



## ROBS NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2007

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 68



### WE'VE RELOCATED!

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

**FRIDAYS - 2007  
APRIL 13**

**MAY 11  
History Video**

**JUNE LUNCHEON  
June 8  
Riverview Restaurant  
3 Consuelo Place  
Oakdale**



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### SOLAR CAFÉ IN RR STATION

We wrote about the purchase of the old Brentwood RR station by Wendy and Christopher Castro back in 2004. The renovations took longer than expected, but the dream of the Castro's finally took off last fall. This editor, Judi Weissman (retiring in June) and Judy Curran checked it out in November. Excellent dining!

Castro, a solar engineer, harnessed the sun's energy to power the once abandoned RR station. Wendy, a 1983 graduate of the Brentwood schools, and a culinary school graduate, is the chef. Their three teenage children, (Katrina & Lee in the photo) all in the Brentwood schools, help out in the dining room on most weekends. There is fresh baked bread,

garlic butter, and herbs that come from the organic garden outside. And the Latin accented food, made mostly with organic ingredients, is "unfailingly lively," according to the food editor of *Newsday*.

"Grilled red snapper was flawless, the skin lightly charred, the flesh sweet and delicate." The ROBS crew found the many varieties of plantains delectable as well. Among many dishes, the Dominican-style hamburger, a highly seasoned ground beef mixture grilled and topped with a melange of cabbage, tomatoes and onions called a chimi, was also recommended. For dessert, the "rich tres leches cake & silky, burnished



flan. Fresh bakery items are available for sale too.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.  
And catering too.

1 First Avenue,  
Brentwood, .  
631-348-7181  
Solarcafeus.com

The web site is excellent.  
Pictures, menus, etc.

### CONSUMER CLAIM ADJUSTERS

When you get a bill from a health care provider, do you often cringe, but eventually just pay it?

Did you know that there are ways to bargain down your charges, just as the insurance companies do? How, you ask?

One web-based company that reviews doctor and hospital bills for consumers is My Medical Control. The company has put together a database detailing the wholesale reimbursement rates paid by major insurers for thousands of procedures. They

claim to know the lowest rate a hospital or clinic has already accepted for a given service. Some have up to 150 rates for the same procedure.

Savings are possible because medical care is priced so arbitrarily. From a typical claim of \$1,100, the company shaves an average of \$232, minus a collection fee.

Especially if you have a high deductible, there is less insurance oversight on your claim, and having your own

claims adjuster is a plus.

Another web site that has begun estimating fees negotiated by insurers for a variety of hospital procedures is Vimo.com. They found, for example, that the cost of a cornea transplant in Philadelphia was estimated at \$15,000, the reimbursement rate negotiated by insurers was closer to \$4,700, and nationally that rate was \$3,900.

Before paying a questionable medical bill next time, investigate options!

**PHYLL'S FORUM**

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



Dear Colleagues,

Old Man Winter and Jack Frost finally caught up with us these past few weeks. Wherever you are, I hope that you are warm and toasty. I know that I am looking forward to my trip to the ROBS Florida luncheon for great fun. I will enjoy re-connecting with some of my favorite people. It will be held at Padrino's Restaurant on Military Hwy. in Boca Raton on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon.

There are a few changes in Medicare in 2007. Your Medicare Premium will be based on your annual income for the first time rather than one rate for everyone. Part B covers Doctors services and outpatient care. If you have Medicare Part B, your deductible will be \$131 for 2007. This is the amount you must pay before Medicare will begin coverage.

If you have Medicare Part A (inpatient coverage) and have worked more than 10 years in the United States, you will still pay no premium in 2007. If you worked between 7.5 and 10 years, you can buy Medicare Part A coverage but you will be charged \$226 per month next year or \$410 per month if your work history is less.

<u>Individual Annual Income</u>	<u>Couple Annual Income</u>	<u>2007 Premium</u>
Below \$80,000	Below \$160,000	\$93.50\$
80,000 - \$100,000	\$160,000- 200,000	\$105.00
\$100,000 - \$150,000	\$200,00 - 300,000	\$124.40
\$150,000 - 200,000	\$300,000 - \$400,000	\$142.90
Above \$200,000	Above \$400,000	\$161.41

Supplemental insurance, such as retiree health coverage and Medigap plans can cover Medicare out-of-pocket costs. Medicare Savings Programs for people with low incomes can help cover these costs if you qualify. To keep abreast of these changes you can log on to Medicare Interactive made available from AFT and NYSUT. [www.medicareinteractive.org/teachers](http://www.medicareinteractive.org/teachers). This resource is provided by the Medicare Rights Center, the largest independent source of health care information and assistance.

The last piece of information is EmpireUnited Health Care/NYSHIP is no longer accepting Quest Labs for any lab works or test results. Please check your latest NYSHIP directory for alternative sources. And finally, our co-pay has also increased to \$18 for this year. Let's hope that this is a very healthy year for everyone.

In Unity,

Phyllis Goodwin

**PROJECT HOPE**

Chairperson Peter Vercillo reports that Project Hope raised more than \$2,000 this year to brighten the holidays for the families we adopted. "Special thanks must also be given to the many volunteers who shopped, donated, stored, wrapped and distributed the hundreds of items that were amassed."

**DIRECTORY CORRECTIONS**

**Fred Schieferstein** email correction  
Fschief@aol.com

**Eleanor Steffen** email correction:  
Esteffan@hvc.rr.com

**ROBS NEWSLETTER**

CONTENT EDITOR: Christin Veech  
([chrisveech@aol.com](mailto:chrisveech@aol.com))

COORD. COMM.: Phyllis Goodwin  
([pbgoodwin@msn.com](mailto:pbgoodwin@msn.com))

**ROBS OFFICERS**

PRES. Phyllis Goodwin  
V. PRES. Harriet Pepine  
SEC'Y. Lucille Fink  
Harriet Helman  
TREAS. Marge Kirchner

Barbaro's owner when the valiant racehorse, who fought for almost a year to overcome an injury was put down:

"Grief is the price you pay for love."  
So true!

**ROBS Newsletter  
Editorial Board:**

Carmela Criscione  
Adrienne Eastman  
Phyllis Goodwin  
Marge Kirchner

**THE M-T  
CORNER**

"When fascism comes to America  
it will be wrapped in the flag  
carrying the Cross."

- Sinclair Lewis

## IS YOUR REPRESENTATIVE OR SENATOR A COMMITTEE CHAIR?

As a guide to members, the Alliance for Retired Americans is publishing a list of some of the key lawmakers who chair committees and subcommittees in the 110th Congress. "If your Senator or Representative chairs one of these committees or subcommittees, I would urge you to contact them about the issues that are important to retirees," said **George J. Kourpias**, President of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

### FOR THE SENATE, THE LIST INCLUDES:

Committee on Appropriations:	<b>Sen. Robert Byrd</b> (D-WV), Chair
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:	<b>Sen. Chris Dodd</b> (D-CT), Chair
Committee on Budget:	<b>Sen. Kent Conrad</b> (D-ND), Chair
Committee on Finance:	<b>Sen. Max Baucus</b> (D-MT), Chair
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions:	<b>Sen. Edward Kennedy</b> (D-MA), Chair
Special Committee on Aging:	<b>Sen. Herb Kohl</b> (D-WI), Chair

### ALSO, AS A REMINDER, OTHER SENATE LEADERS INCLUDE:

Majority Leader:	<b>Sen. Harry Reid</b> (D-NV)
Minority Leader:	<b>Sen. Mitch McConnell</b> (R-KY)
Majority Whip:	<b>Sen. Dick Durbin</b> (D-IL)
Minority Whip:	<b>Sen. Trent Lott</b> (R-MS)



### FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE LIST INCLUDES:

Committee on Appropriations:	<b>Rep. David Obey</b> (D-WI), Chair
Committee on Budget:	<b>Rep. John Spratt</b> (D-SC), Chair
Committee on Education and Labor:	<b>Rep. George Miller</b> (D-CA), Chair
Committee on Energy and Commerce:	<b>Rep. John Dingell</b> (D-MI), Chair
Health Subcommittee:	<b>Rep. Frank Pallone</b> (D-NJ), Chair
Committee on Ways and Means:	<b>Rep. Charles Rangel</b> (D-NY), Chair
Health Subcommittee:	<b>Rep. Pete Stark</b> (D-CA), Chair
Social Security Subcommittee:	<b>Rep. Michael McNulty</b> (D-NY), Chair
Income Security & Family Support Subcommittee:	<b>Rep. Jim McDermott</b> (D-WA), Chair

### THE HOUSE LEADERSHIP LIST ALSO INCLUDES:

Speaker of the House:	<b>Rep. Nancy Pelosi</b> (D-CA)
Majority Leader:	<b>Rep. Steny Hoyer</b> (D-MD)
Minority Leader:	<b>Rep. John Boehner</b> (R-OH)
Majority Whip:	<b>Rep. James Clyburn</b> (D-SC)
Minority Whip:	<b>Rep. Roy Blunt</b> (R-MO)



### QUOTE OF NOTE:

***"Civil War is checkers. This (Iraq) is chess!"***

John E. McLaughlin, former acting director of the CIA, reacting to the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's future  
February 3, 2007

# MEMORY LANE

ROBS members are constantly bumping into one another, but especially at ROBS luncheons and breakfasts. At the annual breakfast, Robs president Phyllis Goodwin reports that it was great and that 56 attended. Among them were: Elmon Kazandgian and her husband. Aram and June Athanasian, Linda Eckert and her husband Jim, Mike Lambert, Tony LaScala, Bill and Polly Lane, Sue Lanchantin, Miriam Massucci, Ivy Rosenthal, Bill Heran and Marian Carrol. Lots of good conversation was reported! For a little trip down memory lane, we present some of the digital pictures taken at the Holiday luncheon at the Bonwit in December '06.



**Dot Zuckerman, Harriet Pepine, Phyllis Goodwin and Florence Corkery**



**Adrienne Eastman**



**Vern Spencer and Phyllis Goodwin**



**Ellen Edelstein, June Dawson, Betty Heran**

**AND AT LAST YEAR'S FLORIDA LUNCHEON AND AT HOME AT THE DEPLAZA'S:**

**Marv Cooper & Al Rosensweig**



**Bernie, Amy Heller & Marilyn DePlaza**



**Miriam Friedman, Lil Yedwabnick, Teri Piombo**



**Larry and Florence Briggs**

# NEWS NOTES

*Newsday* published **Chris Veech's** (Ross '91) article in "500 Words or Less," on March 3rd. Retirees read it here first last winter under the title, "Snow What?" The *Newsday* title was "Move Over Frosty, Make Way for Fran." It dealt with inclusive language and the snow man, or snowgirl! Definitely a fun fluff piece.

Around the holidays, **Jim Watson**, (Sond. '95) went to the Phoenix shelter and adopted a fluffy little puppy he named Holly (what else?) and is proceeding to spoil her lovingly. She even has her own couch, and apparently finds lots of sneakers to chew.



**Grace Fata** (Ross aide) celebrated her 50th wedding anniversary with a party at the East Wind with her wedding gown restored and on display ( a surprise from her children) and much nostalgia. **Grace** and husband were off to the Panama Canal in January and Las Vegas in February. Whew! I'm exhausted just typing this up! Happy, Happy, **Mr. & Mrs. Fata!**

**Goldie Bullock** (Ross '93) who lives in Jamaica Estates, is doing occasional substituting, and depending on the weather, she divides her time between New York and Maryland. She hopes to get to one of our spring meetings; enjoys reading this newsletter!

*Newsday* reported in January that two Christmas trees were burned outside homes in Blue Point, one in the gutter, and the other close to a house, which burned the home. The tree burned in the gutter was that of **Dan Malossi**, who retired in 2004 from South Middle. He taught Math. He and his family were not at home at the time. The suspicion is teenage vandalism.



It is with great sadness that we report that one of our nicest colleagues has passed away. **George Barnes**, (Ross '96) , who taught English, died of heart failure on February 8. He was 65. He also suffered from Parkinson's Disease. His unfailing good humor, and wonderful stories about Newfoundland, where he had a family home, carried many of us through the rough times and the crises of teaching. **Harriet Hellman** (Ross '05) said: "George was one of my favorite people ever. He was a kind, thoughtful, intelligent man and whenever I had a question of ethics...I always asked George Barnes." So many of us did just that. George's father just passed away this summer at the age of 96.

George leaves his wife, Holly, and son Glenn. Condolences can be sent to Holly at 1184 SW Mirror Lake Cove, Port St. Lucie, FL. 34986.

**Betty Packer's** (Hemlock Park '88) husband, Jack, passed away in January. Condolences to : **Elizabeth Packer**, 120 Village Grove, Williston, VT. 05495, 802-878-9328. **Charles Gray**, former BTA president in the early 60's died in February.

Joe Silva let us know that **Geoff Dwyer** passed away in January as well., in Manassas, Virginia. **Geoff** struggles with prostate cancer the past few years. He is survived by his wife, Terry, who is suffering from Alzeihmers disease and lives with their eldest son, Michael. **Geoff** served as principal of West JHS, and Assistant Superintendent under **Frank Mauro**. Condolences to Michael and Terry Dwyer, 10104 Holland Court, Manassas, Virginia 20110. Our sympathies to the family and friends of our colleagues.

## COME ONE, COME ALL!

General ROBS Meetings at the Brentwood Public Library.  
Fridays at 10 AM

### APRIL 13 - BITS & PIECES & Book / CD Exchange.

Ongoing projects on Brentwood history, gossip, updates, social interaction with refreshments  
(We ask you take home those items that are not taken as we can't store them)

### May 11 - HISTORY VIDEO

### June 8 - JUNE LUNCHEON

\$31 members, \$33 Non members (includes taxes & gratuities)  
Noon to 4 at the Snapper Inn, 500 Shore Road in Oakdale  
*More information to follow*



## ANTI TEACHER RHETORIC AGAIN — ON THE WEB

The Center for Union Facts (<http://www.unionfacts.com>), has launched an anti-teacher union ad campaign in Newark, NJ, focusing on the theory that tenure protects bad teachers. This campaign is starting in Newark but the sponsors are threatening to take it to other cities.

The ads are appearing on buses, mobile billboards and in the local newspaper, the *Newark Star Ledger*. The ads blame teachers' unions for failing children in Newark and around the country. The campaign Web site is <http://www.ProtectingBadTeachers.com>.

The Center for Union Facts, is led by Richard Berman who supported TABOR and orchestrated attacks against Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a higher minimum wage, and regulations on smoking.

The AFT will be working immediately with the New Jersey affiliates on countering this attack against teachers and their unions. If you have any indication that the Center for Union Facts is coming your way, please contact Chuck Porcari, the AFT's public affairs director at [cporcari@aft.org](mailto:cporcari@aft.org) or 202-879-4482. AFTCN, March 6, 2007

### HOW TEACHER UNIONS AID EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

A growing chorus is arguing that teacher unions and collective bargaining are obstacles to school improvement. In the Winter 2006-2007 issue of the AFT's professional quarterly magazine *American Educator*, that argument is addressed. The issue's lead author, education historian and former Assistant Secretary of Education Diane Ravitch, argues that the real obstacles to better schools are not unions but weak curriculum, mediocre school leadership, lack of resources, and poor hiring and evaluation processes. Further, she argues that unions provide a necessary check on administrative abuses and serve as a vehicle for sensible teacher input into education decisions. Underscoring Ravitch's main point, a Washington, D. C., high school teacher writes about his ongoing struggle to prevent his principal from changing students' grades and handing out unearned diplomas. The magazine also explores one of the most important issues facing schools with lots of disadvantaged students: the high teacher turnover rate. On average, low-income students have teachers with less experience than their higher-income counterparts—and critics of teacher unions claim that collective bargaining is to blame. AFT researcher Howard Nelson demonstrates that such claims are wrong in "Recognize the Real Cause: It's Not Collective Bargaining." These articles are posted online at the AFT Web site.

### SHANKER INSTITUTE FORUM FOCUSES ON DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The challenges for democracy in the Middle East were the focus of a forum that the Albert Shanker Institute conducted on Feb. 6-7 for AFT national, state and local officers and staff, as well as AFL-CIO international affairs staff and representatives from the Canadian Labor Congress. The forum stressed that the AFT's support for democracy and for independent, democratic trade unions shapes its international activities, and participants were encouraged to help conceive innovative, practical program approaches for the Middle East region. Some of the presenters noted that "democracy" programs have become so associated with the current administration's policies that discussing the concept has become problematic for Arab democrats and their allies, despite the hunger for change by ordinary citizens. Seminar participants offered many suggestions, including the possibility of involving the AFT's Arab-American members, who bring their personal experience with democracy, Arabic language skills and cultural insights to any program activity. Speakers at the forum included AFT president Edward J. McElroy, former Clinton administration Middle East envoy Dennis Ross and National Endowment for Democracy (NED) president Carl Gershman. Other panelists and experts came from the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, the AFT international affairs department, the United Nations Development Program, the Brookings Institution and the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy.

### TAX DEDUCTION

A recently passed resolution allows you to deduct state and local sales taxes on your 2006 tax returns. Check for a form at the IRS Office nearest you, or online. You may also claim a flat rate based on your income. And don't forget deductions for phone taxes, line 71 (\$30 for singles and \$60 for joint returns).

## BITS AND PIECES

### FEW COMPANY TV ADS MENTION RISKS

Pharmaceutical company TV ads largely use emotion rather than educating consumers about the risks and causes of a condition or other treatment options, according to a study published January 29 in the *Annals Of Family Medicine*. Led by Dominic Frosch, a clinical health psychologist at the U of California-Los Angeles, researchers analyzed the content of 38 pharmaceutical ads that aired over 90 hours of evening network TV in 2004. The ads represented seven of the 10 top selling prescription drugs of 2004. The study found that 95% of the ads appealed to consumer's emotions. For example, more than 90% of the ads portrayed someone as happier after they took the advertised drug. 69% of ads depicted a person who was unhappy or fearful prior to taking the advertised drug. 58% of the ads claimed the featured drug was a medical or scientific breakthrough, and 25% of ads mentioned how common or uncommon a particular condition is. According to Frosch, by overstating the benefits, the ads "contribute to people believing they need more drugs than they probably need." AFT Retiree 2/21/07

### CAMPAIGN TO COUNTER DRUG COMPANY SALES REPS MAY EXPAND

The Independent Drug Service Project is a \$1 million campaign in Pennsylvania that sends consultants to inform doctors about the effectiveness of different medications based on scientific evidence. It is designed to combat the sales pitches of pharmaceutical company sales reps who visit doctors to increase the number of prescriptions doctors write for medications their companies sell, often hyping expensive new drugs when older, cheaper treatments work just as well. Sponsored by the PA Department of Aging and administered by Brigham and Woman's Hospital in Boston, the campaign includes a team of 10 consultants who have made about 1,200 visits to about 500 doctors in the state. In addition, the campaign includes about six internists and Harvard Medical School instructors who provide talking points that doctors can use to discuss medications with patients. Jerome Avorn, a Harvard Medical School professor and a leader of the campaign, said that the effort could expand to other states later this year. AFT Retiree 2/28/07

### RX DRUGS OFTEN REMAIN EFFECTIVE AFTER EXPIRATION DATES

In December, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* examined how medications often remain safe, effective and stable for years after expiration dates established by pharmaceutical companies and approved by the FDA. Pharmaceutical companies establish expiration dates for medications based on the results of studies, and guarantee that treatments will remain at least 90% effective until those dates. Most medications expire after one or two years. However, the FDA Shelf Life Extension Program, which has studied hundreds of medications for the military since 1985, found that treatments remain effective for an average of five and a half years after expiration. The program also found that 88% of medications remain effective for at least one year after

expiration, and that some remain effective for as long as 14 years. Some patient advocates maintain that pharmaceutical companies establish earlier expiration dates to increase sales, and some pharmacy specialists have recommended that the FDA or companies study medications over longer periods and possibly establish later dates. AFT Retiree, 2/21/07

### OLDER RETIREES HEAD NORTH

For the first time since the Depression, more Americans 75 and older have been leaving the South than moving there, according to a *New York Times* analysis of Census Bureau data in March. The reversal appears to be driven in part by older people who retired to the South in their 60's, but decided to return home to their children and grandchildren in the Northeast, Midwest and West after losing spouses or becoming less mobile. While the number of people 75 and older who move at all is relatively small, a survey of geographic mobility released in February estimated that about 121,000 in that age group left the South from 2000 to 2005, and 87,000 arrived. In a comparable survey a decade earlier, 57,000 left the South and 92,000 moved there. From 1995 to 2000, another Census Bureau survey of migration patterns found, for the first time, slightly more people 85 and older left Florida than settled there. Friday Alert, Alliance for Retired Americans, 3/2/07

### RACE, ETHNICITY & HEALTH

Kaiser Health Disparities Report: A Weekly Look at Race, Ethnicity and Health is a new resource available through a free weekly email. It summarizes and synthesizes news coverage of minority health issues and highlights studies, initiatives and journal articles that generally do not receive mainstream news coverage. It also provides a calendar of upcoming events related to health disparities. *Kaisernetwork.org*

### MEDICARE ADVANTAGE BENEFITS & PREMIUMS

Analyzes the benefits and premiums of Medicare Advantage plans in 2006, including trends in relation to prior years, differences by plan type, and the level of financial protection provided to beneficiaries by the diverse types of plans. *Aarp.org/research/medicare/advantage/12006\_23\_medicare.html*

### RELIABLE HEALTH CARE SITES

If you have a diagnosis and want to explore it further on the Internet, be sure to look up reliable sites. Two that can be relied on are: [www.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.nlm.nih.gov), produced by the National Library of Medicine, and [www.healthfinder.gov](http://www.healthfinder.gov), produced by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Many major medical centers also provide useful, accurate information on-line.

Getting a good night's sleep is sometimes difficult. Learn more on [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

Looking for information on caregiver issues? Check out [www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

# Working to Benefit You!



**nysut** Member  
Benefits  
Trust  
*A Union of Professionals*

Every program endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is researched, designed and monitored to enhance your lifestyle.

With the group buying power represented by more than 575,000 members, we're able to offer quality products and services that are competitively priced.

#### Insurance Benefits

Term Life  
Catastrophe Major  
Medical  
Disability  
Personal Property and  
Liability (Umbrella)  
Long-Term Care  
Retiree Dental Plan  
Senior Term Life  
WrapPlan® Term Life  
Coordination Program  
Accidental Death &  
Dismemberment  
Vision Plan - *New!*

#### Financial Benefits

Preferred Savings  
Mortgages

#### Legal Services

Legal Service Plan  
Retiree Legal Service  
Plan

#### Discount & Travel Benefits

Dell Computers  
Equifax Credit Watch™ Gold  
Barnes & Noble.com  
Simply Certificates  
Working Advantage  
(Discount Tickets)  
Lifeline Personal Response  
& Support Services  
Car Rentals - Alamo, Avis,  
Budget & Hertz  
Six Flags  
The Buyer's Edge Buying  
Service  
Heat USA

#### Other Services

Consumer Credit Counseling  
Service  
MetDESK (Division of Estate  
Planning for Special Kids)  
Payroll & Pension Deduction  
Consumer's Guides  
Defensive Driving

To request more information, please call:

**(800) 626-8101**

E-mail us at: [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org) or visit us  
on the Web at [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).

*Some benefits may not be available in all local associations.*

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