host. Symptoms can be a wet cough, shortness of breath, labored breathing, congestion, runny nose, watery eyes, wheezing, and mental confusion. Children with RSV will often display full-blown respiratory symptoms, while RSV in adults is often mistaken for allergies or the common cold. Measures to protect yourself include hand washing, avoiding crowds, masks, and the vaccine. In December of 2022, a bill was introduced in

the House of Representatives to establish the National Patient Safety Board (NPSB). We have all seen TV coverage of a transportation-related disaster being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). It gathers information on the cause-and-effect relationships of the disaster in an effort to give recommendations to improve safety measures and avoid future disasters. The NPSB would be an agency devoted to doing the same within the field of medical disasters. Again, you have probably seen a TV medical drama where doctors and other hospital staff are interviewed by the "Hospital Board" to gather data about an incident that should never be repeated. Currently, only the state of Pennsylvania has an agency responsible for doing this on the state level. Should this bill, H.R.9377, become law, the NPSB could be a force that benefits all medical patients.

Vicki Smith



discoverlife.
Fox Run Community Members Irene Zinter & Anne Floyd,
discuss new books for the Fox Run library

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WZ Fall 2023 Trip to NYC

The City “That Never Sleeps” was a memorable and educational sight that hosted 44 travelers on Western Zone’s September trip.

A side trip to Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, PA was enjoyed with Park Rangers giving a historical background of its rich heritage. The museums and actual railroad cars that were able to be walked through, served as a tribute to the work and accomplishments that had been achieved in the early industrial era of America.

History and memories were relived at the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and the 9/11 Memorial, where we spent an entire day. The second day, a six-hour bus tour by our very knowledgeable guide, Linda, gave us an overview of the NYC, including Lower and Upper Manhattan. Many sites were viewed, including Times Square, Greenwich Village, Chinatown, Little Italy, Rockefeller Center, St Patrick’s Cathedral, United Nations, Central Park, the homes of famous people and other interesting buildings and designs. Our driver, Stacey, helped make the trip to this ever-busy city a comfortable and stress-free experience.

George and LaVonne Walker, first time travelers with the Western Zone group, shared that they were among two in the group who did the optional 10 story climb to reach the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, which totaled 215 steps. Congratulations to those who accepted this challenge! Thanks to Pat Pierce and Ann Marie Wik, Bus Bingo was enjoyed by all, as was a documentary on the Statue of Liberty. Travelers participated in two different word games, and Mary Wnek, who was declared the winner, was chosen to provide games for future trips.

Memories and new friendships are always part of our Western Zone trips, and we look forward to the planning and announcement of upcoming ones. Special thanks and acknowledgement to the 44 happy travelers who helped make the New York City Experience such a delightful one!



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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



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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



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WESTERN ZONE SPECIAL OFFER

April 1, 2023 - March 31, 2024
Membership Inflation Deduction

WESTERN ZONE Membership Inflation Deduction Rebate is being offered until March 31, 2024.

Dues will continue as - yearly \$30.00 and lifetime \$450.00 until December 31, 2023 with the rebate being \$10.00 or \$150.00. Please pay by **December 15, 2023**.

RENY/Western Zone dues will be increasing to; yearly \$39.00 and lifetime \$900.00 as of Jan 1, 2024.
Reminder, members who are already lifetime members have already paid their lifetime dues.

RETIRED EDUCATORS OF NY NEW MEMBER ENROLLMENT FORM AND PROFILE

Name (circle one) Mr. Miss Mrs. Ms. Dr. _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone (____) _____ Date of Birth _____ Email _____

(Circle one) Retired Educator Active Educator Associate (non-certified support staff) Year Retired _____

County of Residence _____ School Dist./College/Univ Retired From _____

Subject Area _____ Level Taught _____ Level of Admin if Applicable _____

Spouse Enrollment - OPTIONAL Referred by: _____

Spouse Name (circle one) Mr. Miss Mrs. Ms. Dr. _____

Date of Birth _____ Email _____

Retired Educator? Yes No (year retired) _____ Active Educator? Yes No State Retired From _____

School Dist./College/University Retired From _____

Payment Options

I have enclosed my check or money order made out to NYSRTA/RENY in the amount of: _____

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Mail to:

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Western Zone Annual Meeting- September 20, 2023

Our annual meeting is held yearly at Alton's Banquet facility at 2221 Transit Road, Elma. It is held the 3rd Wednesday of September. Next year's meeting is **September 18, 2024**. Please put this on your calendar. Reservation forms will be in the summer 2024 Western Currents. Bring a friend and/or relative.

Our day began early, about 8 am. There were 38 vendors at our meeting. These vendors represented a variety of businesses. Vendors had little "gifts" for all that stopped to ask about their business. Prior to our Western Zone member meeting, many vendors chose a name from their bowl to give a special gift. Examples from this year were; Bills blankets, Bills clothing, Josh Allen cut out, gift certificates to restaurants and businesses, and colorful mums.

During this time, there was a coffee and tea bar, and some pastries and fruit. A luncheon was served about 12:30. The program booklet was given to all that attended.

Our program this year was Buffalo Honor Flight. The president, Tom Petrie and his Western Zone assistant, Dennis Priore gave a splendid, informative look at this very worthwhile trip for veterans and their chaperones.

Our morning meeting began with the pledge, song-America the Beautiful, and invocation. The business part of the meeting included the minutes from the 2022 annual meeting, treasurer's report, and Western Zone Founder's Fund update. We ballot voted on the corrected Western Zone name: The New York State Retired Teachers' Association, Western Zone, Inc. Reports were in the program for all to read.

Among the honorees was our treasurer, Don Lawrence. Our meeting and program were dedicated to him. He has been on the Board of Director's for 16 years. His friend, Stan Nowak, also a Western Zone Board member, presented Don a certificate and gift. Don is important to the success of Western Zone. Thank you, Don.

Our Certificate of Recognition recipient was Vicki Smith. She is the chair of the Health Committee and always here to help.

As you can see, Western Zone has a lot to offer its members. Please consider attending the annual meeting on September 18, 2024.

Get to know us and in turn we will get to know you. Call Michelle Claus, President at 716-481-5279 to be our guest at one of our monthly meetings.

Western Zone—NYSRTA

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Please be current on your RENY dues. Any questions, please call/text/email Michelle Claus,
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