SUNY Retirees Conference Makes High-Tech Connections

by Pierre Radimak, SUNY Retirees Newsletter Editor and SUNY Retirees Service Corps Coordinator

Nearly 70 State University of New York (SUNY) campus retirees and administrators representing 18 campuses and four non-SUNY organizations converged on the SUNY College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE) in Albany, NY on November 20, 2013 for the third biennial SUNY Retirees Conference. The world-famous campus served as the backdrop for Connecting SUNY Retirees in the Digital Age, which was co-sponsored by SUNY CNSE, the University at Albany Emeritus Center, and the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC).

A variety of notable speakers addressed diverse topics, each with a connection to the role the Internet can play in improving the lives of SUNY retirees or providing opportunities for them to give back to their communities. The conference concluded with a guided tour of SUNY CNSE’s Albany NanoTech Complex.

The retirees event drew high praise from attendees. “I thought this conference was one of the best, if not the best. Kudos to all who made [it] happen,” said Bob Kasprak, Associate for Campus Services (Retired) for the SUNY College of Optometry and member of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council.

University at Albany Emeritus Professor Brian F. Head commented, “The conference was excellent, even better than I had expected. Also, I took the tour of the nano-facilities; very impressive.” Marilyn Huber, a SUNY System Administration retiree who had worked in the Office of the Board of Trustees and Secretary of the University, said of the conference, “It was all very interesting, informative, and well worth attending. I truly enjoyed such a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with former SUNY colleagues and to meet other SUNY retirees. And the tour of the new buildings of the Nanoscale College was excellent. Thank you!”

Following are summaries of the Connecting SUNY Retirees in the Digital Age conference presentations:

The SUNY Retirees Network: Linking SUNY Retirees through the World Wide Web Presentation

Julie Petti, Director of University-wide Human Resources, gave an overview of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) and a preview of the SUNY Retirees Network (SRN), an upcoming component of the SUNY RSC website designed to connect SUNY retirees via a secure online directory, promote online interaction among retirees, and connect interested retirees with volunteer opportunities.

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By using the SUNY Retirees Online Directory, Petti said SRN members will be able to securely look up and connect with other retirees who have registered for the Network and opted to be listed in the directory. The SUNY Retirees Interaction Service will allow retirees to securely interact and exchange information with one another through a chat feature as well as explore a variety of online resources. The Retirees Service Corps plans to launch a volunteer matching service after a sufficient number of retirees expressing an interest in volunteerism have registered for the SUNY Retirees Network. Information retirees provide will be used to match their interests and expertise with campus and community needs.

Petti said verified new and long-term retirees of SUNY’s state-operated and community colleges and affiliated organizations will be eligible to join the SRN. Retirees will be able to register on the SUNY RSC website as well as by mail, fax, and email attachment.

Petti gave conference attendees a demonstration of the SUNY Retirees Network test website, which included the online registration process, logging in to the SRN once an applicant’s retirement status has been verified, updating one’s online profile, the online directory search function, and a tour of the SUNY Retirees Interaction Service home page.

Once programming is complete, at least one campus will test the SUNY Retirees Network and its various elements before the service is announced system-wide. Petti said the tentative launch window is sometime in 2014.

Open SUNY: The Vision for SUNY’s 21st Century Online-enabled Environment Presentation

Carey Hatch, SUNY’s Associate Provost for Academic Technologies and Instructional Services, described Open SUNY (http://open.suny.edu/) as a system-wide effort designed to maximize online-enabled learning opportunities for all State University of New York (SUNY) students, current and future. He said Open SUNY, as a concept, seeks to support campuses and faculty in increasing access, completion, and success for their students. Hatch told conference attendees how Open SUNY draws on a rich history of innovative instruction within the SUNY system including the SUNY Learning Network (SLN), Empire State College Center for Distance Learning, and much more.

Open SUNY was introduced in January 2014, with the announcement of eight existing, high-need degree programs that will be enhanced with new student, faculty and course supports to improve student completion and success. Associate Provost Hatch told conference attendees the Open SUNY initiative will evolve over the next several years to include additional high-need degree programs, distinctive Open SUNY courses and campus collaborations, all focused on improving student access, completion and success.

“In order for Open SUNY to be successful,” Hatch said, “we must enlist all individuals that are willing and able to contribute.” He said SUNY retirees may wish to participate in the Open SUNY Center for Online Teaching Excellence, where they can engage in a community of practice, participate in professional development, and stay informed of opportunities to contribute. The Center’s website address is http://commons.suny.edu/facultycenter/.

The Center for Excellence in Aging & Community Wellness Presentation

Elaine Escobales, Assistant Director of Local Program Development and the Living Healthy NY Community Programs,
described the University at Albany-based Center for Excellence in Aging & Community Wellness (CEACW) as a translational research center that develops, tests, and promotes the adoption of effective, innovative practices and policies that address the needs of aging persons, their families and caregivers across New York State, with an emphasis on vulnerable and oppressed populations.

Escobales said the New York State Quality and Technical Assistance Center (QTAC), an arm of the CEACW, works with partner organizations throughout the state to disseminate information, support planning, conduct trainings, monitor progress, and improve the quality of evidence-based health wellness and disease prevention program efforts.

The CEACW, through its Living Healthy NY Community Workshops program, offers a variety of local evidence-based health and wellness workshops designed to help people gain confidence and skills that will assist them in improving health and quality of life. Escobales said these workshops are meant to serve as a model to create best practices for the NYS QTAC network of partners.

People across New York State can visit the CEACW website at http://ceacw.org/find-a-workshop to locate a workshop near them.

New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) Presentation

Reza Mizbani, NYSOFA’s Public Information Officer, described how the New York State Office for the Aging promotes and administers programs and services for New Yorkers who are 60 years of age and older. “Our core mission is to help older adults remain independent for as long as possible,” he said. “In carrying out this mission, we provide leadership and direction to 59 county-based Area Agencies on Aging which, along with a network of over 1,200 public and private organizations, caregivers and volunteers, serve and help empower many of New York’s 3.7 million older adults and their families.”

Mizbani told conference attendees that NYSOFA’s programs and services support older individuals at home and in the community. Those programs range from case management to health and wellness/disease management and prevention programs to those which provide supportive services, including senior centers, in-home services, transportation, adult day care, legal assistance, and other services.

Mizbani said the New York State Office for the Aging website, www.aging.ny.gov, is designed to provide essential information about programs and services for which older New Yorkers may be eligible, and link them to additional information and resources. NYSOFA’s Senior Citizens Help Line can be reached at 1-800-342-9871. A list of the local Area Agencies on Aging is available at www.aging.ny.gov/NYSOFA/LocalOffices.cfm.

SUNY and the Vibrant Community Presentation

Elise Newkirk-Kotfila, the State University of New York system’s Coordinator of Community Relations, spoke about SUNY and the Vibrant Community, one of Chancellor Nancy Zimpher’s “Six Big Ideas” outlined in The Power of SUNY: Strategic Plan 2010 & Beyond (http://www.suny.edu/powerofsuny/).

Newkirk-Kotfila shared information about service-learning, community service and civic engagement projects that have been ongoing throughout the system, giving particular examples of campus projects.

Throughout the conversation, she stressed the importance of volunteerism and the impact of SUNY retirees, who both support and volunteer their time to such projects. Newkirk-Kotfila made a commitment to work more closely with the group, especially in terms of sharing resources and volunteer opportunities using both the SUNY Retirees Service Corps and SUNY and the Vibrant Community websites (http://suny.edu/retirees and http://old.suny.edu/communityservice/).

Links to all of the conference PowerPoint Presentation and the UAlbany Emeritus Center video are available at http://old.suny.edu/retirees/conferences/2013RetConfPPTPresentations.cfm.
I enjoyed reading Augie Mueller’s story of his retirement in the Fall/Winter 2013 issue of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter (http://old.suny.edu/retirees/SUNY%20Retirees%20Newsletter%20Fall-Winter%202013%20web.pdf). I suspect there are others like me who envy the energy he still has at 80, which far exceeds mine at 64! And that is the reason I retired at age 62; chronic fatigue was making it hard to do my job as I believed it should be done.

As a professor of special education, I was passionate about my work – with my program, my professional organizations, and the public schools and agencies in my community. My work consumed so much of my time, energy and thought, I was afraid retirement might mean 30 years of vast nothingness.

I had other interests; I just wasn’t sure I had enough of them or the retirement income to support them. So I started making lists of ways I could spend my time. I had three categories: what I could do for free; what I could do for low cost; and what I would have to budget for. Within a day I had filled a page with my interests, mostly free and low-cost, so I let go of that worry and retired.

Some options were never pursued, and opportunities I never imagined have popped up. Sometimes I think, “If I knew I would be this busy, I could have kept working and gotten a nice paycheck!” But then I remember that, in retirement, I can do just what I want to do. And what I want to do is have options for activities that are outdoors and indoors, active and quiet, at home and in other parts of the world, with care for myself and care for my community.

I have always enjoyed gardening, and now I spend more of spring, summer, and fall in my own gardens as well as some gardens I’ve adopted. I become a “citizen pruner” assigned to prune street trees around my neighborhood, and I get appointed to the city’s Shade Tree Commission.

I dabble in other outdoor activities: swimming, bicycling, kayaking, hiking, and skiing. I just discovered free exercise classes at my local senior center, so I do that two mornings a week when it’s not so nice outside. My endurance isn’t great, so my activities are not all action-oriented.

When working I had little time to read for pleasure; now I’m in two book clubs and enjoying fabulous books. I can get most books from the public library, and many on CD (great for long drives); if not in my local library, their website lets me request books from elsewhere in our four-county library system.

Without work consuming my mind, I am able to meditate every day and I’ve attended two 10-day Vipassana meditation retreats. (They charge no fee!) I found a church that shares my passion for social justice and, since retirement, I’ve gotten involved in many activities there. A by-product of all these activities is that my friendship circles are expanding.

Travel is certainly my most expensive activity, due to the cost of gas. Most of my trips are by car in the northeastern US, and about once a year I go farther afield. My most recent trip, in February 2014, was a Road Scholar/Elderhostel tour of Cuba (http://www.roadscholar.org/). This “people-to-people” tour connected us with dancers, painters, potters, and photographers of all ages, as well as youth and seniors at community centers in Havana, Matanzas, Cardenas, and Varadero. While the country clearly suffers from deprivation of material goods, the people exude warmth, rich culture, and a strong commitment to education, for the arts as well as academics.

Cuba wasn’t in my travel plan for this year but it is one of those opportunities that appeared and I couldn’t pass it up. After all, I have no pressing deadlines and nowhere else I really must be. Today I have the freedom to enjoy whatever comes my way.

Do You Have A Retirement Story to Tell?

One of the objectives of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter is to share activities of SUNY retirees. We know many of you are doing great things in retirement. Your story can inspire others. Please share your and/or a colleague’s retirement story by contacting the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) at retirees@suny.edu.

Retirement stories that run in the SUNY Retirees Newsletter will also appear on the RSC website. For examples of such stories, visit http://old.suny.edu/retirees/retiree_experiences/experiences.cfm.
A Journey toward Remaking our Schools for the Twenty-First Century
by Robert L. Arnold, SUNY Professor Emeritus of Education, SUNY Plattsburgh

I began teaching for pay in 1952 in the way I saw others teaching – assigning readings, providing verbal explanations during class time, assigning homework, testing for recall each week, recording test scores in a record book (along with attendance) and entering aggregate scores on a report card that was sent home after each ten-week period. I spent much of my class time reprimanding recalcitrant students who were as bored with the process as I was, maybe more so.

I grew up on a nearly self-sufficient farm in the Adirondacks with a growing season of less than ninety days. My parents and twelve children ran the farm, scratching and digging in the glacier-strewn and rock-filled topsoil, and reading with kerosene lamps. I am the youngest of twelve children, six boys and six girls. I doubt, judging from our financial condition, that it was “cheaper by the dozen.”

When World War II came along, my brothers and sisters had moved on, leaving me with responsibility for farming under rationing conditions connected to the war effort. Combining this experience with going to school sixteen miles away, my time for study was seriously constricted. I used the time on the bus to memorize my history lessons and copy someone else’s homework for my chemistry class. Between the laborious work on the farm and the irrelevant work in school, I couldn’t wait to escape from my perceived imprisonment.

Teachers seemed uninterested in my home life and I grew to feel ashamed of it, being isolated from my friends, wearing hand-me-downs and carrying the smell of the cow barn on my shoes. As I get older, I often reflect on the loss I endured by not being able to fully capitalize on learning about matters of real importance in my life. Had the school been even slightly interested in what I was experiencing, it might have made a difference. At least that is what I have come to believe.

Being unhappy with life and bored with the tactics and strategies of schooling, I adopted a mission to do something about it. My recent book, Remaking Our Schools for the Twenty-First Century – A Blueprint for Change/Improvement in our Educational Systems, and numerous other publications represent a significant achievement in fulfilling that mission. The book is built upon my experiences teaching in primary schools to post-graduate education, with over fifty years in teacher education. I have authored many funded projects to help point the way to effective and sustainable educational reform, with limited long-term success. The “hardening of the categories” among educators and the lay public regarding the nature and function of effective school systems has restricted the acceptance and implementation of my work, while I, along with many of my students, have witnessed first-hand the extraordinary value in its message.

In spite of the frustrations connected with not seeing more progress in sensible reforms, I must acknowledge the important opportunities I had through the public school systems in which I lived, learned, and worked. Beginning with my attendance in public schools and later at a public institution as a teacher candidate, teaching in public elementary and secondary schools, followed by a stint in the U.S. Army as a Troop Information and Education NCO, then as a remedial reading teacher during summer school, and then back to my alma mater as a demonstration teacher in its campus school; these varied experiences proved to be quite eye-opening.

I was hired to teach the sixth grade in the Congdon Campus School at the State University of New York at Potsdam, doing what most teachers were doing. During parent conferences at the end of the year, a former history professor came to his conference with blood in his eye to talk about his daughter’s experience and mine. He stated in no uncertain terms that I was the worst history teacher he had ever seen. To this charge, I hesitantly agreed, but noted that I had taken a history course from him when he was a professor, so it was not all my fault.

The late Dr. Charles Lahey (then Professor of History at Potsdam) taught his classes using primary source documents. I didn’t realize at the time the importance of that experience. However, as a result of the encounter over my teaching of history, a partnership emerged with Dr. Lahey that enabled me, along with my seventh- and eighth-grade students, to learn what it meant to create historical knowledge the way historians do. This represented for me an epiphany.

Dr. Lahey, working with me and my students, assembled a library of primary source documents about the early history of St. Lawrence County and later all the other counties throughout New York State and the United States. Using these documents, we created our history and compared our conclusions with other historians. This led to Lahey and I developing the Discovery Approach to the Teaching of Social Studies, published in 1958. Subsequently, I returned to Teachers College Columbia University and studied with Professor Philip Phenix, participating in the research for his book entitled Realms of Meaning – A Philosophy of the Curriculum for General Education, published in 1964. This book addresses not only the discipline of history, but all other disciplines as creative processes classified within the six realms of meaning; Synnoetics, or self-knowledge, is given a primary role as a source of meaning; Empirics

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includes all sciences, including social sciences; Aesthetics encompasses all the arts and architecture; Synoptics includes history, geography and cultural anthropology; Symbolics involves mathematics and all other languages; and Ethics is recognized as an essential realm of meaning that deals with matters of morality.

In a project at Jersey City State College I demonstrated how when disciplines from each of the six realms of meaning were placed in the hands of students as ways of creating knowledge, it resulted in high levels of personal competency especially important for teachers. The successes of that project led to changes in teacher education at the State University at Plattsburgh, New York. These changes were based on well-researched models of individual development and learning, communication and group development, with a particular emphasis on the disciplines as ways of creating and communicating knowledge, as well as employing systems-oriented assessment and evaluation strategies.

My book, Remaking our Schools for the Twenty-First Century – A Blueprint for Change/Improvement in our Educational Systems, features six innovations designed to bring about sustainable systemic reforms, contrasted with today’s disastrous movement toward a version of standardization based on erroneous and incomplete assumptions. The innovations include: 1) A systems-oriented Constructive Assessment, Recordkeeping and Evaluation System (CARES); 2) A comprehensive systems design compatible with new educational technologies supported by authorities of systems theory; 3) Descriptions of validated theories representing a common ground as the foundations for innovation; 4) A common curriculum based on implementation of all “realms of meaning”; 5) An emphasis on the importance of in-depth local studies using primary source documents; and 6) A proposed democratic organization modeled after our constitutional governing processes, with an Instructional Branch, A Management Branch, and a Quality Assurance Branch. This model provides a balance of power that places curricular decision-making more clearly with those who actually deliver instruction. Such a participative organization encourages wider involvement and shared responsibility for improving and maintaining a cost-effective school system.

Change is typically accompanied by fear of the unknown and a reluctance to try something different. Since few people have directly experienced the combination of elements of systemic change described in my book, Remaking our Schools for the Twenty-First Century – A Blueprint for Change/Improvement in our Educational Systems, and even though it contains a detailed outline of recommended changes based on experiences that are supported by the extensive literature of reputable scholars, acceptance and implementation by educators and the lay public presents a formidable challenge.

The initial step in the change process can be taken by any school with a minimum of cost and training by installing the Constructive Assessment, Recordkeeping and Evaluation System (CARES), which is a systems-oriented approach to assessment and evaluation that is individualized, authentic, open-ended, rigorous and accurate, and which utilizes the latest technology available today. The CARES procedure is designed to replace the current version of a common core curriculum and the uses of standardized tests. Concrete experiences with the CARES process will demonstrate the extraordinary improvements that will accrue in the lives of students and their teachers.

Successful implementation is underway in field testing the advanced Dropbox™ technology for maintaining individualized student records of learning experiences and what was accomplished with those experiences.

Remaking our Schools for the Twenty-First Century is available through www.robertlarnold.com. I can be reached at remakingourschools@willex.com.
Healthy Aging

Searching for the Fountain of Youth

by L. Thomas Wolff, MD, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus, Upstate Medical University

Editor’s Note: Dr. Wolff is chair of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council.

Searching for ways to maintain our youth has been a pursuit of mankind for millennia. Herodotus (450 B.C.), Alexander the Great (340 B.C.) and Ponce de Leon (1513 A.D.) are a few who thought they had discovered the Fountain of Youth. Today, the anti-aging business is trying to sell the same myth, but packaged differently and making billions of dollars with the effort.

We continue to age, and so we study ways to manage this process. In medicine we call this study geriatrics. I would like to explore geriatric medicine vs. the anti-aging movement, again turning to Dr. Juergen Bludau’s book, Aging But Never Old. (1)

Geriatrics: A Definition

Geriatrics is the specialty of medicine that focuses on the care of older adults, those 65 and older. The focus is mainly on management of chronic disease and supportive care of patients and their caregivers. Geriatricians are physicians who specialize in this care, but interns and family physicians do as well, especially those with added training who have a Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) in Geriatrics. This is a special designation of the American Board of Internal Medicine and American Board of Family Medicine. Even if they don’t have this designation, interns and family physicians are often well versed in the care of the elderly.

Differences Between Older and Younger Patients

What makes older patients different that requires the knowledge of geriatrics? Older adults differ from younger ones in five significant ways: heterogeneity, homeostasis, comorbidities, different disease presentations, and the difference between acute and chronic diseases. Read on for an explanation of these terms and their significance.

Heterogeneity. As people age, they become more heterogeneous – that is, more and more different in relation to their health and medical needs. For example, a group of 40-year-olds are generally healthy, fit, have virtually no chronic diseases, and rarely visit the doctor. On the other hand, a group of 80-year-olds might range from a fit, jet-setter taking no medications to a frail, wheelchair-bound person on several medications living in a nursing home, and everything in between.

Homeostasis. This refers to our body’s narrowing (stenosis) ability to withstand stress, such as an infection, a fall, injury, or even medications. A younger person may fight off a cold easily with a few days of aches and discomfort and be helped by over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. The same viral illness in an older person may result in pneumonia, dehydration, or a fall. The OTC medications can cause more severe side effects or interact with other medications the older person is taking.

Comorbidities. Older persons tend to have an increase in the number of medical conditions (comorbidities) present at the same time. This is of concern in that the treatment of one might interfere with the treatment of another, or the treatment for one might even worsen another. Drug interactions can become a problem as well.

Different Disease Presentation. Diseases may show up differently in older adults. The crushing chest pain and feeling of impending doom in someone younger with a heart attack might show up as a stomach ache, feeling nauseous and extreme fatigue in an older person. Pneumonia in a young adult might present as breathlessness, cough, and fever, but present as confusion, poor appetite, or a propensity to fall in an older adult.

Chronic versus Acute Diseases.

Finally, older adults tend to visit their physicians more frequently for worsening of a chronic condition, rather than a new acute problem. This poses more challenges in diagnosis and treatment as these people are already being treated for these conditions.

Consequently, treating older persons is a more complex and challenging process that, more often than not, involves helping them and their caretakers manage disease rather than cure it.

The Anti-Aging Movement

The anti-aging movement is both medicine and business. Let’s look at some of what it has to offer. Its market includes cosmetic treatments and surgery, vitamins, minerals and supplements, hormone replacement, diet and exercise, and genetic engineering.

Cosmetics. There is a dazzling array of anti-aging creams, lotions and potions which the FDA classifies as cosmetics having no medical value. Retinol, hydroxyl acids, copper peptides, kinetin and tea extracts are the most common ingredients found in these products. There is no guarantee these will work and they can be very costly. Some anti-wrinkle creams have been shown to reduce wrinkles, but they do not really treat aging. (2) They just cover up a normally-occurring phenomenon.

Antioxidants and Vitamin Supplements. Like cosmetics, these products are not regulated by the FDA, so you cannot be sure what a variety of these products contain or how effective they are. Some may interact adversely with...
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medications you are taking. Vitamins have a specific daily allowance for good health and mega-doses of vitamins will not enhance their effects, but may cause harm. None of these products have demonstrated anti-aging effects.

**Hormone Replacement.** Certain hormones such as testosterone, estrogen, growth hormone and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) are known to decrease with age. Some of these hormones are used to treat certain specific conditions, but not to treat aging. (3, 4) Unfortunately, estrogen replacement therapy, thought at one time to be a boon for women, has turned out to increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, breast cancer and blood clots. (5) Human growth hormone (HGH) is successfully used in patients that have known growth hormone insufficiency when administered by injection. Pill or spray form does not work. There are no studies that show that giving HGH in any form to older adults without a deficiency has any benefit and you could wind up with joint and muscle pain, diabetes, or heart disease. (6)

**Resveratrol.** “Drink your red wine” is now one of the newest anti-aging idioms. Resveratrol is the micronutrient in the skin of grapes that is causing all this hullabaloo. It does activate an enzyme called SIRTI which engenders new mitochondria (our cells’ power source) in muscle and other tissues, thereby supposedly boosting the body’s metabolism. According to the Resveratrol website (www.resveratrol.com), this could result in “less weight gain, prevention of diabetes, prevention of cancer, increase exercise endurance, prevention of strokes, and heart disease, (and) prevention of Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.” (7) Is this the new anti-aging wonder drug? Its claims are still being investigated. A nice review of Resveratrol is found at the website of the Linus Pauling Institute on Micronutrient Research. (8) For me, I will drink my red wine (in moderation of course), as it is certainly one of the joys of living and helps me cope with my aging body. If it really does more than that, it’s a bonus.

**Genetics and Stem Cells.** Gene manipulation and stem cell therapy are on the cutting edge of possible anti-aging therapies. Tinkering with genes has indeed resulted in life extension in yeast, fruit flies, nematodes and mice. However, we are just at the dawn of this research and far from commercially using these methods to treat aging.

**Exercise and Weight Reduction.** Caloric restriction may be the best bet of all the anti-aging strategies. In animal studies, limiting calorie intake resulted in longer life in some animals. There are no scientific studies in humans, but we know that a proper diet, exercise and weight control can lower blood pressure, and cholesterol, help in managing diabetes, and help in managing heart disease and arthritis. It also reduces the risk of complications of all these diseases and chances are it will reduce the risk of death and disability. However, nothing guarantees a long life.

In conclusion, aging is a process we can help to manage by good nutrition, exercise, early treatment of disease and effective disease management. There is no magic pill, potion, or poultice I am aware of that will stop aging. If there was, I’d be using it!

As Sofia Loren once said, “There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.”

“Searching for the Fountain of Youth” References:
(1) Bludau, Juergen. Aging But Never Old: The Realities, Myths, and Misrepresentations of the Anti-Aging Movement, Praeger, 2010
(7) “Is Resveratrol the New Wonder Supplement?,” http://www.resveratrol.com/
How to Take Your Medications Properly and Safely

by Frances S. Hilliard, RN, MS,
Professor of Nursing (Emeritus),
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Currently, two-thirds of patient visits end with the health care provider writing a prescription. More than ten percent of Americans today take five or more different drugs. According to the FDA, medication errors (including drug interactions – taking drugs that don’t mix) cause at least one fatality per day, and account for about 1.3 million adverse reactions or patient injuries per year.

Patients and their families need to be active participants in their health care, and this includes the medications they take. The goal of drug therapy is to provide the greatest benefit with the least risk, and in order to achieve this goal, patients must be well-informed about their medication regimens. Patient non-adherence to drug therapy – skipping doses or discontinuance of medications – can result in serious medical issues, hospital stays, or even death.

Communication between patients and health care providers is at the heart of proper and safe taking of medications. When a drug is prescribed for you, be sure to ask questions:

- Why do I need this drug?
- How does this drug work? How long will it take to work?
- What change(s) should I expect when the drug is working?

What are the common side effects of this drug? How can they be avoided or minimized? Which side effects are the most serious?

What should I do if I experience any side effects?

What should I do if the drug doesn’t seem to be working?

Remember that physicians are not your only source of information. Pharmacists and nurses are usually able to answer your questions about medications, and often have more time to spend with you. However, the health care practitioner who prescribed the medication for you should be the final decision maker about the drug.

Because there are numerous factors that can influence how a drug acts in your body, it is important to know the correct ways to store and take medications. Be sure to keep all drugs in their original containers, which helps protect against the effects of light and moisture. Avoid extremes of temperature or humidity, which can cause drugs to deteriorate and lose effectiveness. Some drugs require special storage, such as refrigeration. Do NOT store medications in the bathroom. Always read the labels on medication containers, and be sure to check expiration dates.

When you take a drug can also be important. What time(s) of day are best? Do I take this drug with food or on an empty stomach, or doesn’t it matter?

It is also essential to know about potential interactions between two drugs or between drugs and certain foods. Remember that drug interactions can involve not only prescription medications, but also herbal remedies and over-the-counter drugs. Again – read the label and ask questions.

Here are some additional hints to keep you safe and well:

- Take all medications exactly as prescribed.
- Do not stop taking a drug without consulting your health care practitioner. Abrupt discontinuance of certain medications, especially those for cardiovascular conditions, can prove very dangerous. They must be tapered off.
- Have all prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy, so that they have a complete “drug profile” of you. This is especially important for avoiding drug interactions.
- Keep a wallet card that lists all your medications – prescription, herbal, and over-the-counter – including dose, route, frequency, and indication.
- Be sure to provide your complete medication profile to all your health care providers.
- Use assistive devices if necessary to remind you about taking medications.
- Find out how to safely discard of any drugs that are outdated or no longer needed.
Campus Retiree Program Profile

SUNY Upstate Medical University’s “Retiree Associates”
by John C. Farruggio, Human Resources Benefits Manager

Born out of the efforts & vision of the Human Resources Benefits Office and the local UUP Chapter at Upstate Medical University, the “Retiree Associates” initiative was created in 2009. The purpose and focus of the group was based on multiple objectives that included:

1. Providing a means for allowing professional (non-emeritus status) retirees to remain involved with Upstate’s noble mission in the community;
2. Being a viable means to help retirees stay up-to-date on what’s happening on campus; and
3. Supporting retirees’ interest in volunteering their time and expertise.

The immediate benefits of enrollment in this well-respected group include:

- **Campus I.D. Cards** – Eligible retirees may obtain a Retiree Associate non-employee I.D. card at any time following retirement. These cards generally entitle retirees to privileges that require possession of an I.D. card, allowing for ease of security access into different buildings such as the hospital, the library, and campus activities.
- **E-mail Access** – Retiree Associates maintain access to SUNY Upstate’s e-mail system through their old GroupWise email account.
- **Library Privileges** – Members retain borrowing library privileges that include remote access to e-mail journals, e-books, and databases.
- **Campus Activities and Upstate Discounts** – Retiree Associates are entitled to use the Campus Activities Building (CAB) exercise/recreational facilities at the same membership fees as active-duty personnel. Additionally, members receive a free OASIS membership and are eligible for a one-time $20.00 gift certificate that can be used towards the processing fee for trimester course registration. OASIS is a unique educational program for mature adults who want to continue to grow, learn and be productive during the best years of their lives. OASIS offers a broad range of stimulating educational classes – from the arts and humanities to wellness, fitness and travel. To learn more about the Syracuse-area OASIS program, which is supported by Upstate Medical University, go to [http://www.oasisnet.org/Cities/East/SyracuseNY.aspx](http://www.oasisnet.org/Cities/East/SyracuseNY.aspx).
- **Enrollment in Upstate’s Vitality Fitness Program** – Members have access to the Institute for Human Performance (IHP) facilities for this senior fitness program offered in conjunction with the OASIS program. This is generally a no-cost service, depending on the extent of activities members elect to participate in. For details, visit [http://www.upstate.edu/vitality/](http://www.upstate.edu/vitality/).
- **SUNY PerksCard Program** – Enables members of the SUNY family, including retirees and their family members, to save money on many of their everyday LOCAL purchases, including: dining, retail, auto services, pet needs, home services, health & beauty, fitness, recreation, travel, entertainment and much more. For additional information, see the “Save Money with SUNY Retiree Discounts” article by Gina Blume on page 15.
- **Receipt of Campus Publications** – Retiree Associates members are included on home mailing lists for various marketing and public affairs materials, allowing them to stay current on campus news and developments.
- **Involvement in Community Service Projects and Fundraising Events** – Retiree Associates are given the opportunity to participate with “Team Upstate” or volunteer with the SUNY Upstate Medical University Foundation or the Advocates for Upstate, which assist Upstate accomplish its goal of community involvement. Such service includes volunteering for events like the “Upstate Open” (annual golf tournament), the annual Community Giving Campaign and various other events, including “Mystery, Malt, & Merlot,” the “Heart Walk,” and the “Tour de Cure.”

Based on the wide variety of benefits that are offered to the members of the Retiree Associates, participation in this group has grown to point that there are now 46 active retirees on campus. What has helped the growth of this initiative is the fact that the Upstate HR Benefits Office meets with all employees before they retire. A big part of the retirement process for professional employees includes a review of the program application and the advantages of enrolling as a “Retiree Associate.” This approach has resulted in 100% participation since the program began! In fact, a few retirees who retired before 2009 called the HR Benefits Office to enroll after hearing about the Retiree Associates initiative.

Our members personify the motto of the Upstate Retiree Associates group: “Life begins at retirement…..”

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact me at (315) 464-4942 or [farruggj@upstate.edu](mailto:farruggj@upstate.edu).
Upstate Medical University Faculty Retirement Workshop
— What You Should Know

Too often, employees in academia are so focused on their careers and assisting those around them (whether in teaching, research, or patient care) that they lose sight of what they need to do personally in preparation for the retirement phase of their life. Before they realize it, 25, 30, or 40 years have passed by and they are unsure how to go about retiring or assuming a new role in the next stage of their career.

On September 10, 2013, Upstate Medical University in Syracuse held a pre-retirement workshop for interested faculty that included a presentation by John Farruggio, Human Resources Benefits Manager; Paula Trief, Ph.D., Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Development, and Professor of Psychiatry and Medicine; and a panel discussion by three recent Upstate faculty retirees: Dr. Margaret MacDougall, Emeritus Professor of Medicine, Dr. Michael Ratner, Emeritus Professor of Surgery, and Dr. Gregory Threatte, Emeritus Professor and Chair of Pathology.

The event was attended by approximately 60 Upstate faculty and professional staff who had an opportunity to hear directly from those who could best answer questions about the “nuts and bolts” of the retirement process from a benefits standpoint, some of the challenges of retirement, and learn about what retirement is actually like from those who recently retired.

John Farruggio’s presentation included a comprehensive overview of what the criteria are for retiree health insurance, how important sick leave accruals are to off-setting NYSHIP retiree health insurance premiums, and how Medicare is coordinated with the NYSHIP coverage.

Dr. Trief then presented insights on the emotional and interpersonal challenges that retirees might expect after they are no longer working. She helped them consider how important it is to continue to engage in both physically and intellectually stimulating activities, and reflect on their own needs and those of their family members as they create a gratifying new phase of life.

Finally, the members of the Retiree Panel discussion described the benefits of their “new-found” life as retirees. All noted that retirement “agreed” with them, and that while their schedules had changed, they were still very busy with things they were unable to do when working. Examples included traveling, spending time with family, catching up with things around the house, volunteering, as well as teaching part-time. The recently-retired panel members also emphasized the importance of planning, both financial and personal, to ensure that one’s retirement years are satisfying and fun.

Upstate Medical’s retirement workshop was very well-received by attendees. Some of the post-event survey comments included:

• “Tips on retirement were great!”
• “The retiree panel discussion was truly helpful.”
• “Steps to Retirement” was the best part.”
• “Helped me better understand my retiree health insurance benefits.”

Additionally, commenters asked Upstate to hold more of this type of presentation, and include information on Social Security/Medicare benefits, information on part-time employment options, as well financial planning and understanding tax implications of retirement.

The primary concept the participants took away from the September workshop is that it is never too early to plan for retirement and that life can be good, and even better, after retirement if one sees this phase less as a “withdrawal” and more as a time of opportunity and growth.

While the workshop was for Upstate Medical University faculty and professional staff considering retirement, the topics covered could easily apply to future retirees from any of SUNY’s 64 campuses. To see a video of the presentation that also includes PowerPoint slides, go to http://amms.upstate.edu/c/facdev/20130910-155505-WH-2231/index.htm.

For more information, contact John Farruggio at FarruggJ@upstate.edu.

Upstate plans to hold similar retirement workshops in 2014.
AROHE Conference Offers Resources for Retiree Organizations

by Sue Barnes, Director, UC Davis Retiree Center and President, AROHE

SUNY retiree organization leaders are encouraged to attend the 2014 Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) biennial conference from August 10 – 12, hosted by the University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA)*. With the theme “Colleges, Universities and Retirees: Building Connections,” the conference will stimulate discussion and provide opportunities to network with colleagues from across North America. This year’s conference will offer further opportunities to build connections as it is scheduled to directly follow the Big 10 Retirement Organization conference in Minneapolis.

The conference program will include keynote and plenary talks, workshops, special interest group sessions, and networking events.

Linda Pearson, the conference program chair, conducted a survey of AROHE members to gauge the topics of greatest interest to potential attendees. The highest-ranking topics included:

- Efforts to engage and involve different groups of retirees, including faculty retirees, recent/younger retirees and older retirees in the retirement organization
- Securing support from the university/college for the retiree organization
- Advocacy of benefits and rights on behalf of retirees
- Collaborating or coordinating with the human resources office to offer information or programs
- Communications (newsletters, email, social networking)
- Marketing & advertising
- Efforts to recognize the contributions of retirees
- Adapting to change and transition

These and other topics, along with opportunities for conference attendees to share successful practices and brainstorm solutions to common challenges, will provide resources for SUNY leaders to develop and enhance their retiree organizations.

The AROHE conference will also feature two respected speakers:

- Dr. Phyllis Moen will deliver the Paul Hadley keynote address, titled “End of One Way: Beyond Career and Retirement Mystiques,” to open the conference. Dr. Moen is a highly-respected professor and researcher in the field of careers, gender, families and well-being over a person’s lifetime. She has authored several books, including *The Career Mystique: Cracks in the American Dream* (2005, with Pat Roehling) and *It’s About Time: Couples and Careers* (2003).
- Former United States Senator David Durenberger will deliver a plenary talk on the second day of the conference. A national leader in healthcare reform, Durenberger served as the senior U.S. Senator from Minnesota from 1978 to 1995. During his time in the Senate, he served as chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence and as chairman of the Health Subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee.

Conference registration information is available on the AROHE website, [http://arohe.org](http://arohe.org). Materials include a “Conference Justification Toolkit” for organizations who wish to request money from their colleges/universities to send one or more representatives to the conference. Many retiree organizations with small budgets have successfully lobbied for campus funding by demonstrating that attendance at the conference will benefit not only the retiree organization but the campus as a whole.

Questions about the conference should be directed to the AROHE office at [info@arohe.org](mailto:info@arohe.org).


COMMENTS, CONTENT SUGGESTIONS?

We value your input and want to hear from you! Please drop us a line at retirees@suny.edu if you have anything you’d like to say about this issue of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter or if you have something you’d like to see us include in future issues. Whether it be events listings, retiree accomplishments, an In Memorium section, a story idea, or some other type of content, let us know and we’ll see what we can do!
How Wise Were We, or Can We Become?
Review of *30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans* by Karl Pillemer

*by Sharon F. Cramer, Ph.D. (Reviewer)*
SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emerita

**Editor’s Note:** Sharon F. Cramer, Ph.D. loved her 26-year career at Buffalo State, and now enjoys the freedom to experiment with a variety of options for thinking, writing and a post-work fondness for photography.

As SUNY retirees, we benefit from each other – and the shared context for some aspects of our lives that remain mysterious to family and friends. Prompted by questions from those outside academia like “So, what did you used to do?” or “Tell me, what do you do now?,” we are invited on pursuits for authentic answers about our lives – as they were, are, and will be.

If those invitations for reflection intrigue you, you are likely to find *30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans* by Karl Pillemer (2011, Penguin Group) to be fascinating. Pillemer, a gerontologist and founder of the Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging, sought answers to questions about life’s meaning. His five-year research project involved gathering data from approximately 1,200 individuals aged 65 or older, who he refers to as “experts.”

Pillemer’s impressive academic scholarship (five books, over 100 scientific journal articles) and research background enabled him to put together a highly readable book that achieves his goal of distilling the interview content into “concrete, practical advice.” (p. 2)

Pillemer’s project staff members enticed his participants into articulating descriptions of, and insights about, key moments of their lives. *30 Lessons for Living* is a densely-packed book that avoids scholarly jargon, instead giving us a glimpse into the experts’ diverse life experiences, aspirations and deductions, illustrating their differences as well as what they have in common. We can see ourselves, and many of our SUNY colleagues, throughout this book.


Pillemer provides a combination of personal stories, narrative connections, and personal reflections to make each lesson resonate. He offers readers opportunities to face their own qualms about aging, illustrating a range of reflections. He then shares his own observations, such as:

“My ... surprise was the experts’ view of aging as a quest. They acknowledge that growing old is uncharted territory, a transition to a world that does not have the clear road map of middle age, with its defined career ladder and child-rearing responsibilities. But many experts described it with a sense of exploring a new land, of novel opportunities to be seized and interests to be developed. Rather than a time of decline, many of America’s elders see aging as an adventure.” (p. 132)

In refusing to carve up the ideas into neat, non-contradictory axioms, Pillemer offers all readers the opportunity to be part of the conversation the book begins. If you would like to investigate the choices made by his experts (people aged 65 and up), as well as learn more about the research project, go to [http://legacyproject.human.cornell.edu/](http://legacyproject.human.cornell.edu/).

**30 Lessons for Living: Sampling of Themes and Lessons that Resonate for SUNY Retirees**

**Theme 2: “Glad to Get Up in the Morning: Lessons for a Successful and Fulfilling Career”**

Although it may seem natural for us, as retirees, to skip the “career” section, the theme’s title and ideas within the theme are relevant. Does the phrase “Glad to get up in the morning” describe your current life? Pillemer’s experts were looking back at their careers, but our current career – retirement – can particularly benefit from these two lessons: “Don’t give up on looking for a job that makes you happy” and “Everyone needs autonomy.”

In our case, “job” might mean the way we spend time each day – whether volunteering, reading, grand-parenting, or learning a new skill. Following a private

*Continued on page 14*
perusal of your time, imagine the spirited analysis Pillemer’s experts would offer as you read their advice. In what ways do we give ourselves the push we need to make ourselves truly content? How do we productively contrast our lives with those of our neighbors, family members, and friends? Some of the experts described jobs they chose, in some cases after leaving others, that were satisfying in unexpected ways. Our challenge is to make the most of our post-SUNY careers. For example, we have the freedom to decide when to “retire” from post-work habits that have diminishing satisfaction, or demand of us what we no longer enjoy giving.

Theme 5: “Find the Magic: Lessons for Aging Fearlessly and Well”
Obsolete experiences: searching for parking, grading papers, stacking meetings, sorting e-mails. If we follow the advice of the experts, “Act now like you will need your body for a hundred years,” we will make fewer excuses for not taking care of our bodies. We are warned: these bodies might last us many more decades, and will be easier to care for if healthy. Whether you build upon your SUNY accomplishments, or go after altogether fresh experiences, search for your “magic” in this post-SUNY time. You may come to find, as the experts did, that “Being old is better than you think.”

Theme 6: “Choose Happiness: Lessons for Living like an Expert”
Of all six themes in Pillemer’s book, this one gives us ultimate responsibilities for our lives. What we do each day, the messages we give ourselves, can bridge the gap between what was wished for, but not attained, and our newly created, evolving normal. Evaluate what you can do to incorporate “Happiness is a choice, not a condition” into your mindset, relationships, and purposeful decisions.

In Conclusion
Accept the invitation Pillemer offers: enjoy the perspectives of the experts in 30 Lessons for Living: Tried and True Advice from the Wisest Americans, while also reflecting on your own life. Contrast your SUNY years (and life outside SUNY) with the vivid stories and conclusions that fill the book. Pillemer’s friendly narrative voice, and his personal search for his own answers, put the experts’ stories into context.

Consider sharing your own story on the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website at http://old.suny.edu/retirees/retiree_experiences/retiree_experiences.cfm. Or, start your own conversation. If picking up Pillemer’s book provides the framework and the impetus for you to initiate a single substantive conversation with a friend or relative (older or younger), it will meet his wish, “to see [these] discussions taking place around dinner tables across America.” (p. 254)

While writing her book review of 30 Lessons for Living, Sharon Cramer asked herself, “How do SUNY retirees view retirement?” and “What have our experiences been?”

To find out, the Buffalo State retiree designed a short online survey to give retirees of SUNY’s state-operated and community college campuses the opportunity to reflect on and share their own retirement experiences.

Cramer encourages everyone to spend about 10 minutes, and take her brief anonymous survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SUNYRetireeSurvey2014. She encourages all to share the link with their retired SUNY colleagues.

“I’m hoping for a large number of responses,” Cramer said, “because I know SUNY retirees have a rich variety of experiences to share – experiences from which we all could learn.”

Retirees with questions regarding the survey can contact Cramer at cramersf@buffalostate.edu.

Look for a summary of the survey results in the Fall/Winter 2014 issue of the SUNY Retiree Newsletter.
Save Money with SUNY Retiree Discounts

by Gina Blume, University-Wide Benefits Specialist, SUNY System Administration

Savings money during retirement is just as important as (if not more important than) saving money during active employment. To help SUNY retirees save money every day, the State University of New York offers FREE discount programs that continue to be available to employees as they transition into retirement. These programs are available to all SUNY retirees, including retirees of state-operated and community college campuses as well as retirees of SUNY System Administration, the Research Foundation and Construction Fund, etc.

**SUNY Corporate Perks**

The SUNY Corporate Perks program (also known as “SUNY Perks” or simply “Perks”) offers special discounts from a variety of nationwide internet-based merchants and service providers. For online purchases through Perks, registrants are awarded “WOW Points,” which can be used as credits to discount future Perks purchases or donated to charity.

Recently, SUNY Perks has undergone some enhancements to make the site more user-friendly, including optimization for mobile use and more robust searching capability. If you don’t see a favorite brand on the site, you can use the “Suggest a Merchant” feature (via their Help Center) to vote for negotiations to be made with that brand.

Besides featuring everyday savings opportunities, Perks offers themed promotions at different times throughout the year as well, such as the Back-to-School Savings Fair and the Holiday Savings Fair. During these promotions, members have access to exclusive pricing for theme-related merchandise. In addition to money-saving through shopping, Perks offers information about wellness, environmental conservation, and charitable opportunities.

You can register for SUNY Perks with a SUNY email address or a personal email address. To join, visit [http://suny.corporateperks.com](http://suny.corporateperks.com). Click the “REGISTER” button under the “FIRST TIME SIGNING IN?” field on the bottom right of the “Welcome to SUNY Perks” page. This will bring you to the registration form. If you have an “@suny.edu” email address, fill out the form, adjust the ZIP code to match your location, and click “SUBMIT” at the bottom of the page.

If you don’t have an email address ending in “suny.edu,” click the “Don’t have a SUNY email address?” link above the “WORK ZIP” field, then complete all of the fields in the alternate SUNY Perks registration form, including entering an email address of your choosing, adjusting the ZIP code to match your location, and clicking “Submit” at the bottom of the form.

Within approximately 24 hours, you will receive an email at the address you entered during registration that will provide you with a special web link to click and complete the registration process. When you return to the SUNY Perks welcome or registration page, you can sign in by using your email address and password.

**SUNY PerksCard**

The SUNY PerksCard Program (also known as “PerksCard”) is another service for SUNY retirees and other members of the SUNY family that offers discounts at many merchants, with a focus on locally-operated businesses and franchises. PerksCard local discounts are organized into 13 regions across New York State.

Special deals are available at a multitude of restaurants, auto dealerships & service centers, jewelers, health & wellness providers, legal and financial offices, entertainment venues, and more. Discounts can be accessed online, or by presenting the PerksCard for your region in person at participating establishments. You can register for a PerksCard by using the appropriate regional access code; all regions and corresponding codes are listed on the SUNY Benefits website at [www.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/perksCard.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/perksCard.cfm). Click the blue “REGISTER FOR THE SUNY PERKS CARD TODAY!” link at the bottom of the page to sign up for the program. Once registered, create a location and shopping preference profile, and print out the Perks Card from the website.

PerksCard also offers a mobile app for smartphones that allows you to look up and access the special offers while on the go. You can access the app via the yellow “Click HERE to download the FREE Perks Connect Mobile App!” link at the bottom of the SUNY PerksCard page.

**Additional Exclusive Retiree Discounts**

In addition to SUNY Perks and SUNY PerksCard, the SUNY Benefits website lists many other discounts exclusive to members of the SUNY family. Discounts available to retirees are listed on the SUNY Retiree Discount Programs* web page at [www.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/retirees.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/retirees.cfm).

Shopping categories include Computer & Office; Health, Wellness & Beauty; House, Home, Pets & Garden; Surplus Auctions; Shopping, Apparel & Gifts; Transportation & Automotive; and Travel, Leisure & Hobbies.

Within any of these categories, you may find the perfect resource to buy.
Save Money with SUNY Retiree Discounts

Continued from page 15

and/or decorate a vacation home, find items to complement a special occasion for you or a family member, or experiment with new hobbies or activities.

Offers and discounts are added every month, so visit regularly to see what’s new. Some of the more recently added offers include those with Greener Earth Nursery, Vimbly, The Bath Boutique, Zagat Dining Card, Pieces of There, SkyTop Lodge, The Snugg, and Wilderness Survival Gear.

All of the discounts listed on the SUNY Retiree Discount Programs web page are also listed and searchable by keyword within the SUNY Perks program, so if you haven’t registered with SUNY Perks already, sign up today at http://suny.corporateperks.com/ to access these special offers and even more!

For additional information about all of these money-saving programs and offers, please visit the SUNY Retiree Discounts web page at www.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/retirees.cfm.

Potential New Merchants

If you know of a particular business, brand, or merchant that may be interested in offering a discount to members of the SUNY family, please direct them to the SUNY Discount Program Guidelines web page at http://old.suny.edu/benefits/discounts/guidelines.cfm to complete and submit the SUNY Discount Programs Request Form to the Office of University Benefits for review.

You may also feel free to click the SUNY Discount Program Request Form link at the bottom of the program guidelines page, print the form out and distribute it to businesses, etc. that you would like to see featured in the SUNY Retiree Discount Programs.

Quick-Reference Retiree Benefits Contact List

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<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tr>
<td>NYS Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP)</td>
<td>800-833-4344</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cs.ny.gov/ebd/welcome/retireegroupplan.cfm">www.cs.ny.gov/ebd/welcome/retireegroupplan.cfm</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(NYS Employee Benefits Division HelpLine, option #1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Security</td>
<td>1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ssa.gov/">www.ssa.gov/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medicare</td>
<td>1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.medicare.gov/">www.medicare.gov/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NYS Employees’ Retirement System (ERS)</td>
<td>1-866-805-0990</td>
<td><a href="http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php">www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NYS Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS)</td>
<td>1-800-348-7298</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nystrs.org">www.nystrs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>TIAA-CREF</td>
<td>1-800-842-2252</td>
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<td>Valic</td>
<td>1-800-448-2542</td>
<td><a href="http://www.valic.com/suny">www.valic.com/suny</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>MetLife</td>
<td>1-800-560-5001</td>
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<tr>
<td>ING</td>
<td>1-800-677-4636</td>
<td><a href="https://suny.prepare4myfuture.com/">https://suny.prepare4myfuture.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>1-800-343-0860</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fidelity.com/">www.fidelity.com/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NYS Deferred Compensation Plan (NYSDCP)</td>
<td>1-800-422-8463</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nysdcp.com">www.nysdcp.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>UUP Benefit Fund</td>
<td>1-800-342-4206</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSEA Benefit Fund</td>
<td>1-800-323-2732</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cseaebf.com/">www.cseaebf.com/</a></td>
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*Please note that SUNY does not endorse, support, or benefit from any of the programs or offers listed, and that this information is provided strictly for your information and further exploration.
Madelines and Memory
by Sivia Kaye, Professor of English (Emeritus), Nassau Community College
SiviaKaye@mac.com

Judging from all the sales pitches we’ve been subject to in recent years, I’d say MEMORY and its preservation is a high priority amongst retirees. Whenever a speaker comes to town to share with us his tips on keeping us cognitively healthy, the room is packed.

Do we really think there is a remedy for failing memory, or do we persuade ourselves that such a nirvana exists?

We’re delighted to learn of the plasticity of the brain. In lay language, this means that we can continue to learn and stretch our minds way into our senior years. It’s the familiar “use it or lose it” theory. How comforting this news is to those of us who’ve retired from professional jobs. We are a community of educated achievers; we never balked at learning something new. In fact, it was a challenge; we welcomed it.

Many of us have advanced degrees and are accustomed to the discipline of learning. We happily glom onto news that we can strengthen our memories by continuing to “be a beginner” in a subject with which we’ve had no previous familiarity. For those of us who parsed sentences for a living, we’re delighted now to undertake the serious study of the life cycle of insects – if it will create new synapses. And for those of us who diagnosed diseases for a paycheck, a class in Sanskrit would be a welcome prescription if it promised to induce a healthy memory.

BUT – Do any of these “memory improvement” techniques really work? Or is it Fool’s Gold?

Listen to the dinner conversations with your friends and you’re bound to hear about keys misplaced, appointments forgotten, names unremembered, and other such clues of a fading memory. The popular term “senior moment” has gained wide acceptance as a way of explaining these memory lapses.

A newer phrase, “brain freeze,” now has equal standing with “senior moment” as an acceptable excuse for our aging synapses. These terms seem to indicate that we acknowledge that our memories are not those deep Proustian wells from which we can draw water – or past incidents – at will. (It will take more than eating a small, clamshell-shaped madeleine cake* to produce a 3,000-page novel rich with nuanced details.)

At a recent lecture for seniors, we were advised that if aids are needed, use them. When you have difficulty walking, you use a cane. Why shouldn’t we be just as willing to use “lists” to aid our difficulty in remembering? Lists are merely aids for the memory-impaired, the presenter said. And this summary advice was offered after a long recitation about the plasticity of our brains, and how we can effectively prevent memory loss by keeping those synapses stimulated.

There is a Pandora’s Box on the horizon, however: memory-enhancing drugs. Whether these will be effective has yet to be proven, but it offers hope to those of us who value remembering who – amongst our many friends – told us she makes attractive wine totes, or who offered to take us in his yacht for a weekend cruise on the Hudson, or who would be happy to show us his hand-woven Apache blankets.

The drugs, if indeed they do work, will have drawbacks as well. The package inserts of such memory-enhancer pharmaceuticals will likely be required to include a warning. We may be cautious to beware of potentially serious unpleasant side effects.

We will be obliged to train ourselves to carefully read those package inserts and their warnings before we attempt to sharpen our fading memories.

There are many things – particularly as the calendar pages turn ever more quickly – that we may choose to forget. We may have finally been successful in putting the last months of a spouse’s prolonged illness way back in our thoughts. So far back, in fact, that it takes conscious effort to call forth those sad days. Will these new drugs bring such events more sharply into focus? The pain may be worse than the potential benefit.

For now, until the FDA approves these cognitive enhancers for popular consumer use, we can rely on paper lists, we can excuse ourselves for our occasional “senior moments” and we (again) can dip into Proust’s Remembrance of Things Past to see how wondrous MEMORY (and superb writing) can be.

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*In In Search of Lost Time (also known as Remembrance of Things Past), Marcel Proust uses madeleines to contrast involuntary memory with voluntary memory. The latter designates memories retrieved by what he calls “intelligence” – memories produced by putting conscious effort into remembering events, people, and places.
Movies Now and Then

by Ann Fey, Professor of English (Emeritus), Rockland Community College

In Alexander Payne’s latest film, NEBRASKA, Woody Grant, played by Bruce Dern, sets out walking along a highway in Montana on his quest: to claim the million dollars he has been led, by a magazine publishing gimmick, into believing he has won. Like Gregory Peck’s Ahab pursuing the white whale in MOBY DICK or Spencer Tracy in THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA striving for the precious marlin, this is Woody’s quest. Aged, confused, scruffy and alcoholic, he would not rate a close-up, even photo-shopped, on the cover of the AARP magazine, but his experiences go universal in a social context that rains satire, humor, and sadness on the world.

Woody’s distanced sons are typical young men: one an unemployed electronics salesman, the other striving to be a TV newsman. His wife Kate, played by June Squibb, looks like a kindly muffin-baking grandma and talks like a sharp cookie. If excessive portliness and unembarrassed scheming were protected conditions, many of the characters in the cast would be very safe. His unemployed son, played by Will Forte, visits, the family reconnects, and the son agrees to cater to Woody’s irrational, defiant desire to reach the publishing scheme office in Nebraska to claim his dream, and they go on the road again.

The main stop, in the town where Woody spent most of his earlier life, combines characterizations and caricatures, schemes and stupidity, and sentimentality. Arguably it includes the best local bar sequence in recent films and possibly the best bookstore scene too, in which we meet the love of Woody’s young life, an un-Kate, and learn about his marriage choice. As the trip continues, father and son connect. Beautiful flat landscapes and wide vistas in black and white add to the sense of man’s smallness. Ultimately, millionaire status does not get checked as done on Woody’s bucket list. But maybe the list was not specific enough, because somehow, in the end, Woody, at the wheel, rides towards sunset; it’s lump-in-the-throat powerful. This is a film to see: the right combination of sweet and sad, funny and disturbing, in outstanding performances and fine filmic effects.

This is not director Payne’s first film about an old fellow’s final road trip. Actress June Squibb, Woody’s wife in ABOUT SCHMIDT, also set in Nebraska, starring Jack Nicholson, played his wife, who died unexpectedly, early in the story. (Nicholson had been considered for the role of Woody in NEBRASKA, as were Gene Hackman and Robert Duval.) Schmidt, who had retired reluctantly, turned off by his lonely widower home life, goes on a long interstate road trip. It is his last, connecting with elements from his past, and with his daughter.

Schmidt and Woody are essentially on the same trip, at the same point in their lives. ABOUT SCHMIDT is a well crafted film, enjoyable to view. The original story, from Louis Begley’s novel ABOUT SCHMIDT, was not set in Nebraska. Rather than a fly-over location, it took place in a fly-to location: Long Island, New York. Schmidt, who in the novel is Jewish, lives in the Hamptons and his trips are to New York. This delightfully readable book is as “New York” as the film is “Middle America.” It’s a great read after seeing the movie – or before.

The novel-to-film basis of the end-of-life journey occurs again in a little-noticed film called BEING FLYNN, starring Robert De Niro, which has been acclaimed in some circles, and is hard to forget. He plays Jonathan Flynn, whose wife (Julianne Moore) dies from drugs. His is an inner-city urban journey, from poor home to institution to rough streets and so forth, fighting drugs, and then indulging. Towards the end, his end, he is admitted to a homeless shelter, to find his long-separated son Nick working there, his purpose in life to help others. There is a very hard end to Nick’s journey. There is a darkness to the film, shadowed by the urban landscape; De Niro’s past repertoire is enough to create a following for it, especially since the opening scene looks into the front window of a cab, showing De Niro in the driver’s seat staring into the rear view mirror. No, he is not saying “You lookin’ at me?” – but clearly it visually deliberately recalls his iconic character Travis Bickle in TAXI DRIVER (1976). The work that this film is based on is a memoir set in Boston (which you might not want to request because your librarian will likely look up from the desk at you) – Nick Flynn’s memoir: “Another Bull$#%+ Night in Suck City.”
Campus Retiree Program and Organization Contact Information

Editor’s Note: There are approximately 15 SUNY campuses with a retiree organization or retiree program of some sort. Below are the contact persons for several campus programs. The SUNY Retirees Service Corps is providing this information in the event that representatives of these programs want to network with their counterparts and as a resource for campuses or retirees interested in starting their own retiree program or organization.

STATE-OPERATED CAMPUSES

University at Albany
George Hastings, President, University at Albany Emeritus Center Board
Hastings@nycap.rr.com or (518) 439-6917

Binghamton University
Corinna Kruman, Retiree Services Coordinator
ckruman@binghamton.edu or (607) 777-5959

University at Buffalo
Jack Baker
University at Buffalo Emeritus Center
bakerja@buffalo.edu

SUNY Cobleskill
Anne Donnelly, Facilitator
SUNY Cobleskill Retiree Network
donnelal@cobleskill.edu or (518) 234-7502

SUNY Geneseo
Donald Lackey, Coordinator
Geneseo Emeriti Association
ndlackey@localnet.com or (585) 243-0901

SUNY New Paltz
Alan Dunefsky, Chair
New Paltz Faculty Emeriti Group
dunefskaf@newpaltz.edu or (845) 257-3986 (O), (845) 338-2680 (H)

SUNY Oneonta
Richard Burr, President
Retired Faculty, Administrators & Professionals Association at SUNY Oneonta
rrburr4@gmail.com or (607) 432-0517

SUNY Oswego
Vernon Tryon, President
SUNY Oswego Emeriti Association
vern@tryon.com or (315) 343-9692

SUNY Plattsburgh
Sarah Reyell, Health Benefits Administrator
reyellsg@plattsburgh.edu or (518) 564-5062

SUNY Potsdam
Carol Rourke, Assistant to the President
rourke@potsdam.edu or (315) 267-2128

Stony Brook University
Dave Smith, Webmaster
Stony Brook Emeritus Faculty Association
drsmith36@optonline.net

SUNY Upstate Medical University
John C. Farruggio, Administrator, “The Retiree Associates” Program Benefits Manager, Upstate Medical University
farruggio@upstate.edu or (315) 464-4942

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Hudson Valley Community College
William Muller, Member “Keepers of the Flame” Program
wmuller@hvcc.edu or (518) 449-4974

Schenectady County Community College
Retirees Association of Schenectady County Community College
Peggy King, President
mcking43@aol.com or (518) 370-1885

Stan Strauss, Vice President
sstrauss@nycap.rr.com or (518) 377-3610

Suffolk County Community College
Peter Herron, Webmaster
Retiree Association of Suffolk Community College
rc39pete@optonline.net

Westchester Community College
Barbara Christesen
Alumni Communications Coordinator
Westchester Community College Foundation
Barbara.Christesen@sunywcc.edu or (914) 606-6559

If your campus has a retiree program or organization that is not listed above, please reach out to the SUNY Retirees Service Corps at retirees@suny.edu and share your program/organization name and contact person so that we may include your information in the next SUNY Retirees Newsletter. Thank you!
The Last Word

Skilled Retirees Needed for Superstorm Sandy Relief and Future Disasters

by Anna Dorghazi, Empire State Fellow, NYS Executive Chamber

Hurricanes, blizzards, floods, and other natural disasters are becoming increasingly common in New York State. To better confront the new reality of severe weather, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo recently announced the creation of the Civilian Emergency Response Corps. This statewide disaster preparedness and response initiative aims to recruit skilled volunteers to assist in ongoing Superstorm Sandy recovery efforts and develop a network of volunteers who will be able to respond to future disasters.

While many of the physical scars of Superstorm Sandy are fading, individuals and families in impacted communities still have unaddressed needs. In addition to ongoing home repairs, storm victims need assistance with insurance claims, legal issues, and filing complicated tax returns. Communities need help rebuilding parks and public spaces, and designing more resilient structures that will be able to withstand future storms.

The Civilian Emergency Response Corps is unique among volunteer programs in that it focuses specifically on recruiting volunteers who have the necessary skills to meet these specialized needs.

Current and retired attorneys, insurance and tax professionals, tradesmen, social workers, psychologists, engineers, environmental scientists, people with foreign-language proficiencies, and other skilled individuals who live in Sandy-impacted communities are encouraged to join the Civilian Emergency Response Corps.

Interested individuals can connect with volunteer opportunities by contacting their local Regional Volunteer Center (RVC) or New York State Office for New Americans (ONA) Opportunity Center. RVCs help unite interested volunteers with projects in their communities, and with the ONA’s assistance, New Americans can contribute to their communities and fully participate in New York State’s civic and economic life.

For more information about the Civilian Emergency Response Corps and Sandy-related service opportunities, please contact your local RVC or ONA:

Long Island Regional Volunteer Center
Laura Messano, Director of Disaster Services
Email: lmessano.livc@optimum.net
Phone: (845) 608-7394

Mid-Hudson Regional Volunteer Center
Damian Morales, Director of Disaster Programs
Email: damian@volunteer-center.org
Phone: (914) 227-9306

New York City Regional Volunteer Center
Stephanie Gillette, Sandy Recovery Services Manager
Email: sgillette@cityhall.nyc.gov
Phone: (212) 788-1401

While much of the work of the Civilian Emergency Response Corps is focused on Sandy-impacted areas, every region of the state has been affected by severe weather or some other type of emergency, so there are opportunities for skilled volunteers in every community. By visiting www.prepare.ny.gov, you can join the state’s Skilled Volunteers Registry and let New York State know that the next time a disaster strikes, you are standing by and ready to assist.

Superstorm Sandy caused tremendous damage in many communities, but it also demonstrated the willingness of New Yorkers to give of their talents to help their neighbors. We hope that skilled SUNY retirees will consider reaching out and learning more about how you can serve through the Civilian Emergency Response Corps. Thank you for doing your part to help to help New York State prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County (ONA)
Patricia Telfort, Office for New Americans Volunteer Liaison
Email: ptelfort@eoc-nassau.org
Phone: (516) 292-9710 x229

New York Immigration Coalition (ONA)
Kiwi Grady, New Americans Volunteer Coordinator
Email: kgrady@thenyic.org
Phone: (212) 627-2227, ext. 245

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