



SUNY retirees stay connected, seek service options

SUNY has found that its retirees want to stay connected to their campus and seek opportunities to give back to their communities after retirement.

The findings are a result of a survey recently conducted by SUNY and have been published in a report by the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC).

“Each year, approximately 1,000 individuals retire from SUNY and its 64 campuses, and are a large and diverse group in terms of their expertise and skills, educational background and work experience,” said SUNY

Chancellor Nancy Zimpher. “SUNY retirees are a deeply rich resource ... They want to stay connected and we are more than happy to help them do that.”

82 percent of respondents have engaged in volunteer activity since retiring from SUNY.

“SUNY became what it is today because of the dedication and accomplishments of its past and

current employees,” said UUPer Ram Chugh, RSC executive director. “This report seeks to give SUNY retirees the credit they richly deserve and demonstrate the roles they can continue to play as members of the SUNY and general communities.”

The survey was conducted to accomplish six main objectives, including: determining the demographic profile of the SUNY retiree respondents; identifying the nature and degree of SUNY retiree involvement in voluntary service; determining why they did or did not volunteer; identifying the social and see **SUNY**, page 5

ARA focused on saving entitlement programs

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

In early September, I attended the national legislative conference of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) in Washington, D.C. Six hundred retirees from 32 states and from dozens of unions came to discuss how to protect Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

There were numerous speakers, including Sen. Bernie Sanders, AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schulz, Social Security expert Eric Kingson, AFT President Randi Weingarten, Rep. Raul Grijalva, U.S. Secretary of Health Kathleen Sebelius, and Rep. Nancy Pelosi.

There were workshops on Social Security that came in handy when we lobbied our Congresspeople. We reminded the legislators that Social Security did not cause the deficit, and that the government owes Social Security the money it “borrowed” to help balance the federal budget, when the fund was running a huge surplus. And, of course, if nothing is done to change it, the fund will be fine for the next 27 years.

However, we must think of the future



and something should be done now to bolster the fund. Sen. Sanders has introduced legislation to eliminate the cap (now at \$106,800) so that people earning more than \$250,000 will continue to pay into the fund. It was noted by a number of speakers that before the New Deal, almost 40 percent of retirees lived in poverty. Now, because of Social Security and Medicare, the figure is 9 percent—still high but a huge improvement.

Sebelius spoke about Medicare. Although there is talk of raising the age of entitlement, she said they hope to save money by identifying fraud (apparently there is a lot!) and by negotiating with the pharmaceutical companies for lower prices.

An issue that worries many retirees is see **ARA**, page 15

A retiree’s lament

By Larry Ashley, Cortland
(with apologies to Martin Niemöller)

It is not that I didn’t see the corporate/financial complex emerge. After all, they came for my democracy and I didn’t support election reform, so they bought the damned government.

They came for my union, but I didn’t support the Employee Free Choice Act, so they stripped me of all employee rights.

They came for my universities, so I buckled down and “did more with less” and they replaced most of my colleagues with part-timers.

They came for my mortgage, and I went under so they took their bonuses and

murmured about the invisible hand of the market and called me a slacker.

They came for my medical plan and I bowed my head and paid more for less coverage while their executives blamed the fact that I was living longer than my dad.

Now, they are coming for my pension and my Social Security and my Medicare and that’s all I’ve got. I just hope that they don’t notice that my body is worth about \$1.98 in raw materials (what with all the mercury and lead I’ve managed to accumulate therein) and there are so many like me that someone is going to make a huge profit with our remains.

Viva Occupy Wall Street!

The Active Retiree

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.

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Life as I see it ...

What makes a politician?

By Henry Geerken
Cobleskill

I had been grouchy for more than a week and my wife Diane said to me, "You need to vent that pent-up anger. Why not write an article about being a politician?"

I snarled, "Great idea" and fired up the old PC.

What makes a person choose a life-time of public service? Is it the power? (Yes) Is it the fantastic health and dental plans? (Yes) Is it the salary? (Yes) Is it all the fringe benefits like spending time in South America with someone other than your wife? (Yes) Is it the fact that you have no conscience? (Yes) Is it that you have an aversion to hard work? (Yes)

At what point does a person start to consider a political career? How is that choice made? The CCBSCC (Close Cover Before Striking Career Counseling) has the answer. Consider the following guidelines:

If you think Jefferson Davis is buried in Grant's Tomb, you might be politician material.

If you think you have two left feet (and you do), you might be politician material.

If you voted for Victor Quasimodo or Bugs Bunny in the last election, you might be politician material.

If you thought a 50 on an IQ test meant that you got half the questions right, you might be politician material.

If the last time you attended church you heard someone pop a beer can during the sermon, you might be politician material.

If you think an outhouse is a building on the property line, you might be politician material.

If you take a bath in the same tub your momma washes the dishes in, you might be politician material.



Geerken

If you think you'll make a lot of tip money carrying trunks for elephants, you might be politician material.

If you think that passing a budget without reading it is funny, you might be politician material.

If you think that pulling Uncle Joe's finger will

enable you to hear a band playing a Sousa march, you might be politician material.

If you think the expression "garbage in garbage out" refers to a change in government, you might be politician material.

If you think that Manny, Moe and Mac are the first names of men in the state Senate, you might be politician material.

If you think there are 23 letters in the alphabet, you might be politician material.

If you put a cuff on your new pants or a hem on your new dress by stapling it, you might be politician material.

If you think a "bejillian dollars" is petty cash, you might be politician material.

If you think a white-collar worker is a church official, you might be politician material.

If you think Albany is on the Canadian border, you might be politician material.

If you think Santa's cry of Ho! Ho! Ho! is a sexist slur, you might be politician material.

If you think a salary of more than \$330 per day for a part-time job as a New York state senator isn't enough, you might be politician material.

If you think you should get a pay increase while blue-collar workers are taking cuts in salaries and benefits, you might be politician material.

From the COARM chair

Memories of a Depression childhood

When watching the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations and participating in a small solidarity rally in the next town, I began to think about what it was like growing up in the Depression. It's a lot like what's happening in today's economic situation. During the Depression, small businesses failed, people lost their life savings and the unemployed stood on bread lines, while big corporations continued to amass large profits, saving money by *not* hiring workers. Life was difficult. My father worked only half time because his union correctly opted to put everyone on half time, rather than laying off half the workers. Remember, there was no unemployment insurance, and the loss of a job meant poverty, eviction and hunger for your family. I can remember when homeless relatives moved in with us and my sister and I had to sleep on mattresses in the small living room. In an era without health insurance, it took five years of monthly payments to the hospital after my father's heart attack to finally clear his debt. But when Roosevelt was elected, and introduced the reforms of the New Deal, we knew things would get better. Union membership grew, as did the unions' demands, and Roosevelt did not cater to the reactionaries: He defied them. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) gave my cousin a job, and he and his family moved out. I can still remember my father displaying his new Social Security card: He would have a pension!

This optimism in the face of economic need was brought home to me several weeks ago when I attended the 70th anniversary of the opening of my Brooklyn high school: Midwood, now called Midwood at Brooklyn College (the college is next door.) Midwood was primarily a neighborhood high school, but because it had special programs in music, art and language arts, very bright students from other districts could enroll. Thus my circle of friends now expanded beyond my neighborhood. The science nerds, including my husband, went to Brooklyn Technical High School or

“The New York politicians ...
had decided that, even in a time
of terrible financial crisis,
education was important for the
future. ... Where is our future now?”



Wishnia

Stuyvesant in Manhattan. Both had difficult entrance exams. (Midwood now has a science building and one of two electron microscopes in a high school.)

We were a mixture of mostly Jewish, Irish and Italian Catholic children of immigrants and—with the open district enrollment—African Americans. We had intelligent and dedicated teachers who challenged us to think and analyze. Since I was the only one of 13 cousins who attended college, I know it was those wonderful teachers who encouraged me and made it possible for me to go on to higher education.

At the time, New York City politics was dominated by the three main ethnic groups. If there was an Irish mayor, the comptroller would be Jewish and the head of the Board of Estimate (city council) would be Italian. If the mayor was Italian, the jobs were switched. It took me a long time to learn that the country was really run by white Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs). The only Protestants I knew were African American, and I knew they did not run the country.

I am telling you all this, not just because I am feeling nostalgic, but because there is a more important message in the opening of this high school. We were reminded by one of the speakers at the celebration that the construction of Midwood was begun during the Depression (it was opened in 1941). At the same time as Midwood was being built, so were two other major city high schools:

Franklyn K. Lane and Forest Hills. The New York politicians—Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia (bless him) and Gov. Herbert Lehman—had decided that, even in a time of terrible financial crisis, education was important for the future; the city was committed to educating its citizens. I might add that this was also a period of expansion of CUNY, with the opening of both Brooklyn and Queens colleges. The alumni of these high schools and CUNY went on to great achievement. At one point, more Nobel laureates had done their undergraduate work at CUNY than those from Harvard. And there was no tuition! Midwood had its share of famous graduates. Aside from UUPers Judy Wishnia and Jo Schaffer, there were scientists, an ambassador, well-known academics, and composer John Corigliano. But of course, the most famous alum was Woody Allen, who confessed to cutting more classes than he attended.

Compare that commitment to educating the children of New York with today's trashing and firing of teachers, of increasing tuition that makes it harder for the next generation of immigrant kids and other children of working families to avoid debilitating debt. Many simply forego college. Our Depression-era schools brought enlightenment to the nation.

Where is our future now?

Judith Wishnia

Retirees meet for retreat, COARM

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

Prior to the 2011 Fall Delegate Assembly, 20 retirees from around the state participated in a “retreat” to discuss how to improve the work of the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM).

Among the highlights were:

1. Discussion on how to expand COARM (UUP’s retiree contingent is now just under 4,000 members!) so that more of our retirees could be involved in its activities. There are two ways to do this: elect a chair and co-chair in each of the seven regions; or return to the original plan of 20 years ago and have a liaison on every SUNY state-operated campus. It was decided to go the liaison route.

Some regions already have liaisons, but a letter to chapter presidents will expand and reinforce that commitment. COARM Chair Judy Wishnia was directed to send a letter asking chapters to call for a volunteer or to appoint a retiree to work with regional chairs. The letter will also ask chapter presidents to have the retiree liaison be a member (voting or non-voting) of the chapter executive board.

2. There was discussion of how COARM could get downloadable email lists of retirees by region. Apparently, this is not currently possible. Retiree Paul Griffen of Geneseo will look into finding a solution. It was also mentioned that it is difficult to get lists of new retirees; COARM will be asking SUNY System Administration for this information.

3. UUP retiree Ram Chugh, chair of the SUNY-sponsored Retirees Service Corps (we have nine UUPers on the Advisory Council) noted that we could “piggy back” on the group’s website, which would make it possible for UUP retirees to join this list for social contacts. Chugh also discussed the upcoming Nov. 3 conference, where UUP retiree Bob Kasprak of Optometry will be on a panel discussing elder abuse.

4. Griffen demonstrated how COARM could edit the online document *Organize*



PHOTOS BY EL-WISE NOISETTE AND KAREN L. MATTISON

Above, COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, center, comments on a resolution honoring Pearl Brod. Waiting their turn to speak are Jo Schaffer of Cortland and Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center.

Below, Harvey Inventasch of Cortland drops his ballot in the box during the election for statewide vice president for professionals. Delegates also cast their ballots for a member of the Executive Board. Philippe Abraham of Albany was elected VPP; Idalia Torres of Fredonia won an at-large seat on the board.

Your Vital Records.

5. Plans were made to organize UUP retirees in states other than New York. It was decided to see if COARM could entice members to plan get-togethers or small meetings with other people in their area. Some parts of California look promising; Florida retirees from the north, south, east and west could meet with other in their region (see related story, page 13).

6. The NYSHIP increase and the threats to Social Security and Medicare were discussed. COARM passed two resolutions on these topics.

7. It was noted that RELAG is organizing regionally in an effort to reach more legislators in their districts.

COARM MEETING

The following are the draft minutes of the COARM meeting conducted during the Fall DA, Sept. 23 in Albany.

- Minutes of the previous meeting were passed, and upcoming regional meetings were approved.
- There was a report on the retreat.



Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center raised the issue of the timing of the retreat, noting that it was inconvenient for many. Wishnia noted that the times had been agreed to by the members. It was decided to change the hours of the retreat. There will be no retreat prior to the 2012 Winter DA, but there will be one scheduled for the spring.

- Report from RELAG: COARM passed resolutions on NYSHIP and Social

SUNY ...

(continued from page 1)

economic contributions made by SUNY retirees through volunteerism; seeking suggestions for promoting greater involvement of retirees in voluntary service; and obtaining recommendations for what SUNY and its campuses can do to make the retirement experience more meaningful for its retirees.

The report is available at www.suny.edu/Files/sunynewsFiles/Pdf/RetireeFinalReport.pdf.

For the survey, retirees were asked about their volunteer activities and how SUNY campuses could keep them involved after retirement.

Among the key findings were:

- 75 percent of those who responded continued to live in the community where they had worked; another 6 percent relocated, but remained in New York;
- 82 percent of those who responded have engaged in some sort of volunteer activity since retiring from SUNY, be it on campus or locally;
- Of those who were not already involved in volunteer services, nearly 26 percent said they would be willing to volunteer if they were contacted directly for help.

Since surveying its retirees, SUNY has put in place several of the group's suggestions, including developing a web-based system to match retiree interests and expertise with volunteer services on campuses and in communities, and the launch of a website for retirees (www.suny.edu/retirees).

In addition, SUNY has produced a guide for campuses interested in starting a retiree organization.

The survey was conducted by the SUNY Retirees Service Corps, which was created in 2008 to enhance awareness about the potential value of retired faculty, administrators and support staff, and to encourage campuses to establish retiree programs to take advantage of this valuable resource for the good of their campuses and local communities.



Above, UUP President Phil Smith, left, discusses the increase in NYSHIP premiums during the RELAG meeting.

Listening in are Eric Russell of Downstate and Membership Development Officer Ed Quinn, right.

Left, Pat Stempel and Horace Ivey, both of Upstate, listen to a discussion on organizing UUP retirees around the country.



Security. These resolutions went to the full Delegate Assembly for approval. Lengthy discussions of nine proposed constitutional amendments left little time for resolutions.

UUP President Phil Smith followed up on COARM's concerns about the increase in retirees' NYSHIP premiums. After meeting with NYSUT legislative and legal staffs, it was determined that the state Department of Civil Service has the right to increase by 2 percent the premium contributions of all state workers enrolled in NYSHIP (see related story, page 13).

- Delegates adopted a resolution honoring the late Pearl Brod of Farmingdale. They also agreed to rename the Retiree of the Year award after Brod. COARM also collected \$165 for the scholarship fund to buy a Wall of Honor brick for Brod.

- COARM passed a resolution to give Karen Mattison a \$500 bonus for her

work on *The Active Retiree*. Wishnia said she has a large pile of awards in her den that were won by *The Active Retiree*.

- Members were encouraged to attend the Nov. 3 Retirees Service Corps conference, and to connect with their local Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA). UUP retirees are all ARA members and need to be active.

- COARM's elected members became the temporary executive committee for representation on the NYSUT Retiree Council. This is a very important step because UUP retirees can bring higher ed issues to the mostly K-12 council members.

UUP is entitled to nine seats—three for each of its election districts. The seven elected COARM members will serve as a nominating committee.

COARM will mail nomination forms to eligible UUP retirees as soon as all the necessary election information is received from NYSUT.

Goodbye, Pearl

Delegate Assembly honors former COARM chair

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

At the 2011 Fall Delegate Assembly Sept. 24 in Albany, Dr. Pearl H. Brod was honored with a joint resolution listing her many years of service to the union, especially its retiree members through COARM.

The Farmingdale Chapter joined with COARM in sponsoring the resolution—which was adopted unanimously by the full DA. As a way to further honor Brod, who passed away July 11 at age 90, the resolution changed the name of the annual retiree award to the Pearl H. Brod Active Retiree Award.

During the COARM meeting prior to the DA, Brod was honored by the regional leaders who passed the hat and collected funds for a brick in Brod's name to be placed on the Wall of Honor at the UUP Administrative Office and a donation to the UUP scholarship fund which was a charity near and dear to Brod.

At many DAs, Brod had worked at the fundraising events held by the scholarship fund and was always a smiling, happy face of the event, helping to raise many thousands of dollars to benefit UUP scholarship recipients.

The Farmingdale Chapter is planning to honor Brod with a plaque placed in Ward Hall and will solicit contributions for the plaque at its next general membership meeting.

The resolution was prepared by Vicki Janik and coordinated with Barbara Maertz. It reads:

Whereas, Dr. Pearl H. Brod, who passed away June 11, 2011, worked at Farmingdale State College for over 20 years as both a professor and the first female college administrator; and

Whereas, Pearl helped in the creation on that campus of the

University Faculty Club, the Retirement Luncheon, the UUP Farmingdale Retiree Luncheon Series, the Institute for Learning in Retirement, and the Farmingdale Chapter of the American Association of University Women; and

Whereas, after Pearl retired in 1985 she became an advocate through UUP for UUP retirees, working with the Retiree Legislative Action Group (RELAG); helping all UUP retirees to gain parking privileges, SUNYwide library access, use of college facilities, identification cards, and annual COLA adjustments in state pensions; serving as chair of the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM); and establishing a UUP retiree group in Florida; and

Whereas, because of her important work for retirees and for all of UUP, Pearl received the UUP Outstanding Retiree Award in 2006; and

Whereas, Pearl continued to attend Delegate Assemblies and participate with vigor in COARM meetings and activities even after she became disabled and was confined to a wheelchair; therefore be it

Resolved, that Dr. Pearl H. Brod be named to the Donor Wall of Hope of United University Professions, so that her exemplary work may serve as a model for future union leaders in UUP and so that they may be inspired by her commitment to service to all union members and by her respect for the humanistic values of unionism throughout the world; and be it further

Resolved, that the Outstanding Retiree Award be renamed the Pearl H. Brod Active Retiree Award in order to recognize the invaluable work supporting unionism achieved by future dedicated UUP retirees.



“Pearl was one of a kind.”

— Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

“We are all indebted to Pearl for her tireless efforts throughout the years to improve the lives of those in the Farmingdale community.”

— Russ Tuthill
Farmingdale

“I so much enjoyed working with Pearl on the Scholarship Development Committee. She was always so willing to help.”

— Gertrude Butera
Alfred



KAREN L. MATTISON

Pearl Brod, right, makes a suggestion during a recent DA. Also shown is Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale.

In memoriam

Let us take time to remember the UUP Active Retirees who have passed away:

Gail E. Baldwin, Brooklyn HSC
 Sarah Bihl, Buffalo HSC
 Pearl H. Brod, Farmingdale
 James K. Forrester, New Paltz
 Beth S. Goldberg, Farmingdale
 Joseph H. Goldstein, Brooklyn HSC
 Richard F. Gustafson, Oneonta
 Harriet R. Jonas, Farmingdale
 Arthur L. Kaiser, Buffalo HSC
 Martin Lubin, Plattsburgh
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 Karl W. Scharl, Albany
 Margaret M. Schwartz, Oneonta
 Theodore J. Starr, Brockport
 Mary Lou Stewart, Stony Brook HSC
 Donald R. Sulas, Delhi
 Jacqueline K. Thompson, Buffalo HSC

Alfonsin named retiree of the year

Former UUP president Tim Reilly affectionately referred to Ed Alfonsin as “the 1,000-year-old man” because of the depth and breadth of his union knowledge. Let’s face it, if there’s something you need to know about UUP, parliamentary procedures or the American labor movement, just ask Ed.

His retirement from SUNY Potsdam in 1997 didn’t slow him down one bit, and led to his being named the Outstanding Active Retiree of the Year during the 2011 Winter Delegate Assembly. He formally received his award at the Fall DA in September.

Alfonsin’s work as an active member began in 1975, and included elected terms as statewide secretary, membership development officer, and Executive Board member, and as an appointee to eight Negotiations Teams.

Alfonsin has been dubbed “the consummate union man” by many of his colleagues, who never doubted he would remain a valuable asset to UUP. They spelled out their hopes in a resolution read during the 1997 Spring DA: “As we express our gratitude to Ed and congratulate him on his retirement, we do so with the knowledge that he will continue to serve UUP ... and that we will continue to benefit from his intelligence and his dedication to UUP and academic unionism.”

How right they were.

Since his retirement, Alfonsin continues to serve as a chapter delegate and as a member of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council. He also lends his expertise to

the Franklin-St. Lawrence Educators’ Council, and the Franklin, St. Lawrence and Lewis Counties Central Trades and Labor Council.

His union service extended to the Public Employees Federation and NYSUT, where he served as a parliamentarian and on several committees, respectively. He is also visible in his community as a volunteer with the Seaway Valley Prevention Council, the United Church of Christ, and the Norwood Model Railway Club.

“Amazingly, even in retirement, Ed continued his record of never missing a DA,” said COARM Chair Judy



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam says a few words after being named the Outstanding Retiree of the Year. He officially received the award in September during the 2011 Fall Delegate Assembly in Albany.

Wishnia of Stony Brook. “He ran UUP elections (‘Fold your ballots; go down the center aisle’) and we can always count on his historical knowledge and his ability to go to the mic and tell us what constitutional provision we were negotiating!”

Regional meetings

Southern Tier retirees gather in Cortland, Oneonta

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

Jo Schaffer, Southern Tier COARM elected representative, held autumn meetings on the Cortland and Oneonta campuses in October. A similar meeting is scheduled for early November at SUNY Binghamton.

CORTLAND

The Cortland meeting on Oct. 14 included a brunch and guest speaker Art Mason, director of Elder Care Prevention at Lifespan in Rochester. Mason is well known to COARM members and the very active COARM Subcommittee on Elder Abuse, as he has presented programmatic information at the state level on a number of occasions.

The 65 attendees at Cortland heard Mason report on the study, “Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study.” Considering the sober nature of the report, the audience was absolutely rapt by the clear presentation of the nature of elder abuse, the population in danger of such abuse, and the relevant statistics supporting this information.

Sadly, following the presentation, members shared specific cases and instances of elder abuse. They asked Mason how to get help for those being abused.

A Cortland attendee volunteered that this was one of the most important—and certainly interesting—programs ever scheduled in the long history of Cortland retiree events.



JO SCHAFFER PHOTOS

Above, Lifespan’s Art Mason discusses the “Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study” during a retiree meeting in Cortland.



Left, an unidentified Delhi retiree, left, discusses the issues during a retiree gathering in Oneonta. Also shown are Duke Piroha of Delhi, center, and Fred Miller of Oneonta.

ONEONTA

The trip to Oneonta on Oct. 19 for Oneonta and Delhi retirees was one week too late to enjoy what had been the most glorious of fall peeping! It was a gray and drizzly day, so meeting in front of a roaring blaze in the fireplace of the Brooks House of Barbecue was really welcome.

Walter Apple, the new UUP retiree member services coordinator, was introduced and gave a brief update on available benefits. Oneonta Chapter President Bill Simons came in time for barbecue

ribs and to pass along his greetings to the assembled retirees.

In both venues, Schaffer discussed vital issues pertaining to UUP retirees. She clarified the events leading to the increase in NYSHIP premiums, Social Security COLA, and the potential increase in Medicare rates. She suggested retirees further educate themselves and to use their “University skills” to educate elected officials in Albany and Washington.

Capital District COARM asks: Why is public higher education public?

By Al Magid
Albany

In recent times, a wide array of public institutions, among them universities and colleges, have been subjected to much scrutiny and criticism and sharp reductions in public financing. The scrutiny and criticism have been directed also at public-sector unions supportive of public institutions and their workforces.

With that consideration in mind, Capital District COARM's Executive Committee deemed it appropriate, nay urgent, to address the question, Why is Public Higher Education Public?, particularly in New York with its two great state university systems: SUNY and CUNY.

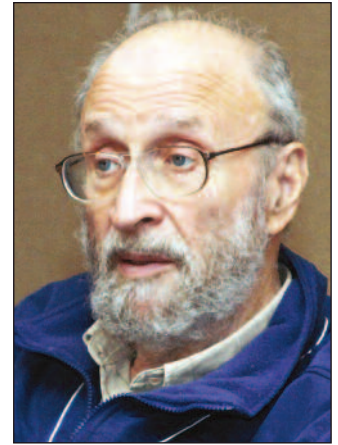
SUNY, for example, operates on 64 campuses and other sites spread across the state; it educates nearly a half million students in two- and four-year colleges and university centers and professional schools, and has 88,000 employees.

Both SUNY and CUNY are driving forces in all sectors of the state economy: industry, agriculture, service, law and medical training, health care, research and development. New York's university systems are continuing to broaden the scope of public/private partnerships and other collaborative arrangements.

Vitally connected with SUNY and CUNY are well-established union organizations for academic and professional personnel. UUP, with 35,000 members— among them nearly 4,000 retirees—is the nation's largest higher education union.

Capital Region COARM convened its fall semester semi-annual meeting to tackle the question, Why is Public Higher Education Public? The meeting was held Oct. 18 in the Alumni House on UAlbany's main campus, with two distinguished guest speakers: William Scheuerman and Elizabeth Bringsjord.

Scheuerman was UUP president for 14 years. He left that post to take up the presidency of the National Labor College in Washington, D.C., for a few years. Long on leave as a professor of political



Capital District COARM members heard from SUNY Vice Chancellor Elizabeth Bringsjord, former UUP president Bill Scheuerman, and COARM Capital District elected representative Al Magid, right.

science at SUNY Oswego, he has resumed teaching there.

Dr. Bringsjord is SUNY vice chancellor for academic programs and planning, and vice provost. Her key responsibilities are in policy analysis, formulation and implementation.

Both speakers established deep roots as students in New York's public higher education sector: Scheuerman earned his B.A. from City College of New York/CUNY and his Ph.D. from the CUNY Graduate Center. Among her several academic degrees, Bringsjord earned an M.S. and a Ph.D. from UAlbany.

The two speakers ranged widely in remarking for an hour about past, present and future prospects for public higher education in the nation and New York state, principally SUNY, and about public- and private-sector unionism. Their emphasis was on the need for public support—political and financial—of public higher education.

A robust hourlong Q-and-A followed their presentations.

The meeting ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It began with an opportunity for SUNY academic and professional retirees (from SUNY campuses in Albany, New Paltz and Cobleskill) and others to socialize and consult printed materials provided

by UUP Member Benefits and Services. Highlighted also was the recent appointment of Walter Apple to succeed Anne Marine as retiree member services coordinator. Apple has come to UUP with an impressive educational and work record in the area of human resources.

Jim Kiepper and Don Cohen, both members of the Capital Region COARM Executive Committee, reported on the fall meeting of the UUP Delegate Assembly at The Desmond in Albany and on COARM's elder-abuse project.

As is our tradition, a brunch was provided by statewide COARM for those attending the meeting. Provided also was a large cake honoring the 95th birthday of UAlbany academic retiree Hy Kuritz, a member of the Capital Region COARM Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee will meet soon to begin organizing the semi-annual meeting to be held in May 2012. Details will follow.

Capital Region COARM urges SUNY academic and professional retirees to participate in its always lively and informative semi-annual meetings.

All meetings are keyed to timely issues—educational and political/policy, the latter domestic and international—with distinguished guest speakers from near and far.

Regional meetings

WNY retirees get a sneak peek at MusicalFare

By Harvey Axlerod
Buffalo Center

"MusicalFare was a great idea. Those who did not attend, missed out."

— Paul Griffen, Geneseo

"Wow!"

— Numerous people who attended

On June 29, the Western New York Region held a social event as opposed to a more formal meeting. The venue was at MusicalFare, a small theater in Amherst specializing in—you guessed it—musicals.

Specifically, WNY retirees were given the opportunity to see a rehearsal of the world premier of a new musical, "One More for My Baby." Attendees saw Act I (only) of the two-act play about a Frank Sinatra wannabe.

Actor/vocalist John Fredo was in especially great voice, holding the audience in the palm of his hands.

Before the actual rehearsal, MusicalFare Director Randall Kramer gave a brief description of what goes into planning a musical—from staging and sets, to costumes and lighting. It was akin to a Cadillac factory tour rather than simply buying the finished product.

It was a wonderful evening. A modest \$5 per person was collected; the funds were donated to MusicalFare. In exchange, WNY COARM is listed in the playbill as a corporate sponsor. It was a bit of good publicity and a win-win-win situation.

People coming to Western New York are encouraged to consider tickets to MusicalFare productions, which are entertaining and reasonably priced.

For more on MusicalFare, visit www.musicalfare.com.



Above are John Fredo as Jack DeCarlo, left, and Don Gervasi as Howie. Gervasi played several different characters in the two-man show, "One More for My Baby," at the MusicalFare Theater in Buffalo.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MUSICALFARE

Correction

In the July 2011 issue of *The Active Retiree*, the page 6 byline should have read "By Paul McKenna, Buffalo Center."

We regret the error.

WNYers hear Lifespan ombudsman, 9/11 theories

By Harvey Axlerod
Buffalo Center

Western New York retirees met Oct. 17 at Brockport College for the annual fall brunch meeting.

The first speaker was Deb Frink, ombudsman/coordinator of Lifespan, who spoke on "The Lifespan Ombudsman Program and You." Lifespan is one-stop shopping for older people. According to the Lifespan brochure, "Ombudsmen are volunteers who make a difference one person at a time."

Lifespan covers seven counties in the Rochester and Buffalo area. Some programs are fee based; others are not.

Did you know that:

- the average stay in a nursing home is two-and-a-half to three years.
- the average nursing home resident is bathed once a week.
- people retain the right to make bad decisions.
- people have the right to make a grievance without fear of reprisal. (Author's editorial: Sounds a lot like unionized workers, doesn't it!)

The latter is often addressed by framing the issue as, "It has come to our attention that ..." to shield residents, family and staff from possible reprisals. Ombudsmen often have a certain credibility in getting outside agencies involved.

There was much more material presented, but it's safe to say that the audience was captivated and well informed by this talk.

After brunch and a business meeting, invited speaker Paul Zarembka, a UUP member and professor of economics at the University at Buffalo, spoke on "The Hidden History Behind the 9/11 Attacks," the title of a book he edited.

The talk consisted of a review of the topics in the book. Each chapter had a central theme. Zarembka made it clear that he himself had not reached a solid conclusion as to what really happened on 9/11.



PAT BAKER PHOTOS



Above, WNYers study 9/11 materials with rapt attention. Clockwise, from left are Harvey Axlerod, Paul Zarembka (standing), Paul Griffen, Jeanne Galbraith, Jack Richert, Mrs. Jack Richert, and Bill Mathews.

Left, Stacy Johnson of Buffalo Center, left, and Betsy Balzano of Brockport listen to a presentation from Deb Frink of Lifespan.

He just had a series of hard-to-explain reports surrounding that day.

The first example he cited had to do with reports of various "alleged terrorists" being seen and reported as alive. He displayed four pictures of one terrorist that seemed to some to be different people; others in the meeting disagreed.

Another issue was the later, but unreported, collapse of World Trade Center Building 7. The prevailing theory is that Building 7 collapsed from the weight of the fallout from the collapse of Buildings 1 and 2. Other reports contend that the dust contained nano-thermite, a residue found in planned explosions. Zarembka questioned why there has been no investigation regarding the latter theory.

Additionally, many experienced pilots have asserted that they cannot fathom how the plane that flew into the Pentagon was

able to achieve the flight maneuver. They contend that the terrorist pilots could not have turned the plane around in the described path before hitting the Pentagon.

Finally, the issue of insider trading arose as a possible motive for the events of 9/11. Apparently, some people profited in what appeared to be a planned stock market event.

There were many questions during and after the presentation. Everyone was intrigued: some were skeptical, others were not. The presentation was jam-packed with illustrations.

After the meeting, Zarembka was gracious enough to sell copies of his book at a special senior discount!

The Twilight Zone: The door prize, a beautiful potted plant, was awarded to the person whose birthday is closest to Sept. 11. Andrea Domst of Fredonia jumped up and declared, "My birthday is Sept. 11, and it has never been the same since." Happy birthday, Andrea!

My brilliant pitching career

One day at Chicago's Wrigley Field at age 77

By Mac Nelson
Fredonia

I've been a Cub fan for 69 years—for my sins, I suppose. Actually, my fandom started rather well.

The Cubs made the World Series when I was eleven, and lost in seven games on a gloomy wet autumn day. (I still remember the weather.) That near miss may have made the next 66 years harder, as I expected success that never happened.

But I still hang in, loving the game, the park, the city, and admiring the great skills of the players. No other game is so rich in legend, laughs and literature. When did a midget ever play in the NFL? (It is sometimes called the "No Fun League.") Playing catch with Cub ace Claude Passeau in the '40s and shaking Cal Ripken's hand are important memories for me.

I make annual pilgrimages to that magnificent dump, Wrigley Field, still an old neighborhood ballpark with hopelessly antiquated toilets and a view of sailboats on Lake Michigan from the upper deck: "That ivy-covered burial ground" in the wonderful words of Steve Goodman.

Lifelong friend Ralph "threw me a curveball. Maybe more like a knuckler. ... 'You're throwing out the first ball.' ... Gulp."

Planning to be in Chicagoland in September for my 60th high school reunion, I asked my lifelong pals, Ralph and Stan, to get tickets for the Houston game Saturday the 17th. Done. Great ones, right behind the Cubs' dugout. Then Ralph, a retired fund manager with serious contacts in Chicago, threw me a curveball. Maybe more like a knuckler.

"I have volunteered you for a little duty before the game. You are throwing out the first ball."

Gulp.

I loved the idea, of course, but my right shoulder is so bad that when I raise it and move it vigorously it sounds like I am popping corn in there. I tried a few throws and knew instantly that this was impossible. I could throw just fine underhand—

I'm an old softball pitcher—but that would be ridiculously wussy on a big league diamond. So I said "No." Ralph assured me that I didn't have to pitch a complete game, and friends played catch with me to show me that I probably could lob a ball the requisite 60 feet 6 inches. So I said "OK."

The charming old custom of throwing out the first ball used to be reserved for presidents and other celebrities.

It has been democratized, commercialized and downgraded since the days of Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman. There was no real "first ball." There were seven of us, 20 minutes before the game was to start, so no TV coverage. (Just as well.) I was the oldest by at least 40 years.

We lined up to throw to our catcher, who was actually a pitcher: John Gaub, a nice young lefty who was called up in September to throw a few meaningless innings at the end of a bad Cub season. I checked. He has pitched two innings, and has an ERA of 9.00. Bad, though better than me.

see CUBS, page 15

And now a word from a Brooklyn Dodgers fan ...

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

When I reviewed Mac Nelson's article about his beloved Cubbies, it brought to mind memories of my youth (many years ago!) in Brooklyn, where everyone was a devoted fan of "dem bums," our beloved Dodgers. The Yankees (bah!) was the team of the rich; the Dodgers were with us, the working class.

Brooklyn was a kaleidoscope of ethnic neighborhoods: Irish, Italian, Jewish, African Americans: all had their enclaves.

There is even a Leif Ericson Drive to remind us of the old Scandinavian section. But we were all united in devotion to the Dodgers.

I did not go to many games because my 25 cent weekly allowance was not enough for a trolley ride and a seat. But we didn't need to go. In the warm weather, before the days of air conditioning, all the windows were open and you could walk for blocks and never stop hearing the radios tuned to the game. I actually got to go to games during World War II when—if you brought a can of used fat (for the war effort)—you could get in free. "Ladies,

bring your fat can to Ebbetts Field!"

In those days, the last games of the season and the World Series were in mid- and late-September, and many times the important games coincided with the Jewish New Year. A boy, younger than the bar mitzvah age of 13, would be sent from the synagogue every half hour to get the score, and you could see the heads moving from side to side as the information was passed along. Perhaps, there was even a special prayer said for our bums.

And then came Jackie Robinson. We were so proud that our beloved team was
see DODGERS, page 15

Help wanted

As more and more UUP retirees are abandoning the wonderful winters of New York state and are moving to warmer climes (except for the few hearty souls in Maine!).

In New York, hundreds of retirees attend regional and campus meetings to see old colleagues and hear the latest political and benefits news. But what about all the out-of-state retirees? How can they get together?

COARM has found that there are several areas where UUP retirees are concentrated. Of course, Florida has the largest number of retirees, and the late Pearl Brod held several Florida meetings for UUPers. But the state's geography is vast; it might be more logical to hold meetings in regions, such as north, south, east or west. Other areas are California (the bay area, LA and San Diego), North Carolina and Massachusetts.

Are there retirees out there who would like to try to sponsor a meeting in their area? If so, COARM will provide all the help it can (meals and mileage are reimbursed by dues).

Interested? Contact Judy Wishnia at jwishnia@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.

Join our e-list

Retirees are invited to join the group's email information network (e-list) as a way to share ideas and to receive information more quickly.

E-list topics are restricted to issues of concern to UUP, SUNY, the labor movement and retirees.



MEIROWITZ

COARM Chair
Judy Wishnia said the e-list is an easy way to discuss retiree issues and to post news about regional meetings, benefits and advocacy.

Interested members should contact Old Westbury retiree Claire Meiorowitz at cmeiorowitz@yahoo.com. Member privacy is protected because the group is considered private and names will not be displayed in Yahoo!'s directory.

NYSHIP changes explained

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

When you retire, your accumulated sick leave pay is used to maintain your membership in NYSHIP. Up to now, the state contributed 90 percent of the costs and 10 percent came out of your sick leave money.

All retirees recently received a notice from NYSHIP that individual premiums will increase from 10 percent to 12 percent. (There are also increases in prescription drug co-pays.)

The announcement stated that the increase was due to a "collective bargaining agreement." Since CSEA at the time was the only union to conclude a contract with the state, we wondered what this meant. Many members questioned if our union had sold them out its retirees.

So what happened?

Here's what we know. The day before

the legislative session ended, legislators were presented with a bill to adopt the collective bargaining agreement with CSEA. Most legislators did not read the bill, assuming it was a simple approval vote. But the Governor's Office of Employee Relations had added a provision that allowed Civil Service to extend the raise to *all* state retirees. Many lawmakers didn't realize what they were signing. Nonetheless, it is now law.

So where do we go from here? UUP President Phil Smith, working with NYSUT, has promised to do all he can to see what can be done to change the law. We are also worried that another increase may be on the way Jan. 1 once the state examines its health care costs.

We will try to keep you informed.

Join our listserv so you can get updates on all important issues (see related story, below left).

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Are you keeping your family's best interests in mind?

The importance of having a will cannot be overstated – this crucial legal document protects your family during their time of grief and ensures that your wishes are honored.

Drafting a will can help provide peace of mind for you today and prevent unnecessary stress for your family in the future. It also allows you to name a legal guardian if you have children under the age of 18. In addition, a will ensures that your estate will be distributed according to your desires.

A power-packed legal punch

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed Legal Service Plan – provided by Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. – provides access to legal advice and assistance that is crucial when looking to create or update a will.

Each year, the plan provides for one simple will or update at no charge. A simple will provides for the proceeds of one's estate to be distributed to a specifically named beneficiary(ies), with an alternate distribution plan in the event that the primary beneficiary predeceases the writer of the will. With a simple will, proceeds are distributed outright with no conditions attached.

In addition to the simple will, you will receive a durable power of attorney, living will and health care proxy – all important documents to have in place before the need for them arises.

Discounted rates

NYSUT members can purchase the Legal Service Plan at the special cost of \$85 per year or \$55 per year for retirees; an Elder Law Rider and/or Business Protection Rider are available for an additional fee. Members eligible for payroll or pension deduction can take advantage of further savings.

Do you have other legal issues that you need assistance with, such as dealing with a speeding ticket or selling your home? The plan offers NYSUT members legal assistance for a variety of personal legal matters.

You will have access to unlimited, toll-free legal advice from plan attorneys; these attorneys will make phone calls and write third-party correspondence at no charge to resolve personal legal situations on your behalf before they become major problems. In

addition, when you enroll in this plan, you will receive two coupons for free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney.

How to get started

You can enroll in the voluntary plan online by visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org or printing a descriptive brochure and enrollment form. Feel free to also contact NYSUT Member Benefits at **800-626-8101** with any questions about the plan.



Please note: if you belong to a local association that provides a group legal service plan through the local or its benefit fund, remember to take advantage of the plan's benefits.

The Legal Service Plan provided through Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 33.33% of annual participation fees received for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

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Say again?

This photo—submitted by Jo Schaffer of Cortland—appeared on Real Texas Blog. Blog contributor David Werst said he posted the photo after a friend “sent me a picture of these signs the other day.” Some friend.

ARA ...

(continued from page 1)

any change in how COLA is determined, specifically the “chained CPI.” According to an ARA brochure, “Prior reduction negotiations have proposed changing the formula to calculate the annual COLA, to the so-called chained CPI, which would cut the benefits of those receiving Social Security today.” After 10 years, average benefits would be cut by \$600 and, after 20 years, the cuts would be even higher.

This “technical” change would assume that seniors would substitute one type of product for a cheaper version to make ends meet. For example, if meat gets too expensive, seniors would opt for beans. This might work for certain goods. But the most likely increase will be in health care, and one can’t opt for a cheaper product: double bypass instead of triple? I guess one could simply buy a cheaper coffin.

U.S. Congressman Tim Bishop of New York is worried that the super committee might see this as an easy way to cut expenses, while still claiming they are “saving” Social Security.

Other issues:

- Aid to senior housing has been cut from \$350 million to \$78 million, the same amount that is spent every 23 minutes on the war in Afghanistan.

- 48 percent of people over 62 spend more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

- There are attempts to prevent people from voting by requiring specific IDs. This affects seniors who do not drive, and poorer blacks and immigrants who are not likely to have official IDs. Also, students would not be allowed to use their college IDs.

- More states are passing “right-to-work” anti-union legislation.

Congresswoman Pelosi spoke and she, among others, noted that seniors vote more than any other group. Sadly, seniors have drifted away from the Democrats and now vote Republican, including those in Florida who supported Marco Rubio, who said the country went wrong when it introduced Social Security.

We have work to do. We must contact members of the super committee. We must educate our retirees about the dangers of taking from working families and retirees and giving to the rich. Most polls show that people do understand the politics: 67 percent want to see the Social Security cap raised; 54 percent say no to a means test; and 60 percent say Social Security should not be connected to the deficit.

So, let’s fight for social justice.

Cubs ...

(continued from page 12)

When it was my turn—I was the first relief pitcher—I jogged out onto the sacred turf, seeing my name on the famous scoreboard. I felt surprisingly calm, though I was standing where I had watched Warren Spahn and Bob Gibson stand. I wasn’t worried about the thousands of people watching; I just wanted to get the ball to the plate. I cheated a little—I stood in front of the mound—and threw.

I was brilliant.

Well, no, but at least nobody booed. (I think if I had been in New York City that might have been different; Wrigley crowds are famously warm and supportive.) The ball got to my catcher, and I waved my cap to mild applause and left the field. Stan had suggested that I shake off the sign, which would have been very funny, but I forgot. I do hope my fastball didn’t bruise the young man’s glove hand. (Joke.)

The Cubs went on to win a thriller 2-1, bases loaded with two out in the 9th, exciting down to the last pitch. “Put me in, coach.” Three of the best games I ever saw were won 2-1 (by the Cubs, of course).

And it turned out that this was the 4000th game the Cubs had won at Wrigley Field, a string that started in 1916. Nice to be a tiny part of history.

So I await the contract offers which will no doubt flood in. I mean, who needs UUP when the Players’ Union is on my side? Anybody know a good agent?

Dodgers ...

(continued from page 12)

the first to bring up a black player. And I can remember the worries: would he be accepted by the players and the fans. Then Pee Wee Reese, the “little colonel from Kentucky,” walked onto the field with his arm around Jackie’s shoulder. Cheers!

Then came the debacle. In order to make a financial killing, team owner Walter O’Malley moved the Dodgers to Los Angeles. We were bereft. This is possibly an urban myth, but it is asserted that when a poll was taken of Brooklynites asking who were the three worst men of the 20th century, the answer was: Hitler, Stalin and O’Malley.

I now root for the Mets, who frequently qualify as “dem bums.” But it’s not the same.

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