

# S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Volume XVI, Issue 2

November – December 2016

## From The Editor's Desk

Another year is about to close. A year in which our country had as contentious an election as we have seen in our lifetime. An election in which for the second time in the last 16 years the winner of the electoral votes was not the winner of the popular votes.



Right below the photos in the second column, once again written in blue, is an additional link to click on to also access the Newsletter. At the bottom of this column is a link to click on to once again get the renewal form. By navigating the website, as you see, there are several ways you can get

whatever you want.

If you still have any questions we will be glad to answer them or offer assistance.

We have spent a lot of time and effort developing an easy to use website. Yet we keep getting questions regarding how to access some of its links. The most common problem that seems to occur is trying to access it by using just **myssra** by itself. Don't! The website is **myssra.com**. If you use the dot com you will see a whole page of ways to navigate different parts of our website. The first one listed will give you all the parts you need. This is our home page.....Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association.

Now, the latest from Albany. Common Core still has some issues to resolve such as too many testing days. But, the Board of Regents is now trying to "simplify" graduation requirements. Under consideration is raising the requirements for Algebra but geometry, trigonometry and physics students would receive an "advanced" regents diploma. The concept of the traditional 100 point scale would be scrapped and grading would be based on a 1-5 scale with 3 as a passing grade. similar to what colleges do today. However, nothing at present seems to address the issue of students with disabilities. These ideas are only in their infancy with more coming in the months ahead.

To Join or Renew, look at the black bar above the pictures. Click on the link at the far right which says JOIN/RENEW. When you click on this link you will get the same form as the one in our Newsletter on page 11. Print the form and mail with your check for \$15 made out to **Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association**, not SSRA. (That is our bank's request not ours).

Our Fall luncheon was most enjoyable and our thanks go to Susan Fink for taking the photos seen on page 9 and to Patty Stoddard for her invaluable computer assistance in making them available for this edition of the Newsletter.

To view the current or any prior Newsletters, just look at the middle column of the home page. You will see a box in blue saying Newsletter. Below this box, also in blue is the word "Newsletter." Click on this word and on the left will be the latest edition of our Newsletter with prior editions listed below it.

Carl Haymes  
Editor

## Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

50 Route 111– Suite 216

Smithtown, NY 11787

(631)265-4218

Email: [ssraeditor@optonline.net](mailto:ssraeditor@optonline.net)

President.....George Makris  
Vice President .....John Pettit  
Treasurer..... Susan Fink  
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Newsletter Editor.....Carl Haymes  
Membership Coordinator/  
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Special Assistant.....Patty Stoddard

The Smithtown Schools 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

Seasons greetings,

Hopefully, peace and calm will reign over the nation and the New Year will bring us joy and unity. It's been such a tumultuous election year, so thankful that it's over. Just a reminder, please send in your 2017 membership dues by Dec.31. Make your check out to Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association. We've been asked by the bank to not use SSRA anymore.

Wishing you all the joys of the season and a happy and healthy 2017.

George Makris

### *:Our Condolences to:*

Ed Condon on the loss in November of his daughter Marybeth.

The Sobel family on the loss of Larry, long time Music Director in Smithtown

JoAnn Nickl, on the passing of her mother, Roswitha Nickl, who was the Principal Account Clerk for the district

April Harnisch on the loss of her husband, James Glendenning



# 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, volunteer work, adventures or whatever you would like to tell your former colleagues.*

**Joseph Gilkey-** We have a summer course here that has members tell their life experiences in a lecture power point presentation. I am on the docket next summer so I was rummaging around my photo collections and trying to put together a coherent presentation. I came across this photo and I thought it would be a good idea to send it out to our members. A bit about the photo. I founded the Smithtown Teachers' Bowling League the second half of the bowling season in 1960 -61. I was new to Smithtown at the time (although already an experienced teacher) and at that time Jim Erviti was the District Principal. He called a meeting of all the teachers new to Smithtown. He went over a number of things about the school district and indicated to us that the district was going to grow. He said that they would be recruiting teachers from all over the country.



*(l to r) bowling alley owner, Bill Eysaman, Elaine Mitchell, Joe Gilkey, Charlie Williams, Bob Bell, Bob Alley, Les Manigault*

Many of those would be single people and people from far from their home towns. He wanted to know if any of us could suggest how the district could help to make them more at home, give them a social outlet, a way to meet other staff members, and a way to bring the staff together in a non-school setting.

I suggested a bowling league He said, "OK, you organize it and I will back you." We decided on Thursday afternoons at 4:00 PM and true to his word all school offices closed in time for people to make the 4:00 PM starting time and no meetings were scheduled for this time. Even the principals were encouraged to join a team.

Now back to the photo. It was taken in 1985 with the league at that point, the longest continuing one in the Smithtown Bowl. We were celebrating 25 years of bowling by the Smithtown staff. As an honor, I was once again made the league president and this photo is of all those who served as president of the league during those 25 years, I don't believe Les never actually served as president but he was especially helpful to me that first year in getting the league started. It is interesting that the back of the photo has a sticker on it that says, "Smithtown Central School District, Eleanor Koehler, Public Relations 360-7313" so I believe this may have been published in the Messenger and/or News when this event happened at the start of the bowling season in 1985.

(more News of Members p.4)

(News cont. from p.3)

**Lou DeBole** - In the October Newsletter we mentioned that Lou was to be inducted into the Queens College Sports Hall of Fame on October 14, 2016. It was part of the fifth annual Hall of Fame dinner and golf outing. Lou was a pitcher for Queens College beginning in the late 1950s. Here is Lou accepting his award. Next to him is a current Queens College baseball player.



**Nancy Koch** - I am spending my first retirement year in New York City. It is a pleasure to discover hidden secrets and things to do when you are not running in and out on a weekend. I'm particularly interested in exploring the many walks and different features of Central Park from the gates, monuments, flora and birds and just the peaceful beauty of having the time to enjoy it. A great treat!

**Bobbi Mastrangelo** - Bobbi's "Grate Works of Art" were featured on Michelle Ward's blog: October Manhole Madness."



Bobbi with some of her Grate Works

"WHEN (The People Care)"  
by Bobbi Mastrangelo  
Fiber Art, 31" x 13" x 3"

A major exhibit of Bobbi's works will be presented at the Orange County Regional History Center in Orlando, Florida. "Plastics Under Cover" - "Grate Works of Art" December 14, 2016.

A permanent exhibit of Bobbi's art is hosted by Toast Coffee House in Patchogue, NY

**Vince Damato** - My wife Donna and I recently returned from Barcelona where we visited a former exchange student of mine, Ana Batllo, who attended Smithtown West 17 years ago. She is now married with two children and she and her husband Daniel brought us to places which we had not seen in our previous two visits to the city. We then boarded the largest cruise ship in the world - the Harmony of the Seas - and made stops in Palma de Mallorca and Malaga, Spain before returning to Florida. During the crossing I taught Spanish every day to classes of 50 passengers. What a delightful way to spend time teaching to people who really want to learn some Spanish. I can't believe that my teaching career started almost 50 years ago. We would strongly recommend this type of cruise - a repositioning cruise. You can get great deals on these if you do some investigation.

**Kay Wanstrath** - I just wanted to say thanks to all who voted for my son, Robert Murphy, for  
(cont. on p.5)

**(News continued from p.4)**

Superintendent of Highways. As a mom, I am very proud of his accomplishments and know you have a man with good morals and a work ethic his late dad and I always respected. I am looking forward to being there with Robert and his family when he is sworn in.

**Jo-Ann Goldwasser** - Good news to report on the growth of the Doggie Reading Club. We're now in five school districts — Rocky Point, Hauppauge, Comsewogue, Brentwood and South Country, volunteering in more than 25 classes. The dogs are PRATT (Patchogue Rotary Animal Therapy) certified. The dogs and their handlers go into classes, usually special ed or special needs, and work one-on-one with the boys and girls. It's been tremendously gratifying to see how the children respond to the dogs and how welcomed we are by the schools and teachers. If you have a dog and might be interested in joining us, please e-mail [jogold@gmail.com](mailto:jogold@gmail.com).

**Larry & Yvette Hohler** - We are back from Kenya, encouraged by what we learned on our visit. After several years of agitation and the death last February of one of our kids while crossing the road on her way to school, a visit to the Kenyan highway authorities, finally resulted in the installation of traffic calming rumble strips that will slow traffic and make our kids safer. We finally received the paper work which registers the Home as a government certified Children's Charitable Institution. We are hoping certification will qualify the Home for some level of Kenyan government aid. We've hired two young women to work as weavers and assist our housemothers. They make sweaters that will be sold along with school uniforms when the new term begins in January. We have 14 acres under cultivation and we are renting six more with the expectation that the money generated from the maize we grow will help to move our Home toward self-sustainability.

We were heartened by our visits to the young people who are now enrolled at Kenyan universities. We learned that Doreen Gatwiri received a government stipend as a reward for her outstanding class work at Jomo Kenyatta University where she is enrolled in a pre-med program. We stopped at the Presbyterian Teacher Training College in Chuka to visit Catherine Nkatha, a sophomore standout on the girls' football (soccer) team. We went with Kelvin Mutuma Naari to enroll him in a medical tech internship at Consulta Hospital in Nkubu. Kelvin Koome is completing his course work in a doctor's assistant program at Kenya Methodist University and is already working for a local doctor. When Jane Mwendwa passes her qualifying exam at the end of the year, she will be employed locally as a pharmacist. Other young people enrolled in technical schools are preparing for employment as bakers, welders, engineering technicians and office workers. We have known many of these kids for 11 years and seeing them succeed is enormously satisfying. The little kids are great too...and not as expensive.



Boys at the Home wearing Smithtown Bulls uniforms



Larry and Catherine Nkatha



Yvette and Doreen Gatwiri

# OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

**Internet:** The “myssra.com” website appears to be working quite well. Please note that, for security reasons, we don’t list the names or other personal info of members *on-line* in the bi-monthly Newsletter itself --- “Changes and Additions” are sent as a separate email. I really thank those members who have “opted” for the email version of the Newsletter – it’s been found to be easy to access and very convenient to read. See page 1 for instructions if you are still having difficulty or are intimidated by a website.

**Membership/Dues:** My personal appreciation to all those who have already renewed their SSRA membership – not only does it save time but also the expense of mailing reminders. If you have not yet done so, please take a moment to send your \$15.00 annual dues renewal -- the deadline is Dec.31. The form can be found elsewhere in this issue or on- line. We’ve added a link directly to the printable dues renewal form (click either “Join/Renew” at the top of the homepage or on the Newsletter page).

**Fall/Spring Luncheon:** While our Fall Luncheon, at the St. George’s G & CC, surely lived up to its advanced billing as a terrific occasion, we are growing concerned about the dwindling number of members who chose to attend. I am currently in the initial stages of planning the Spring Luncheon (in late April), and would welcome any suggestions (keep it local and at a suitably large place) from members – call or email me.

**Rumblings & Ramblings:** Have you noticed the over-use of the response “No Problem” in recent years? Ask a waiter or waitress for another napkin or a drink refill and you get a “No Problem” – ask for your dinner check, again, a “No Problem.”. I recall back in the 1970’s or 80’s, when visiting the island of Jamaica, you heard the locals respond “No Problem, Mon” all over; they actually sold t-shirts with that saying. What rankles me currently is that whatever I ask or request is neither complex nor difficult and certainly shouldn’t be any “problem”. When I get a “No Problem” response, I usually think “Yeah, I know.” Another shift in the vernacular: To me, the term “guy” is a common noun denoting a male, a fellow, a gentleman. (I realize that there are secondary usages, also). Today, however, it’s become an overly familiar greeting as in “Hi, guys.” or “Are you guys ready to order?” --- whatever happened to “Yes, sir” or “Yes, ma’am”? This often comes up with too casual frequency in restaurants where I would prefer efficient, polite service, and am not seeking a personal relationship, with my newest BFF. Of course, if these are the biggest issues I face, things are quite OK, thank you.

**We certainly hope that everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving and I join the SSRA Board of Directors in wishing every member a very Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukkah and a Happy and Healthy New Year.**

**A Thought:** When I was a boy I was told that anyone can become President. I’m beginning to believe it.  
Clarence Darrow

**From Karen Mastrella:** A reminder from a great President. “Let us not express, nor cherish, any harsh feelings towards any citizen who, by his vote, has differed with us. Let us at all times remember that all American citizens are brothers of a common country, and should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling.”

Abraham Lincoln

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intentionally left blank.**

**Changes in members' personal  
information will be sent  
separately by email.**

# NYSUT MEMBER BENEFITS ANNOUNCES 4 NEW ENDORSED PROGRAMS!



## **Office Depot/OfficeMax**

This program offers NYSUT members & their families the opportunity to save up to 80% on almost 100,000 products in all Office Depot/OfficeMax locations or online through the company's website; the average savings on items is approximately 30%. NYSUT members can save on school supplies, office supplies, ink & toner, copying & printing, and much more.

## **Tunstall Medical Alert**

Tunstall offers a variety of medical alert products that ensure NYSUT members and/or their family members living alone can get quick assistance when they need it; the majority of Tunstall's products have a lightweight, waterproof activator that can be worn around the neck or wrist.

When pushed, the Tunstall activator signals a base unit that in turn communicates directly with the Tunstall 24/7/365 Emergency Response Center. Tunstall offers personal emergency response systems for both traditional landline and cell phone users that directly connect with the Tunstall Emergency Response Center when the activator button is pushed.

## **Premier World Discovery**

This program offers a variety of group tour vacations designed for active adult American travelers specializing in domestic and international worldwide tours. NYSUT members & their family members who use the Premier

World Discovery program can save \$100 per person on specific tours and cruises.

Since the company's inception in 1999, Premier World Discovery has developed a lineup of more than 70 travel programs around the globe, including fully-escorted tours, unique rail tours, private-chartered European river cruises, festive holiday and New Year's getaways, and more.

## **Abenity Discounts**

The Abenity discounts program gives NYSUT members access to approximately 290,000 exclusive member discounts across 10,000 U.S. cities, including discounted tickets for entertainment & sporting events; a variety of travel opportunities; and numerous local deals.

With the Abenity discounts program, you'll be able to enjoy substantial savings on tickets to the latest blockbuster movies or theater events, theme parks, museums & attractions, zoos, major appliances/televisions, restaurants, groceries, gym memberships, and much more!

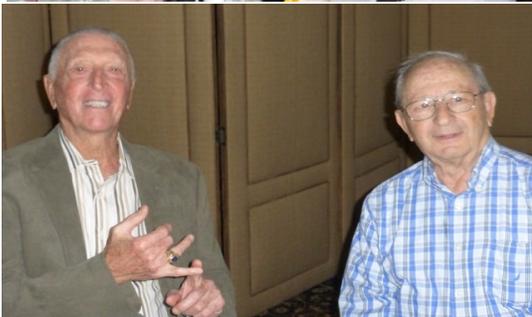
NYSUT members can utilize their Abenity discounts program on any mobile device and gain access to exclusive local deals no matter where you are. Purchase tickets to more than 3,000 movie theaters and theme parks. There are no hidden fees and you'll receive electronic tickets immediately!

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.

# 2016 SSRA Fall Luncheon

at St. George's Golf & Country Club





## Legislative & Political Action Department

### New York State Constitutional Convention?



Here's what you should know.

**What is a constitutional convention?** The New York State Constitutional Convention is a meeting of 3 delegates from each of our 63 Senate districts, plus 15 at-large delegates. They convene in Albany and have the ability to amend any part of the state's constitution. Any changes agreed to by a majority of the delegates will then go to the public for approval.

**When would it take place?** On November 7, 2017, New York State voters will have the opportunity to vote on a referendum on whether they would like a constitutional convention to be held. If the referendum passes, a constitutional convention will be held in April 2019.

The last New York State Constitutional Convention was held in 1967. The last vote for a convention was held in 1997 and 62% of New Yorkers said NO.

**Why is this important?** The convention could result in minor tweaks or radical changes. Since CSEA members and retirees rely upon the state's constitution to protect our pensions, our right to organize, and the nature of our work, we could all face major setbacks and see our futures jeopardized.

**Who will be affected?** All New Yorkers. A convention is costly and puts power in the hands of a select few. As CSEA members and retirees, the civil service laws that dictate our terms of employment and service are protected by the state's constitution. The very basis of what we do and how we do it could be decided by political insiders.

**What's at stake?** Everything is at stake. Our state pensions, our right to organize and collectively bargain, civil service appointments, public education, and environmental standards are among the many hard-fought protections that we stand to lose.

The 1967 New York State Constitutional Convention cost taxpayers roughly \$6.5 million. In 2015 numbers, that's over \$46 million!

**How can we change the constitution without a convention?**

It's easy. Bills can be passed through the state legislature to propose as questions on the ballot during general elections. Our constitution has been amended over 200 times in this way since 1894, and a number of ballot questions were voted on in 2013.

**How can I get involved?** Talk to your friends and family about how a constitutional convention could affect them. Call your state legislators and tell them that there are better ways to make changes in New York.



## Last Call for Dues for 2017!

Join Now!

This form is the form to be used by all SSRA members in paying their annual dues for 2017. Payment should be made by December 31st. We operate on a calendar year and not a school year. The SSRA is independent of the STA so any monies paid to the STA do not go to the SSRA. You can help reduce our mailing costs by completing the form below and mailing it along with a check for \$15 made out to the **SSRA**.

**Please carefully read the directions below before filling out the form.**

1. if you were a member for all of 2016, kindly pay the \$15 for 2017
2. If you retired in 2016. you were an honorary member for the remainder of 2016; **(If you subscribe to any of NYSUT's benefit programs, you are required by law to belong to your retiree association)**
3. If you joined the SSRA after Sept. 1, 2016, you are considered paid for 2017
- \*\*4. Please be sure to check one of the boxes at the bottom referring to Email or paper copy of your Newsletter
5. The bank has requested that your check be made out to:  
**SMITHTOWN SCHOOLS RETIREES' ASSOCIATION (NOT SSRA)**

Kindly cut out the form below and mail with your check to:

**SSRA  
c/o STA  
26 New York Avenue  
Smithtown. NY 11787**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. # \_\_\_\_\_

City//Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Kindly circle any of the above if it is NEW to us. Do not circle any changes you have already given to us. These changes are already in our data base.

In addition to the above information, please put an **X** in **ONE** of the three boxes below.

I have already opted to receive the Newsletter by email

I would like to try receiving the Newsletter by email

I prefer to receive the Newsletter by regular mail



To all our SSRA members and  
their families:

A very happy holiday season  
and good health in the coming  
year

Happy Hanukkah



S.S.R.A.  
c/o STA  
26 New York Avenue  
Smithtown, NY 11787