



# ROBS - RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

## BEWARE...BE AWARE! by Carmela Criscione

Increasingly, I feel like there is a target on my back as a retiree. Politicians go on and on about the impact the Baby Boom Generation is having on Social Security and Medicare. **Excuse me?** When I started work, I was told that my contributions to Social Security, for the entirety of my career, would fund my benefits at age 65. The Baby Boom Generation (the largest generation at the time) **made** Medicare possible. We held up our part of bargain. If the trust fund hadn't been raided repeatedly and not paid back, we would not be looking at having the fund exhausted in the near future.

The governor proposed, in his executive budget, that the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA), which reimburses retirees for the Medicare Part B funds that are taken from their benefit checks, be eliminated. We receive a quarterly payment from our employer, the Brentwood Schools, for that amount and there is an additional check in June for those payments in excess of the standard deduction.

The NYS Legislature voted the proposal down. But it is an idea that may not go away. Right now, the proposal was for state employees, but you can see it gaining momentum for other areas covered by this NYSHIP provision.

We were strong and effective when we voted against the proposed constitutional amendment last November. We must have strength and resolve in this matter too. Write to your state assembly person and state senator that we do not want this approved. Please look on our website ([www.robsny.org](http://www.robsny.org)) for a sample letter that can be sent to your local representative. Their names are also on the website.

There is an even bigger problem looming and one of our members spoke out at our April meeting about it. A retired friend of hers, from the Bay Shore schools, was ill and having difficulty getting the care she deserves and was used to getting. **Why?** Because Bay Shore has dropped NYSHIP's insurance coverage for its retirees in favor of AETNA. They assured everyone that it was just as good. **Wrong!** They said it would be easy to access. **Wrong!** Bay Shore is again the toe in the water. Other districts may be considering changing also. **RC21** is aware and is keeping us up-to-date on the issue.

When we retired, we received a personal health insurance contract with the District. You received a copy which I am sure is in a safe place you can't locate. It's OK. There is a copy in your personnel file. Paper work never really disappears. The good news is that the District promised 100% coverage for retirees for life -- **"at the same level of benefits in effect for employees who are actively employed by the School District."** This means our coverage is tied to the BTA, BCA or BPSO contracts. I remember very clearly, as the Human Resources Officer, secondary member of the District's negotiating teams, and as a retiree, that the intent was to safeguard our rights by putting past practice into writing.

There is one further point to be made. There is an old Sicilian proverb which says: To trust is good, not to trust is better. Who looks to our interests? Increasingly, it must be ourselves.

### 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.

May 3 - Auction

June 7 - Luncheon (see flyer on page 8)

No meetings July or August

Have a great summer!

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

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## NICK'S NOTES

For this newsletter, we thought we would vary things and have one of our executive board members write a column.

### SCHOLARSHIPS - A FUTURE IN EDUCATION

*by Fern Sasso*

Before we know it, graduation will be here and there will be several graduates looking forward to pursuing careers in education.

**ROBS** has been committed, from its very beginning, to fostering the educational goals of these students, while helping to ease some of the financial burden that rising college costs can bring. Now, more than ever, we need motivated young people to enter the field of education and take on the many challenges faced by educators today.

This year, four deserving graduates will each receive one of our **ROBS** scholarships based on the following criteria:

- ◆ grade point average
- ◆ class rank
- ◆ personal essay
- ◆ letter of recommendation
- ◆ extra curricular activities
- ◆ community service
- ◆ college acceptance

Scholarships will be in honor of Jack Zuckerman, Dot Zuckerman, Lillian Kelly and Sheila Sustrin.

If you haven't done so already, please consider a contribution to the **ROBS** Scholarship Fund. You can bring a check to the general meetings or send it directly to:

Carmen Roldan • 49 Linda Lane • North Babylon, New York 11703

The check should be made out to **ROBS** with "Scholarship Fund" noted on the memo line. Thank you for your generosity and continued support.

***Remember - we're still serving AND making a difference!***

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### **\$5 \$5 \$5 \$5 \$5 \$5 \$5 by Carmela Criscione**

You may remember my mom, Mary Criscione, the original sub-caller. She hit upon a novel way to save money. She started saving \$5 bills. It's easy, it's fun, it adds up, you can do it in the comfort of your own home and you can do all kinds of things with the money.

There are some easy steps to follow: 1. Dedicate the \$5 to a purpose, such as vacation, car, jewelry, anything you want to do or buy. 2. Never pass up the opportunity to get a \$5 bill. If your purchase is \$15.50 always give \$20.50. If your purchase is \$4.99 always give singles or a \$10 bill. 3. Never turn down a \$5 if offered. In turn, always offer to accept fives instead of a ten or twenty. 4. Never give a \$5 bill away. Five crisp singles are just as good as a bedraggled \$5 to a stranger. 5. If you spend (God forbid) a \$5 bill you must pay a penalty. Spend one and pay back two. 6. Only spend \$5 for the dedicated purpose. If a loan is necessary pay it back as soon as possible with a hefty interest payment. 7. Remember, Abraham Lincoln was a great president.

This easy plan has worked for thirty years. I have lovely jewelry, went on wonderful trips and bought beautiful things using it.

The federal government should consider adopting her plan.

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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)



## IT'S ALL ABOUT US

*By Carmela Criscione*

It looks like winter is finally over and we were lucky that really bad weather passed us by. The daffies, tulips and hosta plants are peeking through the ground and my lilac bush has sprouted buds. They may be still making up their minds whether to sleep a little longer or bloom but we're getting there. I've finally stopped translating the "new" time from the "old" time and even figured out how to fix the clock in the car. I wish they would do away with changing the clocks twice a year. You never realize how many clocks you have until you have to change them.

We're sending get well wishes to **Irene Spano** (Secretary/Funded Programs) who is at home recovering from surgery.

We're sorry to say that **Steve Coleman**, Board Member and father of Ed (administrator) and father-in-law to Erica (teacher) died in February. He was a Board member for many years and was a stabilizing figure during one of Brentwood's recent turbulent times.

**Bob Ottone** has also passed away. He ran the Brentwood Radio Station and did color commentary for our sports teams as well as for the Long Island Ducks. He was known as "Bullet Bob" for his rapid delivery. Newsday published a lovely obituary about Bob which can be accessed from their website.

**Joyce Shapiro's** (Kgn/HP) son informed us of her passing in 2018 but did not provide a date. **Charles Brown** (Elem/SW) and **Marie Jarolem** (Elem/NE) also died. Marie was the first Brentwood graduate to come back as a teacher. She technically did not graduate from Brentwood High School but from Bay Shore because we did not yet have a high school of our own. **Richard Livreri** passed away in March.

**Edythe Welch** (Admin) lost her dad in February. She and the family celebrated his 100th birthday with a special party just weeks before his passing.

**Christin Veech** passed away in February. She was newsletter editor and Executive Board Mem-

ber for many years. Our newsletter won many NYSUT journalism awards under her hands and our members always looked forward to each issue.

We are publishing three tributes to **Peggy DelBene**, **Gail Inzerillo** and **Christin Veech**. You may or may not have known them personally, nevertheless they are worth knowing. **Kathy Ging** writes about her friendship with Peggy and Gail. **Judi Weissman** writes about Chris. This is not a sad newsletter. We tend to look at grief as a loss instead of a gain for many years we had these special people in our lives. Read these tributes and consider them in that light.

**Paula Moore** and **Valerie Vismale**. was recently honored by the Town of Islip during Black History Month in February for her community service. Do you know why February was selected as Black History Month? It is because both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln were born in February.

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

## Going, Going, Gone!

Our general meeting on May 3rd will be a fun event. We will be hosting a Chinese Auction on as many "treasures" as are donated. There will also be a silent auction on some very special items. All proceeds will go the **ROBS** scholarship fund. Your generous monetary donations are always welcome but this a new way to support the scholarship fund.

**What kind of donations are we looking for?** What ever "treasures" you are no longer using because you've downsized or trying for a new look for your home. Gently used kitchen items, that impulse buy that has hung unworn for three years in the back of your closet, that "as seen on TV" gadget that sits in a drawer, gift cards for stores you don't shop in or restaurants you don't dine in, things like that. We already have some knick knacks which would look lovely in your home, wind chimes, "as seen on TV"

items, (faux) jewelry - in other words, a little of this and little of that.

We are asking that you bring your donations in a little before our 10 a.m. meeting time so we can show them off to their best advantage.

**How does a Chinese Auction work?** Each items will be displayed with an index card giving it a description and number. There will be a bag/or cup in front of each item for you to place a ticket into. We will draw a ticket for each number and then the happy winner will retrieve his or her treasure. Tickets will be sold at the door and on the floor.

We anticipate a lot of fun and laughter. Please join us on May 3rd and bring a treasure for the auction with you. Remember, the proceeds are going to a very worthy cause - the **ROBS** Scholarship Fund.

## REMEMBERING CHRIS VEECH

by Judi Hearst Weissman



Chris Veech was my colleague and cherished friend. After a valiant battle with metastasized breast cancer, Chris passed away at her home on January 30, 2019, surrounded by her family. Chris is survived by her husband Bob, children Rondi and Gregg, and six beloved grandchildren.

Chris and I were dear friends for four decades; we knew each other's lives intimately and supported each other through joys and sorrows. Chris, in so many ways, was a woman ahead of her time. She was a political activist, attended marches for causes she passionately believed in and was a feminist long before most of us had heard the term. She served on a variety of boards and committees and she ran for public office multiple times. She was a prolific writer and even during her last months, Chris was published in *Newsday's* "Letters to the Editor" section. She wrote opinion pieces for local newspapers and she participated in the **ROBS** Writing Group for many years. Recently, John Sherin gathered many pieces of her writings and shared them with me and her family. I marveled at her ability to express herself and to tell stories about Brentwood and teaching.

Chris graduated from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota. In 1955, Chris began her career as a 9th grade English teacher in Anoka, Minnesota in a class with forty students. In one of the articles Chris wrote in the **ROBS** Writing Group, she spoke about this class: "*That first year prepared me for what I*

*would encounter later in my career.*" One of her first students was Garrison Keillor, who went on to *Prairie Home Companion* fame. The photo included with this article is Chris on her first day as a teacher. Chris then became an English teacher in the Syosset School District and after that, spent the rest of her teaching career at Brentwood High School. She brought to her teaching the same qualities she brought to our friendship - compassion, intelligence, insight, love and dedication. Chris appreciated all forms of literature and was an avid reader throughout her life. Reading and writing were guiding passions for Chris and informed much of her activism and community service.

Chris didn't just talk the talk; she walked the walk of the passions in her life. She was Vice-Chairperson of the Smithtown Democratic Party in 1976. She ran for County Treasurer in 1973, State Senate in 1974 and in 1975 she ran for Smithtown Town Council. She remained active in politics throughout her life.

She was always involved in women's rights and worked for Planned Parenthood of Nassau County in 1977. She also served as their Education Coordinator in order to make sure women of all ages and backgrounds were aware of the services Planned Parenthood provided. The many marches that Chris participated in were most often about what she saw as injustices occurring to people who she believed deserved better.

Chris was involved in the Long Island Council of Churches (LICC) and, not surprisingly, used her writing talents to make a significant contribution to this organization. For fifteen years, Chris was the editor of "The Prelude," their monthly newsletter.

When **ROBS** was first being formed, Chris became the Communications Coordinator for both **ROBS** and **RC21**. **ROBS** also benefitted from Chris' writing as she was involved not only in the **ROBS** Writers Group but also in the monthly newsletter. In 1996, the "Retirees on Track, ED 21 Retiree

Council Newsletter" won the American Federation of Teachers Communications Association Journalism Award for General Excellence. Chris traveled to Cincinnati with Catherine Killian, the editor, to receive the award and celebrated the fact that they had beaten 100 other winning publications to get this honor.

Just this past Thanksgiving, Chris was able to do something that was very special to me. I am on the Board of Directors for PRONTO of Long Island, a wonderful non-profit organization that most Brentwood teachers are familiar with. One of our biggest events occurs at Thanksgiving where we feed hundreds of local families. It is a bustling time at the PRONTO office and we are always in need of donations, food and volunteers. I sent an email to the Brentwood High School Retirees and many colleagues sent in generous donations. Chris, unbeknownst to me at the time, was working with a philanthropic group at her church - The Charlotte Cheatham Hunger Relief Fund. Chris told them about PRONTO and, with her encouragement, the group selected PRONTO as a recipient of their annual donation and we received a very generous check from them.

Chris brought light and love to her family, friends, colleagues and students. She was a uniquely wonderful person who backed up her passions with action. She looked at the world she lived in and continually asked herself, 'how can I make it a better place?' And, she did. She will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

A memorial service for Chris was held on March 2, 2019 at the First Presbyterian Church of Smithtown, 175 E. Main Street, Smithtown.

Of the many condolences sent to the family, one provides a perfect conclusion to this tribute. It was from a teaching colleague who wrote: "My deep condolences. Chris was someone who understood our hearts, walked beside us and understood our commitments. She is no longer here....but how lucky we were that she was our friend!" Yes, how very lucky we were!

## MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, PEGGY DEL BENE

by *Kathy Williams-Ging*

Peggy Del Bene was loved by everyone that she worked with, and by many of the students that she taught. Peggy worked her entire career teaching 9<sup>th</sup> grade social studies in Brentwood. She began teaching at East Junior High School and moved to the Freshmen Center in 1991.

Peggy never had a bad word to say about anyone. Even when dealing with the most challenging student or disgruntled parent, she remained upbeat and tried to find the good in all. Peggy was the chairperson of

the Sunshine Committee at East Junior, and assumed the same job as soon as she moved



to the Center. She loved feeding people and celebrating happy

occasions with all staff members. Peggy would pick out the perfect cards for sad sharings. In 1983, a former substitute teacher entered her classroom with a gun seeking revenge on a student. Peggy asked the gunman to keep her as the hostage and let the students go. That was just her natural instinct, to put the safety of her students first.

We jokingly called her “Saint Peggy”. It was fitting when her family decided to put her picture on the face of the prayer cards at her wake. She was devoted to her family and friends, and is missed by all.

## MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, GAIL INZERILLO-LATELLA

by *Kathy Williams-Ging*

Gail was a teacher, a writer, a reader, a director, an activist, a cook, a wife, a sister, an aunt, a friend.

Gail worked her entire career in Brentwood Schools. I met Gail at East Junior High School in 1974. I was a first year teacher and she was already a legend. She connected with students, teaching English in a unique way, using many innovative and creative techniques. We both moved to the Freshmen Center in 1991. During her last few years, she was the Dean at the Center, embracing the new role with her usual enthusiasm.

Gail cared deeply about the environment and animals. She was instrumental in getting a grant to fund a garden in the courtyard of the Freshmen Center. She also put in many hours planting and weeding. She was occasionally late to school be-

cause she stopped to help an animal in distress on the side of the Southern State Parkway. After her retirement in 2004, she volunteered at the Riverhead Foundation, helping to rehab injured animals.

During her birthday dinner in 2008, she expressed concern that not enough was being done to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina. That summer, three of us went down to work at a Habitat building, siding and roofing a house in the New Orleans heat.

During the presidential elections in 2012 and 2016, she helped register voters in the Philadelphia area. She hosted wonderful Inauguration Day parties in 2009 and 2013. After the last presidential election, she pushed a friend to rent a bus to go to the Women’s March in Washington. The bus was filled with many Brentwood retirees, current staff, family and friends.

If you ask people what is the first thing that they think of at the mention of Gail’s name, most would say laughter. All of her work and activism was done with a sense of joy. Gail could laugh louder and longer than anyone I have ever known. She was devoted to her friends and family. We miss her every day.



## LOOK AT WHAT YOU'RE MISSING

*By JoAnn Brown*

I joined **ROBS** right after I retired in 2013, and over the past six years I've tried to attend as many meetings as possible. It's a way to catch up with old friends over coffee and at the same time learn and enjoy new things along the way.

Most recently, we had the pleasure of being entertained by the Brentwood Chamber Choir, conducted by Jonathan Bley. The students sang songs from the recent High School production "In the Heights," as well as the "Star Spangled Banner," "Alleluia" and others. We were fortunate to witness incredible talent by the group, including gifted soloists.

Here are just a few more guests we've had the pleasure of seeing and topics we've covered (and sometimes even participated in):

- Peter Cohalan, Historian (and former Suffolk County Executive)
- Friends of America's Vet Dogs
- Attorney Christopher Petillo of Feldman, Kramer, and Monaco
- Gary Teich, Lee's Auto Body
- Fraud Protection, AARP
- Holistic Approach to Wellness
- Stress Management
- How to De-Clutter
- Yoga & Enhanced Fitness, YMCA

We learned a little bit about the history of Long Island, Wills and Trusts, and how one community member works with Special Needs kids to restore old cars and outfit a van to transport Veterans to appointments.

So please come join us and get involved. Even become a Board Member – you won't regret it.



Brentwood Chamber Choir

## AMERICA’S VET DOGS

by *Connie Gennaro*

We all enjoyed Cliff Miller's presentation at a recent **ROBS** meeting on America's Vet Dogs. Our group was very generous in monetary contributions and in inviting him to speak at other libraries, church and synagogue gatherings.

There is always the need for monetary contributions but there is also need for specific items necessary for this wonderful organization to thrive.

I've listed items that would help them greatly:

- ✎ Creamy peanut butter
- ✎ Chicken broth
- ✎ Cans of green beans
- ✎ Baby rice cereal

- ✎ Gallon size plastic bags (twist tie only)
- ✎ Unscented baby wipe refills
- ✎ Clorox or Lysol disinfecting wipes
- ✎ Gently used blankets and towels
- ✎ Medium/large dog toys
- ✎ Nylabone-Durachew (wolf or super)
- ✎ Nylabone-Durachew wish-bones (wolf or super)

Please mark donations with your name, address and phone number. If you know the value of the donation please include it. You will receive and "in-kind" donation letter.

Mail your donations to: America's Vet Dogs, 371 East Jericho Turnpike, Smithtown, NY 11787. Their phone number is 631 930-9000.



This is a picture of Sully who was named in honor of Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger who safely landed American Airlines Flight 1549 onto the Hudson River in January 2009. Sully, the puppy, was successfully trained by America’s Vet Dogs and went on to be the service dog of President George H.W. Bush, until the former president’s death. On February 27, 2019, Sully officially joined the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center’s Facility Dog Program.

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## I'M A SENIOR CITIZEN..OOPS..GOLDEN OLDIE. GIVE ME MY DISCOUNT

Claire (Elementary) and Nick (Administrator) Geraci recently moved to Florida and have been kind enough to pass on some senior citizen discount tips to us. Some of you may already be aware but some you may be hearing about these for the first time.

- \$ Kohl's does a 15% on Wednesdays for seniors 55+.
- \$ Marshall's 10% on Tuesdays for 60+
- \$ McDonalds discounts coffee and beverages for 55+
- \$ Taco Bell 10% for 65+
- \$ Choice Hotels gives 10% for 60+
- \$ Marriot Hotels 15% for 62+
- \$ Hyatt has a sliding scale up to 50% for 60+ plus but not all locations. You have to book in advance and it has to be for 2 people
- \$ Hampton Inn 15% if booked 72 hours in advance
- \$ Southwest Airlines has senior fares
- \$ United Airlines has a discount to selected locations for seniors 65+
- \$ Museums have reduced fees for seniors and/or free admission days.
- \$ Trader Joe's has marked senior citizen parking...and paper shopping bags with handles.

Just ask. Either the answer is "yes" or "gee, you don't look old enough to be a senior citizen."



**ROBS**  
114 E. Rogues Path  
Huntington Station, NY 11746

PRESORT STANDARD  
**US POSTAGE PAID**  
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11746  
PERMIT 101

**ROBS LUNCHEON**  
**PATRIZIA'S**  
358 VANDERBILT MOTOR PKY.  
HAUPPAUGE NY 11788  
JUNE 7, 2019 12-3:30 PM

**MENU**

Margherita Pizza    Baked Clams  
Eggplant Rollatini    Fried Calamari

**Entree**

Chicken Marsala  
Sole Oreganata

Served with Caesar Salad & Fioretti Pasta  
All inclusive: Soda, Beer, Sangria & Wine  
Dessert, Coffee & Tea.

Per Person \$38 Deadline May 30, 2019  
Make checks payable to ROBS with "luncheon" posted  
on memo line. Please send your check to:  
Valerie Vismale 1586 Lincoln Blvd.  
Bay Shore NY 11706 631.680.4730