SUNY Retirees Service Corps Initiative Attracts Attention at International Conference

The SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC), based at SUNY System Administration in Albany, drew widespread interest at Colleges, Universities and Retirees: Building Connections, the August 10th-12th Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) conference in Minneapolis.

Julie Petti, SUNY’s Director of University-wide Human Resources, and Pierre Radimak, RSC Coordinator, attended the event to represent the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) and network with other members of AROHE (www.arohe.org).

The RSC was featured at a member showcase during the conference, which gave attendees the opportunity to learn about programs and projects of other retiree organizations in the U.S. and Canada. Petti and Radimak shared copies of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter, the recent RSC conference agenda, and excerpts from an RSC report on SUNY retiree volunteerism.

Petti, who oversees the Retirees Service Corps, also made a presentation called “The SUNY Retirees Network: Connecting Retirees in the Digital Age.” She gave conference-goers a brief overview of the State University of New York system and the SUNY RSC (www.suny.edu/retirees) before explaining that The SUNY Retirees Network (SRN) is an upcoming component of the RSC website designed to connect SUNY retirees via a secure online directory, promote online interaction among retirees, and connect interested retirees with volunteer opportunities.

By using the SUNY Retirees Online Directory, Petti said SRN members will be able to securely look up and connect with other SUNY retirees who have registered for the Network and opt to be listed in the directory.

The SUNY Retirees Interaction Service will allow retirees to securely interact in real time 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 once a sufficient number of retirees who expressed interest in volunteerism during the sign-up process 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 told AROHE conference attendees how verified new and long-term retirees of SUNY’s community colleges, state-operated colleges and universities, 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 and Radimak gave a demonstration of the SUNY Retirees Network test website, which included the online registration process, logging into the SRN once an applicant’s retirement status has been verified, how a retiree would update his/her 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.

AROHE members asked Petti numerous questions about the SUNY Retirees Network and its functionality and safeguards. Several commented on the innovation that the Network represented in efforts to build and maintain connections among higher education retirees.

For more on the AROHE event, see the “2014 AROHE Conference Overview” article on page 2.
The Seventh Biennial Conference of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education (AROHE) was held from August 10-12 in Minneapolis, hosted by the University of Minnesota at the newly renovated Commons Hotel, located amidst the university’s sprawling urban campus. The Conference afforded 110 attendees from academic institutions and retirement organizations throughout North America the chance to share “best practices.”

In the words of the Conference Bulletin, “AROHE brings together the talent, knowledge, and experience of retired faculty and staff to improve the quality ... of their communities and institutions through the creation of new models of retirement.”

 Evaluations from the AROHE Conference participants included many comments on the diverse and informative program content as well as opportunities to network. One conference evaluator expressed, “Very well done! This conference is an essential source of ideas and networking for anyone associated with higher education retiree centers.”

Conference attendees experienced a wide variety of interesting and creative programs exemplifying the valuable contributions retired faculty and staff can offer their colleges and universities. The atmosphere promoted collegiality and urged institutions to provide the platform for these kinds of valuable retiree contributions.

The three-day event began on a Sunday afternoon with an optional pre-conference academy on “Starting a Retiree Organization,” followed by a conference orientation for first-time attendees.

Two full days of varied conference activities followed. Each day featured a plenary address, one from Phyllis Moen, McKnight Presidential Chair in Sociology at the University of Minnesota, the other by former U.S. Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota. There was also an excellent plenary panel discussion on the general topic of Building Retirement Organizations.

One valuable innovation was the optional Special Interest Group (SIG) networking tables set up during the continental breakfast period both days. Each table was identified by theme: Emeriti Colleges, Retiree Center Directors, Retired Faculty, Retired Staff, University Administrators, Small Colleges, and hosted by experienced AROHE leaders. The chance to “speed-network” was a boon to all and a great way to repurpose breakfast.

The afternoons packed in several sets of concurrent sessions that offered a wealth of different topics of interest to attendees, ranging from mentoring foreign graduate students in conversational English (Clemson University), to creating a photo club (University of Minnesota), to campus-adjacent senior housing (University of Iowa, Belmont Village, Kendal Corporation), to the paradox of an increased sense of well-being among retirees (Wesleyan University).

At another innovation, the AROHE Town Hall meeting, members were asked to submit at least three “big ideas” for AROHE’s future development. The Town Hall yielded 28 ideas, which were later distilled down by the board to major initiatives for the AROHE 2015 – 2017 board to consider. A few are listed below:

- There was unanimous agreement that AROHE needs to grow and many suggestions were made, including: increasing diversity; contacting non-member schools with no retirement organizations (ROs) and asking them to cite their best practices in the AROHE newsletter; offering workshops on how to start a retiree organization, and connecting via phone, email, and face-to-face contacts.

- There was universal consensus that AROHE’s present financial situation is untenable, and that more revenue is necessary, if only to be able to hire a salaried administrator.

- The notion of regional consortia of AROHE member organizations has come of age. Attendees seemed to agree that these provide more frequent and more localized opportunities to share best practices, and that as these regional units become more consolidated, they will also serve to strengthen and extend the reach of the national consortium (AROHE). This could be achieved by AROHE members starting regional consortia with local higher education retiree organizations and encouraging members which do not already belong to AROHE to join.
Several suggestions coalesced around the idea that AROHE should play a role in educating North American university administrators about the value of retirement organizations to their institutions.

A groundswell of support emerged for AROHE’s attaining a national presence through much more purposeful public relations—advertising, social media, placement of AROHE position statements in national media such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, and development of “white papers” on retirement principles that will allow AROHE to act as a kind of de facto accrediting body for determining quality criteria for retirement programs. The thought was that AROHE might find itself in the position of vetting plans for new retirement organizations and such things as phased-retirement packages offered by universities and colleges.

The AROHE Conference program and photos are available on the AROHE public website, www.arohe.org, special resources and PowerPoint presentations are available on the password-protected member website.

The 2016 AROHE biennial conference will be held at the University of Washington in Seattle.

AROHE’s membership has grown to 100+ institutions. In addition to hosting biennial conferences and conducting survey research, AROHE publishes an online newsletter and provides online resources, networking, mentoring and consulting. Major resources include the AROHE “Start-up Kit” to assist institutions in forming retirement organizations, survey research, networking contacts, online presentations and best practices reports.

For additional information on the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education, contact info@arohe.org or go to www.arohe.org and click “Join Now” to learn more about a free trail membership.

The University at Buffalo REV-UP Program

by Pierre Radimak, Editor, SUNY Retirees Newsletter

The Retired Employee Volunteers-University Program, or REV-UP, was conceived in the late 1980s by Rosalyn Wilkinson, then Director of Human Resources Development in Personnel Services at the University at Buffalo (UB). She envisioned the program as a way for retirees to remain connected to the university while carrying out worthwhile activities in support of active faculty and staff.

The concept and mission of REV-UP, as a means for adding to the quality of life of retired employees while helping UB pursue its goals, earned vigorous support from faculty member Rose Weinstein, who was the catalyst behind the 1977 establishment of the UB Emeritus Center (see the Emeritus Center profile on page 5).

Wilkinson’s vision became a reality in March 1990 with the hiring of Leila (Lee) Baker as manager of REV-UP, a collaborative relationship between the Emeritus Center (EC) and UB Human Resources. “I was very fortunate for the expertise, guidance and support I gained from these women [Wilkinson and Weinstein],” Baker said.

Although Baker now reports to the Director of Wellness and Work/Life Balance, she still uses an office at the Emeritus Center as her base of operations. She was first employed at 10 hours per week and, a few years later, was increased to 25%. Whether working at home or in the Emeritus Center or visiting family out of town, she says “REV-UP never sleeps.” Baker is constantly checking email to see if there is anything that needs her attention. “It is just something I enjoy doing,” she said. “I love what I do and the people I am doing it for.”

“Lee is the glue that keeps everything together for REV-UP and the Emeritus Center,” said EC President Elenora Heffner. “She knows everyone, is always right-on-the-mark when placing volunteers with UB departments, forgets nothing, and does everything possible to make members feel welcome. Her joie de vivre and happy smile brighten everyone’s day.”

HOW REV-UP WORKS

UB Emeritus Center membership ($5.00 per year) is a prerequisite for participation in REV-UP for the purposes of liability, recognition, and the enhancement and viability of the program. Baker coordinates all volunteer services through REV-UP, matching retiree interests and availability with volunteer opportunities submitted to her by various university departments.

When UB employees retire, they are given a letter that describes REV-UP and program participation requirements (Emeritus Center membership). They also receive an interest survey to indicate the type of volunteer activity that interests them, their expertise, and the type of volunteer work schedule they prefer (one-time events, spring or fall semester, several hours weekly or monthly). Baker maintains a database which she utilizes to match department need and retiree volunteer. Volunteers are asked to call in or

Continued on page 4
email their service hours each month.

Location is no obstacle for Baker’s responsibilities. “I have written REV-UP letters from Colorado, Florida and England,” Baker said, emailing them to the University Print and Mail Service for monthly distribution to the membership. “I actually filled a service request by phone from Sicily after I received an email that a volunteer was needed in the President’s Office.”

Since May 1991, REV-UP has hosted a volunteer recognition program and reception in conjunction with the May meeting of the Emeritus Center. UB Emeritus Center members who have chosen to participate in REV-UP from May of the previous year to April of the current year are recognized for their volunteer service to UB.

**REV-UP BY THE NUMBERS**

- Current average number of UB departments REV-UP assists: 25
- Current average number of retiree volunteers per year: 75
- Number of Service Hours from May 2013 thru April 2014: 2,460
- Highest number of Service Hours for a volunteer (2013-2014): 188*
- Highest number of Service Hours for a volunteer (Total): 2,999* (Given a UB Alumni Association Volunteer Service Award in 2010)
- Total Volunteer Hours from March 1990-May 2014: 70,983

*Same individual

“The REV-UP program at UB is a successful model for campuses, here in NY and throughout the country, who hope to initiate a similar volunteer commitment with their retirees,” Baker said. She has received inquiries and speaking requests from the campus and system level.

One of the officials who reached out to Baker about the UB program was Dr. Ram Chugh, the former executive director of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC), which is based at SUNY System Administration in Albany. He contacted Baker in 2008 about how the REV-UP program

works and invited her to speak at the RSC’s inaugural biennial conference in 2009. Baker was not able to accept the invitation but sent Chugh a variety of material.

“Lee quickly understood the importance of what we were trying to do for SUNY retirees through the newly-created SUNY RSC,” Chugh said. “She was cooperative and provided good information regarding REV-UP activities. The thing which impressed me most about her was that she went out of her way, beyond her normal responsibilities, to provide me with the data I requested in a timely manner.”

Chugh added, “Lee has built an impressive program and she can be proud of her accomplishments in bringing UB retirees and departments together in mutually beneficial relationships; UB employees and areas benefit from the services provided by the REV-UP retiree volunteers, and the retirees know they are needed and appreciated while having the opportunity to reconnect with other retirees and remain connected to UB.”

Corinna Krumman contacted Baker when Krumman was forming the Binghamton University Retiree Services Program (BU RSP) in 2007. Campus and community service was to be one aspect of the BU RSP, which was profiled in the April/May 2012 issue of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter at [http://old.suny.edu/retirees/SUNY%20Retirees%20Newsletter%20Vol.%201%20Issue%202.pdf](http://old.suny.edu/retirees/SUNY%20Retirees%20Newsletter%20Vol.%201%20Issue%202.pdf).

“Lee was one of my first contacts when I was in the process of creating the Retiree Services Program for Binghamton University,” Krumman said. “The REV-UP program at UB was on the forefront of focusing on the importance of keeping retirees involved and connected to campus. [Lee and I] talked on the phone several times and she provided me with valuable information on the logistics of how the UB volunteer program worked. Not only was she knowledgeable as well as helpful and prompt,” the BU Retiree Services Program Coordinator recalled, “but I was struck by how enthusiastically Lee talked about the REV-UP program.”

**TRANSITIONS**

After just over 25 years as manager of the UB Retired Employee Volunteers-University Program, Lee Baker has decided to retire after the next REV-UP Recognition and Reception in May 2015.

When asked what advice she would give her eventual REV-UP successor, Baker commented, “Be diligent and stay connected with the retiree volunteers and with the departments requesting service. Keeping in touch with the volunteers is a vital key; when they sense you sincerely care about their lives and volunteer interests, it can be that extra incentive to agree to give some REV-UP service.”

“Lee has been a wonderful asset and I wish her all the best in retirement,” Krumman of Binghamton University said.

For more information on the University at Buffalo REV-UP program, contact Lee Baker at [bakerl@buffalo.edu](mailto:bakerl@buffalo.edu).
The University at Buffalo Emeritus Center was established in 1977 thanks to the initiative of School of Social Work Professor Rose Weinstein and the support of then UB President Robert Kettner. The Center was designed to enable all faculty and staff who retire from UB to continue their relationship with the university community.

After several changes in location on campus, the Emeritus Center (EC) now has a well-appointed lounge, library, kitchen, and meeting room in Goodyear Hall (a large student residence hall). The UB President’s office supports the maintenance and repairs to the Center’s space as well as supplies, printing, mailings, and audio-visual services. Emeritus Center membership is $5.00 annually and must be paid by December to receive monthly mailings for the following year. REV-UP members receive a free annual parking permit from the Office of Parking and Transportation.

UB’s Human Resources Department provides names and addresses of all retirees to the Membership Chairperson of the Emeritus Center, who sends new retirees an invitation to join the Center. They may join either closely following retirement or at any future time. Spouses of retirees are also eligible for membership. There are currently approximately over 500 members of the Emeritus Center.

Retired Employee Volunteers-University Program (REV-UP) Manager Leila Baker, who has her office in the Emeritus Center, devotes a percentage of her time to support the Center’s activities, including fielding phone calls and noting maintenance/facilities problems.

“Emeritus Center members meet monthly to hear a timely speaker, travel together to cultural events, and maintain ties with the university and their retired colleagues,” Center President Elenora Heffner stated. From September through December and February through April, the EC offers a lecture or musical performance followed by a social hour with refreshments provided by members. “It is definitely a worthwhile organization which extends connection to the university and an opportunity for learning,” Heffner said.

The REV-UP/Emeritus Center partnership allows members to share their skills and talents with the university, creating a symbiotic relationship. “Lee recruits volunteers for REV-UP only from the ranks of the Emeritus Center members; therefore, both organizations are intertwined,” Heffner stated. “The Emeritus Center membership offers a ready-made pool of volunteers who maintain their ties with the university by helping where needed. In addition, volunteering is fun as well as meeting up with your former colleagues!”

Emeritus Center members also contribute to the annual State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA) campaign. The EC president serves on UB’s SEFA administrative committee, which oversees the campaign.

For more information on the University at Buffalo Emeritus Center, contact Jack Baker at bakerja@buffalo.edu.

DO YOU HAVE A RETIREMENT STORY TO TELL?

We Want to Hear from You!

One of the objectives of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter is to share activities of SUNY retirees. We know many of you are doing great, interesting things in retirement, from scholarship to volunteerism and everything in between. Your story can inspire others.

We welcome stories from retired SUNY faculty, staff, and administrators from any of SUNY’s state-operated and community college campuses, System Administration, the Research Foundation, State University Construction Fund, and affiliated organizations.

Please share your retirement story or tell us about a retired colleague’s 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.
Recalling Horror from the Night of Broken Glass
by Hedi McKinley, LCSW, Professor Emeritus, College of Social Welfare
University at Albany

Editor’s Note: Hedi, 94, is a practicing clinical social worker who writes on mental health issues and still maintains an office in Albany, NY. She was named Social Worker of the Year for Northeastern New York in 1983. Hedi retired from the University at Albany in 1985 after 12 years of service. She was awarded the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service following the 1979-80 academic year for running UAlbany’s Community Service Program. The groundbreaking program, which she founded in 1971, exists to this day. Hedi’s story below tells of her harrowing escape from Nazi-occupied Vienna, Austria in the aftermath of Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) on November 11, 1938.

November 1938 was the coldest month Austria had experienced in 20 years. November 11 was a special day. The streets of Vienna, my hometown, were littered with diamonds. So or it seemed. Until you realized that the diamonds were millions of pieces of glass fallen from windows and storefronts shattered by rocks and stones hurled by Nazi followers.

Hitler, who had overrun Austria seven months previously, had decreed that November 11 was to be the day all Jewish homes and establishments were to be demolished and their inhabitants either killed or dragged to concentration camps. The night was to be forever known all over the world as Kristallnacht — or Crystal Night.

My parents and I were sitting in our living room, fearful and worried. It was 10 p.m. There was a knock on the front door. Not an ordinary knock but rather a proprietary demand. My parents, 55 and 56, hesitated, I, being 18, felt safe. At the door were two boys about 16 dressed in black uniforms, finger all. What? club? Hard to tell. “Jews out!” one said without looking at me. In normal times, we would have laughed and closed the door. (Halloween prank?) But these were times of terror and upheaval and even a teenager wielded absolute power as long as he wore a swastika on his sleeve.

By now my parents had come to the door. “But where shall we go?” whispered my mother.

“Who gives a (expletive) where you go?” said the older boy, “We’ll catch you wherever.”

“And,” he added, “by the way; don’t take anything, you understand? Nothing. Nothing. And leave your house keys.”

They sauntered down the stairs as we stood frozen. Hard to imagine 76 years later, but we did as we were told. We left. We took nothing. Except I, the 18-year-old rebellious teenager, slipped the apartment keys into my bra.

After Kristallnacht, I stayed with a friend in Vienna while my parents found refuge with relatives.

A few days later, I, with the purloined key, sneaked into our apartment and hurriedly packed a few warm clothes, my furry kitty toy, and my passport (obtained after many months of endless bureaucratic hassles.)

The apartment was a catastrophe. Furniture overturned, curtains ripped, food smeared on the floors. But the absolute worst discovery for me, the animal lover, was my goldfish bowl and the two little critters dead on the floor. But the next morning, as I was walking by our apartment building, a woman motioned to me.

I recognized her as one of my parents’ customers of the grocery store they had owned, which was taken away from them for being a “Jewish business” and given to a Nazi party member.

“The SS (Schutz Staffel) is looking for you,” she whispered. “They say you broke into government property. Better hide.”

This was serious. I called my boyfriend, Heinz, who, by having a Catholic mother, was entitled to wear a swastika and therefore relatively safe on the streets.

He agreed it was time to run. Where to? I did have a visa to travel to England, which was the result of writing dozens of letters to Jewish-sounding names found in a London phone book asking for a job as scullery maid, the only position a non-Brit was allowed to take. I was fortunate to secure a job and a place to stay with the Sweet family in London. But how to get there? I was penniless.

Heinz told me to come to his house (a 10-mile walk) in the evening. It was safer at night, with fewer Nazis picking off Jews. Heinz took me to the Gildemeester Organization for Assistance to Emigrants. I had no idea at the time what kind of place this was but the smiling man behind the desk asked very few questions, had a short whisper with Heinz and said “OK.”

“OK what?,” I asked.

“Here is your train ticket to London; the train leaves at 7 a.m.,” said the smiling man. “And,” he added, “here is a shilling as a tip for the porter. We’ll telegraph the people who’ll give you a job.” I took the 7 a.m. train. Heinz stayed behind, as did my parents. I cried.

At the border, uniformed Nazis ordered all passengers off the train, searched everyone, told us we were capitalist pigs, and herded us back into the train. After crossing the border into Belgium, we heard the shouts of hotdog vendors under the train window.

I used my shilling! In 76 years, nothing, but nothing, ever could equal the taste of the limp hotdog I bought in the soggy roll.
Recently a story appeared in the New York Times and other news outlets relating to a claimed breach of 1.5 billion passwords from undisclosed sites worldwide. It should be noted that other, more recent, articles are calling the whole thing into question. Who do you believe when the experts are divided?

As an information security professional, my recommendation is to err on the side of safety. So, what should the average person do to protect themselves? The following actions are generic and well understood steps that you can take to protect yourself:

### PASSWORD MANAGEMENT

1. Change your passwords on a regular basis – minimally once a year or sooner. In many work environments this is already a requirement.

2. Do not reuse old passwords. Most people have a few root passwords that are tweaked and reused over and over again. Do not do this.

3. Use strong passwords for anything you consider important. This should include any systems you access remotely including, but not limited to, the following: email, cloud storage (One Drive, DropBox, Sky Drive, etc...), remote desktop, or VPN. A strong password should be a minimum of 10 (some will argue 15) characters in total length, include upper/lower case, numbers, and special characters. Anything less than 10 characters can easily be broken.

4. Consider using advanced access technology such as Google 2-Step verification, for example.

5. Use pass phrases instead of passwords. These can be from a favorite book or a saying. You then do some kind of letter or special character substitution to build a longer and more complex pass phrase.

6. Consider the use of an encrypted device/technology/application to store your passwords in case you forget them. One popular password manager application is called KeePass, which installs on your computer and creates an encrypted database of your passwords. Another solution is to use an external storage device (a thumb drive, for instance) that is FIPS 140-2 Level 3 certified.

### GENERAL DATA SECURITY

1. Encrypt the storage on any mobile devices such as a Smart Phones, Tablets, external hard drives or Laptop computers.

2. Use a PIN or password on your smartphone, tablet, or laptop. It is inconvenient but necessary.

3. Use encrypted thumb drives when moving or storing your data on these easily-lost devices.

### MONITOR YOUR ACCOUNTS

1. Check your monthly bank account/credit card statements for unexpected charges. Often the first sign that something is wrong is a relatively innocuous credit card charge for items you don’t normally buy or from a strange location.

2. Check your online personal accounts such as GMail, FaceBook, LinkedIn, etc. These online systems are routinely compromised. Be sure to limit personal information shared on these sites.

3. Do not sign the back of your credit card. Instead, write the words “SHOW ID” in the space provided for your signature.

Remember, the best line of defense in these situations is to be vigilant, to change your passwords often, and to use strong passwords.
The Reading Is Fun Program in Schenectady, NY: “Where Every Child Is Everyone’s Child”

by Alvin Magid, Ph.D., Emeritus Professor of Political Science, University at Albany

Editor’s Note: Dr. Magid is Founder and Executive Director of The Reading Is Fun Program. His effort is an example of how SUNY retirees can do personally rewarding volunteer work that serves the public/community interest.

The Reading Is Fun Program is intended as a crucial, permanent feature of civic life in the city of Schenectady, NY centered on its four-year-olds, many of whom face great pressure and obstacles in developing reading-readiness skills preparatory to entering the city school district’s kindergartens. There is ample social science and neuroscience research documenting that such ill-equipped youngsters are likely to backslide in kindergarten and continue spiraling downward. In Schenectady particularly, the finances of the city school district are continuing to worsen, requiring that programs and personnel be cut. In the face of this stark reality, far too many young children in Schenectady, without a strong foundation in reading and writing on which to build, will in the future find themselves denied the joys and benefits of advanced formal education, wide employment opportunities and broad cultural enrichment. It is imperative that harmful conditions be countered with vision and vigor.

In that spirit, The Reading Is Fun Program aims to yearly mobilize a large group of trained volunteer instructors (see below) to teach reading-readiness skills (i.e., letter identification and sounds and letter combinations) to the parents or other principal caregivers of as many of Schenectady’s 700-900 four-year-olds as may be attracted to the program so that the parents or other principal caregivers can then teach those skills to their young charges. And, where circumstances warrant, The Reading Is Fun Program aims to have the qualified volunteers teach the four-year-olds directly. All instruction will be conducted in suitable public venues. Where children are taught directly by volunteers, the parents or other principal caregivers will be required to be present to observe the teaching process or, if they choose to do so, participate in it.

PROGRAM INSPIRATION

The Reading Is Fun Program can best be understood in the context of dire, interrelated conditions in the city of Schenectady and the Schenectady City School District. As throughout the United States, these conditions have to do with great income disparities contributing to the wide gap between children’s educational opportunities, affecting their chances for success at all school levels and in their personal, family and adult work lives. Schenectady’s young children, many from the poorest of homes in the city, often lack the knowledge and reading-readiness skills identified as standard-appropriate upon entry into the city school district’s kindergartens.

For example, of the 775 new kindergartners who were tested in September and October 2013 for reading-readiness skills, only 23 (2.79%) could identify all 54 letters (i.e., upper- and lower-case letters plus two more letters for another way to render upper- and lower-case letter g). At the other extreme, 54 (6.79%) could not identify a single letter among the total 54 letters. Of the 775 new kindergartners tested, 272 (35%) could not identify a single letter sound; only one student (0.13%) could identify all 33 letter sounds.

The insidious effects can be seen throughout the Schenectady City School District. Two-thirds of the students in all grades (reflecting a disproportionately large number of the city’s poorest residents) read below grade level. A majority of students in the fourth and eighth grades score below grade level in the English Language Arts and Math, setting the stage for poor performances in the city’s middle schools and its high school. The graduation rate for students in Schenectady High School is about 60 percent, one of the lowest rates in the Capital Region and the state. Together, these deeply disturbing numbers portend poor outcomes throughout the students’ lives.

HOW THE READING IS FUN PROGRAM WILL WORK

Teaching of reading-readiness skills will be mostly by the method of play, employing appropriate printed and writing materials and apparatus. Emphasis will also be placed on improving the four-year olds’ conversational skills and building their vocabulary.

Further reading-readiness activities to be organized by The Reading Is Fun Program include Reading Rallies held periodically with clusters of four-year olds and their parents or other principal caregivers and volunteer teachers in suitable neighborhood public venues throughout the city. Finally, a Grand Reading Jamboree comprising all the program participants—the four-year olds and their parents or other principal caregivers and the volunteer teachers—will be held at a single location at the end of each program year, with all the four-year olds receiving awards (T-shirts and books) inscribed with “The Reading Is Fun Program/Schenectady,
PARTNERSHIPS AND TRAINING THE TRAINERS

The all-volunteer Reading Is Fun Program has partnership agreements with the Schenectady City School District; the Schenectady City School District Education Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization; the Schenectady Boys and Girls Club; and the Schenectady First United Methodist Church.

The Schenectady City School District Education Foundation, Inc. is the repository for financial donations raised by The Reading Is Fun Program to support program needs and activities. The education foundation manages the program’s financial affairs, including revenues and disbursements and routine bookkeeping functions. The city school district and the education foundation are represented on The Reading Is Fun Program board.

The program has worked closely with the school district in designing a curriculum for four-year-olds that is aligned with the district’s kindergarten-level reading curriculum, likely strengthening the reading programs for kindergarten and also for key grades 1-3. Dr. Kate Abbott, the city school district’s director for instructional services, has trained the program volunteers (approximately 25 adults and six seniors in Schenectady High School’s National Honor Society chapter) in how to teach reading-readiness and conversational skills and will assist the program in tracking and charting teaching/learning outcomes. This will be achieved by following a schedule which corresponds to one utilized by the city school district’s kindergarten teachers. The school district is providing background checks for the program volunteers and teaching venues in the city schools.

The Boys and Girls Club is also providing teaching venues for the program as well as liability insurance for its volunteers and a network to facilitate communication between the program and the urban community it serves free of charge.

The First United Methodist Church is providing office space for the program’s central administration.

NORMATIVE MENTORING

It should be noted that in its instructional activities, The Reading Is Fun Program may, out of necessity, extend to a wider normative mentoring of the four-year-olds and their parents or other principal caregivers. This would involve engraining in them the values and standards of self-discipline and proper behavior as well as positive goal-setting and building of self-esteem on the base of personal achievement. Hopefully, on this foundation, and with their families’ or other principal caregivers’ encouragement and support, the four-year-olds’ prospects for success in school and beyond will be improved. That effect can be expected to strengthen the youngsters’ family units and their wider social networks, with benefits accruing also to the city of Schenectady at-large.

PROGRAM YEAR SCHEDULE

The inaugural Reading Is Fun Program year is organized as follows: During July and August of this year, Dr. Kate Abbott, the city school district’s director for instructional services, trained the program volunteers in how to teach reading-readiness skills. From now through June 2015, parents will be taught those skills by the program volunteers at twice-monthly meetings for a minimum of 30 minutes per session; or, where circumstances warrant, the four-year-olds, together with their parents or other principal caregivers, will meet the volunteers for instruction in reading-readiness skills three or four times monthly, for at least 30 minutes each time.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

The Reading Is Fun Program has been keyed to garnering wide public support, material and otherwise, throughout the city of Schenectady and further afield. This has been achieved by networking ceaselessly with an array of organizations and institutions and individuals to promote recruitment of four-year-olds and their parents or other principal caregivers into the program; mobilizing a large legion of volunteers to teach and perform other program functions; and continuing to raise funds and in-kind donations for the program. In-kind contributions could comprise mostly of educational books, games and supplies, as well as office space and equipment for the program’s central administration.

GETTING INVOLVED

Inquiries about volunteering or providing other support for The Reading Is Fun Program are welcome and should be directed to me at magid2@juno.com or (518) 377-9542. 

Note: To learn more about the origins of The Reading Is Fun Program, see Ann Parillo’s interviews of Dr. Magid on Schenectady Today at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=flfIeosZA4 (from December 2013) and http://youtu.be/rCNsuoRciOE (from April 1, 2014). Each interview is approximately nine minutes in length.
Instead of retiring from Binghamton University (BU) in 1999 at the reasonable age of 70, when I would still be a passable teacher, productive scholar, and fair-to-middling breadwinner, I leaped at the chance to bow out and change my reclusive, nose-in-a-book life. The cause was my second wife Martha. Two weeks after we married late in 1993, we celebrated by flying to Heathrow with about a dozen students to participate in the BU English Department’s annual London program.

My life in London for nearly five months, apart from weekend trips and occasional recreation, involved attending plays that I would teach in class, locating copies for sale, preparing for classes, and grading papers.

Both my Modern Drama and Shakespeare courses were intended to include as many plays as possible that were being performed in London at the time. I had never taught a course that had more than one Shakespeare play, and performances turned up everywhere from the Old Vic to a few pubs. Many of the modern plays were so recent that texts were hard to locate, but at least I knew enough about them to grant each one at least half a class.

The occasional chaos and exhaustion of BU’s London program added many wrinkles to our honeymoon trip. On returning home, it struck me that if I could evade such stress and enjoy a self-chosen new life with my fabulous new wife, So I retired from BU in 1995.

Martha and I had learned quite conclusively on the weekend bus tours in England that she could not avoid getting sick when travelling. However, she still had her engrossing activities at Roberson Center, Tri-Cities Opera and the Phelps Mansion, and I joined her at the many classical and jazz performances that we both relished. I was an incurable duplicate bridge player, and along with senior softball those were my chief time-killers.

In my last few years teaching, I had concentrated on the absurdist literature and art of the post-World War II period. (One of my courses was entitled “Shapes of Chaos in Contemporary Literature, Art, and Music.”) In my early retirement, I started researching plays that dealt significantly with the atomic bomb. This led to a compact volume entitled Dramas of the Nuclear Age: A Descriptive List of English-Language Plays. But my main objective was to nail down the subject described in my title: Dramatists and the Bomb: American and British Playwrights Confront the Nuclear Age, 1945-1964.

So far my professorial career had not been heavily focused on George Bernard Shaw. (In fact; in the seventies, I had taught and written articles about Beckett, Pinter, and their ilk.) But I had joined the new International Shaw Society, and someone asked me if compiling a secondary bibliography of Shaw would appeal to me. I responded with a selective but wide-ranging list of books, parts of books, and articles on the topics that I thought would be pursued, and sold it as a Microsoft Word file starting in 2005. Later it graduated to an online product.

The attention it received frankly embarrassed me, since it was by no means as complex a job as people envisioned. But it did make me a genuine member of the Shaw community. It drew me (and on one occasion Martha) to the annual Shaw Symposium in Niagara-on-the-Lake in Canada, and stimulated a series of talks and articles about Shaw’s plays. I finally turned a long article which cried out for further development into my second book on his drama, Bernard Shaw as Artist-Fabian. I was invited to read the most interesting part of it as a “featured speaker” at the coming Shaw Convention in Washington, D.C. in late 2009.

Martha had contracted cancer two years before, and I had to plead with the gods to keep her alive so that she could hear the talk and see my new book, which was dedicated to her. As usual in cases of terminal cancer, the gods did not see fit to honor my plea. It was hard to get through the talk with my daughter and her two children from Virginia in the audience.

Martha’s death in April 2009 was devastating, and pretty much wiped out my confidence to do anything mentally challenging for a while. I had previously compiled a selective checklist of works about Samuel Beckett’s plays, so I reacted after she died by launching recklessly into a highly improved version, a relentlessly researched international secondary bibliography of Beckett’s dramatic writings.
and their “conceptual backgrounds” – a huge component in the case of Beckett.

By the time of the Shaw Convention I had compiled hundreds of the entries for this version. There, an empathetic friend, and not coincidentally the General Editor of Toronto’s Shaw Correspondence series, asked me cautiously if I might be amenable to editing the letters of Shaw and his close acquaintance Gilbert Murray during the next few years. I made what turned out to be the correct decision, though it felt unlikely at the time: Yes; I would alternate the two projects and thus stay doubly preoccupied.

Most of my early efforts went into the Beckett cumulation, so that I reached the phase of approaching publishers in early 2010. I had learned how eager academic publishers are to publish bibliographies when the Shaw project was rejected by both American firms who had featured Shaw on their lists. Neither wanted to touch it. By chance I noticed that a relatively new British publisher, Continuum, had adopted Beckett as a special interest. They were at first reluctant, but an insistent letter from their chief advisor (whom I had recommended) swung them in my favor. This was Christopher Innes, one of the world’s most prominent scholars in modern drama and theatre and a good friend. After I slaved over an attempt to verify every entry that I could and worked out an innovative index, a 515-page book was published in 2011 with a $350 price tag. No, it has not sold anywhere near as well as I could wish, but it is, after all, a bibliography.

I had naively welcomed putting together the Shaw/Murray letters edition but my eyes were gradually opened to the scope and difficulties of the task. A comment from the oldest living Shavian said in a letter to me, “I would caution you to consider how daunting a challenge it is . . . . You will be dealing with writings of two voluminous authors who have written about every subject imaginable. Those who have written extensively about them are dead, dying, or frequenting medical facilities.” (The writer, incidentally, was Sid Albert, whose first teaching job was at Triple Cities College of Syracuse U, later known as Harpur College, which eventually became Binghamton University!)

Ultimately, it turned out that of the four or five hundred letters that Bernard Shaw and Gilbert Murray had exchanged, only about 150 were still in existence. True, a great many of these did turn out to be lengthy and dealt with “every subject imaginable.”

Amazingly, the sudden “uptick” in the fortune of the Beckett bibliography was paralleled by an “uptick” in the Shaw/Murray project. Coincidence, then misfortune, made it possible for me to avoid most of the need to track down the bulk of the existing correspondence and save most of the money I would have spent working in the London and Cambridge depositories recording their letters. I learned quite early that another scholar, a Dartmouth librarian and professor, had begun to assemble the needed correspondence and had collected a large set of transcriptions, all of which he succeeded in locating over a lengthy period of time. This man faded from the scene, first, because he could not reconcile himself to the standard format features of the series – he found a printing firm willing to do the job his way – and second, because he got sick and died, leaving everything up in the air.

The General Editor of the Shaw Correspondence series informed me that a large packet of the transcriptions – the earliest Shaw/Murray letters through those of 1905 – had been passed over to him, and he sent it on to me. Then, mostly by accident, I discovered that the Dartmouth library housed a large collection of transcriptions of the remaining letters, those from 1906 to 1950. The curator there was pleased to ship them to me.

My task had therefore been reduced to contacting an array of depositories that might hold originals or copies of whatever letters I did not have, but no extended travels to achieve the same end. The long, difficult, but rewarding job of introducing and annotating the 150-odd letters thus took most of the time and energy I expended, and the volume – Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Gilbert Murray (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) – was published in July 2014.

One would think that this achievement called for a prolonged vacation. However, the research bug would not let me off the hook. Getting a dog was a welcome distraction, but would not deflect me from my newly-acquired habit: scholarship. The present project, a compilation of reviews of Shaw plays by critics working in the United States already exceeds more than 400 pages. It is proving to be a much stronger leash than a 30-pound Beagle.
Since the National Cancer Institute (NCI) first published its “Annual Report to the Nation” in 1998, overall cancer incidence and death rates from cancer have been decreasing for both men and women. These declines are in large part related to decreases in the three most common cancers among men (lung, colon/rectum, prostate) and the two most common among women (breast, colon/rectum), together with a leveling off of lung cancer death rates among women.

However, death rates for certain specific cancers are still increasing, including esophageal cancer for men, pancreatic cancer for women, and liver cancer for both genders. Overall cancer death rates are highest in the African-American population and lowest for Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders. Statistics demonstrate the need to better reach economically disadvantaged and underserved populations.

The NCI report also notes substantial variations in tobacco smoking patterns and lung cancer trends by state and geographic region, highlighting the need for more tobacco control efforts.

Numerous health-related organizations and professional groups have developed cancer screening guidelines. The broad and sometimes conflicting recommendations have made decision-making by primary care physicians more difficult, and these physicians often do not follow any screening guidelines.

Therefore, it becomes extremely important for patients to know their risk for specific cancers and to take an active role in cancer detection.

**CANCER SCREENING AND RISK FACTORS**

Screening differs between individuals with “average” risk and no specific symptoms, and those with increased risk. General population risk refers to persons not known to have any medical conditions, family history, or specific exposures that are known to increase the risk – above that of the general population – of developing certain cancer(s). Increased risk refers to persons who are known or suspected to be at higher risk than the general population because of personal and/or family history, exposures, or prior cancer diagnosis. Individuals at increased risk may need to follow a different screening schedule, such as starting at an earlier age or being screened more often.

**CANCER SCREENING TESTS AND GUIDELINES**

The most widely accepted recommendations for cancer screening are from the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org) and from the National Cancer Institute, a division of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (www.cancer.gov). (The NCI website also contains information on cancer treatment clinical trials taking place across the country.) These cancer screening tests have a solid basis of evidence in terms of improved patient health: decreased incidence of disease, decreased mortality, and improved quality of life. The following are current guidelines for several common types of cancer:

**Breast Cancer:** All women should be familiar with their breasts so that they can notice changes and report them promptly to their health care practitioner. Women should learn the technique of breast self-examination and perform it on a regular basis starting in their twenties. Clinical breast exam by a health care practitioner should be part of periodic checkups, about every three years for women in their twenties and thirties, and every year for women forty and older.

Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age forty and continuing throughout the woman’s lifetime. Women at increased risk should speak with their health care practitioner about the benefits and limitations of starting annual mammograms at an earlier age, or perhaps having additional testing (e.g., breast ultrasound or MRI).

**Cervical Cancer:** All women should begin screening at about three years after becoming sexually active, but no later than age twenty-one. Screening should be done every year with the Standard Pap Test, or every two years using the newer form of Pap Test. Beginning at age thirty, women who have had three consecutive normal Pap Tests may be screened every two to three years. A DNA test for human papilloma virus (HPV) is also recommended. Women with certain risk factors (e.g., HIV infection, organ transplant, chemotherapy, or long-term therapy with corticosteroids) should continue to be screened annually.
Colorectal Cancer: Beginning at age fifty, both men and women at average risk should use one of the following screening tests:

- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years (colonoscopy should be done if results are positive)
- Colonoscopy every ten years
- Double contrast barium enema every five years
- Virtual colonoscopy [CT colonoscopy] every five years
- Fecal occult blood test every year

Talk to your health care practitioner about which test(s) may be best for you. Individuals should also speak to their health care practitioner about earlier and/or more frequent screening if risk factors (e.g., personal history of polyps, personal history of chronic inflammatory bowel disease, strong family history of polyps or colon cancer) are present.

Lung Cancer: At this time, screening is not recommended.

Ovarian Cancer: At this time, screening is not recommended.

Prostate Cancer: The American Cancer Society (ACS) does not support routine testing at this time. The ACS believes that individuals should discuss potential benefits and limitations of early detection testing with their health care professional. This discussion should include an offer of blood testing for prostate-specific antigen (PSA) and digital rectal exam yearly for men fifty and older, or age forty-five for men at higher risk (e.g., strong family history of prostate cancer at an early age).

Currently, use of the PSA test as a screening tool is controversial. One reason is that the test is prone to high rates of false positive results, leading to invasive diagnostic procedures. Studies also suggest that what the PSA detects may often be a slow-growing, nonaggressive form of prostate cancer that actually requires no radical treatment, especially in older men. The NCI and the U.S. Public Health Service are conducting an extensive long-term research project on this subject.

Skin Cancer: A cancer-related examination which includes a thorough inspection of the skin should be done by a health care professional every three years between ages twenty and forty, and every year for individuals over the age of forty. This should be accompanied by counseling on avoidance of skin exposure. Individuals should also be advised to seek prompt medical attention if any moles or other skin lesions undergo changes in size or appearance.

Testicular Cancer: This is the most common cancer in males aged fifteen to thirty-four, and the incidence has been increasing. Although testicular self-exam was formerly recommended by some organizations, there is currently no such recommendation.

The optimal frequency of testicular examination by a health care professional has not been determined for individuals at average risk. It is recommended that individuals at increased risk (e.g., those with a history of un-descended testicles) be informed of their increased risk and counseled about the need for regular checkups.

Clearly this is an area of cancer screening in need of additional study in order to formulate more definitive guidelines.

About the SUNY Retirees Newsletter

The SUNY Retirees Newsletter is designed to share information about happenings, programs, and personalities at SUNY’s various campuses and System-wide which are of interest to retirees. The newsletter is a publication of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC). It is created with the assistance of the following people, who constitute the Editorial Committee:

Dave DeMarco
Degree Planning Project Director
SUNY System Administration

Anne Donnelly
Member, SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council
Professor of Biology (Emeritus), SUNY Cobleskill

Jim Kalas
Vice Chair, SUNY Retiree Service Corps Advisory Council
Associate Provost, Academic Affairs (Ret.)
SUNY System Administration

Curtis Lloyd
Vice Chancellor for Human Resources
SUNY System Administration

Julie Petti
Director, University-wide Human Resources
SUNY System Administration

Pierre Radimak
Editor, SUNY Retirees Newsletter Coordinator, SUNY Retirees Service Corps
SUNY System Administration

The Committee thanks Lee Dixon in the SUNY System Administration Design and Printing department for his design work.

The Retirees Service Corps welcomes content submission from retirees and campuses for inclusion in the SUNY Retirees Newsletter, which is distributed electronically system-wide twice annually (spring/summer and fall/winter). For more information, contact Pierre Radimak at retirees@suny.edu or (518) 320-1354.

If you know retired SUNY colleagues who might want be added to the SUNY Retirees Newsletter electronic distribution list, have them say so in an email to retirees@suny.edu.
A recent article in the Sunday New York Times Review, “Faking Cultural Literacy,” was accorded a place of honor: Page One. The opinion piece purported to show how one needn’t read a book – nor even its review – to be able to hold forth admirably on its contents. The writer asserted that social media was analogous to those plot summary paperbacks that we hid under our desks in high school.

Flipping through those slender black and white “cheating books” was enough for us to often ace an exam on Hamlet. We didn’t have to labor through the Bard’s lengthy version. Instead, we’d learn in just a few cursory paragraphs that Hamlet’s father had died, his mother had remarried, and his uncle was likely the murderer. All this we learned without having to be bothered by language anachronisms like “whilst” or “ere.”

Cultural Literacy, as defined by Allan Bloom in his 1987 best-seller, The Closing of the American Mind, was defined as “the bedrock of agreed-upon values.”

Karl Taro Greenfield reports in his Times featured article that there is a recent phenomenon of faking cultural literacy. He asserts that this is directly caused by our overly-scheduled lives.

We are so busy and so awash in data that is thrown at us all day that we just don’t have time for the old-fashioned pleasures of reading.

Rather than admit we are overwhelmed, and that we didn’t read the book or see the play that is under discussion at a dinner party, Greenfield contends we feel we must fake first-hand knowledge.

In the 21st century, taking a position on any media product (book, film, TV show) is extremely easy to do: we merely have to consult the hundreds of tweets that folks leave on every conceivable topic. We then narrow our search to the book in question, and voilà, we’re familiar enough with it to carry on with charm and aplomb.

What we have essentially done is outsource our opinion to the social media data. If our search skills are honed, it is fairly easy to do. With a few clicks we can freely discuss a movie that we haven’t seen or a book we haven’t read. And no one is the wiser.

Greenfield writes that the constant pressure to know enough – about everything current – is fierce and unremitting. Happily, there’s a way to eradicate the social stigma that would stick to us if we acknowledged our ignorance of some topic. To the rescue comes social media. With Twitter’s help, we needn’t necessarily consume the content, but we can still take a position on it. We can still, as Greenfield states, “engage in chatter about it.” Social media will feed us what we need to know to converse convincingly on all things.

This got me to thinking about the seniors amongst us. Although many of us are computer literate, and in fact, enjoy the repository of information available at our fingertips, my informal survey shows that few of our generation are engaged with social media.

If we want to argue about Obama’s stand on the Affordable Care Act, we’ve already read about it and can forcibly support our viewpoint.

If we are opposed to immigration reform, we know the pros and cons of how America’s undocumented persons can affect the unemployment rate of unskilled American workers.

If we favor raising the minimum wage, we can support our argument with substantive statistics.

If we wish to pan a show we’ve recently seen at the theatre, as we actually saw it, we can intelligently explain why its plot line was weak or its staging poor.

The younger generation may surpass us in many ways – strength, endurance, beauty, ambition. But we are far more honest in acknowledging what we don’t know, haven’t read, and haven’t seen. We have a huge store of rich experiences lived and relished, of good books read and savored, of movies seen and enjoyed.

That being so, we freely confess to something we know nothing about. Our cultural literacy has not yet been high-jacked by social media – nor do we show any signs of succumbing to this phenomenon.
Food in Film: Some Delicious Examples
by Ann Fey, Professor of English (Emeritus), Rockland Community College

There are probably more than a thousand films that include some significant use, large or small, of some aspect of food. Food has often been a comic prop, as in “The Gold Rush” (1925), where a starving Charlie Chaplin boils and eats his shoes, twisting the laces like spaghetti, or uses two forks and some bread to kick up an animated chorus line on his plate.

Filmmakers have also used food to signal sensualities: “Tom Jones” (1963) featured a tantalizing, erotic dinner for two in a tavern, a scene later skillfully parodied by Woody Allen in “Bananas” (1971).

And food is on the plate in “Chef” (2014), that is, until it’s on the counter and in the paper, when a middle-aged wannabe-famous gourmet chef and technology-disadvantaged divorced and insensitive dad is chopped from his job at a nice enough early-bird-special type of restaurant after launching an unintentionally public crude social media tweet battle with a famous food critic which goes viral.

Chef Carl Casper is played by director Jon Favreau. He abandons his gourmet inclinations, goes from sauté to sizzle, glazed to grilled, from frisée to deep fat-fried and hits the road in a food truck. He travels the country: a road trip from Miami to New Orleans and home to California. He goes for market success with sandwiches. The crowds line up at his truck and go wild, their acclaim elevates his sense of achievement not to mention his income. His new aesthetic is pop food, delicious and so desirable.

Chef’s ten-year-old son Percy (played by Emjay Anthony), who accompanies him on his odyssey, is appealing. Nice acting and nice interaction with his dad; as Percy pumps the culinary progress with social media actions and information, father and son bond. Dad exchanges cooking skills and work motivation for Percy’s social media help, gives his son a symbolic chef’s knife, promotes him to line chef and promises him a job on the truck after the summer; not to worry – it’s after school, not truck-schooled. The mutual education scenes are idealized, (except perhaps when Marvin Gaye’s “Sexual Healing” becomes their sing-along.) Finally, when his journey is over, Carl becomes Chef and partner in a restaurant funded by his former critic. We see an elegant buffet and dance: the occasion of Carl’s remarriage to his ex-wife, who was waiting at home.

All the while, music moves this movie. It’s a large part of the appeal, providing emotional cheerleading ranging through varieties of moods and contemporary styles like Brazilian, rock, Cuban, Mexican, blues, rap, salsa, and country. Visible in theatre audiences even at Tuesday matinees were slight tilting of alternate shoulders, constrained toe tapping, head tilting, and even hip wagging. We were also repeatedly treated to tantalizing food in close-up montages, beautifully styled and composed, cholesterol glistening, clearly delicious.

The restaurant owner who fired the Chef is played coolly by Dustin Hoffman as a financially successful entrepreneur. It’s as if “The Graduate” was influenced by the profit-centered career advice of that gentleman at his graduation party – “Business!” (Actually, “Plastics!”) – instead of running off on a road trip down the aisle. Performances by Scarlett Johansson, John Leguizamo, and Sofia Vergara work excellently, with humor, irony, and fun. The best bit in the film is an improvised-sounding encounter between the Chef and his former wife’s first husband, played Robert Downey Jr.; it’s a comedic gem. “Chef” is fluffy fun piled on a slice of contemporary society and slowly oozing satire.

The famous food-centered film “Babette’s Feast” (1987) satisfies on a different level. There is a beautiful dinner, created by the French political refugee who gives all she has to create her artistic masterpiece, transcending the Danish masses’ traditional choices of boiled fish and gruel, allowing if not creating a loving camaraderie among the now aged self-depriving residents of a lonely-looking world. There are telling scenes: the opening with fish drying on a line, the lovely ill-fated ocean-side meeting of a romantic opera singer and a societal-dominated young girl, the paternal and ecclesiastic portraiture on the walls and on the souls of the society. Best of all: the slow hand-holding dance around the well outside at the end: more powerful than any contemporary mob-fest. This is a film to see again.

The restaurant owner who fired the Chef is played coolly by Dustin Hoffman as a financially successful entrepreneur. It’s as if “The Graduate” was influenced by the profit-centered career advice of that gentleman at his graduation party – “Business!” (Actually, “Plastics!”) – instead of running off on a road trip down the aisle. Performances by Scarlett Johansson, John Leguizamo, and Sofia Vergara work excellently, with humor, irony, and fun. The best bit in the film is an improvised-sounding encounter between the Chef and his former wife’s first husband, played Robert Downey Jr.; it’s a comedic gem. “Chef” is fluffy fun piled on a slice of contemporary society and slowly oozing satire.

The famous food-centered film “Babette’s Feast” (1987) satisfies on a different level. There is a beautiful dinner, created by the French political refugee who gives all she has to create her artistic masterpiece, transcending the Danish masses’ traditional choices of boiled fish and gruel, allowing if not creating a loving camaraderie among the now aged self-depriving residents of a lonely-looking world. There are telling scenes: the opening with fish drying on a line, the lovely ill-fated ocean-side meeting of a romantic opera singer and a societal-dominated young girl, the paternal and ecclesiastic portraiture on the walls and on the souls of the society. Best of all: the slow hand-holding dance around the well outside at the end: more powerful than any contemporary mob-fest. This is a film to see again.

The famous food-centered film “Babette’s Feast” (1987) satisfies on a different level. There is a beautiful dinner, created by the French political refugee who gives all she has to create her artistic masterpiece, transcending the Danish masses’ traditional choices of boiled fish and gruel, allowing if not creating a loving camaraderie among the now aged self-depriving residents of a lonely-looking world. There are telling scenes: the opening with fish drying on a line, the lovely ill-fated ocean-side meeting of a romantic opera singer and a societal-dominated young girl, the paternal and ecclesiastic portraiture on the walls and on the souls of the society. Best of all: the slow hand-holding dance around the well outside at the end: more powerful than any contemporary mob-fest. This is a film to see again.
New York State Employee Assistance Program Seeks Retired Faculty as Expert Trainers

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

Retired SUNY faculty members represent a sizable population of experts in various fields with extensive experience presenting their content knowledge to diverse groups. Many faculty members provide consultation services while actively teaching, which they continue following retirement; some begin providing services on a consultation basis after retirement, as means to continue engagement in their fields.

If you are looking for a new or additional opportunity to provide expert consultation in your field of expertise, then look no further: the New York State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is seeking expert trainers to educate EAP Coordinators across New York State.

As you may be aware, EAP is a peer assistance program which provides confidential information, assessment, and referral services to NYS employees, their family members, and retirees. It also provides orientations and training for employees, managers, supervisors, and union representatives on the benefits and use of EAP. Each State agency has an EAP Coordinator, who is trained by EAP to identify, assess, and refer employees in need.

The Employee Assistance Program seeks to address problems that may affect employee productivity; individual concerns can range from a simple need for childcare, to complicated issues involving substance abuse. Some of the most frequently requested topics include:

- Grief and loss
- Separation, divorce, blended families
- Fitness for duty and return-to-work
- Conflicts with supervisors
- Mental health issues
- Addictions
- Autism, developmental delays
- Parenting
- Elder care
- Retirement

EAP is looking for expert educators to present instructor-led trainings to groups of EAP Coordinators in ten locations around New York State. Content area may be on any of the above, or in other areas that could potentially affect productivity in the workplace.

Retirees from state-operated and community college campuses may be eligible to be compensated for these trainings. Otherwise, you are welcome to provide training on an unpaid volunteer basis.

If you are interested in sharing your expert knowledge to enable EAP Coordinators to better assist their peers at work, please contact EAP Training Specialist Annemarie Adams, LMC-EAP at Annemarie.Adams@eap.ny.gov.

Quick-Reference Retiree Benefits Contact List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BENEFIT</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
<th>WEBSITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYS Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP)</td>
<td>800-833-4344 (NYS Employee Benefits Division HelpLine, option #1)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cs.ny.gov/ebd/welcome/retireegroupplan.cfm">www.cs.ny.gov/ebd/welcome/retireegroupplan.cfm</a></td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIAA-CREF</td>
<td>1-800-842-2252</td>
<td><a href="http://www.tiaa-cref.org/suny">www.tiaa-cref.org/suny</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valic</td>
<td>1-800-448-2542</td>
<td><a href="http://www.valic.com/suny">www.valic.com/suny</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MetLife</td>
<td>1-800-560-5001</td>
<td><a href="http://www.metlife.com/suny">www.metlife.com/suny</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ING</td>
<td>1-800-677-4636</td>
<td><a href="https://suny.prepare4myfuture.com/">https://suny.prepare4myfuture.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fidelity</td>
<td>1-800-343-0860</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fidelity.com/">www.fidelity.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUP Benefit Fund</td>
<td>1-800-342-4206</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uupinfo.org/benefits/retireinfo.php#RMSC">www.uupinfo.org/benefits/retireinfo.php#RMSC</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSEA Benefit Fund</td>
<td>1-800-323-2732</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cseaebf.com">www.cseaebf.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 each program or organization. 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
Binghamton University Retiree Services Coordinator
ckkraman@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
dunefska@newpaltz.edu or (845) 257-3986 (O), (845) 338-2680 (H)

SUNY Oneonta
Richard Burr, President
Retired Faculty, Administrators & Professionals Association at SUNY Oneonta
rbburr4@gmail.com or (607) 432-0517

SUNY Oswego
Vernon Tryon, Chairperson
SUNY Oswego Emeriti Association
vernon@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
rourkecm@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
farruggji@upstate.edu or (315) 464-4942

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

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Hudson Valley Community College
William Muller, Member
“Keepers of the Flame” Program
w.muller@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!
Be a Blood Donor and Then Tell Your Friends

by Pete Herron, Professor of Mathematics (Emeritus)
Suffolk County Community College

Editor’s Note: Pete Herron is a member of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council.

The need is great and never-ending. I’m talking about donating blood products.

BLOOD PRODUCTS? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Whole blood is only one of the blood products you can donate. Besides whole blood, you can donate plasma, red cells and platelets. There is no substitute for human blood. Blood is usable for only 42 days, so your donation is always critical.

An aging population and new medical treatments are contributing to an increase in demand for surgeries and procedures requiring blood transfusions. At the same time, more restrictive donor eligibility criteria intended to protect the safety of the blood supply has decreased the eligibility pool.

WHO CAN DONATE?

Donors must be at least 16 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds, and not have donated blood within the last 56 days. Those 76 and older can donate if they meet all criteria and, depending on where they live, present a physician’s letter.

WHAT’S THE PROCESS LIKE?

When you give blood, you will be asked some basic questions such as name, address, phone number and date of birth. You will be asked about your health history to ensure that you are eligible to donate. Your hematocrit (iron count) will be determined from a drop of blood. Your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will also be checked. As in all blood donations, only new, sterile, single-use items are used.

You can make a real difference by donating blood now. Who knows? You may need a transfusion sometime in the future.

It takes only 10 to 12 minutes to donate a pint of whole blood.

Once your donation is complete, you will rest and be given some refreshments. You should feel fine and you should drink plenty of fluids. Your body replaces blood volume or plasma within 24 hours. Red cells need about four to eight weeks to complete replacement. The average healthy body has between eight and 12 pints of blood and can easily spare one.

After donation, your blood will be tested for blood type, hepatitis, HIV (AIDS virus), HTLV (a virus that may cause blood or nerve disease), Chagas, West Nile virus, and syphilis. It is then separated into components, such as red cells, plasma and platelets, that can help several patients.

Instead of donating a pint of whole blood, you can now donate a partial component (e.g. platelets, plasma or red blood cells) or a combination that is most needed by patients who match your blood type. Platelets are very fragile, short-lived blood cells that are essential for normal blood clotting. Platelets are often used to treat cancer patients, accident victims, patients with blood disorders and bone marrow transplant patients.

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO DONATE PLATELETS AND RED CELLS?

It feels about the same as a whole blood donation. The blood is taken in small amounts and “given a spin” in a centrifuge to separate your platelets from other blood components. The platelets are collected in a separate bag and the remainder of your blood is returned to you. This cycle is repeated until the platelet donation is completed. The whole process takes less than two hours. Donors must refrain from taking products containing aspirin for 72 hours prior to donation. By only donating platelets, you are donating six to 10 times the amount that can be obtained.
from whole blood. Your one donation is helping six to 10 patients.

As part of the platelet donation, plasma may also be collected. Plasma is composed of 92% water, 7% vital proteins such as albumin, gamma globulin, anti-hemophilic factor and other clotting factors, and 1% mineral salts, sugars, fats, hormones and vitamins. Plasma is needed to maintain a person’s blood pressure and assist in clotting. Therefore, it is vital in the treatment of burn patients, patients in shock, and for people with bleeding disorders.

Sometimes you can donate two units of critically-needed red cells in just one visit, saving two lives in the process. In the face of ever-growing growing need, obtaining two units of red cells from a single donor will help to meet the needs of local hospitals and the patients they serve.

An automated red cell donation feels just like a whole blood donation but uses a smaller needle. A smaller amount of blood is drawn into a sterile bag and then spun in a centrifuge to separate red cells from the other blood components. The red cells are stored in a separate bag as the other components are safely returned to the donor’s body along with a saline solution. This helps keep the body’s volume balanced, so the donor actually feels better than a whole blood donor. The cycle is repeated until the red cell donation is completed. You can make an automated red cell donation every 112 days or 16 weeks.

AN EYE-OPENING EXPERIENCE

Recently, the New York Blood Center called me and asked if I would do a platelet donation because a particular patient needed what I have. When I was donating I was informed that I was the only person on Long Island that matched what this patient needed. Can you believe that? The New York Blood Center was aware of only one person who could fulfill the needs of a critically-ill patient. For me, this experience really brought home the crucial shortage of blood products for the New York metropolitan area as well as all of New York State. My blood type is O+, which a very common type. Because it is so common, the demand for type O+ is very high.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can make a real difference by donating blood now. Who knows? You may need a transfusion sometime in the future. Donating is easy, and after the first time you donate red cells or platelets, you will wonder why you did not so sooner.

If you are 76 or older and live in the New York metro area (which includes the five boroughs, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley as far north as Poughkeepsie), have your physician write a letter stating that you are in good health and are able to donate blood products. Send the letter to Benjamin J. Greco, M.D., Medical Director, New York Blood Center, 1200 Prospect Avenue, Westbury, NY 11590.

Call the New York Blood Center at 1-800-933-2566 or visit www.nyblood-center.org to find the times and locations where you can donate.

If you live outside the New York metro area, the New York-Penn Region of the American Red Cross operates blood donation centers in Albany, Binghamton, Utica, Syracuse, as well as in the Rochester and Buffalo metro areas. The Red Cross has no upper age limit for blood donation as long as you are well with no restrictions or limitations to your activities.

Call the American Red Cross at 1-800-733-2767 to schedule a blood donation at the center nearest you. To schedule a platelet donation, call 1-800-545-4086 or e-mail apheresisdonor@redcross.org.

Go to http://www.redcrossblood.org/donation-centers/nyp to see the locations of the Red Cross blood donation centers or type in your ZIP Code in the blue box at the top of the web page to find a blood drive near you. Click the name of the donation center in your area to see their hours of operation or schedule an appointment online.

CONCLUSION

If you are healthy, do not put donating blood off; you may be the only person in your area that can help a critically-ill patient.

Please also encourage your friends and relatives to become blood donors. Blood donation is an easy, rewarding experience that saves lives. It doesn’t get any better than that!

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, or other type of content, let us know and we’ll see what we can do!
Below is a picture of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website home page. Come visit us at www.suny.edu/retirees!

Welcome to The SUNY Retirees Service Corps Website

About the SUNY Retirees Service Corps

The SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) was formed in early 2008 to serve retirees from all State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges, state-operated colleges and universities, System Administration, Research Foundation, State University Construction Fund, and affiliated organizations. The RSC seeks to promote a strong retiree-campus-community connection by linking retirees to information, resources, and service opportunities that enhance their retirement.

Some of the services this website offers are:

- Resources for retirement preparation
- Resources for adjusting to retirement
- Links to campus-based retiree organizations
- Listing of retiree benefits by campus
- Personal stories of retirement

We will be expanding the RSC website to include the following secure, password-protected services:

- An online directory of participating SUNY retirees
- A chat room where retirees can interact and exchange information (events, scholarly articles, etc.)
- A volunteer matching service for those retirees who indicate an interest in volunteerism

We invite you to explore the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact us at retirees@suny.edu.