

# Best Writing 1 – Class RI

**Local:** *Central Islip Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Time For Militant Action

**Publication/Website:** CIRTAtion

Judges' Comments:

This is a forceful call to action to stop the Cuomo attack on education. Its strong tone expertly conveys the sense of urgency behind the author's call. It could be more effective, though, if the word militant were deleted and, in its place, the stress is on the power of the ballot in leading the charge for change.

Strong persuasive essay that lays out a political scenario, both internal and external. Strong concrete examples. Excellent use of Question and Answer.

"Thanks to the litany of anti-education and teacher schemes devised by..., those who truly support education are up in arms. It's time for militant action."  
Follow that with your last paragraph in the essay and you have a perfect lead-in and to your 21 actions. I think it would be stronger to then end with your paragraphs about AFT, NYSUT, UFT, AFL-CIO, etc., and how union solidarity could have made a difference. You do a lot right; it just could be much stronger with some reorganization.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** 14 Days!

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

Judges' Comments:

A very original look at how society views teachers and what they do every day in the classroom. The concept of doctors visiting a hospital-bound teacher-patient is an excellent metaphor for what is ailing public education in New York. And what's the cure? – to place more value on teachers, absolutely. This message could have been even stronger with some graphic representations to accompany the type.

What a refreshing essay! I actually want to read more. This entry could have been improved with more specifics. Their schools were not just on Long Island, they were from everywhere. So the reader wonders if that is across New York State, across the Northeast, the US, or even international. I would have liked just one example of one of their stories, and one of yours too. Wonderful conclusion. Very nice work.

**Local: Oriskany Retirees' Organization**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** This is what happens when you don't do your homework!

**Publication/Website:** ORO Newsletter

**Issue Date:** April 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

No problem with graphics here. The cartoon of Cuomo with a dunce cap says it all, and the likeness of Cuomo is very good. That said, though, the image could be downsized somewhat and some text on the issues could be used as a companion to the graphic for a balanced piece on what Cuomo is doing and what teachers should be doing to stop him.

This is an excellent cartoon and a top contender for that award. This works on so many levels and I like how the drawing also makes me think of Pinocchio who was a puppet and was manipulated in addition to the report card. Excellent job.

**Local: TRIF - Clearwater Unit**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Random thoughts from the Editors Desk

**Publication/Website:** A "C.U.T." Above

**Issue Date:** March 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A nice collage of random thoughts and very good graphics to make the page jump out at the reader. It could be more effective if there were fewer jokes, some of which are old, and more wise and inspirational thoughts sprinkled about.

Most of this submission is credited to others, so there appears to be only one section of original writing. You do an excellent job of sourcing the material and the graphic presentation is very good. The anecdote about the presidential candidate is precious indeed, and very good and I encourage you to write more. You clearly have a knack for story telling.

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** It Will Probably Be Alright

**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

Judges' Comments:

This first-person account of skydiving is realistic enough to give the reader some white knuckles. Good job all around. It could have been more effective if one photo were of larger size, even if one other would have to be sacrificed. This would offset the grey look of the page.

Excellent first-person perspective. Very strong descriptions and the accompanying photographs are excellent, (although it would have been enough to just have one of you in the cockpit and then just use the "No Hands" image. Were they provided by the No Limits Skydiving company? Impressive how this entry does more than just relay an experience, it also teaches.

## Best Writing 2 - RI

**Local:** *Central Islip Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Justice?

**Publication/Website:** CIRTation

Judges' Comments:

This is a powerful editorial that examines the double standard of justice for teachers accused of inflating grades and big-time bankers whose financial misdealings nearly broke the national economy. While not excusing the teachers, the author notes that their punishment is far more severe than the bankers, who remain anonymous and whose banks paid their fines. By comparison, the teachers could go to jail. This uneven justice is another example of why teachers and all educators need to do all they can to halt a relentless attack on public education. Well done.

Very interesting essay and a strong persuasive argument that questions how different standards are being applied to teachers versus banks. I applaud you for taking on this complex issue. This entry would be strengthened with more specifics. Realize that specificity often means more clarity with fewer words. For example, if you would just name the bank, instead of writing "In one case, the management of one of these banks" the reader would not be left wondering. This entry also needs a closer punctuation edit and removal of sentences that don't add information. For example, in the paragraph about the fines, – "In most cases we don't know who they were" — distracts from your point that fines were paid but there were no loss of licenses, jobs or jail time.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** In Response to My Pleas for Retiree News: From Mary Vaeth

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

Judges' Comments:

The first reaction to this essay is "Where are the photos?" The author writes about life in rural Texas, but there are no photos to complement her work. But on second thought, who needs photos when this writer is so skilled at painting a verbal portrait of the Texas landscape – so skilled in fact that readers do not need graphics to appreciate the beauty this author encounters in her new home away from Long Island. A real treat. Exceptional.

This is a lovely letter to the editor. Excellent descriptions and concrete examples of this retiree's life. This writer truly paints a picture with words. Watching the Longhorns watching her, chickens scattering and oil wells moving slowly up and down are just a few examples. It would be nice to see her take on a current news event.

**Local:** *TRIF - Clearwater Unit*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** WANTED/WHAT'S IT TAKE, HUH?!

**Publication/Website:** A "C.U.T." Above

**Issue Date:** October 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is an appealing graphic that uses humor effectively. However, with some text indicating whether this is just humor or a real job opening posting, the reader is left scratching his head.

Since both of these are essentially illustrations, they will be considered in that category. I love the idea of running a "Wanted sign" to get help and your descriptions of requirements are quite witty. As to the "What's It Take graphic," since the majority of that is a reprint of a Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, I don't think it quite fits as original work, although kudos for thinking along these lines and pairing up the need for a secretary for your organization with Calvin's exasperation!

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Reflections: The Candyman

**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

Judges' Comments:

A heart-felt memoir of a teacher who influenced so many lives, yet labored all his life without receiving the recognition he deserved. But this writer makes up for some of that neglect with a moving, eloquent tribute to a dedicated educator.

Wonderful tribute. This entry shows how newsletters work for their membership by giving more than what a typical newspaper would run. A typical obituary concentrates on a recitation of facts, survivors and when and where services will be. This kind of writing shines by giving a glimpse into why this teacher is not forgotten by the writer. Excellent use of varying sentence structure and concrete descriptions.

## Best Writing 3 – RI

**Local:** *Central Islip Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Who Wrote That?

**Publication/Website:** CIRTation

Judges' Comments:

An interesting look back at the unheralded songwriters of the 60s. First of a two-part series. The layout and graphics need improvement.

Very interesting topic. The writer does a very good job of drawing the reader in and holding that interest. I'm not sure if this essay was trying to persuade that Boyce and Hart be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. If that is the case, try to include some information about how that would happen. Nice way of tying the conclusion to the introduction. This was a pleasure to read.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** From our V.P., Rosetta Giannotti...NYSUT Retiree Regional Conference

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

Judges' Comments:

A summary of a meeting's highlights. Informative, but very brief, more like a memorandum than a writing sample.

This was a nice recap of a regional conference with a pleasant style of writing. It would be stronger if an example of what you learned could have been included. Perhaps one topic about elder law or retiree health insurance that you found helpful. Nice that you listed the resources you learned and that is a very nice photo of the three of you. Keep working at it!

**Local:** *TRIF - Clearwater Unit*  
**Category:** Best Writing 3  
**Name of Entry:** Cathy's Column  
**Publication/Website:** A "C.U.T." Above  
**Issue Date:** November 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is a good column about the dangers posed by political conservatives to entitlements like Social Security and Medicare. It could be more developed rather than just a generalized observation.

Excellent persuasive essay. Very good descriptive examples. I know you don't spell out everything, but you also know your audience and know that you don't need to. Excellent use of questions for your transition paragraph.

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*  
**Category:** Best Writing 3  
**Name of Entry:** COSTA RICA ADVENTURE (Zip Lining? Who me??)  
**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS  
**Issue Date:** Winter 2016

Judges' Comments:

An entertaining article about zip lining in Costa Rica, with a good photo layout. The page looks gray, however; better typeface and photo development would have helped enhance the piece.

Very nice first person account of zip lining. Great descriptions and details until the writer steps off the platform. I felt a bit let down as a reader, after all that wonderful description that all I read was "I was zip lining through the rain forest to the next platform." Was it really so fast you felt wind whipping by? Or was it slow so that you could really see the sights that were described as "incredible." The photos are very good and I would suggest only using two of them so that you would have had the space to provide that. May you write about many more adventures!

# Best Writing 4 - RI

**Local:** *Central Islip Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** The Most Dangerous Threat to Our Planet

**Publication/Website:** CIRTAtion

Judges' Comments:

This article appears to expose a serious threat by almonds in California to our water supplies. It appears to be in jest, but sometimes the mood switches from flip to serious. In any event, the black typeface and font give the page a black look and the font should be changed. Some graphics would help as well.

Interesting essay. Excellent descriptions and concrete examples and it flows logically. I would have liked more specific references. Also, this entry would be strengthened with a careful edit; punctuation is needed throughout.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** From Your President, Emily Schreiber

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

Judges' Comments:

This message from the president involves a trip to a science camp to see a student. The packaging is attractive and the photo is well displayed, but it appears to be a brief note rather than a fully developed writing sample.

I applaud you for making the space to provide information about the student your local sponsors at a camp. I like the graphic treatment of providing the photo with scrapbook corners. This entry would be stronger with just a few more details. Is the Tanglewood Preserve connected to the performing arts space? It would be good to add the county or state where it is located. Also, a few details about how large the preserve is would benefit the reader.

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Reflections of a Young Boy

**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS

**Issue Date:** Spring 2015

Judges' Comments:

The author conveys what it was like to grow up in the WWII era, when there were good times even in the hard times caused by the war. A nice memoir, but adding a "Waltons" tone of nostalgia would have made it stand out.

This is a very nice historical essay about the author's life growing up during WWII. Very good descriptions and concrete examples are provided in a pleasant, conversational manner. The conclusion is nice to seek other reminiscences from members. This entry would have been strengthened with one more read through. Your lead sentence makes the reader think WWII only lasted when the writer was 6-8 years old. And perhaps it would have been better to start with your father's service in WWII; the sentence about returning to the USA; and then introduce yourself and WWII.

## Best Writing 5 - RI

**Local:** *Central Islip Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Assembly and Senators Vote on The Cuomo Budget

**Publication/Website:** CIRTAtion

Judges' Comments:

This is a breakdown of how Long Island legislators voted on Cuomo budget. Most of it is a graph, with only a brief text. It is attractively packaged and informative, but not really a writing sample.

I applaud your efforts to hold lawmakers accountable for their votes on the budget. The writing oversimplifies, but in this case it works — since it's the May/June issue, well after the budget was approved and your readers should have had many other ways to get more specifics on the budget. I think this entry would be strengthened if you could add the political party before the lawmakers. Even just a simple D or R.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Our Retirees' Notes

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

Judges' Comments:

This is a random collection of notes. While the layout and graphics are appealing, the collage isn't really a writing sample.

Nice compilation of news from retirees. A valuable outreach to and from your members and it's a great way to keep the newsletter a two-way street. Sadly, the photo Emily Schreiber took at Nassau Community College did not reproduce on the entry. Nice light touches of humor from the editor. Since much of this is not original writing, it doesn't quite qualify for an award, but please do keep up the good work.

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Presidents' Message

**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS

**Issue Date:** Spring 2015

Judges' Comments:

A great column on a topic that doesn't get nearly enough attention – namely, how the obsession with STEM courses is taking its toll on the humanities curriculum. As the author so wisely points out, not students are individuals who should have choices of what they want to pursue in life, rather than being trained as a cog for life in the lab. Hats off for speaking out so eloquently.

Very nice essay that ties together a harsh winter with a harsh political climate. Excellent descriptions and reasoning.

# General Excellence - RI

**Local:** *Johnstown Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** JRTA Communique

**Issue Date:** Spring 2015

Judges' Comments:

Nice looking package overall. Very newsy with good layout. Photos could be sharper though as they fail to stand out on the page.

The "Active in Retirement" contribution is the highlight of this issue. What a great idea to highlight the community service of your members. This publication clearly communicates a lot of information to members. The "Voices of Former WAW scholars" is a pleasure to read, although I was left wondering what WAW stands for, especially since all the contributions ranged so widely. This is a strong entry. Keep up the good work.

**Local:** *Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** The Retiree ReView

**Issue Date:** November 2015

Judges' Comments:

Lots of photos capture the reader's attention and plenty of brief items about the members and their activities. Some of these items could have been developed more, such as the member who writes a column for a newspaper – why not treat the reader to a sample of that column?

Pleasant and lively cover featuring photos of your members. This publication is filled with lots of updates for members and it's packaged well. Do you think your members need a reason to participate in VOTE/COPE? It might make that box a bit stronger. Also, the box on your membership campaign ends with "If you don't pay your \$10 dues," Does that mean those names listed have not paid their \$10? It's confusing. Nice recaps from NYSUT and the AFT.

**Local: *Oriskany Retirees' Organization***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** ORO Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Special Edition

Judges' Comments:

Very imposing photo and layout of a returning student who is now a major general, and who delivered a speech to an admiring audience. Good photos, but there was no mention of what branch of service she belongs to, or what she said in her speech.

This two-page special edition is a very nice package. The article is an excellent recap of the day, with great descriptions and concrete examples from the speech. The photos are very well done and while it is obvious who the Major General is, do all your readers know the other folks? Of course, I am not talking about the auditorium photo and kudos to your photographer for getting that angle to show the faces in the audience.

**Local: *Space Coast TRIF***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Space Coast - TRIF Fall Newsletter

**Issue Date:** September 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry contains a good article on remaining active in retirement. Good photos add to the mix and are nicely packaged. However, three photos show the subjects in disjointed poses as if the lens had elongated them.

What a newsy publication. Your coverage of the Virginia King Early Education Launch Award is an excellent example for other newsletters. Your yearly calendar is a nice compilation, as well as two full pages of updates; the president's message is a thoughtful essay that takes the president's recent appointment to a committee as a means to share her personal blueprint. It is very well done. This is a strong contender for the top award in this category.

**Local:** *TRIF - Clearwater Unit*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** A "C.U.T." Above

**Issue Date:** September 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry contains a good cover column on what unions have won in the past and the need to fight today to preserve those victories. Good comments on the value of NYSUT. Entry could be improved with more content, however.

This edition is a shining example of a publication that seeks to inform its members. The front page has a clearly written message from the editor that pays homage to the contributions of retirees with just enough of a nod to the future. A full page devoted to what membership is all about, including your mission, and what \$30 covers is valuable information. The article that spells out why anyone should give to VOTE-COPE is a good example. I don't understand the article about Egan Cottage. Perhaps your members all know, but what is your end of season contribution? Are there other contributions? Why do you sponsor this group? Compared to the other articles, this one creates more questions than answers.

**Local:** *Walkill Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** CONNECTIONS

**Issue Date:** Dec 2015

Judges' Comments:

A solid entry overall. Good content on a variety of topics and photos to match. However, the reproduction of those photos could be improved. But the content saves the day.

Please see best writing sections for comments on articles. This publication is jam packed full of info. Touching tribute to a fallen colleague on the cover. I wonder if the NYSUT travel benefit belongs on front page, but given all the travel your members do, it's probably warranted! Nicely referenced health corner. President's Message on page three is well written and an excellent summary. I question ads on page three as that is prime space for your members (but maybe those ads pay a prime rate?) Nice recaps with photos throughout give this publication a newsy feel above other newsletters. Kudos for reproducing plan benefit highlights. Since you did a thorough job referencing the health corner, you should credit Bob Hader for the Abbott and Costello spoof.

# Best Writing 1 - RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** The Pumpkin Project

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

Judges' Comments:

An inspiring tale about a teacher who inspired students by including them in a project to raise and sell pumpkins, and use the proceeds to buy gifts for kids in a pediatric ward. It is a wonderful tale of healing all around – the teachers' pupils and the kids in the hospital who were helped by them. Great job.

This is a lovely piece and is a strong contender for a top award in this fiercely competitive category. Excellent descriptions and concrete examples are used effectively. It takes a skilled writer to do a how-to article and this is several how-tos in one. Keep up the great work.

**Local:** *Kingston Retired Teachers' Federation*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** KRTF Political Action

**Publication/Website:** The P.O.R.C.H.

Judges' Comments:

I applaud this publication for not just writing about the need to vote, but for also going the extra step and including an absentee ballot for members to use if they know they will not be able to vote. (It is unfortunate that New York State does not offer early voting like other states). The essay is persuasive and on point. Good job.

**Local:** *North Babylon Retirees' Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Protect Your Benefits

**Publication/Website:** The Next Step

Judges' Comments:

An important message on VOTE COPE and the need to protect hard-won benefits. This entry could use some graphics to make it more appealing to the eye.

Excellent persuasive essay that links member participation with actually protecting their own benefits. Effective use of questions. This is well-written.

**Local:** *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** FROM MY HANDS & HEART... My Most Excellent Adventure

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** February 2015

Judges' Comments:

A nice article on a mission to Belize to provide local girls with dresses. Good layout and photos. It could be improved by giving the reader some idea of what kind of education girls in Belize can expect and whether they need educational materials as well as clothing.

Very nice first person essay that draws connections across the globe. Very good descriptions and concrete examples. Very nice photos. The writing is well organized and answers every question the reader might have. This is a solid contender for a top award in an extremely competitive category.

**Local:** *Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** IN APPRECIATION FOR JOE COPPOLA

**Publication/Website:** PORT OF CALL

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

Judges' Comments:

An excellent memoir of a revered teacher and pioneer labor leader. Well developed with nice touches throughout. The typeface is heavy, though, and gives the page a black look. But the writing makes up for it with its heartfelt appreciation of a valued leader inside the classroom and out.

This is a wonderful tribute to clearly a wonderful teacher and leader. The writer gives excellent descriptions and concrete examples. I did wonder when he retired, as much of this article is based in the 1960s and 1970s. Then, I have to admit, I wondered if this was an obituary. Regardless of those questions, it's a wonderful tribute that even serves as a how to article for future leaders. This is a strong contender for a top award.

**Local:** *Retired Educators Chapter - Syosset Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Pension Update

**Publication/Website:** SYOSSET RECORD

Judges' Comments:

This is a brief recap of a meeting that focuses on *Newsday's* inaccuracies on teacher pensions. It could have been more developed and less generalized, with specific rebuttals to specific *Newsday's* errors.

This short article packs a lot of information. A shining example of concise, clear writing, information is also presented in a graphically pleasing way.

**Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Special Notes In American History (4 part series)

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website

Judges' Comments:

This is an informative series that is attractively packaged. As a four-part series, though, it is difficult to fairly compare it with single entries. Might have been better to include just one part as a sample of what the whole package contains.

I applaud this council for devoting a good amount of space, energy and effort to labor history.

**Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** WALKING WITH HAN YU

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** April 2015

Judges' Comments:

What a touching uplifting story about an exchange student who was neglected by his host family, but was warmly welcomed by a teacher's family, and who returned the favor by becoming like a son to them. A great example of programs that break down barriers between cultures. Good layout and sharp photos.

Lovely writing about the impact of an exchange program and one exchange student in particular. Excellent descriptions and concrete examples. This writer is also skilled at weaving threads throughout the story that help the reader stay connected. I wonder what Rummikub is? This is a strong contender for a top award.

## Best Writing 2 - RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Remembering the Fifties

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

Judges' Comments:

A wonderful recollection of growing up in the 50s, when all seemed right with the world. The author wisely chooses to write from the vantage point of a youngster rather than someone looking back – so the reader gets a Wonder Years viewpoint. The last line – “then came the 60s”—is the perfect ending for this period piece, as the 50s' innocence would soon end. Nicely handled.

More than an interesting look back at childhood, this essay just starts to uncover the onion layers, with such lines like “We didn't realize that the communist witch hunts of the 50's were ruining people's lives.” With excellent descriptions and concrete examples, this writer truly proves the adage “Hindsight is 20-20.”

**Local:** *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** What's Happening to our Public Schools??? A bit of history...

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** February 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is an excellent perspective piece on what it was like to be a teacher in the 1960s, when teaching was an honored profession, compared with today's political attacks on education. Very well done and very persuasive.

What an excellent graphic to start this article. The cupped hands around a pin with the “Respect Public Education It works!” and then the headline The POWER is in OUR hands works so well. Excellent descriptions of a school model that worked. It would be stronger with at least one more fact-based example other than “Test scores increased tremendously.” Skilled use of repetition on what makes a difference.

**Local: Retired Educators Chapter - Syosset Teachers' Association**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Presidents' Message

**Publication/Website:** SYOSSET RECORD

**Issue Date:** Feb. 2015

Judges' Comments:

An informative and comprehensive look at the Cuomo budget and what it means for public schools. It could be more effective with some graphics to accompany the type.

This message is filled with very good analysis of a proposed state budget. The use of bullet points is very well done. It begins to provide readers with a message about what they can do, but does not provide specific strategies. The lengthy quote from the Teachers of Years past is a good summary, then the last sentence seems a bit of a let down. "Looking forward to talking about how we can support the efforts outlined above at our next general meeting on March 17," might be a stronger way to end.

**Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Patriotism Is More Than Flag Waving

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website

Judges' Comments:

A welcome reminder that patriotism is more than flag waving and the need for union members to support American products. It could be more effective with a box that highlights the number of U.S. companies that are now foreign-owned, rather than just including this fact in the body of the narrative.

Excellent essay on a timely topic. Not only does this writer provide facts and evidence in a pleasant, easy to read manner, she also provides specific strategies for the reader to use. Besides being a strong contender in the writing category, this article, I think, is also a strong contender for best article about solidarity amongst all entries.

**Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** March 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

What a story and what a storyteller! A great portrait of a war hero who was also a civil rights hero. Hard to top this, but it could have been more effective if the war and civil rights roles were treated separately rather than mingling together throughout the narrative. Even so, this grabs and holds your attention.

This is such an emotional topic, which the author acknowledged in the second paragraph. It has a powerful message and very good writing with excellent descriptions and strong examples. It is so good, but could be strengthened by reorganizing a number of the paragraphs or just thinking more logically about how to present such great information to the reader. There are 10 paragraphs. The first three deal directly with a speech Mr. Montgomery gave in February 2015. The 4<sup>th</sup> deals with experiences during the war. The 5<sup>th</sup> is about fighting for justice. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are extremely powerful paragraphs about MLK, although the latter half of the 7<sup>th</sup> brings up his military service and then jumps to when the military was integrated and when the Voting Rights Act became law. Then the 8<sup>th</sup> gives basics on Mr. Montgomery's life and mentioned the awards he won. The 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> are his message to students (which of course goes back to the February 2015 speech.) By looking at it that way do you see how it kind of jumps around?

Working in where he was born and when he was drafted and the years he served in southern Italy would have made more sense in the paragraph about his service, and the awards he won. Then, boy, it would have been powerful to note how this man, and all the Tuskegee Airmen, still were denied the right to vote when they returned from WWII. Then, go into his experiences with MLK. Start a new paragraph with what he was most proud of (his involvement with the civil rights and his time as a Tuskegee Airman) – and then note the integration facts. Your two conclusion paragraphs with his inspiring advice to students, is then a logical end. Please take this constructively as this writer clearly has promise to grow even more skilled. Keep up the good work.

## Best Writing 3 - RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** The Core Curriculum

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

**Issue Date:** Feb 2015

Judges' Comments:

An excellent indictment of the Core Curriculum. Though brief, the writer uses an example of a test question in English that speaks volumes about what is wrong with the testing craze. The question would stump a college English major, yet it is included on an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English language test. Very well done, very powerful. Good, punchy prose.

Interesting way to skewer the Core Curriculum. Excellent analysis is given of the examples provided. As I judge this contest, the writer's point that comparing and contrasting the structure of two or more texts, and then analyzing how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style sets an unrealistic high bar for 8<sup>th</sup> grade, is one I heartily agree with. (And I rejoice in finding the situation both ironic and coincidental as that so rarely happens!) One quibble I have is the words "once again" in the final sentence. While I absolutely love the image of maps being drawn up by people who don't know the territory, to what does the "once again" refer to? It would be stronger if the writer would note at least one other ill-advised ed reform foisted on teachers, or better yet, just drop it. The sentence is stronger without.

**Local:** *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** NOTES... from President Nanette Hoffer

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** August 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is a wrap-up of what's been going on in the district. It summarizes rather than discusses issues, and needs to be more thoroughly developed.

This is a skilled update message to members that clearly conveys both information and emotion. That is much easier said than done! The writer goes an extra step in so many paragraphs to include all members, whether they attended a meeting or not. A few sentences are overly long.

**Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Court Cases Affect You

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website

Judges' Comments:

An excellent rundown of issues before the Supreme Court that affect public schools and retirees. Detailed, informative, packaged in an inviting layout and graphic.

So I could not tell when this piece was written, but it's a testament to you how it still holds up now perhaps more than a year later. Excellent summary and excellent analysis for your members. Yes, some of this information is rewritten from other sources, but it is skillfully condensed and packaged in an easy-to-read manner.

**Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** A VERY SPECIAL ROBS MEETING

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** March 2015

Judges' Comments:

A nice layout and a nice look at an oral history project. But it is essentially a meeting report. Could have been improved by giving a sampling of the interviews mentioned.

What a wonderful project to undertake! It's noteworthy that you devoted a full page to explaining it and running a large group photo. Very good job presenting the story. Telling the story had a few flaws. The last four graphs are out of order. One graph talks about the interviewees on tap and sons, daughters and children came to honor their loved one. The next graph is totally out of place. Then the next graph said many people took advantage of an open mic to say what the project meant to them and then the last graph is a perfect conclusion about the slide presentation. Now about that 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph. That would have been far better as a caption reading something like nearly 50 of the 153 interviewees came to celebrate the oral history project, pictured above. For a complete list of everyone represented go to [www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org) our ROBS website. We thank the Library and the District for technical and support assistance in making this celebration a success.

## Best Writing 4 - RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** A Snowy Day

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

**Issue Date:** Feb 2015

Judges' Comments:

The memory piece of growing up loving to walk in the snow, ice skate, sled and get a day off from school will strike a note in retirees from upstate, who no doubt have the same fond memories of an earlier, simpler era. Need to break up the type with graphics or quotes and avoid a heavy black font.

A pleasant, easy-to-read essay on the joys of winter. This writer skillfully weaves from his current life, to recollections of years ago, back to the present times.

Wonderful descriptions of not just how snow feels and looks, but even how it sounds make this a strong contender for a top award.

**Local:** *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Teacher Appreciation Day

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** May 2015

Judges' Comments:

An original take on Teacher Appreciation Day from a historical view and a list of what teachers do that cannot be measured by standardized tests. Nicely done.

This writer provides a wonderful introduction as to the history of Teacher Appreciation Day. I wonder if the use of "open warfare" is too strong a term to describe what teachers are going through daily? I know it's been ugly, but I wonder what your veterans of actual wars wonder when they read that. The Open Letter is lovely with wonderful descriptions.

**Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Solidarity With Postal Workers

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website

Judges' Comments:

A call to action for members to leave a message of support for postal workers, in a context that debunks the myth that the Postal Service is broken. Attractive layout, concise writing.

Very good recap of what the USPS is facing and how members can help. There is too much information provided in a confusing way in the first two sentences of the second graph. This entry would be stronger if those sentences were reworked and perhaps even more info provided. For example, in an effort to crush this vital public service, conservative lawmakers forced the postal service to "over fund" its health insurance and pension funds for 75 years into the future. Despite this bleak outlook, the postal service remained resilient. Then go into your next sentence about how it is not losing money, etc.

**Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** A BRIDGE TO TOMORROW

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** March 2015

Judges' Comments:

A meeting where retirees drew up "bucket lists" for what they hope to do in their golden years. Original idea with illuminating results – for example, only three wanted to volunteer. Nice graphics. Not much to improve on here.

Not only is this a good article about a meeting/activity, it also serves as an excellent how-to for anyone else who might want to replicate it. This lays out all the steps anyone would need to do the activity and gives good descriptions. Your listing of results with specific examples is effective and well-done. Great job.

## Best Writing 5 – Class RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** SUMMER MEMORIES

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

Judges' Comments:

A great nostalgia article about growing up in an earlier era. The writer doesn't just list what he did and how he enjoyed his youth but rather puts a point of view on the whole piece – that is, by comparing his younger years, when he and his peers learned to use their imaginations, with today's tech savvy, but tech obsessed generations. Very well done. Could use a more attractive typeface and larger graphics to make the package stand out.

Another strong entry from this writer. Vivid descriptions fill each paragraph. I can actually see two kids on a raft sideways riding a wild wave. And how lucky you were to have Guy Lombardo Marine Theatre! This writer is clearly skilled at crafting recollections in a pleasant, easy-to-read style.

**Local:** *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** A MEMBER WRITES... Our Trip to Turkey

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** February 2015

Judges' Comments:

A thorough account of a trip to what many Americans see as the troubled land of Turkey. The writer takes the reader on a visit to one astounding treasure after another, all the while paying attention to the human experience, including the wise and caring hosts encountered along the way. Still, the writer all but dismisses the danger angle even though the news is filled with reports of attacks and bombings. This could have been dealt with more in-depth. Also, the article could be cut down somewhat to allow the very good photos to be sized more appropriately.

This is a skilled travel piece. It informs on so much more than where the writer visited. It weaves in history and culture with the sights and sounds. Perhaps because visiting an Islamic country was cited as the first reason to visit Turkey, I was looking for a bit more about that religion, perhaps about different mosques but there was so much rich detail about so many aspects of the trip, that is minor.

**Local: *Retiree Council 43***

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** From the Desk of President Deb Peterson

**Publication/Website:** ODDS 'n' ENDS

**Issue Date:** March/April 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

An Odds and Ends column consisting of a series of excerpts from an Annual Conference. Informative but too much like a laundry list. Some highlights should have been singled out and developed more.

This was a thorough report out to members about what happened at an annual conference, however other than the intro paragraph, it seemed to read more like minutes and a listing of information. Transitions between speakers or perhaps a bit of analysis would have strengthened this entry.

**Local: *Retirees of Brentwood Schools***

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** WAR POEMS: Ada Tessibel and Ethel Pauline Peters, Forgotten Voices of World War I

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** January 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

Beautiful article on a long lost volume of World War I poems that address the role and mistreatment of African Americans who served in that conflict. Well packaged with a nice balance of graphics and type.

A truly complete package that provides excellent historical documents and excerpts of poetry as well as an insightful introduction that explains the significance. The attention to detail is complete, down to providing the interactive website that has been developed. I was a bit unclear if the writer interviewed Jean Barnes-Peters or if that material should have been referenced. Excellent descriptive phrases. It was thoughtful to display this over two pages and to allow for the "white" space. A lesser publication might have tried to cram all this onto one page or a page and a half.

## General Excellence – Class RII

**Local:** *Bay Shore Retired Teachers' Association*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** 4th R

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

Judges' Comments:

A winning entry. Lots of good informative content, good photos and an attractive layout.

Excellent package of up-to-date information, social news, photo spreads, individual profiles and calendar items. This council does a great job!

**Local:** *Farmingdale Federation of Teachers/Retiree Chapter*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Farmingdale Focus

**Issue Date:** Spring 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry has an attractive cover and plenty of photos inside. It also has a good wrap-up of short news items. It could be improved if some items had been developed more.

An excellent analysis that also works in a persuasive essay on the importance of voting. So the cover is attractive and gets the reader right into it, and then page 2 is essentially a meeting notice and page 3 is your constitutional amendments? Really took the wind out of your sails. Nice photo spread pages 4-5 and thank you for the captions!! Finally, page 6, I get to read the rest of your cover story. The news and views section is well done. Your members should feel appreciated. One thing I found a bit distracting was the "I think Dolores's philosophy is good for all retirees" after one member's update. Excellent recap at the end. Page 8 recaps on VOTE-COPE and the Strides walk are filled with specific information. Perhaps a bit more info on In Memoriam? Perhaps at least the year those folks retired? It just seemed off-putting to just list names. Page 9 is an ad and then I absolutely applaud you for giving that full page to the photo of the protest. Thanks to your previous captions, I know that is Patricia Browne-Coleman, but it would have strengthened that page to identify the #proudson of "this lady protesting with a bunch of teachers." What a great way to end this great publication.

**Local: Long Beach School District Retirees' Association**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Long Beach School District Retirees' Association Newsletter

**Issue Date:** December 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry has good information. It is devoid of photos, though, which are needed to break up type-heavy pages.

Clearly this is a busy retiree council. I applaud the publication for being both concise and thorough in everything it put forward in just one month's publication. I did find this a bit hard to read after a while as the format did not change through all six pages. This publication would be strengthened with some graphic layout choices or even boxing some of the information, especially with the President's report, which in many instances read more like minutes or just a listing of facts. The Tidbits section proves your members enjoy participating in the newsletter. Keep up the good work.

**Local: North Babylon Retirees' Chapter**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** The Next Step

**Issue Date:**

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry is strong on content but could use more of it overall. It also needs photos to make the pages stand out.

Lively publication. Good to reference the Blog post but please check spellings! Diane Ravitch is well known. Were all of the profiles on page 2 tributes to those who had died? Here's a suggestion. Run that information (on condolences) across the top of the page and then have your four profiles. Keep the get well wishes and the congratulations separate in a box on the same page or move to another page.

Really thoughtful to detail for members what happened with their generosity at the May luncheon. Also nice to pair it on the same page as the Member Action Center. Nicely written summaries on the second to last page. Is the last page so empty to allow for address labels? I can understand some space, but you really leave 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the page empty. Seems like a missed opportunity.

**Local: *Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Retired Times

**Issue Date:** May 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry knows the value of graphics and uses them effectively. It also includes a good number of news items. It could use less type on pages to offset a layout that can be hard on the eyes.

This is an excellent publication for council members. Great persuasive writing on the VOTE-COPE piece. The president's message is concise and thorough, which can be tough to do. It's great for a publication to have so many different voices writing the articles. The layout is well done with interesting graphics and your annual meeting page is perhaps the most well-done I've seen. This publication does so much right. It is a strong contender.

**Local: *Retired Educators Chapter - Syosset Teachers' Association***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** SYOSSET RECORD

**Issue Date:** April 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry features only small photos. It has lots of boxed items, events and a wrap-up of meetings. All of this keeps members well informed, but there is too much information packed into some of the longer items – better to break them out as separates.

Excellent update and analysis for members on page one. Page two is essentially updates, meeting minutes and such, but it is well laid out and makes perfect sense to readers. Excellent to tie in a well-written VOTE-COPE article to your Presidents message. The For Your Information page needs just a little explainer about why half a page is devoted to facts on charter schools? Considering that the other half is briefs on information perhaps more useful to members? Of course, I have to question the absentee ballot. How would you know if folks mailed in votes and then came to the meeting to vote?

**Local: *Retiree Council 43***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** ODDS 'n' ENDS

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry is informative but needs to add graphics or photos to break up type-heavy pages. It could also use more content.

Excellent publication for members. Because this is a statewide publication, it's important to provide detailed contact info on page two. Excellent explanation of the constitutional convention, although I do wonder how much of that is original writing and perhaps the writer might have referenced the source material. Excellent back page that also serves as a mailer.

**Local: *Retirees of Brentwood Schools***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** ROBS NEWSLETTER

**Issue Date:** April-August 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A very good entry overall. Good layout and nice feature articles. Very nice mix of content. A strong entry.

What a lively front page with the headline asking "Is there Life in Retirement" and a well-written essay to provide answers. When you get such a nice thank you letter, I'm glad you reprint it. Funny how I was just wondering about why this publication ran such a gamut of time when I got to the article explaining why it's two publications in one. Nicely written essays on searching for your roots, Sagtikos Manor and the Hal Pastor profile. I kept thinking this is a friendly publication as I went through it. Thank you for spelling out what your scholarship criteria are! I know it's difficult to write about death, but please reconsider writing You lost someone in February (or any month.) Considering the lengths this publication goes to in all other aspects, it was only one dull note in a publication that truly sings.

**Local:** *Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** SSRA Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry puts all type on some pages and all photos on others. An interesting approach. It also features lots of short items about members and news of interest, but it could use some longer articles to add substance overall.

This is a lively and well-written publication. However, it seemed its main focus was to get those dues! A full paragraph on page one, a large headline on page six. The lead section of the Off the Cuff column, and the majority of page 11. Pages are extremely well laid out graphically and easy to follow. Very nice reproduction of photos from the luncheon and recaps of your members. Do you have to edit any of that? Carl's quips are hilarious. Excellent recap with specific info on your fall luncheon. Off the Cuff repeats some of that info. Keep up the good work on a most informative publication.

## Best Website - RII

**Local:** *Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter*

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter Website

**URL:** [www.pwta.info/PWRE](http://www.pwta.info/PWRE)

Judges' Comments:

This is a very inviting website that is easy to access and navigate. And that has links that cover a wide range of interests and topics. The only recommendation for improvement would be to use more graphics on the home page and links. The one photo on the home page is a standout, but it should be sized larger to make the faces more recognizable.

Excellent website and a strong contender for a top award. So many aspects of this site are so well done. Foremost, it is so easy to use and I love your subject headers. How smart to group the Going Green, Legislative and volunteer opportunities Make a Difference. I do think the Teachers & Students sub set should go under PWRE News or somewhere else as they seem to be updates on folks near and dear to the PWRE, even if they are not members. Otherwise, everything makes such sense! The photo galleries are lively, information is current and up-to-date. I thoroughly enjoyed the Challenge Yourself section with its subsection of Body and Mind.

**Local:** *Retired – United Teachers of Northport*

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** Retired – United Teachers of Northport Website

**URL:** [www.retiredteachersofnorthport.org](http://www.retiredteachersofnorthport.org)

Judges' Comments:

This website has an attractive home page. The site itself is easy to access and navigate, with links clearly listed atop the home page logo. The site could use more graphics. The In Memoriam link shows why – it includes a photo of the deceased and as a result the whole page is enhanced. The same approach should be followed with other links.

This is a basic website, perhaps because there is clearly so much effort put into your excellent newsletter, which seems to be the backbone of this site. Take care to remove items from 2015 now that we are well into 2016. The expanded obituaries are lovely, and it is so nice that you provide links to poems or other resources as appropriate.

**Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org>

**Judges' Comments:**

Wow. What a website – great graphics all throughout, great mix of links from photos to commentary and so on. Lots of information, all packaged well and very readable. Easy to access and navigate. Only quibble is that some photos in the photo link are undersized, making faces difficult to see. Otherwise a great page.

This website reminds me too much of NYSUT's. So I wonder how much of the content is taken from the state federation. Of course, I could not access the member-only portion. On the public side, this is an easy-to-use website. What is clearly original content is extremely well done and timely. Please see comments under best writing for the history pieces. The commentary articles do not carry bylines or references so I am not clear who wrote those. They are very well done. Very nice photo galleries.

**Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** ROBS Website

**URL:** <http://www.robsny.org>

**Judges' Comments:**

This site makes great use of photos and has a vast amount of material that can be easily accessed. It's also innovative. For example, the photo history of the school building – from modest beginnings to today's modern building – is inviting. And sound hasn't been ignored either, as the audio link to the choir concert attests. If there is a flaw it's the lack of a specific link to alert retirees to what issues affect them and what they need to do about it. The "About" link gives a good summary of why the chapter was formed, including the need to keep members informed of current issues. Thus, a specific link would add value to this site.

I love the home feature of this website showing the evolution of several school buildings. I checked this website in March and April and it had the most up-to-date info under the announcement page. Well-written history in the "About Us" section and excellent links for more info. Of course the oral history project seemed to dominate.

## Best Blog – Class RII

**Local:** *Retiree Council 43*

**Category:** Best Blog

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 43

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/presidents-desk>

Judges' Comments:

One criticism of most blogs is that they aren't updated frequently enough. But not here. This president is right on top of what's happening. Yet the use of her photo every time creates a string of the same photo over and over again. It needs to be reduced in size, and the headline that says "From the desk of" etc., should be downsized too. In its place the topic of the blog should be featured in headline size.

I don't necessarily see this as a blog as comments are not allowed and it seems to be more like persuasive essays or editorials. They are well-written and insightful and update the membership.

## Best Use of Social Media – Class RII

**Local:** *Retiree Council 43*

**Category:** Best Use of Social Media

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Facebook

**URL:** <https://www.facebook.com/New-York-State-United-Teacher-Retirees-In-Florida-166355720080638/?ref=hl>

Judges' Comments:

Excellent posting, filled with news, graphic and photos. Very easy to access and very easy on the eyes. Good links. A very good job all around.

Very nice FB page. It generated its own original content the three times I visited as well as sharing links from others.

## Best Writing 1 – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** IMPORTANT NEWS FOR ALL RETIREES FROM JOAN AND NYSUT

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

**Issue Date:** Winter 2015

Judges' Comments:

An informative article on Silver Anniversary Conference with a nice mention of an opt-out advocate who spoke about the CORE curriculum. She could have been featured more to give the message more weight.

Excellent conference recap. The writer does a great job of not just saying a workshop was good, but also informing the reader of at least one item learned. This writer also does a great job of not assuming the readers know all background information. Great job.

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** From Your President

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

**Issue Date:** Article 1

Judges' Comments:

This is a very well done opinion article on how the factory model just doesn't work in education. Insightful and informative and persuasive. Could use some graphics like pull-out quotes to break up the type.

Interesting essay. This writer is skilled in carefully choosing repetition and metaphors. Vivid descriptions and concrete examples are used effectively. This entry would be stronger with a careful edit of the two concluding paragraphs and even the one before that. Sentences are overly long and points are repeated.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** From the President's Desk - This is What Democracy Looks Like

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

Judges' Comments:

This is a good call to action piece on NYSUT's Call Out Cuomo effort. It could be improved with a more developed theme. Instead of just a list of Cuomo's wrongs, a list of what to do would give the article more balance.

Excellent analysis and call to action. This writer is skilled in giving concrete examples to make her point, rather than rhetoric. Perhaps the only improvement could be using more active verbs. Say or demand or proclaim or shout is stronger than is saying, and so on.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** A Storm is Brewing!

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** Winter 2015

Judges' Comments:

A great article on the danger of a constitutional convention in New York, despite the push to have one. The author rightly notes that big-money interests can influence the convention to eliminate or erode basic rights contained in the present constitution, like the right to a free public education. Informed and informative, thoughtful and incisive. Should be must reading for all of NYSUT members. Could use some drop-out quotes to break up the type.

Very good persuasive essay that is difficult to read graphically. I applaud the larger text, but if that is why the margins are so extremely narrow how about compromise between the two? Again the writing is very good. It is logical, and answers all the questions about a constitutional convention. There are a few typos and perhaps missing words here or there. Did you mean a small minority **of the** well-funded could affect the result to have a convention? Very good use of questions and very good concluding paragraphs.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Alliance for Retired Americans Legislative Conference 2015

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2015

Judges' Comments:

A very good article on the how Medicare, Social Security and Social Security Disability programs are in peril in today's conservative atmosphere. The writer exhorts members to vote for candidates who will pledge to preserve these vital programs – a welcome and urgent message. Better graphics would have enhanced the article.

Very good conference recap. Switching between I and we became confusing, especially since the others who attended with you were not identified and there were no captions with the two photos. Why doesn't the US Congressional Rep from Illinois get a name? Overall, try to be more consistent with describing lawmakers.

Excellent way to lay out the themes of the conference and then how conference participants used those themes during lobbying. Why not include what the SS income cap is on wage earners right now? Missed opportunity to educate readers more on the issue, and if you could give the number you were reminded of on how many seniors rely on Medicaid it would make that sentence stronger as well.

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** The Committee of 100

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

Judges' Comments:

The author could never have imagined what would happen after he met with legislators in Albany and asked for their support of NYSUT's agenda. And that's what makes this a riveting read. As the author notes, some lawmakers were courteous and attentive but others were bored, including aides to Dean Skelos who was a "no show." It would later come out why Skelos wasn't interested – he had legal problems to worry about involving his son's "no show" jobs. This article expertly conveys how cynical some legislators can be when it comes to the public schools. Well done.

This entertaining take on a lobbying visit was a pleasure to read. This writer skillfully lets the union's stance on issues tell the story. Interesting to read about the non-visit to Skelos last March knowing about his legal issues. Perhaps you could have informed the reader about actions they can also take? That would have strengthened this entry.

**Local: Retiree Council 20**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** A New RC20 President! A First Council Newsletter

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 20 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Vol. 1 Issue 1

Judges' Comments:

This is a welcoming message from the new president. While it is always incumbent on a new leader to introduce him or herself and give a broad outline of goals, this format does not allow for a more thoughtful examination of issues and possible solutions.

Excellent introduction to yourself and what your goals are. Perhaps for a first newsletter you could have spelled out a bit more about the newsletter? Asked for specific contributions? Yes, you do write your goal is to listen to ideas and keep folks informed etc. It's tougher than folks realize to start something new. One good aspect, is you can reach for different expectations!

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Cuomo Baloney

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

Judges' Comments:

A concise look at what Cuomo "baloney" is doing to public education. Good points but they could have been developed more in depth.

I applaud the brevity in this essay. However, when you are brief it becomes most important to be clear. It's not his attitude, it's his proposals. I do think it would have been stronger with specific examples about how well students do. Better yet, the grades issued by Education Week, or other state rankings? Keep up the good work.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Retired

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** March/April 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is a poem about retirement. As good as it is, it comes from a published collection and, in fairness to the other entries, preference should be given to original work written expressly for the newsletter.

Just a lovely poem. Strong contender for a top award in creative writing. Creative way to compare/contrast how things can be retired from use now that it's safe to assume the writer has gained that title. Since a year is referenced in the first two segments, I looked for a year in the third. Beautiful images.

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** A Look Back at 2014 or How About Those Resolutions?

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** Jan - Feb 2015

Judges' Comments:

Everyone makes resolutions. But how many keep them? This article shows how the best hopes can be shattered in a year's time when one is anticipating that those in power will do the right thing. An original perspective that is well developed by the author. The use of boldface helps break up the page and catch the reader's eye.

Excellent way to set the tone for a coming year. One headline is enough for this essay. You don't need the subhead at all. This writer is skilled at condensing complex issues into understandable sentences by using specific examples. Perhaps instead of saying answers ... cannot occur in the part about medical issues might have been better changed to treatments ...cannot be developed or since the earlier example is the fight against Ebola why not even consider along that line and have struggles against ... Bravo on the examples in the tax policies section. Great conclusion (and I consider the hope for enthusiasm then acting together) all build toward those last three simple sentences.

**Local: *United University Professions - Retirees***

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Retiree pens book on 'flip side of genealogy'

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A good article on a retiree who self-published a book with an original look at genealogy. The writer's tips of self-publishing are valuable and could have been used as the general theme of the article, rather than focusing so much on promotion.

Excellent caption! It really sums up one aspect of entire essay in two sentences. In addition to sharing life stories, this writer also provides valuable advice about self-publishing. This is pleasant, easy to read and informative. Might I suggest the writer take on another essay about his presentations and perhaps what he learns from those who attend?

**Local: *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers***

**Category:** Best Writing 1

**Name of Entry:** Devine Intervention: A lofty look at retirement

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

Great layout. Great graphics. An insightful look at how politicians influence people, complete with lessons from history. Well done all around.

What an excellent graphic headline! This essay is a pleasure to read although it jumps from point to point and after discrediting one point, in the next paragraph validates it. I am not sure whether to be upset at politicians who try to scare us, or worry about the bleak picture that is painted of serious issues, or just give up because there is no one who can inspire a national movement. Excellent descriptions and vivid examples. As noted by the editor, this is a new feature and I strongly encourage the writer to keep at it.

## Best Writing 2 – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Know Your Benefits, "Your Most Valuable Benefit Could be in Danger

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

Judges' Comments:

A timely and important article on how a state constitutional convention could endanger entitlements including pension rights and civil service rights. A valuable service to members.

By now I have read so many essays about a constitutional convention, I did not think I could read another one. This writer proved me wrong. It is a skilled, persuasive essay that clearly spells out the issues and then also provides a specific strategy of supporting Vote Cope. That is one flaw. There are three different ways VOTE/COPE Vote/Cope and Vote Cope is listed. Make that consistent and it is perfect!

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** From Your President

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

**Issue Date:** Article 2

Judges' Comments:

An incisive look at varied issues like tax credits, Social Security, Medicare and more. Debunks the myths that Social Security is heading for bankruptcy. Could use graphics to break up the type.

This article takes on the whole world! It provides such valuable information, facts and concrete examples, but it takes far too long to get to them. Might I suggest the entire first paragraph is not needed? Why not start with your second graf asking "What gets you mad" and then just change they in the 4<sup>th</sup> sentence to politicians. This writer is skilled with repeating the "look no further" images. But all those clear sentences get lost in so many questions. The concluding paragraph about Election Day politics is excellent.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** From the President's Desk - Common Sense ....

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

Judges' Comments:

The author explores issues like teacher evaluation, Social Security, Medicare etc. and supports politicians who are fighting for the NYSUT agenda. Watch the semi-colons, though.

This is an excellent example of the writer taking on just a few issues, explaining them fully and in some cases providing possible solutions or strategies for members to do. Bravo. This entry would have been strengthened by providing specifics on how to continue the fight against the elimination of public education. At the very least, urge members to vote on school budgets.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Challenging Times for Public Education

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** April 2015

Judges' Comments:

A searing indictment of the Cuomo school aid proposal and a call for a "daytime army" of retirees to fight for public education. A good call to action article.

Excellent call to action. This writer provides a complete package to the reader. She clearly lays out a problem and provides a solution for the readers. It's refreshing to read writing with such purpose.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Earned Benefits and the Primaries/Elections

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is another warning on the dangers posed by conservative politicians to entitlements like Social Security. But what separates this article from others that discuss the same topic is a reference to Sen. Moynihan and his support for vouchers. That's puts the current debate in proper focus and makes this article all the more compelling.

This writer is skilled at tact and diplomacy. I hope her efforts to not upset Republicans work. Also, of course most union essays have a "United We Stand" approach to all issues. 'Twas refreshing to read an essay urging readers to be selfish on an issue. That message rang clear and true using far fewer words, sentences and paragraphs than other essays in this category.

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** President's Corner: Be Mindful of What You Wish For...Know the Facts

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

Judges' Comments:

This warning on the risks of a state constitutional convention is solidly written but needs some graphics to break up the type.

Interesting the publication title is Linkage and this entry links a president's message about the growth of the council with a column about a constitutional convention. The writer provides concrete examples and good descriptions. It is pleasant and easy to read. This entry would be stronger just by reordering several of the paragraphs about the constitutional convention. Start with the basics and then lead up to specifics. That way you can avoid starting with results of a poll when you haven't explained the topic yet.

**Local: Retiree Council 20**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Election Recap and More

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 20 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Vol. 1 Issue 1

**Judges' Comments:**

This article urges retirees to get out and vote and cites those politicians who have supported public education. But it is too brief and needs more specifics. Watch the typos.

This recap is refreshingly honest. I am curious how the writer knows only 1/3 of NYSUT members voted. Would that include absentee votes? I get the frustration this writer projects. It makes me wonder if a different approach should be used. Perhaps, because the writer emphasizes how much he does, members don't feel the need to do anything on their own? Perhaps the membership should be surveyed as to the reasons why they did not vote so that solutions could be developed.

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** A Message From President Louisa Eiermann: What I Learned in Buffalo

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

**Judges' Comments:**

A great rundown on issues ranging from state and local matters to a local facing dissolution. Packed with specifics but needs graphics.

I found it hard to believe this was the writer's first time reporting out about an RA. Excellent summary positions, which were so well-written I really wonder if the same writer wrote the last sentence of the intro? That overly long sentence should have been two; two spelling errors and then the words were able are repeated. Don't be discouraged as it was probably a busy time. Just be more careful.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** A Retirement Full of Rewarding and Productive Contributions to So Many

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2015

Judges' Comments:

Think retirement is all about days on the golf course or cruising? This article profiles two retirees who moved to New Mexico and are as active as ever – he as professor emeritus of biology and she as instructor in nursing. Active in the Rotary, these two seem busier than ever and very fulfilled. Good graphics and layout. Nice uplifting tone. Well done.

This essay is at its strongest giving excellent descriptions and vivid examples of the charitable work the writer and his wife do. I am exhausted just reading everything they do. It is especially helpful the writer provides facts about what this work means. It's one thing to help the sick and the poor. It's quite another to cut the childhood mortality rate by 80 %! I did find the intro confusing. Where is the writer a professor emeritus of Biology? Back at SCCC or in New Mexico? I also would like to know where A Park Above will be in New Mexico. (west of San Antonio is a rather large place ha ha!)

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** All Hands on Deck!

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** Mar-April 2015

Judges' Comments:

A call to action on student testing, charter schools and Cuomo budget. The call is to get involved, which is urgent, but this article would benefit from more details instead of a generalized approach.

In general this is a very clear and concise message to membership urging increased involvement and providing the strategies for that involvement. This entry would be strengthened by more specific examples or direction. For example, it's one thing to tell folks to write, call or email their lawmakers. With so much at stake, give a specific, such as that the proposed budget is unfair because it does not provide essential programs, equipment and staff to schools.

**Local:** *United University Professions - Retirees*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** 'Social Security Works' debunks myth that program is failing

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

Judges' Comments:

Great article on Social Security and the myth that it is financially doomed. Filled with facts and figures to back up the author's thesis. Very persuasive. Great graphics too.

Excellent book review and analysis rolled into one essay. The layout also helps the article by taking the information about the book's authors and separating it across the bottom with the book's logo as a graphic element. Writing is clear. Examples are specific and useful. Unfortunately for the authors, I feel no need to read their book, as this essay is so thorough.

**Local:** *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers*

**Category:** Best Writing 2

**Name of Entry:** Saranne Rap: A transparent view of issues; Classroom vs. Stateroom. HMMM!!

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2015

Judges' Comments:

This author clearly enjoys life after the classroom and boldly states her preference for cruising rather than teaching. Nice twist but the tone is breezy, almost dismissive of teaching. Good graphics and layout though.

A delightfully short essay that I am certain hits the funny bone of many retirees. This is fun and a pleasure to read as the writer compares and contrasts life in a classroom and life after. The conclusion is a perfect gem.

## Best Writing 3 – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Where Are They Now?

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

Judges' Comments:

Nice slice of life about a chance encounter with a former student and how the author got to meet the student's entire family. Good layout.

Quite the touching essay not about where colleagues are, but where students are! The intro is descriptive with vivid examples. I do wish one Russel story could have been shared. The conclusion takes on too much. This entry would have been strengthened if it could have circled back a bit more to seeing your life's work, just when I think there will be a sentence like that, the essay veers off into personal info about splitting time between Florida and New York and grandchildren. (Yes, that's important stuff to share too.)

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** From Your President

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

**Issue Date:** Article 3

Judges' Comments:

A well- researched, thoughtful and persuasive article on money and politics and how it all affects public education. Well-developed theme but needs graphics or pull-out quotes to break up the gray page.

If there were an award for best explanation of legal issues, this would get it. While it takes the writer some time to establish the points, this has serious value as not only is the Citizen United decision dissected and its implications clearly stated, so are those around agency fee and VOTE-COPE. For all its clarity and concrete examples, I was not sure what the writer means by leveling the playing field in the conclusion.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** A TEAM IN THE SCHOOLS AND A TEAM IN RETIREMENT

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2015

Judges' Comments:

A brief look at SRPs and how new rules require an SRP member on the executive board. Needs to be developed more – what are SRPs and how do that function in the schools? What do they contribute?

Kudos to this publication for really reaching out to the SRP membership to spell out their possibilities under a constitutional amendment. Here also is a case where the headline is improved by a subhed. The writer skillfully brings the conclusion of this article right back to the intro.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** End of year, not end of questions

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** June 2015

Judges' Comments:

A hard-hitting look at the testing craze and how it ill serves students and teachers. Effective but could be developed more.

Excellent headline that draws the reader into this short essay. This writer skillfully intersperses analysis with questions. It is a most effective accompaniment to the main article on the page.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Lessons from the Past

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** Jan/Feb 2015

Judges' Comments:

A good overview of the battles won in the past and the threat of court decisions that could wipe out those victories. However, there was no mention of the California case before the Supreme Court that could wipe out agency fees.

This essay has an apt headline as it seeks to remind readers of their struggles as well as compare them to what current teachers face now. This entry would be strengthened by more detail, even just the years the laws passed, or perhaps cite a reference that would allow the reader to find out more. Also since so much of the essay switches between hardships teachers in the past faced as well as the improvements, the conclusion rings hollow to say "We were in the classrooms at the right time in history. Perhaps, we can even say it was a golden era."

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Convention News 2015

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

Judges' Comments:

This is a wrap-up of convention news, which summarizes of issues and a list of speakers. It is informative but too generalized—needs to be developed more.

While this is a good recap of the convention, it would have been strengthened with specific examples about how to defend Social Security and Medicare. It appears you had plenty of space to expand on "The formal convention had its usual moments with heated discussions on resolutions. All healthy and an integral part of democracy." Perhaps of better use to your members might be what happened to specific resolutions on retiree concerns. Did members pass, reject or table?

**Local: Retiree Council 20**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** A Message from the President...

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 20 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Vol. 1 Issue 2

**Judges' Comments:**

This is more of an introduction to the newsletter than a writing sample as such, as it lists the contents of the latest issue in summary form. Punctuation needs watching.

Wonderful follow-up to your first column. You did bury the lead! Any info that your newsletter provides that results in a substantial amount of money to a member should be heralded. Keep at it! Realize you are amidst fierce competition.

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** A Message From Co-President Michael Eiermann: Will we learn from History?

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

**Judges' Comments:**

A very good examination of the fraying of the social safety net that has evolved over the last 100 years, with quotes and comparisons to make a compelling case for fighting to preserve hard won rights against the robber barons of today.

This is a strong contender for best article about a social justice issue. This writer clearly draws the connections between struggles of years ago with today. He skillfully does exactly what his opening sentence promises, to "see happenings in terms of their historical perspective," but also issues a call to action for his readers. Evidence and studies are well referenced. Excellent job.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Remembering the "Aha Moments of Teaching"

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Jan/Feb 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This is a memoir of teaching days at FIT and later teaching abroad. It lacks focus other than to recap in almost a resume style a satisfying career. Lack of photos is a drawback for an article that refers to foreign locales.

I applaud this author for trying to be concise with such a huge topic. This was one case where I wished for concrete examples or more descriptions, or even just a few years thrown in. Upon retiring from designing IN WHAT YEAR, I began teaching...would help ground the reader, especially since this is such a long and varied career. When did the writer retire from FIT? When did she go to IESC? Sounds like the writer has many more experiences to share.

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** From the President's Desk ... A War Correspondent's Report

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** Mar-April 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This is a solid call to action to fight the Cuomo budget and policies on education. Use of the war correspondent metaphor is effective but more detailed analysis would enhance the message.

This is very similar to All Hands On Deck but provides all the details and concrete examples I needed there. Excellent persuasive article. Excellent suggestions. Be very careful with typos when referring to websites! I was confused why the point size kept getting smaller. The conclusion is powerful, but the type size made it appear inconsequential.

**Local: *United University Professions - Retirees***

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** Defending SUNY and our earned benefits

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

Very good article on how retirees are targeted everywhere in today's world, from phone scams to politicians seeking to cut university funds. Not a "sky is falling" alarm but rather a cogent recitation to make a persuasive case for retirees to speak up to preserve SUNY benefits, whether in person, in Albany, or by the written word. Good layout, good graphic.

A well-reasoned and thoughtful essay for the most part. Overall it is well written. However, the extra "the" in the first sentence is glaring and then there are sentences that just don't make sense in the in the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph. Realize the first sentence makes it sound like the state tries to ensure adequate funding for the public university. The second sentence is so overly long it is confusing. Meanwhile the description of what agency fee means in the last sentence of that paragraph is far too simple. After that the essay gets right back on track. Excellent last three paragraphs.

**Local: *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers***

**Category:** Best Writing 3

**Name of Entry:** "We're at War" in New York

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** Jan/Feb 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A hard-hitting broadside against the Cuomo education budget that holds school aid hostage to "reforms." It could have been stronger if there were facts to refute the "good money after bad" rant by Cuomo. Good layout and photos.

This is a strong contender for best writing. Clear and concise writing is backed up by well-referenced sources. Analysis is on point. Conclusion is a clear call to action. Stunning in its simplicity. Kudos on a great job.

## Best Writing 4 – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** HHHART... On The Road

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

Judges' Comments:

This recap of a 15-day land and river cruise on the Rhone and Saone rivers is interesting but brief and matter of fact. Could have been improved with more details.

**Judge 2:** While this is a nice update for other retirees, I wanted more description and examples like what the writer explains about Roman settlements being 18 miles apart because that is what a soldier could walk in a day. The paragraph about two trips to Colorado brings up questions (like why the 4 ½ hour wait in line for Customer Relations?)

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** From Your President

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

**Issue Date:** Article 4

Judges' Comments:

A well-developed article on school funding and Cuomo's "blame the teacher" mantra. Rich with details. Makes solid points. The layout is gray, though, and could use graphics such as a pull-out quote or two.

This long essay provides exhaustive details of a wide variety of challenges. It is exhausting! Thank goodness the conclusion provides the readers with as much detail on "a chance to make a difference."

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Did You Know Your Health Insurance Could be Changed?

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

**Issue Date:** June/July 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A timely and important warning that school districts looking to save money might target retiree' health insurance benefits. Good information and tips on what to do if targeted, but the format is more like a brief memo when this topic deserves a full article.

Here is exactly the type of writing representatives to conferences, workshops should provide to members. Even if, as is done here, the writer refers to other articles for more information. Sources are well-referenced for those members who might have questions. Great job.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Bernie Rudberg speaks of railroads for RC13

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** June 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A recap of a speech by a retiree with long roots in the railroads of yesteryear and today, and who was instrumental in restoring Hopewell Junction Train Depot. Lots of facts and photos to round out what was surely one of the more interesting retiree meetings of the year.

Very nice feature story about a retiree's interest in railroads. This writer skillfully weaves in basic information throughout the story. Too often historical photos just don't contain much information but these are great especially combined with additional information in the article. It would have strengthened this entry if those could have been written as captions.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** A New War Cry

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** May/June 2015

Judges' Comments:

This article, based on a rally at SUNY Purchase, features comments on charter schools, student testing and more by Diane Ravitch. Her best point – that testing should be diagnostic – is properly emphasized. Her overall indictment of today's Common Core craze is also welcome. Could use a photo to break up page, especially since Ravitch speech was so rousing.

This is an excellent report of a rally to support public education. Great descriptions and concrete examples paint a vivid picture of the event. It's laudable for the retiree publication to devote so much attention to struggles for the in-service members. Rewording the sentence about little media coverage could have strengthened this entry.

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Happy 50th Birthday to Medicare

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

Judges' Comments:

This article focuses on Medicare's success over five decades, which is laudatory, but makes no mention of the current political atmosphere that could threaten the program's future—a point that should be made whenever Medicare is the topic.

This writer has a fun way of presenting rather dry and even boring information. Using a more active voice could strengthen this entry. I know that sounds hard in the past tense, but see how "To meet this problem, the Administration and Congress decided the main thrust should use social insurance" is stronger? (and uses fewer words too.)

**Local: Retiree Council 20**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Political Action-State Budget

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 20 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Vol. 1 Issue 2

**Judges' Comments:**

This recap of the state school aid package is informative and enlightening, but very brief. The point about raising teacher evaluations to 50% of students' test scores is troublesome and deserves a more thorough examination.

An effective recap of not just what was approved in the budget, but what members did to make a difference. This writer knows readers will have gotten much more specific detail about specific aid increases for specific districts from mainstream media and thus chooses to provide more analysis. Good work.

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** A Message From President Louisa Eiermann: Where to Start...

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

**Judges' Comments:**

Where to Start is a perfect headline for this article, which is really a bullet list of topics in no particular order. It could be improved by highlighting a few important topics and developing them more.

I applaud this writer's honesty about how difficult it can be to really communicate a great deal of information in a clear manner. So she does what works for her and "put items in bullet form, not necessarily in order of importance."

You might think the following collection of facts, summaries and references would read oddly, but I found it worked. In a few cases the writer directly analyzes an issue, but there is a refreshing lack of being told what to think. The conclusion is persuasive of course and ends with a strong series of strategies for the reader to follow. Good job.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Movies Now and Then, Three Madame Bovary Films

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** July/August 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This is a lengthy review of various films with Madame Bovary as the topic. Interesting but the author leaves it to the reader to decide which film is the best, even though many readers might not have seen any of them. It could be improved if the writer would turn critic and give her assessment of each version and reasons why one is superior to the other.

How refreshing to read a review of films that have nothing to do with education, or education reform, or testing, or curriculum, or Social Security, Medicare, pensions and health insurance. The writer informs the reader as to the historical significance and then compares four film versions. Entertaining and a pleasure to read.

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Your Best Friend's Birthday Celebration

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** Nov - Dec 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A birthday celebration for Medicare. The writer rightly lauds the program but also wisely warns that its future is in peril given today's conservative onslaught against entitlements.

Witty and creative approach to informing readers about Medicare. The writer could have extended the puns. For example, I first met my soon to be best friend when Medicare was signed into law... and Medicare today is the most popular of my friends ... and But my friend has detractors.

**Local: *United University Professions - Retirees***

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** What do Americans think about economic inequality?

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This is a well-done think piece on what Americans really think about economic equality, or rather inequality. Some eye-opening facts and figures that show a majority of Americans think only a few at the top of the economic ladder can get ahead. Also, significantly, public support for unions is on the rise. Good layout and photo. Very well done overall.

This essay does a great job bringing together poll results to explore the discussion about economic inequality. The writer notes the differences between polling companies far better than most mainstream media. This essay tries to increase the readers understanding in depth as well as breadth. The conclusion is rather unsatisfying, as all of the sudden the 2016 election is brought up.

**Local: *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers***

**Category:** Best Writing 4

**Name of Entry:** Peyton Meyer: Liver Transplant Superhero

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A touching article about a sick youngster who received part of his mom's liver and is on the mend. Nice photo and nice package overall.

I considered all three of the updates, not just the one article listed. What an endearing photo! It takes courage to go public with a family crisis such as this. Congratulations on providing details and specific examples without dwelling on the negatives. Very good work and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

## Best Writing 5 – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** HHHART Trip to Wave Hill

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

Judges' Comments:

A moving tribute to a perfectionist. Good mix of type and photos. Well done all around.

Touching tribute. Recollections like this one are a perfect example of the best in newsletters. They provide much more of the human element than a newspaper. The writer skillfully mentions the lasting imprint Mr. Meehan left on the district and then lovingly details this art educator's contributions. Fine work.

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** "O Fortuna, velut luna, statu variabilis"

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

Judges' Comments:

This is an uplifting article about a down topic – namely the author's diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. The writer takes the reader along on his roller coaster of emotions and the grueling days of treatment, yet he also finds opportunities to lighten the burden with humor. Very well done.

This is a strong contender for a top award. Essays about being diagnosed with cancer abound. The honest and direct simplicity of this writer is refreshing. Descriptions are vivid. Explaining PC Physician or DAISY award could have strengthened the entry. Of course EKG is common enough. The writer also skillfully refers to his intro in his conclusion.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** From the President's Desk ... ALL Hands On Deck!

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

**Issue Date:** Feb 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A call to action to take on Cuomo for holding students hostage to his school aid proposal. Good layout, inviting package. Could use more facts on what can happen when funds are cut, such as layoffs and dropped programs.

Another entry has the exact same headline! There is so much good in this essay: vivid descriptions, logical reasoning, specific strategies, and logical conclusions. However the few errors distract from an otherwise very good essay. Consider how "Enemies of public education, the foundation of our democracy, are ready to destroy the future of our children and our country" is stronger than what was submitted. Percent should be one word the way it is used. Excellent specific strategies for members to use.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Retirees need to support active teachers in battle with Albany

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** April 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A call to action to be soldiers in the battle against Cuomo, but it is not limited to just protesting cuts in school aid. The writer also warns of the dangers posed by a constitutional convention and the possible loss of pension benefits. Well written but the page could use a more attractive layout.

Short and to the point. This writer uses the right amount of reasoning balanced with evidence and a touch of cajoling in this persuasive essay. Very nice work.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Musings of a Retiree

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** July/August 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

Excellent column of student testing. The writer doesn't just rail against the test but instead cites such giants and Piaget, Montessori and Dewey to make the case. Persuasive and informative. Excellent analysis.

This writer clearly shares her compassion for in-service teachers. The varying sentence structure and excellent descriptions make this a pleasure to read. The entry could have been strengthened with providing a timeline for several of the examples. A very strong conclusion skillfully links back to the intro as well as posing excellent questions for the reader to consider.

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** President's Corner: A Call to Arms: Volunteering to Help In-Service Locals Educate the Public on Opt-Out

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

**Judges' Comments:**

This column on the opt-out movement is helpful but it is more about distribution plans for a flyer than an in-depth analysis. Nicely packaged though.

Excellent example of the writer reporting out several issues but delving deeply into just one of them. What happens is readers get the specific information they need and strategies to help. Conclusion shows great skill.

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** A Message From Co-President Michael Eiermann: Entitlements

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

**Judges' Comments:**

Finally, a column of how Washington politicians robbed the Social Security trust fund to fund past budget shortfall, and gave worthless IOUs in return for the cash. As the author notes, Social Security isn't in financial peril as a program, it's been the victim of Washington sleight of hand, and union members – indeed anyone on Social Security – should speak out about this sham. Very well done.

I applaud this writer for taking on such a complex topic. In general, this essay does a good job with well-referenced sources and complete details. A much shorter intro would strengthen this entry. I don't think the reader needs four examples of the positive connotations of entitlements. Also the sentence about our own pension system being affected could have been clarified. Perhaps add the year 2008-09 to when the fund lost a third of its value. I'm glad the author promises another essay about how the system can be funded beyond 2034 and doesn't try to do too much in one stint of writing.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Scary Things are Happening to Pensions in Illinois

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** May/June 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

A timely warning on what can happen to hard-earned pensions if state politicians are not held accountable, as witnessed in Illinois. Also a warning on what could happen at a constitutional convention. This is a short piece but an effective one, as the example of Illinois makes the case for watchfulness in New York.

A chilling tale indeed. This writer does an excellent job explaining not just what is going on in Illinois but why anyone in New York should care. This entry would be strengthened with the facts that the state Comptroller controls pensions in New York state, not the legislature. More importantly this is a missed opportunity to bring up the looming constitutional convention ballot question.

**Local: *Retiree Council 7***

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** From the President's Desk ...

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** July - Aug 2015

Judges' Comments:

This article is more of a news item about scholarship winners. It could use sharper photos to accompany it.

This entry is confusing. From The President's Desk is a photo and then an editor's note that says the president's column will resume in the next issue. If I am to judge the photo, the subjects are extremely dark because of the light coming in from the windows. A sign proclaiming Reclaim the Joy can be seen. The photo caption gives me little information.

**Local: *United University Professions - Retirees***

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** Summer jobs ain't what they used to be

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

Judges' Comments:

A nice look back at the summer jobs available in an earlier era and how they provided invaluable life lessons. It also comes with a warning that just as those jobs were phased out by technology, jobs for pros might someday face the same fate. Well written, well reasoned, well presented.

What an entertaining essay that also sneaks in perspectives on social justice, economic equality and outsourcing. Excellent transitions help this essay build to a strong conclusion. This is a strong contender for a top writing award.

**Local:** *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers*

**Category:** Best Writing 5

**Name of Entry:** WCT Luncheon: facts, fun, friends, food

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** May/June 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is a summary of a luncheon and what speakers had to say. The number of photos overwhelms the text. The presentation could be improved with fewer photos and more developed topics.

Excellent headline. This is a fun recap of your meeting. It provides details for those who couldn't attend. Photos are lively and feature excellent captions. There are nice touches to this writing but you are amidst fierce competition in this category.

## General Excellence – Class RIII

**Local:** *Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** the HHHART BEAT

**Issue Date:** Summer 2015

Judges' Comments:

This is a well-done tribute to a perfectionist. Nice layout too. However the inside layout and content could be improved.

Please see comments under best writing for articles submitted. This publication truly shows an active and caring membership, united in two-way communication. Very nice to run the letters in your Keep In Touch column. I love how every inch is used. Yes, this publication could be strengthened with a "cleaner" look. See page 9 for example. I can't tell what is the most important thing on that page. My eye is drawn to the sunny graphic and Welcome summer. Mark your calendar for the Wednesday Sept. 9 fall luncheon is on the page twice, top right and bottom right.

**Local:** *Retiree Council 10*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS

**Issue Date:** Issue 5 May-June 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry contains excellent content, not the least of which is the Golden commentary. However, graphics are sorely missing.

Attractive layout. Excellent travel and social calendar. The photos on page 3 are a tad dark but the captions are wonderful. I love that you put in Albany's average temperature for March. The AQE press release was provided and is not original content. I hope you run pictures of the Joy Bears workshop and great work on explaining your scholarship process. This is a very good publication committed to communication with the members.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** THE OUTLOOK

**Issue Date:** June - July 2015

Judges' Comments:

The cover spread on an award winner. However, the inside content is on the thin side and the pages are gray.

Please see comments under best writing for article submitted. Excellent article about Gioia Ottaviano. Such vivid descriptions! President's message provides good information about why retirees need to know about ALEC and the impact this group can have on lawmakers. That article would have been stronger if an example of what retired Americans are capable of would have been provided. Interesting to group all the health news on page 3. All of these articles are well written and full of helpful information. The back page uses every inch considering it also must allow for mailing. This publication gets a lot of information into just four pages.

**Local: Retiree Council 13**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** MID HUDSON BRIDGES

**Issue Date:** June 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry contains good coverage of NYSUT president speech and an interesting feature article on railroads told by an old time buff. Content wise, this entry is informative and interesting. However, the photos accompanying the railroad article are sized too small, most likely because of the number used. Fewer photos would have allowed a more appealing page layout.

Please see comments under best writing for articles submitted. Attractive cover. What a great masthead. The news article about Magee speech does a very good job trying to capture all the topics covered. (This article is extremely similar to one that ran in WCRT's Post Script. If they ran it first you should have credited them. The Legislative update gives a confusing wrap-up of the state budget and then notes the outstanding issues that will be addressed with the legislature returns April 21. (The publication is dated June.) Good summaries on federal legislation is offered and an appropriate call to action about voting. If Pete McMahon is NYSUT's retiree of the year for the whole state, shouldn't that warrant a bit more info? It was unclear when or where he was honored. I understand you want to include prior community service award winners, but it kind of means Cathy Berger is lost in the crowd. Chapter Chats on the back mailing pages is a great way to really pack in a lot of info from across your region. Although I didn't quite get the reference "NYSUT Pres. broke bread with us. Where were you?" Was the meeting not well attended? That could be insulting to those who were there.

**Local: Retiree Council 15/16 Westchester/Putnam**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Senior Class

**Issue Date:** May/June 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry is informative but it could use more content and graphics to break up gray pages.

Please see comments under best writing for A New War Cry. This publication is easy to read. Love the headline for your travel programs "Get Up and Go with the NYSUT Retirees" is fun. Touching tribute to Al Graham on page 3 that could have been strengthened with perhaps a quote from his column. Information on the rest of the page is attractively grouped, although perhaps the two different sections on Medicare could have been explained better. The back page tries to make use of every inch. Keep up the good work.

**Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** LINKAGE

**Issue Date:** February 2015

Judges' Comments:

No Problem with photos here – there are plenty. However, they are generally undersized, and the content could be increased.

This publication provides basic information to its members; providing context and analysis would strengthen it. Explain what the resolutions process means. Very nice photo and caption about Kathleen Lyons but I would think getting an AFT 50 year Living the Legacy Award would deserve more than a caption. The Q and A about retiree councils is informative. The tenure support article gives a lot of space explaining what tenure is not and repeats arguments that there are “scores of thousands of incompetent teachers in the schools of this state and nation.” Coverage on your mailing page about the November meeting is much better than coverage of the regional conference because actual information is worked into the captions.

**Local: Retiree Council 20**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 20 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Vol. 1 Issue 1

Judges' Comments:

This entry is informative but it needs more content and better layout to break up gray pages.

Please see comments under best writing for articles submitted on front page and election recap. As a first-ever publication, you got to just put out a publication with no expectations. That can be a scary thing. Excellent job at trying to communicate with members for the first time. This publication sets a great tone of two-way communication with its members. Excellent explanation of the AFT Living the Legacy award. Great Know your benefits column combined with the Medicare information as well as the pension info on the mailing page. Keep at it.

**Local: Retiree Council 21**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** Spotlight 21

**Issue Date:** March/April 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry has interesting content, but the reader wants more. The pages are gray and could use a more appealing layout.

Please see comments under best writing for Cuomo baloney. I take it this is a later version of the Where to Start President's message and this is more effective. Clearly written. The bulleted points work well. Excellent to box out that info about how members can find out what their district has lost in state aid and then shares specific strategies with members. Overall the publication is easy to read. Information is grouped well. The news article about the rally is an excellent recap. Well-referenced, clear and concise language. Information boxes do the job, although might want to consider increasing the point size of the type. The back page does a great job of providing info as well as allow for mailing.

**Local: Retiree Council 39**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** NYSUT Retiree Council 39 Newsletter

**Issue Date:** Nov./Dec. 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry features a long review of the movie Humble and a cover piece warning of the peril of holding a constitutional convention. There are good photos and graphics.

Newsy publication. Front page is attractive and the caption under DiNapoli is an excellent example of providing extra info for readers. Be aware when you repeat yourself too much -- caption under the three officers is so similar to the headlines, which is similar to the lead paragraph. This publication almost falls into the trap of "we got a lot of information" but at least it refers the reader where to go to get more info. The article on 2017 is an extremely good example of giving the reader a reason why to oppose the constitutional convention other than an attack on pensions. Please see comments under best writing for the movies column. This is a different column. This writer is clearly skilled at bringing new perspectives to movies. Page 3 has lots of useful information for members. The cartoon seems out of place as it implies the White House wants to take a wrecking ball to social security. I thought it was Congress and more specifically those in Congress financed by big business. This page could be improved with a bit more info in the bullet points about ALEC. Which Education Task Force has voted? How would the academic bill of rights prevent higher education faculty from using their professional judgment? Some instances refer to states adopting ALEC's bill and then two instances have ALEC adopting legislation in Indiana and Florida. Another shining example of a back page with info, as well as allowing for address labels. Smart way to combine a plea for contributions with address change and the mailbox graphic all in one spot. Could the dues contribution box have a larger font? Or at least provide a bit more space for folks to write?

**Local: Retiree Council 44**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** BUFFALO RETIREE

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry contains a good column on the dangers of a constitutional convention as well as a profile of a NYSUT officer. The content is interesting but the pages are gray.

Newsy publication that is easy to read graphically. Very good president's message on the front page. I like how it specifically brings up an issue and then relates it to how a constitutional convention could impact NY's retirees. It could be stronger with another line providing a strategy on how to "oppose any thought." Well-written profile on a state officer as it does more than just provide basic info. Although something is amiss in the last sentence of the third to last paragraph. Perhaps you meant, "avoid" instead of "meet?" Nice photos from the luncheon. Could you somehow have worked in captions? It seems like you have a large retiree council but perhaps everyone knows those folks. That is one a complete list of information for your celebration luncheon! Even down to when checks will be cashed. You really know what you are doing! Also, creative way to run the NYSUT ad as well as to allow for mailing on the back page. Keep up the good work!

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** THE CENTRAL NEW YORKER

**Issue Date:** Sept - Oct 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

Very attractive layout that enhances the content, which includes a State Fair gathering that featured Call Out Cuomo T-shirts and an informative article on the tax cap inside. It could use more content, however.

Interesting and overall, an easy to read publication. Be careful repeating yourself. Look at the first paragraph of your lead story. By taking out "On the opening day of the NYS Fair" you would have had space to add info about the conversation Chetney had with Hochul over lunch. Remember to use italics when needed. Running an extremely long paragraph in all italics can be harder to read. Love the Welcome new retirees graphic. Excellent president's message that gives specific concrete details, examples and strategies. I like how much of the information is presented in boxes. Could you run a sample of what your RC7 shirt would look like? Your graphic reproduction is excellent. As with another council, creative way to run the NYSUT ad as well as to allow for mailing on the back page. Don't know which of you thought of it first, but if something works, copy it! Kudos on a good job.

**Local:** *United Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter #2*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** UFT RTC RETIREE

**Issue Date:** September 2015

Judges' Comments:

Good substantive content with articles on Social Security, Medicare and more and an excellent package of photos. All around solid.

Excellent publication and a strong contender for a top award. Love the graphic accompanying Congress Watch. Well-referenced article. Good summaries of much larger articles. Excellent "Message from Tom." Having read a number of these articles on Friedrichs, perhaps this is the best explanation of what agency fee really is. It also provides excellent reminders of this specific local's experience with a dues checkoff. The concluding paragraphs provide an excellent summary as well as an admonition about the 2016 election. Nice package of the ARA legislative conference. Creative way of group Medicare, Social Security and Voting rights all in a month of anniversaries. Perhaps you could have noted to see photo on back page for the SS anniversary? The only flaw in this publication? It's not clear why there is a photo of Nina Tribble on the back page. Keep up the great work.

**Local: *United University Professions - Retirees***

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** The Active Retiree

**Issue Date:** Fall 2015

**Judges' Comments:**

This entry is an example of general excellence. It has a rich mix of content that is well balanced on topics and the layout is inviting throughout. A long article on a conference of active members provides valuable information. The writing is lucid, thoughtful and perceptive.

Excellent publication and a strong contender for the top award. This publication must receive professional assistance and it shows. Perhaps the best cover submitted of all retiree and in-service entries. Since all of the other headlines are stellar I have to ask what happened on page four? How about even Senior Action Council confers on state, federal issues as a better headline since page eight got the other option for a better headline on a conference. Photos are excellent and most even have credits. Love the Big Pharm spells big trouble package. What an exhaustive report of the minutes of the COARM meeting. I am torn about the decision behind running minutes versus a report that includes analysis, although the report started to do that with discussion of July 16 report. Be careful repeating info: headline is Proposals for changes to retiree structure. A paragraph before the article notes, The proposed article that follows is based on some suggestions I made at the COARM summer 2015 retreat ... and then the first sentence of article is At the COARM leadership retreat this summer, I presented two potential changes for retirees to the UUP Constitution. Love the regional meetings recaps although I don't understand the monthly challenges graphic on page 13. Great job.

**Local:** *Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers*

**Category:** General Excellence

**Publication/Website:** PostScript

**Issue Date:** May/June 2015

Judges' Comments:

This entry features lots of photos of a luncheon and featured speakers. There's no shortage of photos, but there are too many, which makes for a busy layout. The content consists of only the luncheon article.

Coverage of Magee speech is thorough and persuasive. Confusing why photo of Alice Backer conducting elections is included in that package. Probably just an oversight. Hey, this is a very similar article as what ran in the June issue of Mid-Hudson Bridges. Who ran it first? Because the second one to run it should have credited where they took it from. Memorial to James Kidder is an interesting combination of an obituary and tribute. Since the publication gives it so much space, I had thought Mr. Kidder was a union officer, or committee chair. Interesting there was no note of union activity. I applaud you for doing this, but note you need to do this for all members who die or you could set yourself up for some hefty criticism.

## Best Website – Class RIII

**Local: Retiree Council 10**

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** RC 10 SKYLINE NEWS Website

**URL:** <http://rc10.ny.aft.org>

Judges' Comments:

Very accessible, easy to navigate, up to date and visually appealing. Only drawback is in the Take Action link, where choices are skimpy.

This website follow's AFT's format. I was able to access all areas of this website EXCEPT reading more about the Joy Bear project. Overall the site is easy to use and makes a great deal of sense. Excellent article about scholarship award winners. It is far more than just a listing with names and where they are from. Especially touching is a memorial site under the Membership section. Applaud this investment in time and energy. Has this been honored before? The memorial to victims of school tragedies also notes colleagues who died in service. Many while protecting others. Exceptionally well-done section of this website. The news stream is entirely from NYSUT.

This website could be improved by updating a number of areas on the site. Kathleen Donahue is still mentioned as a vice president under retiree list serve article. In mid-April the Travel and Social update is from February.

**Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Website

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 12 Website

**URL:** [RC12.ny.aft.org](http://RC12.ny.aft.org)

Judges' Comments:

Follows the pattern of other website in ease of access and navigation. Good use of photos and good content. Links are helpful, including the Take Action link.

This website follows the AFT format. It adds some original content, mainly with photos and of course it's newsletter. I was not able to access the minutes under the News section—probably password protected, as it should be. This website could be improved by adding content to the photos on the home page and updating sections.

**Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Website:

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 7 Website

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org>

Judges' Comments:

An eye-catching home page with a great graphic comparing hourly wages for CEOs with the \$15 minimum wage sought in NY. More valuable information as you scroll down, and the side links take the visitor to targeted sites of interest. An original layout that pleases the eye.

This website does NOT follow AFT's format, which frankly gave it a fresh feel having seen two in a row that do. The site is easy to navigate and makes sense. The home page gives news in a descending order. Then when I went to the News section there was nothing there. The about us section is EXCELLENT (and please note I rarely use all caps.) What a welcoming intro and then the brief history is a class act. Membership section is clear and VOTE-COPE article is well written. All the rest of the sections are essentially links to other organizations. The Contact Us page is very well done, giving all pertinent information in one spot.

This website could be improved by updating: The calendar is from 2014-15. Luncheons section starts with Sept. 2015. Delete all those that are over so it's much easier to get to the April and May luncheons. Trips are all from 2015. I can't tell when the Kudos awards were given. All the rest of the sections are essentially links to other organizations. The Contact Us page is very well done, giving all pertinent information in one spot.

## Best Use of Social Media – Class RIII

**Local:** *Retiree Council 7*

**Category:** Best Use of Social Media

**Publication/Website:** Retiree Council 7 Facebook

**URL:** [www.facebook.com/nysutretireecouncil7](http://www.facebook.com/nysutretireecouncil7)

Judges' Comments:

A very active site with a nice mix of retiree news and the ongoing issues revolving around today's teachers/students. Updated fairly regularly with photos and news items, and an occasional video, along with important upcoming events. Well done.

I applaud this council for being on Facebook. Photos on the gallery are excellent. Most of the updates come from the council's newsletter, NYSUT or AFT. This page could be improved by active writing. Seeks is stronger than is seeking. Will arrive is stronger than will be arriving. Or better yet: Your newsletter is in the mail. Keep at it. Why not post some labor history every once in a while in the form of asking your members if they remember when? Keep at it!