

April 10, 2019

Hello, CWZ and Unit Presidents,

I attended the Board of Directors meeting for the NYS Retired Teachers Assoc. this past Monday and Tuesday at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. I was reminded that my major role as Zone Co-President is to disseminate information from the State. Here goes:

We are the only NYS organization that advocates to better the lives of all retirees.

From the **TREASURER** – NTSRTA has a balanced budget because money was transferred from Insurance Trust Fund. This is legal as the money goes to help all members. NYSRTA has 1 ½ million dollars in assets, but at the rate we are losing members, this money may only last 10 years, unless something is done to increase membership. Latest quarter update: 179 deceased, 70 new members

The President's Appeal is a must to keep our heads above water. (Some already do this, but encourage Lifetime members to give to the Appeal).

The fiscal year is January 1 – December 31.

From the **PRESIDENT**, Kevin Mulligan SEE ATTACHMENT

Kevin wants to meet with each Zone. He was looking at the calendar to see when he could make it to a CWZ meeting and thought that it might be better if he came to our CWZ Annual Meeting. Do you like the idea of him being asked to be the keynote speaker or would you rather he bring greetings and that we procure another type of program speaker? Making connections and building relationships is a key factor in any organization.

The **MEMBERSHIP AND HEALTHCARE** reports were summed up in the President's Report. SEE ATTACHMENT

The Healthcare initiative was prompted by decisions of the BOE in Buffalo and Bay Shore on Long Island to change retirees' health insurance in a way that did not agree with the contracts. We need to monitor what is going on the school districts and stay on top of healthcare so that it is not taken from us. This is why the survey is so important. Kevin needs the data that we can supply so that he will know what the plan is in every district. He also would like to know what school districts fall into two counties. It would be helpful if each Unit would send me a list of the school districts in your unit AND the counties they are in. Are the counties that a district lies in part of the same Zone? If you are interested in being a monitor for our zone, please let me know. Kevin is planning to meet with the monitors and will explain what your jobs would be. (I.E. checking the newspapers for hints regarding possible issues; basically being the eyes and ears for the healthcare network).

We need to be more vigilant in getting names of retirees from each school district, even though the school can not give out addresses and phone numbers. That's the problem- We can get the names, but not the specifics. HOW can we?

Marketing and Membership – SEE ATTACHMENT

It doesn't seem right that 6 out of 60 unit presidents are not members of NYSRTA. Zone Presidents are encouraged to make sure that ALL UNIT members belong to the Zone/State Association. The new brand will

highlight again, but in a new way, all of the benefits of being a NYSRTA member. (Membership is \$30 /year – 8 cents a day.

There will be an incentive that will encourage NYSTRA members to recruit new members. If a member recruits 5 new never before members of NYSTRA), between now and October 1, s/he can win \$50.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION – I am extremely impressed with the State Chair, Janice Mullins. She was articulate and knowledgeable. I wish she could come to a CWZ meeting, but she lives about 4 hours away. These are the priorities

- Improve Pension COLA by increasing the base benefit amount upon which COLA increases are computed from \$18,000 to \$21,000. (This keeps it fair for school districts and retirees.)
- Encourage legislative support for increased funding directed at improving school safety including but not limited to mental health services. (NOTE- this initiative has passed both Houses and is awaiting approval from the Governor). [Our gun control resolution was not written well to explain where we stand. We, as NYSTRA, do not get politically involved with the legislation of gun control. . We need to word the resolution in a way that we support educators and students on safety issues (including mental health)
- NYSRTA supports legislation that would remove the mandate that State created or administered assessments be used to evaluate a teacher's or principal's performance. It's a school problem to find out what is wrong.) Opting out is a problem with the APPR, for one thing...There is a law that ELA and Math assessments can not be part of the APPR.
- Her hands are tied as far as lobbying for us unless we have submitted a resolution that has been properly approved. For example, she would have liked to speak against, on our behalf, about recreational marijuana, but couldn't.
- Jan told how difficult it is to determine the right thing to do. For example the NY Health Act is good for the school, but not for seniors. We have to decide which way we want to support the leg.

We had a Powerpoint presentation from Engine 7 Design that explained the reasons and process for a new "brand". If approved, the official name of NYSRTA will not change, but we will be known (DBA) as RENEY (Retired Educators of NY). This will put us apart from NYSUT, NYSTRS, NYCRTA, and others AND be more inclusive. (educators rather than only teachers) And besides, NYSRTA is not a NYS agency.

When we retired, we all became members of NYSRTA and NYSUT. It was very clear throughout discussions that NYSRTA and NYSUT are not on friendly terms. NYSUT is a union that does little to help retirees. The only time they get involved in a retirement issue, (like Buffalo Health care issue, for example) is if they are certain they will win. NYSRTA is not a union, but NYSUT is a strong union, fighting to get our members. Hopefully, the new new brand will help us be more distinguishable and members will want to join. As well as support our efforts)

Please mark your calendar! The 2019 NYSRTA Annual Convention will be at the Turning Stone Resort and Casino from Wednesday, October 9 through Friday, October 11. (These dates were chosen because they avoid any Jewish holidays, Halloween, All Saints Day, etc.) There was much discussion from Long Island (LIZ) and NEZ about the distance members have to travel to the convention site. The site was approved as it is centrally

located for most zones and delivers the best service and price.) Be thinking about becoming a delegate or alternate delegate.

FYI - Terms for officers – 3- one-year terms

NOMINATIONS – “Units fall apart when membership does not step up to take office.”

FRIENDLY SERVICE is an important and unique aspect of NYSRTA that allows us to stay in touch with members on a personal level.

To specifically address Vicki’s concern about the units needing financial help from the State, Kathi Bassett brought a handout that shows the amount of money that the treasurer of each unit receives from the State each month. Some of that money should help with the recruitment of new members and retaining old ones and the costs it takes to do that. (I forgot to bring up Bulk Mailing, but would this fall under this area.)

I like the direction NYSRTA is heading. We are having more opportunities to make a difference.

That’s all for now. If you have any questions and/or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

See you all on May 2.

Robyn