



ROBS NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2006

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 65



WE'VE RELOCATED!

General meetings are now at
the **BRENTWOOD
PUBLIC
LIBRARY**
2 Avenue & 4th Street
Phone: 273-7883

New Library Director is a
Brentwood graduate:
Tom Tarantowicz

COME TO OUR KICK-OFF MEETING

A WELCOME FOR NEW RETIRES

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
AT 10 AM**



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SOCIAL SECURITY STILL UNDER ATTACK: AUGUST 4, 2006

From the Alliance For Retired Americans On-Line Newsletter:

Despite what some may claim, Social Security privatization is not a dead issue to the Bush Administration. In a D.C. Superior Court room last week, Karl Rove was seen working on a PowerPoint presentation about Social Security reform while he waited to be dismissed from a jury pool.

This week, new Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson touched on privatization in his first speech since taking office on July 10. Paulson told the Columbia University business school that "The biggest economic issue facing our country is the growth in spending on the major entitlement programs:

Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security."

He went on to say that he would not run from complicated Social Security reform and admired President Bush's courage in addressing the issue.

Days before Paulson's remarks, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report how Social Security privatization would reduce guaranteed benefits and increase retirement risks for Baby Boomers. "The GAO report echoes what the American people have been telling President Bush for months now: Privatization of Social Security is a risky, costly idea and quite

simply, we don't want it," said Executive Director Edward Coyle.

A I D A P P E A L

The AFT is among the member organizations of Education International that will be supporting a special appeal to help teacher union affiliates in Lebanon with humanitarian aid.

The EI issued an urgent appeal for financial support for the teachers and their families who have been adversely affected by the situation in that country. The AFT for a number of years has been working with teacher unions in Lebanon on conferences, visits and programs that support union-building and service training.

OOPS: JOE CAMPO alive & well

In the April issue of this newsletter, we ran a letter written by Ray Flores to a North Carolina newspaper, in which he lauded the Brentwood teacher who changed his life. The letter was a tribute to Joe Campo, high school Pys Ed, and known as "the Wrestling guy."

Warren Walker ('92 So. Middle) forwarded the page to Joe's son, Manny, who emailed this: "I am glad to say that he is still alive and kicking down in Martin

County, Florida. Actually my mother passed away in 1998 and that may have led to the error."

Thanks for letting us off the hook, but we really should have researched more fully. This editor, (heard from several people), got the phone number from Clem Stancik and called Joe to verbally apologize. Joe couldn't have been nicer, and we had a lovely chat. Though he lived in California when his wife was ill, he returned to Stuart

Florida when she passed away because he missed the "saifish capital of the world."

Joe turned 82 on May 21, and on May 26 he was in San Diego as his son, Jose, was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. Joe is also in that elite group. They may be the first, and only, father son duo there.

Joe also coached football at Brentwood, and is in both the Long Island and New York State Hall of Fame. **Congratulations, Joe!**

PHYLL'S FORUM

Phyllis Goodwin, President – (631-673-2971)



Dear Colleagues,

We have completed the year with a successful agenda. We adopted four wonderful families through Project Hope. They were the most appreciative group that we have ever encountered.

We gave out \$2,000 in scholarships to graduating Brentwood Seniors. They were: Irina Kondrashova (\$1,000), Daisy Maldonado (\$500), and Chelsea Charland (\$500). All of our recipients are pursuing a career in teaching.

Our Golf Outing at Cedar Beach, though not well attended, was a great deal of fun. There were prizes for everyone. A special thanks goes out to Lynn Tiscione for all her hard work and planning.

Dot Zuckerman and I will attend the Alliance for Retired Americans in Washington DC at the beginning of September. I know that we will bring back mountains of information on the status of Social Security and Medicare. We are starting a new year and hope that many more of you will consider renewing your membership in ROBS and attending our meetings.

In Harmony,
Phyllis Goodwin

ROBS MEETING

DATES

BRENTWOOD LIBRARY: 10 AM

FRIDAYS - 2006

SEPTEMBER 8

OCTOBER 13

NOVEMBER 10

DECEMBER 8 (HOLIDAY LUNCHEON: BONWIT)

2007

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8 (NEW YEAR BREAKFAST)

FRIDAYS - 2007

MARCH 9

APRIL 13

MAY 11



Lilian Kelley Remembered

On June 16th South Middle dedicated a garden, and a tree, outside the school in **Lilian Kelley's** memory. Pictured are BTA President Joe Hogan, Eileen Kelley and Principal Kevin McNichols (son of former Board member, Winefred McNichols, and brother of Brentwood teacher Cathy Moroney). More than 100 people attended the lovely memorial to our Brentwood colleague, Lil.

ROBS NEWSLETTER

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TREAS. Marge Kirchner

3/20/06: Blaming imagery of 24 hour news, Donald Rumsfeld said, "fortunately, history is not made up of daily headlines, blogs ... or the latest sensational attack. History...takes time & perspective to measure..." Hmmm...



ROBS Newsletter

Editorial Board:

Carmela Criscione
Adrienne Eastman
Linda Gibson
Phyllis Goodwin
Marge Kirchner

THE M-T CORNER

"We must provide unstructured time because the only thing we really know about creativity is that it happens when you are 'goofing off', ----

- Robert Theobald

NYSUT NOTES

Dorothy Zuckerman, NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant
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IT'S NOT OVER UNTIL NOVEMBER

We've waged a strong, united campaign against privatizing Social Security. We've marched to Washington; we've sent letters, faxes and e-mails to our legislators; we've had discussions with our children and grandchildren. We've joined forces with the AFL-CIO, the Alliance for Retired Americans and many other groups to secure our guaranteed retirement benefits. And then we breathed a sigh of relief on the assumption that our message had finally been heard by the Bush Administration and that Social Security privatization would no longer be an issue to be concerned about.

But Here We Go Again! If the House of Representatives should maintain its Republican majority in November, one of the first priorities will be to bring back legislative proposals to take apart the Social Security program as we know it and to turn it over to Wall Street and investors. Rep. Jim McCrery (R-La), who would head the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, has gone on record as saying that he plans to move again to slash benefits and to turn Social Security into an investment program rather than maintain the defined benefits we now have. It appears that if they maintain their majority the Republicans plan to ignore the overwhelming rejection of the people to their privatization plans and to blindly proceed with their agenda.

But that's not all! The Bush Administration is planning major changes in Medicare payments to hospitals whereby such payments would be based on hospital costs rather than on charges. In addition, payment would be determined by how serious a patient's illness is; presently payment is made regardless of the severity of the condition.

Payments for such treatments as cardiac care could be drastically reduced by as much as 30% or more. The background of the patient would also be a factor in determining how much the hospital would be paid. If the hospitals lose payment from Medicare they will have to find other sources of revenue, such as demanding higher payments from private health insurers. We, in turn, the patients and consumers, would be affected in turn by having to pay even higher premiums for our health care.

So while we enjoy the pleasures of summer now, plans are already underway to turn our world upside down – once again. We are just a few weeks away from determining what our future will be it's a very short time from August to November. This year's elections will bring major decisions that will effect us for the rest of our lives. We can't afford to lose any more ground.

ENTERTAINMENT DISCOUNTS FOR AFT MEMBERS

The AFT + Member Benefits program offers entertainment discounts that save members money on purchases such as movie tickets, amusement park admissions, movie rentals from Blockbuster and even theater tickets.

The AFT + Entertainment Discounts Program also offers reduced prices for museums, aquariums, zoos, ski lift tickets for New England ski resorts, and sporting events. Many more options are available as well. To start saving, call 800/565-3712 (use ID# 744387769) or go to <http://www.unionplus.org/entertainment>.



SHEILA AND LETTY SUSTRIN REPORT

Retirement continues to delight us. The Web Designer just finished our web site and it is now live. Children will enjoy looking at it as they can become acquainted with all the characters from our books, about "The Teacher Who Wouldn't Retire."

The website is:
<http://www.sustrinbooks.com/>

WHAT A WOMAN by Marge Kirchner



I met Ivy Rosenthal in the fall of 1985 when her grandson, Johannes Brugger, was in my 6th grade class at Loretta Park. She was a woman of integrity, culture and intelligence who was cooperative and supportive of my teaching and her grandson's learning. She also possessed a wide smile and dancing eyes.

That was the Ivy I knew then. What I have recently learned about this delightful, gracious and gentle woman caused me to have a wide grin and dancing eyes.

Ivy was born and raised on the island of Jamaica. Her father, supervisor of the Hope Waterworks in Jamaica British West Indies, assigned her the chore of milking 5 cows and feeding 30 turkeys before school everyday, which shaped her work ethic and desire to succeed in whatever she undertook.

In addition to her commitment to help on the family farm, she loved riding and became the winner of the Steeplechase at age 12.

She decided to learn tennis, and after only 7 months of playing, became the Junior Champion of the Island. She maintained that honor for three consecutive years followed by six consecutive years of being Jamaica's Senior Champion. She represented her government in tournaments in other countries, notably, the Pan American Olympics in Mexico, and was granted honorary memberships in several famous Tennis Clubs, including the prestigious St. Andrews. Although she couldn't play at Wimbledon because restrictions posed by World War II cancelled the event, she did play at Forest Hills. It was there she was scouted and awarded a full scholarship to Bethune Cookman. She transferred to Tennessee State University from which she graduated. She taught for 2 years at Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA.

The first time Ivy was aware of the racial divide in the U.S. occurred on a bus in segregated Jacksonville, Florida, when a Caucasian passenger wanted her seat. As a result of her courteous, yet firm, resolve to maintain her seat, a fellow passenger complimented her and told her she should become a teacher so that others might learn about quiet dignity. That incident led her to an outstanding teaching career.

In 1969, at age 38, Ivy came to Brentwood where her devotion to teaching gave pause to her colleagues. She and Ralph Saikin began a Social Club for 6th grade young ladies that lasted for 17 years and included teaching the girls everything from good hygiene to the social graces. She began programs in gymnastics, ballet, tap, modern jazz, ballroom dancing, physical fitness, and Jr. High girls' basketball. A testament to Ivy's dedication is that she undertook most of these programs with no pay because, as she says, "I loved what I did."

Her crowning glory was beginning the Girls' Tennis Team. Although some of the girls could not afford shoes or appropriate clothing, none of this stopped Ivy's intentions of having a winning team. She used her own funds to buy what was needed to have the girls look good on the court in more ways than playing. Her ethic of "hard work pays off" led her teams to numerous victories and they won many awards for the Brentwood School District, including winning the League Championship in 1984.

Retired since 1984, Ivy has continued in her selfless giving by volunteering to read and write for the disabled at our Veteran's hospitals, serving food in her Church's Soup Kitchen and doing volunteer work teaching everything from Shakespeare to Dancing & Gymnastics at Central Islip State Hospital.

Three words that have always been important to Ivy are respect, give and love. She believes that teachers must command respect, teach courtesy, and love everything they do for their students and colleagues.

Ivy is one of our retirees who brought excellence to Brentwood. Her achievements and contributions have left us richer.

WHAT A WOMAN!

THIRD PLACE HONORS — Zoe Brugger, a 9th grader at Brentwood South Junior High School and a member of the Girl's Varsity Tennis Team, was recently selected as the third best tennis player in the conference. Pictured from left, are Anthony F. Felicio, school board president; Brugger; Ivy Rosenthal, tennis coach; and Susan McAfee, school board trustee.



NEWS NOTES

Mary Jane DeVito (Eng. '05) mjdev@optonline.net enjoys the newsletter, and says hi to everyone from BHS 68-05, especially **Claudette Benjamin** & the English department folks from Ross, Sonderling, and The Freshman Center. Judi Weissman (HS Eng.) ran into **Charlie DiGiovanni** (Sond. Math '04) and wife Robin in Vegas, where they are loving their new life. If you're heading there, give ROBDIGIO@yahoo.com a click. He'd love to hear from you.

Tennis coach, **Clem Stancik** (Sond. '95), was honored this year. He has coached at Brentwood for 44 years and was honored with a plaque at the end of this school year. Here's to you and your championship team, **Clem!** **Jeff Wolfe** (SS & Fencing coach) was among "12 exceptional people" from three different areas, nominated for the Fencing Hall of Fame by the Hall of Fame Committee of the USFA.

John Sherin (Ross '92) is participating with BTA & Brentwood's NE Elementary School's Liz Borman's 4th graders in using manipulatives to teach local & regional geography with his Mapuzzles. They secured a Mini grant from Staples. He himself has a grant from LIPA to distribute 1,000 of the Mapuzzles. (www.mapuzzles.com) They are also being sold at L.L. Weams, an educational Supply store, and on their web site. **Chris Veech** (Ross '91) wrote & secured a grant of \$5,000 from the L.I. Fund for Women & Girls for the Community of Faith Task Force on Domestic Violence (COFTFDV). The grant was for a luncheon to Celebrate Survivors, which attracted 135, including **Shirley Walker Lloyd** (Hemlock Park '95) & friends, to hear Nassau DA, Kathleen Rice. 1/3 of the diners were survivors, as was one of the speakers. Channel 55 gave the event 3 minutes on the News.

Twins, **Sheila & Letty Sustrin** (Laurel '98) report that their second book, "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire Goes to Camp" won 1st place in the Mixed Media category at the Islip Town American Fair in June. They won 2nd place in 2004 for their first book, "The Teacher Who Would not Retire." "No way is retirement dull or unexciting," they report.

Marianne Gruskin reports that former student, Vivian Renta and husband are optometrists and have their practice at 1758 Brentwood Road, one block from "Casa Vieja (4th and Brentwood Road).

Amy & **Bernie Heller** (Guid. Ross '90) had a brunch with **Larry & Florence Briggs** (10th Grade Center) recently in Florida. They have booked a cruise for December with their sons and grandson. **Bernie**, though wheelchair-bound, is excited about Weight Watchers & has lost over 30 pounds and still losing. He goes to the races and continues with his weekly card games.

Saw **Joe Governale** (HS Eng. '05), an adjunct at Suffolk Community, in Newsday (picture and quote). He served on the jury that convicted Wayne Prospect of accepting a \$10,000 bribe from an undercover cop to use for securing county contracts. And in NEWSDAY'S "People on the Move: EDUCATION": Michael Cohen of Brightwaters has been named interim superintendent of schools for the Brentwood School District replacing **Les Black**, who just retired. Best wishes, **Les!**

We're thinking of **Vita Aziz** (nurse's aide in Sond.) and husband Bob. They live in Florida now, but journeyed to Sloan Kettering for a diagnosis for Bob. They are back in Florida and on the medical merry-go-round. If you want to send a cheery hello, the address is: 8714 27 Ave. E., Palmetto, FL 34221. Phone is 941-729-8694. Email: raziz2@verizon.net



This editor was touched when she received a lovely note from **Millie O'Neill's** family that said: "We know what a big part of Mom's life you were. She loved being part of your "writing group." **Millie** was always feeding us community information on former students. And she wrote for this paper as well. She is much missed.

Martha Trachtulec informed us of the death of the BTA dance instructor's husband, Jack in May. Condolences can be sent to **Mrs. Snyder** at: PO Box 114, Brentwood 11717. And on July 3, **Amanda Carlucci Kurtz**, retired cook from Laurel Elementary passed away after a long illness. She lived in Las Vegas. Condolences to her husband, **John Kurtz**, (retired plumber from Brentwood schools), 5717 Colwood Lane, Las Vegas, Nev. 89130.

And on June 14th, **Ray Sheele** passed away. He had been battling lymphoma for a few years. **Ray** worked in Brentwood in the 1960's, when the district had a grant from the Ford Foundation for curriculum development. He went on to teach at Hofstra, where he met and married his wife, Mary Anne Raywid, educational author ("The Axe Grinders"), Department Chair and researcher. They moved to Hawaii after retirement, where **Ray** remained active in local theatre while Mary Anne continued teaching at the University there. They have a son, Scott, a lawyer, who lives in DC with his family. Our sympathies to family and friends....

On June 9, Shirley Seiden Smith, former high school English teacher, BTA President, English Department Chairperson, died suddenly in Arizona. She leaves a daughter, Julie, who is a college student. Condolences to Julie at 1938 E. Hawkins Place, Chandler, AZ 85249. Donations can be made to the Diabetes Association.

MEMORIES FOR A LIFETIME BY LOIS MORELLA



Lois Morella, Shirley Seiden Smith & Marian Gray in a Hungarian restaurant in Vienna, Austria: 1968

Sadly, Shirley Seiden Smith, former BTA president, passed away in June. But I have a lifetime of memories of our 1968 nine week European odyssey through the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Greece and Italy. Marian Gray, an active BTA executive board member, who passed away in 2004, joined us for part of the trip.

Shirley, a "seasoned" traveler, taught "me" the ropes." I was never out of the country and had not even flown before! Our adventures still make me chuckle. Just ask me and I'll gladly entertain you for hours! That exciting trip opened my eyes to a whole new world. Because of Shirley, traveling has become my passion.

Thank you Shirley – I appreciated your keen mind, wit, and the fact that you were the only one of us who could drive a shift. (Oh, those mountainous roads on the Greek Peloponnesus peninsula!)

CREATIVE CORNER: "SOLDIER," by Jon Andersen's debut book of poems, STOMP AND SING

Image-studded lyrics about work, love, family and class struggle create a vivid narrative that traces the daily lives of young people facing the challenges of a turbulent century Andersen, a relative of ROBS John Sherin, traces his early working class life through adolescence and young manhood to finding his niche in the world through family and a career of service in teaching, high school English.

In the bustle of passing time,
I do not recognize you
Filling up the frame of my classroom door
In full-dress uniform, your chiseled jaw

and wall of a chest, only your smirk
seems familiar – then, shocked recognition:
Michael! I want to salute but shake your hand,
instead. While sophomore girls giggle and gawk,

we chat, catch up, and I venture
A critical thought about the war.
Unruffled and almost condescendingly
You tell me that *policy* is for politicians.

that you can *disassemble/assemble/fire any rifle,*
self-extract from a mine field, call
in an air strike, lead an ambush, execute
and shout out orders like a machine.

After the job is done, you say
You won't be a loser like your old man
who *threw drinks out of Hueys*
but got his ass kicked by their ghosts

thirty years later. I cough and change
the subject. We laugh about your record-breaking
String of detentions, and I remember how
You used to come to see me – a scrawny,

wounded, angry boy, missing your mother
who fled, or bringing poetry only for me, or
in trouble for leaving a note posted
on your tormentor's locker, threatening

to kill him. Now you calmly tell me
"Mr. Andersen, I just wanted to thank you
for your support during tough personal times,"
and almost overwhelmed by the urge

to shake you, scream in your face:
"Look! See how you bought their shit –
how you let them go and make another soldier
where a man might have been?"

I let myself half-salute, slap you on the shoulder.
and at the final bell dismiss you,
one tough guy to another:
"Hey, Mike – just come home to us alive."

A BIT OF A PIECE:

Complaining of the costs, 100 of 1,000 of the biggest U.S. firms have frozen worker's pensions!
BUT as an example: 45 % of AT&T's pension expenses go to 1,500 top executives.
Less than 1% goes to 190,500 workers. Sounds like the Golden Parachutes are still flying!

85 And Still Counting by Phyllis Goodwin



As we all know, the beauty of being retired is waking to decide what type of adventure we will experience for the day. Most of my journeys are spur of the moment excursions. My goal this year was to attend as many concerts as possible. My cousin is forever touting SPAC (Saratoga Performing Arts Center) since she attends the ballet and opera festivals. Another friend told me about SPAC's Freihofer Jazz Festival. When I went online, I found that they were celebrating Dave Brubeck's 85th birthday and there would be some great talents performing. Hearing Brubeck's name recalled the first time I heard his music. I was 11 years old (1953) and visiting my aunt in Queens for the summer. She found a girl for me to play with during my visit. While visiting her home, I met her older brother, home from college, who was playing this wonderfully exotic music. He placed the record jacket in my hand. Inside was a large, RED transparent vinyl disc. Dave Brubeck Quartet with Paul Desmond - Jazz at Wilshire Elks - straight from California. How cool is that? From that moment, I was hooked. I must go to Saratoga. I called around until I found a traveling companion, planned to visit my college friend, Carol, who lives in Columbia County and made arrangements to meet another friend and her RV group at the festival. The weather outlook was pretty dismal.

Friday evening we arrived at Carol's, had dinner and talked till the wee hours. Carol has a moose and her calf living on her property. **Donna Ragonese** and I went on a moose watch the next morning. No luck, so we enjoyed the view of Vermont.

Saturday- Saratoga is a wonderful town with lots to keep you entertained. The grounds are lovely and every age group was well represented but **SENIORS RULED**. Camping areas, blankets sprawled on the lawn, food courts, impromptu drummers, large screens, a terrific sound stage and amphitheater. The afternoon started with Gerald Albright, Jeff Lorber and Kirk Whalum, in a tribute to saxophonist, Grover Washington.



In the evening, we saw Herbie Hancock with some very talented young musicians, Smokey Robinson and Arturo Sandoval with his very hot group. The weather was extraordinary and Long Island was flooding. Not my problem, I was where I wanted to be.



Sunday - Donna and I visited my friend Cynthia Lee and her RV group. They served lots of cocktails and munchies. I was reacquainted with her brother **Prentiss Hall**, his wife, Tynetta and daughters. **Cynthia, Prentiss** and their sister **Robbie** are Brentwood graduates. Prentiss fondly remembered his 4th and 5th grade teacher, **Sue Gusterson**, at South Elementary and **Tony La Scala** at West Middle.

We started the afternoon singing Happy Birthday to Mr. Brubeck. His quartet gave new meaning to living life to the fullest. They were all around Dave's age and were sensational. A very spry Dave still has a delicate yet powerful touch. "Evergreens" from the 50's - "I'm Old Fashioned," 60's an updated version of "Take Five" and "Unsquare Dance." We also heard Stanley Clarke and the George Duke Project. They are talented musicians but the decibel level was out of control.

Sunday evening. We finished the Festival in high style. The New Orleans Preservation Hall Jazz Band played every single Dixieland song of note. Their last tune was "When the Saints Go Marching In." The rains finally came and the audience took out their bumbershoots and paraded around the theater.

The last event was a very risqué Etta James. She is 77 years young with a figure like an anorexic, arthritic teenager. She sang a few gutbucket blues tunes and her famous hit "At Last." The highlight of this weekend was the ageless process of music and musicians. Most of these musicians were 50 and older but they were incorporating talent as young as 16 in their groups to keep their legacy intact.



Seniors Rule!!!

A FEW BITS AND PIECES

AFT CONVENTION ATTENDEES ADD NEARLY \$25,000 TO RELIEF FUND (AFT Retiree News: 8/15/06)

Delegates, guests and staff at the AFT convention last month showed their solidarity by raising almost \$25,000 for disaster relief. Raffle participants—who won six prizes ranging from electronics to hotel stays—contributed more than \$14,500 to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund, which has supplied \$500 checks to AFT members affected by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma. Cash contributions on the spot amounted to \$3,200. The tiny delegation from the Republic of Georgia in the former Soviet Union, where the average teacher makes only \$40 a month, donated a whopping \$2,800 through two sources: cash from the proceeds of a book about their U.S. travels, and a silent auction of their handcrafted goods. Ticket sales from the play "Organizing Abraham Lincoln," written by retired AFT national representative Rich Klimmer and Tony Award winning playwright Lonnie Carter, brought in about \$2,400. And \$5 from the sale of every convention T-shirt went to the relief fund, netting nearly \$1,800. "Since the hurricanes last fall, AFT members, affiliates, staff and friends have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to our brothers and sisters along the Gulf Coast," says AFT secretary-treasurer Nat LaCour. "The convention was an extension of this generosity, and we're deeply grateful to every individual who has donated time and money to the relief efforts."

NEW WEB TOOL COMPARES LONG-TERM CARE INSURANCE PRODUCTS (Senior Action/NYS Alliance retired Americans)

7/27/06

Superintendent of Insurance Howard Mills announced on July 19th that his Department now has information on the internet that consumers in the market for long-term care (LTC) insurance can use to compare sample premium rates in New York. "Governor Pataki and the state Legislature are rightfully focusing on initiatives that educate New Yorkers about the advantages of buying long term care insurance when planning for their family's financial future," Superintendent Mills stated.

Consumers logging onto www.ins.state.ny.us, clicking the 'Consumers' icon and then scrolling down to the Long Term Care section can retrieve personalized LTC insurance premium rates by submitting the type of policy they would like to purchase, their age, and the number of days they are willing to pay out-of-pocket for LTC services before a policy will begin to pay benefits

MEDICARE ALREADY KNOWS WHICH PART D DRUG PLANS WILL NOT CONTINUE IN 2007

Medicare Part D drug plans intending not to renew participation for 2007 were to indicate their intention to drop out to Medicare by June 5th. However, it is unlikely this information will be made public until the fall. We believe beneficiaries should have as much time as possible to consider signing up for a new plan if the plan they are in drops its coverage in 2007. Also, people on the New York State EPIC program have a special enrollment period in Part D continuing all year as do the low income. These persons should be advised not to sign up for a plan which has already told the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) it won't continue in 2007. Please take action and contact Senators Schumer and Clinton and your member of Congress to urge them to ask Medicare to release the information now.

DRUG COMPANIES, FACING COMPETITION, OFFER NEW YORK STATE MEDICAID HUGE DISCOUNTS WITH PREFERRED DRUG LIST

Drug companies are offering discounts of up to 50% to the state now that the new Medicaid Preferred Drug List program has gone into effect according to several persons knowledgeable with negotiations. Under this program the state is getting some big discounts in the form of "supplemental rebates" by drug companies which don't want their drugs excluded from the Preferred Drug List.

The process starts with the state examining categories of drugs such as acid reflux and determining which drugs are clinically superior. If there are several in a category companies then compete on the basis of price, giving a bidding price of what they would accept to be on the Preferred Drug List.

Interestingly, for all their talk of charging high prices to pay for R & D, what is happening is exactly what consumers thought: when faced with competition and market share, drug companies are offering prices that are at a 40% or 50% discount to be on the state list. This is propriety information and specific details aren't available but sources indicated the savings are quite significant.

The State Health Department has a Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (P&T Committee) which meets regularly to consider which drugs should be placed on the list or require prior authorization before Medicaid will cover it. To read a summary of their last meeting on July 9th, click: http://www.health.state.ny.us/health_care/medicaid/program/ptcommittee/ptsummary06-09-06.htm