

RENY  
RETIREDC  
EDUCATORS OF NY

## WESTERN CURRENTS

NEWSLETTER of the WESTERN ZONE of the NEW YORK STATE RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

Volume 22, Number 2

[www.wzretiredteachers.org](http://www.wzretiredteachers.org)

Spring 2024



### Greetings from Your President

January 2024 brought us snow, snow, snow! February brings us a reminder of the love for our Western Zone members.

WZ committees work during the year. At our December 2023 Board of Directors meeting, we raised \$500 to donate to the WNY Veterans Housing Coalition from two raffles and a generous personal donation.

Some of our committees do most of their work in the beginning of the calendar year. The Scholarship Grant Committee is one such group. This committee supports active teachers within our five counties, (Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara). Letters that state the selection process, along with application forms, were sent the middle of January 2024 to the 5 counties of Western Zone. This selection process must be completed by April 30, 2024. Four scholarships, each in the amount of \$750, will be awarded. Two awards will be given for a cultural project and two awards for innovative classroom activities.

Our WZ nominations committee is chaired by Judy Farmer who is also the RENY Nominations Chair. They have requested letters of intent and

resumes for any of the elected officer vacancies. Please see the Nominations committee report in this newsletter if you are interested in holding an office or would like to serve on the WZ Board.

The Legislative Action Committee, lead by Marilyn and George Stephens, is working to formulate legislation that improves the quality of life for seniors and retired educators. Zoom meetings have been held on the state level. Please read their report in this newsletter.

Our Founders Foundation has an article in this newsletter that highlights donations to various food pantries and FeedMore WNY. Please read their article.

Our Community Service Committee, chaired by Ann Marie Wik, collected pajamas of all sizes and winter wear at our December meeting. These collections have been given to Haven House.

**Continued on page 3**

Michelle Claus  
RENY/Western Zone President  
716-481-5279 email: [joeclaus@msn.com](mailto:joeclaus@msn.com)

# SPOTLIGHT ON

## Spotlight on Thomas Giambra



### Western Zone Officers

**President**  
Michelle Claus

**1st Vice President**  
Carol Cascio

**2nd Vice President**  
Maria Hager

**Treasurer**  
Don E. Lawrence

**Recording Secretary**  
Nancy White

**Corresponding Secretary**  
Audrey Seidel

**Vice President for Membership**  
Karen Gembar

**Past President**  
Judy Farmer

Western Zone is proud to spotlight Thomas Giambra, a dynamic leader who is truly dedicated to achieving the goals of Western Zone.

Tom is the current Chair of the 12-member Friendly Service committee of our zone, a position he has held for the past 18 years. His committee sends cards to members celebrating their 80th, 85th, and 90th birthdays, as well as those 95 and over. This past year he personally sent 260 holiday cards to our members who are at least 90 years old. His work on this committee, often referred to as the “heart” of the Retired Educators of New York (RENY), continues to reflect his high level of positive energy and community engagement. He currently serves as the president of the Buffalo Retired Teachers Association and is on the Board of Directors for Western Zone.

Before retiring, Tom taught History at School 56 in Buffalo for 30 years, and was a teacher in the gifted and talented program. He served on the building committee in the school and was a Buffalo Teachers Federation delegate. For many years, Tom was a leader in the Boy Scout organization, helping young men learn life skills and prepare for future challenges.

As a youth, Tom worked with his father in a grocery store in Kenmore. Coming from an Italian family he learned to cook and still enjoys preparing popular and delicious dishes. After high school, he attended ECC and earned a certificate in Food Service Administration. He then earned his BA in History, and his EDM in Social Studies Education, both at UB. His loyalty to the University is present still, and he holds season tickets to the Bulls football games. Tom enjoys Buffalo Philharmonic concerts and plays the organ in his home. He bowls weekly, and in good weather, enjoys golfing. He is a US Army vet who proudly served his country.



*Tom Giambra with two of his Friendly Service Committee members, Marilyn Stephens & Anne Flansburg*

We salute you, Tom, and thank you for your service to our country, to active and retired educators and especially to the members of Western Zone.

### Zone Unit Presidents

**Buffalo RTA**  
Tom Giambra

**Eastern Erie RTA**  
Judy Farmer

**Genesee RTA**  
Marcia Riley

**Kenmore RTA**  
Joan Costello

**Lackawanna RTA**  
Tina Gambino

**Lancaster/Depew RTA**  
Karen Gembar

**Eastern Niagara RTA**  
Sandy Kelley

**Springville/West Valley RTA**  
Sharon Barley

**West Seneca RTA**  
Patricia Miceli

## President's Message

Continued from page 1

We are looking at adopting a new WZ logo. Sample logos were posted at the December 2023 meeting for discussion later this year. At our April meeting, we will look at the logos and decide to narrow the possible choices to 4. The final decision will be chosen at the September 18, 2024 Annual Meeting.

Our nine units of Western Zone and members number about 2300 members. These units represent areas where retired educators have taught or now live. Contact me and I will give you the name and number of the unit president for your area. Educators are involved!

The WZ Board of Directors has 31 members, 9 unit presidents and 9 elected officers that all guide the Western Zone. If you would like to be a guest at one of our meetings, please call Maria Hager at 716-307-3083. Meetings are April 17, May 15, and June 19, 2024. We welcome your involvement!

### **WESTERN ZONE SPECIAL OFFER**

April 1, 2023-March 31, 2024

Membership Inflation Deduction

- WESTERN ZONE Membership Inflation Deduction Rebate of \$10 for renewed annual dues payments that the RENY has sent you a payment form. Your renewal form must be postmarked by March 31, 2024.
- Annual dues payment forms also allow you to change to a one time only lifetime dues payment of \$900. WZ will send you a check for \$300. This may only happen if you have received your payment form from RENY within the time frame of January 1- March 31, 2024.
- Dues have increased as of January 1, 2024. Dues are yearly \$39 or lifetime dues of \$900.
- Dues payment forms are sent to annual members 2 months before your annual anniversary month. You may NOT pay your dues until RENY sends you the payment form reminder.
- Delinquent dues members, members that have NOT paid their dues from 2023 and prior years, may send in a \$39 annual dues payment to become a current RENY/Western Zone member.
- Please remember lifetime dues members you have already paid your lifetime dues.

## RETIRED EDUCATORS OF NY NEW MEMBER ENROLLMENT FORM AND PROFILE

Name (circle one) Mr. Miss Mrs. Ms. Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

(Circle one) Retired Educator Active Educator Associate (non-certified support staff) Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_

County of Residence \_\_\_\_\_ School Dist./College/Univ Retired From \_\_\_\_\_

Subject Area \_\_\_\_\_ Level Taught \_\_\_\_\_ Level of Admin if Applicable \_\_\_\_\_

### **Spouse Enrollment - OPTIONAL**

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name (circle one) Mr. Miss Mrs. Ms. Dr. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Retired Educator? Yes No (year retired) \_\_\_\_\_ Active Educator? Yes No State Retired From \_\_\_\_\_

School Dist./College/University Retired From \_\_\_\_\_

### **Payment Options**

I have enclosed my check or money order made out to NYSRTA/RENY in the amount of: \_\_\_\_\_

Charge my: VISA Mastercard Credit Card# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_\_ CVV \_\_\_\_\_

Print your name clearly as it appears on your card \_\_\_\_\_

Authorizing Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**JOINING IS EASY**

**Member Dues: \$39.00**

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#### **Mail to:**

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John Cardarella, Treasurer

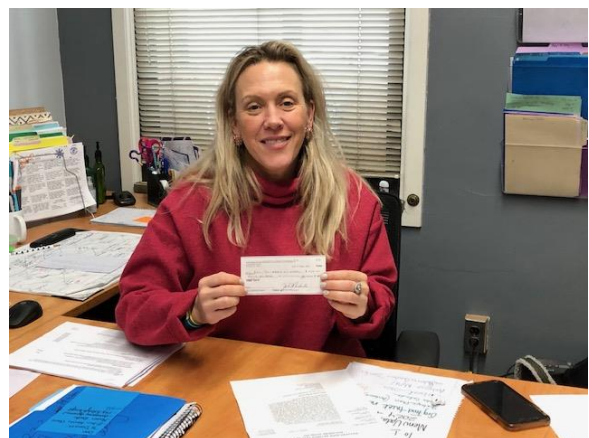
This year the Western Zone of the New York State Retired Teachers' Association, sponsored by Western Zone Retired Teachers' Founders' Fund, Inc. (a nonprofit 501c3) enabled us to continue our support of many local organizations. 2024 will see our donations increase to over \$8000.00! We were able to continue our donations from previous years as well as add a few new organizations. Along with FeedMore of WNY, Network in Aging of WNY and our local Meals on Wheels we were able to add **WNY Veterans Housing Coalition and St Susan Soup Kitchen (Jamestown).**

Checks were hand delivered by Michelle Claus (Springville), Vicky Smith (Jamestown), Karen Schlum (Niagara County) and Carol Casio (WNY Veterans Housing Coalition). I delivered checks to FeedMore WNY, Amherst, Ken-Ton, Niagara Falls and Twin City Meals on Wheels and South Buffalo Community Table. **Almost every one of the MOWs I visited was in need of more volunteers!**

The Distribution Committee consists of the following: Vicky Smith, Karen Schlum, Dolores Scanlon, Rob Roy Griffith and John Cardarella.



*Pam Chrzanowski,  
FeedMore Major Gift  
Officer, and John  
Cardarella*



*Jessica Nowak, Ken-Ton MOW Executive Director*





*Peggy Hess, Springville MOW's Secretary*



*South Buffalo  
Community Table, Linda,  
John & Carol, a retired  
West Seneca teacher*

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Pictured - Lew & Harriet McCauley with their dog Sunny

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**Below is a list of all our communities. Please feel free to reach out to learn more about all we have to offer. We are just a phone call away!**



Independent Living Communities

**Asbury Pointe Retirement Community**

50 Stahl Road ♦ Amherst, NY 14068  
Phone - 716-810-7500



**Presbyterian Village at North Church**

214 Village Park Drive ♦ Williamsville, NY 14221  
Phone - 716-810-7475



**Ken-Ton Presbyterian Village**

3735 Delaware Avenue ♦ Kenmore, NY 14217  
Phone - 716-810-7478



Skilled Nursing &  
Sub-Acute Short Term Rehabilitation

**Beechwood Homes**

100 Stahl Road ♦ Amherst, NY 14068  
Phone - 716-810-7000



**Wesley Rehabilitation Center**

2235 Millersport Highway ♦ Amherst, NY 14068  
Phone - 716-810-7000



**[www.beechwoodcare.org](http://www.beechwoodcare.org)**

## LANCASTER TRIP

### SPOTLIGHTING LIVE PRODUCTION OF DANIEL

Join the Western Zone Travel group **June 3 to June 5, 2024** on an exciting and educational trip to the **Lancaster, PA** area. While there, experience the original live production of **DANIEL**, one of the Bible's most hope-filled stories presented at the famous **Sight and Sound Theatre**. From the fiery furnace to the infamous den of lions, you will be spellbound by this diverse setting of **DANIEL**.

Dinner on day one will be at **Shady Maple Smorgasbord** - the largest buffet in the USA, and on day two a dinner prepared and served in an **Amish homestead** will be enjoyed. A **Strasburg Rail Road** will provide a 45 minute train ride through the scenic Dutch countryside. The **Lil' Country Store & Miniature Horse Farm** and shopping will be offered, as well as a **guided tour** of the Amish Country, with stops at craft and bake shops. The cost for this **all-inclusive** three day, two night trip is \$549 per person for double occupancy and \$698 for single occupancy.

For additional information and reservations contact Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or Ann Marie Wik at 716-228-2414.

## MICHIGAN'S MACKINAC ISLAND AND UPPER PENINSULA

The second 2024 trip for Western Zone travel group will be a five day, four night one, from September 23 – 27, 2024. It will feature **Mackinac Island**, and will include **Frankenmuth and the Upper Peninsula**,

Enjoy Michigan's "**Little Bavaria**" and browse in **Bonner's** Christmas Wonderland, followed by a family style dinner at the historic **Zehnder's** Restaurant. Travel North to experience a **hydro-jet ferry**, board a **horse-drawn carriage** for a narrated tour of the Island, enjoy the area near the **Grand Hotel**, and be in awe at a **lumberjack show**. Spend a day in the Upper Peninsula and visit the **Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum**, view the **Tahquamenon Falls** and enjoy lunch there. Board the cruise boat for a **two hour narrated cruise on St. Mary's River** and share in a dinner at the hunting lodge vibe of **Antlers Restaurant**.

The cost for this **all-inclusive** five day and four night trip is \$862 double occupancy and \$1131 single occupancy. For additional information and reservations contact Anne Flansburg at 716-863-3631 or Ann Marie Wik at 716-228-2414.



## Nominations Committee Information

Did you know that as a member of RENY you are eligible to serve on the Western Zone Board of Directors? All Directors serve a three-year term and are expected to attend Board of Directors meetings and serve on at least one committee. This provides Western Zone members with an opportunity to become actively involved in the zone by participating in decision making. It's also a great avenue for meeting other zone members and making new friends!

Although election to the board will not take place until the next Western Zone Annual Meeting in September of 2024, there are vacancies that need to be filled now. If you are interested in filling one of the vacancies, please send a Letter of Intent, stating that you wish to do so, and a resume to the email address given below.

If you are not sure, but are willing to consider serving as a Director, Letters of Intent and resumes for the Board of Directors Term ending in 2027 will be accepted beginning in April 2024.

Thank you,

Judith Farmer

Nominations Chairperson

[jfarmer2@rochester.rr.com](mailto:jfarmer2@rochester.rr.com)

## Health News

As seniors, I am sure we are all concerned about our memory. You may have noticed that facts "you know you know" just don't come to mind as quickly as they did before. If this is a concern for you, you might be interested in speaking to your doctor about a memory screening. I'm not referring to the task of remembering a series of words like apple, penny, table, or person, man, woman, camera, TV. While that task may be used as a rudimentary indicator of a concern, a memory screening is more involved. During a memory screening, the participant will be asked a series of questions that are geared to gauge memory and brain functions. The participant could be asked to identify objects or draw a specific item such as a clock face displaying a specified time. The results of a memory screening are not used to diagnose a particular illness, but may indicate that the participant could benefit from a followup with a physician or other clinician.

In my next article I will give more information on this topic

## **Legislative Action Committee Report (LAC)**

Following the last RENY meeting (December 2023), the LAC met twice on December 14, 2023 and January 16, 2024. During this time, the following items were discussed. At the December meeting, focus was on the NYS legislative agenda. This legislation was supported by LAC and related to preserving Retirees' Health Care benefits as well as issues concerning teacher retention.

Also discussed with legislators was an increase in COLA for the most senior retirees. Information on this meeting, as well as other meetings will be made available to Western Zone LAC members. The state legislation is currently awaiting RENY board approval.

At the second meeting (January 16, 2024), the LAC focused on Federal legislation; specifically, Medicare for all which would allow greater coverage for hearing, visual, and dental aspects. The same bill would also provide for increased funding by raising the cap (the amount before you no longer have to pay into Social Security). This cap would be raised to \$250,000. This would insure funding for Social Security well into the future.

Also discussed were possible plans regarding the elimination of student debt for teachers or at least reducing the interest on loans to make the loans more manageable.

The LAC will meet again on January 31, 2024 (per zoom meeting) to finalize details. As soon as we have those results, information will be made available to Western Zone Legislative Action members.

Marilyn and George Stephens, 1/28/24

## Your Action is Needed

Have you read the (NYSUT) Western N.Y. NEWS & VIEWS? This retiree newsletter came out the end of January, sent to you in the mail. An article about some of the inequalities of our present tier 6 are stated. The website: **fixtier6.org**, created by NYSUT, can also be viewed. You can write or call your state representatives to let them know your support of changing tier 6. Please help by defending and encouraging teaching as a worthy profession. Tier 6 has to be changed in order to attract and retain qualified teachers.

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Please be current on your RENY dues. Any questions, please call/text/email Michelle Claus,  
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