

SUNY Retirees Newsletter

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SUNY Retirees Conference to be held at Schenectady County Community College on Wednesday, October 21, 2015

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

Mark your calendars! The SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) is proud to announce that its fourth biennial conference on SUNY retirees will take place on Wednesday, October 21, 2015. **Creating New Connections** will be held at Schenectady County Community College (SCCC) in Schenectady, NY. The College and the Retirees Association of SCCC (RASCCC) will co-sponsor the event with the SUNY RSC.

The conference agenda, which is currently under development, will include a panel discussion with representatives from RASCCC, the SUNY Cobleskill Retirees Network, Upstate Medical University's "Retiree Associates" program, and the SUNY Plaza Partnership regarding what those respective programs and organizations are doing to reach out to their campus's retirees.

The conference luncheon will be prepared and served by students of SCCC's prestigious School of Hotel, Culinary Arts & Tourism.

The retirees conference will likely include a tour of the highly-regarded School of Music, which is housed in a new \$3.9 million building that contains teaching studios, two specialized music classrooms, practice rooms, recital space, faculty offices, a student lounge, as well as a state-of-the-art recording studio and control room.

Creating New Connections will be open to current and future

retirees of SUNY's 64 campuses, System Administration, the Research Foundation, the Construction Fund, and individuals who oversee existing campus retirement programs, and those interested in starting or expanding a retiree organization at their campus.



SCCC Culinary Arts Students at work

Once retirees conference details have been finalized, they will be announced via the SUNY RSC's electronic distribution lists and in the Fall/Winter 2015 issue of the *SUNY Retirees Newsletter*, which will come out in September.

Agenda and registration information will also be posted in the Retiree Conferences section of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website (www.suny.edu/retirees).

A Message from the Editor

In the fall of 2014, the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) emailed SUNY retirees on its distribution lists a request: Please send us your retirement stories for inclusion in the **SUNY Retirees Newsletter**. Quite frankly, we didn't know what to expect. We are happy to report that the response to our request was amazing. We were flooded with wonderful articles from SUNY retirees sharing their retirement experiences, such as planning for retirement, how they spent time after retiring, and any thoughts they would like to share with those thinking about retirement.

As a result, we are officially dubbing the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of the **SUNY Retirees Newsletter** "**The Retirement Stories Special Edition**." Interspersed throughout these pages you will find five such stories written by retirees in their own words and two retiree profiles written by others. You'll also find a profile of a SUNY retiree volunteer and two retirees' experiences of becoming American citizens. Each article is unique, informative, and inspiring.

We unfortunately could not fit all of the retirement stories we received into this issue. Not to worry, as the remaining articles will be printed in upcoming issues of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter.

To those of you who responded to our request to share their retirement experiences, THANK YOU! To everyone else: Please keep those stories coming! Email them as Microsoft Word attachments to retirees@suny.edu. Be sure to also send a good-quality jpeg photo of yourself that we can include with your story. We'll let you know when your story will run in the **SUNY Retirees Newsletter**.

Campus Retiree Organization Profile

SUNY Geneseo Emeriti Association

By Don Lackey, Coordinator

Editor's Note: Don Lackey is Assistant Vice President for Human Resources (Emeritus) for SUNY Geneseo and a member of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps Advisory Council.



History of the Organization

The roots of the Geneseo Emeriti Association go way back to the late 1970s when a Twenty-Five Year Club was established to recognize Faculty and Professional Staff who had completed 25 years of service at the College. An annual Dinner and Cocktails celebration was held at the historic Big Tree Inn which was highlighted by the induction of new members to the Club.

Over a number of years, the founders and record keepers retired, Twenty-Five Year Club membership and the number of new SUNY Geneseo retirees grew significantly, and it was decided to create an Emeriti Association to help keep Emeriti in touch with campus activities. Our first Luncheon was held in the early 1990s.

We meet in June shortly after graduation and again in early October at Geneseo's Big Tree Inn before the Snowbirds escape to warmer climes. Members start gathering at

11:30 A.M. to chat and catch up with each other, lunch with a special emphasis on dessert is served at noon, and we close with a 20-to 30-minute presentation by one of our members or someone from the College Administration.

Campus Collaboration

The support of the Geneseo College Administration has been exceptional from the beginning. Assistant Vice President for Human Resources Julie Briggs and staff member Elaine Anderson provide and maintain mailing lists and labels, and send out invitation letters for each Emeriti Association meeting. They also collect the reservations, prepare name tags and coordinate payment to the Big Tree Inn.

The Human Resources Office has created an informative brochure of benefits available to retired Faculty and Professional Staff including ID cards, parking, computer access, library access, and discounts to athletic and cultural events on Campus.

Executive Assistant to the President Becky Glass, and Gayle Dykeman, Administrative Coordinator for the President's Office, provide Emeriti with weekly e-mail updates on Campus academic, social, cultural, and athletic events as well as notification of the passing of current or retired Faculty and Staff.

Vice President for Administration James Milroy has attended a number of Emeriti Association meetings over the last five years to give detailed and informative reports on numerous construction projects occurring on Campus. Tours of the completed projects have been held before our luncheons including the Integrated Science Center, the Doty Administration Building, Monroe Hall, and Baily Hall. We look forward to touring the new athletic stadium in the spring.

Emeriti Association Luncheon Presentation Topics

The presentations at recent Emeriti Luncheons have covered a number of very interesting topics.

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Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus Wayne Mahood spoke on his book, *Fight All Day, March All Night*, detailing letters sent home by a Civil War Medal of Honor recipient killed in action.

Jim Kimball, Geneseo's renowned ethnomusicologist and historian of Western New York folk music, discussed his grant to preserve the early instruments and music of those who settled this area.

Professor Emeritus Gary Cox from our Philosophy Department has grown his own grapes and produced his own wine. He presented the first of two documentaries he is creating for the newly-established Finger Lakes Museum in Branchport on the wine and grape industry in New York's Finger Lakes region. See the Epilogue at the end of this article.

What is Next for the Geneseo Emeriti Association?

Our first priority is to get more Emeriti to attend our meetings. The key to that is to make them aware we are a social organization providing a place to meet and share stories of our years at Geneseo. Many Geneseo Emeriti will tell you they came to Geneseo expecting to spend one to five years and stayed for a lifetime.

Our second priority is to provide a couple of day trips each year within a reasonable distance of Geneseo. Our first was a successful luncheon cruise on the Erie Canal.

Our third priority is to make every Emeritus more aware of the information and resources available through the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (<http://suny.edu/retirees>).

If you have questions regarding the Geneseo Emeriti Association, please contact ndlackey@localnet.com or briggsja@geneseo.edu.

Finally, if you find yourself on Route 390 coming south from Rochester or north from the Southern Tier, please stop and visit our historic Landmark Village and the Geneseo Campus. I believe you will see why so many faculty and staff came here for a job, fell in love with this place, and stayed for a lifetime.

Epilogue

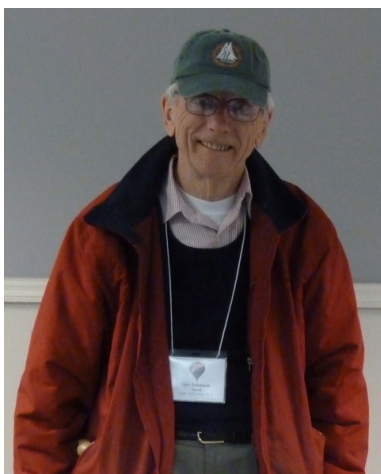
For an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the making of Gary Cox's documentary, visit the *SUNY Retirees Newsletter Bonus Features* section online at www.suny.edu/retirees/newsletters/.



SUNY Retiree Volunteer Profile

Arthur L. Johnson

Professor Emeritus, SUNY Potsdam



I retired in 1999 after 31 years of teaching American and Canadian history at SUNY Potsdam. I retired as a full professor, 66 years old. I loved my job but was ready to slow down. I continued for ten years to teach a course a year as an adjunct.

I also had the good fortune to occasionally be a history lecturer on the vessels of the American-Canadian-

Caribbean Line (now Blount Smallships), doing inland cruises on the Hudson River, Erie Canal, St Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the Intracoastal Waterway in Florida. That lasted ten years.

I continue to teach mini-courses for SOAR, a member-directed lifelong learning group for retirees in the North Country sponsored locally by SUNY Potsdam through its Center for Lifelong Education and Recreation (CLEAR) on the Potsdam campus. SOAR is one of almost 400 such lifelong learning groups affiliated with the Elderhostel Institute Network (<http://www.roadscholar.org/n/institute-network-lifelong-learning>). To learn more about SOAR, visit their website at <http://www.soarnorthcountry.com>.

Since 2000 I have been volunteering at two nursing homes with my wife, Anne. In 2003 I took Hospice training and have been a Hospice volunteer ever since, which involves weekly visits with patients in their homes or in nearby nursing homes. In my

youth I had wanted to be an Episcopal priest. I lost that track in college. Just as well. I thought I would like the liturgical function but didn't think I could handle visiting the elderly, the sick and the dying. Now, after an academic career, I'm visiting the elderly, the sick, and the dying. As it turns out, I have a vocation for it. God does have a sense of humor! At eighty years of age, it's too late for me to join the priesthood, but I remain active in my parish church as acolyte and lector.

At the nursing homes we work with activities such as reading to patients, Anne playing piano for them, taking them out for walks, or just visiting people who see few visitors. I've had a good life and I need to give back some of the good I have had.

I have been a member of the Adirondack Mountain Club and the ADK

SUNY Retirees Volunteer Profile

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46ers, having climbed all of the 46 highest peaks in the range.

"I've had a good life and I need to give back some of the good I have had."

I'm also a long-term member of the Grasse River Players community theater in Canton, NY. Last year I had roles in Steve Martin's "Picasso at the Lapin Agile," and John Cariani's "Almost, Maine." I have written, directed, and acted in sixteen dinner theater murder mystery plays.

So it has been a busy retirement. My health is good, due to a combination of exercise (two-mile walk every morning) and to my dear wife of 54 years, who sees to my diet (including wine and ale).

Someone asked me what advice I would give to SUNY employees who are considering retirement or are recently retired. I would tell them this: Don't retire totally. Perhaps work part-time or get involved in volunteering. The big thing is stay engaged in life.



Arthur and Anne Johnson aboard the W.W. Durant on Raquette Lake, NY

Retirement Story

The Miracle Man of St. Francis Hospital

by George Rannazzi, Assistant Dean for Finance and Administration (Retired), School of Social Welfare, Stony Brook University

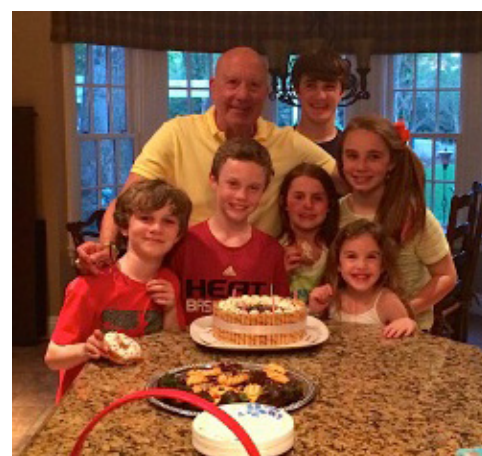
Editor's Note: *The title above was given to George by the doctors and the Long Island news station which aired a piece applauding St. Francis Hospital and his survival of the ordeal he describes below. During his 26-year career at Stony Brook University, George was recipient of the Chancellor's and President's Awards for Professional Excellence.*

As my eyes slowly opened I became aware of strange lights attached to a foreign ceiling and I could barely hear a whispered voice asking if I knew my name and where I was. Why was Linda asking me my name? Where was I?

June 11, 2010 began as an eventful day. It was Linda's (my wife of 47 years) last day as a Registered Nurse with Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital. Her clinical specialty was radiation oncology and she was retiring after 26 years in the profession. I planned to gather our grandchildren to greet her with balloons and cheers as she walked out of Sloan Kettering's Commack, NY site later that day for the last time.

That morning after kissing Linda goodbye, and on my way to the School of Social Welfare in the Health Sciences Center of Stony Brook University where I was assistant Dean for Finance and Administration (Senior Staff Associate), a pain began in my chest and spread through my entire upper torso. This couldn't be happening to me. I had an important meeting with Dean Frances Brisbane that morning! I felt as though an elephant was dancing on my chest and I knew I was in deep trouble. I pulled over, called Linda (I could barely speak), who called 911 and was on her way to me. I was thankful that the ambulance arrived so quickly. I answered some questions and felt an oxygen mask being placed on my face.

The next thing I remembered was opening my eyes in what I was informed was the ICU of St. Francis Hospital in Roslyn, NY. I had awakened from a two-week medically-induced coma, battling liver, kidney and heart failure. In addition, a Temporary Ventricular Assist Device (TVAD) that had been implanted in my chest



George Rannazzi with 6 of his 8 grandchildren at his 70th birthday party

through my right groin was finally removed.

I had suffered a heart attack and two stents were implanted in my right coronary artery at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Islip. Subsequently, thanks mainly to my wife and family who finally convinced a doctor that my condition was continuing to deteriorate, I was transferred to St. Francis Hospital under the direction of the best cardiologist at St. Francis, Dr. Joseph Minadeo.

The right side of my heart was failing. My survival depended upon the implantation of the TVAD, which would take over the functioning of my heart's right side and give my heart the opportunity to rest and recover. If that failed, I would need a heart transplant. The doctors hoped that my otherwise excellent physical condition and the award-winning medical and nursing

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staff of St. Francis Hospital would give me the best chance to survive. My family, who had been at my bed side literally 24 hours a day, agreed with the recommendations of Dr. Newell Robinson, my surgeon, and Dr. Minadeo.

After ten days of treatment with the TVAD my heart began to recover and eventually the liver and kidney failure responded to treatment as well. But nerve damage to my right leg and foot became evident, apparently resulting from a complication during the implantation of the heart pump. This nerve damage resulted in right foot drop, a seemingly small price to pay for being a hair's breadth from death. I also suffered complete muscle de-compensation and loss in weight from 170 to 130 pounds.

Finally, after one month I was released from ICU and taken to my new isolation room. I had contracted *Clostridium difficile*, often known as C. diff, a contagious intestinal infection resulting from antibiotic treatment that's cured, ironically enough, with antibiotics. I now had an additional battle to fight. Two weeks later my health continued to improve and a defibrillator was surgically implanted in my chest as a precaution. My physicians and surgeon shared with my family that, for the first time, they felt I would survive.

I was in desperate need of intense physical rehabilitation if I were ever to resume a normal life. My family was ready to travel and research the best facilities in the Northeast. I was accepted into Burke Rehabilitation Center and Hospital in Westchester County, NY. I was wheeled into the facility on a gurney, unable to walk on my own. I endured 2 1/2 weeks of intense physical rehab and occupational therapy and finally left Burke Rehab walking gingerly with a cane and a brace on my right foot. I continued with physical therapy and cardiac rehab for the next 10 months.

Here I am, nearly five years post-heart attack, thankful for the excellent treatment I received at St Francis and Burke and eternally grateful to Linda and my family, Dan, Dina, Jill, Chris, Lauren and my grandchildren who never left my side and inspired me to overcome my various health challenges. They were the "wind beneath my wings." Their ever-constant presence helped to keep all hospital personnel "honest." The more than 100 get well cards from university administrators and faculty, family and friends near and far, and the prayers from friends and strangers who knew of my plight kept me focused on my recovery.

It was difficult to capsulize this life-changing event for you, and I hope I was able to convey at least in part the ordeal faced by my family and me.

At 66 years of age I retired from the University in December 2010 at the insistence of my family and over the objections of faculty and non-teaching staff at Stony Brook. After all, wasn't I the one who said that I would take the hand that God dealt me and make the best of it?

Today, thankfully, I have recovered from my heart attack and the resulting complications and have resumed all normal activities.

I am now 70 years old and when asked what Linda and I do now that we are retired our reply is "we do everything we did when we worked, except not work." We now have the time to do those things we did not have time for when we worked. We travel several times each year. Our trips have included visits to Canada, our nation's national parks, and of course, Florida for part of the winter.

In October 2014, we took a river cruise on the Danube River which departed from Budapest, Hungary and ended our two-week trip in Prague, The Czech Republic. The shore excursions, restaurants, guides and towns and cities, including Budapest, Salzburg, Dunstien, Vienna and Prague were educational and fascinating.



George & Linda Rannazzi on the banks of the Danube in Durstein, Austria

My many routine activities include breakfast each morning with Linda and a 1 1/2- to 2-hour workout at the gym. Ballroom dance lessons, attending the theatre and concerts are also part of our activities. We spend more time with our children and grandchildren and especially enjoy having lunch at our favorite bagel restaurant. It took a few months, but with our increased free time, Linda and I painted our unfinished basement and converted it into a play area for our grandchildren.

To those SUNY employees considering retirement, I would recommend that you develop plans that include, of course, a financial snapshot of your fiscal resources as well as an outline of how you will approach this new phase of your life. Retirement is wonderful and will enable you to slow down and enjoy the fruits of your labor. It is also the perfect time to catch up on all those things you have always wanted to do.

Life is sweet. Make the most of it.

Your Blood Pressure: Why it Matters

by Frances S. Hilliard, RN,

MS Professor of Nursing (Emeritus), Nassau Community College



Hypertension (or high blood pressure) is one of the most prevalent chronic adult illnesses in the country today. It is estimated that one in four adults has this condition and is aware of it, while several million more individuals are as yet undiagnosed. Hypertension is significantly more common in African-Americans, older adults, those who are overweight, heavy drinkers, and people with diabetes. While the precise cause of high blood pressure is usually unknown, this condition can be effectively treated and controlled.

What the Numbers Mean

Blood pressure represents the amount of force exerted by blood flow against the walls of the arteries. Normally, each time the heart beats, it pushes blood out into the arteries, which are vessels (or tubes) that carry blood and oxygen from the heart to all the organs and tissues of the body. The two numbers in a blood pressure reading represent the amount of force pushing against the artery walls. Systolic blood pressure (top number) indicates the amount of force when the heart is contracting or pumping, while diastolic blood pressure (bottom number) measures the force in between heart beats, when the heart is at rest.

So-called "normal" blood pressure for adults really represents an average number, and has been historically defined as 120/80. Recently the Joint National Committee on Prevention,

Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (part of the National Institutes of Health) issued revised guidelines which now define the target blood pressure for adults as below 120/80. This is because clinical studies have linked even a modest blood pressure elevation to an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

In December 2013, researchers again revised these guidelines for adults aged 60 or older, saying that older adults should only take medication to lower blood pressure if their values exceed 150/90. The exception is for older individuals with diabetes or kidney disease – they need medication at values of 140/90, which is the same point as for all adults younger than 60.

The way in which blood pressure is measured, although relatively simple and non-invasive, may result in erroneous readings if not done correctly. Several areas of concern are:

- Proper cuff size based upon arm circumference (If the cuff is too large, falsely low readings may result; too small a cuff may cause falsely high readings.)
- Having the patient rest (sit or lie down) for 5 – 10 minutes before a reading
- Patient's arm should be resting on a flat surface at heart level
- A bare arm is necessary – avoid gathered, bunched, or rolled up sleeves
- If seated, the patient should have both feet flat on the floor
- Patient should avoid talking while reading is taken

In order to make a diagnosis of hypertension, the blood pressure must be elevated on two or more separate occasions (or visits). However, a single reading above 180 systolic or above 110 diastolic requires immediate treatment.

Why Blood Pressure is Important

Uncontrolled hypertension often leads to

serious illness or even death. Hypertension is called "the silent killer" because while damage is being done to the arteries, heart, kidneys, and other organs, there are usually no symptoms or warning signs. Possible health consequences over time include:

- Damage to the coronary arteries and heart muscle
- Stroke
- Kidney damage, leading to renal failure and the need for dialysis
- Vision loss
- Memory loss
- Erectile dysfunction
- Peripheral artery disease

The chances for such serious problems increase if, along with the high blood pressure, there are other risk factors. These include advancing age, heredity (including race/ethnicity), male gender, being overweight, smoking, high cholesterol, diabetes, and physical inactivity.

What You Can do to Take Care of Yourself

First and foremost is to be aware and informed. Know your risk factors and know your blood pressure. Educate yourself about ways to control blood pressure:

- Eat a better diet, especially reducing sodium (salt) intake
- Participate in regular physical activity
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Manage stress levels
- Do not smoke; avoid second-hand smoke
- Limit alcohol intake
- Comply with medication regimen

Despite best efforts at lifestyle changes, medications are often needed to control blood pressure. Today, there is a wide array of drugs to choose from when treating hypertension. Sometimes a combination of drugs from different pharmaceutical classes is required for adequate control. (Note: A full discussion of available medications is beyond the scope of this article.)

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Whatever you are prescribed, it is essential that you take the medication consistently. Do not just stop taking a drug for any reason – contact your health care practitioner promptly. If you are experiencing side effects or other problems with the drug, usually a simple

change in dosage or a switch to another drug may be all that's required.

Remember – drug treatment does not cure hypertension – it merely helps to control your blood pressure. The responsibility for managing hypertension rests not only with the health care

practitioner, but even more so with the patient. It is up to you to recognize how important effective treatment is, and to continue your efforts at keeping your blood pressure under control.

Retirement Story

William Graebner

Professor Emeritus of History, SUNY Fredonia



William Graebner and Diane Bennett

Retirement was ordinary, at first. After 33 years in Fredonia's History Department – I retired as Professor Emeritus in 2004 – I was content to scour the New York Times in bed, read depressing books on the war in Iraq, and putter around our house in Buffalo, where we've lived since 1978. When that routine got old, I wrote and published a book, my eighth, titled *Patty's Got a Gun: Patricia Hearst in 1970s America* (University of Chicago Press).

But my wife, Diane Bennett, and I had always had a passion for Italy. We met in Florence in 1962 as Stanford students, took six months off our jobs in 1989 to live in Bologna with our two boys, and had been charmed and awed by Rome in 1993, when I held a teaching Fulbright at the university, known as La Sapienza.

Rome became our passion and, as it turned out, our vocation. As retirees, we returned to the city every year, usually in the spring, for two to three months, renting apartments in the close-in suburbs, enjoying the Italian and American friends we had made, mostly former graduate students of mine.

Rome is infinitely interesting – sometimes intimidatingly so – but getting to its

attractions, whether by automobile or public transportation, is irritating at best. There are a million scooters in Rome, and I wanted one.

Dianne was appropriately horrified – my only two-wheeled vehicles had been bicycles as a child – but in a weak moment she agreed to consider a scooter if I earned my New York State motorcycle license. On the third and last day of a three-day “crash” course, I had my license (actually, if you crash, you don't get it). And, as luck would have it, a colleague in the Fredonia History Department, an Italian, had a Piaggio Hexagon, a substantial if older machine with a loud but powerful 2-cycle engine, up for sale and stored in Bologna.

That May, we picked the scooter up, I drove it around the block to assure Dianne that I wouldn't fall over, she got on the back, and we headed south through the Appenines on the historic Futa, a road famed and feared for its white-knuckle curves and steep descents. Four days and 300 kilometers later, through Florence, Arezzo, Montepulciano, Orvieto, and Viterbo – exhilarated but chastened by a near-collision with a semi and our first experience with being rained on while riding – Dianne and I wheeled the blue monster into Rome. Like the city, we felt eternal.



William Graebner riding his Malaguti 250 scooter

We're on our second scooter now, a sleek Bologna-made Malaguti 250. We've used it to get to every mountain and path (only a slight exaggeration) within two hours of Rome, and to navigate the city's complex geography, “riding the white line” next to the oncoming traffic or going between cars and buses to bypass slow-moving vehicles. In Rome, as it is in Los Angeles, where we now have an apartment but no scooter, that's all legal, efficient – and fun.

Scooters are dangerous, too, and we would never advise anyone to take up the pursuit. We've had one serious accident, broadsided at night along the Circus Maximus by a vehicle that ignored a yield sign (As my Dad used to say, “There's no right-of-way in heaven.”). Dianne broke her shoulder. For a month we walked and rode the subway and learned more than we wanted to know about the Italian health system. But we finally got back on the scooter – she got back on, I should say, because that took real courage – and over the years the scooter has been immeasurably helpful in getting us to sites that otherwise would have been virtually inaccessible: rural churches, Roman-era paths in the Alban Hills, late-night jazz clubs, suburban housing projects, model towns of the Mussolini era, World War II battle fields, the field near the Tyrrhenian Sea where the poet Pier Paolo Pasolini was murdered.

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William Graebner Retirement Story Continued from page 7

We thought about sharing our “alternative” Rome with others, and on the plane home in 2006 I threw out some ideas and roughed out a few chapters. *Rome the Second Time: 15 Itineraries that Don't Go to the Coliseum* appeared in 2009, followed in 2014 by *Modern Rome*:

4 Great Walks for the Curious Traveler. Both are self-published (after our publisher folded in the financial crisis), and that's been another adventure and learning experience. We also have a website, <http://www.romethesecondtime.com>; 600 posts and counting. And we're on Facebook: **Rome the Second Time**.

I'm uncomfortable with giving retirement

advice, but for what it's worth, here goes: retire earlier rather than later, when you've still got a body that can do things; for the first year or two, do anything you like without guilt; maintain and use your pre-retirement skills; and take some risks. Just don't go to Rome and rent a scooter.

When a Passionate Avocation Becomes a Retirement Plan

by Michael Murphy, Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus, SUNY Cobleskill



Ivory Wind
(Michael Murphy &
Karen Jacobs)

When I began to think of retirement as a university professor in 2008, of course financial considerations were among those foremost in my mind. However, it was my passion for music – and specifically “early music” – that led to an extremely satisfying retired life.

As a biologist who taught biotechnology as well as ethics in science, my career was fascinating and helped me escape the poverty of my family life (having 11 children placed a serious strain on my parents!). In thirty years with the State University of New York (the first five at UAlbany in a research lab and the next 25 or so at SUNY Cobleskill), I had the good fortune to teach some simply amazing students, perform National Science Foundation-sponsored research (in embryonic/fetal kidney development), and travel extensively – both for professional meetings as well as a Fulbright Senior Scholar to the Czech Academy of Sciences.

And while I occasionally still teach for the college (biotechnology in Nanjing, China) and for local organizations like the Humanities Institute for Life-Long Learning (Contemporary Ethical Issues in Science and Medicine), my avocation has always been music. My music background was primarily vocal, having sung with various church choirs as well as with Albany Pro Musica, Schenectady Light Opera, Lake George Opera, and other groups. In looking forward to retirement, I decided to pursue instrumental music. While piano is the obvious choice for many of us, it was quite difficult to seriously pursue this instrument when I travelled and hiked so often. In addition, it is not an instrument specific to early music.

Fortunately, Old Songs in Voorheesville, NY offered instrumental classes and I began recorder studies. My teacher, Laura Hagen, is a University of Indiana, Jacobs School of Music graduate with both a master's degree as well as the post-graduate “Performance Diploma.” She started me on an exquisite journey learning instrumental styles that ranged from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and the Baroque.

The recorder (“flûte à bec” in French) is the woodwind “fipple” flute of the Middle Ages and also used in certain seminal compositions of the Renaissance and the Baroque (the transverse flute arrived from Asia later and encouraged the development of the “traverso” and ultimately modern concert flutes). For more information on the history of the recorder, I recommend reading the major scholar in this field, David Lasocki of Indiana University (see also <http://www.library.yale.edu/cataloging/music/flute.htm>).

Recorders come in a variety of ranges, including (from smallest to largest) garklein, sopranino, soprano, alto (treble), tenor, bass, great bass, contrabass, and subcontrabass. While I play the standard soprano, alto, tenor, and bass (SATB) recorders, the alto is the most versatile and my favorite instrument. The two standard “styles” of recorder include the Renaissance style (wider bore and louder sound) and the Baroque recorder (smaller bore and ideal for fast passages). Modern recorders (like the Eagle) have increased dynamic and pitch ranges (three octaves is not uncommon).

In addition to recorders, my instrumental music background now includes a variety of early reeds (crumhorn, kelhorn, and rauschpfeiffe) as well as percussion. Because I have so much vocal background, I add singing into the mix when appropriate.

“It was my passion for music – and specifically ‘early music’ – that led to an extremely satisfying retired life.”

The Capital District of New York State is fortunate to have a local chapter of the American Recorder Society (the Hudson-Mohawk Chapter) and some quite fine early musicians. This has allowed me to perform in three separate consorts including the Bleecker Consort, Lycæides, and our newly formed duo, Ivory Wind (see photos). Our music covers all historical periods, including ancient Chinese (Ivory Wind) through to more traditional “early music” as well as some contemporary pieces. We

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(Bleecker Consort) have even won a coveted spot on the Troy Music Hall noontime concert series in the recent past.

Finally, let me add that learning/playing a woodwind in my 60s has had enormous health benefits, including increased aerobic capacity and much more mental alertness. I look forward to taking baroque master classes in mid-July in Lunenburg,



Recorder (flûte à bec)

NS (Boxwood Festival) with Judy Linsenberg, Artistic Director of Musica Pacifica.

This has been a marvelous complement to my other activities, including dance, history, tai chi practice and to my singing.

What could be better? I strongly advocate an approach to retirement that includes passionate avocations, no

matter how daunting they may seem.



Bleecker Consort

Retirement Story

George Wybenga

*Packaging Design Department Chair (Retired), Fashion Institute of Technology;
Founder of CabooseArt*



Twenty years ago, I received my first New York State Teachers' Retirement System check. Since that time, most of my

activities have been a continuation of my pre-retirement years.

without possibilities for employment. When I learned that an enlistment for three-years active duty in the military would speed up my application for U.S. citizenship, I signed up for the U.S. Army and was sworn in at Fort Holabird in Baltimore, Maryland. I became a U.S. citizen in 1960.

Post-Military Life: A New Beginning

Upon my release from active duty in June 1960 I found work as a carpenter, baker, sign painter, and assistant display manager at the E.J. Korvette Department Store in Trenton, NJ. While at Korvette, I attended evening commercial art classes at Trenton Junior College and was fortunate to have a well-known, semi-retired commercial illustrator as an instructor. He encouraged me to move to New York City, where he helped me find employment in a packaging design studio. I had applied to Pratt Institute before my move to the Big Apple but found it financially impossible to enroll in the day program. So I enrolled in the evening school and five years later was awarded a Bachelor's degree (cum laude) in Graphic Design.

If I had not taken the time to help friends move, I would not have been invited to a party during spring break in my junior year

at Pratt – important, because it was there that I met Betty, the woman who became my wife the next year and inspired me to enter the field of education. She was an early childhood specialist, taught public school in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and attended night classes at Wagner College in pursuit of an MA in Education. I applied to and was accepted at Hunter College's graduate program in Art Education.

After our son Eric's birth in 1969, we decided to move to a cottage we owned on Long Island. There was little chance of my finding graphic design employment on the Island, and I was loathe to make a two-hour one-way commute, so I applied for a position as a high school art teacher at two local districts on the advice of a helpful BOCES staff member.

The Unexpected Benefits of Volunteerism and Service to Country

If I had not spent Saturdays as a volunteer with the Pratt Youth Corps giving elementary students a taste of making art, I would not have been hired at Islip High School in Islip, New York and, as a consequence, my first year of salaried teaching satisfied Hunter College's student

The Path to America

Born in Delft, The Netherlands, my whole family survived World War II. If a local lad had not hit and damaged my eye I would probably now be enjoying a Dutch merchant marine pension. Instead, in 1956 I put myself on an immigration quota waiting list because an uncle in Maryland had offered to employ me in his landscaping business. To prepare, I took work in a nursery by day and attended night classes in landscaping architecture.

Two years later, my aunt picked me up at the docks in Hoboken, New Jersey. After registering for the draft, I went to work for my uncle. Six months later he decided to close the business. I was not a U.S. citizen and my draft status was 1-A, which left me

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George Wybenga Retirement Story Continued from page 9

teacher requirement. My three years of active military service placed me on an advanced step of the salary scale and absolved me from active reserve duty. Left-over GI Bill entitlement allowed me to earn a second Master's degree at SUNY Stony Brook.

I loved helping my high school students discover the ability to create and grow as individuals. I managed to overcome the constraints of the 50-minute class period by offering an open studio where a student could spend three or more periods of total involvement in art and/or craft. After eight-plus years, though, I became disillusioned with the district's sparse art supplies budget. Because a large number of my students were accepted at major art colleges, I was offered a teaching position at Parsons School of Design in New York City.

Program-Building at FIT

Fortuitously, a student of mine who had been accepted at Parsons introduced me to a professor who was developing an upper division program in Packaging Design at SUNY's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in Manhattan. When he learned of my design background, this professor asked for my assistance. Together, we built FIT's Bachelor of Fine Arts program in Packaging Design, the only one of its kind in the U.S., while working to foster a close bond between us and the adjunct faculty. I eventually became chair of the Packaging Design department.

In 1991 my FIT colleague and I published a book of packaging design patterns with Van Nostrand Reinhold. This manual, *The Packaging Designers' Book of Patterns*, is now published by John Wiley and Sons; in retirement I have revised and added to it every four years. The fourth edition is now available all over the world, in English, Chinese, and Spanish translations.

When my lack of computer know-how told me that it was time to retire, I convinced the FIT administration to hire at least one (but ideally two) full-time

positions for my replacement. The New York State Teachers' Retirement System representative was extremely helpful in making me aware of my retirement options and in 1995, I passed the program on to two highly capable educators after working at FIT for 21 years.

The Post-Retirement Years

After retirement, I continued to create and exhibit the serigraphs that had been my primary artistic medium during my career at FIT and elsewhere. A serigraph is an art term for silk screen print (Writing through Silk). You can see examples of my serigraphs at www.cabooseart.com by clicking the "also visit George's serigraphs site" link at the top of my web page. I found creating such art to be very fulfilling.

On September 11, 2001, however, that all changed. I was enjoying a cup of coffee on our porch when I received a phone call from our son (who at that time was living in New York City and working as a writer for Dan Rather) to let me know that he was okay. I had no idea what he was referring to until I turned on our television.

The scenes I saw unfolding live on-screen so reminded me of my experiences of World War II that I had to turn off the TV and search for a diversion. Flipping through my file of reference photos, I came across a picture of a railroad cabooses, which I began to paint. I soon realized that I had found my new inanimate "muse."

I have now painted 265 watercolor images of cabooses, which I exhibit at various train shows. I even have a website (www.cabooseart.com) where people can view and, if they so desire, purchase my caboose paintings.



Oil Creek & Titusville Caboose #10

The search for new cabooses to photograph and paint has led my wife and I to make several cross-country drives over the years.

Volunteerism Today

Twice a month I drive to Stony Brook Hospital to donate platelets (300 + donations to date). I am a trustee of the Railroad Museum of Long Island, director of the local National Railroad Historical Society chapter, an alumni advisor for Stony Brook University's students, and a director-at-large of NYSUT Retiree Council 39, whose members are retirees of SUNY's community colleges.

Words of Advice

My advice to future SUNY retirees is to keep busy, learn from every opportunity, and enjoy life.



Voyage to Becoming an American

by Hedi McKinley, LCSW, Professor Emeritus, College of Social Welfare, University at Albany



Editor's Note: Hedi is a practicing clinical social worker who writes on mental health issues and 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 is the conclusion of her harrowing escape from Nazi-occupied Vienna, Austria in the aftermath of Kristallnacht (Crystal Night) on November 11, 1938 as recounted on page 6 of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter's Fall/Winter

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2014 issue, located in the Newsletters section of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps website (www.suny.edu/retirees/newsletters).

Arriving in New York City

Nineteen-thirty-nine was the year I came to America. War clouds had started gathering in London from where I sailed. England had started distributing gas masks and there was talk of digging mass graves in case of a Nazi attack.

For many Americans, Europe seemed to be just one large continent with problems of its own. Unlike in the first World War, sauerkraut was still called sauerkraut and not liberty cabbage. But when I stated that I had come from Austria, I was frequently asked if there were kangaroos and koala bears there rather than Wiener Schnitzel and Apple Strudel.

I had sailed to America by myself. My parents were still in England awaiting a visa which would not come for a year or so. Visas depended on quotas assigned to emigrants depending on their country of origin and who had been able to obtain an affidavit by a relative who would guarantee that said emigrant would not become a public charge.

In my case, the relative was my Uncle Charlie, who had jumped ship at age 13 and made his way into the Promised Land, where he worked as a waiter for more than 20 years until he was able to open a small business on New York's West Side. He was at the West Side Pier when I arrived after a 10-day rocky journey on the SS Aquitania (nine days of which had been spent being extremely seasick).

Uncle Charlie and I had never met before. A burly immigration officer shouted out names (often mispronounced and frequently changed right then and there) and my uncle and I finally connected after the immigration officer called my name.

Uncle Charlie's first words to me were, "Tomorrow you go look for a job, OK?" Never having heard the English word for "job" before, I agreed and, indeed, the next day my uncle searched the want ads and found me a job as a maid in a fancy Easy Side home.

Joining the Workforce and Adjusting to the Land of Plenty

Since I had spent a few months in England after escaping to there from Vienna, I had the vocabulary of a bright three-year-old, which was sufficient for my new employment in Manhattan. Nevertheless, I was soon fired for being "too slow" and so started a series of jobs as maid, waitress, and bus girl.

It did not matter too much since I was overwhelmed with wonder and joy in my new homeland. I could hardly believe that there were oranges, apples, and bananas affordable even at my pay. I earned 40 cents an hour plus tips, no benefits, and it was possible to buy a pair of shoes by saving only a week or so. My parents in Vienna had had to put aside money for many months to buy shoes, let alone a coat.

I was fascinated by the Automat where, for a few nickels, I could purchase creamed spinach, home-fried potatoes, and lemonade.

There were many other fascinating discoveries – for instance, that New York City was divided into East and West, and that buses stopped where they wanted, not where I needed to get off.

Every day going to work, I passed a little stand called "Orange Julius" where I bought orange juice. A small tulip-shaped glass for canned juice cost five cents but there was also available a large glass of freshly-squeezed juice for 25 cents. Many a day, I deliberated and, after considerable struggles with myself, I finally purchased this delight which I consumed standing on the street, leaning against the wall and feeling immensely fortunate.

Friendly Alien

The United States entered World War II in December of 1941, at which time im-

migrants were divided into "friendly" and "enemy" aliens. Austrians were the friendly kind, which allowed me to travel to a neighboring state or take photographs of people but not ships or ports.

My knowledge of English grew daily, mostly because I had become addicted to soap operas on the radio. This was a good thing since I certainly could not afford to go to movies except an occasional double- or triple-feature in Times Square for 40 cents.

College Dreams and "Holding the Slaw"

My uncle and his family were unsophisticated people. When I inquired about the possibility of some day going to college, they did not know of free institutions such as Hunter, Queens, or Brooklyn colleges nor were they aware of the many services available for refugees. My long-time hope of some day becoming a veterinarian was quickly dashed when my family told me that women were not accepted into veterinary colleges and, as far as they were concerned, being a waitress in a fancy restaurant was as good as any job for a foreigner.

I had learned restaurant lingo and knew what "draw one" and "hold the slaw" meant. Most customers seemed to accept my funny accent. Like most who grew up speaking a Germanic language, I found pronunciation of the English "r" or "th" a challenge not quite mastered 75 years later.

I eventually went to Columbia University. The college was very accommodating, allowing me to enroll despite not having a high school diploma. I paid my own way as a Columbia undergrad in sociology; I was accepted into the Columbia School of Social Work and earned my Master's Degree, again paying for my own tuition. Unfortunately, there was no way I could afford the additional tuition to earn my Ph.D. even though Columbia offered me one year tuition-free. I subsequently became a licensed clinical social worker in 1958 and I continue to practice at 94 years of age. I specialize in marriage counseling and family counseling.

Voyage to Becoming an American Continued from page 11

Becoming an American

Very few people knew much of what had been happening in Austria and Germany and, anyway, my family told me I should “forget it” and become an American.

That was, indeed, what I did. In 1944, I applied for United States citizenship after living in New York for five years. I was given a date to appear in court one morning. My family had not realized that I would be subjected to a number of questions, so there was no way to prepare myself.

The courthouse was teeming with individuals and families of many colors and

nationalities wearing many kinds of clothing and speaking many kinds of languages.

When my turn came, the examiner asked me who would take over if the President were to die. Luckily, I did know the answer. However, when she asked me what would happen if the Vice President died too, I was stumped.

The examiner – a young, attractive woman – then drew me into a conversation probably in order to learn the extent of my knowledge of English. She asked about my hobbies and I told her I loved dogs and that someday I hoped to own several. She allowed that she, too, was a dog lover and we exchanged our favorite breeds (mine afghan hounds, hers beagles).

The short interview ended with a smile and a handshake and the citizenship paper arrived weeks later.

Embracing Happiness

Both college and dogs were still far into the future, which became the present when I entered Columbia University and obtained a golden-haired afghan puppy – two events that catapulted my happiness scale to almost 100.



SUNY Retiree Profile

Emily Oaks, Professor Emerita of Biology, SUNY Oswego

by Linda Loomis, Adjunct Instructor, English and Creative Arts

Editor's Note: Professor Oaks was named to the SUNY Oswego Faculty Hall of Fame in December 2013.

Emily Oaks, Ph.D., plunges a well-used shovel into sandy dirt behind her Sterling, NY farmhouse to lift a *Monarda Didyma* from the earth. She cradles its tangled roots in her hands and slides them, dirt and all, into a bag to be given to a friend. The friend will replant, relish the beauty of the fringed red flower and use the tender, aromatic leaves to brew pungent Oswego tea, another name for the native plant.

Retired after 21 years in the biology department, Dr. Oaks is on a mission to restore her property to its natural state. In the high summer days of August, the meadows emit a spiced floral scent and brandish an array of colors and textures. While the effect is that of a free-growing wildflower garden, the fields represent years of deliberate restoration, replacing imports with indigenous plants.

“Not only do I want my little piece of the planet to reflect New York and not Europe,” Oaks says, “but I also know that everything in the environment functions better when we work with native species.” That philosophy explains her willingness to spend hours of back-numbing labor pulling invasive plants such as bishop’s weed. “It’s a useless plant,” she says. “Nothing lives on it.”

Oaks knows every living thing on her property by name and location — even three resident garden spiders. She knows the native violets and ferns that grew up spontaneously after she cleared non-native trees from a woodlot, and she knows the trillium purchased from a nursery and the yellow *Coraopolis* that grew from seeds given

to her by Harry Shock, emeritus assistant dean of students.

Beyond the garden, in a fading red barn, Oaks is restoring a Model A Ford, employing skills she learned in an engine tune up course in 1978. She also enjoys traveling and, in the autumn, completed a camping excursion to the Midwest.

“In my family, there was never anything I was told I couldn’t do,” says the only female in a flock of five. She grew up near woodlands north of Pittsburgh, the oldest child of a research chemist father and a biologist mother.

Valedictorian of her high school class, Oaks attended Rice University in Houston. “I intended to study math, something different from my parents.” But a junior-year biology course inspired her to add the major, and she went on to graduate studies at Yale under renowned ecologist G. Evelyn Hutchinson.

After beginning her career in northern Utah, Oaks joined the biology faculty at Oswego in 1984. She served as

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department chair from 1998 to 2005, and she continues to teach one course a year. Oaks says she loves comparative anatomy. "If you don't appreciate the function, anatomy doesn't make any sense."

Commensurate with her love of discipline, is the value Oaks places on interaction with students, those who grasp the material with ease and those who require encouragement and extra time. Among her teaching strategies, Oaks explains evolution with the prompt "From Fish to Philosopher."

Two recent SUNY Oswego teaching assistants used that slogan when they gave Oaks a custom-printed mug with illustrations that proceed from fish to amphibian and through the ascending vertebrates to humankind. It was their way to say thanks for an unforgettable experience and an unforgettable mnemonic from an unforgettable professor.

Retirement Story

Ronald P. Nielsen

Campus Environmental Health and Safety Director (Retired) SUNY Cobleskill



I retired from SUNY Cobleskill in 1992 after 29 years. I had various titles during my tenure there. When I retired, I was the campus environmental health and safety director. My responsibilities varied. They included meeting with architects and construction people concerning new facilities and rehabs. I gave input regarding safety and health as well as preparing equipment lists for facilities. I also had to initiate and update the campus space inventory and equipment inventory, and handle the surplus property program.

As safety director, I conducted safety inspections to insure the safety of employees and students, safely dispose of hazardous waste, and give staff and students safety lectures regarding in-house as well as state and federal regulations. Our campus received many awards from the National Safety Council for our safety programs. As a result, I was asked to sit on their board to evaluate programs from other colleges and universities.

In the early 1990s, SUNY was downsizing because of the budget situation. Because of this, I was asked if I would retire. I retired since I had accepted a position as a safety and health writer with the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA). This enabled me to follow a different path in my profession. I wrote safety and health instruction manuals for union members.

After I left the CSEA, I did safety and health consulting. I also wrote an instruction booklet for the Nursing Education of America Organization and a book on OSHA compliance for allied health personnel which sold 10,000 copies.

I enjoyed my employment at SUNY Cobleskill. I made many friends and am saddened when I receive notice that one has passed away.

My wife and I have done extensive traveling in the United States, Europe and Hawaii

since my retirement from SUNY. I have also done some of the items on my "bucket list" which included water skiing, kayaking four miles on a Florida river, flying in a 1928 Ford Tri-Motor airplane, piloting an Army T-4 trainer, scuba diving in Hawaii, and swinging in a chair lift with my wife above an Olympic ski slope.

Anyone considering retirement should have a very good idea what they want to do with the rest of their life. If at all possible, you should use your experience and expertise to volunteer for a worthy cause. It's always good to receive monetary compensation for work, but some of it can be done for the pure joy of helping people.

SUNY Retiree Profile

Two Retired SUNY Professors Experience the Joys of Educational Travel and Service Learning with Road Scholar

by Stacie Fasola, Associate Vice President, Public and Media Relations, Road Scholar



Mary Ware learning across American society.

Road Scholar annually offers more than 5,500 world-class educational adventures in 150 countries and 50 states. Originally founded as Elderhostel, today's Road Scholar combines stimulating, not-for-credit classes on a wide variety of subjects.

The organization has evolved and so have our programs and participants. Since our first programs at five colleges and universities in New Hampshire in 1975, today's Road Scholar programs include an extraordinary range of topics, formats and locations. At the heart of the organization are the participants, who are lifelong learners engaged in programs that foster camaraderie and a sense of community.

Road Scholar participant, Ambassador and retired SUNY Professor Mary Ware and her spouse, Mary Stuck, also retired from SUNY, have enjoyed more than 10 adventures with Road Scholar. Mary Ware, 69, was born in Newport News, Virginia but spent 44 years at SUNY Cortland as an instructor, assistant professor, full professor and associate dean. When she retired last year from SUNY Cortland, she was designated as professor emerita of foundations and social advocacy.

"I came to New York originally to attend graduate school and ended up getting

Road Scholar, the not-for-profit leader in lifelong learning, is celebrating its 40 anniversary and its role in creating a culture of lifelong my doctorate and never leaving," said Mary Ware. "Early in my career, I met the woman I would eventually marry and had an incredibly fulfilling career at SUNY. I've worked as both a teacher and as an administrator, retiring last year. I never lost my thirst for learning and exploration, and Road Scholar gave Mary and me the opportunity to continue to learn throughout our careers and into our recent retirement."

The two Marys learned about Road Scholar over 10 years ago when they wanted to explore their interest in the Hopi, a Native American tribe located in the Southwest.

"I signed up to receive the Road Scholar catalog and found a Service Learning program in Arizona that allowed participants to tutor Native American children," Mary Ware said. "This Service Learning program enabled us to work closely with the Hopi children and learn about the rich Native American culture. Road Scholar took care of everything. As an individual or as a couple, it's difficult to just show up at a school or agency and ask to volunteer. Road Scholar arranged everything and we really feel we made a difference in the children's lives. More importantly, the knowledge we gained contributed to our teaching."

When asked what's so special about Road Scholar, Mary says it's the people who attend.

"They are in one word, fabulous," Ware said. "All of the programs we've attended were small groups that had some incredible participants, including a 90-year-old who was so fit we had to work hard to keep up! As educators, it's important for us to be around people who are also interested in learning. At Road Scholar, everyone is knowledgeable, interesting, and interested in learning about the subject and each other."

In addition to attending programs with her spouse, Mary has also experienced Road Scholar as a solo traveler.

"Some women won't travel alone because they're worried about their safety or just don't relish the prospect of being alone when everyone else is coupled up," Ware said. "In my experience as a solo participant with Road Scholar, I felt extremely safe and welcomed by the other participants."

After retiring and living 36 years as a couple, Mary Ware and Mary Frances Stuck, 65, married in New York in 2014. Mary Stuck had served SUNY Oswego for 27 years, as a Sociology professor and Assistant Dean.

"I had always said that we would not get married until the United States made same-sex marriage legal," Mary Ware said. "When DOMA [the Defense of Marriage Act] was overturned, we decided that we would finally get married! Over the many years I taught, I rarely shared details about my personal life with my students; however my Foundations of Education class in the spring 2014 semester was pretty progressive. They cheered when I told them about the upcoming wedding – and that's a refreshing breath of air."

Mary Ware also recently became a Road Scholar Ambassador. Road Scholar Ambassadors are selected Road Scholar participants who volunteer to give presentations, attend trade shows and other events representing Road Scholar. Mary has found this activity very rewarding, having delivered presentations at Rotary meetings, local educational gatherings, and SUNY venues.

The Marys are looking forward to their next Road Scholar adventures as newlyweds!

To schedule Mary Ware or another ambassador as a speaker for your group, please contact us at www.roadscholar.org/ambassador.

Photography as Companionship in Post-Work Life

by Sharon Cramer, SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emerita, Buffalo State College



Sharon at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris

Editor's Note: Sharon Cramer, Ph.D., finished her 26-year career at SUNY Buffalo State, and continues to find numerous resources and inspirations for photography in Western New York.

Have you encountered challenges in establishing new friendships, or deepening existing ones, in your post-work life? Like me, you may be frustrated when potential or current friends differ from you in terms of available time, interests, or resources. Demands from family may make you claustrophobic. Are you wondering how to free yourself?

I invite you to consider a new confidant. Never arguing, always pleased to go wherever I suggest, my camera has enhanced my life. Once you pick up a camera, you will discover new ways to see the world on your own terms.

I knew nothing about the compact digital camera I inherited when I first took it on an overseas trip. Clicking around, finding the zoom, changing the settings, I figured out the basics. While doing so, silently and completely, my travel experience was transformed. Looking through the lens at Stonehenge and Oxford, my camera and I conversed with the scene in ways that would have been impossible on my own. Instead of remaining a solo traveler, my camera and I began a partnership and visual dialogue that has never ceased.

I quickly realized that overseas travel is only one way to develop photography skills. Wherever you live, you will find many diverse subjects that are perfect for

beginning photographers. For example, our changing seasons in New York State allow photographers to see any single scene anew. The same cherry tree – blooming, heavy with cherries, as a lush August bird refuge, and stark against the snow – is like a face in sorrow, then delighted, utterly different.

Variety is not just seasonal: outdoor sculptures benefit from visits at different times of day, with backdrops illuminated by nature. Instead of quickly driving or walking by local architecture, I now slow down, contemplating unusual angles for new photographs. I plan a local “photography safari” into my calendar each month, and the results have been gratifying.

You may wonder how to test the photographic waters with a “starter” digital camera. For a few hundred dollars, you can invest in one that will do so much more than the camera built into your phone. You will be astonished at the features available in the new generation of digital cameras. Because these newer cameras offer options far beyond the imagination of twentieth century amateur photographers for a reasonable price, you can journey into this hobby without investing serious money.

Take time to enjoy dabbling before you decide if photography is for you. New, reasonably priced cameras offer the beginning photographer enticing options that encourage experimentation and produce amazing results. See the “Advice for Purchasing a Digital Camera” in the Bonus Features section at www.suny.edu/retirees/newsletters/ for helpful information on where to begin.

Learning about edits is another window

into the hobby of photography. Many local camera stores host events to introduce editing software, such as Photoshop, Elements, Lightroom (all available at www.adobe.com) and onOne Perfect Photo Suite (www.on1.com).

On-line tutorials and 30-day free trials are available for most photo editing products. In my case, I took advantage of training that accompanied the purchase of Aperture, an Apple photo-editing product. I benefit from the encouragement and advice I receive within the different training opportunities offered through my local Apple store.

Once you have selected the editing tool that is best for you, you will begin

to see your photographs as raw material improved by color adjustment or enhancing shadows. And, after you’ve seen what a crop can do for your photograph, you can consider that crop before you take the next shot. As a result of learning to edit, you develop your photographic eye and skills.

An invaluable resource for budding photographers comes through local camera clubs. Unlike high school, when clubs often had sharply tiered status, camera clubs welcome all. As illustrated in the examples provided in the Bonus article “Find a Photography Club Near You!” at www.suny.edu/retirees/newsletters/, camera clubs exist throughout the state and nationwide. Becoming a member of a camera club gives photographers (beginners as well as those who are advanced) opportunities throughout the year to come together and learn.

If you explore a link to any of the clubs listed, you will be in awe of the vitality and creativity amateurs invest in photography. In most cases, anyone can attend meetings



“Windy Day” by Sharon Cramer
“Contrasting the upright light pole with the active grasses, I tried to convey motion. Seeking beautiful skies and interesting light is a photographer’s eternal quest.”

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Photography as Companionship

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without joining a club. In my region of western New York, one could be busy nearly every evening from September through May, attending free camera club events. And there are similarities – a monthly “competition” is held by each club, along with programs designed to expand the knowledge of photographers about subject matter, composition, or techniques.

At the encouragement of a local photographer, I became a member of the Buffalo Science Museum Camera Club (<http://smcc.photoclubservices.com>). Begun in 1939, the club welcomes all photography enthusiasts. In addition to attending the programs, I participate in the monthly “competitions;” we have a different local judge each month. Monthly, as I sit and nervously await the judge’s comments about my work, I rethink the photograph that is about to be judged – where I was, what I was thinking, what I hope the photograph conveys. It remains scary to offer my work for scrutiny by others. But I have noticed that, over the nearly two years I have been a member, I have been able to separate the scores my photographs receive from an overall evaluation of my talent. Now, I can accept a rating as one judge’s view of a particular photograph, with which I sometimes disagree.

Many of my friends ask me, “Why put yourself through competitions?” I answer that while I love getting positive feedback, and periodic ribbons, my pictures have improved most as a result of the critical comments. Competitions serve another purpose: viewing the work of others, hearing comments about their photographs, seeing the range of subjects, as well as approaches taken to evoke different moods,



“Remembering Summer” by Sharon Cramer. “The ‘rule of thirds’ was used in this photograph, to place the flower off-center. With the close up, I hoped to bring viewers right into the flower’s face.”

have been a revelation. I can now see changes not only in what, but how, I take a photograph as a result of being a member of the camera club.

My camera’s companionship opens up travel – local, day trips, or a plane ride away. Instead of traveling alone, I now have my chum with me. Loneliness is no more. As I journey, I consider whether (then, how) views might be caught. Much like other kinds of temporary capture, my shots do not disturb what I am viewing.

The beauty of digital photography is its encouragement to try, without fear of costly failure. In the days of film, amateurs did not know what they were going to get until the envelope of prints was unsealed. The grading policy of film was harsh. With digital photography, we have immediate viewing of a photograph, and editing tools that range from the basics to more elaborate products that clean up mistakes, tease out colors, or even redefine the image into fantastic new photographic schemes. Does this mean that anyone can take an impressive photo? Does this level the playing field too much?

What does it matter? If you are open to finding new binoculars for the world around you and a mute friend who will both encourage and challenge you, pick up a camera!

The New Cyber Malady: Email Folders

by Sivia Kaye, Kaye, Professor of English (Emeritus) Nassau Community College SiviaKaye@mac.com



They say if you confess to a bad habit, you will be embarrassed into changing it.

It’s insane to drop four-and-a-half bucks at Starbucks for coffee in a paper cup for which you have to stand in a ridiculously long line. But Portland

sophisticates line up for this brew simply because the Seattle marketers have come up with clever names for their additives; the coffeeholics find their addiction is

unstoppable...and expensive.

A supposedly effective way of breaking such a habit is confessing it to some friends; then you’re sure of the embarrassment that will befall you each time you succumb to a coffee latte and leave the better part of a five dollar bill on the Starbucks’ counter.

Well, I’m about to try that system of public confession: I’ve gotten into a very bad habit with my email: I don’t answer it. Mind you, I don’t ignore it either. What I do is nicely drag each email into appropriate folders that I created with much care and creativity.

The result is that I now have about 350 emails, none of which I see on my computer

screen. Where are they? Hiding beautifully within folders in my Mac Mail program.

Clever as hell, I thought when I created my email folder “system”; now it has become a nightmare and I thought public confession would embarrass me into breaking it. Here’s my so-called system in five “easy” steps:

1. When I send someone an email that is not merely informational, but requires an answer, I blind cc (bcc) myself. Thus, if my email asks Prof. Charles Smith to send me the bibliographical reference of musical notations that we were discussing at the opera, I will place the bcc of my email in a folder called “AWAITING RESPONSES.”

The plan was that when Professor Smith replies, I would go into the "AWAITING RESPONSES" folder and delete my original missive to the good professor. But I never do.

Further, this folder was designed to help me follow up on those people who ignore my requests. Weekly, at least, it was my intention to enter the "AWAITING RESPONSES" folder and send a cc of my note to Smith back to him, with 28-point red type on top, saying "Second Request." My idea backfired. First, I would forget to re-enter the folder to see who had ignored my requests. Second, the 28-point red type would not come across to the recipient that way unless he had the exact same email program I had. Thus, I struck out with this idea. The "AWAITING RESPONSES" folder now has 67 emails in it; I've no idea how many of my requests have been honored, or have been cavalierly clicked into the recipients' "DELETE" bin.

2. I created a professionally-titled folder called "TO RESPOND," thinking this was a sensible way to honor the emails that I receive which request something from me. It might be a simple question of someone asking me for the name of my ophthalmologist; or it might be a note I received telling me of some happy accomplishment of a friend. Instead of a brief "Mazel Tov," my good manners dictate that it would be more courteous to send a longer email telling Joan Surick how proud of her I was to learn of her admission to the Bar. So I drag her letter to my "TO RESPOND" folder, and there it sits. Never again do I click it open. Joan thinks I don't give a darn about her major professional accomplishments, that I'm too busy doing my own thing to remember that once we were close friends and that this was her dream, that I'm just like everyone else on this planet – too self-involved. There are

now 83 emails in my "TO RESPOND" folder, and as a consequence, at least 83 people have removed me from their Christmas gift list.

3. I have a folder called "DRAFTS." Here's how this gets filled: I receive an email from Harry McFarlane. Having read every single article that's been printed on effective handling of email, I am primed to answer immediately. "Handle every paper or email just once," dictate those in the know. Eager to emulate one of the seven habits of highly effective people, I immediately click "Reply to Sender" and I begin typing my response.

But I note there is something I want to add, that I can't put my fingers on immediately, and so I send it to "DRAFTS." And there it dies a slow death. McFarlane thinks I neglected his email. I think I answered it. And the poor missive, 90% complete, sits quietly in "DRAFTS." I now have 16 emails in this folder.

4. I have a folder called "REFERENCE." Here I've placed emails which seem to contain fascinating information that I may want at a later date. Examples: someone sent me list of code numbers for producing "TM" for the trademark sign, and the tiny "O" for the degree sign. How am I to know when I'll need to write to the United States Patent Office requesting a trademark of one of my ideas? Or when I might want to tell my Canadian friend who is freezing that it's a balmy 60 degrees here in NY. I have 43 emails here. (I have never had occasion yet to write to the Patent Office).

5. I have the folder, which we all do, that comes courtesy of the email provider, called "SENT." Here all emails – which had been sent out – go to live until I personally delete them. A good housekeeper, would empty the "SENT" folder after each session. But not me. Suppose I want to track down an email that I sent a year ago? Or two? I can find it here. I can sort by date or person. So if Larry Brokaw says I never sent him those Fourth of July barbecue photos, I sort by date, and voila, July 10, 1998, those

photos were sent. Handy feature. I have 830 emails here.

If the truth be told, I have eight more folders, but I am embarrassed to reveal all of my email quirks; enough has already been exposed here for me to feel vulnerable to attacks on my professionalism, proficiency, and general sanity.

Should you wish to offer your suggestions on how I might remedy this serious cyber malady, my email address is SiviaKaye@mac.com.

MOVIE REVIEW: The Grand Budapest Hotel

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

THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, set in the 1930s, may require more than one viewing, not because it's so great but because it's so zany, fast-moving, noisy and chronologically disorganized that it's hard on an initial viewing to fully catch the quirky, outrageously politically-incorrect, sexist and ageist, unkind, infantile, often extremely funny wit and clownishness. It appeals to our inner adolescent. It's directed by Wes Anderson, as were MOONRISE KINGDOM and THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS, and it's cast with a cadre of familiar actors.

THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL's writing credits are conspicuously touted as "inspired by the writings of Stefan Zweig," the highly-respected outstanding Austrian novelist, one of the greatest European writers and intellectuals in the '30s. That kind of inspiring connection sounds like something Royal Tenenbaum – the Gene Hackman character in THE ROYAL TENENBAUMS – would claim.

In THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL, images slide across the screen like pages swiped on a Kindle. Centered images linger to demand attention. Candy-like colors dazzle. Clanging carnival music is piped and pumped and interspersed with big volume

The Grand Budapest Hotel

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classical concert sounds, and insistently synchronized with footsteps and falls.

Early animated films had anonymous voice tracks. Then came famous professional actors doing the voice-overs and billed as playing the animated characters. Now here we have professional actors doing their own voices and affecting the style of animated figures. Anderson's cinematic design style trumps the story here, a tale told with quick starts, stops, and flashbacks within flashbacks.

The basic story is told by the character Mr. Moustafa, the current owner of the GRAND BUDAPEST, who agrees to share history with a curious and questioning young writer played by Jude Law. Moustafa is played by F. Murray Abraham, looking as deep and mysterious as in any of his recent appearances as Dar Adal, the secret CIA agent in *HOMELAND*. Moustafa's story is rendered on screen. It flashes decades back in time and centers on the Grand Budapest's concierge, M. Gustave. Gustave is played by Ralph Feinnes, managing the elegant hillside Grand Budapest Hotel before the start of World War II. As Gustave, Feinnes' characterization is appropriately the opposite of his title role in *SCHINDLER'S LIST*. In the course of his adventures, Gustave selects his young lobby boy named Zero, an orphaned eastern refugee, as sidekick, played by Tony Revolori.

Gustave is an aesthete, a run-around, an egotistical bisexual, preferring old women, all blonde. He loves to wear his favorite perfume: "L'Air de Panache." He travels to the funeral of one of his elderly lovers, Madame D., played by Tilda Swinton, who is styled with foot-high rippled white hair, pasted with crispy wrinkled makeup and shot mostly in close-up. Her promised inheritance to him is cancelled by a false will maneuver by her ugly villainous family. Gustave takes a valuable painting, "Boy with

Apple," from her home, is threatened with arrest, and takes off on a cross-country escape, punctuated with adventures, cliff hangers, and group attacks by police.

Edward Norton plays Henckels, the lead policeman. The film's too-crazy-to-be-true atmosphere softens the image of the staunch tall uniformed commander surrounded by his men. The dominant authoritarianism is not shown as Nazi, it's anonymous, and it's presented not as frightening but funny. Willem Dafoe, playing the evil brass-knuckled gangster Jopling, strides through the story aiding the villainous family, chopping off innocent fingers, ultimately severing heads. Deputy Kovacs, the official who will resolve the conflict over the will, is played by Jeff Goldblum. He discovers and deals with a



severed head respectfully, wrapping it and carrying it – that is, until he sees a public waste basket and plops it in.

Gustave is jailed, joins a gang and digs his way out aided by the little pastry-making kitchen tools smuggled to him by Agatha, Zero's plain and placid girlfriend. Ultimately, helped by members of an amorphous alliance of continent-wide "key club" connections, the three wind up back at The Grand Budapest, climb and jump through a wild shoot-out, and through a series of chance discoveries, ultimately uncover the real prevailing will. Gustave inherits the estate of the late Madame D.

Time jumps decades ahead, to the storyteller Moustafa and the young writer, his listener. We learn Gustave died and left his estate including the hotel to Zero, who continued to maintain that grand relic through the many years since he inherited

it from Gustave, and now it has less glitter, fewer guests, and less income. And there he is: it's Zero himself, now old, now called Mr. Moustafa. We overlook the obvious question of resemblance in exchange for Anderson's characteristic somewhat happy ending.

The film is written by Anderson himself and Hugo Guinness, a graphic designer who creates cartoons, and designs t-shirts sold at J. Crew and purses for Coach. Anderson had the "Boy with Apple" prop painted as an original oil, with a green apple. It's selling in a poster form on the Internet. He had a French company called "Nose" make a perfume called "L'Air de Panache," which advertisers suggest has "top notes which traditionally appeal to older women," and which contains a bit of green apple; it's also sold online. Anderson's previous film, *MOONRISE KINGDOM* (2012), brings viewers more reward for less effort and even more souvenirs to buy.

THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL to date has been popular and profitable, grossing over fifty-nine million dollars. It could require more than one viewing. Or maybe not.

Stefan Zweig, the philosophical Austrian Jewish author of narratives and essays Anderson credits with inspiring the writing of this film, left Germany just before Hitler's rise. Zweig's writings are currently rather widely available in English translation. It would be interesting to discover any of the author's influence in this Anderson film. And it would be interesting sometime to discover Bigfoot.

Retiree Event Photo Spotlight: SUNY Delhi



SUNY Delhi hosted its annual Retired Staff Luncheon on October 9, 2014 in Alumni Hall. Those in attendance included (standing) Suzanne Puffer, Cathy Woodin, Lucy Wood, Kathy Decker, Celia Soden, Reba Sage, Diana VerNooy, Loretta Laing, Emily Harmer, Lucille Frisbee, Linda Harrington, Dianne Guichard, Barb Geywits, Sue Ellis; (seated) Jean Alverson, Cathy Francisco, Joan Townsend, Esther Lee, Cathy Ward, Mabel Adams, and Martha Delello.

IN MEMORIAM

ESTHER KLOPFER



The SUNY Retirees Newsletter and the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC) have lost a good friend. Esther Klopfer passed away on January 26th after a courageous battle with cancer. She was a graphic designer in the SUNY System Administration Design & Printing department who laid out the first four issues of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter as well as several other publications for the RSC.

Esther told me more than once how she truly enjoyed laying out newsletters, and she always did an outstanding job. She was a joy to work with and will truly be missed.

Her colleague Lee Dixon took up the mantle of designing the Newsletter after Esther went out on sick leave. Lee rose to the challenge - just as Amanda Bobel, the newest member of the graphic design team, has done with this issue. They do amazing work in making the SUNY Retirees Newsletter come to life. Esther would be proud.

Pierre F. Radimak
Editor, SUNY Retirees Newsletter
Coordinator, SUNY Retirees
Service Corps

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

Chair of the SUNY Plaza Partnership
SUNY System Administration

Anne Donnelly

Member, SUNY Retirees Service Corps
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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 Amanda Bobel in the SUNY System Administration Design and Printing department for her 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 to be added to the SUNY Retirees Newsletter electronic distribution list, have them say so in an email to retirees@suny.edu.

The Last Word

Transforming Retirement

by Patrick C. Cullinane, President, AROHE

Is America missing a treasure? Is higher education also missing treasured opportunities? Every year tens of thousands of faculty and staff retire from full-time work in higher education and transition to next life chapters of 20 to 30 years. Many leave healthy, still productive with valuable institutional knowledge and a continuing desire to be engaged and continue contributing to the best interests of their institution. It is time for this untapped resource to be engaged for the mutual benefit of the institutions, their faculty and staff and society at large. It is time to transform our vision for retirement in higher education.

What is AROHE?

AROHE, the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education, is committed to transforming retirement in higher education, to champion transformative practices to support all stages of faculty and staff retirement and their mutually beneficial engagement and continuing contributions. AROHE is a dynamic network of 100+ organizations, representing over 100,000 individuals that include retired faculty and staff associations, campus-funded retiree centers, emeriti colleges as well as campus departments such as human resources, academic affairs, development/ advancement and alumni relations.

AROHE promotes a culture that recognizes, encourages, and values retired faculty and staff's continuing contributions to all aspects of campus and community life. AROHE offers advice and consultation on how to make the retirement process – both the preparation for retirement and the actual transition – a more productive and less stressful life course change.

"The Retirement Problem"

Higher education faces a "retirement problem." First, colleges and universities across the land urgently need help in facilitating retirement of their aging faculty. Second, individual faculty members and senior staff especially need personalized

assistance in the sometimes unsettling process of retiring from academic institutions – preparing for it, passing through the transition itself, and then fashioning a meaningful next chapter of continuing creativity and service. And third, the issue of retirement in higher education has national implications in terms of failure thus far to take full advantage of the tremendous resource that an active retired professoriate and staff represent.

Every day 8,000 baby boomers in the USA are beginning to retire. Faculty and staff in higher education are well represented in this group. The professoriate especially is visibly "graying." This population is both living longer and staying longer in full-time employment.

Freedom from a statutory retirement age in the United States has affected academic retirement more than retirement from business or industry. *The Impact of Uncapping of Mandatory Retirement on Postsecondary Institutions*, (NYU, New York, NY) (*Educational Researcher*: Accepted, June 24, 2013) noted that "...Although only 11% of faculty who were subject to mandatory retirement remained after age 70 (those with special arrangements), we find after the law changed that 60% of faculty no longer subject to mandatory retirement are expected to remain employed beyond age 70..."

The Retirement Opportunity

A few programs have begun to emerge to address this trend. A key to success appears to be that they have ways to support senior faculty in the process of approaching and transitioning into retirement. Such programs focus on making retirement a positive step into the future for faculty rather than a surrender of so much that they hold dear, a bridge to a preferred future vs. a plank off the campus ship.

AROHE has functioned very effectively as a retirement coach and adviser for faculty and staff because it understands why academics and staff resist retirement. Once economic concerns are out of the picture, it is the psycho-social aspect of retirement that figures most prominently. Academic professionals and senior staff/administrators in particular don't usually refuse to retire out of fear of boredom. Rather, research has shown that the most important factor keeping faculty and senior staff from retiring is simply overwhelming job satisfaction as stakeholders in a community of thinkers and institutions

created to develop greater good for society. Most say they love what they do and cannot easily conceive of not doing it. AROHE believes academic retirement is fundamentally different.

Transformation Benefits

Higher education across America stands to benefit enormously if its retired faculty and staff are organized. These are highly-educated and talented people, whose personal skills and professional expertise fairly demand to be channeled into productive activities. The evidence suggests, however, that only structured campus-based options and retirement organizations can manage the very substantial job of compiling, coordinating, and managing this richness of human resources.

AROHE Services and Programs

- A **biennial conference** brings retiree organization leaders from across North America together for two full days of workshops, forums and networking opportunities.
- *AROHE Matters*: an electronic newsletter of resources that is sent every other month to AROHE members and non-members.
- An organization Start Up Kit, geared toward newly-established groups
- The **AROHE website** (<http://arohe.org>)
 - o An **online member directory** allows members to search for and seek assistance from other member organizations that will be most aligned with their needs.
 - o An **online discussion forum** allows members to share ideas or to ask questions of other members.
 - o **Member-shared resources** in six different topical areas: programs and events, awards and recognition, fundraising and scholarships, volunteers and service, communications and marketing, surveys and reports, organization management and pre-retirement programs.
- A new mentoring program pairs new or less-experienced members with more experienced members for one-on-one consultation.

Come Join Us

Share your ideas and concerns at info@arohe.org. Join AROHE and transform retirement in higher education.