Campus Profile:
The SUNY Cobleskill Retiree Network
by Anne Donnelly, Professor of Biology (Emeritus)

Editor’s Note: Anne is Facilitator of the Cobleskill Retiree Network and a member of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) Advisory Council.

I was a member of the Task Force on SUNY Retirees, created by the SUNY University Faculty Senate and System Administration in 2007, and chaired by Ram Chugh. The Task Force recommended the creation of a SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) with the mission of creating awareness among the campuses about the potential of SUNY retirees and developing programs to utilize this rich resource for the good of our campuses and our communities. The RSC, which was created in 2008, encouraged the formation of campus retiree groups and developed guidelines to help make them a reality.

On January 30, 2012, we at SUNY Cobleskill started the above process and had an initial meeting with representatives from campus Human Resources, Administration, and the Alumni Association to create the SUNY Cobleskill Retiree Network. The Network was envisioned as an information organization that would be open to Cobleskill retirees from all job classifications, including faculty, administrative, auxiliary services, classified support staff, etc., as well as their spouses and partners.

Human Resources offered to send a letter of invitation to all living retirees. That resulted in a modest response and by April 2012 our Retiree Distribution List grew to 36 retirees, most of whom were local.

By May we brought the Chief Information Officer into the mix, and he offered the use of a summer intern to work on the project. The Alumni Newsletter ran an article about the COBY Retiree Network and all retirees were included in that mailing, again inviting participation of those who would like to stay connected to their campus and colleagues while giving back to their campus and community. Our membership rose to 43.

We met again in November to address the stall in our progress and to plan for the large number of retirements that would soon occur. We wished to have a process in place whereby retirees would be invited to sign up and be given a packet outlining the generous resources, benefits and privileges available to Cobleskill retirees. The campus Information Technology Services (ITS) office helped me with distribution list problems and other computer issues. From that meeting, everything fell into place.

Benefits available to SUNY Cobleskill retirees:
- Electronic bulletin board access
- Campus e-mail account
- Retirees and Emeriti link on the www.CobyConnection.org web page, which lists information of particular interest to retirees, including:
  - Projects that could use retiree volunteer participation
  - News from retirees—moves, accomplishments
  - Retiree illnesses and deaths
  - Free campus parking pass
  - Campus photo ID
  - Ten percent discount at the College Store
  - Use of campus facilities including library, weight room and pool
  - Limited information technology assistance
  - Discounts for ordering computers (I became the first retiree to purchase a computer through our discount benefit plan.)

Registry so retirees can make connections and form affinity groups
- Invitation to campus events
- Link to the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website

In December, I attended each of the celebrations held in honor of retirees from 2010 through 2012 and actively recruited the soon-to-be-retired.

E-mail is our principle mode of communication. Retirees must actively opt in to the Cobleskill Retiree Network and can choose to discontinue membership at any time. There are no formal meetings, officers or dues. Retirees register on www.CobyConnection.org and select the “Retirees and Emeriti” link.

As a SUNY sanctioned organization, Cobleskill Retiree Network members are covered under the SUNY umbrella for participation in SUNY events once they have signed a volunteer form in the campus HR office.

In return for hosting the Network organization, SUNY Cobleskill envisions retirees staying connected and serving the College in whatever way they choose. For instance, retirees can help out by giving tours, mentoring and recruiting students, giving guest lectures by invitation, teaching non-credit classes through the SCHOOL program, or participating in alumni events.

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Retirees are now meeting regularly to sort and identify thousands of unlabeled photos in time for SUNY Cobleskill’s 100th anniversary. The photos will be included in an Alumni Association publication capturing the campus’ rich history since opening its doors in 1916.

Many current alumni ask about the people who have meant much to them while they were students at Cobleskill, and often it is staff and professionals, not only faculty, who have touched their lives.

The Cobleskill Retiree Network will give the campus Alumni office a means of contacting retirees to inform and encourage their presence at campus and alumni events. The Network also provides alumni and retirees an opportunity to reconnect, and facilitate retirees reconnecting with each other.

For more information on the Cobleskill Retiree Network, feel free to contact me at donnelal@cobleskill.edu or (518) 234-7502.