

# THE OUTLOOK

Newsletter of the Retiree Council 12

A NYSUT-NEA-AFT Affiliate

June 2010

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## A 2010 Representative Assembly Highlight

by David King RC 12 Co- Second Vice-President

About a decade ago, a few innovative NYSUT executives recognized the potential of retired teachers as an asset for the union. Subsequently, NYSUT leadership formulated policies that improved the service to and utilization of retirees. Since that time, however, the number of retirees has grown exponentially, currently exceeding 100,000. In addition, the current social, economic, and political climate has had a dramatic and negative impact on our schools. When retiree health care benefits were attacked by school boards in Johnstown, Gloversville, and Broadalbin/Perth, the existing protocol within NYSUT to resolve retiree issues proved to be outdated.

It became apparent that some of the current retiree policies should be revamped. Floyd Cameron, Retiree Services Manager, and Loretta Donlon, a member of the NYSUT Board of Directors representing ED51, suggested I write a resolu-

tion calling for a reexamination of the retiree issue. I wrote the resolution, which was tweaked and passed by the RC12 Board of Directors. A copy of that resolution appeared in the last *Outlook*. At the Representative Assembly in Washinton, DC, Resolution 48 was overwhelmingly passed by the nineteen hundred delegates.

From the standpoint of retirees, this may have been the most vital happening at the 2010 RA. Passed resolutions become NYSUT policy. So, during the upcoming year, the NYSUT Board of Directors will examine and implement polices to better assist retirees. Strengthening the role of and service to retirees will, in turn, strengthen NYSUT during this time of increasing attacks on all facets of public education. This resolution will strengthen retirees' ability to protect the benefits that we earned during our years of teaching when we often served the community while earning low pay and teaching in less than ideal conditions.



## A Message from Karen Wojcik-Hess, Immediate Past President of RC 12 - Looking back ... and Forward Too

During the past two years of my term as President, RC 12 has been faithful to its mission: responding to the needs of retired teachers.

RC 12 has stayed strong in its continued participation in the Committee of 100. We've been actively involved in maintaining phone banks. We have shared information with our members on our website and in our newsletter.

The RC 12 newsletter, the vital link in our communication with our members, has shifted gears. It is now created by a new team of four retirees who work with the newsletter's editor, Betsy Batchelor, and who are continually seeking contributions to represent all members and all interests in our wide geographic area. Our website was

created two years ago. Although it has been a challenge creating and maintaining the website, I believe that in doing so we are investing in our future.

RC 12's Social Committee has grown and has offered opportunities for our members and their families and friends to travel, and these shared experiences have strengthened the bonds of fellowship.

Looking back over my two-year tenure, I more fully realize the significance of the "teacher as a learner." This teacher has learned that leadership requires listening more than talking. Leadership is acceptance of diversity and the ability to facilitate and create consensus to accomplish win-win situations. The process is as important as the product. As president, I had the opportunity to get to know the inner workings of many organizations we sometimes take for granted: AFT, AFL-CIO, NYSUT, the NYS Office of the Aging, and the Alliance of Retired Americans. I have witnessed their expertise and their dedication to the mission of their organizations and benefited from that.

While at times the role of president of RC 12 has not been an easy one, I would not now trade those two years for anything. The joys of leadership, the lessons learned on the job, and the friendships I've gained have certainly outweighed any negatives.

I would love to see RC 12's goal of reaching more members by conducting meetings in small groups realized, particularly in areas of our region from which travel to the Capital District might be difficult. I want to see our website grow and become the accepted mode of communication for all of us. I also hope that every member will continue to stay involved in the political issues that matter to each of us.

In sum, it's been an incredible two years as your president. Thank you so very much for all your support and kindness.

Contact Editor Elizabeth Batchelor  
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Check out our website  
<http://ny.aft.org/rc12>

## **A Paddling Gem in the Adirondacks**

by **Dianne Kierpiec** *Retired Physical Education Teacher Gloversville Middle School*

Every year, I anticipate my annual paddle up the Kunjamuk River near Speculator. I have made over a dozen trips to this peaceful meandering stream, and I have never been disappointed. The paddle is unique each time, due to the water level variations, the power of the current, the temperature of the air and water, the time of the day, as well as the time of the year, the number of beaver dams -- and, of course, the companions who accompany me.

You should plan on a 3- to 4-hour paddle that is not particularly strenuous, but it can be challenging paddling against the current on the way to Elm Lake. There are many hairpin turns and twists in the flat water river, although there are no sudden drops or swift ripples. The 10 to 15 beaver dams along the way can mostly be paddled over, unless the water is very low. You can

easily get out of your kayak or canoe and pull it over the higher dams.

The water is clean and clear. If the weather is hot, an occasional dip in the deeper areas is always refreshing. Paddlers have the feeling of being far out in the wilderness on the narrow Kunjamuk River. Little Elm Lake is at the end of the river and is serenely quiet and private.

The return paddle is easy, since you go with the current and usually float right over the beaver dams. There are two logging road bridges along the route, where you can pull over and enjoy a walk or picnic lunch. You can even explore the Kunjamuk Caves, a short hike from the first bridge.

If you head north on Route 30, you will find a parking area on the right side of the road about a mile before the town of Speculator that is a safe place to put into the Kunjamuk Bay on the Sacandaga River. There is a Chamber of Commerce

sign nearby. It is a close carry and a small bank to get your boat into the water. Paddle across the small bay which leads into the Kunjamuk River. It is about 7 miles up river to Elm Lake and back again.

If you want to paddle further, you could put your boat in at the Lake Pleasant boat launch in the town of Speculator, where the river crosses routes 8 and 30. This adds another 3 miles down the Sacandaga River to your round trip.

So pack a lunch and a camera and shove off for a wilderness adventure suitable for the beginner as well as the expert. Relax and dream as you practice your paddle strokes and look for wildlife. It's sure to be a de-stressing day! I suggest a sun hat, bug spray, bathing suit and water shoes to protect the feet. I like to take a bottle of wine along to share for lunch! Life is good. Enjoy!



## **Happy Running**

by **Sherry Dixon**, *Retired elementary teacher from the Mayfield School District.* A sure sign of spring is the annual e-mail I receive from the organizers of the Freihofer Run for Women. It is a national 5k championship that attracts many elite female runners and about 3000 women who run for fitness. This was my 27<sup>th</sup> year of uninterrupted participation.

I began in the 1980's when it was a 10-kilometer event. Over the course of those years, I have transitioned from a runner who was competitive in my age group to a participant who runs to stay healthy and lean.

I have been a runner for thirty-two of my 63 years and have suffered very few injuries. I attribute this longevity to the fact that I have, for the most part, tried to use common sense and professional expertise in my training and practice. It is with that in mind that I can say that it is never too late to become an active runner/walker -- and that the benefits are overwhelmingly positive. People who exercise three to four times a week and include aerobic activities tend to maintain a healthy body weight, have fewer illness, and have a more positive outlook on life.

There are many tried and true ways of beginning a running/walking program. One of the newest is the *The Couch-to-5K Running*

*Plan* developed by Active.com and Cool Running ([www.coolrunning.com](http://www.coolrunning.com)). This program outlines a very gradual walk/run plan that uses either time or distance to slowly condition the body. You can purchase an online version, but you don't need to, since the entire program is available online. All you need to do is print it out and lace up your shoes.

That brings me to the other important component of a new running program, and that is to remain injury free. After you have checked with your doctor to see if you are able to pursue this kind of exercise program, your next stop should be a reputable running shoe store, where you need to be fitted for good quality running shoes. Once you have the shoes and the plan, your next stop should be your computer once again. I highly recommend that you spend some time looking at a program called Chi Running ([www.chirunning.com](http://www.chirunning.com)). It is an outgrowth of *tai-chi* and emphasizes good running posture. If you google *chi running videos*, you can actually see short videos that give detailed information about posture and foot strike. Everyone has his or her own running/walking stride developed over a lifetime. Watching these videos will help avoid habits that might contribute to injury.

Happy running! Running and the athletic lifestyle it led to have made all the difference in my well being. I can't imagine a day without doing some kind of exercise. Just remember: it is never too late to start. Get off the couch -- and maybe I'll see you at one of the local running events.

## **Seek Out: Sam's Steak and Seafood:** A Dining Suggestion by **Phyllis Johnston** *retired teacher Gloversville H.S.*

Easy accessibility off Route 30A, Johnstown, and ample parking around the converted former Ponderosa building aren't the only draws to this relatively new restaurant. Delicious food, good service, comfortable tables and booths in an expansive dining area make this choice a no-brainer. It is, however, moderately expensive.

Located at 281 North Comrie Ave., Johnstown, Sam's (518-762-7267), is open daily from 4 PM except Tuesdays. The restaurant opens Sundays at 1 PM. Sam's has an Adirondack Lounge and live entertainment Saturday evenings from 8:30 to 11:30. It is now open for lunches.

My husband and I chose a Sunday afternoon to dine which was a good time to enjoy a leisurely meal with a drink before dinner. The considerable space between tables and booths made conversation possible without interference from dining din.

Compliments to the chef and our super waiter.

*Golfing Recommendation* by **Kay Lenarcic**, *retired from Mohawk Central School*

**Mohawk Valley Country Club** Little Falls, New York 315-508-5128 The Mohawk Valley Country Club is picturesque, with beautiful views of the valley and rolling hills, which are walkable. It is a 9 hole course - men's 3035 yards, ladies' 2672 yards. The women's tees are generous and fair. It is one of the most challenging courses you'll find, featuring 2 par 5's and 2 par 3's, one which is 230 yards. Two holes, #3 and #4, have water in play. Each hole is unique with great variety. This course is defi-

nately not boring. The fairways are somewhat narrow, and the rough is fair. The greens are small but fast and fair. Make your read and then putt. No tricks. There is also a great clubhouse. Its restaurant features everything from burgers to 4-star dinners. The pool and tennis courts are available to members only.

The course manager, Mark Lane, is personable and a great coach. Lessons are available. Carts are electric and state of the art. Wayne Levi, 12 time PGA tour winner, began golfing at MVCC. Fees: 9 holes with cart - \$18, walking - \$11; 18 holes with cart - \$32; walking - \$18.

By **Karen Wojcik-Hess, RC 12 President**

The themes of this year's convention were WE MUST STAND UNITED and DEFINING EXCELLENCE. At the President's conference the day before the RA, we had the opportunity to participate in an open dialogue with all the NYSUT officers about any issues facing our locals.

One clear message was that we must stand united to restore the budget cuts in New York and to ensure the passage of the Federal jobs bill. We were reminded to speak up in this critical year so that our representatives know that we're thinking, educated voters - and that there are 600,000 of us.

Speakers pointed out that standardized tests given to children were not designed to be used for teacher evaluation; we cannot allow these tests to be the sole indicator to evaluate any teacher. After a local Washington, DC, elementary choir sang for the 2800 attendees, National NEA President Dennis Van Roekel addressed the 2800 audience saying, "Show me the paper and pencil test that measures THAT excellence!"

Although the union can't control public opinion, we were assured that NYSUT is

spending time and energy on our behalf to regain control of the conversation and to help the State understand what excellence truly means. Our excellence is defined through our advocacy, our actions, and our unity. The road to excellence must be defined by the practitioners. Teachers are the experts in defining educational excellence, not the for-profit consultants, or think-tank types, the news analysts or the politicians.

I was impressed with the new State Education commissioner David Steiner. "I wish we could cut through the politics," he said. "Cutting support to education is simply stupid... You're going to cut the one thing everyone agrees is absolutely essential?" Formerly a dean of the School of Education at Hunter College, Steiner said all the research shows that, when it comes to education, nothing matters more than teacher quality. That's why his top priority as commissioner will be providing all teachers the preparation, professional development, and resources they need.

At the retiree breakfast, Barbara Easterling, President of the National Alliance for Retired Americans, spoke about her strong belief that the more active you are as a re-

tiree, the healthier you will be. She started her career as a telephone operator and is now the president of a respected national organization that brings together retirees from labor and community groups in both private and public sectors. She noted that during this 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Social Security, we should look back at the wisdom of its creation and insist that the new commission conduct its work with transparency. Her hope is that we do not undo the good we've done.

And most important of all is the acceptance of RC 12's Resolution # 48 NYSUT Retiree Update. We saw a retiree concern, and took it to the TOP! Thank you David King!

Finally, *The New York Teacher* will take on a new look and will now be called *NYSUT United*. Expect a more visually appealing news magazine that will provide both inspirational articles and pertinent information for NYSUT professionals and retirees.

I've attended more almost two dozen RA's over my career. From the very first, I left informed, respected, and fired up to continue the fight and promote our cause.

## Trip to Manchester, Vermont

**Robert Todd Lincoln's Historic Home, Juried Art & Craft Fair, Outlet Shopping, Delicious Dinner Friday, August 6, 2010**

**Depart: Parking area at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Amsterdam at 7:00 AM - Return at approximately 9:00 PM**

**OR Wade Tour's Bus Terminal ( 797 Burdeck Street, Schenectady ) at 7:30 AM. - Return at approximately 8:30 PM**

**Trip Includes:** Round trip transportation provided by Wade's Tours Bus Company; admission & guided tour of the *Hildene* (historic home of Robert Todd Lincoln, CEO of the Pullman Company, complete with artifacts from his father, President Abraham Lincoln; admission to the *Hildene's* formal gardens created to resemble stained glass windows; admission to the *Hildene's* cheese factory; admission to the *Southern Vermont Juried Art & Craft Fair* OR free transportation to and from *Manchester's downtown shopping outlets*; dinner at the historic *Wilburton Inn*. (Menu choices will be provided in advance to those taking our trip.) - Trip insurance may be purchased for an extra fee through Wade Tours. **Trip Cost: \$ 85.00 per person**

**Itinerary:**

- **7:00 or 7:30** Bus pickup
- **7:30 - 8:30 AM** - bus drives from Wade's to Bennington, VT
- **8:30 - 9:00 AM** - ½ hour stop at McDonald's in Bennington, VT
- **10:00 AM** - Arrival at Hildene for 3-hour tour of home and formal gardens (also choose to visit the cheese factory during this time period)
- **1:00 PM** - end of tour of Hildene and its ground **Everyone gets lunch on their own at the Craft Fair or near the Outlets**
- **1:15 - 4:00 PM** -Manchester Outlet Shopping
- **OR 1:15 - 4:15 PM** - Southern Vermont Juried Art & Craft Fair
- **4:30 PM**- Bus arrives at Wilburton Inn (cash bar on the terrace to enjoy the view before dinner)
- **5:00 - 7:00 PM** - Dinner
- **7:00 - 8:30 PM** - Bus trip back to Wade's Schenectady Terminal
- **8:30 - 9:00 PM** - Amsterdam passengers taken back to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel's Park & Ride

**NO REFUNDS CAN BE MADE AFTER July 22, 2010**

**Please send your reservation in early. Once our 55 passenger bus is full, you will be put on the waiting list.**

Please return the reservation slip below with payment in full **on or before Tuesday July 20<sup>th</sup>** to:

David Sammons - 141 Gray Road, Mayfield, NY 12117 - 518-661-5637

Please make your checks for the Manchester, VT trip payable to: **NYSUT RC 12**

Your Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 We will board the coach at: \_\_\_\_\_ Amsterdam \_\_\_\_\_ Wade's in Schenectady

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**HEALTH TIP: Stay Hydrated** by Sue Penny

Our bodies need water more than food, sleep, or even exercise to stay active. We need water. Water cushions and lubricates brain and joint tissue and helps regulate body temperature. So it is important that you remain hydrated!

For older adults especially, the need to be aware of water intake is important. As we grow older, we often drink less than our bodies need. Here are some tips directly from the Medicare Rights Center to make sure you get the daily intake you need:

**Have a beverage that you enjoy with every meal and snack.** A glass of water or a cup of juice can really help. Even caffeinated drinks - while they should not be your primary source of hydration - can contribute to your daily water needs.

**Don't exclusively rely on thirst.** As we age, our bodies lose the ability to detect thirst. Also, certain medications can cause dehydration.

**Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Most fruits have 80 to 90 percent water content. They are a great alternative and supplement to drinking plain water.

**Use the color of your urine as a guide.** If the color is light yellow or clear, you're drinking enough fluids. If it is dark yellow, you need to drink more.

Under average circumstances, the body loses and needs to replace approximately two to three quarts of water daily, and experts recommend that when we are sick we need even more than that.

So, keep up your energy by staying hydrated!

**Save these Dates**

**July 4&5** - New York City Trip

**August 6**—Trip to Hildene & Southern Arts and Crafts

**Retiree Council 12 Contribution Form**

**July 1, 2010 - June 30 2011**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Original Union Local \_\_\_\_\_ You may share my email with AFT \_\_\_\_\_

My Assemblyman \_\_\_\_\_ My NY State Senator \_\_\_\_\_ My US Representative \_\_\_\_\_

I would be willing to work for my fellow retirees in the area of: \_\_\_ Legislation \_\_\_ Social Committee \_\_\_ Newsletter

\$15.00 yearly contribution requested send to John Mazur, 176 West Bush Rd. Gloversville, NY 12078  
 518-773-7180 Make check payable to NYSUT Retiree Council 12