

NYSUT RC 12 REGIONAL CONFERENCE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AND ELECTIONS on May 21th, 2025, at the Terrace at Water Edge, 2 Freebridge Rd. Glenville, N.Y. 12302

The event was called to order by RC 12 President Stacey Caruso-Sharpe. There were about 10 first time attendees who were given an RC 12 pen as a welcome gift. There were over 70 attendees.

Introductions were made by Sheryl Baker Delano, our NYSUT Retiree Consultant. She shared that Peter Salvage, NYSUT Legislation NYS Budget update, was not available to attend.

Ron Gross, NYSUT 2nd Vice President extended gratitude to everyone in attendance and reviewed services for retirees. He shared that school related professionals and higher ed do not have retiree chapters, so being included in our gatherings is appreciated.

The NYSUT Representative Assembly was held recently and there were several retiree issues submitted. One resolution asked for a Task Force to address rising costs of health insurance. This committee is only to make suggestions for members. Thirty-two members are on the committee, including seven retirees. The group met five times and realized they were not done after five meetings. They concluded that in-service locals need to involve NYSUT when developing wording for contracts. The concept of addressing health insurance versus salaries is important to consider. Staff members from NYSUT need to be connected to local presidents. Legislation to stop the nonsense of big pharmaceutical companies is a necessity.

NYSUT was very involved with cell phone bans in schools. There is some resistance but there is amazing success in places where it has been addressed. Our union has been active in reversing budget cuts due to decreasing enrollments. Meals for all kids eliminates the stigma children experience when standing in line for nourishment needed to learn.

On the sixth of every month there is a "Fix Tier Six" rally being held. Solidarity for all educators is represented. Retirees join the fight with the newer educators! A show of hands from the various tiers demonstrates "Union For Life" and solidarity!.

It was stressed that NYSUT is not taking away the printed version of Outlook. Many people do not look at the document and instantly recycle what is very important for other members to hold and read. Anyone who wants to continue to receive the Outlook in print is asked to sign up and it will continue to appear in our mailboxes. RC 12 continues to publish well organized information to allow retirees to stay informed. This information and more is found on the RC 12 website, too.

With a mic in hand Ron played a TV host and asked the question, "How do we get more people involved? Suggestions from attendees included the following suggestions: ask retired colleagues to attend RC 12 activities; utilize the idea of Union for Life, express there are no membership fees, only contributions; obtaining a better list of new retirees (after retiring school emails are eliminated), making trips available to all at the same time, understanding local autonomy in contracts, NYSUT doesn't change insurance for retirees, NYSUT will introduce the sign up process for The Outlook., the Legacy Fund helps defray the cost of events like this luncheon.

The next speaker was Mike Rowan from the Mid-Hudson and Capital District Regional Office. He services 250 locals and has a staff of 25. Mike shared that we are the most powerful union in New York State. As a public relations advocate, he shared that unions cannot represent retired educators because of contract language that locals adapt. All locals are encouraged to connect with NYSUT to help with inclusive contract language.

Mike explained that some school districts are merging and that provides a challenge for unions involved, especially for School Related Personnel often covered by other unions.

The language for health insurance is a challenge because of hospital costs, prescription drugs, chronic disease, the increased aging population, and the development of advanced technology for numerous procedures. The birth rate is dropping. The decisions of different districts make the coverage very complicated. In some districts retirees are responsible for 55% of their coverage. In 30% of the locals there are no retiree benefits when turning 65. There are occasionally hospital and coverage disputes. NYSUT now has hired Derek Clemente to help answer questions regarding health insurance.

There are a few Union benefits that help retired educators. The Calm app is free. Peer support is available to anyone along with debt counseling provided by Cambridge, a nonprofit organization. Help is provided regarding Student Loans and Credit counseling. NYSUT provides reduced rates for Car and Home Insurance through Farmers. A new Home Health Care Plan is now available with Brian Johnson involved. Members of NEA can receive discounts at Disneyland. There is a legal service plan that only costs \$50 a year to utilize. This service writes simple wills, health care proxies, living wills, and can develop one's power of attorney. Unlimited letter writing is also included. Elder law attorney names can be provided with a \$285 hour cap. More information regarding any of these benefits can be found online at memberbenefits.nysut.org or by calling 800-626-8101. Attendees of the luncheon were given pamphlets to help explain the numerous retirement services. NYSUT is our union for life!!

Sheryl Baker Delano provided a presentation that compared life for retired union members versus non-union members. She stressed the need to stay informed with our local unions, NYSUT, and NEA.

Stacey Caruso-Sharpe called the RC 12 Business Meeting to order. She expressed the regret of Jeanne Bennett not being available due to recurring COVID contracted at the Representative Assembly. Ballots were distributed by the Election Committee to members attending to vote for RC 12 Directors for the 2025-2027 term. Ballots were collected by and results will be announced at the end of this meeting. Attendees were reminded to make contributions to VOTE-COPE which acts as an insurance policy for educators.

The Member Organization Institute (MOI) is available to share stories of the past.

The Calm App and Wellness Institute is also available to help anyone who needs someone to talk to regarding challenging issues in their lives. These are not counselors, they are trained retirees who provide peer support to help get through life crises.

Secretary Cathy Picciocca shared that minutes from the Fall Membership Meeting were on the tables. Mary Kirrin made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Doris Leverett seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted and placed into the record. All minutes can be found on the RC 12 website.

Vice President Maggie Bouck asked everyone in attendance who we look up to in our union. She shared that it is our honor to look up to RC 12 President Stacey Caruso-Sharpe. Stacey just received the annual American Labor Studies Center (ALSC) Award at NYSUT on May 14, 2025. She also received a medal from the Kate Mullany House for being an active union member.

Dolores Talmadge, RC 12 Treasurer, was not available to attend but Stacey shared the following Treasury Report:

Savings	\$219.14
#11 Business Market	\$35,872.23
#3 Social Money Market	\$11,149.20
#12 Business Checking	\$390.29
#13 Social Checking	\$430.20
CD	\$27,155.95

Co- 2nd Vice President for Legislation, Richard Peters, attended the Committee of 100 with NYSUT to represent RC 12. He shared that members of the Committee of 100 push issues that are important to education. Issues that were addressed this year included:

- foundation aid where there was a 50% cut; however, there turned out to be a 2% increase,
- reimbursement for BOCES programs from \$30,000 to \$60,000 contributing to the health of students with a state law requirement, which will help all districts to management the distraction from school policy for all devices and eliminate loopholes for districts which have attempted to initiate this practice,
- teacher centers are back in the budget,
- due to the teacher shortage, returning retired teachers have wage earnings removed until June 2027, SUNY and CUNY have increased funds.
- NYSUT will continue to lobby to Fix Tier Six.

Kathlene Lyman provided a Social Committee report, and flyers were placed at the tables. On April 23, 40 people attended "*Good Night and Good Luck, a George Clooney Play*". It will be broadcasted on CNN June 7th. George has been nominated for the Best Leading Actor in a play. Tony Awards will be held on June 8th.

On May 19th, 30 people attended the Anne Frank Exhibit and The Rise of New York at the Center for Jewish History. The Rise of NY provided a soaring journey through New York.

29 tickets were sold for Sunday in the Park on August 5th at Glimmerglass. There is a waiting list. If interested, contact Lori Wrench.

On July 30th a bus trip to NYC will transport individuals to see the Buena Vista Social Club which is nominated for 10 Tony Awards, including best musical. If interested, contact Kathy Lyman.

On November 12-14th there is a trip to the Amish Country. Flyers were provided and if interested contact Sue Roth at 518-365-8407.

An eleven-day trip to New Orleans will be held from September 26th to October 6th. There is still room available for six more people. If interested, contact Linda Zilka.

Another Broadway show trip will be available in October.

Anyone who has suggestions, please contact a Social Committee member. The following are individuals on the Social Committee: Linda Zilka, Gloria Kimball, Kathy Lyman, Wendy W., Lori Wrench, Sue Roth, Dolores Talmadge, Mary and John Rathbun.

It was suggested to sign up for Monday Alerts from New York State Alliance for Retired Americans to stay informed. RC 12 is looking for someone to become a liaison person with

this organization. Anyone who is interested is asked to reach out to anyone on the Executive Board.

Changes to the RC 12 Constitution were placed on the website for everyone to review. The changes were presented to everyone attending the conference. The Executive Board provided the motion to accept the changes to the RC 12 constitution as presented. Suzanne Collins seconded the motion. The changes were approved by the membership. The updated Constitution will be placed on the RC 12 website.

It was a great honor for Stacey to present the RC 12 Award of Excellence to Kathlene Lyman. She has been very active in RC 12, StateWide Senior Action Council, Mother of Twins, the RC 12 Social Committee (planning bus trips to Broadway), past Vice President of RC 12 and Secretary of RC 12. A donation to the charity of her choice will be made by RC 12 and an article will be written about her and placed in The Outlook.

Elaine Lounsbury-Brown and Phyllis VanSteenburg from the Election Committee of RC 12 announced the results for the Executive Board election. Vickie McGowan, David Lamouret, and Jennifer Shaad-Derby were elected to be Directors for the next two years.

Stacey stressed the need for volunteers to get involved with RC 12. Anyone interested in being a Director, working on committees, or running for positions next year is asked to contact anyone on the Executive Board.

Stacey expressed gratitude towards Elaine Lounsbury-Brown and Maria Pacheko whose terms are up on the Executive Board at the end of June. Neither chose to run for another term on the Executive Board. Their time and efforts contributed the past two years are deeply appreciated. Gifts of appreciation were provided.

Stacey shared that the Executive Board neglected to decide where donations for the 50/50 raffle would be distributed. After a brief discussion Cathy Picciocca made a motion that it be rewarded to some organization that is helping to support Federal Workers who are being dismissed from their jobs. Maggie Bouck seconded the motion. Motion carried.

There will be a change in the fall for the NYSUT RC 12 Regional Conference General Membership Meeting. It will be held again at this same location, The Terrace at Water Edge, 2 Freebridge Rd. Glenville, N.Y. 12302 on October 9. The Spring General Membership meeting will be held in the western part of RC 12 around Herkimer.

All the attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch. One of our guest speakers was Dr. Eric Kingson, who is the founding co-director (along with Nancy Atwell) of Social Security Works(www.socialsecurityworks) and the Strengthen Social Security Coalition. Social

Security Works was founded in 2010 to promote the protection and expansion of Social Security and to address the perceived threats to Social Security.

Dr. Kingson believes that NYSUT as a union is most concerned with education, healthcare, and the Social Security System. It's against privatization. He believes that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid is an expression of our values in the USA. He believes that people in our country have a responsibility to work and that reimbursement works.

The Trustee report that came out this week states that in the 1930's this foundation was developed to protect Americans, and it was an institute for life. The system is institutionalized, and the development of widow benefits keeps survivors secure. In 1977-1983 it was suggested we couldn't afford to distribute the benefits promised. In 2004, President Bush went to partial privatization. Since 2015 programs have been under attack. At this point it seems that the administration is pulling the program apart.

One of the biggest problems is the release of government workers who developed the Cobalt computer systems. It was suggested to keep a document of your individual earnings because these documents could be lost without the Federal workers maintaining the system. The number of employees working has been drastically cut which results in waiting in a line or on the telephone for long periods of time. The administration has decreased the employees available because there's a cost squeeze. The Office of Research has been eliminated. There is a major backlog of anyone applying for disability. It's typical to experience a two year wait. As a result, there is a great deal of misinformation and workers are often traumatized. Cuts in Medicaid makes it more difficult to receive long term care in nursing homes. Human need is discredited. Our administration is very much into utilizing the practice of vouchers. With this solution drug companies could do as they please. It seems that our government is providing more benefits for the people who are well off. They perceive fraud, waste, and abuse in our government spending and the result is demoralization of individuals who have worked for the government for decades.

There is not any quick and easy answer to remedy what is going on. The major suggestion was to stay informed and get involved. Many groups are working to stop the demoralization of federal workers. Peaceful protests against governmental decisions could possibly lead to reversals in policies and/or changes in who is elected to make decisions for our government in the future. Dr. Kingson believes demonstrations of the masses and not being afraid to speak out with beliefs may help to turn things around.

A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. The Conference was concluded following the distributions of numerous raffles which included flowers, centerpieces, and gifts given by NYSUT Members Benefits.

Yours in service, Cathy Picciocca, RC 12 Secretary