

S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER

SMITHTOWN SCHOOLS RETIREES' ASSOCIATION



Volume 24 / Issue 1



October 2023

So Many Thanks

J O H N P E T T I T

by Mary Mills Desjeunes



John Pettit is stepping down from his position as the SSRA Membership Chairperson. The SSRA, as an organization, is deeply indebted to him for the many years of dedicated service he has given our organization and the retirees of the Smithtown Central School District. He was elected to his current position as Vice President in 2013, and has worn many hats before and since that time.

While he will continue to serve as our Vice President and our one-man social committee organizing the Annual Luncheon each year, he has decided that the rigors of keeping membership roles on the computer have cut into his baseball and football TV time! And after all these years, I concur. He deserves a break!

I never worked with John in the schools, but came to know him when I was Secretary of the STA. The SSRA would use our office for their meetings, and I was privy to his interactions with other SSRA Board Members and attendees. He has a quick wit and a mind sharper than a tack! Add that to his deadpan delivery of a thought or observation and you find yourself laughing through most conversations.

But he has a passionate side too, and that includes his wife Linda, their kids, and their grandchildren.

Others of us who have worked with John have come to know him to be smart, organized, and efficient; but one who refuses to form alphabetical lists for visual efficiency! Although he does line up the names by last name, he puts the members first name first, which makes the hunt for the alphabetized last name so much fun!

In his email address—grumpyof—the letters “O and F” stand for “Old Fart”. This is a guise to fool people! While he presents with a grumpy exterior, he actually has a very sweet, kind, and gentle interior who has been a dedicated member and hard-worker for our organization.

We thank you, John, for your commitment to making the SSRA better and stronger over these many years. Enjoy the game!

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

26 New York Avenue ♦ Smithtown, NY 11787 ♦ (631) 585-8316

Email: ssraeditor@gmail.com

President	Patty Stoddard
Vice President	John Pettit
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Recording Secretary	Donna Milgrom
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Social Committee	John Pettit
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Facebook Master	Joan LoPardo
Newsletter Editor	Mary Mills Desjeunes

The Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association is affiliated with the **Smithtown Teachers' Association**, the **New York State United Teachers**, and the **American Federation of Teachers**, and is comprised of members from all of the bargaining units in the Smithtown Central School District.

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 10:00 AM at the STA office

Visit our website at: myssra.com and Like us on **facebook**

All members are invited to attend.

We encourage your input and newsletter submissions.



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Our Deepest Sympathy :

◆ To Vinnie Failla and Family

We are so sad to tell you of the passing of Dorothy Giarratano on July 21, 2023 .

Dorothy was the mother-in-law of Vinnie Failla. Dorothy was 99 years old.

Dorothy led a full and happy life filled with family, laughter, food, music and storytelling.

Condolences can be sent to Laurie Jo and Vincent Failla
(Vinnie's contact information is in our Retirees' directory)

◆ To Susan Porter and Family

We are deeply saddened to inform you of the passing of Susan Porter's mother, Janet Porter.

Susan is a 6th Grade teacher at Nesaquake Middle School.

Letters of condolence may be sent to:
Sue Porter 196 Skyline Drive Coram, NY 11727



Please join the Executive Board of the SSRA in extending our deepest condolences to the families of the two exceptional Farmingdale educators who lost their lives and to the countless students who sustained injuries in the tragic bus crash in Orange County while on a band trip.

**Join us in saying a Prayer for
Gina Pellettiere, Band Director
Beatrice Ferrari, Retiree**



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OCTOBER is BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH



What Can I Do to Reduce My Risk of Breast Cancer?

Facts to know:

- 14.4% of women over age 18 are in fair or poor health
- 41.8% of women over age 20 are obese
- Less than 50% of women over age 18 meet the federal guidelines for aerobic physical activity
- 20M women suffer from eating disorders

Many factors over the course of a lifetime can influence your breast cancer risk. You can't change some factors, such as getting older or your family history, but you can help lower your risk of breast cancer by taking care of your health in the following ways—

- Keep a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Choose not to drink alcohol, or drink alcohol in moderation.
- If you are taking, or have been told to take, hormone replacement therapy or oral contraceptives (birth control pills), ask your doctor about the risks and find out if it is right for you.
- If you have a family history of breast cancer or inherited changes in your BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, talk to your doctor about other ways to lower your risk.

Staying healthy will lower your risk of developing cancer, and improve your chances of surviving cancer if it occurs.



*Submitted by Claudia Manzella,
Sr. Field Account Manager, United HealthCare*

Tuesday October 10th is World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is an international day for global mental health education, awareness and advocacy against social stigma. It was first celebrated in 1992 at the initiative of the World Federation for Mental Health, a global mental health organization with members and contacts in more than 150 countries. The theme for 2023, set by the World Foundation of Mental Health, is

'Mental health is a universal human right'.

World Mental Health Day is about raising awareness of mental health and driving positive change for everyone's mental health.

Here are some things you can do to participate: ♦Getting enough sleep ♦Eating well ♦Exercising ♦Practice gratitude ♦Meditate ♦Connect with others ♦Do something creative ♦Learn something new.



What is Depression?

Depression is very common. It affects men and women of all ages.

Depression is an illness that causes you to feel sad, lose interest in activities that you used to enjoy, withdraw from others, and have little energy. It's different from normal feelings of sadness, grief, or low energy. Depression can also cause people to feel hopeless about the future and to even think about suicide.

It is not a character flaw, and it does not mean that you are a bad or weak person.

If you think you may be depressed, **tell your doctor.**

Treatment can help you enjoy life again.

Am I blue?

(An article written completely by Google's BARD, an AI app —mmd)

Blue Zones: Secrets to Longevity from Around the World

Blue Zones are regions of the world where people live longer and healthier lives than average. Researchers have identified five Blue Zones: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California.

While the people in these Blue Zones live in different cultures and have different lifestyles, they share some common habits that contribute to their longevity.

◆ **Diet**

The Blue Zones diet is mostly plant-based, with a focus on whole, unprocessed foods. People in Blue Zones typically eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. They also eat moderate amounts of lean protein and healthy fats.

◆ **Exercise**

People in Blue Zones are naturally active throughout the day. They don't go to the gym or follow strict exercise routines. Instead, they incorporate movement into their daily lives by walking, gardening, and doing other chores.

◆ **Socialization**

Socialization is another important aspect of the Blue Zones lifestyle. People in Blue Zones have strong social networks and spend time with loved ones on a regular basis. They also have a sense of purpose and community.

☑ **Here is a closer look at the diet, exercise, and socialization of each Blue Zone:**

● **Okinawa, Japan:** Okinawans eat a diet rich in fish, tofu, and vegetables. They also drink a lot of green tea and have a strong sense of community.

● **Sardinia, Italy:** Sardinians eat a Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and olive oil. They also drink red wine in moderation and have strong family ties.

● **Nicoya, Costa Rica:** Nicoyans eat a simple diet based on fruits, vegetables, and beans. They also live in close-knit communities and have a strong sense of purpose.

● **Ikaria, Greece:** Ikarians eat a diet similar to the Mediterranean diet, but they also eat more wild greens and herbs. They also have a relaxed lifestyle and a strong sense of community.

● **Loma Linda, California:** Seventh-day Adventists living in Loma Linda follow a plant-based diet and avoid alcohol and tobacco. They also have strong religious beliefs and a sense of community.

☑ **How to adopt a Blue Zones lifestyle**

Even if you don't live in a blue zone, you can adopt some of the healthy habits that contribute to the longevity of the people in these regions. Here are a few tips:

- Eat a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
- Limit your intake of processed foods, red meat, and sugary drinks.
- Get regular exercise, even if it's just walking for 30 minutes a day.
- Spend time with loved ones and build strong social connections.

***By adopting these Blue Zones habits,
you can improve your health
and longevity.***



Compete against Kenyans who will be running simultaneously on the other side of the world!



SATURDAY • OCTOBER 14, 2023 • 11am

Saint Anselm's Episcopal Church

4 WOODVILLE ROAD, SHOREHAM, NY 11786

Suggested donation: \$30* Registration: 10:00-10:30am

**Runners/walkers who can secure more than \$100 in pledges run for free.
Medals for all finishers.*

VIRTUAL RUN/WALK ANY TIME up to OCTOBER 21, 2023

For more information, contact Kevin Mann at kevinmannmail@gmail.com

**All proceeds go to support the Jerusha Mwiraria Hope Children's Home in Meru, Kenya.*



The 6th Annual Douglas J. McDonough

Passion for Education **2024 Gala**

March 9, 2024 ♦ 6:00 pm - 11:00 pm EST ♦ \$199.00 PP

Northampton Ballroom, The Inn & Spa at East Wind, Wading River

Live music, cocktail hour, a plated dinner, raffles, and silent auction to support the Hope Children's Home.

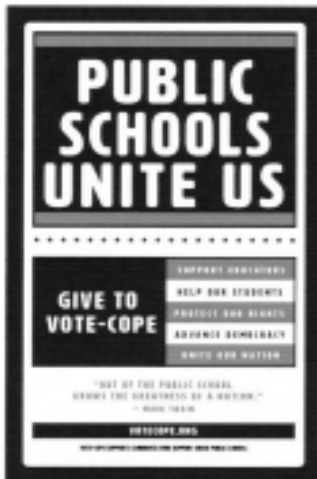
Every ticket pays for a trimester of secondary school for a child from the home.

Mail checks to: Hope Children's Fund, PO Box 387, Setauket, NY 11733 or Venmo at [hopechildrensfund.org](https://www.venmo.com/hopechildrensfund.org)

VOTE-COPE DRIVE IS ON!

You can contribute by Direct Contribution (check) or monthly Pension Deduction.

Please read **pages 7 & 8** carefully and then complete the appropriate section and instructions on the form.



Name _____

Address _____

Local #23-050 Smithtown Teachers Association _____

Member ID # _____

Count me in!

I want to support educators, help our students, protect our rights, advance democracy and unite our nation — all through my voluntary contribution to VOTE-COPE.

There's no easier way to support VOTE-COPE.

VOTE COPE Direct Contribution Card

Email: _____

Home phone number: (____) _____ - _____

*Mobile phone number: (____) _____ - _____

**By providing my mobile phone number I am expressly consenting to receive autodialed and/or prerecorded calls and/or text messages from, or on behalf of, AFT, NEA, NYSUT, AFL-CIO and/or the local union at the wireless number provided. The scope of this consent relates to any purpose for which any of the above entities may call.*

Name _____

Address _____

Local # **#23-050 Smithtown Teachers Association** _____

Member ID # _____

Amount of Contribution: \$ _____

Check enclosed # _____
(Please make check payable to VOTE-COPE.)

Credit card option:

Please visit votecope.org to make a secure one-time contribution online.

It is important that we receive the original form so we can accurately credit your contribution.

VOTE COPE Pension Deduction Authorization Card

Name _____

Address _____

Local # **#23-050** _____ Member ID # _____

Smithtown Teachers Association

- I belong to the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS)
 I belong to the New York State Employees' Retirement System (NYSERS)

I hereby request monthly withholding of union deductions from my monthly benefit as permitted by Section 536 of the Education Law and Section 110-b of the Retirement and Social Security Law. NYSTRS or NYSERS is authorized to continue taking such deduction until NYSUT receives written notice from me to the contrary. I understand that NYSUT VOTE-COPE is my agent and all requests to begin, modify or revoke deductions must be submitted through NYSUT VOTE-COPE.

Please provide your email address: _____

NR 202101

Please read and sign the Pension Deduction section on page 8.

Mail the form to:

**VOTE-COPE
POBox 295**

Canajoharie, NY 13317-0295



Dear NYSUT Member,

These unsettling times have shone a light on a fact that we have always known: **Public Schools Unite Us.**

Educators, school-related professionals, and health care heroes have all come together to support our public schools and the students they serve. We need your help today to make sure our schools, colleges, and hospitals have the resources they need to navigate our future. Since no local dues dollars are used to support political parties, candidates or campaigns, your voluntary contribution to VOTE-COPE is the only way to ensure elected leaders in Albany and Washington D.C. stand up for public education, hear our voices and understand our needs.

Through a thorough endorsement process, VOTE-COPE supports candidates for public office who have a proven record of championing public education and health care while sharing our union values:

Great **public schools** that are safe and welcoming and prepare young people for life, careers and affordable higher education.

Good jobs that pay a decent wage, allow a voice at work and provide a secure retirement.

Affordable, accessible and high-quality **health care.**

A strong and vibrant democracy that embraces the **voice** of labor, unrestrained rights to vote, a **free press** and an **independent** judiciary.

A commitment to **justice**, fighting discrimination, hatred and bigotry.

Public schools unite us and together that makes us stronger. Please do your part and support our educators, help our students, protect our rights, advance democracy and unite our nation. SUPPORT VOTE-COPE.

In solidarity,



Andy Pallotta

NYSUT President
Chairperson of VOTE-COPE



It is important that we receive the original form so we can accurately credit your contribution.

Please keep a copy for your records.

VOTE-COPE is the New York State United Teachers' political action fund.

Contributions or gifts to VOTE-COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

To contribute through pension deduction, please complete the bottom section.

If you wish to make a direct contribution by check, please use this middle section.

FOR DIRECT CONTRIBUTION BY CHECK:

- Complete the form on page 7, and sign it.
- Enclose your check made payable to **VOTE-COPE**
- Mail it to:

SSRA
ATTN: Mary Mills
26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787

or send it directly to:

VOTE-COPE
Post Office Box 295
Canajoharie, New York 13317-0295



Pension Deduction Authorization Card

The undersigned authorizes the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) or the New York State Employees' Retirement System (NYSERS) to deduct from each of my regular defined-benefit pension payments the sum of \$10, \$5 or Other \$____ (per month) and to forward that amount to VOTE-COPE, c/o NYSUT, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110. I understand that this monthly amount will continue to be deducted until revoked by me in writing.

Such guidelines are merely suggestions. NYSUT members are free to contribute more or less than the guidelines suggest, and NYSUT will not disadvantage anyone by reason of the amount of their contribution or decision not to contribute. Contributing to VOTE-COPE is voluntary, and NYSUT members may refuse to contribute to VOTE-COPE without reprisal. Contributing to VOTE-COPE is not a condition of membership in any labor organization. VOTE-COPE may use the money it receives to make political contributions and expenditures in connection with federal, state and local elections.

I expressly acknowledge and understand that the deduction, as specified above, be withheld monthly and that NYSUT will transmit this authorization to the appropriate retirement system. I hereby certify to NYSTRS and NYSERS that I am a member of NYSUT, an employee organization entitled to receive union deduction payments as provided by law.

Name _____ Pension # _____

Phone # _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Local from which you retired **#23-050 Smithtown Teachers Association**

votecope.org

VOTE-COPE is the New York State United Teachers' political action fund.

Contributions or gifts to VOTE-COPE are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes.

Thoughts from our Members.....



Nothing Remains Quite The Same by Joe Gilkey Ed.D.

I started to write this article a few months ago, but got delayed for several reasons that are unimportant now. The point is that I started this before Jimmy Buffett's death and it was his description of aging that I wanted to write about. Buffet recorded a song entitled, *"Change's In Latitudes Changes In Attitudes"*.

Buffet was a good story teller and a philosopher. When I was still working and I listened to this song I always thought Jimmy was describing my mid-winter recesses. After all, I would frequently, during that recess, head for the Caribbean, and a change in latitude. That gave me a new attitude when I returned. Now, as I study this song, I think there is in it a description of events in our life as we age. Consider "Changes In Latitudes" as changes in age and the "Changes in Attitudes" as changes in our view of life's events. Let me explain.

In the first stanza Buffett writes, *"Took off a weekend last month just to try to recall the whole year. All of the faces and all of the places wondering where they all disappeared,"*. The chorus then adds, *"It's these changes in latitudes, changes in attitudes - nothing remains quite the same."* Isn't that a perfect description of what happens to us as we age - as we change in latitude? We lose our friends and acquaintances. Over time we may have relocated so the places we came from disappear along with our friends - nothing remains quite the same.

Then Buffett goes on to add in the next stanza, *"Reading departure signs in some big airport reminds me of the places I've been. Visions of good times that brought so much pleasure makes me want to go back again."* If I were to be in an airport today I know the departure signs would remind me of the places I've been. I've had the great privilege of seeing much of the world and there are places I want to return to. I've changed my latitude by having so many birthdays and I'm left with an attitude of little left of travel, but reminders. But there have been such good times, wonderful days, and good memories I can't help but want to go back again.

In the third stanza Jimmy says, *"So many nights I just dream of the ocean. God, I wish I was sailin' again."* I love being on the ocean and changes in latitudes has made that so difficult, but Buffett offers an encouraging look at new attitudes when he says, *"Oh, yesterdays over my shoulder so I can't look back for too long. There's just too much to see waiting in front of me and I know that I just can't go wrong."*

I know that I'm each day changing my latitude. I really want things to stay the same - the way they were. It affects my attitude in many ways— I forget things, I reminisce about trips I've taken, I miss old friends, I want to be sailing again. However, along with these attitudes I have others that offset these negative ones. I'm more caring about other people, I embrace my faith, and I know that Buffett is correct that my new attitude is as he describes it with, *"There's just too much to see waiting in front of me and I know that I just can't go wrong."*



Back to school can mean a lot of different things:

- Starting a new career
- Planning for the future
- Balancing work and home life
- Making difficult decisions
- Enjoying your final year before retirement
- Recalling memories of a proud career



Regardless of what you might be doing this fall, **NYSUT Member Benefits** offers a variety of endorsed programs and services that could help make you as prepared as possible for whatever the new school year may throw at you.

Whether you are looking to save money, protect your family, or plan for the future, **NYSUT Member Benefits** is a great place to start. With dozens of endorsed insurance, legal, financial, shopping, travel, and discount programs, you are certain to find something of interest that could benefit you or your loved ones.

And speaking of savings, the **Member Benefits Discounts & Deals** program utilizes the nation's largest private discount network to offer all NYSUT members (both in-service and retiree) exclusive access to savings of up to 50% at 850,000 locations -- including more than 21,200 New York State deals. If you have not already done so, head over to mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com to create your account with your NYSUT ID number, preferred email address, and password.

You'll then be eligible to save on restaurant dine-in or take-out, flowers and gift baskets, Bose electronics, clothing and shoes, oil changes and vehicle maintenance, sporting events, hotels and flights, car rentals, theme parks, movie tickets, and much more. Members are encouraged to download the MB Discounts & Deals mobile app for the best user experience with this program.

Check out all your union membership has to offer!



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left, visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org, or calling 800-626-8101.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

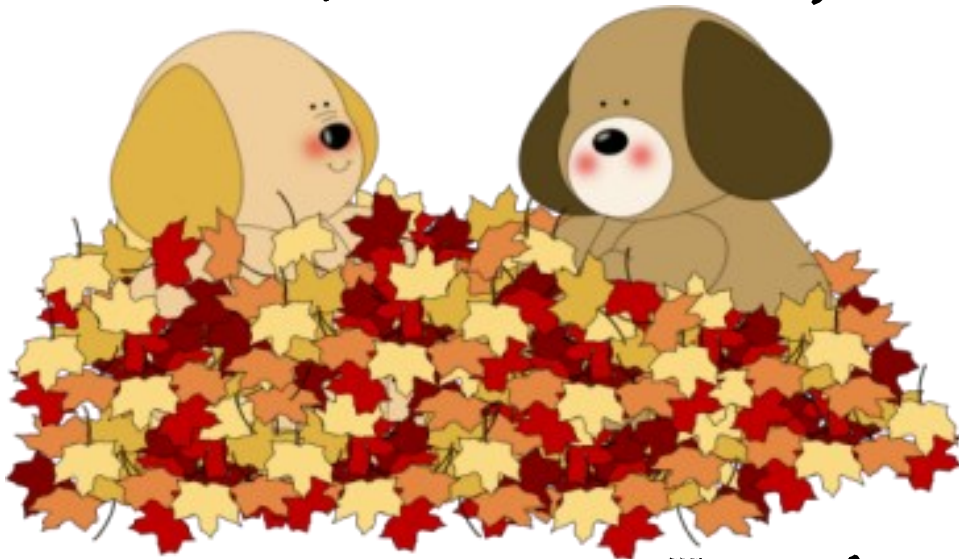
Sept/Oct. 2023

Additions/Changes to Directory

This information purposely omitted from website publication.

For the most updated changes,
please refer to the hardcopy mailed
individually to each member.

Best Wishes for a **HAPPY FALL!**



From Spot



Get four free at-home COVID-19 tests this fall on COVIDTests.gov

The government is providing free at home tests again.

Get four free at-home COVID-19 tests this fall on COVIDTests.gov

Below is the link for anyone who wants to order 4 free at home covid tests per household.

Click on the link, or input the link into your search bar, enter your name, address and email address. Simple as that.

<https://www.covid.gov/tests>

If you include your email address, and you will be notified about delivery.

Submitted by Claudia Manzella, Sr. Field Account Manager, United HealthCare



Join Our Board!

Do you have a special talent that
you'd like to contribute to our SSRA Board?

Are you good with computers?

Would you like to volunteer to
present scholarship awards to our winners,
help to make decisions about our
philanthropic contributions,
be a Committee person, or perhaps
attend NYSUT retiree meetings
as a delegate?

There's lots to do, and we need you!

We could use your help and input.

Afterall, we're not getting any younger!

Drop me a line at ssraeditor@gmail.com

Let's talk!

S.S.R.A.

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association
c/o STA Office
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787