



RENY
RETIRED EDUCATORS OF NY

YORK STATE

Spring 2025

Vol 75

Issue 1



President's Message

By Gayla LePage



How time flies as we get older! It is already March and is time for my second President's message.

We had our March BOD Teams meeting on March 12. It went quite well. Our investments have gone down with the volatility in the markets, but we have faith in our investment team and believe it will be back.

Yes, we are in a very tumultuous time in our history. I sometimes feel like my head is on a swivel with the daily or hourly changes. As I told the BOD yesterday, I will try to stay on top of things and inform membership about things without any political bias. I will check my sources and be sure they are accurate before I send anything out. I do feel it is my responsibility to keep our membership informed.

I want to congratulate NEZ for their winning the two membership incentives. They do a great job, and I think other zones, including mine, could look to them to get ideas.

Membership continues to be a problem. Something that came up at the BOD yesterday was being sure we publish our accomplishments in as many platforms as we can. There are many free places to do this. We need to let as many as we can know what we do.

I am currently working on the Leadership Manual update to go on the website. I also am working on updating the 'Be It Resolved' document that **Doris Kirsch*CR**, Western Zone, did many years ago.

The President's Appeal letter will be coming out in April. Please try to participate no matter the amount. If all members give, it would help a great deal. We are in financial distress with the inevitable losing of members and a lack of new members. I will thank you in advance for your generosity.

Be sure to read through all of the reports in *York State* when it comes out. There is a wealth of information in there.

In conclusion, as promised here is your history lesson about NYSRTA/RENY for this publication.

- Seeds of organization: In 1946 about 100 retired educators met in Albany, NY to establish a Retired Teachers' Association. This would be the 1st such organization in not only New York State, but also in the nation. Thus, the Eastern Zone became the very first zone, followed by the Western Zone in 1947, and the Central Western Zone in 1949. Central, Southern and Southeastern would soon follow in 1949/1950.

- By 1952, Northern, Long Island, North Central and Northeastern Zones would join NYSRTA to complete the ten zones in New York State, making NYSRTA a true State organization.

Update from your Senior Vice President

Judith Farmer*CR



As I have been working on the planning for the 2025 RENY Annual Meeting and Convention with President LePage, the Office Staff, the Workshop Committee, and this year's Host Zone, Central Zone, one thought keeps coming to mind. The most important part of the Annual Meeting and Convention are the delegates. We can plan beautiful decorations, informative speakers and workshops, great dinners, and exciting activities but without delegates, the Annual Meeting and Convention will fail. It's all about the delegates!

With that in mind, I want to encourage all members to consider attending the meeting and convention as a delegate for their zone. It is your opportunity to express opinions and concerns, but most importantly, to represent your zone's decisions by voting at the business meeting.

The event is being held at Turning Stone Resort and Casino, October 15-17. Attending provides you an opportunity to bond with other members of your zone and to meet retirees from other areas of the state and share ideas and concerns with them. The workshops are designed to provide information you will want to share with your zone and units. And, it isn't all business and work. On the closing night of the convention, there is a cocktail hour before dinner and a fun activity or entertainment after.

Please consider this opportunity, and if you are interested in serving as a delegate, contact your zone president.



Nominations Committee Report for Spring 2025

There are three elective positions open for the 2025-26 year. These positions are listed below:

Vice-President for Membership
Secretary
Treasurer

The following officers have agreed to continue in their current positions for 2025-2026:

Gayla LePage, President
Judy Farmer*CR, Senior Vice President
Janice Mullins, Vice President for Legislative Action
Judy Corigliano, Vice President for Friendly Service

Applicants for these positions are encouraged from every zone. Candidates wishing to run for an open position or candidates wishing to oppose one of the incumbents should submit a letter of intent and a current resume along with a letter of endorsement from his/her Zone President. Other supporting letters from RENY members may also be included. These materials must be submitted to:

Kathryn Grande
10 Chestnut Ave
Glen Head NY 11545

Submissions must be received no later than May 31, 2025. This is a firm deadline. There will be no exceptions to this deadline.

The Nominations Committee will meet at the Board of Directors meeting in July. If a member of the Nominations Committee is unable to attend, his/her Zone President should send the name of an alternate via a letter or email message to the Committee Chair.

Prior to that meeting, each member of the Nominations Committee will have been provided with copies of the applications sent to the Committee Chair. Candidates will present themselves to the Nominations Committee at that July meeting. The Committee will interview each candidate and then make recommendations for each position at the Annual Convention in October. Election shall be by majority vote of the accredited delegates in attendance at the session at which the vote is taken.



Membership Report

By Dell Ford Jordan, VP for Membership

*Membership is a growing substance, it needs fuel.
If you want its output to be healthy and benefit others, you have to keep feeding it.*

WELCOME TO 2025. Winter is gone; let us welcome you to Spring. When written, we were forty-two (42) days into 2025. When you read this article, we will be about 100 days into the year. We have about 265 days to turn our numbers around. How? By recruiting new retirees to our organization. Are you ready??? RENY stats showed 59 recruits for 2024. LET'S TOP THAT IN 2025.

Before we get into the stats of 2024, let's congratulate Northeastern Zone for doing a fantastic job of recruiting twenty-nine (29) new members and winning both of the 2024 New Member Incentive Awards: \$500 for the most new members and \$500 for the highest percentage of new members to their current membership.

CONGRATULATIONS NORTHEASTERN ZONE!!

We began the new year with 9,695 members with 706 90-year-olds and 105 100-year-olds. During the month of December 2024 nine (9) members transitioned for a total of deceased members for the year at 473. 2024 left us with a total of 413 non-paid members.

January 2025 ended with 9,577 total member. 660 90-year-olds, 139 100-year-olds. We gained 4 new members, and 67 members transitioned.

We must re-sell RENY, re-sell the Zones, and re-sell the Units. We must re-sell our benefits and our commitment to this awesome organization for its hard work advocating for our members. You should contact your unit Membership chair or your Zone Membership Chair for the updated application, welcome letter and a list of RENY's key services/benefits.

A gentle reminder: You must be a RENY member if you want to hold an office in the Unit, Zone, and/or the State. You also have to be a member in order to be a delegate at our Annual Meeting & Convention.

On behalf of the Membership Team, *WE THANK ALL OF YOU FOR WHAT YOU DO FOR RENY.* Take care and have a great year!



CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION COMMITTEE

By Carol Lord*CR, Committee Chair



Reminder:

Certificate of Recognition Nomination forms must be received by Carol Lord*CR, chairperson, by May 30th signed by the Zone President.

Friendly Service Report

From Judith Corigliano, VP for Friendly Service

"Keep Calm and give a Hug" -good vibes from Friendly Service

Inspired by 21st century songsters, Jannike "Hugs for Free" video.
Pharrell Williams & Trey Parker, "Despicable" Me3 movie



As things go, who doesn't need a hug. We give and receive hugs ... to and from our partners, parents, siblings, old friends, our grands, and our pets, but what about a perfect stranger? Maybe a little iffy in some metropolitan areas.

I recently had an encounter in a way upstate supermarket parking lot, the last stop on a long list of errands. Let me set the scene.

....it was a sunny, but very cold and windy day... I parked my light gray car and started to open my door, and the wind wiped it out of my grip and scraped the light gray car next to me! Ugh, A cringe worthy moment. I stepped out of my car, tapped on the gentleman's window, and as the electric window moved downward, I blurted out ... "I think I dinged your car." He stepped out and around his car to check it out and replied, "let's see". He then moistened his fingers and wiped the area and then said, "I think we're okay." I replied with a look of total relief "Oh, that would have been all I needed today." He smiled then just gave me a big hug.... oh my, a total stranger.... but then again, a stranger is a friend you haven't met.

I had only removed the layer of winter salt and dirt that clings to North Country cars. It was an encounter of two Subaru owners; however, brief was a sweet and memorable event between two total strangers. We didn't exchange names, nevertheless, it made my day, I shared this with family and best friend, and I am sure this older man might have also shared this story.

A hug is like your heart circling and embracing another person, reaching out to another human in kindness. Sometimes we do sense that need from another person. You might have to ask....do you need a hug today give them out (carefully).... they are free.

It was recently reported that in 2024, 52 RENY's Friendly Service workers sent a lot of HUGS with a total of over 1200 cards, as well as an additional 254 text messages, emails and phone calls, visits, and small gifts. They made many of their zone members smile and feel warmly remembered ...like a hug.

Why not join the hug movement and "make someone's day". Send one card to a RENY member who you think might like a thank you for being a supportive member, "hug"!

"The shortest distance between friends is their hugs." ~anonymous



Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund Report

From Anne Flansburg*CR, Chair

Members of the Robert R DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund thank all who have contributed and assisted in providing a "lifeline" to some of our colleagues who are experiencing temporary or long-term financial difficulties. This has afforded those individuals the opportunity to purchase needed medicine, pay utility bills, receive medical and dental care, and provide for other basic necessities of life.

Through the fall and winter editions of **YORK STATE**, as well as Zone notifications, we are reaching out to members of RENY who have been affected by the recent storms, hurricanes and fires. Many members of RENY live in areas that have been seriously affected and, in some cases, devastated.

See more on the next page....

Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund Report

From Anne Flansburg*CR, Chair



If you or any RENY member that you know has been adversely affected financially by these recent disasters, the Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund is here to help. It was established to provide monetary assistance to RENY members who are in financial need and certainly this is one of those times.

You can receive additional information and download a Special Grant Application on the website <https://retirededucatorsny.org/financial-assistance/> - This URL will take you to the financial assistance section of our website. You may also obtain an application for a Special Grant by calling the Chair of the Trust, Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or by emailing her at anneflanswz@aol.com. The grants not only help those who are affected by the recent storms, but they may be able to help in various other ways.

Since the office is no longer located in a central area, we ask that donations, payable to: Robert R DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund, be sent directly to:

Mary Lou Davis, Treasurer 125 Andrews Rd LaGrangeville NY 12540

DO NOT SEND DONATIONS TO THE RENY OFFICE



Community Service Report

From Eileen Holmes*CR, Chair

RENY'S Community Service programs are generous and diverse, with members working through zone-wide projects, unit projects and individual efforts. During the past winter, community service collected and delivered items for North Carolina hurricane relief. They delivered new coats, boots, hats and snow pants to needy children in upstate New York. Toys were donated through the Christmas Bureau. Money was collected to support public libraries. Very generous amounts of money and foodstuffs were donated to local and county food banks across the state. Greeting cards were sent to veterans and donations were made to animal rescue organizations. Individually, RENY members donated their time and expertise to their communities: decorating hometowns, serving on boards, answering Santa Claus letters, checking on their neighbors and much more! They also very generously donated foodstuffs and money to many local and county food banks across the state.

We are proud that in so many different and unique ways, the spirit of giving and sharing is the core of RENY community service efforts. We are looking forward to spring and summer activities that will include scholarships, veteran causes, continued food, clothing, and personal hygiene collections, and community service projects that will benefit children, animals, the environment, active teachers and graduating students.

Special thanks to our RENY Community Service Zone chairs:

Joan Handfield (CWZ), **Joyce Notarnicola** (EZ), **Angelo Grande*CR** (LIZ), **Toni Gigliotti** and **Patty Corey** (NCZ), **Connie LaLonde** (NEZ), **Alice Galvin**, (NZ), **Cheryl Fischer** (SEZ), **Mary Suffern** (SZ) and **Anne Marie Wik** (WZ). The Central Zone is without a Community Service chair and it would be great to welcome a RENY member to this position. Working with community service provides a rewarding, feel-good opportunity. Helping make you HAPPY!

"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted>" ...Aesop



Legislative Action Report

by Janice Mullins, VP for Legislative Action



As our part of the world is awakening to the certainty of spring, the uncertainty of economic wellness looms large for many of our seniors and members of your families. I can't imagine how unsettling it must be to have worked hard as a servant of the Federal Government only to find out in an email that you are terminated. Without warning, without previous notification, not knowing if you will receive a final paycheck or when your health insurance will end, or even if you qualify for unemployment benefits is frightening. Our hearts go out to the members of your families and the tens of thousands of other Americans who are experiencing this nightmare.

RENY's Legislative Action Committee has been following the changes in the various government agencies since the new administration took office and how these changes will affect retired seniors and all New Yorkers.

Advocacy at the state level began in early March and is currently on going. The issues we are addressing for this NYS legislative Session focus on protecting retiree health benefits (HERA), preserving federal aid to education in NYS, continuing effective changes that will improve retirement for Tier 6 members, and improving the public pension COLA computation formula. Each priority can have a significant impact upon our retiree membership. HERA legislation, if passed, would guarantee that we cannot be forced out of traditional Medicare into an inferior Medicare Advantage Plan. Preserving federal aid to New York schools would guarantee that programs for students with special needs and the underprivileged would continue, school taxes would not exceed the tax cap, and retiree health insurance would not be threatened. Bringing Tier 6 in line with Tier 4 could draw more students to the teaching profession. Raising the base benefit amount upon which COLA is computed from \$18,000 to \$21,000 would help seniors keep better pace with inflation.

Advocacy at the federal level commences between April 11th and April 25th when our Congressional Representatives will be spending time in their districts. The issues we are addressing for this Congressional Session include Protecting Social Security and Medicare for the future, Protecting, Preserving, and Strengthening Medicaid, and Protecting the Federal Department of Education. We will also support the Elimination of Taxes on Social Security Benefits income. If there is a clear path to recouping that lost revenue into the Social Security Trust Fund. As with our State Priorities, these Federal Priorities are even more crucial to the economic wellness of retired seniors. As the administration continues to slash away at spending and the size of the federal workforce in its efforts to make government more efficient, programs that seniors rely upon are at risk. When surveyed, most Americans overwhelmingly want to see Social Security's funding gap closed by bringing in additional revenues instead of through benefit reductions. Medicaid is the state's largest source of federal funds. Cuts to those funds and changes to services covered under Medicaid puts 36% of New York's population's health care at risk. To maintain the coverage that recipients have today would cost the state \$5.5 billion. That cost would "trickle down" to counties, cities and you. Elimination of the Federal Department of Education could threaten not only programs for students in grades k-12 but could also threaten many grant programs at the higher education level. Removing federal taxes on Social Security income could create a \$50 billion shortfall in the Social Security Trust Fund bringing its insolvency nearer in our future unless there is a clear plan to replace that shortfall.



We don't have a crystal ball so we can't predict how all of this will play out in the end. This month you are receiving a letter asking you to support the RENY President's Appeal. In that envelope you will also receive a letter that you may send to your Congressional Representatives expressing how concerned you, as a RENY member, are with the current situation in Washington. On the positive side, hope for the best.



Legislative Action Report

From Jan Mullins, VP for Legislation



Your voice counts. This letter, expressing our concern over recent cuts in Washington, has been approved for use by the RENY Board of Directors and the members of the RENY Legislative Action Committee. It is our hope that many members will choose to send it to their Congressional Representatives in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate. When you receive your copy in the President's Appeal, please date it, sign it, include your email address, and send it on its way.

Dear Congressional Representative,

We are Retired Educators of New York (RENY), an organization that represents over 9,000 retired educators in New York State. We are not lobbyists; we are advocates. Our advocacy spans many issues to improve life for retirees, seniors, educators, students and families in our communities and across our state. Our membership is comprised of Republicans and Democrats as well as independent voters. We are Conservatives and Liberals, and we are very concerned about recent events taking place in Washington in the past month. We are calling upon you to fulfill the responsibility that you have been charged with as a member of the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

You had a calling to run for the position you serve in, **to represent the American People and make decisions in every American's best interest.** It is hard to believe that you may have lost sight of that calling. It is hard to believe that you fully support all the numerous changes being proposed and implemented by the new administration. It is hard to believe that you fully support the way in which the changes are being implemented.

Ask yourself, is it in the best interest of American seniors and American children to reduce funding for Medicaid? Is it in the best interest of American seniors to reduce Medicare and Social Security? Is it in the best interest of eliminating the Federal Education Department affecting funding for our students with special needs and the future of current college students whose loans have been halted or the possibility of acquiring a college loan put in jeopardy? Is it in the best interest of rural America to decrease mail services to those areas?

You must stand up for us without worry or fear of political repercussions. It has been reported that discussions behind closed doors are very different from those presented when some of our Representatives are interviewed by the media. If you feel in your heart that something is wrong, then it is. We encourage you to put aside partisanship. We encourage you to work with your members across the aisle for bipartisan solutions to these difficult questions. We encourage you to use the congressional duty of oversight given to you by our United States Constitution.

Sincerely and respectfully,

CENTRAL ZONE

Submitted by Ray Pitcher, Zone President & Mary Ann Luciano, Public Relations Chair

During a Zone meeting held on Zoom, the group recommended that “Kaleidoscope” be selected as the RENY State Convention theme. The recommendation went to the RENY Board and Conference Committee with the Central Zone’s Spring Meeting on April 17th continuing work needed for the October RENY State Convention.

At the Central Zone Spring Meeting, zone members heard an update from **David Keefe**, Board President of the NYS Teachers’ Retirement System (NYSTRS). Since 2004, David has served on the NYSTRS Board of Directors. He retired from the Hempstead Public School District, was president of the local Teachers’ Association, and is the first NYSTRS Board President who was elected by the retirees. Before his retirement, David taught eighth grade social studies. He has been a RENY member since 2005. The RENY Annual Meeting and Convention’s keynote speaker will be from the NYSTRS.

This past winter following the holidays was a challenging time in Central New York with the weather. Ice and snow were especially devastating to Oswego County where buildings caved in, and one member reported that a foot and a half of ice encased her roof. Therefore, the Oswego, Onondaga, and Cayuga units in the northern part of the Zone did not hold centralized activities during this time.

RENY Chenango held a gathering to plan legislative actions to occur with their local state officials followed by emails to RENY members. Emails contained contact information and information on RENY’s state legislative priority on the maintenance of health insurance that retirees were promised upon retiring.



During the Committee of 100 Lobby Day, the RENY Chenango Vice President for Legislative Action **Diana Torta** attended as part of the RC45, retired teachers’ group and reports that the primary focus was changing Tier 6 for future retirees to be comparable with Tier 4. Diana is active as the Retired Teacher Representative on the Catskill Regional Teacher Center’s Policy Board and assists with their Annual Legislative Forum, a professional development experience on having conversations with legislators and the area Regent for SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College pre-service teachers and active teachers in the Teacher Center’s 35-school district area. Participants conversed with the legislators face to face and via Zoom.

Diana and others in the RENY Unit met with our Chenango Assemblymembers and Senators after these fortuitous introductions. It has been the practice of this unit to collaborate with other organizations to meet similar goals.

The RENY Chenango unit also held a successful Celebrate National Pi Day (March 14th) informal lunch with pizza pie at Angela’s, a popular Norwich Italian Restaurant. Door prizes were given, and attendees discussed the unit’s 2025-26 Community Service Project with the Chenango County Area Aging Council. Each New York State County has an aging agency that provides services to the aging and their families and has an advisory council.

See more on the next page....

ZONE NEWS ZONE NEWS ZONE NEWS ZONE NEWS

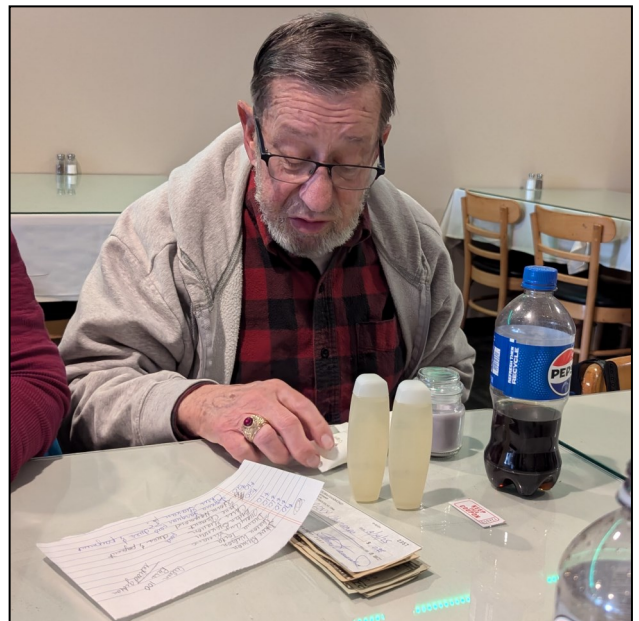
CENTRAL ZONE

Submitted by Ray Pitcher, Zone President & Mary Ann Luciano, Public Relations Chair

National Pi Day is an annual celebration of the mathematical constant π equal to 3.14159, that is the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter. Pi Day is observed on March 14, since the first three significant figures of π are 3, 1, and 4. In the United States in 1988, it was initiated by Larry Shaw, a physicist of the Exploratorium, a San Francisco science museum. The celebration provides a break from the long winter and a fun time to enjoy each other.

Pi also has other meanings such as in the Life of Pi where the character's name reminds us of the cyclical nature of life and the ways in which the natural universe exists in a delicate balance <https://study.com/academy/lesson/pis-name-in-life-of-pi-meaning-symbolism-significance.html#>

RENY Chenango 's National Pi Day Celebration intense conversation, **Storm Hammond** (Friendly Service Chair), **Chris Granan** (Member-at-Large), **Diana Torta** (V-P for Legislative Action). Below, **Steve Runion**, (Treasure) talking up the Community Service proceeds from the National Pi Day Celebration.



The Onondaga County unit was busy developing their three major meetings held in spring, summer, and fall. As of this writing, the dates and places were soon to be announced. At these meetings, the participants determine their community service projects and prepare for future educator scholarships. Friendly Service Key Workers are busy all year long with cards and phone calls to 90+ age members.

RENY Cayuga County raised funds for community service at their spring and fall dinner meetings. The Cayuga unit's President, **Bill Tenity*CR**, is also busy reviewing proposed RENY bylaws changes as Chair of RENY's Bylaws Committee.

The Central Zone welcomes participation of any RENY member as they pilot changes to the RENY Annual Meeting and Convention. If you would like to volunteer to help, please contact Ray Pitcher, Central Zone President, 315-217-1286 or email him at rpitcher1@twcny.rr.com

CENTRAL WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by Mary Beth Tyndall, Zone President & Carol Lord*CR, Public Relations Chair

We look forward to Spring and reuniting at our counties' meetings so we can move forward in 2025!

The fall season began with our Annual Meeting at King's Catering & Party House in Canandaigua on September 12th . There were 35 in attendance plus 25 entertainers! Our time together was filled with a delicious picnic BBQ lunch, beautiful raffle baskets, lots of photos from the past and the Oasis Tappers!



Oasis Tapper Jeanne & Betty Worden



Mabel Deal



Betty Worden, Virginia Konz, Joan Handfield, Marshall Handfield, & Jane Crosby

CWZ was well represented at our RENY Annual Meeting and Convention at Turning Stone in October. We always enjoy ourselves with many thanks to the hosting zone and RENY staff! We especially had fun at the Black Fly Ball and the Trivia competition! Pictured at right is the CWZ Delegation

See more on the next page....



CENTRAL WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by Mary Beth Tyndall, Zone President & Carol Lord*CR, Public Relations Chair



CWZ Delegation dressed for the Black Fly Ball



Barb & Dave Bush



Sue Nellany & John Hogan



Sandy Hill & Deb Dorgan

EASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Pamela Love, Public Relations Chair

RENY/Eastern Zone Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 18, 2025. The Executive Committee will meet on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. At this meeting, the winner of the Hudson-Kramer Grant will be announced.

Our legislative advocacy efforts have begun with phone calls to the NYS Assembly and NYS Senate Representatives assigned to Eastern Zone. We would like to thank **Thomas Mullins**, **Lisa Devaren**, **Al Ciejska**, **David Christopher** and **Janice Mullins** for giving their time and efforts to this endeavor. Federal advocacy calls to Congressional Representatives will begin in April.

Ken Bollerud, President of the Saratoga Unit, says that his unit meets once a month during the school year. At present, his unit is meeting at the Ripe Tomato Restaurant on the first Tuesday of the month. Each meeting features a Treasurers report, a Friendly Service report and a Legislative Action Report. There is a speaker at some of the meetings. His unit is looking for new members and are having a discussion of possible summer events.

The Capital District (RCRTA) unit will be having an Executive Board Meeting on Wednesday, May 7, 2025. The June meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 11, 2025. Winners of 2025 scholarships will be announced at this meeting.

The Upper Montgomery unit will be having a Spring Meeting on May 20, 2025. Other units in RENY Eastern Zone are working on upcoming activities as of March 25, 2025.

LONG ISLAND ZONE

Submitted by Eileen Holmes*CR, Zone President

"Lo the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds has come....." Song of Solomon 2:11

The Long Island Zone is very pleased to welcome Spring! It was a cold and windy winter, full of viruses, flu and other germs that caused us to cancel meetings and 'hold off' until Spring. The zone held an organizational meeting in April and scheduled its annual Spring Meeting/Luncheon for May 21, 2025. The East End unit held an organizational meeting in late March and set their first-of-the-year luncheon for April 23rd. The West End unit has planned their next group adventure for June, 2025. Community service projects were discussed as well as plans for what we can do as a group to show our concern over the federal cuts made to the Education Department, veterans, and social programs that address early childhood hunger, autism, and so much more. Legislative Action chair **Val Sype** has shared RENY form letters and means of advocating through our state legislators and senators.

Saturday, March 12, 2025 was a memorable day on eastern Long Island. Wildfires raged from Center Moriches, East Moriches, and Manorville to Westhampton, fueled by 35+ mph winds and dry conditions in "The Pine Barrens". The Pine Barrens are thousands of acres of scrub oak and pine trees that span the center of eastern Long Island. They have been preserved from building and development because they lie atop millions of gallons of pure drinking water that was formed during the glacier age.

The fires are now believed to have been accidentally started by some kids making S'mores. They used a piece of cardboard to get more heat, the cardboard ashes got carried by the windand so it began! Over 700 acres of the Pine Barrens burned, two firefighters were slightly injured and two industrial type sheds/buildings were lost. *If done under control*, burning the Pine Barrens is not all bad;; it clears out dead brush and trees and the heat allows certain pine cone seeds to open to regenerate.

See more on the next page....

LONG ISLAND ZONE

Submitted by Eileen Holmes*CR, Zone President

Over 79 volunteer fire departments responded, the state police and Suffolk County sheriff's handled road closing and possible evacuations. Dozens of ambulances from across the island stood by, along with winter snow bulldozing equipment from townships, in case 'roads' had to be cut through the burning forests. Nassau County was on alert if more help was needed, delis donated food, neighbors checked on neighbors and it was a successful, come-together day. No politics, no boundaries, no in-fighting, just work together and get the job done. The fires started around 1PM and all except Westhampton were out by 8PM. Westhampton was all-clear by Sunday. The last major wildfires on Long Island were in the mid 1990's and called the Sunrise Fires because they jumped both Sunrise Highway, raged for days and caused massive destruction. Thirty years later, everyone had learned a lot about tackling wildfires so the 2025 situation had a much better ending!

NORTH CENTRAL ZONE

Submitted by Nancy Roberts*CR and Patricia Newell, Public Relations Co-Chairs

NCZ website: www.renyncz.org

"In winter, I plot and plan. In spring, I move." Henry Rollins

NCZ members have taken Mr. Rollins' advice. They are indeed moving ahead into a myriad of spring activities. This is especially satisfying after an old-fashioned winter season complete with frigid temperatures and tons of snow. We are looking forward to celebrating our Scholarship Luncheon on June 19th at the Hilton Garden Inn in Watertown. Under the leadership of NCZ President **Rick Morris**, this venue proved to be quite successful and enjoyable for our luncheons last year. Our members were pleased with the cheerful room, triple screen viewing capacity, and delicious food.

Our 2025 Future Educator Scholarship Award winners with their parents will be the honored guests at this luncheon. The two winners will each receive a \$1,000 scholarship award. A great deal of credit goes to **John Gaffney**, NCZ Scholarship Chair. He and his dedicated committee members have the formidable task of selecting the winners from a number of outstanding candidates. They are hard at work right now on this task. Members serving on the scholarship committee are: **Candice Buckingham, Bill Haller, Marianne Malatino, Patti Scordo, and Tom Van Emmerik**. NCZ is proud to support not only retired educators but also future educators. It is inspiring to see young people so excited about entering the teaching field. These are the individuals who will make a difference in the classroom.



We are delighted to have Michael Comet, pictured at left with **John Gaffney**, back with us as our guest speaker for the Scholarship Luncheon. Mr. Comet is an Excellence in Teaching Award winner from South Lewis Central School. He is also a two time winner of the Hudson Kramer Award. His power point presentation on bees and the bee observation hive is both informative and fascinating. For his presentation, Mr. Comet always brings his sense of humor and his bee keeper's equipment!

Our own dynamic NCZ member, Diane Ferrucci, at right, will treat us once again to "Aging Gracefully" at the June luncheon. Diane, a certified personal trainer and life coach, will share her expertise with us. She will give us one physical tip and one tip on business/finance. Diane has created a program highlight that everyone enjoys.



This luncheon is shaping up to be a super spring event for our honored guests, members, and friends. Come and see what NCZ is all about!

Dates to Remember:

NCZ Exec Council Meeting May 7, 2025, 10am, NNYCF, Watertown
NCZ Scholarship Luncheon June 19, 2025, Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown

NORTHEASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Cindi LaFountain, Public Relations Chair

Our winters are long but there is a lot going up here in the Adirondacks, behind the snowbanks and in our homes. Our committees have been meeting and making plans for the upcoming months.

The Community Service Committee, led by **Connie Lalonde**, has a personal care item collection at our June meeting which will be assembled in individual bags. Our annual food drive will be held at 2 local food markets in Plattsburgh and Peru during this month. In the fall, they will be gathering hats, mittens, gloves and warm socks. Both collections will be donated to a local distribution site.

At our December meeting, we will be collecting toys and cash for the Christmas Bureau. Notices have gone out to Clinton and Essex schools for the Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant that is being offered to educators this year.

The Program Committee has speakers and/or entertainment lined up for our upcoming meetings.

Finally, our Membership Committee has gone from one to a team of four. **Sandy Lashua**, our energizer bunny, is excited to have these three ladies join her in increasing our membership. Imagine what these four will accomplish being led by our successful Sandy. We look forward to the months ahead and all that is planned.

NEZ MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Rosemary & David Spencer

by Sandy Lashua



I recently received an email from Rosemary concerning RENY's age for free membership. (RENY members over the age of 90 receive free membership) I called her to give her the information and thank them for their years of support for RENY/NEZ. They are both longtime members. Dave (92) retired in '91 after years of teaching Math at Plattsburgh High School. Rosemary (89) retired in '94 from Peru School where she taught Music. Many Peru students learned to play the recorder from her. She also had a recorder group of adults called the "North Winds" with Carol Gallagher, Rosemary Lombardoni and Gwen Chase as members. The Spencers retired to Florida and reside in their town house at Lake View Terrace in Altoona, Florida. I'm happy to report they are in good health and she still gives recorder lessons to adults.



NORTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Linda Crosby, Public Relations Chair



Greetings to all from a snowy Malone, N.Y. We broke some longstanding records this season. The open fields are bare, but, my yard still has knee deep snow plus a tree that just fell down from strong winds whipping across the North Country today including rain, hail, and a tornado warning in the western part of our zone. March is always a crazy weather month with some of our biggest snow storms--hope we are done with those storms. Out in the nearby woods, have the bears come out of hibernation yet? Notice that in the photo of me, I'm about as close to a live black bear (ok, it's stuffed) as I ever would NOT want to be, tickling her chin whiskers at the Nicandri Nature Center in Massena, N.Y. at our last NZ membership meeting.

While the snow still lingers, I'd like to mention the always festive Christmas party celebrated by our Clifton-Fine-Edwards Retired Teachers Association in southeastern St. Lawrence County. Many northern NZ members also gathered with the locals to enjoy a luscious lunch on December 17, 2024 at the Packbasket Inn in Wanakena, N.Y. The CFE unit always welcomes all NZ members to their meetings; their President **Joe Russo** and Meetings and Program Chair **Alice Galvin** do a great job planning entertaining meetings. Both Joe and Alice also serve on the NZ BOD and RENY committees.



Congratulations to NZ member **Bob Devins!!** As a superb college athlete, he was recently inducted into the SUNY Cortland C-Club as a member of the 2024 Hall of Fame Class. Bob is a 1971 graduate of SUNY Cortland, where he participated in Indoor and Outdoor Track and Field, setting many school records, as well as being elected MVP of the 1970 NYS Collegiate Track and Field Association Championships. He earned three Indoor NYSCTFA Team titles, two Outdoor Team titles, and set many facility records at other university meets. Bob had a very successful career at Malone CSD as a Physical Education Teacher and Coach before he retired in 2008. He coached Outdoor Track and Field from 1971-2012 and Indoor Track and Field from 1973-2012. He also coached JV/Varsity Football, Boys and Girls Cross Country, and Boys Basketball. He led his athletes to many Section 10 Titles while coaching over 40 NYSPHSAA Track and Field medalists and State Champions. His Boys Track and Field dual meet record was 251-34 and his Girls Cross Country record was 110-11. Bob was selected many times as Section 10 Coach of the Year. He gave many hours of service as a NCAA and USA Track official, Cross Country official and NCAA Track and Field Umpire. Originally from Peru, N.Y., Bob now lives in Canton, N.Y. with his wife, **Cathy Devins**, who is also an NZ member. They love being near their children and grandchildren.

The NZ BOD and committees have begun planning for the many 2025 events, such as H.S. Senior Scholarships, the Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant (for active educators) and the Spring Membership Meeting. Please encourage worthy individuals to apply for our scholarship/grant opportunities; contact President **Gayla LePage** about scholarships and **Linda Crosby** for the H-K grant. We hope to see you at the Spring Membership Meeting. Watch for the NZ Spring Newsletter in May for more information.

See more on the next page....

NORTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Linda Crosby, Public Relations Chair

Northern Zone folks will greatly miss a wonderful friend; **Douglas Theobald**, 87, of Potsdam, N.Y., who passed away on January 5, 2025 in Port Charlotte, Florida ,under the loving care of his wife, Jean, and his children Cindy (Brian), Eric (Charlotte), and Brian (Ann) and their families including grandchildren Melissa, Megan, Trey, Lauren, Aidan, Liam, Sarah, Ava, and Sean and great grandchildren Olivia, Gianna, and Addie. Doug had three sisters, Barbara, Joyce, and Phyllis and two brothers, Walter and Kenneth. He was the son of Ruth and Walter. Doug and Jean were always visiting or hosting members of their large, loving family.

After attending a one-room schoolhouse, Doug graduated from Potsdam CSD(1955), Cornell University (1959) and married Jean in 1960. They moved to the family dairy farm which they named High Ivy Homestead. Doug worked the farm with Jean and earned a Masters Degree in Special Education. He taught agriculture at Hermon-DeKalb CSD, shop and agriculture at Potsdam CSD, and Special Education at BOCES. He retired from teaching in 2008. He and Jean (NZ Historian) have been RENY members for many years.

One of his principals, **Holly Chorba**, recently told me, “He was always a positive influence at Potsdam Central with a ready smile and upbeat attitude that reflected how much he truly cared for his students.” Doug also served his community by supporting his church, local Hospice, Jaycees, 4-H, FFA, garden club and his children’s sports and activities. Always helping at our NZ BOD, membership meetings, and RENY conventions, Doug was a very loyal supportive NZ member. He was a kind and humble man with a subtle, yet, sublime sense of humor--a true gentleman, whose generous smile made us smile often. We will remember him and miss him very much.



Doug and Jean on far left with many members of RENY Northern Zone visiting The Wilder Farm.

Photo credit: Alice Galvin

Lower left, Doug and Jean at the 2016 Annual Meeting and lower right, pictured with Rae Louise and Ted Tate at the 2017 Annual Meeting & Convention.



SOUTHEASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Maureen Coffey, Public Relations Chair

*"No winter lasts forever;
no spring skips its turn."
Hal Borland, author, staff writer
for The New York Times*

This winter was harsh and caused hardships for many New Yorkers as well as people from all over the country. Knowing that eventually spring would arrive was truly a beacon of hope for us all. And with the warmer weather comes an increase in activities for the retired teachers of Southeastern Zone.

For starters, SEZ has established a Scholarship Committee which will soon begin screening applicants. A suggestion from **Patti DeLeo**, chairperson of the committee, to allow \$1000 to be awarded to a senior heading for college and another \$1000 to be split between two applicants pursuing vocational, technical or trade school careers. The students can use these funds for tuition or to purchase necessary tools to begin working in their desired field. When Patti suggested that this format be considered to structure our awards, it was met with unanimous approval. What better way to award money than to choose a few deserving students as they pursue their dreams. SEZ plans to continue this worthwhile \$2000 award every year.

Our SEZ "Third Thursday" luncheons have started up again after taking a pause during the winter months. These afternoons are always enjoyable, and a fun way to catch up and visit with friends and colleagues. And to further keep us up to date, **Donna Harness**, President of Southeastern Zone, is busy preparing her spring newsletter.

One more piece of news, past SEZ president, **Harriet Beers*CR**, will be leaving New York to live with her daughter in the Sunshine State. Harriet plans to celebrate her 100th birthday in Florida. We wish her our best, but we'll still miss her. You can catch up with her at htbeers@yahoo.com

The retired teachers in Sullivan County got together on April 9th at Casa Mia in Hurleyville. Their speaker, Chris Skinner, spoke on community work. On a sad note from Sullivan County, **Jean Harrold**, wife of past SEZ president, **Leon Harrold*CR**, passed away. Jean often accompanied Leon to the annual convention. She was a lovely person and will be missed by all who knew her.

The Newburgh retired teachers had their spring luncheon on April 3rd at Temple Hill Tavern in New Windsor. Their annual June meeting will be on June 5th, also at Temple Hill Tavern. For years now, the Newburgh teachers have collected socks for local homeless shelters. The "Sock It To 'Em" program has been quite successful. At their April luncheon, Donna Mc Carthy, a committee member of The Friends of the Newburgh Library, accepted new or gently used book donations for children up to 4 years of age.

The retirees from MARTA, the Mid Hudson Area Retired Teachers Association, have also been quite busy. Springtime activities include walking trails, lessons in painting, ceramics and cupcake decorating, a lecture on cyber security, a breakfast to honor their scholarship winners, and outings to The Culinary Institute, The Orange County Arboretum, and The Motorcycle Museum. This group truly does have something for everyone!

So that about sums up the news from our beautiful mid Hudson Valley. Enjoy the warmer weather and stay safe.

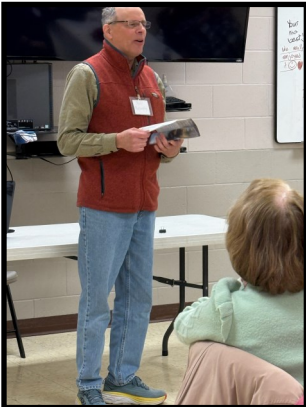
'Til next time...



SOUTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Mary Lou Wood, Zone Co-President and Public Relations Chair

Would you believe, I saw a robin today! I also saw a groundhog, a skunk, and two more feral cat. Must be spring. We are so ready for warmer weather and no wind. The sun is absolutely gorgeous and the sunsets are phenomenal.



This spring the Corning Area Retired Teachers brought in Bill Mattingly, (pictured at left) president of the local Sierra Club. This is an organization working to protect our environment. Very educational.

March is the month where we celebrate Music in our schools. Our organizations will be singing and enjoying music. We shouldn't forget heart health. Take care of yourself. Love your heart.

April 6th the Southern Zone Officers and Unit Officers will be meeting to discuss and determine new officers. We will elect them in September at our annual meeting. We will be looking for delegates to attend the RENY Annual State meeting in October. The Southern Zone

Audit will be completed during that meeting.

Donna Lupardo, our state legislator, will be the speaker at the Eastern Broome Branch luncheon April 14. This will be an excellent opportunity to approach her about our different RENY priorities.

We had a very sad Fall season. CARTA lost five of our members, close friends, and colleagues.

Katy Clancy 6-11-24; **Elaine Blowers** 10-13-24; **Diane Huggler** 11-21-24;

Bonnie Stratton 2-4-25; **Wade Irmischer** 2-5-25.

IN LOVING
Memory

Bonnie Stratton held many offices within the Southern Zone and CARTA. Bonnie served the Corning Area Unit and our Zone in many capacities over the years. As a CARTA member she was a Past President, Secretary and Treasurer and at the Zone level she served as a convention delegate, Secretary, and was our current SZ Treasurer. She was active within the RENY organization. Bonnie was a friend and colleague. She will be greatly missed.

Enjoy the flowers, birds, and nature. Don't forget to visit your friends and keep exercising.



WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by **Audrey Seidel and Nancy White, Public Relations Co-Chairs**

In previous editions of *YORK STATE*, we have been highlighting the various committees of Western Zone. Committee chairs and committee members contribute to the success of the Zone. Their active participation benefits all of our members. This month we wish to describe the work of the Awards Committee and the History Committee.



The Awards Committee's Chair is **Audrey Seidel**, pictured, who has been chair since 2021. Other members on the committee include Association **Vice President Judy Farmer*CR, Dolores Scanlon, Marilyn Tota, Nancy White and Irine Zinter**. Each year since 1973 at our Annual Western Zone September meeting a Citation Award is presented to member(s) who have shown outstanding contributions, leadership, participation and service to WZ, their units and their communities. They are nominated by their fellow board members. This committee's selection of the deserving board member (s) is a wonderful honor for the recipient and a part of WZ's proud history.

The History Committee maintains a historical record of the officers, committees, events, grant recipients and news of our members in Western Zone. Memorial pages for those who have passed on are also included. **Sandy Kelley** is the committee chair and has held that position since 2021. Other members of this committee are **Rhoda Harrington, LaVonne Walker, and Ann Marie Wik**. They put a great deal of work, time and care in the Annual Scrapbook. To assist in this project, members provide newspaper clippings of events, local news highlighting a member or members and obituaries of deceased WZ members. The scrapbook is displayed at the Western Zone's Annual Meeting in September and the October RENY Annual Meeting and Convention. These scrapbooks are beautifully created and are a wonderful record of the year's activities of each WZ Unit and the Western Zone Board of Directors.

These committee members, by their efforts, are active participants in helping Western Zone membership thrive and grow.

