



# ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

## THE DANGERS OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

by Michael Murphy

New Yorkers entering the voting booth on Nov. 7 will face a choice on the back of their ballots: whether or not to allow a costly and open-ended state constitutional convention to rewrite the state's highest law, putting public-employee pensions and other cherished rights and benefits at risk.

"In an off-year election, this ballot question will be decided by a small minority of voters," said UFT President Michael Mulgrew. "That's why it is imperative that every UFT member vote 'no' and encourage their friends and family to vote 'no.'"

The UFT is part of a coalition of more than 100 organizations opposing the convention.

If the referendum passes, voters would next be asked to elect 204 convention delegates. Members of the state Legislature and other elected officials, as well as political party leaders, would be allowed to run for these posts.

Historically, when a sitting official runs for convention delegate, the official wins virtually every time. Each delegate is guaranteed an annual salary equal to that of a member of the State Assembly, \$79,500, whether the convention lasts three months or three years.

The convention would meet

in Albany in 2019 for an unspecified duration, all at taxpayer expense.

The last time taxpayers picked up the tab for a constitutional convention in Albany was 1967. New Yorkers rejected all of the proposed changes that came out of that convention, but all the delegates and staff got paid for their time regardless.

Beyond its estimated cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, a constitutional convention would expose the rights and benefits guaranteed in New York's constitution to alteration or removal.

Critically for public employees, the New York State constitution guarantees that the benefits of public employees who are currently members in any pension system "shall not be diminished or impaired." A constitutional convention would present wealthy interests with a rare opportunity to end that guarantee and to slash public pensions.

Public employees could lose union protections as well. The state constitution safeguards workers' rights to join a union and bargain together for a contract. A constitutional convention would give anti-union forces a chance to roll back those rights and leave workers powerless.

Our state constitution also provides for the right to a

free public education. The state constitution further forbids direct government aid to educational institutions that have a religious affiliation. A constitutional convention could remove those protections and open the door to charter school executives, voucher proponents and other well-financed interests seeking to privatize public education.

Even the environment is at risk. The state constitution requires that the Adirondack and Catskill mountains be kept "forever wild." Opening up the constitution at a convention would give wealthy developers an opening to lobby for the removal of that protection, allowing them to profit from these green spaces.

The state constitution requires that this question appear on the ballot every 20 years, but a convention is ultimately unnecessary. New York State already has a legislative process in place to amend the state constitution without a convention. The state Legislature must pass a constitutional amendment in two consecutive legislative sessions and then it is put before New Yorkers in a statewide vote.

For all these reasons, it's important that New Yorkers vote 'No' on Nov. 7.

*(Reprinted from UFT September 7, 2017 New York Teacher issue)*

### 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.

October 6 - TBA

November 3 - TBA

December 1 - Holiday Luncheon  
TBA

### 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

Nick Siciliano - President  
kpnici@aol.com

Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP

Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP

Nancy Churchillo - Secretary

Carmen Roldan - Treasurer

Phyllis Goodwin -  
President Emerita

Dot Zuckerman - Founder

### AFFILIATIONS

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

www.robsny.org

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**EDITORIAL BOARD**

- Carmela Criscione - Co-Editor  
tecnouquen@aol.com
- Ronda Brooks - Co-Editor and Graphic Designer  
gumby5@optonline.net
- Adrienne Eastman
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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)

**NICK'S NOTES**

***By Nick Siciliano***

As we begin another year of **ROBS** (2017-2018), I would like to welcome any new retirees, in addition to all of you who attend regularly. Please make every effort to come to meetings (the dates are listed elsewhere in the newsletter) and bring a friend. We cannot let our organization wither because of indifference. We are too vital an organization to let this happen.

As most of you know, one of **ROBS** roles is to give back to the community. We do this by donating canned and dry goods to **Pronto**. Thank you for your generous participation in this.

As we enter the fall season, we are requesting donations in any amount to help adopt several families for the holiday season. Make your check to **ROBS** and on the memo line just write **Holiday** or **Project HOPE**.

As you are aware, the 2017 election will be held in November. On the ballot will be a proposal to have a Constitutional Convention next year. As most of you are aware, NYSUT has proposed that all of us vote **NO** on this proposal as it could have a disastrous impact on active and retired members. Elsewhere in the newsletter is an article on what impact a YES vote could have on all of us.

This May we will be holding our Election of Officers. Several officers are stepping down. We have told you this before. For this organization to continue, we need people to step forward. May is not far away. Please consider a leadership role in **ROBS**. Call any of the officers or executive board members for information.

Have a great year!



## IT'S ALL ABOUT US

### By Carmela Criscione

What a sight! All those yellow school buses on the road and we don't have to load and unload them!

Yes, another school year has started. What did you do this summer? Let us know we'd love to hear all about it.

Our sympathies to everyone (and we have a lot of members) in Florida and Texas. The footage of the two disasters has been frightening. **ROBS** voted at its September 8th meeting to send two \$100 contributions to aid agencies and we also encourage you to do the same if you can.

At the meeting we learned that **Orieta Blanco** was in Florida and evacuated from Miami to Naples and was on her way to Orlando. We hope that she was able to stay there until everything can return to normal and she can come home.

We lost **Maddi Dwyer** in June. Maddi was very active in the BTA during its formative years. She was an interesting and lovely lady. We

also said goodbye to **Grace Mauro** (Secretary/Music) in July. She was soft-spoken and we will miss her.

**Marilyn Hallam's** husband, Joe, passed away in July. Marilyn was a secretary in the Health Services Office.

Our condolences to all who lost someone this summer.

**Ivy Rosenthal** passed away in early September. Ivy was in her 96th year. She was a champion (world famous) tennis star from Jamaica in the 1950's. She was active well into her 90's attending meetings and still interested in tennis. The District dedicated tennis courts in her name. We are reprinting the article **Marge Kirchner** wrote about her titled "What A Woman" as a tribute to her. (See page 7) Her family had the article framed and it was on display at the wake. A great lady throughout her life.

Northeast Elementary School was renamed for **Gail Kirkham** in June. She was a long-time board member and community activist.

**Susana Bouza** is traveling again. This time she will be in Africa for about 20 days. We told her to be prepared to write an article and provide lots of pictures.

**Peter Vercillo** was also on the road this summer. With his granddaughter, Rosalie, he visited 15 states and traveled on the fabled Route 66. He also bought a two tone blue classic 1955 Chrysler New Yorker. I hope next **ROBS** meeting he comes driving it.

**Nick and Claire Geraci** (Guidance Administrator and elementary teacher) have moved to Lakeland, Florida and experienced their first Florida hurricane. Everything is fine. Best news of all they have a granddaughter name Emilia Trinidad or Mia who is just two months old and beautiful.

We cannot stress strongly enough for everyone to vote **NO** on the amendment for the Constitutional Convention. It will bring harsh changes and affects us all, working or retired. It has been packaged in a deceptive

way -- of course you don't want convicted felons to collect pensions but a yes there means a yes for the convention. The amendment appears on two pages and it is the second page that has the zinger.

Get well wishes to **Marty Hochheiser's** wife, Marcia, who is in rehab and to **Mary Ruffino** (Librarian/HS).

Congratulations to **Adrienne Eastman** on the birth of her great-granddaughter, Emma Madelyn, daughter of grandson Phil, and and his wife, Jennifer.

**Marge Kirschner** and her wife, Pat Landry, are moving permanently to Florida at the end of September. They already have a home there but there's still a ton of work to combine houses. Best wishes! Thanks for your dedicated service to **ROBS**.

Remember...  
**IT'S ALL ABOUT US!**



## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST ROBS MEMBERS!

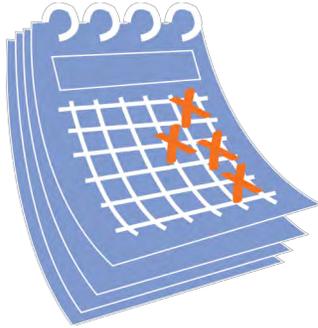


(L-R): Barbara Delillo, Linda Kuebler and Patti Eichner

## SAVE THAT DATE

### ROBS GENERAL MEETING SCHEDULE

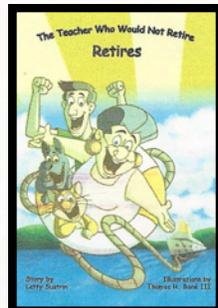
The meetings are at 10 a.m. the first Friday of the month, unless otherwise noted, at the Brentwood Library.



October 6  
November 3  
December 1 - Holiday Luncheon - TBA  
January 5 - New Year Breakfast - TBA  
February - no meeting  
March 2  
April 6  
May 4 - Election of Officers  
June 1 - End of Year Luncheon - TBA



Please come to a meeting, catch up with old friends and make some new ones. Refreshments are always served.



Here she is, our Mrs. Belle,  
As she retires, we wish her well,  
The "Dancing Lady" is her ship,  
And we all know she'll have a great trip!

Please join the celebration  
as I read and sign the last book of the series,

**"THE TEACHER WHO WOULD NOT RETIRE RETIRES!"**

This book is dedicated in memory of  
my twin sister and co-author, Sheila Sustrin.  
A light buffet lunch will be set out for you to enjoy  
during the performance.  
Each guest will receive a special gift from Mrs. Belle.

Sunday, October 8, 2017  
Doors open 12:00 Noon \* Reading begins promptly at 1:00 P.M.  
YMCA Boulton Center  
37 W. Main Street  
Bay Shore, N.Y. 11706  
Tel.#: 631-969-1101

## STILL SERVING

*By Barbara Mascaro*

**ROBS** has “Ollie” as our owl mascot and “Still Serving” as our slogan and certain members have put our **ROBS** slogan into positive actions. Let me explain.

At the **RC21** Awards Luncheon held on June 13, 2017 at Timber Point Country Club the following NYSUT Communication Awards were presented to **ROBS**:

- First Place - General Excellence - **ROBS** Newsletter - Editor Carmela Criscione
- First Place - Best Layout - **ROBS** Newsletter - Editor Carmela Criscione
- First Place - Best Article About Union Values - “Project Hope - A Time of Giving” - Letty Sustrin

We congratulate all of our award winners and thank them for keeping us informed of **ROBS** activities in such an outstanding manner! Way to go Carmela and Letty!

This past year members of **ROBS** have participated in a project that is now in its fifth year in the Brentwood School District. It is called Book to Home and it offers the parents/guardians of the school community the opportunity to come and acquire free books for their elementary-aged children. Special thanks go out to John Sherin, who obtained a large donation of books from the Jericho Public Library and Carmela Criscione, Letty Sustrin, and Karen Riley, who all made substantial donations to this worthwhile endeavor! What a wonderful way to promote literacy in the young people of the Brentwood school community and to support our in-service colleagues! We will continue to collect children’s books at each of our monthly meetings in the coming year.

**ROBS** has made the following monetary donations:

- \$100.00 for school supplies for school-aged children whose parents are clients of Suburban Housing Research & Development, Inc.
- \$100.00 to ONE AMERICA APPEAL for Hurricane Harvey victims in Texas
- \$100.00 to PROJECT HOPE for Hurricane Irma victims in Florida
- \$100.00 to the American Cancer Society for the NYSUT- sponsored Breast Cancer Walk

Now a wonderful round of applause for the members of **ROBS** ... your dues to our organization have made all these donations possible and made our slogan “Still Serving” a reality!

## THEY NEVER FORGET...

*By Ronda Brooks*

It’s true...I spend a lot of time on Facebook. I have been able to reconnect with dozens of friends from college, high school, even all the way back to Kindergarten. I can keep up with people I know all over the world on a regular basis. I can share news with family, colleagues and friends with a few clicks on a keyboard. It’s a wonderful resource for me.

On August 24th I was just hanging out on Facebook when the private messenger pops up with, “Hi Mrs. Brooks. It’s me Anita Pearson.”

Wow, Anita was a student I worked with in 1986-87. I was the Social Worker at North Junior High. We had many meetings and worked on many issues. Anita has given me her permission to share our story. She says “maybe our past can help uplift someone else’s future.”

Anita had many difficulties in her young life, and we tried to find strategies and solutions for her so she could deal and move on. Now, Anita says, “I’ve forgiven all that have done me wrong and violated me. Really it’s the only way that you can truly heal. Greater days and nights now.”

After she moved from Brentwood, I would get an occasional phone call from her, maybe once a year, and we would touch base. That stopped about 20 years ago.

I remember her telling me that she wanted to be a doctor when she grew up. She wrote, “I just wanted to tell you that I never became a Doctor or anything close to it. However I’ve never been in jail or on drugs nor sold my body. So that’s something I’m proud of!!! I raised two. fine stand up children, my daughter is a teacher and my son is fourteen years old. He’s an Honor Roll Student since kindergarten.”

Anita is 45 years old, lives in Georgia and is a mom and a grandmother! That makes me jealous since I’m not a grandmother. I hope to be someday. Ironically, Anita is giving ME advice about being a grandparent.

Anita runs her own business creating unique baby shower gifts. She is a strong, independent woman and is enjoying her life.

My favorite quote from Anita is, “I’ve never forgotten you. And how much you have changed my life.”

Anita, I want to let you know that you also changed my life and I’ll never forget you either!



# LAS TRES AMIGAS

## Susana Bouza, Amalia Moise, and Orieta Blanco

by *Susana Bouza*



It began in 1976.

I met Amy during Mrs. Snyder's dancing classes in Southwest School.

Our children were taking dancing lessons together. Later on, both of us started working for the Brentwood School District. Every now and then, we would talk on the phone. I met Orieta in 1984 when she began working at Northeast Elementary.

As the years passed, we would see each other at the Bilingual meetings, workshops and at the Superinten-

dent's conferences. Then, we started getting together after school to celebrate birthdays!

Orieta and I worked together for many years at Pine Park School. The three of us worked summer school. Then, we began getting together for lunch on a monthly basis. Our children grew, the teenage years passed. The high school graduations came and went. The weddings began, and then our beautiful grandchildren came! And, we continued to get together.

The three of us stopped working sum-

mer school the same years, and in 2010, the three of us retired!

We joined **ROBS, RC21** and the Brentwood Historical Society. We now see each other at the meetings, and we have lunch every week unless one of us is traveling.

We enjoy our friendship, and we have the Brentwood School District to thank for it!

Orieta is from Cuba, Amy is from Panama and I am from Mexico.

¡Las Tres Amigas!



# PROJECT HOPE -- A TIME OF GIVING

By *Letty Sustrin*

**Project Hope** was started by **ROBS** 25 years ago. From the very beginning of our organization we wanted to continue to show support for the families of the District they had worked in and loved so much. Suburban Children is the organization we have worked with for many years.

We are able to adopt local families and give HOPE during the Holiday Season. **Phyllis Goodwin**, assisted by **Adrienne Eastman**,

collects the food for the Thanksgiving baskets. Elves like **Lois Morrella**, **Loretta Ellington** and others are there to shop for the gifts for Christmas and Hanukkah time.

When the shopping is completed, we will have a **WRAPPING PARTY** at the Brentwood Library. We would love some more **ROBS** elves to attend this event and help wrap and deliver presents. It's a rewarding and fun time. You can also get to eat some delicious goodies and socialize.

Our **ROBS** members have always been so generous and, each year when "giving" time has come, respond handsomely. **Project Hope** has touched the lives of many, not only the families that we make happy, but also those of you involved in trying to fulfill some of the dreams of people who are less fortunate.

After my co-chair (my twin sister **Sheila**) passed away, I made a vow that I would continue to chair this committee with pride for what **ROBS** does for this community.

Please make your check out to **ROBS** and put **PROJECT HOPE** in the memo area. All donations can be given to Nick Siciliano at meetings, or mailed to our **ROBS** Treasurer, Mrs. Carmen Roldan, 49 Linda Lane, North Babylon, New York 11703.

Thank you once again for all your support. I'm looking forward to another successful year for **Project Hope**.



## IN MEMORIAM - IVY ROSENTHAL

(Ed. note: We lost Ivy in early September. She will be missed.)

Reprinted from ROBS Newsletter AUGUST 2006

### WHAT A WOMAN by Marge Kirchner



I met Ivy Rosenthal in the fall of 1985 when her grandson, Johannes Brugger, was in my 6<sup>th</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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.





# LET'S EAT!!

What do Brentwood retirees do when everyone else goes back to work? We go out to eat! Here are two recent get-togethers of **ROBS** members around Suffolk County. Please share your photos of **ROBS** social gatherings.



(Left to right) Mark Kuebler, Linda Kuebler, Patti Eichner, Janet Verdi, Pam Maniscalco, Alice Neidig



(Left to right) Back row: Kathy Gulekson, Debbie Berkman, Ronda Brooks, Lynne Shewan, Pat Goedtel; Front row: Darlene Phillips, Barbara Goldstein, Alice Neidig, Pat Monsen



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