



ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

THE NEW YORK STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION: SOMETHING TO BE AWARE OF

By Adrienne Eastman

On March 4th I attended a meeting at East Middle School presented by the Honorable Arthur "Jerry" Kremer and Anthony Figliola, Chairman and Vice President, respectively, of Empire Government Strategies, a government affairs organization. You have probably seen and heard Jerry Kremer's comments many times on TV. He was on the Ways and Means Committee in the New York State Legislature.

Jerry gave a brief history of the Constitutional Convention which is held every 20 years. There are 800 pages in the Constitution which includes such important items as pensions, state parks and taxes. Two hundred amendments have been made by the Legislature. Amendments can be made instead of having a convention which could cost 47 million dollars.

He also mentioned how the State of Rhode Island cut pensions, and to watch out for special interests. The Koch brothers are pushing to have union benefits taken away.

The vote in November 2017, to have a convention, is very crucial. If a convention is approved, delegates will meet in April 2018. Jerry urged all who attended to talk to their neighbors about it and the dangers of how everything could be in jeopardy.

Anthony Figliola spoke about how union contracts are currently protected by the New York State Constitution. That could be taken away if there is a convention. There is a movement afoot to make a change that contracts could be altered in the middle of the contract period. The Triboro amendment protects this from happening. Employers cannot change a contract. Special interests want to change that.

Another item being proposed is a tax on the sale of a house. That could happen if there is a convention. An item that will be on the ballot is the taking away of the pensions of public officials convicted of a felony.

Questions from the audience were entertained after both speakers were finished with their presentations. Some of the

concerns addressed were in regard to the public parks, some of which are now free and the Constitution allowing parochial schools to have bus transportation.

Teachers and environmental groups are voting to defeat the convention proposal. Governor Cuomo has not funded a convention and is on the side of the unions.

The final message is **FOLLOW WHAT'S GOING ON.** Tell your legislators we don't want a convention. It can hurt public education, parks, unions, taxes and more.

Long Island voters can defeat the convention if we **GET OUT AND VOTE NO!**

Author's Note: Arthur "Jerry" Kremer and Anthony Figliola have published a book entitled "Patronage, Waste, and Favoritism: A Dark History of Constitutional Conventions" which can be ordered from their website afiglola@empiregs.com or by calling (516) 663-5335.



MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at the Brentwood Public Library, 2nd Avenue and Third Street at 10:00 a.m. on the first Friday of the month unless otherwise noted.

June 2 - The View
(see flyer on back cover)

July & August - no meeting

ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Pronto, the community action group we support, is in need of dry and canned goods, paper products and toiletries. Please bring your contributions to every meeting. Thank you.

New and/or gently-used children's books are being collected for the Books to Home Program at every meeting. Please donate.

OFFICERS

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ROBS is proudly affiliated with NYSUT, AFT, NEA, AFL-CIO, RC21 & NYSARA.

www.robsny.org

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Co-Editor and Graphic Designer
gumby5@optonline.net
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TALK TO US

The phone numbers, home addresses, and e-mail addresses of all the Officers and Executive Board Members are in the Directory should you wish to contact us.

Stories, ideas for stories or columns and news items are always welcome.

This newsletter is all about us.



www.robsny.org

THE FUTURE OF ROBS

By Nick Siciliano

As you are aware, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of **ROBS** last year. The question is: will this organization last well into the future? If you believe that this organization is worthwhile to our retirees, you must step forward and get involved in **ROBS**.

I am sure a number of you have questions about our organization and how we can preserve our longevity. You can do this in a number of ways:

- a) run for an office
- b) volunteer for a committee
- c) support our programs
- d) when called upon by **RC 21** and **NYSUT** to support teacher and retiree issues, be sure to do so

e) encourage those retirees who are not members of **ROBS** to join our organization

As an organization looking out for the interests of retirees and helping our fellow teachers and clericals still in service, we also provide services to the Brentwood community in several ways - scholarships for students, adopting families for the holidays and in other ways.

Next year, some of us in leadership positions and committees will be leaving. It is time for those who have not been involved to step up and run for office and continue to make **ROBS** a successful retiree organization.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US

By Carmela Criscione

Welcome to spring. If the flowers are brave enough to show up, we can put away our long winter underwear and break out the sandals.

Happy birthday to **Ellie Steffen** (Art Teacher/HS)! She recently celebrated her 80th birthday with a party and gallery show of recent works. The thank-you gift for attending was a painting or photograph of the guest's choosing. **Phyllis Goodwin** attended the party at Ellie's Woodstock home and has written a small article with pictures for this issue.

A get well wish goes out to **Chris Veech** who is having hip surgery.

Thinking of you thoughts go out to **Maria Canale** (Head Clerk at the Attendance Department, Past President of the BCA and chef of most delicious Italian cheesecakes) and also to **Chuck Goehring** (Athletic Director) both of them experiencing health issues.

John Sherin informed me that Chuck's video interview will be on the **ROBS** website

(www.robsny.org) for the month of May and will be followed by **Ruth McCalla's** interview in June.

Evelyn Sekac (Secretary/Music Department) will be moving to Monroe, New Jersey in May. We will miss her at our general meetings. Much happiness in your new home and please stay in touch with us.

We're sorry to report that we lost **Joseph Padilla** (Social Worker) in March. His wife **Lillian** was also a social worker. They worked in the District for many years in other capacities. They went back to school and earned their masters in social work. A dedicated and hard-working couple.

We also lost **Irene Barahal** (Elementary Teacher), **Yvette Zimmerman** (Secretary/HS) and **Bill Lown** (Phys Ed Director.) Our condolences to their families. **Jim Nanos** (Science) lost his mom, Patricia, recently and **Carmen Pittinaro's** wife, Joyce (PE/HS), lost her father.

Ruth Teich (Elementary/NE) is writing a column for the East Islip Chamber of Commerce. She is the Membership Liaison between the Chamber and businesses in the community. It's titled "Spotlight On.." She's just started but will interview people and businesses. Her son, Gary, was honored by the Islip Bulletin with its 2016 Inspiration Award for his work with challenged youth. In 2016, Lee's Auto Body, Main Street, East Islip, which Gary runs, presented the East Islip Schools with a school patrol vehicle that started out as a wreck but the students, under Gary's supervision, turned it into a showroom-worthy vehicle. His son, Matthew, even while attending college, is active and is a Board Member of the Chamber of Commerce as well.

Hoping everyone had a Happy Mother's Day!

Please let me know if you have any news items you would like mentioned in the newsletter. Remember...

IT'S ALL ABOUT US!



Editor's Note:

How do you like our new look? Ronda Brooks, co-editor and graphic designer, has created a snappy new look for us. Congratulations, Ronda, on a wonderful new layout.



Ellie

ELLIE STEFFEN'S PARTY

By Phyllis Goodwin

I had a call from Ellie Lipkins Steffen about a retirement matter which was quickly resolved. After a pleasant chat, I explained that I would be in her neck of the woods to work on a garden. Ellie, very kindly, invited me to her Art Show, Open House, and 80th Birthday Party. I spent several days in the wilds of Ulster County planting tons of flowers for summer blooming. Needless to say, the weather was beautiful but the no-see-ums appeared in epic proportions. On Sunday, Gene Gaston, Donna Ragonese's husband, and I went to Ellie's party. Donna and Ellie

worked the suicide hotline for Woodstock's Family Service League. Ellie really knows how to throw a party. Very interesting people came from all over the state to visit. Her daughter, Susan, is a renowned string bow maker and her husband, David, is a world class violin maker and family photographer. Her son, Jerry, a very talented Juilliard musician and HVAC manager, traveled from Buffalo with his two sons, Noah and Jeremiah. Former student, Tim Lynch (North Elementary, NMS and Ross) and son, Ethan, arrived from Morristown, N.J. Many of the attendees have taken art lessons from Ellie. Conversations cov-

ered topics such as art, books, music, the economy, health issues, politics and, of course, "he who shall not be named." Ellie provided enough sumptuous food to take care of a small army. People were scattered everywhere, in the garden, the studio and throughout the house. As a party favor, everyone was given the chance to choose a painting to take home. What a great way to end a party. Happy Birthday, Ellie!



Ethan, Tim and Jerry

"Ellie, very kindly, invited me to her Art Show, Open House, and 80th Birthday Party."



Party Guests



Gene and Ellie



ROTARY CLUB OF BRENTWOOD

by RoseMarie and Lou Brousseau

What is Rotary? Many people ask this question and although there is lots of information on Rotary, simply put, Rotary is an international service organization. It is well known in most parts of the world and does the most wonderful projects which we will describe in the following paragraphs.

Each year our club is involved in a variety of projects; some more involved than others. In late summer, we take up a collection of school supplies and donate them to Pronto, our outreach contact. This past October, our club, along with Pronto, prepared 8,300 meals to be given to their clients. These meals could be prepared by adding only hot water. In December we host a holiday party for special needs Brentwood students. Springtime begins the preparation for our dictionary project. We have been giving dictionaries to Brentwood's third grade students for almost ten years.

These projects are only the tip of our involvement with the community. We lend our support to Interact students at the high school and North Middle School. Interact is the service organization which is an arm of Rotary. RYLA is another Rotary part involved with 10th grade students. RYLA is a leadership program in which 10th graders from all over Long Island, Queens and Brooklyn enjoy a week-end and learn leadership skills. Students in the 11th and 12th grade participate as leaders and keep the whole scenario going. It is a wonderful program.

There are five areas of service in Rotary. They are club, community, vocational, international and youth. In each area, service is the object, whether it promotes service to the community, sharing our vocations, doing international projects, or sending or receiving students to or from other parts of the world to promote literacy.

There are six areas of focus in Rotary. They are promoting peace, fighting disease, providing clean water,

sanitation and hygiene, saving mothers and children, supporting education and growing local economies. In support of these areas of focus, we have been eradicating polio in the world since 1985. We are almost there and we are proud! The Gift of Life program supports heart surgery for children 18 and under in third world countries and many lives have been saved. The list of accomplishments goes on and on.

Our club meets at Casa Vieja on the first, second and third Tuesday evenings of every month at 6 p.m. Join us for dinner sometime and learn even more about us. You can contact us by mail at P. O. Box 516, Brentwood, New York 11717.



"...Rotary is an international service organization. It is well known in most parts of the world and does the most wonderful projects..."



**CREATING ORDER FROM CHAOS
or
A SPACE FOR EVERYTHING
or
WHAT DOES YOUR SPACE SAY ABOUT YOU?**



Patricia Campbell,
Professional Organizer

**“Did you promise
yourself that
once you retired
you would find
time to purge and
declutter?”**

by Fern Sasso

It's so easy to accumulate and so hard to choose what to get rid of...even a title selection. Looking around your home, have you ever wondered how you acquired all that "stuff" that is now accumulating in the corners of almost every drawer, closet and room including the attic, basement and garage? Did you promise yourself that once you retired you would find time to purge and declutter? Would you no longer find excuses to procrastinate and begin the overwhelming task of tackling the clutter? Well help is on the way!

At our March 3rd **ROBS** meeting, we were treated to a special presentation given by Patricia Campbell, a professional organizer. As many of us know, we tend to have an easier time acquiring possessions than we do getting rid of them. It is believed that a clutter-free room energizes and expands an individual's mind and creativity, while on the contrary, mess causes stress and holding on to unnecessary items can affect your health physically, mentally and emotionally as well.

It's easy to convince ourselves that unused items will come in handy some day. One strategy distributed was a list of questions to refer to while going through the sorting and purging process that could help while making the difficult decisions regarding whether to keep an item or get rid of it. Some of the questions included:

1. Why have I been keeping this?
2. Have I used it in the last year?
3. Is it obsolete?
4. What is the worst thing that would happen if I didn't have it?
5. Am I keeping this solely because I would feel guilty if I got rid of it?

Be honest with yourself and evaluate your things as realistically as possible.

Another technique discussed as a means of creating order was the **SPACE** methods. **SPACE** is an acronym which stands for:

SORT - sort everything in the space into like groups

PURGE - get rid of items you

no longer want, use or need

ASSIGN A HOME - find a specific place for everything

CONTAINERIZE - store items and maximize your space

EQUALIZE - keep everything in its place

The overall message from the presentation was that people should live lightly by collecting moments, not things. Many in attendance seemed to identify with today's topic on a personal level and left with a plan and renewed sense of getting things in order and decluttering their lives.

Are you up to the challenge?

Next, all we have to do is organize the family pictures.



ROBS APRIL MEETING REPORT

By Susana Bouza

On Friday, April 7th, we had our **ROBS** Meeting. We started it with the Pledge of Allegiance. We have the American Flag now. It was a social meeting and a nice get together. Valerie and Carmela brought some games that we could play and also coloring stencils and supplies. The big group was broken into smaller ones. Our group of three people began playing UNO. We haven't played this game in many years and we needed to refresh our memories. We played for a few minutes. I

could tell that we were not going to end the game soon and I needed time to ask each group how they were enjoying this meeting. Also, I noticed some people leaving. I decided to ask the group's opinion before we finished our game. By that time, there were only 21 members remaining. Nineteen of the members were happy to have this social time occasionally and two members didn't enjoy it. It was a good experiment. I enjoyed it because it gave me the chance to go and talk to 21 people. Everyone loves our regular meetings with presenters. This one

occasion was different.

Many thanks to Valerie Vismale, our Program's Coordinator. You have selected excellent programs that everyone has enjoyed.



CUTE AS A BUTTON

By Ronda Brooks

When I was in ninth grade, I had a green corduroy skirt that was a little too long. It was the era of mini-skirts so my mom cut and hemmed it for me. I was left with a long strip of fabric about five inches wide. I also had a couple of pin-back buttons with cute expressions on them lying around so I pinned them to the material, hung it on my wall, and thus began my button collection. For several years, I continued to collect buttons. They have all kinds of messages, some funny, some political, some advertising, and are assorted colors, sizes and shapes, though most are round. When I left for college, the collection stayed behind. Mom continued to expand the collection and moved it from the slim corduroy strip to a large panel of black felt. This has since expanded to four large, black, felt panels in my old room.

Meanwhile, I finished college, started working and went back to graduate school, all the while collect-

ing more buttons that I would bring to mom's house whenever I'd visit. Eventually, I started my own collection that I've continued expanding until this day. I never counted but I estimate that I have over 4,000 buttons.

In my house, they are all on display, pinned to multiple panels of burlap that line several walls of my basement. I frequently buy buttons as souvenirs from trips I take or places I visit, like museums or zoos or concerts. Occasionally, I will see an employee at a place of business wearing an advertising button, and I'll ask if they have any to share. I'll even show them a picture of part of my collection and often they will find some buttons to give to me. I've even had employees give me their name badges! Friends and family know I'm a collector and will find buttons in their homes or on their travels that they give to me. A few months back, a friend of mine, who used to collect buttons, decided to give it up and left a bag with more than

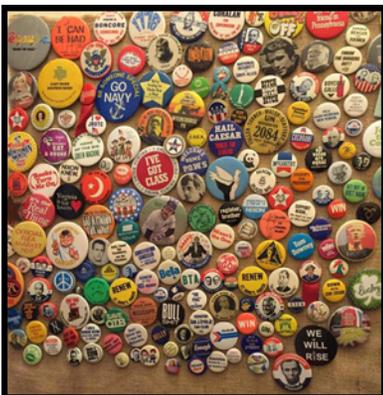
50 buttons on my doorstep. Recently, I stopped to admire a button at our editor, Carmela Criscione's house. On my very next visit, she handed me a bag with over 250 buttons that she no longer wanted! I am so grateful to all my friends and family and acquaintances and even strangers who are so generous to me.

It's a great little hobby to have. It's inexpensive, only takes up wall space, requires minimal upkeep other than a little dusting now and then, provides memories of various events and people in my life, and is a great conversation piece. My favorite button? It's an Elvis Presley Vari-Vue Flicker Badge from 1956 that changes images as it's tilted back and forth.

So, who's got some old buttons they don't want?



"I never counted but I estimate that I have over 4,000 buttons."





*ROBS Luncheon
The View
3 Consuelo Pl. Oakdale NY
June 2, 2017 12-3:30 PM*

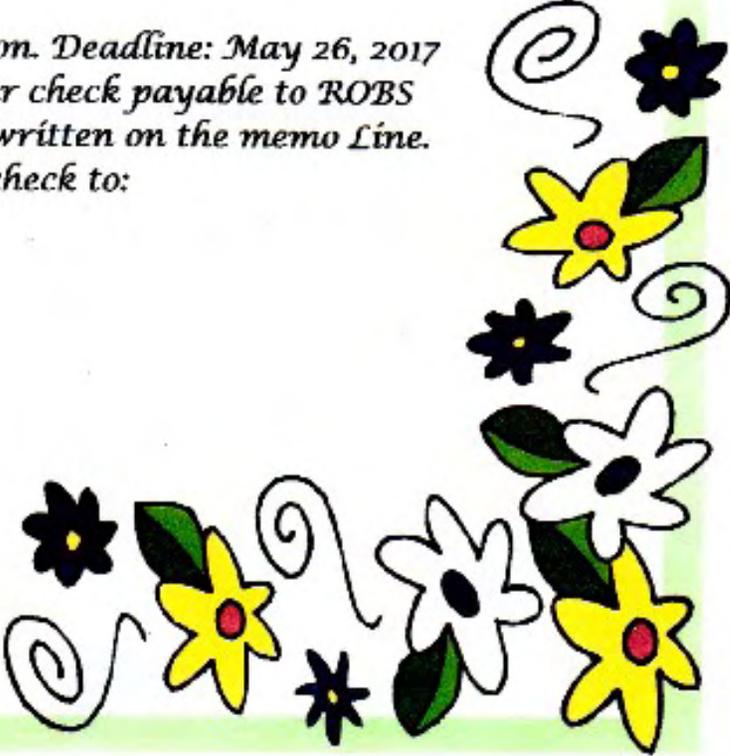
First Course
Penne a la Vodka

Second Course
Chicken Florentine

*Center Cut Pork Loin with Carmelized Apples
Macadamia Encrusted Mahi Mahi with Mango Sauce
Served with Potatoes and Mixed Vegetables*

Dessert
*Carrot Cake
Coffee, Tea, Soda and Cash Bar*

*Cost: \$35 per person. Deadline: May 26, 2017
Please make your check payable to ROBS
with "luncheon" written on the memo line.
Send your check to:*



*Valerie Vismale
1586 Lincoln Blvd.
Bay Shore NY 11706
631-680-4730*