

THE OUTLOOK

Newsletter of the Retiree Council 12

A NYSUT-NEA-AFT Affiliate

January 2010

A Message from Karen Wojcik-Hess, President of RC 12

EVERY VOICE IS SIGNIFICANT !

It's a New Year, and as the years pass I find that, like most retirees, I'm busier than ever. We've all become more involved with family and hobbies, our communities and politics. Yet I find that since retirement, I have had more time to reflect upon significant issues that I had no time to consider when I was teaching. Despite my busy schedule, I find that now I am finding my voice. But I know that before I make my voice heard, I must make myself informed.

There is no better resource than NYSUT for information. NYSUT provides its members with information both in print and on-line about the latest legislation, changes in policy or personnel, and news of good and not-so-good happenings in the classroom. You could spend hours each day becoming informed just about issues critical to the AFT and NYSUT.

But becoming informed is only the first step, as I learned while attending a meeting of the NYS Alliance of Retired Americans on the health care debate. During a broadcast conference call, I heard the voice of a young, enthusiastic lobbyist for the ARA in DC explaining how the Senate bill

was looking on that day. What rang out loud and clear in her parting words was that the voices of all are important. EVERY voice is significant. Only if we raise our voices we can hope to influence policy.

Whenever we look at history, we learn the value of voices. The struggle to initiate change by merging the old and the new has always been the struggle of voices crying out to be heard. Whether we look at the fights for women's rights or civil rights or the current local fights over the possible redistricting of the election areas in all of NYSUT, the results depend on hearing many voices. Ordinary voices can produce extraordinary results.

There have always been and will always be individual voices that shape history. The one hundred United States senators' voices can change the history of medical care in this country. But we need also to remember that each of us has a significant voice. History bears out that our voices - when raised - can make a difference. Ours are the voices that make our democracy work and shape history.

Remember, it is YOUR voice that is significant. TODAY please use it in ways to change our world for the better.

News from NYSUT: Legislation Update

Recently the NY State Senate and Assembly approved a \$2.7-billion deficit reduction plan. In a significant gain for NYSUT members, the three-way agreement includes a provision that permanently protects retiree health insurance from being diminished unless in-service members negotiate a reduction in their own health insurance as well. The agreement also includes a promise to institute an early retirement incentive for NYSUT members in the state Teachers Retirement System and created a new Tier 5 pension plan.

- **A huge gain in retiree health insurance:** The agreement permanently protects retiree health insurance from being diminished unless in-service members negotiate a reduction in their own health insurance as well. This is a huge gain in a tough year when many other public and private sector retirees are seeing their health benefits slashed. Until now, we had to get a moratorium extension every year. Now retirees can be secure in the knowledge that future legislatures or governors cannot wreak havoc on their benefits.
- **The early retirement option:** The approved bill commits the Legislature and the Governor to offer a 55/25 early retirement option for NYSUT members in the State TRS and ERS during a three-month window in 2010. This retirement program is expected to be available at employee election and is not subject to employer authorization.
- **Tier 5:** NYSUT was successful in delaying enactment of Tier 5 legislation for almost a full year. As a result, an entire class of NYSUT members was able to enter public service this year under the Tier 4 plan. While the new Tier 5 plan has some relatively significant changes for future members, NYSUT was successful in maintaining the integrity of the defined benefit plan that can be counted on by all members, current and future, and the continuation of a permanent COLA benefit for all future retirees.

On Becoming a Member of RC 12 by John Mazur, Treasurer of RC 12

Everyone who retires as a member of NYSUT is automatically a member of a Retiree Council. If you have retired from a district that is in RC 12, you will remain in RC 12 unless you ask to be moved to another retiree council. Because you are automatically a member, you are welcome to attend the General Membership meetings - even if you have not made a contribution to the organization.

We do, however, urge all our members to make an annual contribution so we can continue to work on your behalf on issues that impact us. Our budget is constructed by the Board of Directors, then presented to the membership for adoption at the spring General Membership meeting. The organization spent \$12,928.25 during the 2008 - 2009 fiscal year: \$4,991 for conferences and conventions, \$2,219.69 on operating expenses, and \$3,691.30 for mileage reimbursements. The balance was used for donations, local awards, luncheons, member programs, and contingency items.

If you have questions or concerns with our budget, feel free to contact me at jmazz@nycap.rr.com or call me at 518-773-7180.

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Check out our website
<http://ny.aft.org/rc12>
Web mistress
Gwynne Delong



by **Chris Corrigan**, retired Spanish teacher, Mohawk Central Schools

Is there life after teaching? Jeanne Williams would respond, “Definitely!”

Jeanne retired from Mohawk Central School in 2007 after teaching both fifth and sixth grades there for 34 years. Her parents were both teachers and unionists, so she was born with union in her blood. Her contributions to the union cause in Mohawk are legendary. She served as the president, vice president, delegate to the Representative Assembly (RA), newsletter editor, grievance chair, and as a member of the negotiations team. She was Mohawk’s rep to the Committee of 100 for over twenty-five years. In retirement, she has joined the RC 12 Board of Directors as vice president and parliamentarian and continues to be active in many union activities.

But there is so much more to Jeanne than just union work. She is an accomplished musician, playing the piano, organ, and harp. She also loves to be outdoors. Jeanne is an avid cross country skier and has already booked a ski trip to the Alps in February. When the weather is warmer, you can find her hiking in the Adirondacks or on the Finger Lakes Trail, working on the family camp at Big Moose, or kayaking in lakes all over New York State.

Helping others is another important part of Jeanne’s life. She is often asked to accompany the elementary choir in Mohawk, to play at local churches, and to be a part of community concerts. Her talent never disappoints. She has been the organist, harpist, or pianist at numerous weddings and provides comfort with her musical talent at many funerals. She is an important part of her church community and just served as the chair of the search committee for a new pastor. She is kind and thoughtful with a wide circle of friends and colleagues who look to her for advice, camaraderie, and support. Jeanne is the one you call when you need a sounding board for an idea, a volunteer for a local activity, or just plain help. She is reliable, trustworthy, and conscientious and a valuable member of the RC 12 team of retired teachers.

RETIREE COUNCIL 12 ELECTION NOTICE

The following positions will be filled by an election during the morning business portion of RC 12’s Annual Meeting, June 2, 2010, at the Water’s Edge Restaurant, Scotia, NY. If there is more than one candidate for RC 12 president, NYSUT will do a separate mailing for this position only. Terms of office are July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2012. All candidates must be NYSUT members in good standing. **There will be no nominations for any positions from the floor during the Annual Meeting.**

President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice- President, Secretary and Treasurer.

2011 and 2012 NYSUT Representative Assembly – 2 delegates and 3 alternates. (The president is automatically the lead delegate.)

2012 AFT Convention – 1 delegate and 1 alternate

Nominations close March 12, 2010. Interested candidates are requested to complete a Candidate Questionnaire. Please contact Nominating Committee Chair, Judy Schultz, (518) 399-4957 or mainmate@aol.com, to request a form and for further information.

Volunteering as an Ombudsman

by **Mary Pritchard**, retired elementary teacher, Schenectady City Schools

Listening to my grandparents’ stories was like experiencing history coming alive. So when I retired from teaching, I knew that volunteering with the elderly would be something I would like to do. I was also looking forward to spending more time with my parents. The week I retired, however, my mom died. Dad did well on his own for a few years, but eventually we had to find for a place which would enable him to be independent, and at the same time, provide him help with his meds and his meals. We finally settled on an assisted living facility in Syracuse near my sister and her family.

But the search for appropriate housing for my father led me to question many things about the long term care system in New York State. At the time, I was representing RC 12 at the Capital District Alliance for Retired Americans meeting. There I learned about a program in the Capital District under the umbrella organization of the Red Cross: the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. Even though it was new to the Capital District, this program was created at the Federal level by the 1978 Amendment to the Older Americans Act in order to improve the quality of care in nursing homes and adult care facilities.

Ombudsmen are volunteers. In New York State we are certified by the New York Office for the Aging to advocate on behalf of the residents in our assigned facility. I contacted Edie Sennett, the coordinator of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program for three counties—Albany, Schenectady, and Montgomery. A training program running for six hours daily for a week was just to begin in Schenectady. I was in the second group that was trained. The training itself a great learning experience, and I could put much of what I learned into action to help my dad.

Being an advocate for the facility I chose requires going in weekly - sometimes more often if the need arises. Establishing trust with the residents and staff is a must, but now everyone knows that if a concern comes to me, we will all work together to resolve it. With Edie Sennett’s direction and the support of monthly staff meetings, many issues have been settled. The reward of seeing an acceptable solution is all I need to know the value of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program.

If you are interested in knowing more about this volunteer opportunity; contact me or Edie Sennett at the Red Cross, 518-458-8111.

The **Social Committee** is considering an overnight trip to New York City for July 4 – 5, 2010, including a Fourth of July sightseeing cruise on the Circle Line to view fireworks on the Hudson River. The next day would be a free day in NYC. The committee is also exploring the possibility of a day trip on Friday, August 6, 2010, to Manchester, VT, to visit Hildene, the home of Robert Todd Lincoln, and to attend the Southern Arts and Crafts Festival. Please check our website for more information about these trips. Go to: www.nysut.org and highlight NYSUT local web Sites. Scroll down to Retiree Council 12 and check Calendar.

Cross-Country Skiing: A Retirement Plan That Pays Dividends

by **Nolan Marciniac**, retired HS English teacher, Greater Johnstown School District

Winter is the most interior of the seasons, when many of us hunker down in front of the hearth and marvel, through frost-covered windows, at a landscape reduced to least common denominator. Even though we complain of “cabin fever,” some of us are reluctant to leave the house to venture into this most exhilarating of seasons. Fortunately, Nordic skiing offers all of us retirees a key to appreciating winter and to cultivating good physical and mental health.

Say “skiing” to most people, and Alpine or downhill skiing comes immediately to mind. Nordic skiing came first, originating in Scandinavia more than 4000 years ago as a way of getting around in a region snow-bound for the better part of the year. It differs from Alpine skiing in a number of ways.

There are no lift lines. Nordic skiing is a “human-powered” venture and, as a consequence, a superlative physical

exercise. Medical professionals recognize that Nordic skiing is one of the best cardio-vascular fitness activities one can engage in. It is a relatively low-risk, low-impact, and highly aerobic form of outdoor exercise. It burns more calories per hour than any other sport – an adult skier can expend nearly 1000 calories per hour.

Clothing and equipment also differ markedly. XC skiers dress in several light, comfortable, and breathable layers and seldom have a problem keeping warm despite the thermometer readings. To be sure, the physical movement generates heat, but XC skiers are also usually protected from the wind by the wooded setting of most XC ski centers. The XC boot is lightweight and closer to a running shoe than the bulky and unwieldy Alpine boot. The critical difference in equipment is the “free heel” ski, which enables the skier to climb, descend, and traverse “cross country.” In downhill skiing, the skier is limited to the range of the downhill

slope.

XC costs are significantly lower than downhill costs. A package of skis, poles, and boots can be had for under \$300, but used equipment is often available at ski centers such as Lapland Lake in Benson for about half that price. And compare Lapland Lake’s \$18 (\$16 seniors 65+) mid-week trail fee to the price of a lift ticket at any downhill ski facility. Purchasing a season’s pass will further reduce your costs.

But newcomers should certainly not be intimidated by images of spandex-clad fitness freaks sweating their way through the wilderness. If you can walk, you can learn to cross-country ski. The activity capitalizes on natural body rhythms and has a fairly short learning curve – and you can take it from there.

Some XC skiers relish the time alone in the beauty of Nature; others, the sheer physical exercise; still others, the camaraderie the sport offers. Nordic skiing is an activity that brings families together, from grandparents to toddlers, out and away from the winter doldrums.

A Night Out in Schenectady

Join us on **April 15** for a gourmet dinner at Schenectady County Community College culinary school followed by the Rodgers & Hammerstein musical *South Pacific* at Proctor’s Theater. Seating will be on the Main Floor - Orchestra. Meet at 4:45 at the entrance of the Casola Dining Hall in Elston Hall on Washington Ave. Park in the main parking lot. Dinner is at 5:30 with a 7:00 departure for Proctors in time for the 8:00 curtain call. **Total cost: \$79.00. Dinner Menu** includes soup, salad, dessert and your choice of broiled salmon with crabmeat and asparagus finished with white wine sauce, sugar snap peas, parsley potatoes OR beef bourguignon served on a bed of rice and accompanied by broccoli crowns. Vegetarian choices are also available upon request. Those who already have tickets for that evening’s performance can still join us for dinner at a cost of \$20.00 for dinner only. There is no option for going only to the theater.

Reservations are now being accepted. Complete the form below and include a check made payable to NYSUT Retiree Council 12. Send reservation and check to: Pat Michalski, 69 Lincoln Ave., Albany, NY 12205. For additional information, e-mail Pat at booklady72@yahoo.com or call 869-7969 **Reservations due no later than March 15, 2010, and there are no refunds after March 15.**

Name(s): _____

Contact’s address: _____

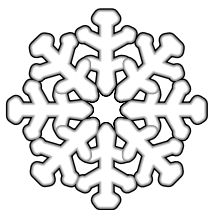
Contact’s email: _____ Phone _____

Dinner (indicate how many of each in the space): _____ salmon _____ beef _____ veggie

_____ \$79 each included for dinner/theater or _____ \$20 each included for dinner only



The Arts



Winter Survival 101

by **Ginni Mazur**, retired elementary teacher, Gloversville School District

With winter well underway in the Northeast, do you find yourself counting the days until spring? Do you have days

of never going outside because of the snow? Are the holiday goodies making your clothes feel a bit tighter? Do you wonder why you didn’t ask for a trip to warmer climates for Christmas or Hanukkah?

Fret no more – snow shoeing is the solution to the winter doldrums. It’s a perfect winter sport that can be enjoyed by many ages, regardless of your athletic abilities, and is great exercise. It requires little equipment and minimal or no fees.

Equipment: Snowshoes come in many sizes and types. There are the newer, lighter weight aluminum frame types available at sport shops, on-line stores, and even on popular auction sites. They have aluminum crampons that allow great

traction on ice, crusty snow, and for uphill climbs. The older snowshoes, which look like tennis rackets, are available too – sometimes from people who want to use the newer types. But keep in mind, they are heavier and make icy spots and uphill climbs a bit trickier.

You can rent snowshoes if you’d like to try snow shoeing before you invest in equipment. Usually, lodges that have their own trails have equipment available.

It’s a good idea to wear a light backpack if you plan to be out a while. Take some high-energy food, water, a small first aid kit, a trail map, and a compass. You should also consider packing telescopic poles which are useful in uneven and uphill walking. If you do night hiking, wear a headlamp.

Hiking trails: Snow shoeing can be done wherever there is snow and no “Posted” signs. You can go on golf courses, groomed trails, State hiking trails, and even in your own back yard! NY is one the northern states that

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Chris Corrigan Carolyn Darkangelo
Ginni Mazur Nolan Marciniac

Winter Survival 101 (Continued from page 3)

offers hundreds of hiking trails. There are many guides available that describe the level of difficulty, length of hike, types of terrain and directions to the trailhead. If you have access to a computer, just “Google” snowshoeing and let your fingers do the walking! Consider checking out hikes when you travel out of state.

Clothing: Dressing for snowshoeing is all about layering. It’ll take a few times out before you find what works best for you, but layers allow you to pull off or add on if necessary. Try out your snowshoes in your backyard and see how many layers are best for you. Keep in mind that the temperature and sun affect what you need to wear.

Safety precautions: Snowshoeing is always more fun with a buddy AND it is a smart move not to be alone. Taking a cell phone is a good idea but know that in some wooded areas, there is little or no reception.

Age restrictions: Good news ~ there are none. If you can walk, you can snowshoe! So strap on some snowshoes and give snowshoeing a try.

Save these Dates

March 21-22 - Committee of 100

March 25- General Meeting at Crystal Restaurant in Amsterdam

April 15 - A Night out in Schenectady— *South Pacific* at Proctors

June 2 - General Meeting at the Waters Edge Light House Scotia

**Retiree Council 12 Contribution Form
July 1, 2009 - June 30 2010**

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**

