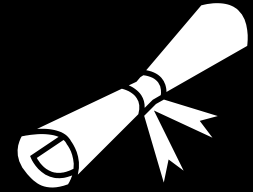


Senior Class



Newsletter of Retiree Councils 15 & 16 Westchester/Putnam Retirees New York State United Teachers
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Dear Colleagues,

As we begin the new year and continue to navigate through the political landscape in Washington, D.C., we must remember that the threats to public education, collective bargaining, retirement security and our health benefits continue. Our union is at its strongest when we work together and use our collective voice to fight for our values. You can raise your voice and be heard by contributing to VOTE-COPE, NYSUT's non-partisan political action arm funded by voluntary contributions.

Well, you might say, "I'm retired. Why should I contribute to VOTE-COPE?" Two important reasons - protect our financial security and health benefits in retirement.

NYSUT retirees have one of the best pension plans in the United States. The NYS Constitution describes our pensions as "...a contractual obligation, the benefits of which may not be diminished or impaired." It would take a constitutional convention to alter our pensions. The last call to convene a Constitutional Convention was in 2017. Over \$1.8 million of VOTE-COPE funds were spent; it was defeated 83% to 17%!

Last February, the NYS Court of Appeals issued a ruling stating that health insurance benefits for retirees may be subject to modification by an employer after a contract expires, unless there is specific language expressly guaranteeing a lifetime benefit. NYSUT has written legislation in the NYS Senate and Assembly reaffirming long-standing precedent allowing unions to introduce evidence showing both employer and employee intent to provide retirees with health insurance for life, regardless of contract language. This legislation is supported by VOTE-COPE dollars.

Another reason - when Tiers 3 and 4 were adopted, it stipulated that public school employees contribute 3% over their career and retiring before 62 would result in significant penalties. Relentless lobbying using VOTE-COPE dollars saw Tiers 3 and 4 amended to resemble Tiers 1 and 2. We now need to do the same thing for our colleagues in Tiers 5 and 6 that the Tier 1 folks did for those of you in Tiers 3 and 4.

Thanks to your support of VOTE-COPE, we have made a difference and we must continue to do so. Your contribution and participation in the political process is crucial and one of the best investments you can make in yourself, your family, your profession, and public education. So that NYSUT can continue its work to defend Our Voice, Our Values, Our Union, I am asking you to increase your VOTE-COPE contribution. Even a small increase of \$5 or \$10 a month will make a difference.

Pension deduction is the easiest way to make your contribution. Please sign up for pension deduction or increase your deduction by completing the **Pension Deduction form below** indicating your **new TOTAL monthly deduction** and mailing it to the address provided on the form. If you are not using pension deduction, please consider increasing the amount of your last year's contribution and send a check payable to VOTE-COPE to the address provided on the **Direct Contribution form on the bottom of page 2. THANK YOU!**

Questions? Please contact Jeff Zuckerman at Jeffzuckerman2000@yahoo.com or (914) 364-8891.

In solidarity,
Roni



Pension Deduction Authorization

VOTE-COPE is the New York State United Teachers political action fund. VOTE-COPE solicits and accepts only voluntary contributions. Contributions or gifts to VOTE-COPE are not tax deductible.

The undersigned authorizes the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) or the New York State Employees' Retirement System (NYSERS) to deduct from each of my regular defined benefit pension payments the sum of \$_____ (per month). I understand that this monthly amount will continue to be deducted until revoked by me in writing. This authorization is made voluntarily and without fear of reprisal and with the understanding that the making of contributions to VOTE-COPE is not a condition of membership in any labor organization, will not impact the provision of my defined benefit pension and that VOTE-COPE may use the money it receives to make political contributions and expenditures in connection with federal, state and local elections. **Mail this form to Vote-Cope, 800 Troy-Schenectady Rd., Latham NY 12110.**

Name _____ Pension # _____

Phone # _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Local from which you retired _____

Join RC 15/16 on Thursday, April 18, 2024 at 10:00 AM
at the Tarrytown Regional Office
520 White Plains Road, 4th Floor, Tarrytown, NY

A brief general membership meeting will be followed by our program

FRAUD, SCAMS and IDENTITY THEFT

Presented by Troy Outlaw

New York State Attorney General's Office

Online scams and identity theft are increasing problems as the internet has become a large part of our everyday lives. Unfortunately, there are many ways con artists and other criminals gain entry into our lives making senior citizens their prime targets. Being a smart consumer requires having the tools to protect yourself from fraud, scams, and identity theft. In this presentation, you will learn how to stop these criminals and how to take steps to protect your assets. You will learn how to make smart purchasing decisions and what to do should you become a victim.

Please RSVP to Linda at linnybayberry@aol.com by Monday, April 15th

Have you moved?

Don't let a new address keep you from receiving *Senior Class*, RC 15/16's newsletter. There are three ways to update your address: 1) contact NYSUT Member Records at 1-800-342-9810 ext.6224; (2) send written changes to NYSUT Member Records, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110; 3) e-mail changes to memberrec@nysutmail.org.

If you are a "snowbird", give Member Records a few weeks' notice to change your address records each way.

Lyndhurst Mansion Holiday Tour

"Breathtaking! Beautiful! So glad I came!" These and many other positive remarks were made by members who participated in the December 4th holiday tour of the Lyndhurst Mansion. Over eighty retirees took part in an historical tour of this amazing building decked out in all its holiday finery. Paintings of family members, prized possessions, table settings, artwork, beautifully decorated Christmas trees and more were on display and part of the discussion led by talented and knowledgeable docents as we wandered throughout the many decorated rooms. Members viewed a video on the history of the estate and browsed in the gift shop while awaiting their tour. Many thanks to the staff of Lyndhurst for making this a most worthwhile educational and enjoyable afternoon outing. We look forward to more adventures in the upcoming months. Lori Mollo



VOTE-COPE Contribution Form - Use this form for checks ONLY

VOTE-COPE is the New York State United Teachers political action fund.

Name: _____ Member ID # _____

Address: _____

Date: _____ Local from which you retired: _____

Contribution: \$ _____ Check # _____ (Make check payable to VOTE-COPE)

Please provide your email address: _____

Return this form to: VOTE-COPE, PO Box 295, Canajoharie, NY 13317-9901

Contributions or gifts to VOTE-COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes

RC 15/16 Westchester/Putnam Executive Board

President: Veronica O'Connor
RC1516pres@aol.com
Exec Vice President: Florence McCue
Treasurer: Ellen Pincus
Secretary: Irene Kanowitz

Vice Presidents:

Mary Curtis	Anthony Russo
Linda Doerr	Marty Sommer
Lori Mollo	Kay Staplin
Frank Orfei	Dolores Thompson
Pat Puleo	Diane Torstrup
John Roden	

NYSUT RC 15/16
Retiree Services Consultant:
Lynn O'Donnell
Lynn.o'donnell@nysut.org
Newsletter Editor: Clare Gorman
Webmaster: Lori Mollo

**Questions? Contact Roni at the
NYSUT Office at 914-592-4411**



Wednesday, May 22, 2024 - Historical Tour of Untermyer Gardens
Wednesday, June 12, 2024 - Spring Luncheon at Harrison Meadows Country Club

Attention - All Florida Snowbirds and Florida Residents

RC 43 - the only NYSUT-sanctioned out-of-state retiree council is waiting to welcome you to the Sunshine State. We have an active, dedicated group of New York State retirees who would love for you to join a local Florida unit.

All units sponsor social activities, meetings with guest speakers, community projects that benefit children, and engagement in activities in conjunction with Florida unions.

If you are interested in becoming involved with retired colleagues, even on a seasonal basis, please contact Miriam Hanan, NYSUT Retirees Services Consultant at 516-236-0276 or miriam.hanan@nysut.org who will connect you with your local unit representative.

Felicia Bruce, RC 43 President
Miriam Hanan, NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant

Important Reminder...

It has come to our attention that the emails we send sometimes go to Spam. Please be sure to check your Spam folder for emails coming from **NYSUT Westchester/Putnam Retirees via ActionNetwork.org**. To receive reminders of programs and special events in between the issues of *Senior Class*, please remember to send your personal email address to rc1516database@gmail.com to be added to the ever-growing RC 15/16 database.

If you have already sent us your email address and are receiving our emails, there is no need to send it again.

Congratulations Veronica O'Connor

Congratulations to NYSUT Retirees of Westchester/Putnam (RC15/16) President Veronica (Roni) O'Connor, who was inducted into the Westchester County Senior Citizens Hall of Fame on December 1st. This honor is presented to seniors who have made significant and enduring contributions to enhance Westchester's quality of life through their professional work and/or volunteer achievements. Roni was one of four of the sixty-one seniors who received Special Recognition.

Roni is a retired elementary school teacher having taught in the Mount Vernon and Pelham School Districts for a total of 38 years. While in-service, she served as Association Building Representative as well as a member of numerous Union and District committees.

Upon retirement, Roni continued her activism, remaining on the Pelham Teachers' Association Executive Board as the Retiree Liaison. As RC 15/16 President, she worked tirelessly to organize many virtual programs to keep the retirees engaged and informed during the pandemic. Several of these programs were attended by close to 100 participants. She made wellness calls to retirees and has worked the virtual phone banks in support of NYSUT endorsed candidates. She attends rallies and events in support of public education, social justice, and human rights. For many years, she has worked to raise funds for Breast Cancer Research. She has been an active member of the Doris Blank REACT Committee (Retired Educators and Children Together) bringing school supplies to Westchester and Putnam second and third graders. Roni participates in Committee of 100 lobbying and works with local and state legislators in support of public education, social justice, human rights, and senior issues. In addition to serving as RC President, Roni is a NYSUT delegate, AFT delegate, Westchester Putnam Central Labor Body delegate and is a member of the NYSUT statewide Retiree Advisory Committee, where she currently serves as Chair of the Resolutions Sub-Committee.

Roni serves with distinction on several boards; among them as President of the Port Chester-Rye Brook Library Board of Trustees; as Treasurer of the Michigan State NYC Alumni Club Board of Directors; and as Secretary/Treasurer of the Spartan Alumni Foundation of Greater NYC.

Roni has earned several awards for her years of dedicated work, including the New York State PTA Honorary Life Membership Award in recognition of contributions to the welfare of children and youth; the NYSUT Judi Laurence Community Service Award in recognition of service to less fortunate members of the Tarrytown Regional Community; the NYSUT Community Service Award; and the American Federation of Teachers Living the Legacy Award in recognition of over 50 years of exceptional leadership and union advocacy in support of women's rights. In 2022, she was awarded the New York State United Teachers statewide Retiree of the Year Award.

As a senior citizen, Roni willingly gives of her time and expertise to help others. So many lives are made better because of Roni's involvement and dedication.



*Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, Roni,
County Executive George Latimer*



*Past Presidents of Westchester Locals attend Senior Hall of Fame Luncheon
Pat Puleo, Yonkers Federation of Teachers; Kay Staplin, Somers Faculty Association; Judie Mirra, Greenburgh Teachers Federation; Frank Orfei, Pelham Teachers' Association*



