



S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER



Volume XV, Issue 3

March – April 2016

From the Editor's Desk

The recent appointment of John B. King, Jr. as Acting U.S. Secretary of Education is very disheartening to say the least. This is the same person who as New York State's Commissioner of Education was so instrumental in fostering the many issues associated with the Common Core standards and evaluations which only recently have begun to take on some semblance of sanity.

King, who is a big proponent of charter schools, often contends that it is New York City's public school teachers who literally saved his life when both his parents died by the time he was 12 years old. Yet, while serving as Education Commissioner in New York, there was constant squabbling over these same Common Core standards between King, teacher unions, school administrators and parents. It is only since he left that Governor Cuomo has relented in his position on the Common Core and under King's replacement, Maryellen Elia, has the Common Core curriculum been reevaluated by the Board of Regents. Student scores and teacher evaluations based on these scores have now been put on hold for the next four years. Hopefully, by then, a reevaluation of how to implement these changes will be sensibly incorporated and there will be no reason for thousands of students to opt out of the state tests.

In December, I left for Florida for the winter, feeling that at least things were on the right track. I was soon to find that Florida has been having its own share of testing woes with con-



flicts between the new state curriculum, teacher unions, and the parents, over these student tests. Florida has dropped the Common Core testing in favor of its own Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) which they claim is based on the Common Core. According to one report, the 7th and 8th grade tests took a total of 9 hours and 20 minutes. A written portion is not graded by educators. Instead, a staffing agency hires people to grade this portion and are given a quota of how many tests to grade per hour.

Then, as Paul Harvey used to say, "now for the rest of the story." How many of you remember your score on the SATs or ACTs? How many of you even took these tests? Florida's legislature adopted a program of evaluation called, "Best and Brightest." This program offered up to \$10,000 as a bonus based on a teachers performance on his or her scores while a high school senior! Apparently, a high test score guarantees success in the classroom.

Is it any wonder, thousands of teachers held a rally in Tallahassee in early January. They were asking for an end to the "Best and Brightest" program, an end to different standards for for-profit charter schools, an end to legislative interference in how local schools are run, along with other issues.

Is it any wonder I say stay healthy and enjoy your retirement!!!!

Carl Haymes
SSRA Editor

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

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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 26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787

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

President's Message

Hello Everyone,

Wishing all of you a Happy Easter, Happy Passover, and a beautiful Spring. Beginning with this issue, all Newsletters will be sent to you by email unless you requested a hard copy. The privacy concern has been addressed and discussed in John's column. Don't forget to keep us informed about your activities during retirement. Members enjoy hearing news about former colleagues. Stay well and enjoy your retirement!

~George Makris

Condolences to:

Phoebe Badeer on the loss of her husband Bob, former principal of Accomsett Middle School.

Mary Ann Cacciabardo on the loss of her brother, the Hon. Charles Cacciabardo,

The family of Larry Dolan, former principal of Mt. Pleasant Elementary School, on his passing in December.

The family of Virginia Stanton, former district teacher, who passed away in January.

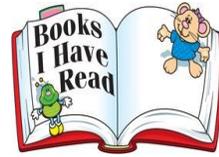
Marilyn Gerken on the loss of her husband, Bob.

The family of Natalie Allen, former guidance secretary, who passed away in February.

The family of Genevieve (Jean) Lott, on her passing in February



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.

Donna & Vince Amato - We keep busy all year long spending our winters in Venice, Florida. We both play golf and are involved with our church here. Vince still volunteers with our local Hospice Home care program and teaches Spanish at our community club house. Donna and I are members of the Italian-American Club of Venice where Vince teaches Italian to a large group of members. Last April, we both went to Sicily where Vince met cousins whom he had not seen in 52 years. Between us, we have 5 children and 4 grandkids who are the light of our eyes. This coming October, we are going to Barcelona to visit one of Vince's former Spanish exchange students who was at Smithtown West during the 2000-01 school year. We are so blessed to have our wonderful family and many friends both here in Venice, Florida and on Long Island. It is always a pleasure seeing colleagues from Smithtown schools as we travel from place to place.

Joyce McLaren - Ron and I visited Shirley and Ernie Baltutis when we vacationed in Florida a few weeks ago. Shirley and Ernie live in The Villages, which is like Disney World for retirees. Mary and Chris Geiger, who also live in The Villages, joined us for a wonderful reunion. The three of us haven't been together since we taught in the combined Middle School.

Marilyn Gerken - After many years, Marilyn's husband succumbed to Alzheimer's Disease and died on January 22nd. As of January, Marilyn herself was recovering from serious back surgery and was in a rehab facility near their home in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Her daughter, Susan, and son-in-law, Bill were staying with her. If you so desire, a donation to the Alzheimer's Association would be appropriate. Marilyn would enjoy hearing from her fellow retirees. Her address and phone number are in the latest Members' Directory.

Joseph Gilkey - In January, Heather and I headed out on a two week cruise from Tampa to various points in the Caribbean. Since 2016 is the year of my 85th birthday it was highly appropriate that this was my 85th cruise. We have cruised most of the seas of the world, but now have an aversion to the discomfort of long flights, so most of the cruising we do now is in the Caribbean where we can drive to the departing and arriving ports here in Florida. There were 8 of us from the Oak Hammock community with us on this cruise. There is a couple, the Alvarez's, that have a permanent home in San Juan. They also have an apartment in Oak Hammock which they stay in for 3-4 week periods several times throughout the year. They have a daughter that lives here in Gainesville along with grandchildren. They eventually want to live permanently here in Oak Hammock. They invited our group of travelers to have dinner at their home when we got to San Juan. It was a delightful and wonderful time with them. They will be here in Oak Hammock in just a couple of weeks as their granddaughter is appearing in the university's laboratory high school production of "Beauty and the Beast."

Hope all is well with the old gang. I want you to know that I wear a "t" shirt to the gym in the mornings that says, "I have a retirement plan. I'm going cruising!"

(cont. on p. 4 — see Members)

Members (cont. from p.3)

Jo-Ann Goldwasser - My dream come true--children, dogs, and any opportunity to do something productive in the surrounding communities. The Doggie Reading Club was started three years ago and the number of volunteer teams has grown to ten as the demand by schools interested in having our teams of dogs with \their handlers visit. We volunteer in Rocky Point, Brentwood, Comsewogue and South Country. We work in more than 22 classes. The children get an opportunity to read one-on-one to the dogs while the handler gently guides the boys' and girls' reading. This is a win-win experience all around--the children, the dogs, the handlers, the classroom teachers, and the building administrators. If you would like more information about the Doggie Reading Club and joining our ranks, please e-mail jogold4311@gmail.com. or call Jo-Ann Goldwasser at 631-689-2747. You'll love it!!!

Bobbi Mastrangelo - Bobbi and several colleagues were interviewed for the WUCF-TV Artisode: "Sight Unseen: Touchable Sculpture." This unique exhibit allowing all the art to be touched was filmed at Winter Park's Albin Polasek Sculpture Museum. The PBS special aired on Thursday, Feb. 18, 2016 at 8 PM and can be accessed on You Tube or on Bobbi's blog. The exhibition which engages people of all ages is on view through April 17th.

Bobbi has two works in this exhibit. "City of Orlando" is a sculpture relief streetscape. A manhole cover surrounded by antique bricks replicates a scene near the Orlando Museum of Art. Her second piece, "Con Edison Concert" is an inter-active sculpture with light, sound and touchable components.



"City of New Orleans"



Bobbi with "Con Edison Concert"

Larry Hohler- Don't let anyone tell you that terrorism or attacks by wild animals are the most serious dangers you face when visiting Kenya. More lethal is the danger both locals and visitors face from mayhem on the roads. Shortly after we opened Hope Children's Home in 2005, Glory, one of our older girls, was walking to school on a Saturday for an extra help session. While crossing the bridge into Meru town on the path next to the road, a speeding pickup truck tried to pass the vehicle it was following. A car was coming in the opposite direction and in order to avoid a head-on collision, the driver swerved onto the path, killing Glory. He kept on going.

Most of our younger children attend Gikumene Primary School, located down the hill from Hope Children's Home and across Meru Embu Road, the main artery between Nairobi and Meru. Our children cross this road four times a day - going to school in the morning, returning home for lunch, then back to school, and crossing again at the end of the school day. For years we have been pressing local government to put a rumble strip in front of the school and they agreed to do so. Sadly, no rumble strip has been put in place. February 11th

(see Members cont. on p.11)



Around the World by Sherry Jargo



We had a surreal year in 2015. We did not actually bring about world peace, or save the world, but we spent from January to May aboard the Queen Mary 2, sailing as part of the QM2 world voyage. We also became known as SKINS - or to quote the British - Spending Kids Inheritance Now.

We say our trip was surreal because we went to a place like Rome and saw the Coliseum, went through the Suez Canal, spent time in the Emirates...Dubai and Abu Dhabi (extremely over-the-top riches like a skiing area in the middle of a shopping mall which is in the desert), India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong—ooh the market places. We even got to spend the Chinese new year in China. It was very interesting and very crowded and very exciting. We had some fun in Indonesia visiting a shoe store and having the owner ask if she could take a picture of us. I quickly grabbed a pair of shoes and did a Vanna White thing, pointing to the shoes. Who knows, maybe we were featured in a magazine showing even non-Moslems like their shoes. A highlight for me was to be in Borneo. Try as I may, I never saw the wild man. However, we saw beautiful country sides, birds, and of course many mosques and shrines. Each one was lovely in its own way. It got to the point that I think David and I were “mosqued out.” Sort of like seeing so many cathedrals in England, or beautiful art in Florence. The mind just goes on overload seeing beautiful things. Can you imagine going to a mosque that can hold 40,000 worshippers? It boggles the mind. Of course we went to temples and shrines, being an equal opportunity tourist.

We also spent some time in Australia where we connected with friends who we met on past cruises. We had seen the interior of New Zealand before, so it was interesting to see the country and cities from a ship and port. We had to cancel some ports because of a cyclone, were able to see other cities that were not on the itinerary. Cunard threw us a special dinner party for the world cruisers, where we had a fantastic dinner at the Shrine of Remembrance. After leaving Australia, we sailed on to Africa, where we set up a three day safari. It is one thing to see wild animals at the zoo, but to see them in their natural habitat, with nothing between you and them except maybe 2-3 feet is surreal. We were able to see white lions, their cubs and even a kill of a zebra. Not easy to take, but necessary for their survival. At dusk we had a standoff with an elephant. Our guide told us that if we backed up the Jeep the elephant would charge us. Luckily, the guide knew what to do and after a several long minutes, the animal moved on.

After spending several days in Africa and going to a few wineries, we sailed on to Namibia. The desert was interesting, but more important to me, I learned how to say Namibia without twisting up my tongue. (Print the word Patchogue and ask someone not from LI to say it) As we were approaching the end of our trip, we went to Gran Canaria, where the last dodo was seen alive. Going to several more ports, we headed back to Southampton, then on to New York. We were at sea approximately 134 days. Part of the excitement of our trip was not only seeing fantastic sights and meeting interesting people, but to be on the ocean liner the Queen Mary 2 which has such an interesting history. Definitely, a fantastic way to see the world. One time we were 17 hours difference between where we were at sea and where we lived. Pretty amazing for a girl who grew up in Franklin Square. It took a while to settle back to regular life, but laundry and cooking called.

(cont. on p 6 – Trip)

Trip – (cont. from p.5)

One of the nicest outshoots of our trip was that we had the same tablemates for the whole journey and one couple came from England to spend Thanksgiving with us. It was great to see them again. We enjoy traveling and seeing the world and by putting ourselves out there we are able to meet new and interesting people and experience other cultures and ways of life. It also brought home to us how fortunate and lucky we are to live in America.

As a post script to our journey, it is interesting to note how different an ocean liner is from a cruise ship. We never had the pitch and roll that sometimes occurs on a cruise ship. Also, because the QM2 is such a large ship, we often had to dock in the container port

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OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

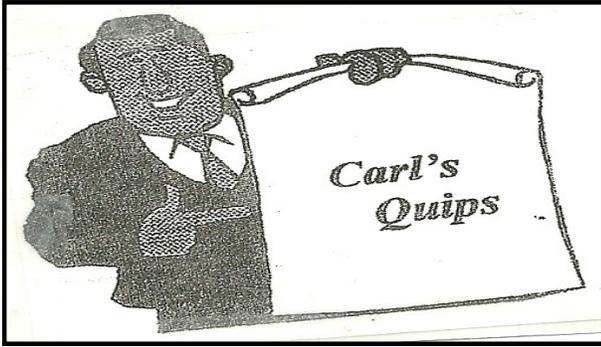
Membership/Dues: We are most grateful to the majority of members who submitted their 2016 dues on time. If you haven't quite gotten to it yet, please use the info slip found on page 7 of this issue and mail it right away.

Internet: Well, we are up and running — this issue is being sent via email to the majority of members and is being delivered in print-form, by regular mail, to those who opted for that. In addition, you will note that the email format won't include the names, addresses phone numbers and /or email addresses of either new members or changes of information. This is an effort to protect that personal data from identity thieves. As a result the past issues of our Newsletter which had been on our website (mysssr.com) have since been removed. Our gratitude to Heather Gilkey for alerting us to this matter. Email recipients will receive the changes on their computer by separate email.

Spring Luncheon News: After several years,, we are returning to the **Irish Coffee Pub**, a luncheon site which has been a real favorite with our members. You will find all the details on the full page Luncheon flier on page 9 of this issue. Kindly use the tear-off slip at the bottom of the flier to make your reservation. Email recipients can either print the luncheon page or just use a slip of paper when they send in their check.

A Thought: The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery.

- - - - Winston Churchill



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, send to sasraeditor@optonline.net.

A sound west of the state of Washington is the sound of the ocean.

Double Jeopardy is when you watch the TV program twice in one day.

Momentum is when you give someone something when they are going away.

The prehistoric period is when no one cared enough to write anything down.

A pathogen is someone who doesn't believe in fighting in a war.

Television can provide a public service by showing less reality shows.

I Want A Paper Copy Of The Newsletter!



For all members who do not have email addresses, **OR** have one, but prefer to receive a paper copy of the Newsletter, you **MUST** fill out the form below (if you have not already done it) and return it to: **SSRA office, 26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787.**

Name _____

Street Address _____

City/Town _____

Have You Paid Your Dues for 2016, Yet?

Your SSRA dues were to be paid by January 1st. If you haven't paid them yet, kindly fill out the form below and mail a check for \$15 to: SSRA, c/o STA Office, 26 New York Ave., Smithtown, NY 11787.

SSRA Dues

Name _____ Year Retired _____

Street Address _____ Apt. # _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____ Email Address _____

What A Shame!!

Those of us who have accumulated a large number of candles on our recent birthday cake, realize that most things change over time – some more than others. Most changes are for the good, they are “improvements.” However, there are some which are a loss and that’s a real shame.

When I was growing up on the “mean streets” of Queens, my friends and I could “go out to play” on our own, virtually all day. (“Be home for supper.”) We could choose up a ball game in a vacant lot or on a street (I was a 2-sewer man), cardboard bases, broom-handle bat, no umpire - “watch out for broken glass,” or go bike riding on the streets or to one of the parks in the area. Perhaps we could go “fishing” or pollywog hunting in “the mud hole” in one of the parks (no bait and no lifeguards). Occasionally, in the summer, we would take the A-subway line to Brooklyn, use a free transfer to get to Ebbets Field, pay less than a dollar for bleacher admission, sneak into better seats, watch a Dodger game, then reverse the process and upon getting home for supper, answer the question, “What did you do today?” with “Nuthin’ much.” We played “street hockey”: “clamp-on” roller skates, a taped up old hockey stick and a make-shift puck — “Watch out for cars,” We had great fun, learned how to cope, developed independence and self-reliance, basically, we “grew up.”

In more recent years, I purchased bicycles for each of my grandchildren only to realize that, absent sidewalks, they really couldn’t “go riding,” especially if that meant going out of sight of the ever-watchful parent - forget about going for an across town ride. The concept of “choosing up” a stickball game is forever lost, replaced with parent-arranged “play dates.” Full equipment (especially a helmet and joint pads) in a formal venue, with adult officiating necessary before any activity can begin. Something got lost along the way; the spontaneity and exuberance of youth is gone - kids just being kids.

While I didn’t do it, I envy those of my friends, who, as a young adult, traveled to Europe, toured on their own as inexpensively as possible and saw all the great sites of the Old World. I don’t hear of many parents urging their sons or daughters to do that today. Actually, over the last dozen years or so, I’ve had to edit down my travel bucket list in light of world events. There are places where I wouldn’t feel welcome or safe. How often I’ve heard, “it was nice but you can’t go there anymore.”

The shame is what will my grandchildren have to look forward to and what will they miss? Instead of broadening their horizons in an expanded world, it appears they will be confined to constricted safe-zones. Instead of real, memorable experiences, they will have to be satisfied with “virtual” adventures on electronic devices (that’s how they play now). Regardless of the age, life was never really completely carefree, but the future trend is not encouraging.- - what a shame!

- - - John Pettit

SMITHTOWN SCHOOLS RETIREES' ASSOCIATION

Spring 2016

LUNCHEON

At

THE IRISH COFFEE PUB

131 Carleton Avenue
East Islip, NY 11730
(631)277-0007

Wednesday, April 20
Noon to 3pm

The Irish Coffee Pub is fully handicapped accessible by way of an entrance on the north side, as well as an elevator within.

Send check made payable to: **SSRA** for \$30.00 per person -mail to: **SSRA**

c/o STA Office
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787

RSVP by Friday, April 15

Directions: Take Route 111 – South from Smithtown – continue under LIE - take left fork onto Wheeler Road (which becomes Carleton Avenue) towards Central Islip. Continue over Southern State Pkwy. & Sunrise Hwy. to The Irish Coffee Pub on left.

(From central Smithtown: approx. 9 ½ miles – 18 minutes)

Please Note: At this Luncheon, we will continue our practice of collecting funds for Smithtown area Food Pantries. Please consider making a donation to this most worthy cause.

Kindly detach below and return slip with check

Name _____
(print)

Phone _____

5 *Benefits Of Being a NYSUT Member*



1. Higher pay & better benefits
2. A contract you can rely on
3. A strong voice at work
4. Professional learning

5. NYSUT Member Benefits

NYSUT members & their families can choose from a variety of insurance, financial, legal, and shopping & travel programs designed with the NYSUT member in mind – including term life insurance, auto insurance, legal & financial services, car rentals, vacation packages, and much more!

Member Appreciation Month is back again this February!

Since it was such a big hit last year, we're doing it again! Member Appreciation Month is coming February 2016.

To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is participate in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.

This year will be even bigger because it's a leap year... that means more chances to win even more great prizes!!!

Once again, Member Appreciation Month will be filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers. Prizes will include gift cards, Beats headphones, a Go Pro camera and more.



We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

It's the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer more than 40 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at 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.

Members (cont. from p. 4)

was a normal school day. Six year old Michelle Kirimi had just crossed the road on the way to school with her classmates when she was hit and killed by a speeding vehicle that veered off the road to avoid an oncoming car. Hopefully, this tragedy will finally result in action being taken to slow the traffic on this section of Meru Embu Road. This tragedy is tempered by the fact that 78 of Michelle’s brothers and sisters at Hope Children’s Home are being fed, clothed, housed, and prepared for independent adulthood. Sixteen have passed the test to enter secondary schools, and nine are studying at technical schools or universities. Six of the young people we rescued over a decade ago are now living independently. Two have married. Four others are working variously as a beautician, a cosmetics supplier, a teacher, and a cell phone salesman.

Donors in the US have made it possible for the Home to buy two greenhouses, land on which to grow food, and milling machines that enable us to sell maize flour to the surrounding community. A school uniform manufacturing scheme and a welding operation at our Technical Training Center hold the promise of moving our operation toward self-sustainability. Avery Friedman, a twenty year old from Shoreham, recently spent a month at the home and during his visit bought 15 three hundred and fifty pound bags of coffee beans which he plans to market on the East End, sharing the profits with the Home.

Six Long Islanders just got back from Kenya, having visited our children to assess their needs and also enjoying the natural beauty of the country. When not spending time with our kids, they visited the elephant orphanage in suburban Nairobi and went on safari to Meru Game Park where the movie “Born Free” was filmed. They also met with local authorities to hopefully insure that we don’t lose any more of our children on the Meru Embu Road.

John Howe - CONGRATULATIONS are in order for John and his family. ”Papa John” has another granddaughter, Scarlet Poppy Howe. Scarlet was born Jan. 8, 2016, at 8:12 AM, weighing in at 8 lbs. 9 oz., and was 21.5 inches tall. Scarlet, son Brian and daughter-in-law Katianne are all doing well. Papa John and Grammy are elated!!!

CONDOLENCES to the family of **Lawrence Dolan**, former principal of Mt. Pleasant Elementary School, for more than 20 years. According to his wife, Clara, Larry retired in 1986 and made lasting friendships with his teachers until he passed away on December 29th. Larry and his wife of 52 years, retired to North Carolina in 1987. He is survived by their two daughters, Michele and Denise. Larry always had happy memories of his time in the Smithtown school system.

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Lost Words of Our Youth

sent by Holly Whitacre

Heavens to Murgatroyd! Would you believe the email spell checker did not recognize the word Murgatroyd? Lost words from our childhood: Words gone by as fast as the buggy whip! Sad, really! The other day a not so elderly (65) lady said something to her son about driving a Jalopy. He looked at her quizzically and asked, “What is a Jalopy?” OMG (new phrase!), he never heard of a jalopy!!.....Richard Lederer once wrote, “Well, I hope you are Hunky Dory after you read these : “Don’t touch that dial,” “Carbon copy,” “You sound like a broken record,” and “Hung out to dry.”.....Back in the old days we had a lot of moxie. We’d put on our best bib and tucker up and fly right. Heavens to Betsy! Gee whillikers! Jumping Jehoshaphat! Holy moley!We were in like Flynn and living the life of Riley. Even a regular guy couldn’t accuse us of being a knucklehead, a nincompoop or a pill. Not for all the tea in China.

Back in the olden days, life was swell, but when was the last time anything was swell? Swell has gone the way of beehives, pageboys, spats, knickers, fedoras, poodle skirts, saddle shoes and pedal pushers. Oh, my aching back. Kilroy was here, but he isn’t anymore. We wake up from a short nap, and before we can say, “Well I’ll b e a monkey’s uncle!” or “This is a fine kettle of fish!” words that seemed omnipresent as oxygen have vanished.

Poof, go the words of our youth. the words we left behind. We blink, and they’re gone.

See ya later, Alligator!



Al Chandler Honored

Al Chandler, long time coach in Smithtown, will be honored on April 2, 2016, when the Smithtown School District will be naming the baseball field at High School East

“AL CHANDLER FIELD.”

There will be a breakfast at 10 AM in the school cafeteria followed by a 1 PM game between HS East and HS West.

The deadline for confirming attendance at the breakfast was
March 5th

with a notice sent to all SSRA email subscribers in February.

For any further information, please contact Al Chandler, JR at:

achandler@smithtown.k12.ny.us

**S.S.R.A.
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787**