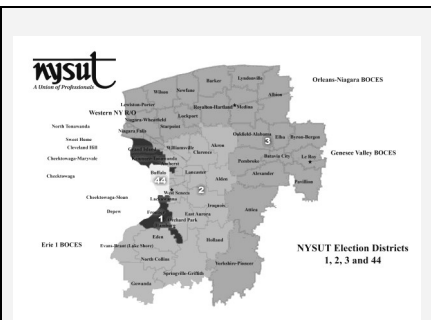


Western N.Y. NEWS & Views

Winter 2024

Reaching out to Retirees in five Western New York Counties—We are over 12,000 strong—A Coalition of Councils 1, 2 & 3



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From the President's Desk by Lynn Mele



Dear Retirees,

Welcome to 2024! To quote our Mini-Grant Co-Chairperson, "We are a victim of our own success!" We need your help! Our Mini-Grant Program awards grants up to \$500 to active teachers to fund a project not covered by their department's budget. Normally, we receive 25-30 requests. The word is out across WNY and we received 131 applications this year! This would require a budget of \$65,500. Obviously, we don't have this money in our budget. We do a "Share the Wealth" drawing at all of our events and this year added a Basket Raffle at the Holiday Party which helped raise additional funds. PLEASE consider a donation to fund more grants. The form is on the last page of this newsletter. Every dollar is greatly appreciated. Thank you.



This will be the year we ask you retirees to become more involved in NYSUT's effort to "Fix Tier 6." The Tier-6-issue is not only being addressed by NYSUT, but by our brothers and sisters across the state who work as police officers, firefighters, nurses, and public servants. We are asking our members to "sign" an electronic petition to address the economic injustices of Tier 6. Please go to fixtier6.org for information and sign the petition. This should take you less than two minutes.

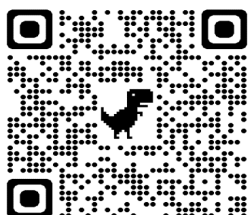
Your Board Members are also attending training sessions in Albany to learn new and better ways to reach out to our retirees in NYS and across the country. On the lighter side—the winters in WNY seem long and dark. By March, I'm over it! But you should take advantage of this time to join a gym, read books, or start planning your garden. Go outside and embrace the winter weather. Try cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, or just take a long walk. Better yet...clean out that closet or cupboard, and donate usable items.

As always, be well,
Yours in Solidarity
Lynn Mele, President



TRAVEL NEWS—SENECA WINE COUNTRY AND TRAIL

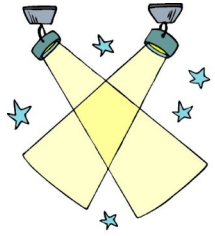
A coach bus day trip is being planned to tour Seneca Wine Country. The tentative date is Thursday, June 6, 2024. This event will include round-trip coach bus (pick ups will be in the Southtowns at the AAA Office in Orchard Park and the Northtowns AAA Office in Williamsville). The coach bus will be handicapped accessible. The trip will include: Belhurst Castle, Three Brothers Winery Estates, Muranda Cheese Company, Sauders Store, etc. Price will include transportation, one meal, taxes and gratuity. This event will be limited to the first 50 reservations—please be on the lookout for information in future newsletters regarding accessing the reservation form and cost per ticket. Brought to you by the WNY Regional Council and AAA Horizon Tours.



For up-to-date information on RC's 1, 2 & 3, visit our new website at <http://rcwest.ny.aft.org>

SCAN the QR CODE to be taken to our Facebook Page!

Make a friend request; we are a private group.



SPOTLIGHT ON.....LYNN MELE

As I begin my second term as President of the Coalition, I was asked to share how I arrived at this position. Well! WAY back when I started teaching in 1973 at Grand Island High School, I was told to “lay low and not surface” until I received tenure.



With encouragement from President Joanne McCartin (a NYSUT Legend Award winner) I began my other career...union activism. I wore many hats as Building Rep., Treasurer on the Executive Board, helped to negotiate two contracts, served as an AFL-CIO delegate under George Wessel, Chairperson of the United Way, Alternate Retirement Delegate, and finally, Retirement Delegate and Chairperson of the G.I.T.A. Scholarship Committee. I joined the Board of Trustees after retirement in 2007. Once again, Joanne McCartin was responsible for “bringing me into the fold.” I served on the Program Committee and was Participation Fee Chairperson for several years before taking a leave for family medical reasons. Returning in 2019, I was asked to run for President of our NYSUT Coalition. The first few years were challenging. With COVID, all meetings were Zoom and no fun activities! But, we are back!

I enjoy meeting retirees and encouraging folks to continue to remain active. As our NYSUT slogan says:
“NYSUT Retirees....Experienced, Resourceful, Engaged.”



TAKE NOTE - If you need to contact your Retiree Council President, listed below are the respective council emails:

- RC 1 – Kathy Brown - RetireeCouncil1@gmail.com**
- RC 2 – Eva Mroczka - RetireeCouncil2@gmail.com**
- RC 3 – Veronica Cavan - NYSUTRetireeCouncil3@gmail.com**



Retirees Support our UAW Brothers and Sisters

Thank you to those who attended our Coalition Fall Luncheon and bought raffle tickets totaling \$348 to support the UAW workers on strike.



WESTERN NEW YORK RETIREE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

MAY 21, 2024 LOCATION: TBA



VOLUNTEER AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE’S LIVES!

Ninety percent of the **American Red Cross** workforce are volunteers and their work is only possible because of people like you. Discover the role that’s right for you today.

- **Blood Drive Support:** Help staff the registration/sign-in desk, monitor the hospitality snack area and help to take health histories of our local blood donors as a Volunteer Medical Screener.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Response:** Help families and communities prepare for emergencies, from home fires to natural disasters, before they happen. Volunteers provide care and comfort and access to necessities like food, clothing, and shelter. In addition, our recovery services help people get back to their lives as quickly as possible.
- **Serving our Armed Forces:** Provide 24-hour communications and resource support to members, veterans and families at home, in military hospitals, and military installations around the world.
- **More Opportunities:** Explore a wide range of positions with Community Outreach, to supporting fundraising and special events, as well as maintaining our fleet and facilities. There is something for you!
- **Communities across the country count on the Red Cross every day and they couldn’t do it without you.** Discover the role that’s right for you, today! <http://redcross.org/volunteer> Contact: Grace Wach, Volunteer Recruitment Specialist (716) 345-3689, RecruitWNY@redcross.org



A TALE OF TWO TIERS



Let's look at **Mike** and **Molly** who both teach in the same school district. Mike is the more experienced and is on Retirement Tier 4 while Molly is on Tier 6. Let's see what that means when retirement nears.*



*At the start of their careers, Mike and Molly each pay 3% of their salary toward their retirement...**BUT WATCH WHAT HAPPENS.**

TIER 4

For the first 10 years, **Mike** continues to pay 3% of his salary toward his pension, BUT after year 10, his payments END.

Mike can retire and collect his full pension penalty-free at age 55 and 30 years of service. This would equal 60% of his FAS (Final Average Salary).

**info from FixTier6.org

TIER 6

As **Molly's** salary increases, so does the percentage of her salary going to her pension. When she reaches \$46,000, she will be paying 3.5% of her salary toward her pension. By \$56,000 she is paying 4.5%. By \$76,000 it's 5.75% and by \$101,000 it will be 6%. **Molly** can't retire and collect her penalty-free pension until she's 63. **If she retired like Mike at age 55 and 30 years of service, she would receive only 26.4% of her FAS—after paying tens of thousands \$\$\$ more into the system.**

It's **UNFAIR** that some NYSUT members must work longer, and contribute more, to earn a significantly reduced pension. This should anger ALL union members. **FIXING TIER 6 IS ABOUT DIGNITY.** The hallmark of a public-service career is the promise of a dignified retirement.

FIXING TIER 6 IS ABOUT KEEPING TALENTED EDUCATORS IN THE CLASSROOM AND ALSO RECRUITING NEW EDUCATORS INTO THE PROFESSION. Forcing younger members into a lesser pension system undervalues our profession and makes it harder to recruit new teachers. **FIXING TIER 6 IS ABOUT UNITY AND POWER.** By staying united, we've made big changes before. We can do it again!

HOW CAN RETIREES HELP?

- ➡ **WRITE OR CALL** your state representatives letting them know that Tier 6 has to be changed if NYS is going to attract qualified teachers.
- ➡ **TELL** your state representatives that Tier 6 makes teaching a less desirable career and discourages young people from choosing to teach.
- ➡ **EXPLAIN** what has happened to Teacher Pensions in NY if the subject of "*teachers' great pensions*" come up in conversation.
- ➡ **DEFEND** and **ENCOURAGE** teaching as a worthy profession for young people to prepare for and consider.
- ➡ **DONATE** to **VOTE-COPE** to help NYSUT get the message out to our state lawmakers so that changes can be made.



Lockwoods Reindeer Wreath Workshop

December Holiday Luncheon 2023



PARTICIPATION FEE FORM (2023-2024)

If you have not already sent in your Participation Fee Form, we urge you to support our Retiree Councils by sending in your \$10 participation fee and by encouraging others to support the work we do for all of us. Thank you.

Name _____ District you retired from _____

Street Address _____ Year of Retirement _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Make your \$10 contribution payable to: **NYSUT Retirees of WNY**. NOTE: Due to heavy initial response, there might be a delay in processing your check. Please be patient when looking for your cancelled check.

Mail this form to: Eva Mroczka, c/o NYSUT Retirees of WNY, 270 Essjay Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221

MINI-GRANT DONATION FORM

NYSUT Retirees of WNY awards mini-grants up to \$500 to active teachers to supplement special projects. Grant monies are funded by our "Share the Wealth" drawings and retiree donations. Please consider donating to this worthwhile activity.

NAME _____

PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

E-MAIL _____

DONATION AMOUNT \$ _____

Please send your donation payable to: **NYSUT Retirees of WNY** and mail to:

ATTN: Mark Shanahan
270 Essjay Road
Williamsville, NY 14221