

# THE OUTLOOK

Newsletter of the Retiree Council 12

A NYSUT-NEA-AFT Affiliate

June 2011



## Trip to Vermont Woodstock and Quechee Gorge Thursday, September 22, 2011

**Depart:** 7:00 am leave Wade Tours (797 Burdeck Street, Schenectady) / 7:30 am Amsterdam -Exit 27)

**Arrive:** 10:30 Woodstock, VT

(choice) 10:30 – 12:30 Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller Mansion and National Historical Park or Billings Farm and Museum

12:30 – 3:00 **Woodstock Village:** Lunch on your own, shop, stroll, etc.

3:15 – 4:45 **Quechee Gorge:** Viewing of the Gorge and shopping at The Mill

5:00 – 6:30 **Dinner at the Quechee Inn**

**Depart:** 6:30 pm Quechee, VT

**Arrive:** 9:30 pm Amsterdam/ 10:00 at Wade Tours

**Total Cost: \$85**

**Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park and Mansion:** The mansion is a Queen Anne-style residence built 1805-07 for Charles Marsh Sr. Heirs added 20<sup>th</sup> century renovations featuring Tiffany glass windows, beautifully detailed woodwork, and works of art that include some of America's finest landscape paintings. The tour is guided.

**Billings Farm and Museum:** The museum, housed in four renovated 19<sup>th</sup> century barns encompasses both a modern working dairy farm and a museum depicting farm life in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Frederick Billings purchased this Vermont farm in 1871 from early conservationist George Perkins Marsh. Visitors observe daily activities of the modern dairy operations as well as 19<sup>th</sup> century daily chores such as butter and cheese making.

**Woodstock Village:** Woodstock is noted for its historic Federal-style homes and charming village green. Three covered bridges can be seen along historic US 4.

**Quechee Gorge:** Quechee Gorge (pronounced KWEE-chee), Vermont's Little Grand Canyon, can be seen from a bridge on US 4 that spans the gorge 165 feet above the Ottauquechee River.

**The Mill:** The Mill is a complex of shops, including Simon Pearce Glass, where visitors can observe the glass blowing process. The Fat Hat Clothing Company sells clothing and has a farmer's market.

**The Quechee Inn at Marshland Farm:** The restaurant occupies the beautiful, historic 1793 former home and farm of Col. John Marsh, Vermont's first lieutenant governor.

**Dinner Choices:** *Grilled Salmon, Black Jack Pork, or Eggplant Pomodoro*, served with Quechee Inn Salad, Dessert (Fruit Cobbler with Ben and Jerry's Vanilla Bean Ice Cream), soft drinks and/or coffee

### RC-12 Vermont Trip: September 22, 2011: Registration Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people attending \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$85 per person Total enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to NYSUT RC-12 **Marsh - Billings Choice(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ Museum or \_\_\_\_\_ Mansion

**Dinner Choice(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ Grilled Salmon \_\_\_\_\_ Black Jack Pork \_\_\_\_\_ Eggplant Pomodoro

Send check and registration form by August 18, 2011, to: Kathlene Lyman, 254 Riverside Place, Alplaus, NY 12008

(No refunds after August 18, 2011.)

For a more detailed description go to our website at <http://ny.aft.org/rc12>

### Win a Free One- Day Trip, and Get On The RC 12 Hot List!!!

The RC 12 Social Committee would like to dramatically increase the size of its email list and at the same time give you a chance to win a free one-day trip. We're asking all RC 12 members who do not currently get our periodic emails, to send us via email. Send your name, email address, home address, and home phone number via e-mail to: [dharris5@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dharris5@nycap.rr.com).

This information will be used by RC 12 **only** to keep you informed of upcoming RC 12 events and trips.

Once your name has been put on tour Hot List, you'll be among the first to learn about our upcoming activities. In addition, we will be randomly drawing one name from the Hot List. The winner can go for free on any of the one-day trips sponsored by RC 12 between October 2011 and October 2012.

*\$226.00 in cash  
and checks and  
three large bags of  
food donated to  
Regional Food  
Bank at the May  
luncheon*

## From the President's Desk...

*Jeanne W. Bennett*

Page 2



On May 16, 2011, the national debt ceiling reached 14.29 trillion dollars. By August of 2011, our nation's representatives have to make a decision about what to do regarding this debt crisis. The discussion has led to attacks on Social Security. Two keynote speakers addressed the issue of Social Security at Bi-Annual Convention of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans Bi-Annual Convention held in May.

One of the keynote speakers was Dr. Eric Kingson, professor of social work at Syracuse University, who served as policy advisor to the 1982-3 National Commission on Social Security Reform and the 1994 Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform. Dr. Kingson co-directs Social Security Works ([www.socialsecurity-works.org](http://www.socialsecurity-works.org)), and the Strengthen Social Security Campaign ([www.strengthensocialsecurity.org](http://www.strengthensocialsecurity.org)). He began by addressing such core American values as concern and caring for our parents, neighbors, and family members, rewarding hard work, and leaving the legacy of a better world for our children and grandchildren. He defined the debate about Social Security as a debate about the generations who follow; it's not just about those 55 and over who are "safe."

Dr. Kingson believes Social Security has come under attack because of high unemployment and a halting economic recovery. In addition, many people are underemployed. We are also facing a deficit caused by unfunded wars and tax cuts to the wealthiest. Nevertheless, Social Security is a program that works, that Americans value – and it is not in crisis. It is a program that never has contributed, and by law cannot contribute a penny to the federal deficit.

Dr. Kingson recommends that we thank our US senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand for supporting Social Security but that we urge them not to compromise. He recommends keeping Social Security out of the debt discussion, opposing global CAPS, opposing raising the retirement age, opposing changing the CPI (Consumer Price Index), and opposing changing the benefit formula. He urged that we focus on the 2012 election to reshape 2013 and that we focus on retirement income. Dr. Kingson concluded by reminding us that Social Security is **wage** insurance. It is not a retirement program. It is not only for the elderly but also the young, widowed, and disabled.

A second keynote speaker was Richard Fiesta, the Director of Government and Political Affairs of the Alliance for Retired Americans. He served in the Clinton Administration at both the Department

of Labor and the Department of the Interior and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. He worked in Congress as counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Labor Standards. He has also practiced law, specializing in labor and retirement issues.

Mr. Fiesta examined the roots to Social Security, beginning with its origin in 1935 at the height of the Depression and continuing through the addition of disability insurance in 1956 and Nixon's signing the COLA law. (Unfortunately, in 2011 there was no COLA increase).

Mr. Fiesta noted that Social Security spends less than 1% on administrative fees. There is no CEO; there is no money spent on advertising. No money comes from federal treasury funds. Money does come from American citizens - 95% pay 6.2% of earnings, up to a \$106,800 cap. Employers and employees contribute 82%; interest on Treasury bonds and reserves contributes 15%, and 3% comes from income taxes on benefits. By law, Social Security cannot borrow and, therefore, cannot add to the federal deficit.

Social Security benefits go to 90% of people age 65 and older. Of those, about 1 in 3 gets almost all of their income from Social Security. Nearly 1 in 4 households receives income from Social Security, and 1 in 6 Americans receives Social Security benefits. Those 54 million people who receive Social Security checks each month include 34.7 million retired workers, 8.2 million disabled individuals, 4.4 million widows and widowers, 2.5 million surviving spouses, 1.0 million adults disabled since childhood, and 3.2 million children who have lost a parent or have a disabled parent.

Contrary to what the speakers recommend, the current fiscal commission is examining proposals to reduce the COLA, change the benefit formula, and raise the retirement age to 70. RC 12 members must be vigilant, especially during the next couple of months. RC 12 will continue to work with NYSUT, the AFT, and the ARA to preserve Social Security, action which is of critical importance to many of our members.

Last summer on August 14<sup>th</sup>, Social Security celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Let us work together and stand together to ensure Social Security benefits remain intact as our legacy to our families, friends, and neighbors.

For updated information as events unfold, go to NYSUT's web site ([www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)) or to the Alliance for Retired Americans website ([www.retiredamericans.org](http://www.retiredamericans.org)) as well as the websites mentioned at the beginning of the article.

## 2011 NYSUT Community Service Award Winner.

Peter Petrillose was honored at the May RC 12 General Membership meeting as a 2011 NYSUT Community Service Award winner. The award recognizes the contribution of NYSUT members to the growth and well-being of the communities where they live and work. Peter was nominated by Past President Judy Schultz in recognition of his tireless efforts on behalf of Burnt Hills and the Town of Ballston. He has been a member of the Burnt Hills Fire Department for fifteen years as a firefighter, trustee, and member of the fire prevention team. His work on the Jenkens Park Advisory Board spans 25 years and includes park maintenance, work on a new playground, and beautification of the grounds. He has been a member of the Democratic Committee for the Town of Ballston since 1995, a member since 1984 of the Adirondack Live Steamers Club which promotes public knowledge of railroading, and a member of Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church since 1965 where he serves as the social chair and member of the choir. When he retired, Peter joined the RC 12 legislative committee attending the Committee of 100 and participating in the COLA rally. He has contributed annually to RC 12 to support its mission and NYSUT's agenda. As an award winner, Peter was recognized at the 2011 RA and received an award certificate from NYSUT.



**Peter Petrillose with Town of Ballston Supervisor Patti Southwork, Jeanne W. Bennett, and Judy Schultz at RC 12 general meeting on May 26, 2011 at the Riverstone Manor in Glenville**



## Mike Corn, Recipient of the RC 12 Award of Excellence

*The following is excerpted from a speech given at the March 24th General Membership meeting by RC 12 President Jeanne Williams Bennett to honor Mike Corn. Mike was unable to attend the meeting, but the presentation was videotaped for Mike and his wife. Mike died March 26.*

It is my honor and privilege to announce that Michael Corn is this year's recipient of the RC 12 Award of Excellence. When I told him last fall that he had been chosen for this award, his response was, "I am humbled and deeply appreciative."

I first met Mike during the 1970's, when he was union president of New Hartford, and I was president of the Mohawk Teachers Association. Mike was one of the three teacher members of the Board of Trustees of the New York State Teachers Retirement System. Unlike his predecessors and the other two teacher members of the Retirement Board, Mike was not given full-time release from his district. Whenever a day arose when Mike did not have NYSTRS business, he had to sub in the New Hartford School System. Sometimes that meant driving to another school district to resolve an emergency after teaching all day. I remember two such emergencies during my years in the Mohawk School District. On the first occasion, Mike was subbing in a Physical Education class. In the second instance, Mike was teaching reading to a group of first graders. Nevertheless, Mike drove down to Mohawk immediately after his school day ended. It's my guess that many of you had similar dealings with Mike whenever emergencies arose in your districts.

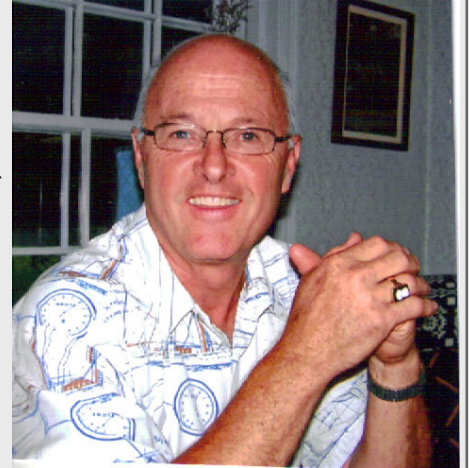
In addition to his job at NYSTRS, Mike served on the NYSUT Board of Directors and was chair of its financial committee. He was on the board of directors of the credit union in our area. He was involved with the NYSUT PAC (political action) and served as a trustee on the Central Labor Body. In 2009, the Central New York Labor Council awarded Mike the Samuel Gompers Award.

Mike represented teachers beyond his work with the union. In the 1980's, space travel was considered so safe that civilians might be allowed on spacecraft as astronauts. Back then, teachers were so highly regarded that President Ronald Reagan declared the first civilian to go into space would be a teacher. Mike entered the competition to choose the teacher and made the first cut and into the top 100; he was not ultimately chosen. On January 28, 1986, the nation watched in horror as the Challenger spaceship exploded, killing teacher astronaut Christa McAuliffe and Mohawk native Gregory B. Jarvis. As tragic as that day was, I couldn't help but think, "That could have been Mike Corn."

Nearly ten years ago, Mike was diagnosed with a rare and complicated form of cancer. The doctors told Mike that he had a one in a million chance of survival. When Mike went in for his surgery, he told the doctor, "You're looking at that one in a million man." As he recuperated, he became involved with many cancer research/fundraising activities. That first year, I asked Mike if he felt up to being the main speaker at our Relay for Life. He replied, "Absolutely," and said he was gaining strength daily. When I telephoned Stephanie Boucher, the Executive Director of the Cancer Society, and gave her Mike's name, there was silence on the line. I was stunned. Then, Stephanie said, "You are the seventh caller today to give me Mike Corn's name. Who is he???" That weekend, Mike committed to speaking at three Relay for Life events.

Mike gave generously to the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer events. The funds raised from the first annual Mike Corn roast this past January went to cancer research. Mike also participated in clinical trials and gave much of his time giving hope to others with cancer or terminal diseases. He led by his positive example and through counseling. Years ago he began promoting bone marrow donation registration to NYSUT members in the region.

Mike's favorite saying was, "I'm the luckiest man alive!" Those of us who know Mike and worked with him know that WE are the lucky ones. We are lucky to have had him as the embodiment of all of the best that a union leader should be: a visionary; a catalyst for getting things done; an inspiration; a fighter - whether it be for teachers benefits or against cancer; and a caring and compassionate human being.



## “DOUBLE WHAMMY” TAX CAP BILL

The proposed New York State tax cap, which Gov. Andrew Cuomo boasts is the "tightest" in the nation, **WILL NOT** lower anyone's taxes, ensure that residents' individual tax bills won't go up more than a small amount each year, help anyone who can't afford his or her current property taxes, change the main drivers behind higher property taxes, or change the demand or need for local services. **Tax Caps WILL** make the local revenue system more regressive, impair public safety, impair the quality of K-12 education, and lead to deteriorating streets and roads.

1. The tax cap will limit property tax-levy increases to 2 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is less, **ONLY** if voters approve the increases.
2. The tax cap will require districts to maintain their current tax levy -- a 0 percent increase -- if they put forward a budget that is voted down twice. (Currently, budget plans that don't pass twice are subjected to a contingency rate of increase, tied to inflation.)
3. The tax cap makes no exemptions for increases in energy costs, health care costs, contractual costs or growth in student enrollment.

4. The tax cap will sunset only if New York City rent control expires, which is highly unlikely.
5. In what NYSUT regards as one of the worst provisions, the tax cap bill would require a 60 percent super-majority of voters to approve any tax increase of more than 2 percent. NYSUT Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta suggests this is as reasonable as asking for a bill requiring all statewide officeholders to get 60 percent majorities to be re-elected.
6. Under the tax cap bill's requirements, hundreds of budgets would have failed this year, including those in many in the state's neediest school districts. The tax cap restrictions, coupled with painful cuts in state aid, would be a double financial whammy for poor districts. SUNY community colleges would also be hit hard, since the cap would apply to school districts, towns, villages and counties.

**Note:** When you receive this issue of the Outlook, the legislative session may have ended and action or inaction on proposed tax cap legislation may have occurred.

*From NYSUT LEADER BRIEFING May 27, 2011*

Jennifer Shaad-Derby, member of the committee of 100 and former President of the Mayfield Teachers Association is the new Retiree Consultant for RC-12.

**The Outlook**

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*RC 12 delegate Karen Wojcik-Hess and Ed Hryhor enjoying the excitement of the "WE ARE ONE"! RALLY in NYC at Times Square.*

**Save the Date**

Sept. 22 Trip to Woodstock and Quechee Gorge  
 Oct. 11 Fall General Meeting at the Otesaga in Cooperstown



**Retiree Council 12 Contribution Form July 1, 2011 - June 30 2012**

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

