

Retreat focuses on retiree involvement

By Jo Schaffer, Cortland,
and Judy Wishnia, Stony Brook

Twice a year, interested retirees are invited to join COARM for a day-long “retreat” where there is ample time to discuss issues in greater depth than allowed by the regular 90-minute meeting at the Delegate Assembly. This spring (May 4/5), the discussion centered on how to involve more retirees in UUP activity and political advocacy.

INVOLVEMENT

• In order to reach more members, COARM would like to expand its e-mail list. We will ask the UUP Administrative Office to give us downloadable e-mail lists for campuses and regions. We will try to restrict messages to issues that are important to retirees.

• We will inquire about having membership cards sent out after the annual dues billing in August.

• We will ask chapters to appoint or elect a retiree to their executive boards. Many chapters currently do this, but we would like all chapters to have better contact with retirees.

• Although there is a statewide retiree leg-

islative action committee (RELAG) whose members visit legislators, we discussed the possibility of establishing RELAG groups at the chapters to facilitate visits with legislators in district offices.

• A communications committee was established to research listservs, distribution lists and a possible website for retirees. Members are Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center, Paul Griffen of Geneseo, Bob Kasprak of Optometry and Jo Schaffer of Cortland.

• A number of members have expressed an interest in establishing a way to contact old friends and colleagues without involving the current e-mail distribution list. It was suggested that we make use of the “nostalgia” list hosted by Henry Geerken of Cobleskill. Eric Russell of Brooklyn HSC volunteered to help.

POLITICAL ISSUES

• We noted that Council 82/AFSCME rejected the tentative contract because it did not protect benefits. It is crucial that health care and pensions not be sacrificed.

• There was also discussion of NY2020 and the implications of a large tuition hike see **RETREAT**, page 9

Elder abuse gets attention it deserves

By Don Cohen
Albany

The hidden issue of elder abuse (EA) recently captured national attention on TV, in major newspapers, and through the first prevalence study of elder abuse covering all 62 counties in New York state.

Most dramatic was the appearance of 90-year-old movie legend Mickey Rooney and his riveting testimony in March before the U.S. Senate Committee on Aging, during which he declared, “I am testifying before the committee today

(3/2/11) not just as a concerned citizen, but also as a victim of elder abuse myself.”

He went on to explain how a stepson had stolen his life earnings.

“Life was unbearable. I felt trapped, scared and helpless,” Rooney told the committee. “When I tried to speak up, I was told to shut up, that I didn’t know what I was talking about.”

Rooney’s became the lead story on national TV that evening.

On March 16, an editorial in *The New York Times* entitled “Broken Trusts,” explained that America had failed to treat see **ELDER ABUSE**, page 8



Apple

Walter Apple hired as retiree coordinator

Walter Apple has been hired as UUP retiree member services coordinator. He replaces Anne Marine, who retired in April after 12 years of dedicated service to the union and its retiree members.

Apple comes to UUP most recently from a temporary position at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, where he worked as an administrative assistant in human resources. Prior to that, Apple worked for nearly two decades at Aetna, starting out as a claims benefits consultant before working his way up to senior customer service representative. In the latter role he served as concierge for eight direct accounts, was liaison for the company’s benefits, eligibility and technical divisions, and mentored representatives to increase performance.

“Walter comes to UUP with 18 years of customer service experience in health care and dental,” said UUP President Phil Smith. “He also is knowledgeable in COBRA, HIPAA, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and short- and long-term disability regulations. He will be a great asset to our members who are looking toward retirement and those who are currently retired.”

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia and Southern Tier Region Chair Jo Schaffer were involved in the interview process.

The Active Retiree

UUP Officers

Phillip H. Smith/President
J. Philippe Abraham/Acting VP for Professionals
Frederick G. Floss/VP for Academics
Eileen Landy/Secretary
Rowena J. Blackman-Stroud/Treasurer
Edward H. Quinn/Membership Dev. Officer

COARM Members (2011-2013)

Judith Wishnia, Chair
 3 Quincy Ct. jwishnia@notes.cc.sunysb.edu
 Setauket, NY 11733 (631) 751-3810

Jo Schaffer, Southern Tier region
 31 Pearl St. schaffer@twcny.rr.com
 Cortland, NY 13035 (607) 753-7245

Patricia D. Strempel, Central NY region
 3767 Mooney Dr. pat28@aol.com
 Marietta, NY 13110 (315) 636-8048

Alvin Magid, Capital District region
 2200 Grand Blvd. magid2@juno.com
 Schenectady, NY 12309 (518) 377-9542

Barbara T. Maertz, Long Island region
 134 Farmers Ave. maertzbt@farmingdale.edu
 Lindenhurst, NY 11757 (631) 957-2499

Eric P. Russell, Metropolitan region
 134 Smithfield Ct. ericprussell@hotmail.com
 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920

Robert Harsh, North Country region
 387 Mason Rd. robert.harsh@plattsburgh.edu
 Essex, NY 12936

Harvey Axlerod, Western NY region
 16 Telfair Dr. axlerod@buffalo.edu
 Williamsville, NY 14221 (716) 631-0233

Edward H. Quinn, Ex-officio member
 P.O. Box 378 equinn@uupmail.org
 Miller Place, NY 11764 (631) 928-3811

UUP Retiree Member Services Coordinator
 Walter Apple wapple@uupmail.org

UUP Publications Specialist
 Karen L. Mattison kmattiso@uupmail.org

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United University Professions
 P.O. Box 15143, Albany, NY 12212-5143
 518-640-6600 1-800-342-4206
 fax: 1-866-812-9446

Life as I see it ...

For men only

By **Henry Geerken**
 Cobleskill

If you want to live and enjoy “those golden years of retirement,” you must master the knowledge of what a look from your mate really means.

This is no easy task because, just as all women may have the same parts, each woman is assembled differently. They’re just like snowflakes—no two are alike—similar, perhaps, but never identical.

These differences are what make the subject matter so difficult to report. Having passed my 74th birthday (and after this article a slim-to-no chance for 75), it should make me somewhat of an expert on the meaning of what “a look” from your significant other can mean.

First, I am fully aware that women are reading this because no woman alive can resist the warning “for men only.”

Secondly, Diane will read this because she edits everything. There is a 50/50 chance that I may not be alive when she finishes.

Men, listen up! In order to understand the look(s) of a woman, we must delve into the netherworld of what makes a woman tick.

A look from a woman has several degrees of intensity. Just like a stove, the look can go from “warm” to “raging inferno” in a matter of seconds. There are those men who claim that there is a higher level called “volcanic,” which is when she blows her top and it is time to take cover. (Make sure that all parts are covered else you might lose them.)

Men, a second word of caution. A woman does not marry you for who and what you are. She is only interested in what she can mold you into.

You represent a lump of clay. She will knead you, push you, press you, squeeze you, work and manipulate you until you take the form of her preconceived perfect mate. (When Diane gets to this point in her editing, I am not



Geerken

beyond shame to get down on my knees and beg for mercy.)

Let’s examine the meaning of a “luke-warm look.” This look means that she has just heard something that might be of passing interest to her. It can take the form of a slight narrowing of the eyelids to a wide-eyed look of astonish-

ment. This look is just a cursory look that may die for lack of interest or start to smolder indicating that Mount Etna is starting to boil.

What might trigger such a look? Your spouse or mate is standing well apart from you when she overhears that you were seen having lunch with a former girlfriend, Bambi.

Bambi was the swimsuit model for Victoria’s Secret. (The bikini *almost* covered her, and it was quite embarrassing that she “fell” out of it several times while walking down the runway.)

The look has been generated because, in all innocence, it was just a “chance meeting”—lunch and nothing else—but unfortunately you failed to mention it.

As you receive this look and recognize its potential, it will behoove you to go to her side as fast as you can and be very, very, very attentive. Use phrases like “You look ravishing tonight” and “Gee honey, you have the figure of a 20-year-old.” (Under no circumstances say anything about a sack of potatoes, even if it might be justified.)

The next level is the “simmer look.” This will manifest itself by a definite narrowing of the eyes, but not yet going into the full-squint stage. You will have the same sensation that a girl gets when she is examined by Superman and his X-ray vision. (Hey stop that, you’re burning me!)

What prompts this look from your wife or mate is the overheard remark you were seen giving Bambi a “smooch.” Now the smooch is still well within the “I’m innocent stage,” especially since it was in response to Bambi’s

see **LIFE AS I SEE IT**, page 11

From the COARM chair

Nine countries care for citizens better than U.S.

I don't know about other UUP retirees, but sometimes I want to spend a day without looking at my e-mail! Every morning, and frequently in the evening, I scroll through dozens of messages from organizations, from political groups, from all sorts of blogs and, occasionally, from some Nigerian prince who assures me that I am on the way to wealth.

However, even though I read *The New York Times* every morning and listen to Rachel Maddow every evening, my e-mail gives me important information I do not get from the standard media. And it was through e-mail that I was able to learn about and contribute to such things as the recalls in Wisconsin, the Kathy Hochul campaign, and NOW's counterattack to the Republican war on women.

For example, I recently read a study by Joshua Holland on Alternet (June 15) entitled, "Nine Countries That Do it Better: Why Does Europe Take Better Care of its People Than America?" The most obvious comparison is with health care. In 2008, the U.S. spent 26 percent of its economic output on health care and covered only 85 percent of its citizens. It was the only major country, other than Mexico and Turkey, to cover less than 90 percent of its people. And we are 37th in the world for longest life expectancy. Despite the high expenditure and all the latest machines, we die earlier than people in 36 countries. France, which is ranked No. 1 in health care by WHO, spent only 11.2 percent of its economy to cover everyone. In most European countries, 70 percent of the health care costs is picked up by the government, which means that people are insured in large pools. In the U.S., more than 50 percent of insurance comes from private companies with very high administrative costs.

Turning to income disparity, not surprisingly, research shows that countries with the highest union membership have the lowest income inequality. The U.S. is the most unequal society among wealthy nations. Denmark, with very high union membership, has the flattest income distribution and the lowest poverty rate. In the U.S., 17 percent of our fellow citizens

“If we want better health care and more retirement security, we might try to emulate those European countries that encourage unions.”

(many children) live below the poverty line. In Denmark, it is 5.4 percent. Child poverty rates in Norway, Austria, Finland and Sweden stand at only 4 percent.

Believe it or not, Italy, which has the highest union membership outside of Scandinavia, also boasts the smallest gender gap. A female worker makes just 1.3 percent less than her male counterpart. American women earn more than 20 percent less than men. Italy also has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe, so I guess the image of the Italian Mama slaving away in the kitchen is somewhat out-of-date!

Do we take care of our young and our elderly as well as Europeans? At 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, the U.S. has the highest infant mortality rate among high-income nations. The U.S. is the only advanced economy that does not offer paid maternity and/or paternity leave. Sweden offers 16 months at 80 percent of prior income, and Denmark provides one year at full salary.

Only one-third of American children aged 3 to 5 benefit from pre-school programs. In Denmark it is 2/3. As for seniors in the U.S., Social Security pays only 42 percent of the median salary (and they are trying to take that away)! Luxembourg and the Netherlands replace 90 percent of salary.

OK, now comes the big question. Who pays for these benefits? It is well known that the U.S. collects less in taxes than any other rich country. But most crucial is an analysis of who pays those taxes. The U.S. is one of only two countries collecting the lowest share of the economy in corpo-



Wishnia

rative taxes: 1.8 percent of GNP. But individuals and families pay 9.9 percent. Compare that to Luxemburg, where corporations are taxed 5.1 percent and individuals and families pay 7.7 percent. I will not even mention the current refusal to tax the richest Americans. And, of course, the European taxes pay for health care, college education (low or no tuition), better unemployment benefits, job training, four to six weeks mandated vacation for workers, and other benefits. And I will add that they were smart enough to stay out of Iraq!

Many Republican politicians repeat the mantra: We don't want to be like socialist France or Sweden. Of course, the European countries are capitalist but with strong social welfare programs. So, if we want better health care, less income disparity, more retirement security, and less child poverty, we might try to emulate those European countries that encourage unions and put the public good above greed.

Judith Wishnia

Retirees do union work at Spring DA

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

The following are draft minutes of the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) meeting, held May 6 during the 2011 Spring Delegate Assembly in Albany.

In attendance were Ed Alfonsin, Potsdam; Al Magid, Albany; Pat Strempel, Upstate Medical University; COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, Stony Brook; Frank Maraviglia, ESF; Jack Richert, Buffalo HSC; Eric Russell, Brooklyn HSC; Jo Schaffer, Cortland; and Barbara Maertz, Farmingdale.

- COARM members approve the minutes as they appeared in the March 2011 issue of *The Active Retiree*.

- Tom Tucker, statewide chair of VOTE/COPE, asked for a few moments to elicit retiree support for the union's non-partisan political action fund. Tucker explained how the fund operates. COARM members unanimously agreed to mail a VOTE/COPE contribution card in the August billing.

- Regional reports and requests for meeting support, which were approved:

- Western NY: June 10, Mid-June Musical Fair, and Oct. 17 with NYSUT (tentative).

- Capitol District: May 11 and October.

- Central NY: May 12 and fall meeting (tentative).

- North Country: Fall meetings planned.

- Long Island: Fall meeting planned.

- Southern Tier: October meeting, and spring meetings planned for chapters.

- Metropolitan: Fall meeting planned.

- Report of the chair:

- Report of the retiree retreat: Urge UUP to recognize our role, contributions, years of dedication, and expertise. Retiree membership above 3,800, or 17 percent of the total UUP membership.

- Urge UUP to invite Eric Kingson, a Syracuse University professor of geriatric sociology and co-director of Social Security Works, Washington D.C., to speak at an



Above, Florence Brush of Cortland drops her ballot in the box during the Spring DA elections for three statewide officers and eight Executive Board members.

Below, Jo Schaffer of Cortland discusses a DA resolution.



upcoming Delegate Assembly.

- Request a standing column in *The Voice* on pre-retirement/retirement issues.

- Urge UUP to push for a retiree on every chapter executive board.

- Urge Strategic Planning Committee Chair John Delate to recognize retiree service in his report.

- Improve communications: Publish *The Active Retiree* four times a year, with articles from more members; get electronic listservs for regions; and develop a UUP retiree website. Looking into improved communications are Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center, Bob Kasprak of Optometry, Paul Griffen of Geneseo, and Schaffer.

- The Elder Abuse Subcommittee reported that a PowerPoint presentation is currently being revised and edited. Also, the subcommittee reported on the review of the Office for the Aging and new Director Greg Olsen.

- RELAG Co-chairs Richert and Harvey Inventasch of Cortland reiterated the union's talking points for discussions with local legislators. Joint programs were proposed and adopted following a motion from Richert and a second from Alfonsin.

- Share *Follow the Paper Trail*, in New Hire Kits and pre-retirement packets.

- Wishnia reported on the progress of elections to the NYSUT Retiree Board. She said a Nomination Committee and



Retirees Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC, right, Al Magid of Albany and Frank Maraviglia of ESF, rear, listen to the debate.

letter are in the works.

- UUP is looking to hire a new retiree member services coordinator, following the recent retirement of Anne Marine. COARM representatives will be invited to interview.

- Acceptance of budget for 2011-12 as presented by committee Chair Maertz.

- Advocacy and ethics: Axlerod suggested COARM ask NYSUT to explain the procedures necessary when inviting legislators to meetings.

- May 19: Alfred University's Aging Conference noted after discussion on caregiving.

- COARM members voted unanimously to name Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam as the sole recipient of the 2011

Outstanding Retiree of the Year award. It was decided to present the award during the Spring DA as a Special Order of Business.

The resolution read:

WHEREAS, Edward Alfonsin has served UUP and the union's Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) for many decades, in any number of capacities: statewide Secretary, statewide Membership Development Officer, Potsdam Chapter President, the North Country COARM Representative, and many other UUP committees; and

WHEREAS, he has also served his region in the Jefferson/Lewis/St. Lawrence Labor Council; and

WHEREAS, he has been the parliamentarian for the Faculty Senate for the Public Employees Federation (PEF) and for the UUP Elections and Credentials Committee; and

WHEREAS, letters of support have cited him as the "consummate union man," the "consummate academic" and the "consummate community man;" and

WHEREAS, COARM has nominated Ed as 2011 UUP Outstanding Retiree of the Year; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Edward Alfonsin be named the 2011 UUP Outstanding Retiree of the Year.

Congratulations Ed!



Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam shares his expertise on Robert's Rules of Order. He was later named the 2011 Outstanding Retiree of the Year.

WANTED: Ideas and participation

By Don Cohen
Albany

COARM is asking retiree members to get active in their union, and to start by suggesting new program ideas, projects and/or social opportunities for its seven regions. Ideas include:

- Launching a film & lecture series on "The Aging Brain" (scheduled for 2011 Fall DA).

- Advocating new approaches to affordable, quality long-term care.

- Celebrating COARM's 25th anniversary in 2014 with the first statewide union retiree convention in Saratoga Springs.

- Open invitation: Free, noninvasive, 15-minute examination and printout of your heart muscle re: Carl H. Rosner's magnet heart machine.

Send comments/suggestions to Cohen at bdonco@gmail.com.

Join our e-list

Retirees are invited to join the group's e-mail 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.

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.



MEIROWITZ

Correction

In the March 2011 issue of *The Active Retiree*, Brooklyn HSC retiree member Joe Marcus should have been identified as a clinical associate professor emeritus of neurology.

We regret the error.

Regional meetings

WNYers learn about religion, health care costs

By Paul McKenna
Cortland

The Western New York Region of COARM held a luncheon meeting Tuesday, May 17, at Sean Patrick's in Getzville.

WYN Region Acting Chair Harvey Axlerod gave a report on the COARM elections.

The brick on the Wall of Hope, which was donated in Bill Rock's name, has been installed. Bill thanks his fellow COARM friends for this tribute.

The morning speaker was Imam Nazim Mangera. His subject was "Islam 101: A Quick Study of One of the World's Major Religions."

Nazim was born in India, raised in Toronto, studied in Leeds, England, and then came to the United States.

He quoted from the Koran that relates the line of prophets. The first prophet was Abraham, then Jesus and then Mohammad.

He compared Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The similarities were striking. He said each is monotheistic, and has governing rules for its followers.

Nazim related the five pillars (rules) of Islam:

1. Core beliefs. There is one God and Mohammed is his prophet.
2. Prayers are offered five times a day. The Friday afternoon prayer is the most important. His mosque has about 400 attendees for Friday prayer.
3. The month of fasting is called Ramadan. Islam uses the lunar calendar so months average between 29 and 30 days. The day starts at 3:30 a.m. and ends around 8:30 p.m. with complete abstinence. After the day ends they may feast.
4. Pilgrimage to Mecca. Each Muslim must make the Hajj once in their lifetime, anytime after one reaches puberty. The Hajj lasts five days and there are about two million people in Mecca. The building draped in black was the home of Abraham.
5. The fifth pillar is charity. Annual charity must equal 2.5 percent of assets



PAT BAKER

Guest speaker Imam Nazim Mangera dons a UUP baseball cap given to him by newly elected WNY Region Chair Harvey Axlerod.

earned during the year and must be given to the needy.

There were many excellent questions from the floor. Nazim showed the positions for prayer and explained dietary laws. For instance, no intoxicants may be taken and pork is forbidden.

When asked about non-Muslims forbidden in Mecca and Medina, he explained that Saudi Arabia set those restrictions not Islam. He believes all should be free to practice their beliefs and to travel without government restrictions.

It was an excellent informative presentation that was very well received.

After lunch, we had our second speaker, Michael Graziano of MetLife, who gave a PowerPoint presentation on "Understanding Retirement Health Care Expenses."

Graziano explained that health care expenses will have to increase. One chart he presented showed that those men now 65 years old have a 50 percent chance of living to 85, while 65-year-old women

have the same chance of living to 88. He also noted that the first generation of baby boomers are now 65 and are beginning to receive Medicare benefits.

He said the rise in life expectancy will increase the medical needs, and the cost of those medical needs must be met with rate increases.

Graziano added that Social Security faces a financial shortfall and longer life expectancy will draw even more from the Social Security coffers.

He encouraged the audience to carefully examine their financial status and consider retaining a financial planner to create a fiscal plan that protects their assets. He also said a financial planner is able to help them develop new sources of revenue to offset the anticipated increases in health care costs.

Graziano's was another excellent presentation.

The Fall Luncheon Meeting is scheduled for Monday, Oct. 17 at Brockport State College.

Capital District COARM looks at community colleges

By Al Magid
Albany

Arguably the best kept secret about SUNY and public higher education nationally is the important role of community colleges. Their enrollments continue to swell as the cost of undergraduate education rises sharply in both the public and private sectors.

Community colleges are able to meet the educational needs of countless students unable or unwilling to move directly to four-year colleges and universities immediately upon graduation from high school, and they exhibit an impressive ability to adapt degree programs and course offerings to workforce needs especially in diverse local communities and regions throughout the nation.

With these considerations in mind, Capital District COARM convened its spring semester semi-annual meeting to address the topic, "Community Colleges in Public Higher Education: Past, Present,



Addressing the Capital District COARM meeting were SCCC President Quintin Bullock, left, Chair Al Magid and HVCC President Andrew Matonak, right.

Future." The meeting was held May 11 in the Alumni House on UAlbany's main campus, with two distinguished presenters: Dr. Quintin Bullock, president of Schenectady County Community College, and Dr. Andrew Matonak, president of Hudson Valley Community College in Troy.

Drs. Bullock and Matonak came to their current positions on a base of rich experience with community colleges. Together their presentations addressed a wide array of issues facing community colleges, among them stresses deriving from the poor state of public finance throughout the country, at the national, state, county, and local levels.

Each presenter highlighted an especial bright spot in the Capital District: the

new multibillion-dollar Global Foundries semiconductor plant in Malta and GE Schenectady's growing role in the development of alternative-energy technologies, and the positive effects of both for program development at SCCC and HVCC and employment prospects for their graduates.

A robust Q & A followed the presentations by Drs. Bullock and Matonak.

The meeting ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It began with an

opportunity for SUNY academic and professional retirees (from UAlbany, New Paltz, and Cobleskill) and others to socialize and hear a useful presentation about SUNY retiree benefits by Doreen Bango, manager of UUP Member Benefits and Services.

The Capital District COARM Executive Committee met a few weeks later to begin organizing the semi-annual meetings for October 2011 and May 2012. Details will follow.

Capital District COARM welcomes SUNY retirees to participate in its many vibrant and informative meetings, which are keyed to timely issues with distinguished presenters.

LI retirees get updates on campus happenings

By Barbara Maertz
Farmingdale

Our very energetic group of members from Farmingdale, Stony Brook and Old Westbury met April 13, at the University Club at Farmingdale.

There were almost 50 in attendance. They heard from Long Island Region Chair Barbara Maertz and statewide COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, who shared their stories and updates about the rally in Times Square and the 2011 NYSUT Representative Assembly in New York City.

Farmingdale College President Hubert Keen told us about all the construction planned or ongoing on campus.

It was good to hear about future plans for the college. A building to house the business school, as well as a student center and Children's Day Care Center, are currently being built. There were cheers heard when he announced that Hale Hall was opening this summer after years of reconstruction. When the new road realignment is completed and all the construction fences come down, parking and walking will be safer for students, faculty, staff and the entire campus community.

It is important in these times—where jobs are hard to come by—that Farmingdale will be employing hundreds of construction workers to build

new facilities for teaching and research for thousands of students and, hopefully, some new UUP members.

UUP Farmingdale Chapter President Yolanda Pauze updated the group on the latest version of NY2020, which was being considered in the Legislature. She urged the members to join the fight against this bill by talking to senators and assemblymembers in their district offices.

Negotiations were on everyone's mind because our retiree benefits (dental/vision/health) are in some ways tied to the negotiation's process. Pauze spoke about the tentative pact between the state and Council 82. We need to be strong and

support our Negotiations Team during contract talks.

Many of our retirees exchanged tips for favorite travel sources that sponsor safe travel experiences for seniors. All were encouraged to sign up for UNUM Travel, which is a free benefit for UUP/NYSUT members.

This fall, the Long Island region is planning two meetings, with plans to hold one on the Stony Brook HSC campus. We are hoping that retirees who live on the East End will become active in COARM if the meeting place is more accessible to them.

An October meeting is being planned, with exact dates and location to be determined.

Regional meeting

Noted geriatric sociologist addresses Cortland retirees

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

The spring Cortland campus meeting was held April 24. More than 70 people attended.

These meetings, held twice a year, have been a campus retiree tradition for nearly 10 years. Southern Tier Region Chair Jo Schaffer initiated them “way back” as a UUP event and now they are a joint labor/management affair to everyone’s benefit. Some of the costs are shared; both sponsors get to speak about their issues. UUP organizes the guest speakers and schedules.

This time, Schaffer invited Dr. Eric Kingson, a noted professor of geriatric sociology at Syracuse University and co-director of Social Security Works in Washington, D.C., to be the featured



JO SCHAFFER

Featured speaker Eric Kingson speaks about the benefits of social programs.

speaker.

Looking around the room, Kingson remarked that he didn’t have to convince this particular audience of the active benefits of Social Security or Medicare. Rather, he decided to make very specific comments about the nature of a society that would do away with such protective means that enable its elder population to live in comfort and security. His remarks about the national ethos of greed,

disdain for seniors, and lack of a common morality hit home. Judging by the number of questions asked, everyone had listened intently and heard what was said. A very lively discussion went beyond the scheduled time frame.

Retiree events for the other Southern Tier chapters at Delhi, Oneonta and Binghamton are being planned for early fall.

And the winner is ...

The *Active Retiree* earned an honorable mention for Best Editorial/Column in the annual UUP Journalism Contest.

The column, “We must rebuild our sense of community” (Summer 2010 issue), was written by COARM Chair Judy Wishnia of Stony Brook, pictured above accepting her award from UUP President Phil Smith during the 2011 Spring DA in Albany.

“A clear-eyed look at the trend of demonizing government,” the judges wrote. “This column faces the elephant in the room and bemoans it.”

Judges in the competition are professional journalists and graphic designers.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Elder abuse ...

(continued from page 1)

its elderly citizens with respect, and failed to protect personal and financial security in their retirement years.

Similarly, a May 20 Syracuse *Post-Standard* article, “Elder Abuse: Many Still Don’t Report Problem,” reported a new New York state study that showed “one in 13 older adults suffer abuse.”

That 122-page study, entitled “Under the Radar: NYS Elder Abuse Prevalence Study,” is the first of its kind. It was officially released in June by Art Mason and Anne Marie Cook of Lifespan, a Rochester-based senior service agency. Mason is a veteran community social worker and the key planner/organizer of the study; Cook is president and CEO of Lifespan, which sponsored the study.

The three-year study was underwritten by a grant from the New York State William B. Hoyt Memorial Children and Family Trust Fund.

The study’s investigation used two approaches to obtain its data: 1) official data from all agencies in New York state that dealt with reported abuse of people over the age of 60; and 2) random phone interviews with more than 4,000 older citizens identified from official census data from all 62 New York state counties.

Among the study’s major findings, as reported by Mason at COARM’s Subcommittee on Elder Abuse in 2010 and 2011, are:

- The highest one-year rate of elder abuse was major financial exploitation— theft of money or property; using items without permission; impersonation to gain access; forcing or misleading to obtain items such as money, bank cards accounts, power of attorney—with a rate of 41 per 1,000 surveyed (replicating the Rooney story).

- 141 out of 1,000 older adults have experienced an elder abuse event since turning age 60.

Cornell University’s Mark Lachs, one of two principal study investigators, who also appeared before the Senate Committee on Aging, testified that “elder abuse is the most hideous form of ageism imaginable.”

Whodathunk

that in the middle of Paris—yes, France—there would be a hot dog stand with a “UUP” license plate all the way from New York state?

Well, it’s there all right, captured for posterity by COARM’s very own Jo Schaffer of Cortland.

“The owner decorates his little ‘American hot dog stand’ with license plates, and this one caught my eye,” Schaffer said. “Imagine my delight to see UUP!”



JO SCHAFFER

Unions build the middle class

Unions are under attack, vilified as “special interest” groups. Those of us in UUP and other unions know how important unions are in maintaining our quality of life.

The United Steel Workers sent out the following chart, emphasizing the fact

that where unions are strongest, workers earn more, work in safer conditions, send their children to better schools, and live in safer neighborhoods.

Share the facts below the next time you hear of another attack on union members.

10 states where unions are strongest

10 states where unions are weakest

Average Household Earnings (Manufacturing)	\$18.98	\$16.35
Household Income	\$56,409	\$43,913
Population Without Health Insurance	10.0%	18.1%
Workplace Fatalities Per 100,000 Employees	2.4	4.2
Public Education Spending Per Pupil	\$12,673	\$8,860
Eligible Voters who Voted for President	62.8%	60.0%
Crimes per 100,000	3,356	4,152
Population in Poverty	12.5%	16.3%

Retreat ...

(continued from page 1)
and the attempts at public/private contracts without legislative oversight.

EVENING PROGRAM

During the evening dinner program, attendees heard from Greg Olsen, acting director of the NYS Office of the Aging, who told us about the various programs aimed at keeping people in their communities

Also discussed was COARM’s continued involvement with the problem of elder abuse. We watched a video of Mickey Rooney’s testimony before Congress about his personal experience with abuse, and we reviewed a PowerPoint presentation created by Russell and Ed Alleyne of Stony Brook HSC.

If you have suggestions for the fall retreat and/or wish to attend, please let us know at jwishnia@notes.cc.sunysb.edu.

Summer is the perfect time

Summer is the perfect time for so many things – gardening, vacationing, swimming, catching up on reading, and whatever else one wants to do but can't seem to find the time for during the school year. That's why summers seem to go so fast, because we're so busy!

But summer is also the perfect time to pay attention to those things that we don't have time for during the rest of the year, such as, (groan), our finances. It's so easy to go day-to-day without making any long-term financial plans, setting up a budget, saving for a rainy day, etc.

Fortunately, the **Financial Counseling Program** endorsed by *NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation* can be of great assistance in getting your financial house in order.

When you enroll in the plan, you'll receive toll-free access to certified financial planners and registered investment advisors who will address your various financial questions and situations. You'll also have options for in-person consultations. And you have the added comfort of knowing these professionals are there solely to help you, not to line their pockets by pushing you in one direction or another.

These financial professionals do not sell any financial products; hence, they receive no

commissions from mutual funds, brokerage firms, insurance companies or any other third party. These are the professionals of Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., the provider of the Financial Counseling Program.

Stacey Braun Associates is an investment advisory company established in 1977. It provides fee-based professional financial counseling.

Here is a sampling of topics you can receive advice and assistance on:

- Pre- and post-retirement planning
- 403(b) and 457(b) plan advice
- Mutual fund questions
- Establishing risk tolerance
- Mortgages and refinancing
- Savings
- Estate and inheritance planning
- Financial advice relating to divorce
- Tax planning
- Insurance
- Social Security
- Education funding

The plan also includes no-cost written summaries or reports upon request; access to Stacey Braun's password-protected website, which features all kinds of helpful information and calculators; an e-mail helpdesk; and free admission to regional educational workshops.

In addition to the plan described here, a

403(b) Limited Financial Counseling Program is available.

So why not take a little time out of your busy summer and see how you can benefit from the Financial Counseling Program?

For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at **800-626-8101** or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.



Every day has its own ‘measure of delight’

By Joanna H. Kraus
Brockport

Daffodils decorated the dining tables. Backstage my hands were damp. My heart was racing.

Was I crazy?

Eight of us had volunteered to model as part of a charity fundraiser.

But I'd never done anything like this. Was I tempting fate?

It's supposed to be fun, I told myself. For a good cause. Breathe. My granddaughter had patiently shown me how to walk and turn, but all I wanted to do was flee from my impulsive folly.

Yet at the curtain call my smile was triumphant.

Why?

Because a few years ago I couldn't have walked that ramp, descended those stairs or made quick costume changes.

A few years ago I was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune neuromuscular disorder. Myasthenia Gravis. Incurable but treatable.

As the disease took hold my world collapsed. Blurred double vision was just the start. In rapid progression I couldn't drive, comb my hair, write a check or feed myself. One morning I remember being close to tears as I lay on the bed wriggling and struggling for ten minutes trying to put my legs into a pair of elastic waist trousers. My gait was a drunken lurch, and climbing the short flight of steps to my home was as daunting as ascending

Mt. Everest.

By the time the necessary neurological tests were administered, I was terrified. Despite inordinate physical fatigue, my imagination worked overtime. I foresaw my future as a disgruntled invalid.

I began to bargain with the powers that be: "Okay. Forget the legs. Just let me have my hands back."

Used to being a professional

“Learning to live with a chronic illness is humbling. I believe you have to accept what you can't change, but you can't let it defeat you.”

I did not like the idea of something else in charge, something I couldn't see, something I had trouble saying, let alone spelling!

Losing control of my body was like losing my best friend. But over the course of a year, the daily diet of rest and strong medications gradually began to show results. Small successes became significant.

"Last night I cut my toenails," I informed the neurologist

"I'll put that in your file," he grinned.

Slowly, I began to focus on what I could do, instead of what I couldn't. If I was no

longer able to walk three miles, I'd manage a five-minute walk with a cane.

Ruthlessly, I edited activities, eliminating sources of stress when possible, and learned that some distinguished VIPs took afternoon naps.

Now, if I have a project due I allow extra time. I don't try to accomplish five events a day. Not even three. And sometimes I plug in rest days.

Although I used to rush from one task to the next, these days I take time to savor a cup of tea and watch the sunlight on the leaves.

Learning to live with a chronic illness is humbling. I believe you have to accept what you can't change, but you can't let it defeat you.

And I've learned that every day has its own measure of delight.

Joanna H. Kraus is an award-winning playwright, author of children's books and a correspondent for the Bay Area News Group. Her new play, Pilot Christabel, and new book, Blue Toboggan, are forthcoming.

A longer version of this article was printed in MG News, a publication of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of California, as well as in This I Believe: Words of Wit and Wisdom by Rossmoor Residents, which is compiled and edited by Rossmoor Counseling Services.

Life as I see it ...

(continued from page 2)

announcement that she is married and expecting a child. The smooch was akin to a sigh of relief that temptation was now off the table. It's your way of saying, "Thank heavens!"

If you get the simmering look, it calls for immediate action on your part. If the look is followed by a continued narrowing of the eyelids and a draining of blood from the cheeks of your beloved, perhaps it is best at this point to "come clean." Confess the off-chance meeting with Bambi and

that you gave her a smooch as a way of saying "goodbye."

You'll definitely know the "burning look" because her eyes will be in a total squint, the blood will have drained from her head—giving her a cadaver, wax-like look—and her lip line will completely disappear. She will probably grab your arm and dig into your skin like she just grew talons. Bloodletting is a distinct possibility. You have only minutes to live so you had better start dancing like Mr. Bojangles.

The reason for the burning look (oft time

known as the "you may rot in hell" look) is that she overheard how you picked up a key at the front desk and were seen heading upstairs with Bambi.

You are completely innocent and were only going to get Bambi's bags in deference to her delicate condition. You wanted to prove that chivalry is not dead. Unfortunately, *you* are! Go into grovel mode immediately and beg for mercy.

Follow my advice and you may be alive to read the next episode in *The Active Retiree*.

ARA focuses on services

By Judy Wishnia
Stony Brook

Because NYSUT pays our dues, all UUP retirees are members of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), a national organization sponsored by unions and community groups.

Unlike the AARP, whose primary function is to sell insurance, the four million members of ARA have been in the vanguard in the fight to maintain and improve Social Security and Medicare. Many of our union brothers and sisters are active in New York state chapters and attended the bi-annual convention of the New York State ARA May 25.

The keynote speaker was Greg Olsen, acting director of the state Office for the Aging, who spoke of the office's efforts to keep senior citizens in their communities by aiding with meals, health care and transportation.

He was followed by a panel of representatives of various senior advocacy groups (Coalition for Aging, statewide Senior Action, NY state agencies for the aging) that apprised attendees of the many programs available for seniors.

All the organizations are trying to aid the many people who are caring for sick and/or elderly family members. There are currently more than two million caregivers in New York state whose efforts are worth more than \$20 billion. It is hoped that the Lifespan Respite Act will help lessen the everyday stress faced by these devoted citizens, especially since 60 percent of caregivers die before those they care for!

A highlight of the meeting was the report of people who dashed in from Buffalo to report on how the unions organized to make Kathy Hochul the victor in the 26th District Congressional race. Unions did it!

A resolution sponsored by the Central New York Chapter—calling for a change in the nation's priorities by getting out of Afghanistan, taxing the rich, and using the funds to support education, health care, Social Security and infrastructure projects—was passed overwhelmingly.

COARM urges all UUP retirees to work with their local ARA group.

More information can be found at www.retiredamericans.org.

In memoriam

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

John A Crawford Jr., New Paltz
Mary C. Hall, Buffalo State
Horace A. Mann, Buffalo State
Robert Matz, Stony Brook HSC
Robert E.L. Nesbitt Jr., Upstate
Maurice C. Neveu, Fredonia
John M. Purcell, Farmingdale
George J. Rentsch, Brockport
N. Reshetnikoff, Stony Brook HSC
Robert Scheig, Buffalo HSC
Georgianna Shepard, Brockport
Kenneth H. Stebbins, Alfred
Joseph M. Zaremba, Geneseo

Albany, N.Y. 12212-5143

P.O. Box 15143

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