

# The Retiree ORGANIZER

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S RETIREE LEADERS

May 2008

[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

Vol. 21, No. 9

## Donahue: Retirees are the jewels of NYSUT

In her address to Representative Assembly delegates last month, NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue urged members of different constituent groups — retirees, teachers, SRPs and health care workers — to work together with “mutual respect and appreciation” and stay focused on common goals.

“Different locals may deal with different issues and demands, but every local is interdependent,” she said. “Each of you has the ability to change attitudes and ideas, to overcome obstacles and move us forward.”

Donahue applauded the forward-moving contributions of retirees, whom she called the “jewels” of NYSUT. “NYSUT retirees brought us to where we

**“NYSUT retirees brought us to where we are today.”**

— Kathleen Donahue

are today. They didn't stop when they retired,” said Donahue. “They continued to fight for our common goals.”

Donahue outlined retirees' commitment to NYSUT in the political arena, citing their work in staffing phone banks, meeting with legislators and working on election campaigns.



Using retirees as an example to follow, Donahue said, “They haven't stopped fighting and neither can we!” Retirees are working hard to safeguard prescription drug coverage, health insurance, Social Security and pensions, Donahue added, noting retirees fight, not only for themselves, but for all the NYSUT members who will someday retire.

“Take a chance,” she said. “Step across territorial boundaries — or open your own to others.”



## Retirees share ideas, activities

The RA gave retiree leaders from around the state a forum to describe the good works their members are doing in schools, communities and volunteer organizations. Retirees shared success stories in a panel discussion titled, “Retirees on the Move.”

Among the projects highlighted at the Pre-NYSUT RA Local & Retiree Council Presidents Conference: Judith Schultz, president of Retiree Council 12, described how the council provides three annual grants of \$250 each to a NYSUT local; and Bruce Smith, president of RC 2, explained the annual in-service scholarship program of RCs 1-3 that provides two \$1,000 scholarships to NYSUT local members to help them pursue graduate coursework for certification.

Other retiree leaders described projects that have helped spark a love of reading in children (RC 5's “Books for Kids”); or have given hundreds of bags of free school supplies to children in

continued on page 4



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care. For more, see [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).

### INSIDE

**Retirees of the Year**  
Page 2

**Convention notes**  
Page 3

**Retiree dental plan**  
Page 4

**NYSUT Regional Membership Conferences**

RC 4 May 15  
RC 11 June 4

**Committee of 100**

Albany May 12-13

**School Budget Vote**

Statewide May 20

**Vote YES**  
**on May 20th**  
**Support your community!**

**The Retiree ORGANIZER**

*The Retiree Organizer* is a newsletter published periodically for New York State United Teachers' retiree leaders. Locals, chapters and retiree councils may reprint all *Organizer* content.

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# Retirees of the year honored

Louise Levine Rosenthal and John Soldini were honored as NYSUT's Retiree Members of the Year at last month's RA. Both exemplify selfless dedication to public education and union service.

Because she remains so active in the union, Levine Rosenthal joked that her family has hardly noticed she retired 12 years ago.

"I continue to teach, just in another capacity," she said. "I speak to individuals, groups and legislators, to safeguard the hard-earned Social Security and retirement benefits of my colleagues. No one should be without health insurance and I conduct workshops and lobby to see that is the case."

Levine Rosenthal, co-president of RC 19, was introduced to unionism at an early age.

"Unionism is in my blood," said Levine Rosenthal. "One year, a salesman at the company my father worked for was fired right before Christmas. My father organized the men and started a union." She is an RA delegate and a trainer for NYSUT and previously served as president of the Retired Teachers of Mineola. Levine Rosenthal's activism also extends to other causes. A breast cancer survivor, she has been very active in Making Strides Against Breast Cancer and serves on the executive board of the Long Island Association of Retired Americans.



Louise Levine Rosenthal



John Soldini

Soldini, of the United Federation of Teachers Retired Teachers Chapter, taught social studies at Tottenville High School on Staten Island, where he was known for introducing innovations to his classroom — including independent studies and mini courses — years before they became standard practice elsewhere. He also helped found Staten Island's first alternative high school for at-risk students.

Soldini urged retirees to continue to stay active in the union. "Maintaining our active membership in retirement is a win-win situation," Soldini said. "Without NYSUT, we retirees would be individuals crying in the wilderness or at least grumbling in our coffee and NYSUT wouldn't be as strong as it is." Soldini is a long-time Democratic party activist and served as a delegate at the party's historic 1968 and 1972 national conventions. He has been affiliated with the Council for Unity, a school-based anti-violence initiative, for more than 20 years. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1953-1956. He served as the elected UFT vice president for academic high schools from 1987 to 2002.

## Retiree leadership update slated for June

It's time for the annual update of retiree council/chapter leaders' contact information. Council/chapter leaders will receive an update form in the mail in June. Leaders, please make sure you return this form using the postage-paid envelope provided, by June 30. Remember to return this form to Retiree Services even if there are no changes to report — it's the only way we can ensure accuracy and better serve our retiree members. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



**Chris Pendergast honored with exemplary service award**

NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi presented the 2008 special community service award to Chris Pendergast, citing the retiree's efforts to find a cure for and raise public awareness of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. ALS, sometimes known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a degenerative neuromuscular disease, which has no known cure and no current treatment.

In 1998, Pendergast, who has ALS, founded Ride for Life, an organization dedicated to informing people about ALS and raising funds for research and support services. Each year, ALS activists — many in wheelchairs — travel between Montauk Point and Manhattan, raising money while visiting schools and informing students about the disease.

Ride for Life has raised more than \$2 million for ALS research and awareness to date. Iannuzzi said NYSUT would increase its annual level of sponsorship of Ride For Life.



*Dick Iannuzzi, Chris Pendergast and his wife Christine*

**2008 retiree community service award winners**

The following retirees were honored with Community Service Awards: Christine Alexio, RC 24, Carol Ashley, 17; Josie Beckwith, 24; Linda Collins, 6; Barbara Dzubak, 24; Sheila Feivelson, 24; Marcella Fugle, 1; Lee Gridley, 4; Maryann Hamilton, 20; Amollia Hooks Grossman, 8; Irene Kanowitz, 15-16; Ely Kaplan, 23, Carol Lunn, 9; Diana Manzo, 24; William Perry, 24; Vincent Petroccelli, 13; Mary Pritchard, 12; Sonia Rieber, 24; Patsy Robertson, 5; Betty Siegel, 21; Sylvia Singer, 24; Anna Smith, 11; Charles Sollinger, 43; Harvey Weber, 24; Thelma Werner, 24; Helen Whitaker, 24; and Edith Whitaker, 18.

**Albert Shanker Award for Distinguished Service**

NYSUT's highest honor, the Albert Shanker Award for Distinguished Service, was presented to civil rights pioneer Joseph C. Lowery. Lowery co-founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference with Martin Luther King Jr, in 1957. Lowery served as SCLC's president from 1977 to 1997. Lowery was honored at the International Civil Rights Hall of Fame in 2004 and is an NAACP's Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.

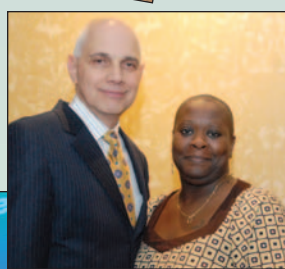


**Retirees on the move**

*Right, ED 52 Director Judith Rudman speaking at the ED meeting. Below, RC 10 President Dave Golden at the Resolution Committee meeting.*



*Right, Dick Iannuzzi and Board of Directors member Selina Duria at the retiree breakfast*



**Officers elected**

Delegates unanimously re-elected President Dick Iannuzzi, Executive Vice President Alan Lubin, Vice President Maria Neira and Vice President Kathleen Donahue. Lee Cutler was elected secretary-treasurer, succeeding Ivan Tiger, who is retiring. Vice President Robin Rapaport continues in office through July.

**Election results ED 51-53**

Ruth Dworkin was elected NYSUT At-Large ED 51-52-53 Director. Stanley J. Nowak was elected At-Large Retiree Director. Retirees elected to the NYSUT Board of Directors as Directors of Election Districts 51, 52, 53, respectively, were Loretta Donlon, Judith Rudman and Thomas Pappas.

*UFT's George Altomare (on guitar) leads the convention in "Solidarity Forever."*



# NYSUT needs your help

When the American Federation of Teachers retiree director Frank Stella spoke at the Retiree Breakfast at the RA, his message was clear: NYSUT needs your help. NYSUT retirees are needed in large numbers through November to help elect a pro-education president and to strengthen the pro-education majority in Congress.

“The AFL-CIO mantra for the next one is ‘bigger, better and broader,’ but the presidential race is a really tough battle,” Stella told the group. “Our estimate is that it will take about 65 million votes to win. We still need 37 million more votes.”

NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue thanked the retirees for being such an active group and such a strong presence in the union. These two qualities, according to Stella, make NYSUT retirees the perfect choice to help on the campaign trail. Retirees’ knowledge and experience make them a valuable resource for us, he said.

The AFT will launch a series of political walks next month. During the walks, members will distribute leaflets that present information on the issues and the candidates at various locations around the country.



*Frank Stella and Kathleen Donahue at the Retiree Breakfast.*

# Retiree Dental Plan offers choice

The Retiree Dental Plan endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust pays benefits for three categories of service: Type A Preventive (cleanings, exams, X-rays), Type B Restorative (fillings; simple extractions; crown, denture and bridge repair), and Type C Major Restorative (surgical extractions, general anesthesia, oral surgery, bridges and dentures). The plan is provided by MetLife.

Members can use a participating MetLife dentist or a non-participating dentist. The plan has more than 60,000 participating dentists throughout the U.S., including more than 10,200 specialists. When a participating (in-network) dentist is used, members receive the greatest benefit and incur the least out-of-pocket expense.

The plan has an annual benefit maximum of \$1,250 per person for covered services rendered by any dentist.

Retired NYSUT members, spouses or domestic partners and children are eligible to apply. Unmarried dependent children are covered to age 23.

If members use pension deduction to pay for the plan, there are no service fees. There is a \$4 service fee per billing cycle for direct billing; frequency of direct billing can be quarterly, semi-annual or annual.

For information, contact NYSUT Member Benefits at (800) 626-8101, e-mail [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org), or visit [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).

For information about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, contact NYSUT Member Benefits Trust or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs.

## Retiree share ideas

continued from page 1



Syracuse (RC 7's annual giveaway, timed around the birthday of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.), still others have raised both dollars and awareness for breast cancer screenings, treatment and research (RC 17 and its participation in the "Making Strides" fundraisers).

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