

Chair reports from New York ARA meeting

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

Because of the horrible thunderstorms, there were fewer attendees to this year's meeting of the New York Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA). Nevertheless, all the regions had representatives there.

Here are the highlights:

- In his welcome, Dennis Tracy mentioned how important it was to reach younger unionists. In other words, we must address our younger UUP members with news about their future retirement.

- Suzy Ballantyne of the AFL-CIO spoke about immigration and how it is a labor issue. Unions are in favor of immigration reform that allows immigrants to become citizens and to work at decent wages. On the national level, she talked about the need to address the issues involved in the "fiscal showdown," e.g., repeal sequestration, prevent any benefit cuts, stop chained CPI, close tax loopholes, and stop anti-labor legislation such as the comp time law, the attack on the NLRB, etc.

As for state issues, Ballantyne noted the problems with Tier 6, how many retirees do not get health care coverage, the attack on binding arbitration, the need to pass the

farm labor bill, and the push for the various parts of the Women's Equality Agenda.

- John Cochran of the Office for the Aging spoke about how communities are working to help people stay in their homes and neighborhoods by addressing home care needs, transportation, etc. He said most seniors do not want to leave their communities and need help other than health care. He noted that bankruptcies for older adults have skyrocketed, and that people over age 45 make up 35 percent of all unemployed!

- Eric Kingson hit all the right issues about Social Security. Once again, he reminded us that Social Security has nothing to do with the deficit and that, in fact, seniors put all their money into the economy—approximately \$45 billion, mostly local.

Although there are still obvious dangers to the safety net, Kingson reminded us that we have had some victories, e.g., there is no longer talk about raising the age for Social Security and Medicare, and—except for the chained CPI—no other cuts. We are getting the message out on chained CPI and there is hope that it will not go through.



He urged us to support the Harkin bill that would raise the cap and raise current income, and to oppose the Hatch Act that would provide no benefits to undocumented workers even if they contribute to Social Security.

Kingson urged everyone to "Keep the pressure up and, remember, Social Security is supported by a huge majority of Americans, including members of the Tea Party ..."

- Richard Kline, who runs the AFL-CIO's Union Label Department (which tells you which products are made in the U.S. and which are not) talked of the benefits of buying American-made goods and how it's important to let retailers know that you will not buy goods made overseas.

- There was a discussion of how locals can no longer say "Western New York ARA" or "Long Island ARA." Instead, we have to say "Western NY Chapter of ARA" as a result of a ruling from the AFL-CIO, which controls the name ARA.

There was also a discussion of how dues are distributed.

The ARA is fighting the good fight for us and for future retirees. Thanks to NYSUT, we are all members of ARA. Please think about becoming active in your region.

Join our e-list

Retirees are invited to join the group's email information network 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.

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

Relief available; donations sought

Although Hurricane Sandy is well behind us, the massive cleanup effort continues.

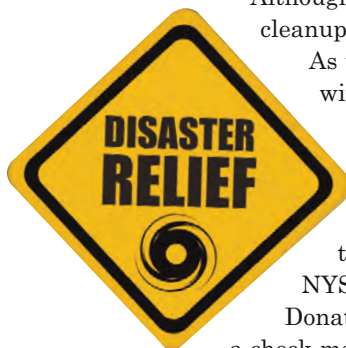
As with past natural disasters, UUP has partnered with NYSUT and AFT to help members in need. Go to bitly.com/VFY7U0 to learn more about how you can help and how you can get help if you need it.

Members seeking financial assistance as a result of the storm should make their requests directly to NYSUT, using the application posted on the NYSUT website.

Donations can be made online using Pay Pal, or by mailing a check made out to "NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund" to UUP,

P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y. 12212-5143.

Donations are tax deductible.



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 "She" sees it ...

A rebuttal: For Women Only

By Dianne Geerken
 Cobleskill

My husband is oh-so-clever, writing articles that sometimes involve me yet I have no recourse but to grin and bear it and/or put things in his soup that throw him for a loss.

(Marbles that look like eyeballs being one option; he says he feels guilty with his soup watching him. Good.)

If you are a man reading this, "shame on you!" I am a liberated woman who hasn't burned her bra because I need it. Growing older for a woman is no picnic no less than a man.

One thing a man can't begin to comprehend is "the change of life." I like my bedroom temperature to be around 65 degrees in the winter. My husband claims he is turning blue from the cold. He exaggerates that frost is forming on his mustache. I tell him to put his mustache under the covers. At times I have found him sleeping with a wool ski cap on his head and woolen gloves on his hands. Good for him! Deal with it.

Another thing is that Henry has no tolerance for pain. He has no concept of real pain as he has never given birth. Birthing is no way close to the descrip-



Geerken

tion of trying to push a piano through a transom window. It is far more than that. It is like pushing a piano through a transom window while the piano is being played! A duet! Standing up!

When Henry gets a "boo-boo," he immediately whimpers, "Dee, I'm wounded."

He will cry and carry on until I get out the band-aids, gauze, tape and ointments. Then the fun really begins. I spend an hour trying to locate the source of this boo-boo that required my immediate attention. When we finally locate it, it's so small that the smallest band-aid in the box covers it two times over. To top it off, I have to kiss the boo-boo to make sure it is "going to feel better." Oey Vey!

When we had our charter boat business on the Hudson River, I inherited two 258hp Detroit Diesel engines along with a 15kW Onan diesel generator and the battery banks to keep everything running when we were making way.

My husband is 6'4" and wasn't able to bend very well to get into the bilge. So I ended up doing all the engine room work, such as oil changes (22 quarts per engine) and water-pump impellers being

see **REBUTTAL**, page 7

In memoriam

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

William Allen, Buffalo Center
 Lawrence Ashley, Cortland
 Robert Baeumler, Buffalo State
 Gary Bartow, Potsdam
 Milton Brown, Alfred
 Gerald Brown, Stony Brook
 Richard D'Amato, Stony Brook
 Del Janik, Farmingdale
 Norbert Lerner, Cortland

John Morganti, Buffalo State
 Joseph Nardiello, Buffalo State
 Bert Needelman, Oswego
 David Parkinson, Stony Brook HSC
 Angelika Patsis, New Paltz
 Barrett Potter, Alfred
 William Stein, Buffalo Center
 Harvey Sprowl, Buffalo HSC
 Gerald Von Vreckin, Buffalo Center

From the COARM chair

Privatize ... privatize ... privatize

Since excessive medical costs are now being questioned in the media and by the public, more and more investors feel that they can no longer increase their profits from private medical insurance companies and the pharmaceutical industry. Hmmm, how can we make more profit? How about education? In the last decade, we have seen an alliance of corporate capitalism and right-wing politicians hell bent on destroying public education, now entering the ripe field of education.

On the K-12 level, we have private companies, without input from classroom teachers, creating curricula and tests (and tests and tests). The results of these tests affect how students, teachers and schools are evaluated. If there is failure, well, private investors will open more charter schools that suck much-needed funds from public education. Charter school advocates may say good education is their goal, but studies show that, while some schools are successful, most charter schools do not outperform public schools and they often increase racial and class segregation. (Crista Rawls, Alternet, June 9, 2013)

Again, there is profit to be made, including improved real estate values near the schools. And since there is no state regulation, it is hard to monitor the business practices of those who run the charter schools. But clearly, money is being made at the expense of public schools.

Let us now turn to public higher education where most of us have spent our professional lives.

Of primary importance is the decline of state funding, which has forced state universities to expand public/private initiatives. Pharmaceutical, oil and gas companies, among others, are currently funding much research, influencing the hiring, the research and publications of faculty. And, of course, lower state support means higher tuition and increased student debt (see Letter to the Editor, page 13).

And to continue the gradual privatization of SUNY, Gov. Andrew Cuomo introduced a plan—which the Legislature

“These plans aim to destroy public education while lining the pockets of investors.”



Wishnia

passed just before the session ended—that will allow new businesses to set up shop on and near SUNY campuses without legislative oversight, and they and their employees would be exempt from paying business and income taxes for 10 years. Hey, want to join me in opening a store selling our old books? No taxes! UUP President Fred Kowal regretfully calls this the “SUNY sell-off,” and says he fears that these tax breaks will create unfair competition for the current tax-paying businesses that rely on the patronage of SUNY employees and students.

Our colleague, Larry Wittner of UAlbany, in an article published in *Salem News* (June 10, 2013), quotes the Alliance for a Greater New York that notes how New York state gave away \$490 million to businesses for projects through its Industrial Development agencies in the last year alone. Of these projects, half failed to create any jobs and another quarter lost a total of 17,000 jobs! There is no evidence of any economic gain and, in addition, these programs were riddled with abuse and fraud by unscrupulous companies.

There is some good news. Although the legislation was passed, working with other unions, UUP was able to get important labor protections into the bill and a proviso that proceeds *can* be used to hire faculty and fund student aid. Yet I can't help thinking of what may happen to the beautiful campuses located in prime real estate areas, such as Old

Westbury and Purchase.

Now, we have the latest idea: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) created by, guess what, a private company, Coursera! There are indeed excellent online courses that factor in student discussion and personal attention. But MOOCs are different. They will indeed be massive; our SUNY chancellor has proposed enrolling more than 100,000 students, with no new faculty and very little in the way of cross communication. Of course, tuition will be charged and Coursera will get its share. In the end, why develop writing skills and analytical thinking? Heck, why have a university at all when you can log on and get a degree?

President Kowal said studies show that fewer than 10 percent of students enrolled in MOOCs complete the course.

Finally, let us not forget the large number of for-profit “colleges” that offer worthless degrees and increase the debts of mostly poorer students.

It is comforting to say, “times change; let's go with the flow.” After all, we do not require our students to learn Greek and Latin anymore. But these plans aim to destroy public education while lining the pockets of investors. Let's stop them.

Contact your lawmakers and warn them of these destructive practices. The future of New York depends on it.

Judith

COARM looks to improve services

By COARM Chair Judy Wishnia and Loraine Tyler of Oneonta

At the end of June, 19 elected members of the statewide Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) and interested retirees from around the state met for two days to discuss how to improve services and connections to the more than 4,000 retiree members of UUP.

Attending the meeting were: COARM Chair Judith Wishnia of Stony Brook; Richard Tyler and Loraine Tyler of Oneonta (recorder); Jeanne Galbraith of Stony Brook HSC; Hillary Zaewehik; Frank Maraviglia and Justin Culkowski of ESF; Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC; Al Magid of Albany; Bob Kasprak of Optometry; Eric Russell and Lou Herod of Downstate Medical Center; Flossy Brush, Harvey Inventasch and Jo Schaffer, all of Cortland; Paul Griffen of Geneseo; Joan Connolly of New Paltz; Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale; and Pat Stempel of Upstate Medical University.

The attendees were joined by new UUP President Fred Kowal, statewide Membership Development Officer (MDO) Edison Bond, UUP Member Benefits and Services Retiree Coordinator Walter Apple, and Alan Dorn, chair of the Retired Public Employees Association (RPEA).

President Kowal welcomed us and said that his first priority would be to restructure and strengthen UUP's advocacy efforts to cover every election district and remain active throughout the year. Kowal said he hoped that retirees would play a major role in this important enterprise.

Kowal also spoke of the ongoing situation at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn and called on retirees to make their voices heard in support of the thousands of UUP members under fire there.

We then turned to the business of the



KAREN L. MATTISON PHOTOS

Above, COARM Chair Judy Wishnia discusses the role of retirees in UUP, as Paul Griffen of Geneseo listens.

Below, UUP staffer Walter Apple, left, explains retiree benefits to Justin Culkowski of ESF.

retreat. Aside from the congeniality that made the retreat so enjoyable, the discussion was wide-ranging and stimulating. The result was a host of suggestions to make COARM a stronger advocate for retiree issues.

Of major importance was the effort to reach new retirees and those who are planning to retire. MDO Bond joined in the discussion and the following suggestions were advanced.

- Create a new membership brochure with a mission statement and a list of benefits available to retirees. This will be done by our wonderful dynamic duo, staffers Apple and Karen L. Mattison, UUP publications specialist. COARM will receive drafts for approval;

- Distribute retirement packets to new



and prospective retirees. Human Resources should be asked to supply names to each chapter on a monthly basis and chapter presidents should be asked to send the packets to members. This might be a labor/management issue and there was some suggestion that SUNY's Curtis



Above, Florence Brush of Cortland discusses pre-retirement issues, as Eric Russell of Downstate Medical Center listens.

Right, Pat Stempel of Upstate Medical University discusses the annual COARM budget. To her right is Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale.



Above, Jo Schaffer of Cortland shares her thoughts on the importance of regional retiree meetings.

Lloyd might help;

- work to ensure that all chapters have pre-retirement meetings with union participation;
- consider hosting a pre-retirement session during a UUP Delegate Assembly or at other venues, such as new member orientations, leadership conferences, etc.; and
- support a constitutional amendment for the COARM chair to have a vote on the statewide UUP Executive Board.

Ideas were also put forth for UUP members who are already retired from SUNY:

- look into mailing dues renewal letters in September instead of August. In a related discussion, renewals forms should include requests for retiree emails and included a VOTE/COPE donation form, with an explanation of the importance of the union's non-partisan political action fund; and

Discussion also centered on how to connect with UUP retirees and get information to (and from) them:

- UUP/COARM is in the process of creating an email list of all retiree members. Once up and running, it will be monitored by Kasprak and used only to send important information to members. Our listserv—uupretirees@yahoo.com—monitored by Claire Meiowitz, will continue to be a venue for discussion of union issues (and we hope that more retirees will join this list).
- consider restructuring COARM to coincide with how UUP is organizing regions for district advocacy. This will be discussed at

the COARM meeting scheduled for the 2013 Fall DA at the Saratoga Hilton;

- President Kowal will be asked to sign a joint letter to all chapter presidents, urging them to elect or appoint a retiree member to chapter executive boards, with or without a vote;

— encourage/solicit articles for *The Active Retiree*;

- recommend that every regional chair have a vice chair and a contact on every chapter (perhaps those

names from the above letter); and

- local chapter chairs should cooperate with campus retiree meetings.

Connections to advocacy:

- retirees can and should play an important role in local advocacy (to be discussed with members of the union's Outreach Committee). Retirees have knowledge, expertise and time. This will be addressed by Russell, Maertz and Magid;

— UUP's legislative agenda and advocacy outreach should include retiree issues;

- UUP Coordinator of Legislation Rob Trimarchi will be urged to keep COARM informed of proposed state and federal legislation that affects retirees;

— Request an occasional column/article in *The Voice* so all members, active and retired, can know what is happening to the safety net in the state and in the nation. It was noted that active members should be kept informed about changes in health care coverage, Social Security, Medicare, etc.

- COARM should have a vice chair. It was suggested that the elected vice president of NYSUT Retiree Council (Election Districts 40, 41 and 42), Jo Schaffer, be COARM vice chair.

Connections to other retiree organizations:

- RPEA's Dorn discussed mutual interests. Kasprak will work on a possible affiliation between the two groups. He will also investigate other allies, such as the Senior Action Council.

see **RETREAT**, page 6

Retreat ...

(continued from page 5)

COARM is already working alongside members of the Alliance for Retired Americans and more activity in that organization is encouraged;

— K-12 retirees and UUP retirees are all part of the same state system and face similar problems. K-12 retirees should be made aware of higher ed issues. Wishnia will distribute a list of regional meetings held by K-12 retirees;

— COARM will continue to work with the SUNY Retiree Services Corps and with the higher education organization mentioned by UUP retiree Patty Bentley of Plattsburgh; and

— UUP retirees will seek more details about the role of NYSUT Retiree Council members.

In other business:

— COARM will ask Mattison to design a special edition of *The Active Retiree* to commemorate the committee's anniversary. Schaffer will write a brief history. Mattison will receive a stipend for this work;

— under discussion was the possibility of UUP retirees paying for a vehicle for Apple, who travels around the state;

— it was decided that, in certain instances, an honorarium could be paid to speakers, not to exceed \$100;

— Tyler is rewriting the criteria for the annual Pearl H. Brod Outstanding Retiree of the Year award;

— UUP Manager of Member Benefits and Services Doreen Bango will be asked for advice on how retirees can be informed of changes in family coverage costs;

— COARM is writing a mission statement to include concerns with the retiree safety net and to reflect our support of UUP and public higher education; and

— it was decided to hold a retiree retreat every year.



Above, Harvey Inventasch of Cortland, right, outlines a strategy for retirees. To his right is Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC.



Above, Jeanne Galbraith of Stony Brook HSC takes notes during the meeting.



Below, Frank Maraviglia of ESF shares an idea.



Above, Bob Kasprak of Optometry talks about the new retiree email list being compiled by COARM and UUP.



The importance of being earnest—and organized

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

I recently had the experience of trying to assist the families of two colleagues who died rather precipitously.

One, in particular, fell terminally ill in another state, where inheritance laws are different from those of New York. And his survivor/executor had no idea how many documents were needed, nor where they were located some 3,000 miles away, nor the names of banks or other financial institutions, nor any paper trail to help settle the estate for the widow and surviving children.

Had my colleagues filled out the 12-page *Organizing your vital records: Critical information at your fingertips* booklet compiled by COARM, many, many hours of frustrating searches would have been avoided and more time might have been spent in

support of the family in its time of need.

Keeping organized

Slightly more than a year ago, COARM members Pat Stempel, Central New York representative, and Jo Schaffer, Southern Tier representative developed the guide, which was sent to UUP retirees via *The Active Retiree*. The guide is designed to assist members in keeping their personal information organized to make it easier to deal with the unexpected. The checklist was designed as an organizational tool to help UUP members and their families more easily navigate moments of change. It is also meant to

assist members in aggregating their important data.

“We hope this document helps give you a view of



your vital information, and some measure of peace of mind for you and those you hold dear,” COARM Chair

Judy Wishnia of Stony Brook wrote in the booklet.

The booklet was created in response to requests from a handful of UUP retiree members, and we struggled to make the guide a simple yet complete way to organize your records.

A copy of the guide can be downloaded from the UUP website: Click on the box titled Research, then on Reports and Guides.

Included in the fillable PDF are various sections to include: Key contacts; household expenses; banking documents; credit and lending documents; investment documents; estate planning documents; and retirement documents. Also included are Health Care Proxy and Living Will forms.

Print as many copies as you need. Share them with your friends and family.

Be prepared!

Rebuttal ...

(continued from page 2)

replaced when they got worn or had broken off. Every now and then I would break a fingernail and come top-side showing a nail that was ripped off almost to the quick. “Look!” I would lament, “I broke a nail.” My husband would laugh. Now a broken nail to a man might not seem like much, but to a woman it destroys the symmetry of a hand. My beauty is marred! I felt disfigured.

You have heard that old adage, “What makes a man want sex? Just show up!” Well ladies, there will come a day when “you will show up,” but you will experience “nobody is home.” This is a sad fact of life. Men are 90 percent bluster and 10 percent delivery. If you are lucky enough

to find a good one, hang on to him because he’s a rare breed.

So ladies, if your husband is about to retire and he insists that he has a job description, tell him, “Fine. Let’s write down all the jobs and the ramifications if they get done improperly or not at all.” Start with, Determine who pays for the proper completion of the jobs, and finish with, No golf until all the jobs are done.

The reason why I do not ask Henry to help around the house anymore is because I am sick and tired of doing the same job twice. Henry likes to start a lot of projects, but I end up doing all the work. Remember his famous tomato garden? Guess who did all the weeding? That’s right, Me. I staked the plants,

watered them, fed them plant food, and pulled all the weeds. When one tomato finally grew, guess who picked it and ran all over town showing off the wonderful tomato *he* grew? If I wasn’t a Christian woman, I would have told him where to put his wonderful tomato.

But I didn’t.

As time goes by, ladies, remember this: As “management,” we can’t get shafted because we have all the control.

Believe it men!

(Diane Geerken is a retired professor of mathematics from SUNY Cobleskill. She is an outstanding seamstress and fills her “spare” time answering the cries of help from her husband. She can be reached at dgeerken@stny.rr.com.)

Regional meetings

Central NYers discuss benefits, medical planning

By Pat Stempel
Upstate Medical University

On May 9, 34 COARM members and guests met for a very informative brunch at the Steak and Sunday Restaurant. There were some new faces, as well as old friends and co-workers coming together.

Pat Stempel, regional COARM chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for her re-election. There are currently more than 4,200 UUP retiree members, or 12 percent of UUP.

Carol Braund, outgoing UUP chapter president at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, completed her “retiree in training” and became a UUP retiree member June 1.

A number of handouts regarding benefits available to retiree members were provided. UUP retirees receive a \$1,000 life insurance policy through UNUM, which also provides our free travel insurance. New York state also has a survivor’s benefit program for retired NY state employees. This is for \$3,000 for survivors of those who retired after April 1, 1970. All members were urged to make sure they have completed the forms naming their beneficiaries.

All members were urged to fight the



From left are Pat Stempel, Patricia Knox, Dave Peckham and Carol Braund.

chained CPI, or consumer price index. This formula changes the cost-of-living adjustments downward, and income decreases over time. Let your legislators know that the formula for calculating the cost of living needs to remain unchanged.

Information was provided about upcoming ARA and RPEA meetings.

Retirees were urged to participate in the NYSUT One Voice for Education rally June 8 in Albany. Buses were scheduled to leave from NYSUT’s regional offices.

Upstate Medical University UUP member Dave Peckham provided frightening numbers regarding the financial issues facing hospitals and Downstate Medical

Center in Brooklyn. If Downstate closes, Upstate may follow. There is a real risk of privatization. All were urged to visit their local legislators to fight for SUNY’s hospital and universities.

Braund reported on the merger between Upstate and Community General and how that differs from the Downstate merger.

After a delicious lunch, the group was provided a great deal of valuable information about palliative care.

Patricia Knox, a palliative care nurse practitioner and an assistant professor at Upstate, discussed “Advance Medical Planning: Why and How To.”

She talked about the differences between hospice care and palliative care, and about services that can be provided, when they are provided and insurance coverage. The Excellus booklet, “Advance Care Planning,” was shared with attendees. This booklet includes New York health care proxy and living will forms, as well as information and a form for MOLST (Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment).

A lively Q-and-A session followed.

The fall CNY COARM meeting is scheduled for Sept. 9 at the Casa Di Copani Restaurant.

NYS offers Survivor’s Benefit Program

The Survivor’s Benefit Program is a financial protection plan that provides a minimum death benefit to the survivor’s of state retired employees, including UUP members who retire from SUNY.

The designated beneficiaries of UUPers who retired between Oct. 1, 1966, and March 31, 1970, will receive \$2,000; survivors of UUPers who left state service on or after April 1, 1970, will receive \$3,000.

UUP retirees with questions about the benefit program can

contact the Call Center toll-free at (800) 805-0990, or at (518) 474-7736 in the Albany area, or write to the New York State and Local Retirement System, Survivor’s Benefit Program, at 110 State Street, Albany, NY 12244-0001 (Please remember to include the last four digits of your Social Security number in any correspondence).

If you’re sharing this information with active SUNY employees, tell them they can contact their campus health benefits administrator with questions or to designate a beneficiary.

Capital District COARM hosts RPEA

By Al Magid
Albany

There's never been a time when active and retired public-sector employees didn't need the heft and skills of unions, and kindred non-union organizations, to protect and advance their interests.

One such non-union organization is the Retired Public Employees Association (RPEA), which for nearly 45 years has been keyed to public policy affecting myriad state and local government retirees in New York.

With 35,000 dues-paying members—organized in 13 chapters across New York state, as well as five others in Florida, another in the Carolinas, and a small headquarters staff in Albany—the RPEA has achieved an impressive record advocating for public-sector retirees.

With these considerations in mind, the Executive Committee of the Capital District Region COARM invited RPEA staff to address the semi-annual forum meeting at UAlbany's Alumni House on May 14. Their topic, "Protecting and Promoting the Interests of Public Sector Retirees in New York State," was deemed timely, especially in light of budget stringencies at all levels of government in the U.S. and, of course, in our own state. Active and retired public-sector employees and their unions and other representative non-union organizations are being pressed all round to back off and give back when it comes to wages and benefits.



RPEA's Tony Cantore meets with COARM members in May.

The two speakers were Tony Cantore and Jim Rulison.

Cantore, an attorney and registered lobbyist, is RPEA's legislative liaison. Previously, he was counsel to the New York State Assembly Committee on Real Property Taxation; counsel to the Assembly Committee on Child Care; and legislative liaison to various state agencies. While a student at Albany Law School, Cantore served as a legislative assistant to a member of the state Senate.

Rulison is a project leader for RPEA. He took that position after he retired from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Preservation, where he was director for human services.

Cantore and Rulison spoke at length about the mission of RPEA as an advocate for state and local government retirees in

New York; about the actions and motivations of the governor and state Legislature as they impact public-sector retirees, with reference particularly to pension and health care benefits; and about the need for RPEA and public-sector unions in the state to be ever vigilant and assertive in promoting and protecting retirees' interests. Their remarks were laced with illuminating examples.

A robust Q-and-A followed.

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 from SUNY System Administration) and other guests to socialize and consult printed materials provided by UUP Member Benefits and Services. Retiree matters were remarked on by UUP staff members Walter Apple and Rob Trimarchi.

As is our practice, a brunch was provided by statewide COARM for those attending the meeting.

The Capital District Region COARM Executive Committee will meet soon to begin organizing the next semi-annual forum meeting to be held in October. Details to follow.

The Executive Committee urges SUNY academic and professional retirees in the Capital District Region to participate in the always lively and informative semi-annual forums.

All forum meetings are keyed to timely issues—educational and political/policy, the latter domestic and international—with expert guest speakers.

Southern Tier: climate, gun control top agenda

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

It was a fairly active spring for the retirees in the Southern Tier.

Southern Tier COARM Region Chair Jo Schaffer of Cortland and Oneonta retiree member Loraine Tyler organized a very successful brunch meeting for the joint chapters of Oneonta and Delhi. As usual, the regulars, such as

Fred Miller of Oneonta, showed up along with a hefty number of new attendees. A lively social hour preceded the generous repast.

There was a short business meeting where Schaffer and Walter Apple, UUP retiree member services coordinator, gave the participants up-to-date information about potential changes and existing benefits provided and supported by

UUP and NYSUT. There was a discussion about their participation and information in protecting the earned retiree benefits. A promise was made to continue informing them weekly through the COARM distribution list about the attacks made on the earned and paid for benefits—Social Security and Medicare. Schaffer explained that NYSUT covers the member-

ship's enrollment in the Alliance for Retired Americans, an organization of retired American union workers from the UAW to Aerospace Workers to Firefighters. She encouraged UUP's retiree members to be more active and to share the information with friends from the Southern Tier who have escaped to winter residences. see SOUTHERN TIER, page 11

2013 Spring DA

COARM tackles retiree business

By Loraine Tyler
Oneonta

The statewide Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) has a lot of items on its plate: developing an email list of UUP retirees; scheduling regional meetings; building coalitions with various retiree organizations; improving advocacy efforts; and scheduling a retiree retreat to tackle these issues in further detail (see related story, page x).

Working on these important issues were COARM Chair Judith Wishnia of Stony Brook; Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center; Patty Bentley of Plattsburgh; Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale; Frank Maraviglia of ESF; Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC; Pat Stempel and Horace Ivey of Upstate Medical University; Alvin Magid of Albany; Loraine Tyler and Richard Tyler of Oneonta; Bob Kasprak of Optometry; Ora Bouey, Ed Hines, Ed Alleyne, Ed Drummond and Kathy Southerton, all of Stony Brook HSC; Harvey Inventash and Flossy Brush of Cortland; Sandy Harper of Downstate Medical Center; Joe Lamendola of Canton; Mac Nelson of Fredonia; UUP Membership Development Officer Edison Bond; and UUP Retiree Member Services Coordinator Walter Apple.

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Wishnia; the minutes of the spring meeting were adopted.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- Any e-lists created should be sent to UUP Director of IT Laura Kirch. The newly created list will be informational only, no responses (broadcast system). For those who don't use email, Apple can post a copy. The official listserv will include a Reply option.

- Questions about retiree issues for candidates for statewide offices are encouraged.

- Chained CPI is disastrous for seniors. Social Security is not an entitlement, but



Above, Al Magid of Albany, right, makes a suggestion during the COARM meeting.

Below, retiree Lydia Johnson of Stony Brook HSC, right, discusses affirmative action issues during a committee meeting.

an insurance. COARM must spread the word.

- Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union for faculty and staff at CUNY, had developed a very informative booklet on the safety net. COARM will look into distributing this material.

- As retirees, we need to be move active in outreach efforts on our behalf. For example, retirees should attend NYSUT's June 8 "One Voice" rally in support of public education.

- Fall and spring regional meetings—were announced and approved by COARM, including:

- Western NY, May meeting with two speakers, women's health issues and wills and estates, etc.; summer social, Assemblyman Sean Ryan, guest speaker.
- Farmingdale, Stony Brook meetings



in the spring; fall meetings planned.

- Capital District, two spring meetings, speakers from RPEA.

- Metropolitan Region, fall pre-retirement meeting and spring meeting.

- Southern Tier, three spring meetings (Cortland, Delhi/Oneonta, Binghamton).

- North Country, two meetings at Plattsburgh and Canton/Potsdam in June; fall joint meeting of all three chapters.

— Stempel has arranged meetings for retirees in Florida; and in Central New York, speaker on Hospice.

• Proposed Budget—COARM thanked Inventasch, Maertz, Schaffer and UUP Director of Finance Tina George for formulating the budget.

Maertz shared budget highlights and amendments: Vouchers/misc, increased by \$200; food, lodging, travel, increased by \$300; \$3,500 added for the North Country meeting expenses; Retreat budget reduced to \$6,500. Additional monies to be taken from Reserve Fund, if needed.

RELAG REPORT

A good portion of committee members and other Active Retirees have visited legislators in Albany and in their district offices. Next meeting will request written reports.

Budget for RELAG—need to be able to reimburse for travel.

RETIREE OF THE YEAR

Larry Wittner of Albany was nominated for the Pearl H. Brod Outstanding Retiree of the Year Award.

It was moved and seconded to establish a committee to determine criteria and announce nominees. Inventasch, Stempel, Richert were named.



Harvey Axlerod of Buffalo Center, left, shares a thought during the COARM meeting, while Fred Miller of Oneonta reviews materials.

MDO REPORT

MDO Edison Bond said every chapter should be encouraged to hold at least one pre-retirement meeting a year. In addition, he said he hopes to share pre-retirement information at retreats, workshops and DAs, and in *The Voice*.

RETIREE RETREAT

All UUP retiree members are invited. Issues to discuss:

- Expansion of COARM (officers); role in UUP; role of Special committees; advocacy; alliances (RPEA, NYSUT, ARA, PSC); constitutional revisions (budget, among others); and other alliances.

Southern Tier ...

(continued from page 9)

Tyler arranged for P. Jay Fleischer, an Oneonta professor emeritus of earth science, to present an illustrated talk on the science of global warming, primarily from detailed photos of now and then glacial movement and shrinkage.

“I must say that I can only describe the pithy nature of his talk by telling you the introductory image of a clothesline of ladies undergarments—the fullness thereof from the mid-19th century bloomers to a thong of today—was the ultimate picture of glacial reduction,” Schaffer said. “It was a really interesting presentation!”

Earlier in the spring, Schaffer scheduled the semi-

annual Cortland retiree brunch. The retirees are a very faithful group of 70-plus people who enjoy the social time before the meal to catch up with friends and colleagues. The buzz of active conversation was broken only by the call to lunch.

The Cortland campus president, the UUP chapter president and Schaffer gave brief updates on the union and University before Robert Spitzer, a distinguished service professor and chair of the political science department, shared his nationally recognized expertise on the Second Amendment and gun control rights.

Spitzer gave the rapt audience a history on the subject from pre-revolutionary laws on



From left are UUP staffer Walter Apple, Southern Tier Region Chair Jo Schaffer of Cortland and Loraine Tyler of Oneonta.

gun control to the present. Members in the Central NY Region can catch Spitzer most Friday evenings on the WCNY

Ivory Tower show. There are plans in motion for fall meetings at Oneonta, Binghamton and Cortland.

In other words

The most dishonest words in American politics: ‘Right to work’

By Steven Wishnia

“**R**ight to work” is the most dishonest phrase in American political discourse. It sounds like it’s defending people’s right to earn a living. But as used by its supporters, it means making it impossible for workers to form an effective union, couched in the language of “freedom” and “choice.”

Specifically, it means laws banning “union shops,” in which everyone in a workplace has to join the union or pay a fee to cover the cost of union representation. Twenty-four states have such laws. All were in the South and West until last year, when Indiana and Michigan enacted them.

Michigan’s law was rammed through the Republican-dominated legislature in a lame-duck session last December.

The Michigan law was “pretty devastating for the labor movement,” says Erin Johansson of American Rights at Work. It came in the state where the United Auto Workers’ six-week occupation of General Motors plants in Flint in 1937 won the victory that opened the doors for unions throughout American industry, the state whose union labor defined the working-class prosperity of World War II to the 1970s.

Both Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder and Dick DeVos, the heir to the multibillion-dollar Amway fortune who bankrolled the campaign for the law, stuck to the party line about “freedom.” Snyder said the law would give workers “the freedom to choose” and unions “an opportunity to be more responsible to their workers,” because instead of automatically collect-

ing dues, they’d have to show workers “a value proposition.”

“Absolute horseshit,” responds Ed Ott, former head of the New York City Central Labor Council. “This is a total offensive against workers. They don’t want workers to have any say. After workers vote for a union, they don’t want them to maintain membership.”

“‘Right to work’ sounds like it’s defending people’s right to earn a living. But as used by its supporters, it means making it impossible for workers to form an effective union.”

This year, “right to work” measures were introduced in 17 states, according to Peggy Shorey, director of state government relations at the AFL-CIO. Ten were defeated, including those in Missouri, Kentucky, and New Hampshire, where Gov. John Lynch vetoed one in 2011. Republicans in the Ohio legislature introduced one in early May, but the state senate president said he didn’t want to give Democrats an issue to raise funds on. (Ohio voters overwhelmingly overturned draconian limits on unions in 2011.) Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) introduced one in January, but it hasn’t gotten a committee hearing.

“It’s striking that they were not successful in passing it in Missouri,” says Shorey. The most significant measures still pending, she says, are in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. In North Carolina, House Speaker Thom Tillis proposed making the state’s “right to

work” law and a ban on public-worker unions an amendment to its constitution, after declaring that he wanted to keep North Carolina “the least unionized state in the United States.” In Pennsylvania, the sponsor is Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, chair of the State Government committee, who also sponsored the state’s voter-ID law and fulminates against “illegal alien invaders.”

Neither measure has made it out of committee, but “after Michigan, anything could happen,” warns Ott.

• • •

The Michigan and Indiana laws came as part of the 2011-2012 offensive against worker rights in the upper

Midwest, but the concept emerged after the great union victories of the late 1930s. The phrase “right to work” was coined in 1941 by William B. Ruggles, an editorial writer at the *Dallas Morning News* who didn’t want to join a union. His bosses feared that federal laws and regulations backing union rights were forcing unions down the throats of employers and socializing industry. Ruggles proposed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to work with or without union membership.

(Steven Wishnia is a New York-based journalist and musician. He is the author of the novel When the Drumming Stops (Manic D Press), “Exit 25 Utopia,” and “The Cannabis Companion.” He is also the son of COARM Chair Judy Wishnia and Stony Brook UUPer Arnold Wishnia. This article was written for Alternet and published July 7, 2013.)

Letters to the Editor

We can't fight new battles with old strategies

With regard to Judy Wishnia's recent article re: the problems we currently have ("What's happening to our country?" April 2013), one should recall the military maxim, namely, not to fight current or future wars with the strategy of the old ones.

The era of demonstrations is over—witness the failure of such in Wisconsin last year, and the dismal fiasco in Congress, where the heavily watered-down gun control bill failed to pass, even though polls stated that 90 percent of the people were in favor of it. It is the case, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, of the incapable versus the unspeakable. As Wilde said, "a plague on both your houses." The only time they managed to agree with each other was when they unanimously voted funds back to the FAA, so that air traffic controllers would be restored, and they could all rush off home without having to wait like the ordinary people.

The trouble is there are too many

politicians, and no statesmen. Their concern is being re-elected, not taking a lead, unlike their compatriots in Australia, who voted for positive items even though they thought (and were subsequently confirmed) that they could well lose their seats.

Don't expect any relief from the Supreme Court either. A recent *New York Times* analysis showed that most of the time they ruled in favor of big business against labor. As seen with the recent contretemps with Apple, big business can always get away with it, while the little people get hammered each time.

A plan might be what MoveOn is currently doing. They are raising funds, not to campaign against the opposition, but to put up candidates in primaries, to get rid of the cowardly "supporters" who put their own apparent well-being above the needs of the country. Perhaps this is the way we should go.

— **Joe Marcus
Downstate**

DOMA deemed unconstitutional

Just a brief note in my state of relief and joy at the Supreme Court decision that DOMA is unconstitutional in how the federal government treats gay and lesbian couples.

Please note that this case was argued on behalf of Edie Windsor who was billed over \$330,000 (!) by the IRS for inheritance taxes after the death of her partner of 44 years, Thea Spyer. This decision has far-reaching implications for all LGBT families, but especially for retirees in terms of estates, trusts, Social Security and health care, not to mention the imputation of income for health insurance.

While I know most of you are not directly affected, many of our members,

friends, neighbors and colleagues are.

On another note, those LGBT couples who are binational will be allowed to marry and come to the U.S. and many who had to expatriate to be with their spouse can come home. This will also eliminate the discrimination by the U.S. Department of State (certainly not Hillary's fault—it was a function of DOMA) toward all our Fulbright colleagues whose partners can now have the same benefits, visas and perks of our heterosexual colleagues.

To those of you who have been so supportive of the LGBT brothers and sisters in UUP—thank you!

— **Patty Bentley
Plattsburgh**

College debt: A crime against students, America

One of my former students called me, clearly upset. She has about one and a half years to complete her doctorate. She has earned honors and distinction, yet her student loans have been overpowering her. "How will I ever get out from under? Right now I owe \$100,000 plus \$30,000 in interest." She couldn't stop crying and I felt helpless.

This story is repeated many, many times. One investigation showed 37 million young people saddled with enormous debt which passed the 1 trillion dollar mark. Some efforts have been made to help. Representative Karen Bass from California sponsored The Student Loan Fairness Act. But this is not enough and most people are not even aware of this legislation.

But the problem goes deeper. Why have we supported public education? Clearly, the benefit to society has been enormous. We do not even have to examine Jeffersonian philosophy. Our twentieth century tells the story. The City Colleges in New York were free. They produced advisors to presidents, scholars, business people, engineers, and more. Their contribution to society more than made up for the investment in their education. The G. I. Bill is another example. The researchers stated that this was the greatest social welfare program of the twentieth century because of the pay back to society.

Our investment in colleges as well as trade schools definitely paid off. So, the question looms large. If the research is respected, then why aren't we continuing this investment? We are losing enormous skills and talent. Too many families simply cannot afford the cost of educating their children today. Yet, so much skill and talent did not only come from the wealthy. We need to rise up, fight hard, and provide opportunity for every child to nurture skills and talent. We need to do something about student loans that not only suppress so much talent, but have a negative effect on our country.

— **Anne Raybin, Stony Brook
visiting scholar**

Save on vacations with Member Benefits

Have you been planning to finally book that incredible vacation to the Caribbean, Europe or Australia that you've always dreamed about? Or perhaps you need to plan an upcoming business trip or rent a vehicle as part of your next excursion?

Wouldn't it be great to be able to save some money while doing so? NYSUT Member Benefits has a variety of endorsed discount travel programs designed to help you keep extra cash in your wallet while enjoying some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

If you're on the hunt for big savings, look no further than the Member Benefits-endorsed travel program offered by **Wyndham Hotels & Endless Vacation Rentals**. NYSUT members can enjoy savings of up to 20% at nearly 7,000 participating hotels among 17 hotel brands with Wyndham Worldwide; meanwhile, save 25% at more than 200,000 vacation rentals in 100 countries with Endless Vacation Rentals.

Wyndham Hotels has the right hotel for you at the right price – whether it's an upscale hotel, all-inclusive resort or something more cost-effective. With Endless Vacation Rentals, NYSUT members can save on resort condos, villas, homes, and cottages that provide space



and flexibility ideal for families and groups of friends traveling together.

These aren't your everyday run-of-the-mill hotel rooms as accommodations range in size from resort studios to multi-bedroom units. And, many units feature large living rooms, dining rooms, fully-equipped kitchens, and laundry facilities.

Whether you're looking for a multi-bedroom condo in Orlando or Las Vegas, or a luxurious resort in Mexico, the Caribbean, Europe, or Canada, Endless Vacation Rentals offers the space and comforts-of-home to make each stay a memorable time!

Don't forget the car rental discounts!

Next time you need to rent a vehicle, make sure to contact Alamo, Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Hertz, or National. These companies provide NYSUT members and their families with discounted rates on passenger car rentals.

You can even receive 20% off local or one-way truck rentals from **Budget Truck Rental**.

Learn more about these endorsed programs – including how to access discounts, unique website codes and website links – by contacting **Member Benefits at 800-626-8101** or visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

: Improvements

Old folks may decry new things—but sometimes we're right

By Mac Nelson
Fredonia

It's something of a cliché that old folks decry new things. Robert Penn Warren spoke fondly of a grandfather who had been a Confederate officer, and did not much like the modern world after the Civil War. The only new things he approved of were “painless dentistry and fly screens.”

That's a very short list. I am an old man of a century and a half later. My approved list is longer. It would include modern medicine, indoor plumbing, electricity in the home, radio and recorded music, the Internet and baseball.

But I am spiritually akin to the old Rebel in one way. I find many so-called “Improvements” are anything but. They are often sold as benefits for us, but most of the time they benefit only their perpetrators.

ITEM: PACKAGING.

— I bought a blister pack of sleep aid pills because the store was out of the bottles. I fought for ten minutes to try to free one of them, then noticed (in tiny print) “If difficult to open, use scissors.” I don't want a hobby, I want a pill.

— My spare hearing aid batteries used to fit nicely into the little pouch the aids came in. Until the packaging swole up into a handsome plastic wheelie thing that had to be carried separately.

— Just try to open the hard plastic pack on much electronic gear without a knife or a hatchet. Wasteful, infuriating, environmentally awful.

— My lady tells me the little bottles with contact lens cleaning fluid used to be screw top; now they are essentially unopenable by anybody this side of an NFL lineman.

— And don't get me started on jars and lids.

“I find so many
‘Improvements’
are anything but.”

ITEM: IMPLEMENTS

— I have some affection for the microwave oven, and I happily nuke pop corn and warm leftovers. But what on earth is the rationale for the toaster oven? Two numbered dials, mysterious instructions, “turn past fifteen and then turn back,” bells and smells, and whaddya get? Burnt toast. Now, what was the name of those things with slots that we used to use? Oh, yeah, toasters.

— My van insisted on locking itself and staying locked when I stopped it. These machines think they are smarter than I am. Maybe they are: It took me forever to figure out how to disarm it.

— The new voting machines are harder to use than the old, and probably easier to falsify.

— Have you seen or heard an automatic card shuffler? Hilarious. George Carlin was right: We should all rush to the mall when they are selling “75 Percent off on Stupid Useless Shit!”

— Do you use store blood pressure machines? Have you noticed they are getting chatty and intrusive? They now have personalities, and sweet soothing tones. One asked me not only for my height and weight and date of birth but also, I swear, seductively, “Are you a guy or a gal?” “A GAL?!” Will sexual preference be next? Which positions turn me on? I don't want a relationship, just 130 over 85.

— Digital TV. This was sold as a great boon for the consumer. Actually, it just made more space in the spectrum for business to use and sell. Now I can no longer get many local and Canadian stations, which used to come in just fine on analog. Major loss.

— And, of course, PCs, like the one I am writing this on, are terrific tools; but they can get feisty, sulky, difficult too: “Not responding.” I'm sorry for your bad mood. What can I do to help?

ITEM: THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SELF AND TECHNOLOGY

— I understand and accept the need for tight airport security. But airports have become hell-holes, and flying, which used to be fun, is now really ugly. Does anybody really think that patting down Granny or checking BooBoo's diapers will defeat terrorism?

— Thanks to the late New York state Sen. Pat McGee, we New Yorkers now get fewer nuisance calls. But robocalls are still out there, especially during elections. Free speech? I guess so. But they're a pain, and I can't imagine that they work. (Unlike negative ads, which, sadly, do.) I vote against anybody who uses them.

— Murderous Multitasking: It now seems a bit quaint to complain about people talking on their phones while driving. With the advent of The Mobile Office, people can now gab, text, check directions on their GPS, dictate memos, receive faxes, and order pizza, all while looking away from the road, all while passing me at 75 on the NYS Thruway.

— Then there's the mad telephone maze you must endure to ask a question or report a change of address or get a price quote. Forget talking to a human being. “If in despair, please press 8 for self-immolation.”

No more Improvements, if you please.



**Problems come in many forms.
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