

THE RETIREE NEWSLETTER

Summer 2005

I. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN: IRWIN YELLOWITZ: I want to thank Jack Judd, the Vice-Chairman of the Chapter, for conducting the business meeting and luncheon on June 13, and for preparing this Newsletter in its entirety. I was away on vacation, and Jack admirably took care of my duties as he has in the past. The depth of leadership is a strength in this Chapter. For more details on the work of your leaders, please see the conclusion of the end-of-the year report below. My personal thanks go to all those who have worked so fruitfully on your behalf. I also want to remind you that this is an open Chapter. If you would like to become more involved in our activities, please let me know. You can reach me at iyellowitz@aol.com or by mail c/o Linda Slifkin at the PSC.

A. GREETINGS: Jack Judd, Vice-Chairman of the Retirees Chapter, offered greetings to the assembled group gathered at the end-of-the-year meeting held on June 13, at John Jay College. He recognized Carroll Felleman, Chairman of the Florida Branch of the Retirees, and thanked the members of the PSC staff who have worked throughout the year to support the work of the Retirees Chapter: Clarissa Weiss, Director, Pension and Welfare Benefits, and Linda Slifkin and Christina Ingoglia, PSC staff members.

B. NEW RETIREES: Some 132 individuals have retired from the University since June, 2004. Jack then introduced fifteen new retirees, who had signified attendance at the meeting, by asking the following to be recognized:

Anita Wenden, Bernard Sohmer, Bruce Sanford, Steve Leberstein, Sue Kimbrough, Genevieve Mullin, Loraine Ferguson, Charles Lindner, Manuel Pérez, John P. Martin, Patricia E. Maher, Martin Spergel, Maria Reid, Gary Popkin.

All of the 132 recent retirees will receive certificates congratulating them upon their retirement.

C. PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING TWO OPTIONAL HEALTH PLANS:

Peter Jonas, a member of the Executive Committee, and Miriam Balmuth, a Chapter member, prepared a preliminary questionnaire seeking responses from the audience members as to what experiences the retirees may have had in utilizing either one or both of the following two optional health plans: The Catastrophic Medical Plan, the Long Term Care plan. The attendees were asked to fill out the forms by responding to such questions as to whether they had joined a plan, remained in the plan, whether they had an occasion to call upon the plan, and their overall characterization of the plan or plans that may have been utilized.

On the basis of the feedback received from this pilot questionnaire, a final version will be prepared for distribution to all our members.

D. THE END-OF-THE-YEAR REPORT: JACK JUDD

The PSC Retirees Chapter, numbering over 2,200 members, comprises the largest chapter in the PSC. As a group, we have consistently recognized the need to act on many governmental, political and local health issues relating to retirees. Under the former dynamic leadership of Larry Kaplan, Chairman Emeritus, and the current Chair, Irwin Yellowitz, we have actively participated on many different fronts on behalf of the retirees. In the process, we have been, and continue to be, involved in issues on the federal, state, municipal, university-wide, national, state and local union levels and, internally, within our own chapter.

There was nothing more urgent on the national level than the presidential election. We strove to achieve a victory for John Kerry. Petitions were circulated and signed, we placed telephone calls, canvassed for votes here in NY, and in other venues, but we did not bring the desired results. Almost immediately after the ballots were counted, the Bush program kicked in with the move to radically alter Social Security. We mustered our forces to block the efforts to "privatize" the system. Through the careful analyses prepared by Larry Kaplan, and which he presented monthly to our members, you were kept well aware of the pitfalls that may await current retirees, along with those about to join our ranks, as well as those in future generations who would suffer significant cuts under the proposed modifications. The battle against "privatization" is still on, and we cannot become complacent about this major Bush effort.

As part of the effort to keep you aware of the issues concerning "privatization" of Social Security, Peter Jonas, a member of the Executive Committee, arranged that a video prepared by NYSUT on Social Security be displayed during the breakfast hour this morning, and which will be shown again at the luncheon.

We are also well aware of the shortcomings of the new Medicare Law, instituting a Medicare "Part D" relating to prescription drug coverage. Larry Morgan, Executive Director of the Welfare Fund, will speak in a few minutes on the impact "Part D" will have on the Welfare Fund, and its impact on you, as individuals.

I do not believe that there is anyone in the room who is not aware of the continuing effort on the part of the PSC leadership to acquire a new contract. Any new contract with the University, which has to be signed off by the mayor and the state legislature, has a direct bearing upon us. Will there be adequate funds allotted for Welfare Fund benefits? A one shot infusion of financial aid will not suffice. We need a long-term commitment to the Welfare Fund. Therefore, we have been in the forefront of various campaigns seeking to obtain a positive movement on a contract that will protect current benefits, and, hopefully, to enhance them. That struggle, too, continues.

Along with such efforts, we have lobbied in Albany for enhanced monetary commitments on the part of the legislature to increase full time faculty, to improve working conditions, and to help maintain the City University as a leading institution of higher learning.

Health issues are high on our agenda. We are active in national, state and local organizations, e.g., ARA, NYCARA, Rekindling Reform, and several other organizations, outside of the PSC and within the PSC, who seek a national health plan that would cover all workers and non-workers throughout the country. Through our Newsletter we try to keep members informed of the latest information concerning health issues, from the national to the personal levels.

I will now offer a list of those of our members who are actively engaged in ongoing endeavors on our behalf in a myriad of activities.

PSC Committees:

Elections: Bob Wurman, Ed Alterman, Jack Judd
Grievance Policy: Bob Wurman, Jim Perlstein
Health Care: Francine Brewer
International: Renate Bridenthal, Tony O'Brien
Legislation: Mary Bryce-Jennings, Eileen Moran (Chair)
Solidarity: Jim Perlstein
Publications: Ezra Seltzer, Irwin Yellowitz

Outside Committees:

Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO): Elva Christy, Jane Moore, Jack Judd, Larry Kaplan
Rekindling Reform: Francine Brewer, Larry Kaplan
NYCARA: Francine Brewer, Jim Perlstein
Joint Public Affairs Committee, Jane Moore

Executive Committee:

Irwin Yellowitz, Jack Judd, Mary Bryce-Jennings, Francine Brewer, Ted Gottesman, Martin Kaplan, Jane Moore, Ed Alterman, Elva Christy, Peter Jonas, Al Bachman, Judith Bronfman, Jim Perlstein, Ezra Seltzer, Larry Kaplan

In addition, Executive Committee members serve on the Chapter's Membership, Program, Health Care, and Social committees.

Welfare Fund Representative: Elva Christy
Welfare Fund Advisory Council: Irwin Yellowitz, Jack Judd
Prescription Drug Task Force: Irwin Yellowitz, Jack Judd

TIAA-CREF Issues Committee: Susan Karp Manning (Chair), David Berger, John McGloin, Peggy Ogden, Peter Jonas, Howard Reznikoff, Irwin Yellowitz

Florida Branch: Carroll Felleman

Two major goals have not as yet been achieved. First of all, we seek the adoption of a constitutional amendment to create two seats on the PSC Executive Council for retiree representatives. It is now understood that this item will appear on the September 2005 agenda of the Delegate Assembly. The second goal is to obtain parity for retirees in PSC elections.

In reviewing our activities during this year, we may conclude that this has been a very active and, to a great extent, a productive year for the Retirees Chapter.

E. RETIREES CHAPTER WEBSITE: This year we have added a website through the PSC. To access the Retirees Chapter website, first go the PSC website at www.psc-cuny.org, then click chapters, then click websites, and finally click Retirees Chapter News and Directory. You will be able to access any Retiree Newsletter from October 2004 through May 2005, the new TIAA-CREF online booklet, which describes the major features of the program in a 32 page document, and a directory of the Chapter's leadership. The newsletters and TIAA-CREF online booklet will require Adobe software. You can download this free from Adobe. We will add other items in the future. The PSC website also has much current information about the union in general including the struggle for a contract.

II. THE WELFARE FUND AND THE NEW MEDICARE "PART D"

Larry Morgan, Executive Director PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund

Larry Morgan began his remarks by thanking Jack Judd for the opportunity to speak to the Retirees Chapter regarding the new "Part D" of Medicare, effective January 1, 2006. He declared that the members will be bombarded with literature during the next few months urging individuals to sign up for one of the programs being offered. He repeatedly declared that the members of the Retirees Chapter should ignore all the blandishments that will be offered **and to stay with the Welfare Fund.**

It was pointed out that under "Plan D," the monthly cost will start at \$37 a month, and then a \$250 deductible before an individual will begin to pay 25% of the prescription drug costs from \$251 to \$2,250. From \$2,250 to \$5,100, there exists a so-called "donut hole," during which the individual will assume all of the prescription drug costs. Morgan remarked that Social Security has informed its employees to stop referring to that gap in coverage as a "donut hole." From \$5,100 a year and more of prescription drug costs, Medicare will pay about 95%.

The Welfare Fund is in the process of certification as being actuarially equivalent to "Plan D," and will be fully qualified to participate in the new Medicare program.

He again urged all members of the Retirees Chapter to
STAY WITH THE WELFARE FUND.

III. HEALTH CARE ISSUES: In other portions of the NEWSLETTER you will have learned about Medicare "Part D" from Larry Morgan, Executive Director of the Welfare Fund, and from our Chairman Emeritus, Larry Kaplan. There are some additional general sources of information provided by the Alliance for Retired Americans on their Web site: www.retiredamericansfund.org. And a special source of information for members of NYSUT is available at: www.medicareinteractive.org/nysut. Through that portal, you may then sign on for *Dear Marci*, a free weekly educational newsletter provided by the Medicare Interactive Community. These organizations provide additional sources of information which may prove important to you.

IV. NUTRITION FOR SENIORS WORKSHOP: Francine Brewer

The Retirees Chapter is sponsoring its second Nutrition for Seniors Workshop on Fats, Oils and Cholesterol. It will be held at the Graduate Center (W. 34th & 5th Ave.) on Monday, October 17th from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in room C205. Eating healthy fats and oils is essential to maintaining health and well being. Over the past 75 years, food processing has led to the degradation of oils and fats in the food supply. The essential fatty acids, especially the Omega 3's, 6's and 9's are out of balance in our diets. This leads to many health problems that can be remedied or prevented by eating healthy fats and oil. We will also discuss the role of low-fat or no fat foods in the diet in food affects our health.

V. REPORT OF LAWRENCE KAPLAN: THE NEW PRESCRIPTION DRUG LAW

The Report is appended to this NEWSLETTER

VI. THE LUNCHEON: Over 110 retirees and guests attended the June luncheon. All joined in offering our distinguished member, Israel Kugler, the happiest of birthday best wishes on his 88th birthday.

Offering greetings from the executive officers of the PSC was John Hyland, Treasurer of the PSC. Professor Hyland informed us that the constitutional amendment to create two seats for retiree representatives on the PSC Executive Council is slated for a vote at the September meeting of the Delegate Assembly.

Our guest entertainer at the luncheon was the outstanding labor organizer and activist, George Altomare. One of his talents is that of a labor troubadour of song. George led the group in a rousing medley of songs, to the delight of the audience. The songfest would have continued endlessly if not for the absence of air conditioning in the room because of ongoing renovations at John Jay. Despite the uncomfortable heat, a great

time was had by all. Mr. Altomare declared that he would be happy to return on another occasion. He received a hearty round of applause.

A person who deserves to receive a special vote of thanks is Judith Bronfman, Chair of our Social Committee. She arranged for the meeting room and for the luncheon. This involved a great deal of negotiations on her part because of the ongoing renovations taking place at John Jay College.

VII. NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Retirees Chapter will be on SEPTEMBER 19 at 1 p.m. at the Graduate School in Room 9204-9205. This date will be in lieu of an October meeting because of religious observances. The subject will be Welfare Fund issues, and we will have Steve London and Larry Morgan as speakers. In September, you will receive our regular notice for the meeting. The full list of programs for 2005-2006 should be included in the next newsletter issued after the meeting of September 19.