

S.S.R.A. Newsletter

Volume XVII, Issue 2

November—December 2017

From the Editor's Desk

A major issue in this year's New York election was the possibility of a Constitutional Convention being held. It is required by law to be on the ballot every 20 years. With all unions solidly opposed to one, this resolution was soundly de-feated 83% to 17%.

The last time a convention was approved was 1967 with no resulting changes ever made to the constitution. I guess I can now take the NO Constitutional Convention magnet off my car and the same sign off my front lawn.

Have you ever wondered where most of New York state's retirees live following their retirement? Most NYSLRS retirees seem to remain in NY state where their pensions are exempt from state and local taxes. Half of these retirees live in 10 of 62 NY counties. Suffolk has the most of these retirees with Erie and Nassau completing the top three.

Outside of New York, Florida is second to New York (could the weather be a factor?) followed by North Carolina, New Jersey and South Carolina.

Few of us care to talk about our own demise. But it is important that your beneficiaries are prepared to make certain decisions. They are covered in a NYSUT publication on getting your affairs in order. The highlights include items such as:

- ◆ Reviewing your finances with your loved ones. Be sure they know where your assets and documents are kept.



- ◆ Be sure NYSLRS is informed of your death especially if a continuing benefit is to begin.

- ◆ Let your family know of any funeral arrangements you may have made in advance.

- ◆ Beneficiaries should be aware of any advance directives such as durable power of attorney, living will, health care proxy and do-not-resuscitate (DNR) orders.

More details are available in print or on line. Most important is be sure your files are organized and located in a secure place at home. Do not use a safe deposit box as it may be sealed when you die.

Since becoming NY State Comptroller, Thomas Di Napoli has been fighting abuses of public funds. His investigations have resulted in 24 arrests and the recovery of \$3 million in retirement funds. Many have involved not notifying NYSLRS of a relative's death and continuing to collect their retirement pensions. One of these cases actually involved a non-notification for 12 years. Another case involved the complete disregard of the retiree earnings limit before he was found out having to repay a sum of just short of a half million dollars forfeiting future pension payments to repay what was illegally gained.

Stay well everyone and on behalf of all your Board members we wish you all a wonderful 2018.

Carl Haymes, editor

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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

Season's greetings! Believe it or not, it's been four years since our election of SSRA officers. We are planning to have our next election in April 2018. If you would like to be an officer or nominate a candidate, please send the name to ssraeditor@optonline.net. Candidates are for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Enjoy the holidays!

George Makris

Correction

In the October Newsletter, the Deepest Sympathy column should have said that Eberhard Mueller was a Science teacher, became Science Chairman, and retired as an Assistant Principal at High School West.

OUR CONDOLENCES TO:

The family of Edward Murray, former foreign language teacher, who passed away in October.

Erica (Rickie) Savage, on the loss of her son John, in October.

The family of Al Zoller, former Science teacher, Science Chairman and later moving to Central Administration who passed away in October.

The family of Mary Ann Meyers, teacher at Nesconset Elementary School, who passed away in October..

The family of Laura Dennis, former district secretary who passed away in November.



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.

Joseph Gilkey - We have a very active Institute for Learning in Retirement (ILR) here at Oak Hammock. During the summer session we have had a course entitled, "Adventures in Living" for the last couple of years. The course basically is a series of lectures given by someone regarding their life story - their entire life or some interesting segments from their life. This past summer I agreed to do one of the lectures and as it came out it was my entire life's story. The title of my presentation was, "Along the Monongahela . . . Growing up in the Pittsburgh Area." The presentation was well received and has been posted on U-Tube.

The first Thursday of each month we have a travel presentation made by one of our members who has made a trip that might be interesting to our membership and that they are willing to talk about. I was selected to do the Oct. 5th presentation and the committee wanted me to repeat one I had done a few years ago on the history of the cruise industry. Since years had passed since I had originally done this presentation, severe editing and additions had to be made to the original presentation. The title of the resultant presentation was, "Take Your Resort With You . . . A Short History of the Cruise Industry." The very next day I made this same presentation to our Assisted Living and Skilled Nursing members.

Both of these presentations are Power Point presentations with lots of pictures and graphics. When I do these presentation I am so thankful for the training I got while in college and the support and opportunities I had at Smittown Central School District to use and hone the skills I was taught. They have enriched my retirement life beyond anything I thought possible. I'm now working on a presentation on the Canary Islands.

Bill Benzinger - When you look at this trip you might think that the Science Department is going on another PDF Adventure.

Joanne Pugliani, Mavis Chaskin-Mott, Stan Ogonowsky, myself and our spouses went on a very cool trip. We left the east coast of the USA and rendezvoused in Barcelona, Spain. We spent 3 days sightseeing using on and off buses, eating spectacular food and drinking Spanish wine. I was reintroduced to to a beverage that Tony Lacertosa gave to me years ago as a cure for sea sickness. It is a VILE concoction of distilled second grape pressings called "GRAPPA!" I brought a bottle home with me.

Here we boarded a Windstar Cruise Ship, the "Windsurf" bound for several Spanish ports in the Mediterranean, Tangier, Morocco and Lisbon, Portugal. By today's standards this is a small cruise ship carrying 325 passengers. It is a real Sailing Ship with five working masts and auxiliary diesel engines. With a small passenger compliment we got to know people very well. The cuisine was excellent and a mid-week BBQ with Line Dancing was great fun.

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News of Members continued from Page 3

Evert port we visited had wonderful character and culture. It is interesting how one civilization built their infrastructure on the ruins of the one before. This was especially apparent on excavations of churches and castles. In Malaga we went on a guided Segway Tour. This included travel through markets, shopping centers, city parks and hilly nature preserves at a breakneck speed of up to 11 mph!!

In Tangier, Morocco we ventured into the Medina and Casbah. Talk about high pressure sales! If you come out not owning a new carpet or lamp, you are a great bargainer or you know how to say "No Thank You."

Our last port was Lisbon, Portugal. A beautiful city with delightful outskirts. We stayed at a wonderful hotel, "The Lisboa Plaza." We enjoyed a Rooftop Lounge, especially since every day of this trip the weather was sunny and mild. The hotel bar offered Joanne Pugliani samples of the drink of the country, "Port."

On a personal note, some airlines are incorporating then use of the new Rocarro Seat in coach class. These are very uncomfortable and when reclined leave no room to eat. Try going to seatguru.com for plane info and avoid these seats.

Mary Jane Casey - Mary Jane and Jim are proud to announce that they are now great grandparents. Our granddaughter Kelly and her husband Danny are parents to John James 2 years, 2 months and Madelyn Jane 6 months old. Our third great grandchild, Bradley James, is expected in February. The parents are our grandson Steve and his wife Lauren. In May, our granddaughter Casey was married to Brendan Ward. Our grandson James is a defenseman on the Penn State hockey team. He is #6 if you catch a game on the Big Ten network.



We keep busy visiting our family, golfing and traveling. In January, we will be going on an Andy Cooney Irish Cruise to the Caribbean. We are also enjoying our lake house in Vermont. We hope you all had a great Thanksgiving.



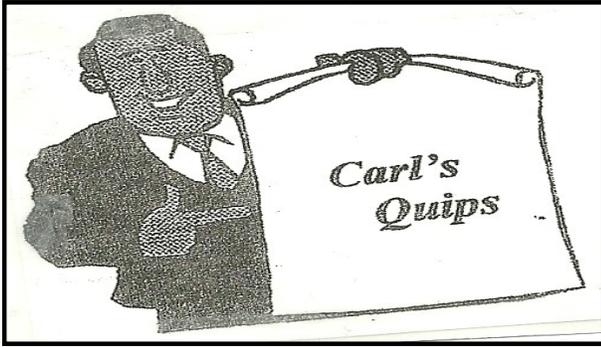
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Deborah Boyce - My son Steven received a wonderful birthday gift - - a baby boy named Colton John on November 11th. Father and son had the same due date and now birthday. I'll be going to Greenville, SC in early December to help share the joy.

Dieter Dose - This may not be earthshaking but my band Flashback will be in St. James at the Pleasant Inn on Saturday, January 6th and Saturday, February 3rd. The Pleasant Inn is on Lake Avenue next to where Patio Pizza was. Enjoy some 60's, 70's and 80's grooves. Bring your boogie shoes. AARP Power!!!!



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

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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.

Syncopation means merrily skipping from bar to bar.

Blizzards are the insides of a fowl.

A polygon is a man who has many wives.

Caesar extinguished himself on the battlefields of Gaul.

Habeus Corpus was a phrase during the plague meaning, "bring out your dead."

Notice the classified ads in column 2 on this page.

The next edition of the Newsletter will be in March. Please feel free to send in a contribution any time. Mail to the STA office or email it to:

ssraeditor@optonline.net

Classified Ads

For Sale: 5br, 2ba, mother/daughter hi-ranch, All remodeled in Smithtown SD, updated eik/quartz and baths, CAC, crown moldings, hardwood floors, Anderson windows, built-in generator, semi-inground salt water pool and other extras. Call 631-979-0950.

For Sale: Berkeley, Forge and Foundry Park Bench, Call 631-979-0950.

For Sale: Two Tiffany style hanging lamps. One very large, multi-colored. The other, medium size and brown tones.

Marigot Bay, St. Lucia, the most beautiful bay in the Caribbean; as described by noted author James Mitchner, beautiful duplex 1 bedroom villa available for weeks of May 26, June 2, and June 9 2018. For details go to Oa-sismarigot.com, click on Vacation Club. Asking \$575 per week. Contact Bill Benzinger at nkeepr@optonline.net.



Yvette Holder with the secondary students of the Hope Children's Home in Meru, Kenya. See Larry Holder's article on page 6 for the latest on the Home.

MEMORIAM

I have lost a friend. My friend was the first teacher I met when I became a teacher at the New York Avenue Junior High School in September of 1960. It was a day or two before students were to arrive and I met him in a chemical storage room on the third floor. He would be teaching science to all the ninth grade classes and I would have all the eighth grade classes. Our classrooms were back to back as it would be for the remainder of our tenures as science teachers. He made fun of my Western Pennsylvania twang and I wore white socks with dressy clothes and shoes. We became great friends. We attended conferences together. My wife and I attended several of the wonderful dinner parties he held including one to celebrate the completing of my doctorate. He helped so much in acclimating me to the Long Island scene and we traveled to Columbia University together. We enjoyed many meals at Ruoff's. He was a tireless worker with the STA before he became president of that organization and then as its president he continued to work to further the welfare of the teachers. He was a friend to the superintendent and to board members and that friendship benefitted the district, the students, and those who worked there. I knew his mother, father, and sister and loved every time I got to see them. I have heard from him every birthday and Christmas since I left the district and relish those greetings. My friend is Al Zoller and he is now gone, but I have ever so many memories. He will always be in those memories as long as I am able. Goodbye my friend.

Joe Gilkey

(Cont. from p. 4 - More News of Members)

Larry Hohler - Time is flying by! Joe Kirima was an 18 year old sophomore and my student while I was on sabbatical in Kenya in 1976. Now he is a 59 year old advocate for homeless children who recently retired from his duties as a school administrator. (How old does this make me!??) The 18 children that we took off the street when Joe and I opened Hope Children's Home in 2005 are now in their late teens and early twenties. Two of our young women have married and recently became mothers. One of our young men just received his doctor's assistant degree and another is pursuing a degree in engineering. We also support a number of young people who attend trade schools and are learning to be welders, cooks, drivers and plumbers. We now support nearly 100 kids. More than half attend primary school where no fees are required, but we have to pay tuitions for those at universities, technical and secondary schools. Thanks to the generosity

of a well-off donor, we gain income from our 10 acre farm, and we purchased a milling machine that makes it possible for us to sell maize flour. We also own sewing machines and are able to make and sell school uniforms at the beginning of each school year. In spite of our efforts to move toward self-sustainability, we still rely on donors to cover most of our costs.

Joe and I are thinking about what comes next. We recently hired Betty Gakii who came to us 10 years ago and is a recent college graduate to handle our books and facilitate communications with our donors over the internet. We have spoken to those young people who are on their own or soon will be to think how they can support the Home when they have the means to do so. The hope is that as they prosper they will help those orphans coming behind them to become independent members of society.

(Cont. on p. 8 - More News of Members)

Membership: The SSRA is continuing our practice of welcoming new school district retirees with “complimentary” membership for the remainder of the calendar year in which they retired. We are only provided with the mailing address for each of the new retirees; if they wish to maintain “active” membership in the SSRA it is necessary to fill out and send in the Info Slip found below. Even though 2018 is a “Dues Free Year,” it is important that we maintain up-to-date records so kindly also use the Information Slip to let us know of any changes in your personal data (i.e., address, phone, email, etc.). It is not necessary for you to send in a slip if there are no changes or additions to the info we already have.

Spring/Fall Luncheon: As mentioned in a previous column, the SSRA Board of Directors has had extensive discussions regarding our traditional, twice-a-year luncheons. We even explored several different formats: a catered summer picnic, a morning brunch or a destination day-trip; while each has a distinct appeal, various limitations become apparent also. Prices have been rising while our attendance has either remained the same or dropped slightly; selecting a restaurant (large or small room – table service or buffet) has become difficult due to our varying numbers; menu offerings as well as location (distance from Smithtown) are significant considerations. With all this in mind, it was decided to forego the Fall luncheon and to look forward to a Spring 2018 luncheon; several locations are currently being considered – exact date and location will be announced in the March Newsletter.

Internet: I certainly hope that everyone has had success and is enjoying the ease of viewing the current issue of this Newsletter on the “MySSRA.com” website.

Rumblings & Ramblings: No commentary or observations this time -- not for a lack of possibilities, but due to an overwhelming number of choices and a severe absence of space here.

A Thought: Any fool can criticize, condemn or complain and most fools do. – Benjamin Franklin

For 2017 retirees and/or prior members with changes:

_____ (cut out this form if needed _____)

Information Form

Name: _____ Year Retired: _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. #: _____

City/Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone No: _____ Email Address: _____

This page is intentionally left blank .

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

(cont. from p. 6 - News of Members)



Jo-Ann Goldwasser - Retirement's good! Gene and I recently returned from a VBT bicycle trip to France, cycling from Normandy to Brittany. It was a great and very emotional trip learning about the D-Day invasion and visiting the American cemetery (in spite of having to ride uphill, in the rain and wind!) I just bought a new bicycle - - hopefully, I'm not being overly optimistic thinking I'll have many years of riding starting this spring. !!!



**Which type of retiree are you?
The choice is yours!**



NYSUT Member Benefits... more than just insurance!

As an additional benefit to NYSUT members and their families, your union membership allows you to participate in more than 40 programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits.

These offerings include crucial products that you may already purchase such as life, auto & homeowners insurance, unbiased financial services and expert legal advice. But your NYSUT membership also allows you to participate in a variety of shopping, travel and personal programs that can help you save on everyday purchases and those special occasions.



Our endorsed shopping/travel/personal programs offer savings on numerous online purchases, including:

**Theme Park & Movie Tickets
Hotel & Vacation Discounts
Car & Truck Rentals**

**Office Supply Discounts
Retail Store Discounts
Concerts & Sporting Events**

**Electronics Discounts
Ski Tickets
Car Buying Service**

Participation in Member Benefits-endorsed programs also gives you a trusted advocate ready to assist you with any issues or concerns with any of our programs.



Member Appreciation Month coming in February 2018!

As a show of thanks to the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that comprise this labor union, NYSUT Member Benefits will once again be holding our annual Member Appreciation Month celebration in February 2018.

Special prize drawings will be held each day of the month. To be eligible to win, you must be a member of our voluntary MAP Alert email service.

Sign up any time through the end of February 2018 to be eligible to win... but if you join MAP by January 31, 2018, you'll have the most chances to win!

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit 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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