



# ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991

Still Serving

Issue 5/2013-2014

September, October, November and December, 2014

## 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.

**November 7 - Linda Metzger**  
Genealogy

**December 5 - Holiday Luncheon**  
San Marco  
Restaurant

## DATE CHANGE

**January 9 - Breakfast**  
Candlelight Diner

**February - 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.

## OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President  
kpncl@aol.com

Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP

Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP

Nancy Churchillo - Secretary

Marge Kirchner - Treasurer

Phyllis Goodwin - President Emerita

Dot Zuckerman - Founder

## AFFILIATIONS

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

[www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org)

## Suffolk County Historian Speaks To Brentwood Schools Retirees

by John Sherin



Judge Peter Cohalan, Ellen Edelstein

Photo by Paula Moore

Brentwood Public Library - ROBS General Meeting – October 3, 2014.

Judge Peter Fox Cohalan was named Suffolk County Historian in May of 2012 by the County Legislature. He currently occupies donated office space at the Suffolk County Historical Society in Riverhead, filling the job as an unpaid volunteer. It's the first time the post of Suffolk County Historian was filled in nearly five years.

Received with rapt attention by all those in the Brentwood Public Library meeting room, he spoke with considerable knowledge about the history of Islip and the notable role his family has played in the history of Long Island.

His interest in history came from his father, who once wrote a book about Aaron Burr, and his grandfather, he said, as well as from his own family history.

"I got started because one of my family members was the first Catholic priest on Long Island back in 1839, and I was very interested in his career," Judge Cohalan told the legislative committee prior to his selection. This relative was the co-founder and second pastor of St. Andrew's Church in Sag Harbor back in 1845, adding that St. Andrew's was the first Catholic church on Long Island.

From there, his interest in local history expanded into other areas. He's researched the African-American communities that settled in Sag Harbor in the 19th century, and intends to continue "playing up" the history of various diverse segments of the county's population.

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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](http://www.robsny.org)

Visit us today!



### NICK'S NOTES by Nick Siciliano

As we end another year I would like to thank all who have contributed to the **ROBS** Scholarship Fund and the Project Hope Program.

Your kindness has helped students who are pursuing a career in education as well as families in the community who need our support.

In addition, your contributions to the PRONTO Pantry are deeply appreciated.

Please keep politically informed especially on those issues that pertain to retirees and those in active service.

Lastly, we are here to serve you.

Please inform me if you have suggestions for speakers at our monthly general meetings. Also, if there is anyone who should be receiving cards from **ROBS**.

We will be holding ROBS elections in May. Further details will be in the January issue.

Marge Kirchner, our Treasurer for many years, is stepping down. Please consider taking on her duties.

Please consider becoming active on **ROBS** committees. Our membership has always been generous in donating funds for the scholarship fund and holiday gift giving. We need help to make sure we meet the needs and interests of our membership.

I wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving, Joyous Hanukah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanza and, of course, the happiest healthiest of New Years.





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Cohalan traces his family's American roots to the American Revolution, when his Irish ancestors fought against the British under Lafayette, the French General allied with George Washington. A former Islip Town Supervisor (1971 – 1979) and Suffolk County Executive (1979 – 1986), Cohalan retired from the New York State Supreme Court where he served the people of this County for more than twenty-five years.

Actively involved in historic preservation for four decades, Judge Cohalan has participated in numerous local historical organizations, including the Sayville Historical Society in the hamlet where he resides, the Aaron Burr Association, American Irish Historical Society, and the W.K. Vanderbilt Historical Society of Dowling College, where he served as a member of the Board of Directors. County Legislator Ed Romaine (R-Center Moriches) liked the choice. "I could not think of a more appropriate historian for this county, (who has great knowledge and love for the history of this county), than Peter Fox Cohalan."

The County Historian is responsible for researching historic events within the County and promoting the preservation of historic documents and materials to ensure a full understanding and appreciation of the County's history.

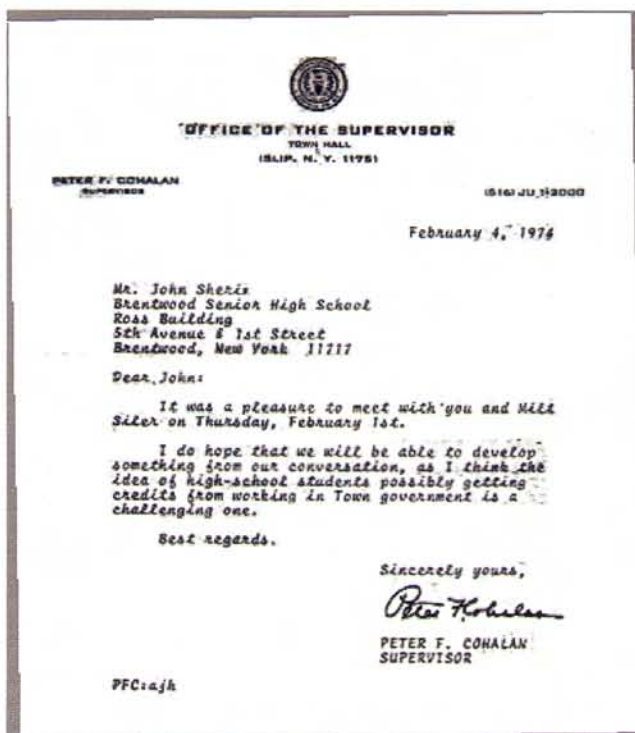
"Now, more than ever, in this age of constantly changing technology, it is critical that we preserve what has come before so that we can continue to honor and learn from the past", said County Executive Bellone, "Peter Cohalan has deep roots in Suffolk County, a long record of public service and a passionate interest in local and American history."

Presiding Officer Lindsay added, "Suffolk is rich in history and its history is the fabric of the American experience. We ought to preserve that." Judge Cohalan added "We all have a story to tell and I want to help tell those stories."

Much of this account has been gleaned from two **NEWSDAY** articles that appeared on May 10-12, 2012 announcing his appointment. His remarks were of keen interest to Ellen Edelstein, President of the Brentwood Historical Society noting that his role as Trustee of the Estate of the late David Lion Gardiner. A small portion of that financial inheritance might promise the possibility of preservation of Brentwood's original octagonal school house,

I and many others interested in local history were impressed by the speaker's extensive memory for specific detail as he recounted the story of Suffolk County's history and his family's role in it. Speaking with the Judge afterwards, Judge Cohalan suddenly pointed to me and said, "I know you. We've met before." Indeed we had, more than forty years ago in 1973 when Peter Fox Cohalan was Islip Town Supervisor and had facilitated key support for the Brentwood School District as it gave credence to the Maslow Toffler School Work Experience Program. It provided graduation credit to many Seniors through the NY State Education Department and offered help to those students attending MT and Brentwood High School.

All agreed that his was truly an informative and entertaining program. Thanks deservedly go to Lynda Romano, Program Coordinator, for scheduling Judge Peter Fox Cohalan to appear before our group.



John Sherer, Peter Cohalan, a Legislator





### START OF ANOTHER ROBS YEAR

by Adrienne Eastman

On September 5th it was time to welcome new retirees and returning members. Approximately 50 teachers and clericals enjoyed greeting friends and colleagues they had not seen over the summer or since their working years in Brentwood.

Nick Siciliano paid tribute to Dot Zuckerman before welcoming everyone and having new and recent retirees introduce themselves. Everyone clapped their hands for Cathy Browman who had been our go-to expert on health insurance for many years. We were happy to welcome Vita Tesoro (Special Education - PP), Marge Modelewski (East Middle), Denise Perrino (Psychologist, EIP), Ann Becherer (North Elementary), Theresa Roucoulet (North Elementary) Doreen Brochard (PP), Margaret Palmer (Northeast), Lois Branch (West Middle), Fran Sasso, Betty Greene (High School) and Maria Santini (Northeast).

After the introductions John Sherin had everyone participate in a small group fun exercise naming and discussing things on their "Bucket Lists." A few of the most common things on the lists were legal and health concerns and travel. All the lists were collected and taped together to form a chain and put on a small bridge constructed by John with the help of some of the members. The bridge represented a path from the past to the future. Everyone enjoyed the project and discussions.

Again, welcome to everyone, and join us again for interesting meetings and delicious luncheons to come.

*Editor's note: The beautiful group picture taken at the meeting is somewhere in cyberspace. We are trying to find it and when we do it will appear in a newsletter. Apologies to all the new retirees but the World Wide Web can be a very big place.*

### BRENTWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

by  
Ellen Edelstein

Our first meeting since the summer break took place at the Pilgrim State Hospital Museum on September 15. We had 30 people attend this interesting and informative tour conducted by Al Cibelli, who is responsible for having created this exhibit. As a long-time employee, Al was able to give us great insight into the evolution of the mental health field and the role that Pilgrim played over the years. It was surprising to me how few of our members had even been on the grounds of an institution that has been such an important part of Brentwood's development but everyone agreed that it was a great trip.

We are raffling off two Rick Mundy paintings at our Holiday Party on December 15. There will be a limited number of tickets sold at \$10 each or 3 for \$25. The money raised from this raffle will be used to fund two scholarships to be given to Brentwood High School students. Tickets will be available at all **ROBS** meetings or by contacting me at [president@brentwoodhis.org](mailto:president@brentwoodhis.org). The winner need not be present.

*Ellen is the president of the Brentwood Historical Society and will be keeping **ROBS** members up-to-date on their activities. Please consider contacting her about joining this interesting society. Editor*

### HAVE YOU JOINED?

The deadline for joining **ROBS** for 2014-2015 is fast approaching. Have you joined?

You can download the application from our website, [www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org). Send your check and application to our **ROBS** Treasurer: Marge Kirchner, 666 Hawkins Road E., Coram, NY 11727.





### MY PEOPLE TO PEOPLE AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE

by Ronda Brooks

G'day, mates! I have written before of my trips as a delegation leader with the People to People Student Ambassador Program. Starting in the summer of 2010, I have had the privilege of traveling to China, Hong Kong, England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, France, Austria, Switzerland and Italy with various groups of students. Every trip was amazing.

This past summer, I was chosen to be one of the leaders on an Australian Adventure. Along with my three co-leaders and 35 wonderful high school students from all over Long Island, on July 7 we embarked on the journey of a lifetime. For the next three weeks we learned to throw boomerangs and spears with Aborigines, took a skyrail through the rainforest, lived with local families, snorkeled in the Great Barrier Reef, lived on a farm, went surfing, had our pictures taken with koalas, saw mobs of kangaroos, toured and photographed the iconic Sydney Opera House, walked through guano-covered Capricorn Caves, visited with school kids, visited a crocodile farm, tried new foods (like kangaroo!) rappelled off a 200-foot cliff in the Blue Mountains, met with elected officials, walked along the outside of the tallest building in Sydney and so much more.

The smiles on the faces of the delegates as they explored the Land Down Under were priceless. The friendships they made were forever. The experience was life-changing for all of us. This was definitely a bucket-list trip for me.

Next summer's People to People delegations are already forming. There's a two-week trip to Japan; a two-week journey to Costa Rica; and there's **MY** new delegation...a three-week adventure to England, France, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. I'm ready to go!

If you know a child from fifth grade through college who might want to travel next summer, or if you are interested in being a delegation leader, please check out [www.peopletopeople.com](http://www.peopletopeople.com).







### WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP!

ROBS is a truly wonderful organization and for many years most of the work has been completed by a small group of volunteers.

There is, however, an area that has been a concern for the Executive Board. Every year we work hard to keep you informed on many aspects of senior living and helping the Brentwood community.

We are asking you to complete a simple task. That is to fill out the entire membership form, pay your dues and send the form back to us.

Some of you are not returning the form and then accuse us of ignoring you. Then you realize that you didn't give us an update on your new address or you didn't send in the form because your information has not changed. Many have simply assumed that you will continue to receive the newsletter. We can save our organization quite a substantial amount of money for printing and mailing by sending out the newsletter only to people who return their forms and those who were "grandfathered" in 2010.

Please help ROBS keep our organization running smoothly.

In Harmony,

Phyllis Goodwin

Don't let this be YOUR last newsletter. Starting with the January issue, only members will be receiving the newsletter. Don't let this happen to you.

### PROJECT HOPE 2014

As we start a new year we can reflect upon our many accomplishments.

One such source of pride is **ROBS PROJECT HOPE**.

As you know, **Project Hope** is a way for the retirees of the Brentwood school community to show continued concern for the children of the area. Through **Suburban Children, Inc.**, ROBS adopts families during the traditional holiday season.

Complete dinners are provided for Thanksgiving, and many gifts are bought, wrapped, and presented at Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanza.

**Letty and Sheila Sustrin**, and other volunteers, work diligently to make this endeavor a success. Their effort has been very appreciated, not only by the folks at Suburban, but especially by the children and their parents. If you are interested in participating in the "wrap party", please let us know.

Through our donations, **Project Hope** touches the lives of many. It is an opportunity for our group to add to the joy and spirit of the season. Please help continue this fine tradition.

Please make your checks payable simply to "**ROBS**". You may write "**HOPE**" on the memo line. So that we may keep proper records, please send your check to our Treasurer, Marge Kirchner.

**Ms. Marge Kirchner**  
666 Hawkins Road East  
Coram, New York 11727

Thank you for your continued support. Best wishes for the special weeks ahead.

Nick Siciliano, **ROBS** President







## **IT'S ALL ABOUT US** by Carmela Criscione

I hope we all enjoyed the long, hot, sometimes cool, sometimes humid summer. It seems to have settled into fall. The leaves are starting to turn and there are bins and bins of Halloween candy in the supermarkets.

We've already had two excellent **ROBS** meetings. September introduced the new retirees, and we had a very nice turnout. **John Sherin** had an interactive activity for us and that's always fun. In October, Judge Peter Cohalan gave an informative talk about Islip history. **Lynda Romano** has a great slate of speakers for the rest of the year also. Please make every effort to attend our helpful and insightful meetings.

**Rosemarie Brousseau** (Oak Park) would like us to know that the Rotary sponsored a Special Needs Holiday Party on October 22. **Donna Keller** (Brentwood HS) and **Ann Schnal** (Southwest School) were both honored as Women of the Year. Both ladies will be retiring at the end of this school year.

Sad news to report. **Caster Howard's** (High School) mother passed away in September. **Ethel Carter** (East Middle Math Lab) also passed in September. **Marti Davidson's** (Laurel Park) lost her mother-in-law in October.

**Donna Marie Ragonese** (Special Education) lost her long battle with cancer in September. She was very brave through out. She was the **ROBS** archivist for many years. A donation was made by **ROBS** to Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital in her name. She will be missed by her many friends.

**Barbara Sergi's** husband, Thomas, also died in September.

Our condolences to all who lost loved ones and know that our thoughts are with you.

We recently learned that **Grace DeRiggi's** (High School Guidance) son, Eric, has been diagnosed with a brain tumor and has had surgery. There is a link [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com) if any one wishes to contribute to a fund to help pay medical expenses.

There is good news too. **Grace Fishenfeld** (HS Art) had her work displayed in the Reception Room of Kellenberg Hall at Malloy College during Homecoming Weekend in October. On display are "In The Spirit" and "Mourning The Losses". Grace graduated from Malloy in 1972. She is a successful artist and has had several exhibitions in both New York and Florida. Congratulations on your achievement.

**Sheila** and **Letty Sustrin** are having a book launch for the latest in their charming "Teacher Who Would Not Retire" series. This one is titled "The Teacher Who Would Not Retire Loses Her Ballet Slippers". There is a flyer in this newsletter with details.

**Marge Kirchner** has been our treasurer for the last ten or so years. She has done a superlative job. She announced at the October meeting that she will serve out her term but will not stand for re-election because of health problems. She has done her job from Florida and from New York in spite of being in back pain. We wish her well and will miss her very much. She asked the members to think about coming forward to take on the duties as treasurer for a two year term starting July 1, 2015. If anyone is interested in taking on the position, please contact any of the officers. We may have to replace her but it will be exceedingly hard to fill her shoes. Thank you, Marge!

Congratulations to **Bob Rosenblatt** and his wife, Roz, on having celebrated their **68th** anniversary! Mazel Tov!





### AHRC COMES TO THE RESCUE!

by Phyllis Goodwin

For the past nine years **ROBS** has been very lucky to have this wonderful organization come to our aid. For us, it means another form of scholarship to the community.

**ROBS** has been fortunate to have Chris Schock, as head of the printing department and Ed Cody taking care of our newsletter. Chris has about six or seven people helping to move things along. They prepare newsletters, graphics for publications, annual reports, brochures and all the printing needs of AHRC. Chris has found many ways to set our directory and addendum. He has made or improved some of the graphics and pictures of our newsletter and sets it up for printing. If it can be done, Chris is the man. Chris has a wife who is completing her degree in nursing and two active daughters who keep him busy.

Ed Cody has been at AHRC for many years and is Chris' right hand man in the collating department. As soon as he finishes our newsletter, he is asking when the next one will be coming out. Ed plays soccer and travels to many interesting places with his brother. Ed is very precise and efficient in his undertaking. He is in charge of delivering the mail to all the departments and keeps track of when there are vacation schedules that may change the delivery schedule.

Before Chris and Ed came to our rescue we had to wait for NYSUT to print the newsletter and mail it to us. Our job was to collate, fold, insert, print two sets of labels for each envelope and attach them in zip code order. Thank goodness for AHRC. We are now left with delivering our materials to AHRC and then later transporting the newsletter to the post office.

Our hats are off to Chris and Ed for a job well-done.



Left to right: Amanda Nadvornik, Ashley Fisher, Kathleen Guleksen, Estefany Guterrez and Tiffany Hernandez.

Not pictured is Ana Argueta.

### **2014 ROBS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS**

by Kathy Guleksen

We are proud to announce that once again **ROBS** was able to award five scholarships to graduating Brentwood High School seniors this year.

Thanks to our very generous **ROBS** members we were able to increase the amounts of the general awards from \$500 to \$800 this year.

Scholarship night was held on May 15, 2014 at Brentwood High School and, as Vice President I was there to present the awards to the winners.

Amanda Nadvonik was presented with the \$1,000 Jack Zuckerman Award and Estefany Gutierrez received the \$800 Lillian Kelly award. Ashley Fisher, Tiffany Hernandez, and Ana Argueta were given \$800 awards.

Congratulations to all the winners and success in your future endeavors.

*Editor: **ROBS** is deeply appreciative of its members contributions to the scholarship fund. You can donate at any time. Please send contributions to our Treasurer, Marge Kirchner, 666 Hawkins Road E., Coram, NY 11727.*





## RRRRRIIINNNGGGG!!!

Some things are universal it seems. Below is a supposed actual telephone answering message for a school in Queensland, Australia. John Sherin checked it out for us, and while there is a school by that name this is not their actual answering machine message. Listen to the Awesome School Answering Machine You Tube (complete with Aussie accent). It is hilarious. Whether it is true or not, it is very funny. Enjoy it for what it is. Thanks to Shirley Stamm for letting us know about it.

"This is the message that the Maroochydore High School, Queensland, Australia, staff voted **unanimously** to record on the school's telephone answering machine. This is the **actual** message.

This came about because the school implemented a policy requiring students and their parents to be responsible for their children's absences and missing homework.

The school and teachers are being sued by parents who want their children's failing grades changed to passing grades even though those children were absent 15-30 times during the semester and did not complete enough work.

'Hello, you have reached the automated answering service to your school. In order to assist you in connecting you to the right staff member please listen to all the options before making a selection.

To lie about why your child is absent **Press 1.**

To make excuses for why your child did not do his/her homework **Press 2.**

To complain about what we do **Press 3.**

To swear at staff members **Press 4.**

To ask why you didn't get information that has already been enclosed in your newsletter and several flyers that have been mailed to you **Press 5.**

If you want us to raise your child **Press 6.**

If you want to reach out and touch, slap or hit someone **Press 7.**

To request another teacher, for the third time this year, **Press 8.**

To complain about bus transportation **Press 9.**

To complain about school lunches **Press 0.**

If you realize this is the real world and your child must be accountable and responsible for his or her behavior, class work and homework, and it's not the teacher's fault for your child's lack of effort, please hang up and have a nice day.

If you want this in another language, move to a country that speaks it.

Thank you for your interest in public education.' "



### CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME

Anyone interested in contributing an article to the Newsletter is encouraged to do so.

Have you read a really good new book, re-read an old favorite, visited a local landmark and discovered you learned something that you might see every day and not really think about?

Have you had an encounter with a famous, or even better, infamous person?

Let us know. You can contact me, Carmela, or anyone on the Editorial Board. We are all in the Directory.

Have you started a new business? What is it? How is it doing? We would really like to know.