

NYSARA focuses on health care issues

By Judy Wishnia
COARM Chair

Dozens of retiree delegates representing the many unions affiliated with the New York Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA) met in Albany May 27 for the alliance's biannual convention. Attendees heard reports from ARA representatives, as well as from the New York State Office for the Aging.

And as might be expected, while the Obama administration offers some cause for optimism about the future, the current economic crisis poses a severe threat to the well-being and security of New York retirees. All agreed: there is much work to be done.

NYSARA President Jim Wood emphasized to retirees the importance of maintaining income, pension security and health care coverage. Last year 1,225 employers

The current economic crisis poses a severe threat to the well-being and security of New York retirees.

closed their pension plans and others are eliminating their contributions, placing all responsibility for pensions solely on employees. While Social Security is not in immediate danger, Wood said an influx of new funds is needed or future retirees will face lower benefits and/or a higher retirement age. The ARA supports raising the cap so that higher-income earners will continue to contribute to the fund. Wood noted that given the current state of the stock market, we should rejoice that the Bush attempt to privatize Social Security did not succeed.

Much more worrisome is the fiscal state of Medicare and the entire health care system. President Obama has vowed to improve the system this year and various congressional committees are now holding meetings. The national ARA has issued its recommendations, noting that the skyrocketing cost of health care threatens the future of retirement in the United

States. The ARA proposes expanding Medicare to allow the five million uninsured Americans age 55-64 to buy into the system. The ARA also proposes to allow Medicare to negotiate volume discounts with drug manufacturers and supports plans to make long-term care affordable. In particular, the ARA supports the CLASS Act proposed by U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy and U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, which would create an insurance program to help middle-class families with the cost of long-term care.

see NYSARA, page 9

NYSUT RA passes retiree-related resolutions

By Fred Miller
Oneonta

More than 2,500 delegates, officers, staff, guests and observers attended the 37th Annual NYSUT Representative Assembly (RA) in Buffalo, April 2-4.

During the RA, many issues were discussed and many resolutions passed. Among the resolutions adopted were several that are of special interest to both the retired members and the soon-to-be-retired:

- The Health Care and Workplace Safety Committee discussed the issue of the Ombudsperson Program for Adult Facilities and presented a resolution to the RA endorsing the program and urging NYSUT to help its members be more aware of and participate in the program. Delegates passed the resolution.

- The same committee also presented a resolution calling for NYSUT to "use its leadership and vital community linkages" in addressing the problems of elder abuse, including advocating in favor of laws that would require the reporting of incidents of suspected elder abuse; laws which would be analogous to the laws

see RA, page 12



Active Retiree Frank Maraviglia of ESF checks the badge of UFTer Sally Bell during the RA. Maraviglia served as a sergeant at arms.

KAREN L. MATTISON

The Active Retiree

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Life as I see it ...

A fish out of water

By Henry Geerken
 SUNY Cobleskill

This winter, I went to water aquatics classes three times a week for an hour each, doing a variety of exercises designed to keep me functional and limber. This is very important for retirees for a variety of reasons.

For some reason men think that this is a "chick" sport and shun it. This meant that there were 21 women in the class and only two men, one of whom was me. (You should be able to guess where this is going right off the bat.)

We used floating bar-bells that gave added resistance to what we were trying to accomplish. We always started with neck exercises, progressing to underwater thrusts that were very similar to rowing a boat. It reminded me of my mother washing clothes using a washboard. I don't think she ever called it "aquatic exercise," but I know she had a few words in German that I never understood.

Next it was underwater cross-country skiing and jumping jacks. Picture 21 women jumping up and down in bathing suits. Bear with me, dear reader, because I have wanted to use a particular phrase for years, but never had the opportunity: I found it very titillating.

We proceeded to Grand Battement. This is a ballet move that you do with a leg extended to the front, side and



Geerken

back, while keeping a stiff torso. I was picturing everyone in tutus, which reminded me of my first love, Joan Miller.

We then progressed with making "figure eights," with our legs extended and/or bent. The instructor shouted to me, "Henry what are you

doing?" I said, "My leg isn't smart enough to make figure eights, but I found out I can do a five and a three." (I could also do a six and a two or a pair of fours, but I didn't tell her that. She never said so, but I suspect she might have been a drill sergeant for Army Special Forces and didn't have much of a sense of humor.)

One time, she caught me floating with the bar-bells under my armpits while the rest of the class was "peddling a bicycle to the left and right." She asked me why I had stopped. I said, "The chain on my bicycle broke." I had to give her 10 push-ups holding onto the side of the pool. (Piece of cake if you're in deep water.)

As I see it, I have an increasing appreciation for people who learned how to eat right, exercise and save money in ways that are out of the reach of greedy people. A mattress comes to mind, along with a hole in the ground.

The ultimate, of course, is buying a boat.

In memoriam

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

Anne Campbell, Cobleskill
 William Cotton, Geneseo
 William Grolli, Farmingdale
 Robert Hammond, Cortland
 Constance Milliner, Buffalo State

From the COARM chair

Labor 'left out' of social history

One of the joys of retirement is having the time to read. And given the absence of lecture or conference deadlines, one can read for pleasure in fields other than one's discipline. Although I am addicted to mysteries, as a European historian, I also find it fascinating to read the many new books in American history. Several weeks ago I read a biography of Frances Perkins, the secretary of labor in Franklin Delano Roosevelt's cabinet. What a fantastic woman: it was she who worked with FDR to pass legislation that gave us unemployment insurance, Social Security, the minimum wage and, of course, the National Labor Relations Board. The only proposed legislation that did not go through was ... surprise! ... universal health care.

Reading about the New Deal was, as Yogi Berra said, like déjà vu all over again. The New Deal achievements were attacked, as are the Obama proposals today, as socialist, communist, restrictive of free trade and, finally, of promoting laziness! But after reading this carefully researched book, I found myself getting angry with the author. She made it sound as if all those labor laws had sprung full grown from Frances Perkins' own experiences. There was little mention of the role of labor unions that had

been fighting for these laws throughout the 20th century. It was the miners and John L. Lewis, the Reuther brothers and the auto workers—who faced billy clubs and bullets fighting for the rights of workers—who were the real authors of the New Deal.

The importance of union activity and demands has been left out of today's political analysis as well. In the discussion of the origins of employee health insurance, the usual line is: there was wage control during World War II, so in order to compensate workers who could not have their wages raised, employers gave them health coverage. It sounds as if health insurance coverage was the brilliant idea of hundreds of CEOs who, out of the kindness of their hearts, wanted to reward their hard-working employees. Once again, unions are left out. It was the unions who said, if you can't pay us, give us health insurance!

Finally, my anger at the denigration of labor unions was further intensified when I read the comments of the CEO of a "big box" chain, who was refusing to allow his workers to organize a union. His father had been a union activist, but the son asserted, unions were necessary in "those days," but now employers are more enlightened and unions are unnecessary. Tell that to Walmart!



Wishnia

As they say in the ads, it was the unions who gave us the weekend and the eight-hour day. But it was also the unions who gave workers the wages, the security and respect to build what is called the "middle class."

For us in academe, it is the union that fights for our benefits, for our job security, for academic freedom and for a secure retirement. In this time of crisis, think of where we would be without a union. We, as retirees, must continue to support our unions, to help rebuild their power, for ourselves and for the generations to come.

At UUP Delegate Assembly meetings, we begin the opening session with the singing of the labor anthem "Solidarity Forever." Let's keep that a reality.

Judith Wishnia

COARM call for volunteer liaisons

The UUP Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) is currently recruiting liaisons to assist with its organization.

UUP retiree liaisons help to disseminate the committee's information and serve as a vital link for communications between chapters and COARM. Liaisons also provide assistance to the elected regional leaders, both in planning their meetings and reaching out to members. Any retired member of UUP may serve as a liaison.

If you would be interested in learning more about this important service to UUP, or if you are willing to serve as a liaison, simply return the form at right to: UUP, P.O. Box 15143, Albany, NY 12212-5143, Attn: UUP Retiree Services Coordinator Anne Marine.

- ☐ **Yes!** I would like to become a UUP retiree liaison
- ☐ Please send me more information

Name _____ Chapter _____

Address _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

Mail to: Anne Marine, c/o UUP, PO Box 15143, Albany, NY 12212-5143

COARM

members discuss money, meetings and more

By Jo Schaffer
Cortland

The Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) met during the 2009 Spring Delegate Assembly in Albany, April 24.

Present were Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam, Pearl Brod of Farmingdale, Harvey Inventasch of Cortland, Al Magid of Albany, Fred Miller of Oneonta, Jo Schaffer of Cortland and Judy Wishnia of Stony Brook. Guests included Ed Alleyne of Stony Brook HSC, Florence Brush of Cortland, Don Cohen of Albany, Robert Fluck of Upstate Medical University, Frank Goldsmith of Stony Brook HSC, Paul Griffen of Geneseo, Barbara Habenstreit of Brooklyn HSC, Bob Kasprak of Optometry, Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale, Duke Piroha of Delhi, Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC and Pat Stremmel of Upstate. UUP Retiree Services Coordinator Anne Marine also attended the meeting.

Miller motioned to approve the minutes of the previous COARM meeting. Adopted.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia met with UUP Treasurer Rowena Blackman-Stroud and Finance Committee Chair Caroline Bailey of ESF to discuss the potential budget and financial operations of COARM. Authorization of regional meetings was discussed, as well as lunch/brunch costs.

Other topics discussed:

- Blackman-Stroud proposed a three-person financial subcommittee dedicated to COARM. Concurrently, Maertz, Inventasch and Schaffer will comprise an equivalent COARM committee. Maertz will act as liaison between the two;

- Blackman-Stroud will ask UUP Benefits Manager Doreen Bango to draft a job description of an additional employee dedicated to retiree issues;

- Wishnia raised the issue of a retreat to discuss and produce ideas for strengthening

Right, Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam, right, discusses union affiliations during a recent meeting. Also shown are, from left, Harvey Inventasch of Cortland, Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale and Mac Nelson of Fredonia.



Above, from left, Pearl Brod of Farmingdale, Don Cohen of Albany, Tom Jamison of Alfred and Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC listen to the discussion.

Right, Jo Schaffer of Cortland, right, makes a point, as Robert Fluck of Upstate Medical listens.



COARM and its yearly programs. Miller moved that COARM meet (as a retreat) on the Thursday before each of the next three scheduled DAs. Magid seconded. Approved without dissent.

- Wishnia discussed her attendance to the next national meeting of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) for the purpose of establishing a retiree section. COARM to pay her dues and expenses.

- She discussed the already paid UUP COARM membership dues in NYSARA and ARA and encouraged more local partic-

ipation by COARM regional representatives. (See related report of RA resolutions, page 1).

Wishnia recognized with a gift outgoing former COARM Chair Brod. Miller and Betz were also recognized for their COARM service.

RELAG REPORT

Cohen presented the recommendations from the Retiree Legislative Action Group (RELAG). There were four recommendations concerning elder abuse and one on coverage for other than generic drugs.



Goldsmith reported on meeting with lawmakers on health legislation issues: EPIC, prescription drugs and nursing homes. He also reported on the status of bills by Sens. Baucus and Kennedy to lower Medicare age to 55, raise Medicaid standards and to have the federal government fund two-thirds of COBRA premiums. Brush stated that there is no appeal process for interactive drug problems.

REGIONAL REPORTS

Albany region—May 5, UUP Advocacy

Rosenbaum.

Southern Tier—Miller presented his RA report. Miller moved the expenditure of up to \$1,500 to cover the costs of an Elder Abuse Subcommittee. Alleyne, Cohen, Goldsmith, Brush, Miller and Kasprak to meet before the next DA and to report back to COARM. Approved.

Schaffer has 72 people signed up to attend a Sunday, April 26, meeting. R. Spitzer, a distinguished service professor, will give a presentation on the First 100 Days.

RELAG reviews agenda



KAREN L. MATTISON PHOTOS

Top, Outreach Committee Co-chair Glenn McNitt, right, goes over the union's legislative agenda with RELAG Co-chair Jack Richert of Buffalo HSC.

Above, John Hain of New Paltz and Duke Piroha of Delhi, right, listen to the debate.

Day in Albany; and May 6, Retirement and Public Policy with Frank Mauro and Jennifer

Schaffer moved to approve expenses of elected reps to prepare, organize and hold regional meetings for 2009-2010.

Approved.

Commendation for fine service by Marine. Approved.

Alfonsin will "discover" the cover letter about the NYSUT Retiree Council 40,41,42 elections to accompany the ballot. He will bring it to the next COARM meeting.

Schaffer and Stempel will meet to produce a report on a Survivors Guide by next meeting.

Adjourned 2:15 p.m.

Western NY retirees get lessons in healthy living

By Paul McKenna
SUNY Buffalo

The Active Retirees of Western New York held a spring luncheon meeting at Fanny's Restaurant in Amherst. There were 56 retirees and five guests present.

The morning speaker was Bruce Naughton, M.D., director of the University at Buffalo's Division of Geriatrics. His presentation outlined a clear and concise program to maintain health in your senior years. He said the keys to healthy living are diet and exercise, as well as maintaining a close relationship with your primary care doctor.

Other points:

- Dietary factors, such as controlling sugar and especially salt, are critical. He mentioned visiting an elderly patient and checking her food stock. The shelves were filled with canned soups, which contain a very high level of sodium. He recommended people read the labels on foodstuffs.

The audience was "heartened" by the doctor's advice that a single glass of red wine is acceptable as part of a dietary regime.

- Maintaining an acceptable blood pressure level is very important. Naughton noted that there is evidence that older people can have a higher blood pressure reading than the 120/72, which had been considered the norm. He recommended retirees monitoring their blood pressure.

- Medications are important, especially when it comes to blood pressure and cholesterol medications, which must be taken in the proper dosages.

- For exercise, Naughton recommended a 30-minute a day routine of moderate exer-

Right, Western NY Regional Representative Bill Rock, second from left, poses with TIAA/CREF representatives, from left, Chris Roberti, Joseph Kelly, Brenda Griebert and Mike Filing.

Inset is guest speaker Bruce Naughton, director of UB's Division of Geriatrics.



cise. Walking is very good, but he highly recommended Tai Chi.

Those in attendance agreed that the information was useful and the presentation reinforced advice they had already received from private physicians.

After lunch, COARM Western NY Representative Bill Rock asked the members to be part of the legislative outreach efforts of UUP. Rock stressed the importance of lawmakers understanding UUP and retiree concerns.

Jack Richert, co-chair of RELAG, echoed that sentiment and urged members to take part in trips to Albany to meet with members of the Legislature.

The afternoon speaker was Chris Roberti of TIAA/CREF. Roberti's topic was "Perspectives for Weathering Volatile Times." He was joined by three other TIAA/CREF consultants.

Roberti stressed that these were tough times for all, and that TIAA/CREF showed a loss of \$7 billion in 2008, or 3.9 percent. But he quickly assured the audience that TIAA/CREF had a large contingency fund and a net worth approaching \$200 billion.

He added that TIAA/CREF is solvent and has enjoyed the Triple-A rating every year of its 32-year existence.

In addition, Roberti said there is evidence that the economic downside was slowly improving; that there were positive readings in housing and a slowing down of the unemployment rate. Those within TIAA/CREF had seen this recession coming and the company had made adjustments. He said TIAA/CREF did not heavily invest in the sub-prime market and other investments that were outside the risk parameters.

Roberti then addressed the availability of consultants within TIAA/CREF. Other members of his team suggested retirees meet with a consultant periodically to examine their portfolios and to make adjustments where warranted.

Long Island retirees meet, greet and give thanks

By Russell Tuthill
Farmingdale

The Long Island regional meeting of retirees was held May 13 on the Farmingdale campus. Farmingdale Chapter President Mike Smiles welcomed UUP retirees from Farmingdale, Old Westbury, and both Stony Brook chapters.

Before turning the microphone over to Pearl Brod, Smiles thanked her for 25 years of service as a member and past chair of the statewide Committee on

Active Retired Membership (COARM). Brod, who plans to continue representing UUP retirees living in Florida, expressed the pleasure she has had representing all retirees. She received a standing ovation.

Brod then introduced COARM's newly elected Long Island regional representative, Barbara Maertz of Farmingdale. Brod stressed how delighted she is that Maertz was elected, noting of all Maertz's past activities and accomplishments on behalf of UUP. Among them: Maertz is a former UUP Farmingdale Chapter presi-

dent, has served on several statewide committees, has been deeply involved in political action, and is the 2006 recipient of the union's Nina Mitchell Award for Distinguished Service.

The guest speaker was Ellen Smiley, educational service specialist for the Educators Credit Union. She gave an eye-opening presentation on credit cards and credit ratings.

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia of SUNY Stony Brook brought the group up to date on committee activities, with a special

North Country retirees discuss a range of topics

By Ed Alfonsin
Potsdam

Again this spring, North Country retirees from UUP and the Public Employees Federation (PEF) were invited to meet jointly for brunch meetings, this time in Canton and Peru.

Last year's attendance was disappointing, but it was thought that the economic and political changes of the last several months might encourage more interest to take part in the discussion. At the Canton meeting, four UUPers showed up to join a half dozen PEF retirees.

The attendance may seem small, but members were able to talk about the effects of the state budget (much different in the University compared with the other state agencies represented by PEF), our success in preservation of Medicare B coverage (with comments on the joint UUP-PEF-CSEA lawsuit of a few years ago) and health coverage in general.

The topic of elder abuse legislation and the work done by COARM on this was noted, as were other legislative matters such as unemployment insurance coverage for a large group of part-timers in the University. Other items discussed were the UUP/NYSUT Retiree Council bylaws amendments to be sent out in the fall and possible constitutional changes to enlarge COARM.

We also discussed the importance of VOTE/COPE participation (with pension deduction available) and the possibility of attempting to develop a North Country chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA), the national AFL-CIO-affiliated retiree organization.

At the Canton meeting, the differences between the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the ARA proved to be a subject of interest. Even though all retired members of UUP are also ARA members by virtue of their NYSUT affiliation, it was

noted that it would be helpful for ARA to communicate with UUP members through a newsletter or other means.

At the COARM meeting during the 2009 Winter Delegate Assembly, I suggested that UUP look into joining with PEF for some benefits. Adding our 3,500 members to PEF's 11,000 would offer a larger base. As a start to this investigation, I handed out PEF retiree booklets at the meeting and asked the North Country retirees to look at what PEF offers, to see where we might want to look. (A PEF benefits representative was expected to attend the Peru meeting.)

I continue to encourage our retirees to attend UUP chapter events. Some ideas for retiree meetings for next year might be a discussion of how the new border-crossing restrictions are affecting our ability to travel and if we might try to get modifications to the mandatory passport or enhanced driver license laws.

Central NY retirees get updates on health, legislation

By Robin Nichols
Upstate Medical

Central New York UUP retirees and their guests met for the spring COARM regional meeting Thursday, May 28, at the Twin Trees Restaurant in Syracuse. Retirees from Utica/Rome, Upstate, Morrisville and ESF gathered to meet old friends.

Newly elected COARM representative Pat Strempel of Upstate Medical University (UMU) discussed a variety of issues and thanked everyone for her election.

Strempel spoke to the 39 attendees about the needs of retirees and provided new information regarding statewide issues. Emphasizing that Medicare reimbursement for Part B will remain for this year, she said the group must stay vigilant in light of the governor establishing a task force on retiree benefits.

UUP Outreach Committee member David Peckham of UMU spoke on the "hot issues," including A./S.2020 legislation.

The federal H.R. 676 legislation for a single-payer health care system was also discussed. Peckham said UUP and its national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, endorse the bill, as do many physician groups. Attendees received a handout on the myths surrounding universal

health care.

UMU Chapter President Carol Braund spoke on the stability of the membership at SUNY Upstate Medical University. She addressed the question of emeriti status for UMU retirees. Braund indicated that she is working with Eric Frost, UMU vice president of human resources, to accomplish this request.

Braund reminded retirees that UMU's annual UUP meeting was set for June 10 at Weiskotten Hall, followed by a picnic in the courtyard.

Keynote speaker Anne Bowdoin, director of the Institute for Human Performance's (IHP) Vitality Fitness Program and an exercise physiologist, spoke on exercise for retirees. She talked about how important regular exercise is for senior citizens and the barriers they face. Bowdoin suggested retirees space out exercise in manageable time periods of 10 minutes. She demonstrated warming up exercises, stretching exercises and then pointed out the importance of this to prevent injury.



ROBIN NICHOLS PHOTOS



Above, from left, are UUPers Daisy Allman and Nancy Shumway, both of Upstate, and Anne Bowdoin, director of Upstate's Vitality Fitness Program. At left are Kathy Fiumano of Upstate and Frank Maraviglia of ESF.

Bowdoin then took questions and passed out pamphlets on exercise and the Vitality Fitness Program at the IHP.

The retirees rounded out the afternoon by suggesting topics and locations for future COARM meetings. Strempel told everyone that the next meeting will be in the early fall. Members were asked to look for more information on the Upstate Medical University Chapter Web site at www.uupinfosyr.org/retirement.html, updated by UMU webmaster and UUPer Colin Massulik.

Capital District retirees debate public policy

By Alvin Magid
Albany

COARM's spring calendar was keyed to the issue of public policy for the aging and retiree communities.

During dinner at The Desmond in Albany May 5, seven guests spent three hours discussing just about every hot-button aspect of the issue that had brought them together: Medicare, Social Security, elder abuse, long-term care, and more.

Anne Montgomery, senior policy analyst for the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, chaired by Sen. Herbert Kohl (D-Wisc.), was the special guest. She was joined by UUP President Phil Smith; statewide COARM Chair Judy Wishnia; Don Cohen, Jim Kiepper and Hy Kuritz, Capital District region COARM activists; and the writer.

In the Alumni House at the University at Albany the next day, nearly 30 guests convened for a buffet luncheon meeting. After lunch, a panel comprising three special guests—Montgomery; Jennifer Rosenbaum, director of the Bureau for Policy Analysis, Research and Management in the New York



KATIE GEERKEN

From left, Capital District Active Retirees Al Magid, Hy Kuritz, Henry Geerken and Don Cohen discuss public policy for the aging and retiree communities.

State Office for the Aging; and Frank Mauro, executive director of the Fiscal Policy Institute in Albany—presented their perspectives on the issue of public policy for the aging and retiree communities.

Montgomery focused mostly on federal priorities, programs and prospects; Rosenbaum on New York state initiatives; and Mauro on public finance in the national and state economies and the implications for policymaking at both levels.

Fortified by years of service in the public, private and NGO sectors, all the panelists acquitted themselves impressively. This inspired a robust Q-and-A follow up.

Participants were drawn to the May 6 event from all over the Capital District, and from as far away as the Long Island and

Southern Tier COARM regions. Bouyed by the success of the May 5-6 events, Capital District Region of COARM contemplates holding such events, keyed to the diverse interests of the aging and retiree communities, twice yearly, in the fall and spring semesters. It is expected that this will continue to draw significant numbers of participants from within the Capital District COARM region and beyond.

Suggestions for future programs should be referred to Magid at magid2@juno.com or by calling (518) 377-9542.

Capital District Region of COARM is grateful to TIAA-CREF for its support of the May 6 buffet luncheon and for its representative's illuminating comments on an array of UUP retiree issues.

It is grateful also for assistance rendered at the May 6 event by Anne Marine and Rob Trimarchi, staffers at UUP headquarters in Latham.

Fla. retirees hear from commissioner, fiscal advisors

By Marion Newman
Optometry

A meeting of UUP Active Retirees now living in Florida was held March 24 at the Asian Buffet in Pembroke Pines, Fla.

Farmingdale retiree Pearl Brod opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance. She then went on to introduce the first speaker, Pembroke Pines City Commissioner Angelo Castillo.

Castillo spoke about America being confronted with the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression, noting that some are calling this the Great Recession. Despite the dismal news, Castillo said he remains hopeful because he believes that Americans can overcome any crisis, as we have in the past, and that the country will come back even stronger.

His message: Everyone must come together and be more understanding and caring of others. After all, he said, that's what "community" is all about and that's what America is all about.

A question-and-answer period followed. Brod then presented Castillo with a UUP T-shirt, which he gladly accepted.

The next presenters were from Bank United. Joe Smith, a financial advisor, introduced two of his colleagues: Leslie Montes-de-Oca and Nilsa Roberts.

Roberts handed out booklets that described mutual funds. She went page by page, helping the retirees to understand the fund, and invited them to contact her for more information.

A question-and-answer period followed.

Each retiree was given a ball-point pen from Bank United. In return, Brod gave



Farmingdale retiree and outgoing regional representative Pearl Brod poses with Pembroke Pines (Fla.) Commissioner Angelo Castillo.

each bank representative a UUP T-shirt.

A good time and a delicious luncheon was had by all.

NYSARA ...

(continued from page 1)

In addition, the ARA wants to continue tax free health benefits for employers. NYSARA's recommendations for health care reform includes provisions for universal care (no discrimination), promoting preventive care, choices to include a public component and, of course, a plan to cut costs.

Unfortunately, so far the discussions of the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by Sen. Baucus, have been disappointing. No advocate of single payer insurance was invited to the table and when members of Physicians for a National Health Program tried to speak, they were ousted from the hearing room and arrested. Moreover, as reported at the NYSARA convention by Danielle Pere of the ARA, the current proposal for expanding Medicare to the age 55-64 cohort would be prohibitively expensive for the contributor. The committee is also proposing a means test for Part D similar to the one for Part B. The ARA opposes all means testing for any part of Medicare.

Finally, most distressing is the proposal to tax health care benefits. Retirees have contributed to their benefits throughout their working lives. They should not be taxed for receiving these benefits.

On the optimistic side, the convention attendees heard addresses by both Michael Burgess and Greg Olsen, director and deputy director of the New York State Office for the Aging, respectively.

The Active Retiree wins UUP awards

The *Active Retiree* took home two Best in Class awards in the annual journalism contest sponsored by the UUP Communications Department.

Earning top honors for Best Feature Story was Mac Nelson of Fredonia for his article "Water Wilderness," which

Under Burgess' direction, the once moribund office is now up and running in every county in the state. The office has been especially supportive of caregivers, the 2.3 million wives, husbands, sons, daughters and grandparents who take care of the sick, the elderly and the very young. It is estimated that their efforts are valued at \$25 billion a year. Programs to aid these caregivers, such as respite facilities, have been established.

The office is also advocating programs to help senior citizens remain in their homes and communities by sponsoring a "livable communities initiative" that will promote grassroots and community strategies to enhance options for aging in the community.

In addition, the office is supporting legislation to improve protection against elder abuse and neglect.

The Office for the Aging also runs a volunteer service for seniors to aid other seniors by giving advice about health services, providing services for good nutrition, transportation and serving as observers and ombudsmen at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

For further information or to get involved, go to www.aging.ny.gov or to www.newyorkersvolunteer.org. To get publications, send an e-mail to nysofanews@ofa.state.ny.us.

UUP is asking its retiree members to support NYSARA and the national ARA. Thanks to their NYSUT affiliation, UUPers are automatically members of both organizations.

ran in the November 2008 issue.

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia also earned top honors for her editorial "Health care should be a top priority in this election," which was published in the April 2008 issue.

Contest judges are professional writers, editors and graphic designers.



MEIROWITZ

Meirowitz named Communicator of the Year

Former *Active Retiree* editor and current e-list moderator Claire Meirowitz of SUNY

Old Westbury has been named the 2009 Communicator of the Year by the International Association of Business Communicators of Long Island (IABC-LI).

Meirowitz is principal of Professional Editing Services, and she manages projects, edits and proofreads print, e-letters and Web materials for a nationwide client base. These include IBM, Intel, Microsoft, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*. She is currently copy chief for *Smart Enterprise* magazine and the Smart Enterprise Exchange Web site.

She is also a writer and publication editor who co-founded and managed several journals in the labor relations field, and award-winning newsletters for the education industry.

Meirowitz formerly directed publications and community relations for SUNY Old Westbury, where she oversaw production of more than 400 publications annually and received a Chancellor's Award for excellence in professional service. Her peers on SUNY campuses statewide elected her president of the State University Council on University Affairs and Development.

Meirowitz is a past president and a long-time IABC-LI board member, and is current president of the Babylon Business and Professional Women's Association. She edits the newsletters of the Babylon Breast Cancer Coalition on a pro-bono basis.

Meirowitz and her business partner, Natalie Canavor, are principals in C&M Business Writing Services. Their book, *The Truth About Business Writing that Works*, will be published by Pearson/Financial Times Press this year.

WNY retirees to meet Oct. 20

Amy Fleischauer, director of Victim and Preventive Services, International Institute of Buffalo, will speak about human slavery in Western New York at the Oct. 20 meeting of Western New York retirees. The meeting will be held at SUNY Brockport.

The meeting will begin with coffee at 11 a.m. After lunch, W. Scott Hicks of NYSUT Social Services will discuss the scope of Social Service's efforts to meet retiree needs.

Save the date. A formal invitation will be sent to all members early in September.

Shopping for insurance? Keep NYSUT Member Benefits Trust in mind.

Insurance - it's one of those things no one likes to think about. Is it necessary to have? It depends on the type of insurance, on your personal risk tolerance and other individual circumstances.

It can provide peace of mind, and usually once you need it, it's too late to apply for it.

NYSUT Member Benefits Trust endorses a variety of voluntary insurance plans to provide extra protection for you and your family. Consider these options when you're in the purchasing process.

Term Life Insurance.

Members and their spouses (or certified domestic partners) under age 85 may apply. Up to \$1 million of coverage is available for applicants up to age 65. Coverage up to \$30,000 is available for applicants between the ages of 65 and 84.

WrapPlanSM II Flexible Premium Adjustable Life Insurance

is group universal life insurance. The plan allows you to purchase life insurance coverage that increases as your term life coverage decreases or terminates. You must be age 65 or under to apply.

Personal Property & Liability Insurance.

Policies include automobile, boatowners, homeowners/renters, personal excess liability (umbrella), mobile home, recreational vehicle, snowmobile, motorcycle, fire and landlord's rental dwelling.

Disability Insurance provides tax-free benefits to help meet living expenses if a covered

sickness or injury prevents you from working. You must be under age 64 and work 20 or more hours per week to apply.

Accidental Death & Dismemberment

Insurance covers you against any type of accident in the course of business or pleasure. Worldwide Emergency Travel Services is included, and an education benefit for qualified children is also provided.

Catastrophe Major Medical

Insurance supplements your basic hospitalization and major medical insurance, including Medicare. You must be age 79 or younger to apply.

Long-Term Care Insurance

provides choices with regard to plan design and daily benefit amounts. Services provided include care planning and coverage for home health care, adult day care, homemaker services, licensed assisted living facilities, nursing home care, hospice care and respite care.

Vision Plan benefits include an annual eye exam and one pair of eyeglasses. You may receive services from an out-of-network provider; however, maximum benefit is received when using an in-network provider.

In-Service Dental Plan and Retiree Dental Plan pay benefits for preventive, restorative and major restorative services.



NYSUT Member Benefits offers Consumer's Guides on many of these types of insurance. Call or log on today. (See below for contact information.)

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A Union of Professionals

For information about these programs or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

On Twenty

Trappists loom large along America's longest road

By Mac Nelson
SUNY Fredonia

I wrote in these pages recently about the remarkable number of new religions founded along US 20 in New York state: Seventh Day Adventism, Mormonism (LDS), the Oneida Community, the Brotherhood of the Common Life, Spiritualism, Shakerism, the Longhouse religion, and more.

Our Great Road has also been hospitable to religious groups that are not so new. We've all seen the buggies of our Amish neighbors clip clopping along Twenty and Chautauqua County's back roads. They date back to the religious strife of 16th century Europe, and they came here to avoid religious persecution and lead their simple lives.

The US 20 religious institutions that intrigue me most are two monasteries: The Abbey of the Genesee, founded in 1951, near US 20A in Piffard, N.Y., near Geneseo; and New Melleray Abbey, founded in 1848, in Peosta, Iowa. They trace their roots to the 17th century in the village of La Trappe in France. Thus the monks who follow this rule are called Trappists, though they are formally OCSO, the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance.

And man, did they mean strict! Until changes made in the 1960s after Vatican Two, a postulant who joined the order took the usual monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. He also vowed never to speak again with a few rare exceptions, too complicated to go into here. Trappists dedicated themselves to absolute silence, which they broke only to say Mass or to sing prayers seven times a day. They used hand signals to communicate simple things about their work; but they spoke only to God.

They do speak now, and one monk I talked to said he approved of the change;

that in the old days you could spend years next to a brother and not know him. But I think it must be something of a loss as well: a loss in focus, dedication, singleness of mind.

Trappists were and are required to earn their living at some productive physical work, usually connected with farming. We in Western New York know them best through their many excellent varieties of Monk's Bread, which has become their very successful cash crop. As you drive from 20A to the Abbey in Piffard in the summer, you pass acres and acres of sunflowers, grown for their seeds to bake into my favorite variety.

The Abbey of the Genesee was founded as an offshoot of the first Trappist community in America, Gethsemani, in Kentucky. That's where the famous monk Thomas Merton lived and taught and wrote as Brother Mary Louis. The second American Trappist foundation was and is just off US 20 in Eastern Iowa, originally founded by Irish monks. They came to this country in 1848 to spread their faith, but also for reasons similar to those that inspired my ancestors: they were hungry and America looked promising. There were many charming Irish accents on the New Melleray welcoming team 40 years ago. The last time I was there (2006) I was told that there was only one old Irish monk left.

They are farmers too; how could they not be in Iowa, where even the highway cracks sprout vigorous weeds? But their major cash crop is different: they now make and sell gorgeous wooden coffins, elegant boxes for eternity. There's a lovely irony in this. When a brother dies, he is laid out in clean robes in a plain pine box in the chapel and the brothers sit a vigil with him. Then he is taken to the cemetery and a cloth is placed over his



Nelson earns IPPY award for travel essay

A book by Active Retiree Mac Nelson, above, a distinguished teaching professor emeritus at SUNY Fredonia, has received a highly acclaimed IPPY Gold Award in the travel essay class from the Independent Book Publishers Association.

TWENTY WEST: The Great Road Across America (SUNY Press, May 2008) tells the many tales of America that occur along or near US Route 20—a 3,300-mile stretch of pavement that runs east to west across 12 states. Many of Nelson's stories have been shared in *The Active Retiree*.

The IPPY awards were conceived as a broad-based, unaffiliated awards program open to all members of the independent publishing industry, and are open to authors and publishers worldwide who produce books written in English and intended for the North American market.

Nelson will be signing copies of his book at The Book Nook at the Plaza in Dunkirk from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 8.

face. His coffin is lowered, without a lid, into the grave. His brothers all sprinkle dirt on him and fill in the grave. Dust thou art, to dust thou shalt return—in a plain open box, not a beautiful walnut coffin.

Both abbeys accept retreatants, on an organized or an individual basis. I've done it, for three days, and it was magical. Even a few hours there is sweet. The monks are usually friendly and helpful, though you get the idea that they'd really rather be praying or studying or silently meditating—after all, that's what they joined up to do. You can attend services, or choral prayers, or formal retreat events. Or you can just be still and listen to the amazing silence, harder and harder to find in our century.

Do it while you still can.

Mac Nelson is a distinguished teaching professor of English emeritus at SUNY Fredonia. His TWENTY WEST: The Great Road Across America (SUNY Press), deals with these matters in more detail. The book is available at local book stores or from the author.

RA covers retiree issues

(continued from page 1)

addressing the reporting of suspected child abuse. That resolution also passed.

- The Legislative and Political Action I Committee discussed and presented to the Assembly a resolution “to seek legislation to provide the same enhanced Star benefit to all mandated distributions from qualified retirement plans” [TIAA/CREF 403(b) plans are “qualified retirement plans”]. The resolution passed.

- A resolution from the Legislative and Political Action II Committee was approved that NYSUT seek legislative support to ensure all retirees have access to health and dental benefits at a cost “no greater than the rate paid during employment.”

- That same committee also saw passage of a resolution urging NYSUT to support legislation that will require retired members to be eligible to receive health care benefits at the same level as those to which they

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia displays *The Active Retiree* award presented by NYSUT VP Kathy Donahue, right.

were entitled before retiring.

- In a separate action, RA delegates also reaffirmed its resolution “encouraging its members to become active members in the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans and its local chapters.”

In other RA business, *The Active Retiree* earned three awards in the annual journalism contest sponsored by *New York Teacher*.

The newsletter won an Award of Merit for General Excellence, which recognizes outstanding writing, photography and design.



KAREN L. MATTISON

Individual awards went to COARM Chair Judy Wishnia, who received an Award of Merit for Best Editorial and to Jo Schaffer of Cortland, who picked up an Honorable Mention for Best News Story.

(Editor's note: Fred Miller has been an elected delegate to all 37 NYSUT RAs.)