



RENY
RETIRED EDUCATORS OF NY

YORK
STATE



Vol 75
Issue 2

A Message From Our President, Gayla LePage



By the time this gets out, it will be spring. We are all looking forward to this as no matter where you were over this winter it has been a difficult one. Yet, we New Yorkers are tough, have been here before, and will look forward. Happy Spring!!!

I can't believe that this is my second year as your president. I am enjoying working for the betterment of this great organization despite some of the trials we are facing, especially with membership decline and the political environment.

Once again, I want to thank all of you who donated to the 2025 President's Appeal which yielded \$64,422.11. What a great job, everyone! The 2026 President's Appeal will be going out in April. I hope you can see it in your heart to donate again this year. This helps carry on the daily work of our organization, especially with declining membership, which is primarily from where our revenue comes.

At the annual meeting there seemed to be an interest in resurrecting the Ad Hoc Insurance Committee. There are just so many unknowns happening within this area. At that meeting, I spoke to **President Emeritus Kevin Mulligan*CR** who originally chaired the committee. He agreed to co-chair as he is now chair of the Insurance Trust. I then asked **Jim Newell** to help, and he also agreed. There is a representative, each with a great deal of interest and knowledge, from eight of the ten zones. I was so impressed with the scope of this knowledge. There is an excellent article in this York State that explains the purpose of the committee. This is just another way that we work for you, our membership.

I want to take a minute to talk about the *York State*. This is the your way of finding out what is going on in our organization. Please take the time to read it **all**. This publication is for you the members.

On a depressing note, as you all know, our membership is declining rapidly. I wish I had a magic wand to correct this, but I don't, so we all have to work together to try to solve this. **Michelle Claus**, VP for Membership, is doing great in her new job. She has meetings set up every two months. I am sure she would accept any suggestions.

Remember I am only a phone call (518-569-3612) or e-mail (luer913@hotmail.com) away. Feel free to contact me. I will do my best to answer all of your concerns.



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT REPORT

By Judith Farmer*CR



Greetings from Western New York, where Spring is making a valiant effort to supplant Winter. Although I am anxious for warmer weather, my thoughts are on the upcoming October 14,15, and 16th 2026 RENY Annual Meeting and Convention at Turning Stone Casino and Resort.

Our honored zone, the Eastern Zone, has been busy making plans and securing two workshop speakers, a keynote presenter, and the company that brings us trivia. The office staff is working with the venue to secure the meeting rooms and accommodations. They have also made plans for the other two workshop presenters, one of whom will be the TRS. The entire event is looking like it will be a great time of reconnecting and becoming informed RENY members. Specific details will be in the summer edition of *York State*.

Now for your part. Every RENY member has the opportunity to be a delegate to the convention. We need a full contingency of delegates in order to properly conduct the business of the organization. If you are interested, please talk to your zone president. I am looking forward to seeing you there.

AD HOC HEALTH INSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

By Marilyn J. Dominick, (CZ), Committee Member and
President Emeritus Kevin Mulligan*CR, Committee Chairperson

Isn't retirement wonderful?! We have all walked away from our schools, thankful, for the most part, for a satisfying career, having poured our lives into the lives of others. Our work has been important and fulfilling, and now we get to enjoy some freedom and hopefully, excellent health!

The purpose of this article is to make you aware of a RENY initiative that is designed to help make sure that retired educators get the health care benefits that they have worked for.

The RENY Ad Hoc Health Insurance Committee has been meeting recently and has been working on a mission statement. While this work is ongoing, we continue to try to be laser focused on what will benefit our members. As a result, there are two main purposes of our team.

Retiree health insurance can be very complicated. One focus area for our committee is to provide useful information about available health insurance benefits for retirees, such as the "ins and outs" of Medicare Advantage Plans. This includes keeping an eye on any proposed legislation at the state level that could impact health benefits for retired educators. We will work alongside the RENY Legislative Committee to monitor this situation. A huge part of this will rely on our membership being diligent about any changes that are proposed to their local health benefits.

By law, your school district MUST inform you of any changes to your district provided health insurance coverage, if you are fortunate enough to have that coverage. Sometimes this notification comes after the fact, making it vital that we all monitor any change (s) being proposed, or even considered for Medicare eligible retirees, to their supplemental (district provided) health insurance coverage. We can do that by contacting our district business offices to ask if any change (s) are being considered. It is much easier to address an issue before it is decided. If you hear of ANY proposed change (s) that could be detrimental to the benefits of retirees, please contact the committee! **We cannot give legal advice, but we may be able to help in other ways.**

In conclusion, we hope to develop this committee into one that can serve as an advisor to those RENY members who find themselves treated unfairly with their district provided health insurance and be a source of useful health insurance information. The most important thing all of us can do is to remain VIGILANT when it comes to our own health insurance situations.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your zone president, who can then direct you to the right source for your concern.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

NEZ Chair: President Emeritus Kevin Mulligan*CR
CZ - Marilyn Dominick
CZ - Ray Pitcher
CWZ - Joan McClure
EZ - Mark Notarnicola

EZ - David Christopher
LIZ - President Emeritus Angelo Grande*CR
NCZ - Immediate Past President Jim Newell
NZ - Kevin Walbridge
WZ - Suzanne Schmidt

If you need to contact a committee member, please call the RENY office at 518-482-3509 or submit an email at <https://retirededucatorsny.org/contact-us/>

CHEERS TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH! DID YOU KNOW....

The following information can be found on the [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) website.

Filing a Medicare Appeal

Have you ever received a denial and wondered why? Did you know that 80-90% of denials are reversed when an appeal is submitted? If you disagree with a coverage or payment decision by Original Medicare, your Medicare Advantage Plan, or your Medicare drug plan, you can file an appeal.

Before you start an appeal, you can ask your provider or supplier for any information to make your appeal stronger. If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan, other health plan, or a drug plan, check your plan materials, or contact your plan, for details about your appeal rights. The plan must tell you, in writing, how to appeal. Generally, you can find your plan's contact information on your plan membership card.

You can file an appeal if Medicare or your plan refuses to:

- Cover a health care service, supply, item, or drug you think Medicare should cover.
- Pay for a health care service, supply, item, or drug you already received.
- Change the amount you must pay for a health care service, supply, item, or drug.

You can also file an appeal if:

- Medicare or your plan stops providing or paying for all or part of a health care service, supply, item, or drug that you believe you still need.

The following link provides detailed information concerning appeals:

<https://www.medicare.gov/publications/11525-medicare-appeals.pdf>

A print copy of the above publication may be ordered by going to [medicare.gov/publications](https://www.medicare.gov/publications).

Type "Appeals" in the "Search for Publications" box and hit the Search button. Select the item and enter the needed information. Book will arrive in 7-10 days. Many more resources (print and/or digital format) are available at no cost.



MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Michelle Claus, VP for Membership

We need to encourage members that have forgotten to pay their \$39 dues. Please check with me if you aren't sure. We also need the current membership to ask soon to be retired educators/friends that we know haven't joined RENY, and educator friends and relatives that want to know more about RENY, to join our RENY Association.

How do we accomplish this? Talk to them. We also have a website. Encourage them to go to retirededucatorsny.org and go to Member Registration. As you move down the list, there are other topics to look at.

RENY has 8 zones that also have units (smaller groups) within the zones. We have 2 zones that operate as single groups. All zones have a variety of committees that spearhead the work for their communities. Please take the time to look at the zone's website you want to investigate. There are openings for new committee members.

Congratulations to the Northeastern Zone (NEZ)! Congratulations to them on winning 2 awards in 2025. The first award is for the most new members in their zone, 32 for the year. The second award is the highest percentage of new members total in 2025. They received two \$500 awards to continue their membership work. An honorary mention to Western Zone for coming in 2nd, 14 new members in 2025. Congratulations to NEZ Membership Chair, **Sandy Lashua**, and her team!



Please help us continue our mission! **What can you do for RENY?**

ROBERT R. DECORMIER MEMORIAL TRUST FUND REPORT

By Joe Russo, Trustee

Yep! It's my honor to submit a report for the Trust Fund and have to assume this is my way of "giving back". I am not a very formal person. As a matter of fact, I would rather just talk about the Trust rather than write. Hence, my reports may be a little different than most.

I love the concept of "giving back", This has become so large today in our world and I think it helps make people feel good. I have been retired for twenty six years. If it weren't for my New York State Retired Teacher pension and my Social Security, I probably would not have my home and a car, and plenty of food – well cooked by my wife Marge.

This brings me to my report about the Robert R. DeCormier Trust Fund, which is able to help our retirees who need or have needed help financially. The Fund "gives back" by way of monthly stipend grants and special needs grants. This could be helping with roof repairs, replacing windows and doors, car repairs, hearing aids, dental and medical bills, or anything else that is needed. If you are a RENY retiree and are having financial difficulties, reach out to the DeCormier Chair **Anne Flansburg*CR**, at 716-863-3631 or anneflanswz@aol.com as well as to your Friendly Service committee member or any DeCormier trustee.

After receiving your completed request, the Chair calls a meeting of the Trustees: **Colette Astoria, Mary Lou Davis, Beth Green**, myself and my fellow Red Dragon, **Richard Brogowski**. I recently attended a celebration of the 100th birthday of a retired RENY member, our beloved **President Emerita Agnes Hudson*CR** of Gouveneur, NY. Agnes is a living example of someone who always "gave back" and while serving as President of RENY in 2000-2005, she was very supportive of the DeCormier Trust. Through financial donations to the Trust from Zones, Units and individuals who "give back", the Trust is able to help those in need, and we thank each of you.



LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

By Jan Mullins, VP for Legislative Action

RENY advocates proudly represented Retired Educators of New York as we spoke with State and Federal Representatives to discuss the issues given priority this year. At the Federal level we made our case asking for their support to protect Social Security and Medicare, for the continued reduction in prescription drug prices, and the elimination of Social Security benefits from the federal taxes we pay while protecting the solvency of the Social Security Trust Funds.

The affordability problems facing our members in 2025 have not improved. Therefore, with the approval of our RENY Board of Directors, the Legislative Action Committee decided to retain the same State Priorities for 2026 that we had in 2025. We advocated to protect your negotiated health insurance benefits provided by our schools so health care cuts cannot affect you. We encouraged our representatives to expand budgetary funding for education so school taxes can remain below the existing tax cap. We insisted that representatives support adding more money into the pockets of retirees by improving the very outdated Public Pension COLA computation formula. We requested support for all efforts to improve Tier Equity for future RENY members.

Not surprisingly, these priorities were not their number one concern. At the time the committee was making its plans for advocacy, RENY members were receiving their first utility bills reflecting the excessive ratepayer hikes in utility costs. Representative phones were ringing off the hooks. So many constituents were calling to express their concern, several pieces of legislation were immediately introduced that would improve transparency in utility rate hikes and protect you, the ratepayer, in that process. Phone calls and hearing directly from constituents do make a difference. This issue was added to our priorities list.

The million-dollar question posed to me by one State Legislator who supports all our priorities was, "Where would the revenue come from?" Everything we are asking for comes with a cost. I did not have an answer. This will not stop RENY advocates from asking for their help in making your life more affordable. Thank you, RENY advocates, for continuing to lead the charge. You can view the official State and Federal Legislative Priority Cards for 2026 by visiting our website www.retirededucatorsny.org and click on the "Advocacy" tab. Please consider adding your voice to our efforts by becoming an advocate for your Zone.

COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMITTEE REPORT

By Eileen Holmes*CR, Chair



"Hunkered down", "on hold" and "hibernating" were common responses to how our members were reacting to this past winter but I am pleased to report that community service activities were still on going and successful. The **North Central Zone** held their annual Coats for Kids project, providing 52 new winter coats, 22 pairs of boots along with snow pants and gloves for needy children. The **Central Zone** winter collection was donated to benefit the Chenango City Aging Council. The **Southeastern Zone** continued its collection and distribution of new socks, gloves and hats which are displayed outside food kitchens and homeless centers for needy folks. **Northeastern Zone** members collected and donated hats, mittens, gloves and toys to The Christmas Bureau and members also volunteered in soup kitchens.

Alice Galvin reported that individual members in the **Northern Zone** carry on community service activities serving as Christmas elves, being actively involved in WOW (a February White Out Weekend event), driving locals to medical appointments, working in food pantries and volunteering at church events.



COMMUNITY SERVICE COMMITTEE REPORT

By Eileen Holmes*CR, Chair

From the **Long Island Zone President Emeritus Angelo Grande*CR** reported that donations were made to CAST and Helping Makes U Happy.

Joan Handfield let me know that the **Central Western Zone** may be hibernating but the Ontario unit donated a Christmas basket suggested by Social Services, the Steuben/Wayland unit donated to food pantries and to school nurses who provide children with hats, gloves, etc. They also donated to Vincent House Comfort Care. The Seneca unit donated nonperishables to a food pantry, along with new and gently used books for a free bookshelf project.

Joyce Notarnicola reported that her **Eastern Zone** members continue their year-long association with the Regional Food Bank in Latham, NY with financial donations and bi-monthly volunteering to help sort donated foodstuffs. The food provided by the Regional Food Bank helps feed over 350,000 people each year!

Mary Suffern's Southern Zone units continue to support year-round projects. The CARTA unit donates to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier (specifically to support Food Mart programs in school districts). CARTA meets 6 times a year and \$50 per meeting goes to one of the 5 school districts for the Food Mart program and the 6th donation rotates between Heritage Village and the children's section of the Southern Tier Library System. The EARTA unit supports local charities, including non-perishable donations to a local homeless shelter, the Arctic League, Meals on Wheels, the Food Bank of the Southern Tier, and Bampa's House. EBB/WBET (merged units) supports CHOW, Toys for Tots, the Humane Society, Mom's House, Literacy Volunteers, Discovery Center, St. Mary's Assumption Church and the Roberson Museum and Science Center. The reorganized SCRTA unit is focusing on creating educational scholarships.

The **Western Zone's** new Community Service Chair Stan Nowak reported that his members donated non-perishable food, new socks and children's books for Thanksgiving and for December, new PJ's (all sizes), more foodstuffs and winter clothing to Feed More and to the Buffalo City Mission. Members also collected 8 bags of winter clothing and 2 bags of food items which Stan delivered to "Friends of the Night" and the organization was very grateful.

It is always uplifting to report on the service and overall generosity that our RENY members contribute to our diversified Community Service projects and programs. **THANK YOU** to our nine Community Service Chairs and to all our members who help make Community Service successful!

Certificate of Recognition Applications

A reminder that applications for RENY Certificate of Recognition Awards must be completed and postmarked by June 1st, 2026. They are sent to:

Carol Lord, 39 Park Street, Phelps, New York 14532

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CENTRAL ZONE

Cayuga, Chenango, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, & Oswego Counties
Submitted by Mary Ann Luciano, PR Chair and Ray Pitcher, Zone President

Welcome back from a long cold winter and hopefully a short mud season. On Tuesday, April 21st, 2026, the Central Zone will have their annual all committees meeting in Canastota. At this meeting, they will select the Zone recipient of the Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant for active teachers and/or administrators. Contact Zone President **Ray Pitcher** to attend the Zone meeting and luncheon (rpitcher1@twcny.rr.com). It's always so nice to get together after the winter; this year especially.

As an organization and profession, we are facing attacks on all fronts. We need to be politically proactive in the upcoming midterm elections. Members need to know their elected state and federal officials and support the ones with a positive voting record. Also, the Zone will become be more proactive in writing resolutions, which then may become part of RENY legislative actions.

Our health insurance is under attack. If you have district provided insurance, get a copy of your current contract and compare the language with that which you retired and the current language. If change has occurred, contact the bargaining unit that you formerly were in, and through them, seek relief. If your efforts fail, then reach out to RENY's newly formed Ad-Hoc Insurance Committee for assistance (see pages 2 and 3 of this publication). In the Central Zone, your representatives are:

Marilynn Dominick (mjdominick77@gmail.com) and **Ray Pitcher** (rpitcher1@twcny.rr.com).

If your health insurance is through your employer, research how your health insurance coverage works. Research how the coverage works for your dependent if you die first. Your dependent must be aware of changes in their coverage and premium. If your Medicare is provided through a former employer, do not act on the many TV commercials, emails, and spam calls that we all are receiving. Your former employer would love you to change to one of these plans. Your change would help their budget but not necessarily you.

We encourage you to get involved in both the units close to you (Cayuga, Chenango, Onondaga, Oswego) and the Central Zone activities. Many hands make the work lighter and fun. Don't leave it to the same folks to do it all.

RENY Cayuga unit is looking forward to spring to gather its members for their next planned activities. Contact **Bill Tenity*CR**, President (billt1@roadrunner.com)

RENY-Chenango rescheduled their National Pi Day pie and coffee get together on March 14th for sometime this spring. The March 14 event with homemade pies and coffee was canceled because of ice, rain, and snow. It will include a legislative update and raffle for their Community Service project, the Chenango County Council on Aging. At the April 8th Executive Committee's Zoom meeting open to their members, they will discuss proposed changes to the bylaws and preparation for the joint Chenango's Annual Meeting and their hosting the Central Zone Annual Meeting on September 15th.

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CENTRAL ZONE

Cayuga, Chenango, Herkimer, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, & Oswego Counties
Submitted by Mary Ann Luciano, PR Chair and Ray Pitcher, Zone President

The unit's spring meeting is on May 7th during Teacher Appreciation Week where the annual Future Educator Scholarship will be announced. Contact **Mary Ann Luciano**, President (maryann.luciano@gmail.com)

On March 19th, the RENY Onondaga's Executive Council met by Zoom to plan their activities for 2026. Beginning in May, they will have three RENY luncheons this year. The unit tries to hold their events at locally owned and operated venues.

In July, RENY Onondaga will honor their 90+ year old members with a special recognition in addition to their 2026 Scholarship winners with their families. As with the other Central Zone units, all of the scholarship winners are pursuing a future in education and RENY members love to hear their plans. At this special luncheon meeting, the future educators also benefit from the 90+ year old educators, who impart words of wisdom to all!

In September, the Onondaga Unit will have their final annual luncheon. At each luncheon, their members, retired educators who are so generous and gracious, support a worthy not for profit organization. Often, they have the not for profit representative tell RENY members about their organization's important work. For more information about the RENY Onondaga contact Co-Presidents **Marilyn Dominick** (mjdominick77@gmail.com) or **Dell Ford Jordan** (reny.dfjordjordan@yahoo.com).

Colette Astoria, Oswego unit's President (coletteastoria@gmail.com) reports that the Oswego unit will meet in May and is expecting to announce their future educators' scholarship winner.

Across the Central Zone, the Friendly Service Key Workers are continually active, and we thank these volunteers for their time and thoughtfulness. The Zone and units continue to look for ways to connect and engage new retirees. We face increasing resistance to obtaining contact information for these folks, so we would be interested to hear from other units about their successful strategies in this area. Please contact **Dell Ford Jordan**, Central Zone's Membership Chair or any of our unit presidents, names and email addresses above.

The spring is a busy time for planning, scholarship and grant reviews, and finding out about new retirees. Hope to see you at our April, July and September meetings.



CENTRAL WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by **Carol Lord*CR**, Public Relations Chair

Central Western Zone members are anxiously awaiting pussy willows, daffodils and birds singing. **Kathy Grandjean**, former Wayne County President and now Seneca member with her husband Dennis and fellow retiree **Les Buell**, recently went to Williamson Central School 7th Grade Social Studies and the AG-Tech class to present the making of maple syrup. The students then went out and tapped trees to collect and then process syrup. A great spring learning experience! More on the next page....

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CENTRAL WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by Carol Lord*CR, Public Relations Chair



Mary Beth Tyndall, CWZ President from Monroe County, recently chaired a zoom Board Meeting to plan for 2026.

Each county unit will be holding Spring meetings. Presidents serving include:

Yates: **Linda Snyder**; Wyoming: **Sandra Kushner**; Steuben: **Jane Behnk**; Seneca: **Marie Scoles**; Orleans: **Barb Dunham/Ann Czajkowski**; Ontario: **Laura Janas**; Monroe: **Nellie Schiano/Meena Gehani**; Allegany: **Deb Dorgan**. Thank you for your leadership!

Livingston counties' energetic President **Mary Corey** recently passed away suddenly. They are seeking a new leader!

Bruce Croucher (Ontario) has stepped up to chair our Barrie Fleegel Grants. Zone members donate to this fund. Active Educators from our zone may apply for grant money to be used for graduate work/ advanced certifications they are working on.

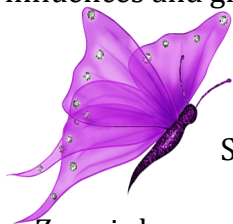
Lynn Locklear has volunteered to work with **Sandra Kushner** to assume our next Hudson Kramer Award turn. Thank you for the outstanding job you have done Sandy!

Bob Gleason has volunteered to chair our prestigious Epke-Maher Award. Each year at our Zone Annual Meeting a recently retired educator from our zone is honored for exemplary service, leadership, and community involvement. The award is named to honor Elsie Epke and Betty Meagher outstanding educators from Monroe County.

We look forward to fellowship and friendship within our zone and working with the officers and committees of Retired Educators of New York to promote the influences and growth of RENEY.



Kathy Grandjean and Les Buell sampling the sap



EASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Pamela Love, Public Relations Chair



RENY/Eastern Zone is busy preparing for the upcoming RENEY State Annual Meeting and Convention as the honored zone for 2026. We hope that it will be an enjoyable convention for everyone.

Marjorie Leibowitz, President of the Capital Region (RCRTA), reported that her unit will have its first executive board meeting of the year on May 13, 2026 and its first luncheon of the year on June 10th. When members will bring donations for homeless animals. At the last luncheon in December 2025, the unit collected canned goods and other non-perishables for the Northeast Regional Food Bank in Latham.

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EASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Pamela Love, Public Relations Chair



Our Zone is starting a Spotlight on a member who is really helping others in a significant way. Our first person to be spotlighted is **Tom Mullins**, husband of our President, **Janice Mullins**. Tom was never a veteran himself. He donates his time to honoring veterans. Over the past seven years, he has obtained Federal and State medals for deserving veterans who never received the medals they qualified for. So far, he has obtained more than 1,000 medals for both living and deceased veterans. He has also enrolled over 500 Vietnam and Korean veterans from 19 NYS Counties in the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor. Through his efforts, 90 living and deceased veterans, who left school before graduating high school to serve, have received their High School Diplomas under Operation Recognition. The list also included ten nominations to recipients of the NYS Senate Veteran’s Hall of Fame Award. Every year, he organizes the “Green Island Salutes Its Veterans” event, which honors local veterans for their service.

{Picture of Tom Mullins welcoming Veteran’s and their families at the annual “Green Island Salutes its Veterans” held every November}



LONG ISLAND ZONE

Submitted by **Eileen Holmes*CR**, Public Relations Chair and Zone President



It has been a frigid, snowy, windy winter on Long Island and we are not used to it!! Thanks to email and phone service we have been able to facilitate a LIZ donation to Helping Makes U Happy for their Easter food baskets, make a donation to the Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund and finally set the date (May 20, 2026) for our Spring Luncheon.

East End unit activities have been on hold while EERTA President **Dom Licausi** is in rehab for physical therapy, and even tho' the first day of spring have come and gone, the weather continues to be 'iffy'. Many EERTA members are still snowbirding down south. Hopefully, Dom's recovery will be complete by mid-April, the weather will permanently warm up and EERTA will be able to hold board meetings, plan luncheons and initiate community service projects.

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LONG ISLAND ZONE

Submitted by **Eileen Holmes*CR**, Public Relations Chair and Zone President

This summer the USA will be celebrating its 250th birthday. Some interesting facts about our nation came to mind while dealing with these past winter months: Have you blown your New Year's resolution to lose weight? Think Montpelier, Vermont, the only US capital city with no McDonalds and no Starbucks to tempt you! FYI, also no Walmart!

Really fed up with cold weather? Think Honolulu, with the highest annual temperature of any US capital, the largest open air shopping mall and for sightseeing, the only royal palace in the US, Iolani Palace.

Tired of switching all your clocks because of Daylight Savings Time which you think is ridiculous to begin with? Consider Arizona and Hawaii, the only 2 US state that don't bother with DST. They gave up switching in 1967....except for the Navajo Nation in AZ which kept DST because their lands stretch into Utah and New Mexico and they still do DST....however, on the Hopi Indian tribal lands that are located *inside* the Navajo Nation, they align with Arizona and do not do DST! Hawaii, due to its location near the equator, has minimal variation in daylight hours throughout the year, making DST unnecessary. Several U.S. territories also do not observe DST, including American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Does President's Day in February get you wondering how many US state capitals were named after presidents? Probably not but there are 4: Jackson, MS, Jefferson City, MO, Lincoln, NE and Madison, WI. Maybe "president" gets you to thinking about 'draining the swamp'...no, not Lake Okeechobee in FL...rather Louisiana's Atchafalaya Basin, the largest swamp in the US, spanning about 1.4 million acres!

There are so many unique and interesting facts about our states, our state capitals and our country... Happy 250th Birthday and God Bless the USA!



NORTH CENTRAL ZONE

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

NCZ website: www.renyncz.org

In spite of a long, cold winter in the North Country, our spirits were lifted by the 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan-Cortina, Italy. How inspiring to watch these young athletes compete on the world stage! The sheer joy of the winter sports was quite evident. We are proud of all the athletes, especially our own Americans, who displayed courage, perseverance, good sportsmanship, and patriotism. These Games have inspired us and encouraged us to see the beauty and the fun of the winter season.

As you may have guessed, NCZ members are warming up from the winter chill and moving ahead into spring. Under the direction of NCZ President **Rick Morris**, plans are underway for our Scholarship Luncheon on June 11th. We are delighted to hold this celebrated event once again at the Hilton Garden Inn in Watertown.

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NORTH CENTRAL ZONE

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

NCZ website: www.renyncz.org

The Scholarship Committee members, **Candice Buckingham, Willis Haller, Sharon Kelly, Marianne Malatino, Patti Scordo, Tom Van Emmerik**, have been working under the able leadership of Scholarship Chair, **John Gaffney**. They have the challenging task of evaluating student applications. They will select two outstanding seniors from Jefferson/Lewis County who will each receive a \$1,000 Future Educators Scholarship. The winners and their parents will be invited guests at the luncheon during which these awards will be presented.

NCZ is also fortunate this year to have the honor of presenting the Hudson-Kramer Award for Professional Educators. This award will also be given on June 11th.

Our special guest presenter at the luncheon will be renowned North Country artist, John A. Morrow, pictured at right, from Ogdensburg. He is well known for his paintings of the St. Lawrence River, the Adirondacks, and Amish scenes. Mr. Morrow states, "I've always believed that art is a universal language—one that transcends words and speaks directly to our shared sense of wonder." He is a former art teacher from Ogdensburg Free Academy. We think that Mr. Morrow will feel right at home with our retired educators! We are excited to host this talented artist who will share with us some of his fine artwork and talk about his career journey. The June Luncheon is shaping up to be a memorable NCZ event.



Dates to Remember:

NCZ Executive Council Meeting: April 29, 2026, 10am, NNYCF
Spring Scholarship Luncheon: June 11, 2026, Hilton Garden Inn



NORTHEASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Cindi LaFountain, Public Relations Chair

March in the north country is not known for madness but MUD! The snow is slowly disappearing in the warm sun and making puddles for cars, children and dogs to enjoy. Floors don't get washed again until May when the mud disappears.

Our group hasn't met in the new year but there is still work going on. We have put out notices regarding the Kramer Memorial Educator Award of \$1000. This honors Dr. Karl Kramer, former professor and mentor to Education Majors at SUNY Plattsburgh, and long time devoted member of the Northeastern Zone of RENY.

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NORTHEASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Cindi LaFountain, Public Relations Chair

The grant is designed to assist active educators in developing and implementing an innovative program or project. The Scholarship Committee will be going through the applications to pick the award winning idea.

Connie Lalonde is stepping down as our Community Service Chair. She has spent years finding organizations in our area for us to support. We have appreciated all her hard work. Her shoes are so big to fill that we had to find two members to co-chair. **Kim Quinn** and **Janet Booth** have volunteered to step in. We look forward to seeing what ways they will find for NEZ to assist in our area.

Members are meeting to discuss fundraising ideas so that any member that wants to go to the annual meeting and convention can without any out of pocket costs. A couple ideas are a golf tournament and buy a square from the 100 grid, win some cash. Part of the proceeds would be donated to the community.

We can't wait for spring, green grass, flowers and no mud!



NORTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Linda Crosby, Public Relations Chair

Typing this article as a powerful blizzard rages outside my window on St. Patrick's Day, I find it hard to believe Spring is only a few days away; March is always a weird month in the North Country! We are expecting 3-5 more inches of snow on Friday and more on Sunday.



I'd like to finish up on some events from the end of Winter especially since our NZ member **Alice Galvin** clicked some great photos; she captured on her camera the festive Clifton-Fine RTA Christmas party on Dec.16 at the Packbasket Lodge in Wanakena, NY. All NZ folks are always welcome to celebrate any meeting with the unit members; they

were thrilled to see special visitors from Gouverneur, NY: **President Emerita Agnes Hudson*CR**, her son, **Scott Hudson** (NZ member) and daughter-in-law, Sandy, were all decked out in their Christmas holiday plaid shirts.

See more on the next page...

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NORTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Linda Crosby, Public Relations Chair



Many NZ members also celebrated the 100th birthday of **President Emerita Agnes Hudson*CR** (January 11) on January 17 with her and the many family members and friends who filled the Casablanca Restaurant in Gouverneur. Agnes did receive a huge box of birthday cards/gifts; she enjoyed delicious food and birthday cake with her son, Scott (photo at left). NZ BOD and members **Linda Crosby, Alice Galvin, Rae Louise Tate, Ted Tate, Tom Cook, Betty Cook, Joe Russo, Margie Russo, Roxann Finley and Gayla LePage** (pictured left to right-photo on right) had a grand time and will treasure the special conversations they had with Agnes that day. Agnes has always been a devoted NZ BOD member. She is a grand lady!



Turning to March, the NZ BOD is presently planning 2026 events, BOD meetings, and the Spring and Fall full membership meetings in addition to our usual NZ jobs. We encourage members to join us at all meetings; we always offer engaging speakers or local entertainment or area museum trips as part of our membership meetings. Watch for our Spring NZ newsletter coming soon.

Do you have a child or grandchild graduating in June? NZ high school senior scholarship information and applications will soon be sent to all St. Lawrence County and Franklin County school district guidance offices. Encourage seniors to apply for the two \$400 scholarships.

Enjoy the coming sunny days of Spring! Hopefully, all our new outdoor excursions will boost our Winter vitamin D levels to satisfying highs.

Below are some more pictures from the Clifton-Fine RTA Christmas Party.



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SOUTHEASTERN ZONE

Submitted by Maureen Coffey, Public Relations Chair



"What good is the warmth of summer without the cold of winter to give it sweetness."

~ John Steinbeck

If we take Steinbeck's words to heart, we're in for a very sweet spring and summer!

Donna Harness, President of Southeastern Zone, will preside over our annual Spring meeting and luncheon. Our Scholarship Committee, headed by **Patti DeLeo**, will soon be busy reading applications to decide which students will share in the \$2000 to be awarded this year.

Sullivan County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) will meet at Casa Mia on April 15th. This was a brutal winter. Looking forward to lunch with friends on a spring afternoon perfect!

Likewise, the Mid-Hudson Area Retired Teachers Association (MARTA) is taking advantage of the nicer weather. Once again, their Activities Committee has offerings for everyone.

A ZOOM meeting will help to de-mystify the coordination of health benefits between Medicare and our secondary insurance.

For those who enjoy structured tours, outings are planned for Stone Top Gardens, the Arboretum to see the May tulips, the Hidden Garden Tour, the New Windsor Cantonment, Boscobel, Locust Grove Mansion, and the Hudson Hills Trail Island.

If you prefer hands on activities, there are offerings in CPR instruction, pottery classes, aqua aerobics, a Sip 'n' Paint and cupcake decorating.

Last but not least, for those looking for more physical activities, hikes are planned at Cascade Lake, Port Jervis, The Liberty Loop Trail and Schunemunk State Park.



And behind the scenes, the Scholarship Committee has been reviewing applications so they are ready for the Scholarship Breakfast at Temple Hill Tavern on May 27th.

Laura Fraher, President, and members of the Newburgh Area Retired Teachers Association (NARTA) have been busy planning their April luncheon and their annual meeting in June. Both events will be held at Temple Hill Tavern. Their scholarship committee met in January to discuss criteria to be used for two \$2000 scholarships. Students from Newburgh, Cornwall, Highland Falls and Marlboro are eligible to apply. NARTA'S upcoming projects include their very successful Sock It To 'Em campaign run by **Cheryl Fischer**, children's books donations for The Friends of the Newburgh Library, Toys for Tots, and The Johnny Selino Wishes for Wellness Foundation.

Members of NARTA as well as SEZ continue to send prayers and good wishes to **Raymond Leduc**, a dedicated member and wonderful friend to all of us. During the winter, Ray suffered a medical emergency involving his kidneys. It's been a long road, but he's recouping at a rehabilitation facility and is expected to make a full recovery. Please keep his return to good health in your thoughts and prayers.

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SOUTHERN ZONE

Submitted by Mary Lou Wood, Public Relations Chair

The weather is teasing us. A few days of sun and warmth, and then back to the wind and cold. I don't want to complain too loudly because soon it will be too humid and hot. When I was still teaching, we put up posters for the children to sign their names when they saw a robin. Well, I saw a robin but I think he flew back south or was blown away.

Gerardo Tagliaferri, President of Southern Zone: The RENY/Southern Zone Spring meeting is scheduled for April 23, and the Schuyler County Retired Teachers will be hosting the annual zone meeting in September.

Vince Smith*CR, EBB/WBET: (Eastern Broome Branch/ Western Broome Eastern Tioga) We had an excellent luncheon with almost 60 people in attendance. A great speaker, Joe Schuerch, presented an excellent historical view of the Phelps Mansion located in downtown Binghamton, NY. **Mary Johnson*CR**, our Legislative Chair, presented up to date info as to up-coming contacts with our Legislative Reps, depending on their last minute legislative activity in Albany.

Nancy Spaulding, President of EARTA: (Elmira Area Retired Teachers): At our February meeting, we heard the incredible voice of Mark Cox accompanied on the piano by his equally incredible wife, Grace Cox. The steamboat behind Mark is because we are in the Mark Twain Room. For all the times I've been in that room, it's the first time I saw what was behind the curtain.

Mary Suffern: RENY/SZ/CARTA, Hudson-Kramer Memorial Award committee met and sent information letters to 29 Central School District superintendents. May 1st is the deadline for educators to apply for this \$2,000. award.

Debbi Deats, President of CARTA, Corning Area Retired Teachers: Sue Gruber will give us tips on "Decluttering: Reclaim Your Freedom" of our house/apartment/ living quarters. We should all take charge of the "stuff" we've accumulated. I still have items from my teaching days!



Some of us in the Corning Area attended an educational class on 'Citizen Preparedness.' This was presented by Homeland Security & Emergency Services. It would be wise for all units/ zones to contact WWW.ALERT.NY.GOV to see if you could set up classes for your members.

Hope you enjoy the warm weather, chirping birds, fragrant flowers, and returning snowbird friends. Don't forget to walk and exercise. We've been couped up too long.



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WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by Kathy Cansick and Joanne Wheaton, Public Relations Co-Chairs

Spring is here! The days are growing longer, weather is warming, and beautiful plants are sprouting. Western Zone is embracing the new season with all of our new and exciting plans under the leadership of new president, **Karen Thompson**. Karen's primary goal is to connect with and support our units. She wants to foster an environment that is warm and welcoming to all retired teachers in Western Zone. Additionally, her goal is to create a partnership with charitable organizations that benefits the community at large.



Many of our Western Zone members are involved in helping their communities and they are to be commended for their volunteerism. We will be highlighting outstanding Western Zone members from various units in the next few issues. **Judy Sipior** and her husband James Sipior have been members of the West Seneca Retired Teachers Association for over seven years. They are contributing members of the unit and regularly keep in touch with other retired teachers. They are members in their church, St. Gabriels in Elma, NY where they are particularly active in the Bereavement Committee and the Prayer Cloth Ministry, and also serve as Eucharistic Ministers. They have also volunteered at the Food Bank of WNY, and the West Seneca Clothes Closet, where they serve with other retired

West Seneca Teachers. Both Judy and Jim retired from West Seneca Central schools after several years of service. Of particular note, Judy continues to maintain her certification as a Teacher of the Speech Language and Hearing Impaired as well as her New York State licensure as a Speech Language Pathologist, and is a member of the American Speech Language Hearing Association. Jim has maintained his association with the WNY Psychology Association, New York Association of School Psychologists and the National Association of School Psychologists, and is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist. Words they strive to live by are kindness and service to others.

Lavonne Walker is a member from Eastern Niagara RTA. She retired from Gasport Elementary which is part of the Royalton Hartland Central School District in 2002. Lavonne has become her unit president's, **Sandy Kelley**, "right hand" lady; checking out venues for meetings, helping with the annual Basket Raffle to support the ENCRTA scholarship fund, coming up with program suggestions and even setting up some of their programs. Lavonne serves on the ENCRTA Program Committee. Lavonne is always willing to lend a helping hand in any way she can.

In 2024 she was elected as a Board Member of the Western Zone. Lavonne is now on the WZ History Committee, helping to assemble the WZ scrapbook pages each year. Before that she served on the History Committee of WZ as the non-board member for 10+ years.

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WESTERN ZONE

Submitted by Kathy Cansick and Joanne Wheaton, Public Relations Co-Chairs

Lavonne and her husband, George, have gone on many of the WZ trips in the last few years. They have become the “right hand” people for **Anne Flansburg*CR**, WZ’s Travel Committee Chairperson. George handles the luggage into and out of the bus compartment for the travelers as well as other travel duties. He and Lavonne are there to help Anne in any way they can. As of last fall, Lavonne is now a member of the WZ Travel Committee and is handling all of the reservations for the upcoming July 2026 trip to Lancaster, PA.

Both Lavonne and George are staunch supporters of the Lockport Salvation Army, Royalton Hartland Central School student activities, Niagara Hospice, and many other community charitable organizations.

On a sad note, in recent months three former board of directors have past away. They were **Elizabeth Browne, Shirley Plummer, and Janice Weitz**. Each one will be missed for their exceptional dedication to education and especially Western Zone.

A winter get together of former EERTA members was organized by **Judy Farmer*CR** and **Doris Kirsch*CR** on February 17 at Farmers Daughter’s Diner in Marilla. About 20 attendees enjoyed a lunch and social time. Lancaster/Depew RTA president, **Karen Gembar** encouraged any former EERTA member to join her unit.

