

THE OUTLOOK

Newsletter of the Retiree Council 12

A NYSUT-NEA-AFT Affiliate

November 2014

NYSUT RC 12 Presents Nashville Show Trip for only \$799* April 25– May 3, 2015



This 9-day and 8-night trip includes 8 night's lodging, bus transportation, and 13 meals. The group will visit the Cleveland Museum of Natural History en route to Nashville and the Columbus Museum of Art on the return trip. In Nashville, they will take a city tour and ride on the Delta Flatboats inside the Opryland Hotel. They will also take tours of the Belle Meade Plantation, the Country Music Hall of Fame, and the Grand Ole Opry. Shows included are the Grand Ole Opry, the Nashville Nightlife Dinner Theatre, and dinner at the Wildhorse Saloon. The group will also visit the Kentucky Derby Museum.

For a more complete itinerary go to RC12.ny.aft.org

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail address _____ Phone # _____

No refunds after December 1.



Mail payment /checks made out to **NYSUT RC 12** to:
Pat Donovan, 111 6th Ave., Gloversville, NY 12078
For information, Phone 518-725-2531 E-mail jdonova5@nycap.rr.com

What's Coming in 2017?

by **Phyllis VanSteenburgh** *Oppenheim Ephratah Teacher Retiree*

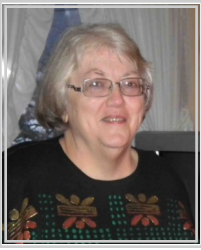
2017 does seem far away from 2014, but it is time to think ahead as New York State could have a constitutional convention in 2020 that might make changes to our teacher, state, and municipal employee retirement pensions. In New York State, every twenty years, there is a mandated vote on whether to call a Constitutional Convention --- also known as a People's Convention. It's important to understand that New York is the ONLY state to provide a constitutional guarantee that our pension, once earned, cannot be diminished or impaired. That constitutional guarantee could disappear, however, if a constitutional convention is held.

Currently, our pensions are not taxed by New York State. Collective bargaining, unemployment insurance, and the protections for the Adirondack Park are other examples of changes that could be made if there is a constitutional convention. In addition, there is talk of doing away with our traditional "defined-benefit" pension system and replacing it with a "defined-contribution" system, such as the 401k's that lost so much of their worth during the stock market downturn.

New York State would love to get its hands on the money from our pension systems. Public pensions are under attack, and anyone with an axe to grind would love to open up the constitution. Our opponents are using the argument that a Constitutional Convention will fix the dysfunction in Albany.

The New York State Constitution contains two avenues for its revision. One way is through a constitutional convention, which would allow wide modifications, and which voters must agree should be called. Therefore, in November of 2017, the question of whether to call a Constitutional Convention will first appear on the ballot. After a convention, voters must approve the proposed changes.

Another way to revise the Constitution is through individual amendments proposed by lawmakers, which must be passed by two separately elected legislatures (i.e. passed twice by legislatures elected in different years) and then approved by voters. There were a couple of constitutional amendments on the ballot this past November. If there is something that needs to be changed in the Constitution, this is the safer route to go. *(continued on page 4)*



From the President's Desk... Sandra Bliss

YOU ASKED FOR IT !!

At the September 30, 2014 RC 12 meeting, during discussion of a motion for RC 12 to donate to the Capital District Chapter of the NYS Alliance for Retired Americans (NYSARA), members asked, "What is the Alliance for Retired Americans, and what does it do?"

The decision was made to donate \$62.50 to the NYSUT Disaster Fund and \$62.50 to the Capital District Chapter of NYSARA.

The Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) is an organization formed in 2001 by the AFL-CIO for the benefit of retirees of its affiliated unions and retired community members. "The mission of the Alliance for Retired Americans is to ensure social and economic justice and full civil rights for all citizens so that they may enjoy lives of dignity, personal and family fulfillment, and security." Every retired NYSUT member is a member of both the ARA and NYSARA since AFT and NYSUT pay the dues to ARA and NYSARA.

To accomplish the mission, ARA and NYSARA educate their members, advocate for their members, and activate their members to oppose any form of privatizing Social Security and Medicare, to fight any new tax breaks for the wealthy at the expense of programs that help seniors, and to oppose raising the retirement age. A weekly newsletter named 'Friday Alert' is emailed to anyone who signs up at the ARA website.

The NYSARA Capital District Chapter and Syracuse Chapter each meet monthly with speakers to discuss issues. Therefore, forums exist on the local, state, and national levels to provide a coalition of various unions and community groups to work together to achieve their mutual goals.

The Capital District Chapter of NYSARA will hold its biennial convention on November 12th at NYSUT headquarters. Officers will be elected, and attendees will hear experts report on senior issues. NYSUT Retiree Council 12 is a member of the Capital District Chapter of NYSARA. To protest the proposed change to a chained CPI, which would lower Social Security benefits, the Syracuse Chapter of NYSARA (covering Herkimer County) formed a human chain around the Syracuse Federal Office building while holding a large metal chain.

Next year will be the 80th anniversary of Social Security and the 50th anniversary of Medicare. Events will be planned to celebrate the successes of these programs and educate legislators on means to strengthen these earned benefits for future generations.

If you want to participate in local ARA activities, send an email to: nysutrc12@gmail.com with a message stating you want to be placed on a chapter mailing list. Include your mailing address and the school district from which you retired to be placed on the appropriate chapter list.

To learn more, visit the national and state ARA websites: retiredamericans.org and nysara.org

The Outlook

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“RECLAIMING THE PROMISE”

2014 American Federation of Teachers Convention in Los Angeles

by *Karen Wojcik-Hess, past president of RC 12*

The theme, RECLAIM THE PROMISE, was evident in all the presentations throughout the week. The introductory song, “WE SHALL, WE SHALL, WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED. WE FIGHT FOR EDUCATION, WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED”, summed up our beliefs. The fiery speech of The Rev. Dr. William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP, and the State of the Union speech of Randi Weingarten echoed this sentiment.

Asean Johnson was the youngest speaker at the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington, on August 28, 2013, and as well as the AFT Convention. He is a 10 or 11 year-old elementary student from Chicago. He is poised, articulate and confident. With a small voice, he started, “Education is a right! That is why we fight!” Soon, it turned into a continuous chant from all the educators in the hall that was exhilarating and held hope for our future.

I must share with you the passionate voices and hours spent on the convention floor debating, clarifying and voting on the many resolutions. One that I feel worth mentioning was a five-page resolution entitled, “The Role of Standards in Public Education.” Both pro’s & con’s were discussed for almost an hour. Comments filled with passion and a genuine love and concern for children and teaching rang out clearly with every speaker.

The resolution passed. AFT believes in the promise and potential of Common Core Standards. (continued page 3)



Karen Wojcik-Hess and Winona Fasholdt at August 11th NYSUT rally against Pearson testing and in support of Teacher Tenure.

Protecting your family for the future



It's important that your family members are financially protected throughout their lives. Have you stopped to consider what would happen to your spouse and/or children if you were to suddenly pass away?

Would your loved ones be able to continue to live in their home, pay regular bills and maintain a comfortable lifestyle? What about your final medical, burial or funeral expenses?

And it's not a question of just having a life insurance policy... make sure you have *enough* coverage to provide for your family. Find a plan that's right for you and your specific financial situation.

Plans designed specifically for NYSUT members

As NYSUT members, it makes prudent sense to look into the Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits. Both of these plans offer specific terms and rates designed exclusively with NYSUT members and their families in mind.

The **Term Life Plan** is available for NYSUT members and their spouses/domestic partners under age 85. If you are under age 65, you can apply for coverage from \$25,000 up to \$1 million at premiums negotiated specifically for NYSUT members.

Meanwhile, the **Level Term Life Plan** offers terms for 10, 15 or 20-year periods. The premium that you start with is projected to remain the same and the benefit amount will not decrease throughout the term – regardless of your age or health condition.

You can enjoy an **additional savings of 15%** on published rates if your local association has approved automatic deductions from your paycheck or pension check and you sign up for that benefit.

To learn more about the Member Benefits-endorsed Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans, call **800-626-8101** or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Member Appreciation Month is coming!

NYSUT Member Benefits wants to start the New Year off right with a celebration of the entire NYSUT membership.

These offers will continue into February 2015, which has been designated as Member Appreciation Month!

It's the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer approximately 50 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

This special celebration will be kicking off in January 2015 with the arrival of your new membership cards. This mailing will include a variety of special offers only available to NYSUT members.



This will be a month filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by our endorsed program providers. To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is be a participant in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.

We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at 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.

Nov./Dec. '14

(Promise continued from page 2)

The 2nd exciting item on the floor, which passed with flying colors, was a special order of business entitled “**Our Commitment to Fighting Back and Fighting Forward**”. A delegate from San Francisco proposed an amendment to this resolution asking Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan to fix the mess in education that the current administration created, and if not, RESIGN.

You can go to www.youtube.com and type in 2014 AFT

Convention to view these and many other speakers. I promise they will move you, as we were moved. As you focus on the live action on your screen, you, too, will feel the commitment and need for action.

In closing, I am proud to be a member of AFT. I am proud that membership and leadership together can help shape the youth of this country. Thank you for allowing me to be your 2014 American Federation of Teachers delegate.

Retiree Council 12 Contribution Form July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015



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

Check this box if there has been a change in your contact information

**\$15.00 yearly contribution requested. Send to
Dolores Talmadge 206 Main Street, Fort Plain, NY 13339
Make check payable to NYSUT Retiree Council 12**

November 2014
RC 12 Outlook



(2017 continued from page 1) NYSUT's position on calling a constitutional convention has always been to vote NO! Getting involved in making sure this convention does not take place might include some ideas put forth by Peter Savage, NYSUT legislative representative, during the RC 12 general membership meeting on September 30, 2014. These ideas include "staying active with the political process" by informing our Senate and Assembly representatives that we are not in favor of having the constitutional convention in 2020 and by being one of the groups working together "to convince voters that holding a convention will not be in the best interests of the people of the state."

If voters agree that a constitutional convention should be called, then we have to show our strength by union solidarity, mobilization, and getting out the vote in record numbers. During the next couple of years, we need to talk and educate our families, friends, and former colleagues about the 2017 ballot with the admonishment "best leave left alone"!

Save the Dates– 2014-2015

Nov. 1-9, 2014	RC 12 trip to Branson
Nov. 25, 2014	RC 12 trip to see Billy Joel
March 2-3, 2015	NYSUT Committee of 100
April 16, 2015	RC 12 General Meeting Cobleskill
April 25 –May 3, 2015	RC12 trip to Nashville
May 7, 2015	NYSUT RC12 Regional Conference Glen Sanders, Scotia
June 2, 2015	RC 12 General Meeting Watersedge Lighthouse, Glenville

