



# S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER



Volume XIV, Issue 4

May - June 2015

## From the Editor's Desk

Another school year is ending and the SSRA welcomes all new retirees. The SSRA (Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association) is made up of all retired district employees. Our purpose is to keep you in touch with former colleagues, maintain an awareness of issues that may affect your retirement and to give you access to the many programs NYSUT or the SSRA offers retirees.

Membership in the SSRA is independent of the membership in the STA. Dues are currently \$15 a year but all 2015 retirees are honorary members through the end of this year. We operate on a calendar year so for our new retirees, there is no payment required. Just adapt to a new way of life and enjoy your retirement.

We publish a Newsletter 4/5 times a year, have a luncheon every October and April, and hold monthly meetings at the STA office the second Monday of each month that school is in session. We welcome all our retirees and encourage your input. **(see p. 5 for list of retirees)**

Much has been said over the past two years or so about the Common Core curriculum and whether it is effective or not as an instrument for learning. The issue of testing and over-testing has made headlines nationwide. But the biggest issue appears to be the validity of these tests and how much of a bearing the results will have on teacher evaluation. We have already witnessed concerted efforts by groups as well as individuals to have students opt out of these tests with Facebook playing a large roll in parents having their children opt out.



But what about the issue of textbooks? At first, publishers couldn't wait for the implementation of the Common Core, envisioning more than 40 states requiring their books but that dream did not materialize. Quality textbooks take time but the major publishing companies couldn't wait. What they developed often failed to meet the requirements needed by the schools nationwide. Online companies then got into the fray. For example, EngageNY developed a math curriculum called Eureka Math which closely followed the Common Core curriculum much to the dismay of the big publishing houses.

All this indirectly affects those children in charter schools. The autonomy of charter schools vary greatly from state to state. How and when they will adapt to the Common Core and what materials to use only time will tell. This issue is far from over.

I hope you all have a wonderful and relaxing summer. In the meantime, if you have occasion to write to us (and we'd love to hear from you) remember the STA office will be closed the month of July through the middle of August. Please contact us through our email address: [ssraeditor@optonline.net](mailto:ssraeditor@optonline.net).

Again, on behalf of your SSRA executive board, congratulations to our new retirees.

Stay healthy and enjoy yourself.

*Carl Haymes*  
Editor

## Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

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Co-Vice Presidents.....Florence Martin  
..... John Pettit  
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RC Delegate.....Lou DeBole  
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The Smithtown School Retirees' Association is affiliated with the Smithtown Teachers' Association, The New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 9:30 AM  
at the STA office

*All members are invited to attend. We encourage your input.*

### President's Message

Finally spring has arrived and we are anxiously awaiting a beautiful summer. We certainly deserve a break after the horrendous Northeast winter we tolerated.

You should have received our 2015-17 Members' Directory by now. If not, please let us know. Any names, addresses, phone numbers, etc that weren't included and should have been are listed in this edition of the Newsletter. We would like to have more members take advantage of receiving the Newsletter online. If you have not done so yet, sign up by emailing Carl Haymes at: [ssraeditor@optonline.net](mailto:ssraeditor@optonline.net). Those who requested the online version will also receive this edition in the mail.

Please keep us informed of news about your travels, adventures, and experiences during retirement!!!!

Have a safe healthy and enjoyable summer!

George Makris

# News of Members

*As retirees, we have the opportunities to undertake many diverse and interesting activities and trips. Why not share them with us? We welcome any stories, poems, adventures or whatever you would like to tell your former colleagues.*

**Breakfast Group** - As mentioned in previous editions, many Smithtown retirees meet for breakfast every Wednesday morning at the Palace Diner on the Smithtown By-Pass in Hauppauge. This is just a friendly, informal gathering that has been going on for about 20 years and has been steadily growing. The picture below was taken in the fall of 2014. Why not join us? We'd love to have new people to carry on this tradition.



(Standing left to right) Ollie Schepers, John Pettit, George Makris, Carl Haymes, Fred Baron, Grace Pergolizzi, Lou DeBole, Mary Alice Sterbenz, Winnie Snyder, Anne Dragos, Carol Schepers, Bev Daffner  
(seated left to right) Eleanor Brocia, Linda Pettit, Liz Chitkara, Donna Milgrom, Marilyn Harris, Karen Makris, Irwin Traugot  
(seated left to right) Al Zoller, Susan Fink, Carole Palmer

**Larry Hohler** - The 11th annual Kenya/USA Bi-Continental Run, held in Setauket and Meru, Kenya on May 3rd, was a big success. The event generated nearly \$6,000 in pledges, enough to pay for 2/3's of the school fees of our kids in secondary schools and those attending Kenyan universities for the upcoming semester. I covered the 5 K distance in 48 minutes, 20 seconds, the fastest in my age group. (The Kenyan winner did it in 14 minutes, 50 seconds!) To find out about past races, check our website at: [www.hopechildrensfund.org](http://www.hopechildrensfund.org).

Elosy Kenya, the 17 year old girl who we have been mentoring since the Home opened 10 years ago, has completed Standard 8 and enrolled in a food preparation course at a local trade school. Catherine Nkatha, who graduated from Secondary School in December, will be attending Chuka Teacher Training College, and Doreen Gatwiri is entering a Pre-Med program, at Jomo Kenyatta University in Nairobi, thanks to the support of a California doctor who will be paying her fees. Providing for the education of our older orphans has become our biggest concern.

The April massacre at Garissa University was devastating. Luckily, none of our young people

(Continued on p. 4 - News of Members)

### **News of Members (cont. from p. 3)**

were directly affected, as those now at universities are attending schools in the center of the country. Sadly, three young students from Meru were among those murdered and the whole country has been shaken.

**Philippa Green** - I was given the honor of conducting the 2015 SCMEA (Suffolk County Music Educators' Association) 7/8 band this past March. Several Smithtown students joined me in this endeavor and I had the time of my life. We rehearsed a total of 14 hours over three weekend days and this culminated in the concert which was held at Huntington H.S. Also of note, was that Barbara Liebert's grandson, Jeremy Krugman, represented Half Hollow Hills on his instrument, the euphonium. A former student of mine, Leanna McCabe Bartley, nominated me for this wonderful opportunity. Leanna and I were together at Tacken Elementary where I started her on her flute. She now plays bassoon, and we are together in the Huntington Community Band!

**Ed Murray** - Ed wants to thank all of you for your well wishes, emails, cards and phone calls. According to Ed's email, "I am home convalescing and my prognosis is good. I am not happy with my diet. I guess I'll have to get used to it. No more pork bellies and fois gras!!! Again muchas gracias. I managed to lose 25 pounds on the "heart attack diet," however, I do not recommend it for those wishing to lose weight."

**Maura Stouter** - (from Bobbi Miller) Tom Hyder has informed me that Maura is being installed posthumously in the Cortland State Hall of fame class of 2015. This was accomplished by her friends and colleagues writing about all her accomplishments. For those who are not aware, Maura, had an exceptional career as an educator and volleyball coach. Besides coaching girls, she started the boys team in 1987 and also coached them for several years. Her win/loss record was phenomenal. Maura coached many championship teams and mentored many future volleyball coaches.

The induction ceremony will be during half time of the SUNY Cortland home football game on Sept. 26, 2015. A nice autumn weekend trip to upstate Cortland by Smithtown retirees would be a great way to recognize Maura and how honored we are to have one of our own so honored for her professional career in Smithtown.

If you are interested in attending please contact Tom Hyder at: [TLHYDER@optonline.net](mailto:TLHYDER@optonline.net) or call him at 631-423-1071.

**Carmelina Trifiletti** -- About two years ago, I was invited by my church to take a 6 week training course to become a "Social Minister." I don't think any of us in the class really knew what a social minister is or does. We soon found out that the assignments can vary according to parish needs.

I was assigned to visit a 96 year old lady I'll call Alice. Prior to my first visit I was told that Alice enjoyed books and in the past had written and published a book of poetry. So I brought Alice some large print books recommended by a Reference librarian. My first visit lasted about two hours in a rehab facility and Alice and I "hit it off" immediately. Neither of us wanted the visit to end. The second visit was the longest one so far. Alice was in the rehab facility where we spent four enjoyable hours outside in a lovely courtyard on a glorious June day. Neither of us could believe that four hours had passed so quickly!

(cont. on p. 5 – see News of Members)

### News of Members (cont. from p.4)

Soon thereafter Alice came back to her house with an aide to assist her. I have learned so much from Alice and her friends who sometimes are visiting her as well.

One visitor was a concentration camp survivor in World war II. Alice recalls what life was like on Long Island before any major highways were built and I tell Alice what life is like today.

Ours is a wonderful relationship and I enjoy each and every visit with my now 97 year old friend. Alice has compiled extensive notes on a manuscript of her life story and despite her protests I am encouraging her to continue writing.

#### *Our Deepest Sympathy to:*

*Correction:* March 2015 edition should have read: Condolences to Charlotte Drespel on the loss of her husband David in December.

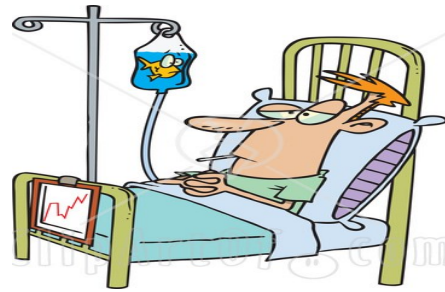
The family of Charles McLaughlin, former district attendance officer, on his recent passing.

Virginia Kelly on the very recent loss of her husband, John.

Anita Buxton on the loss of her husband, Bruce.

#### **Get Well Wishes to:**

*Ann Dragos  
Bob Krebs  
Karen Makris  
Ed Murray  
Bonnie Thiele*



## *Congratulations 2015 Retirees*

### STA

Lawrence Adamkiewicz	Mary Keegan
Carol Lorenzini	Carol Lorenzini (4/15)
Beverly Cheffo	Kathleen M. Martin
Linda Christy	Laura Mirabella
Susan Ciafone	Beth Platt (2/15)
Michael Esposito (1/2015)	Christine Provenano
Patrick Granshaw	Patty Stoddard
Linda Howatt	Mary Talamo-Geiger
Mary Keegan	Michelle Thompson

### SSEA

Barbara Bronzino  
Claire Downing  
James Harrell  
Alex Kurakoff  
Patricia Larson  
Dianne Murgolo (1/30/15)  
Maureen Romano

### Administration

Dianne Elmore

## Membership Changes

(These are corrections or additions to the new Members' Directory)

### Add to Directory listings:

Wallace Collier - 5 Fairway Drive,  
Rocky Point, NY 11778  
631-849-3327  
[wallyc1@optonline.net](mailto:wallyc1@optonline.net)

Mary & Jack Hennessey - 6 Ernest Ct.,  
Kings Park, NY 11754; 631-584-9442  
[jhennessey1111@yahoo.com](mailto:jhennessey1111@yahoo.com)

Brian Kiefer - 117 South Hammock Dr.,  
Islamorada, FL 33036-3515

### Changes to Directory Listings:

Al Allmaras - [al.allmaras@yahoo.com](mailto:al.allmaras@yahoo.com)  
Howard Byrne - [aubon87@gmail.com](mailto:aubon87@gmail.com)  
Beverly Daffner - (518) 403-4037  
Sally Decker - [sally1504@comcast.net](mailto:sally1504@comcast.net)  
Joan DeRosa - [joanrderosa@gmail.com](mailto:joanrderosa@gmail.com)  
( 'r' after first name is missing in the Directory)

Linda Feltman - [Lfeltman1@optonline.net](mailto:Lfeltman1@optonline.net)

Alan Gleicher - 31 Clubhouse Lane,  
Boynton Beach, FL 33436

Richard Kohler - 36 Desford Lane,  
Boynton Beach, FL 33426

Tony Laurino - 411 Elton Court East,  
St. James, NY 11780

Nancy McCourt - 94 Sawtooth Cove,  
Pt. Jefferson, NY 11777

Phyllis Myers - 205 Lorenzo Circle,  
Lake Ronkonkoma, NY 11779

Carole Plunkett - (631) 473-6533  
[carolplunkett12aol.com](mailto:carolplunkett12aol.com)

Jeanette & Tom Salemi - 15 Doe Run,  
Manorville, NY 11949; [teepees@aol.com](mailto:teepees@aol.com)  
(add 2nd email address)  
(cont. in column 2)

Erika Savage - 552 New Highway,  
Apt. 1B, Hauppauge, NY 11788,  
(631) 361-3519

Jan Silverman - zip code is 02264

Mary Staudt - [josephjandmoo@gmail.com](mailto:josephjandmoo@gmail.com)

Diane Zach - Brooks Av e. (add "s"  
to Avenue's name)

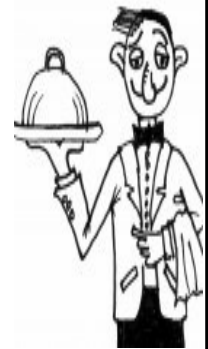
*If you paid your dues for 2015 and have not yet received the new Members' Directory, please call the SSA office at 631-265-4218*

## **SSRA Holds Spring Luncheon**

by Florence Martin

On a lovely spring day in May, the SSRA gathered at the Smithtown Landing Country Club for our annual spring luncheon. Between eating a delicious lunch, which included hors' doerves, salad, pasta, main course, beverages and dessert, members had a chance to catch up with colleagues and friends.

A collection for the local food bank garnered \$450. This year it went to St. Patrick's Outreach Program, which helps feed many local families. A very sincere thank you goes to who attended the luncheon and were so generous in their giving.



If you have never attended one of our luncheons, why not try it next time? The Fall luncheon will be held some time in October.

# OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

**Luncheon:** After a 7 year hiatus, we returned to Smithtown Landing Country Club for our Spring luncheon.— and it proved to be a fine choice. We were placed in the Riverview Room (overlooking the Nissequogue, the pools and the golf course). The food and service were excellent and the day was made perfect by the mingling and chatting with friends and former colleagues. If you missed this one, be sure to attend the Fall luncheon to be announced in the next Newsletter.

**Membership:** The 2015-17 Members” Directory was mailed in the second week in May. We hope you have received it by now and you are pleased. This is a handy resource for keeping you in touch with friends and colleagues “from back in the day.” Of course, every effort was made to provide up-to-date and accurate information. If, however, you spot an error or typo please call it to my attention for correction in an upcoming Newsletter.

Very special thanks goes to those members who assisted with the Directory in both April and May; their careful work in the preparing and mailing is reflected in the fact that none of the mailed booklets were returned as “undeliverable” by the Post Office. - a great achievement.

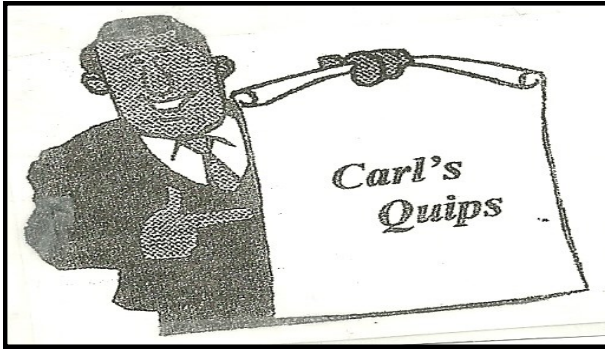
Also, due to our scrambling to prepare and produce the Directory (with tremendous and vital help from Mary M. in the STA office) our Newsletter was moved off the strict bi-monthly schedule resulting in some members’ address and phone numbers being missed, particularly in the January/February period. You should see those “changes” included in this Newsletter (see page 6).

Membership renewals have kept our numbers virtually equal to last year which is gratifying, however, we would like to reach more people. If you know a Smithtown retiree who hasn’t joined or who might not even know that we exist, mention it to them and perhaps show them this Newsletter. — the more the merrier.

**Issues:** Over the years I have read, as have many of you, the writings of many sage figures from history as they noted, or even complained of, the short-comings and inadequacies of the youths or of the leaders of their time. From Socrates to Mark Twain, from Jonathan Swift to Mark Schlesinger, Alexis de Tocqueville to Maya Angelo, each predicts the demise of society in a civilized world. As we enter the current “political season,” it is easy to fall into the abyss of despair over the world conditions today; there is no shortage of politicians who will quickly provide a lengthy listing of disasters, past or impending. I am trying to avoid their line of negative thinking. I prefer to dwell on those aspects of life which up-lift. Summer provides an excellent means of clearing one’s head. There is the beauty of nature to get out and see; we enjoy a comfortable lifestyle, have generally good health, with friends, neighbors and loved-ones to support us. Make this a summer to relax, and smile; be thankful for all the good things we possess.

**A Thought:** Much of the social history of the Western world, over the past three decades, has been a history of replacing what worked with what sounded good.

— Thomas Sowell



**Language is not properly the servant of thought but not infrequently becomes the master.**

••••Clulow••••

*Answers from students' papers collected over many, many years. Laugh or cry, but enjoy them. If you know of any and would like to share them, please send them to the Newsletter.*

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was caused by the lack of food for the people.

The Hippocratic Oath is taken by those who don't intend to keep it.

Waves are created when you raise your arms and shake your hands back and forth.

Four animals of the cat family are the Mama cat, the Papa cat and two kittens.

A polygon is a man who has many wives.

One achievement of Galileo is that he invented the solar system.

## SSRA Awards to Two Seniors

The annual awards assembly took place on Friday, June 5th at HS West. As is our custom, we give an award to a deserving senior from each of our high school's guidance department selects a senior who displays good character along with community service.



The recipients of this year's SSRA awards are Danielle Charletta from HS West and Jamie Romano from HS East. Each of these seniors received a check for \$300 from the SSRA.

Congratulations to each of these two seniors.

## Record 98.7 Percent Pass School Budgets

NYSUT has just issued a new fact sheet on 2015 school budget voting results. Voters approved 666 and defeated only nine proposed plans. The 98.7 approval rate is an all-time high. Of the seven districts that attempted to exceed their tax cap and failed to get the required 60% supermajority, six received well over 50 percent.

## Union Anticipates Working With New Commissioner

NYSUT is encouraged by the appointment of MaryEllen Elia as the state's new education commissioner. Elia's background is as a high school teacher and reading specialist. Her roots in Western New York, make her a welcome voice in the discussion about how to improve New York's already strong education system.

Commissioner Elia has decades of experience as both a teacher in New York's public schools and a superintendent in public education, and has strong academic credentials from our State University system.



## “Reducing Your Risk of Dementia” by Caryn Iorio

I have become increasingly concerned with dementia due to my family history and my own struggle with insulin resistance. (Diabetes doubles the risk of dementia.) Dr. Joseph Mercola (1) wrote an excellent article in his on-line health newsletter on May 23, 2015. The information is all science based and so good that I thought it was worth sharing.

In the article Dr. Mercola included an interview with David Perlmutter MD, renowned neurologist and author of a number of books addressing brain health, including *Grain Brain*. Dr. Perlmutter addresses the connection between inflammation in the brain, diet and Alzheimer's disease. “Evidence points to lifestyle factors as the driving forces behind dementia, and fat avoidance and carbohydrate overconsumption are at the heart of it.”(2) He describes how it is possible to prevent and possibly reverse the disease (by regenerating brain cells) despite one's genetics. The following are a few of Dr. Perlmutter's “basic nutritional strategies to keep your brain healthy as you age” as summarized by Dr. Mercola. (3)

1. **Avoid sugar and refined fructose.** *Avoid all artificial sweeteners, especially aspartame, which studies have linked to the development of Alzheimer's disease.*
2. **Avoid gluten and casein (primarily wheat and pasteurized dairy, but not dairy fat, such as butter).** *Research shows that gluten adversely affects your blood-brain barrier and makes your gut more permeable. This promotes inflammation and immune dysfunction, and both of these are believed to play a role in the development of Alzheimer's disease .*
3. **Optimize your gut flora** by regularly eating fermented foods. (or supplement with a probiotic)
4. **Increase consumption of healthy fats, including animal-based omega-3 fats.** *Make sure you're getting enough omega-3 fats, such as wild-caught Alaskan salmon, sardines, and krill oil, which helps protect your brain.*
5. **Improve your magnesium level.** *Preliminary research suggests increased magnesium levels in the brain may result in decreased Alzheimer's symptoms. Unfortunately, most magnesium supplements do not cross the blood-brain barrier, but magnesium threonate appears to cross so it may be superior to other forms.*
6. **Eat a nutritious diet, rich in folate and zinc.** *Without question, fresh green vegetables are the best form of folate. Research suggests zinc deficiency can contribute to Alzheimer's by promoting the accumulation of defective proteins in your brain, which is one of the hallmarks of the disease. Sources high in zinc include shellfish, red meat (organic grass fed), spinach, pumpkin seeds, cashews and flax.*
7. **Avoid environmental toxins and chemicals as much as possible.** *The rise in Alzheimer's disease may be related to genetically engineered foods and how they're grown; herbicides like glyphosate are mineral chelators, binding up important nutrients, such as zinc.*

Lifestyle changes mentioned in the article include: Physical exercise to help produce new neurons in the brain, stimulating brain exercises (Sudoku, crossword puzzles etc), restful sleep, managing stress and eliminating exposure to aluminum which is found in non-stick cookware and antiperspirants.

- Also worth noting –“ In a recent study, people eating a low-fat diet had a significant decrease in memory and cognitive function over the course of four years”
- “Those following a Mediterranean diet with supplemental nuts had significant improvements in memory, while the group adding extra virgin olive oil experienced significantly better cognitive function” (4)

1. Mercola MD, Joseph – Author of the popular on-line health website [www.mercola.com](http://www.mercola.com)
- 2,3. “Reducing Your Risk of Dementia Through Diet” May 23, 2015 [www.mercola.com](http://www.mercola.com)
4. Reuters May 11, 2015

Here is a delicious brain healthy recipe from Mavis Chaskin-Mott. **Chick Pea and Green Olive Hummus.**

1 can Chick Peas, drained [15.5oz]	Juice of ½ lemon
24 Spanish Olives stuffed with pimentos	2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, diced or grated	¼ tsp black pepper
¼ cup water	

Add all ingredients to a blender. Set on puree. Turn off the blender, if needed, and use a wood spoon to push large pieces into the blades. Also works well in a food processor. Serve on toast point, crackers, or pita bread.



## Benefits that matter to you!

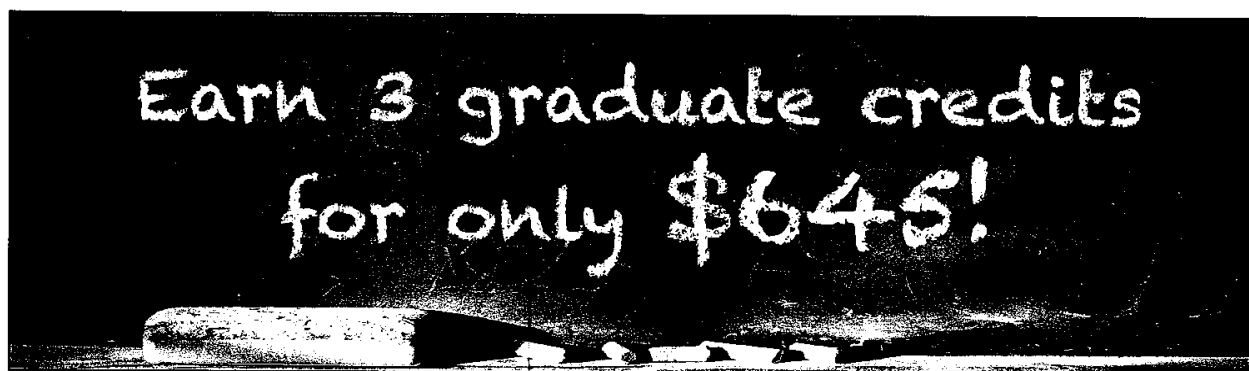
Membership in NYSUT allows you to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits.

These endorsed programs include crucial products that the majority of NYSUT members already purchase:

- Homeowners Insurance
- Auto Insurance
- Legal & Financial Services
- Life Insurance
- Shopping & Travel Programs

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call 800-626-8101.

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.



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# 2015-16 COLA Increase Calculated

Eligible retirees receiving a monthly NYSTRS benefit will receive a 1.0% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) beginning with their September 2015 payment. COLAs are a result of legislation enacted in New York 15 years ago.

Your COLA will bring the cumulative maximum monthly increase to \$297 for eligible retired members. Stated differently, without the 2001 legislation, long time retirees receiving a NYSTRS retirement benefit would have almost \$300 less in their pension check each month. The legislated COLA increase has helped dampen gthe effects of inflation for retirees.

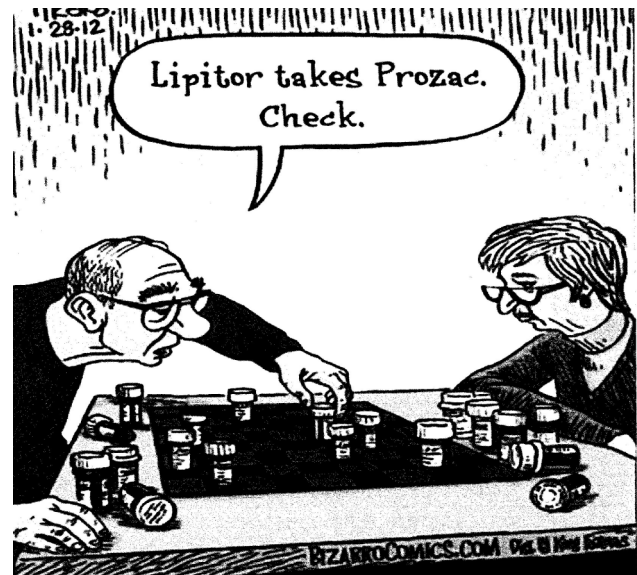
By law, the COLA is applied on the first \$18,000 of a benefit. As a result, an eligible retired member with an annual benefit of at least \$18,000 will receive a maximum increase of \$1or the COLA 5 per month. Retirees who become eligible for the COLA after September will receive their adjustment when first eligible.

To be eligible for a COLA, you must meet one of the following requirements:

- A. At least 62 and retired at least five years; OR,
- B. At least 55 and retired at least 10 years; OR,
- C. A retiree receiving a NYSTRS disability benefit for at least five years (regardless of age); OR,
- D. A surviving spouse of an eligible retiree receiving a lifetime benefit. (*By law, the spouse receives an increase equal to one-half the COLA the retiree would have received.*)

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## Retirement is great, but.....



**Your SSRA Executive Board  
Wishes All Our Members  
As Well As  
Our Newest Retirees  
A Happy and Healthy  
Summer**

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50 Route 111  
Suite 216  
Smithtown, NY 11787**