

- ▶ Sheila Goldberg honored ..... 2
- ▶ Earned benefits focus of meeting ..... 3
- ▶ Retiree activism praised ..... 5

# Retiree Organizer

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S RETIREE LEADERS

## Jackson and McMahon honored as 2015 NYSUT Retirees of the Year

Donesa Jackson and Pete McMahon, who combined, represent more than seven decades of dedicated labor activism, were honored as New York State United Teachers' 2015 Retirees of the Year at the union's 43rd annual Representative Assembly in Buffalo.



*Pete McMahon (left) and NYSUT VP Paul Pecorale*

McMahon, a science teacher for nearly 40 years at Red Hook High School and a long-time past president and vice president for the Red Hook Faculty Association, is also a staunch political activist, serving as the Mid-Hudson VOTE-

COPE coordinator from 1981 until 2014, and a Political Action Committee member from the late 1980s until last year.

"Retirees' contributions to VOTE-COPE are extremely important not only for how they help NYSUT affect legislation, but because they also are a valuable link to the in-service local," said McMahon. "Without NYSUT a large number of the things that we consider to be a given would no longer be available to us."

As a retiree, McMahon remains active, serving his third term as a member of the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee and, for nearly the last decade, as Retiree Council 13 treasurer.

"I believe that retirees are a tremendously important resource," said McMahon. "We, as a union, would not be able to protect what we have, and continue to achieve our goals, without active retirees."

United Federation of



*Donesa Jackson and NYSUT VP Paul Pecorale*

Teachers retiree Donesa L. Jackson, a former chapter leader for P.S. 89 and a part-time pension consultant, salary and licensing adviser at the UFT Bronx office, remains active in retirement, serving as the UFT's retiree leader in the Orlando, Fla., area of Orange and Seminole counties; on the Orlando Central Labor Council; regularly coordinating with the American Federation of Teachers/Florida Education Association locals on issues and campaigns; and establishing a local chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans. Due to her activism and political leader-

*Continued on page 3*

The  
**Retiree  
Organizer**

is published periodically for NYSUT's retiree leaders. Locals, chapters and retiree councils may reprint all *Organizer* content.

Contact: GERALYN O'REILLY

**Karen E. Magee**  
President

**Andy Pallotta**  
Executive Vice President

**Catalina R. Fortino**  
Vice President

**Paul Pecorale**  
Vice President

**Martin Messner**  
Secretary-Treasurer

Retiree Services Office  
New York State United Teachers  
800 Troy-Schenectady Road  
Latham, NY 12110-2455

**518.213.6000**  
**800.342.9810**



**nysut**  
A Union of Professionals  
[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

# Sheila Goldberg honored with Feldman leadership award

In an address that was both humorous and heartfelt, Sheila Goldberg, recipient of the “Not for Ourselves Alone: The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award,” thanked delegates for the recognition, and saluted those who helped her achieve it.

“This is indeed a great honor and a very humbling one,” said Goldberg, Retiree Council 17 president. “No one achieves an honor without the support of others, and I have had the help of many NYSUT brothers and sisters over the last half century.”

Goldberg encouraged delegates to keep fighting to preserve public education. “I loved teaching and bringing the joy of learning to many hundreds of children,” said Goldberg. “My greatest wish is that we get through this challenging period and guarantee that same experience for those



Sheila Goldberg

who are in the field today. We must preserve public education, so don't give up the fight.”

Named in honor of Sandra Feldman, the former American Federation of Teachers and United Federation of Teachers president who succumbed to breast cancer in 2005, the “Not for Ourselves Alone: The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award” recognizes the contributions of women to the education union movement. The award is NYSUT's highest honor for leadership.

## RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

### NYSUT Regional Conferences

RC 12 ..... March 7 - postponed  
RC 7 & 8 ..... May 13  
RC 10 ..... May 14  
RC 4 & 46 ..... May 27  
RC 1, 2, 3 & 44 .. May 28  
RC 11 & 45 ..... June 2

**School Budget Vote** .....  
May 19

### Retiree Advisory Committee

June 15

**2015 Retiree Leadership Database Update Deadline**  
**Due to Retiree Services by June 30**

**Newly Elected Delegate/Alternate Report Form Deadline**

**Due to Retiree Services by June 30**



ship, Jackson was a 2012 elected delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

“My union has done so much for me that I must give back,” said Jackson. “And the way that I can give back is in the work that I do as a retiree for my union.”

Quipped Jackson, “We have our hip replacements and our knee replacements, we have

our walkers and our canes, but we are there!”

“The consistent support of members like Donesa, who’ve dedicated themselves to advancing the union movement, is an inspiration for us all,” said Karen E. Magee, NYSUT president. “Donesa Jackson is a testament to the fact that today’s active membership owes a large debt of gratitude to our retired

members.”

“Pete and Donesa’s commitment to improving the lives of working families and to the labor movement is not limited to their professional lives — they continue to make that a focus of their life’s work,” added NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale. “Both represent the very best of our union.”

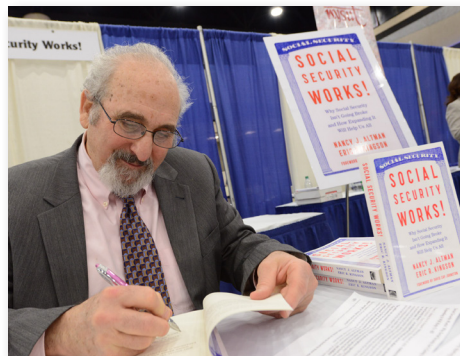
## **Earned benefits focus of pre-RA retiree workshop**

Defending earned-benefit programs such as Social Security, Medicare and public pensions, and raising awareness of the looming New York state constitutional convention vote in 2017, was the focus of a workshop for retiree leaders at the pre-RA Local and Retiree Council Presidents Conference. Paul Pecorale, NYSUT vice president, whose office handles retiree issues, welcomed participants, thanking them for “their advocacy and hard work.”

Featuring Professor Eric Kingson, co-author with Nancy Altman, of the book *Social Security Works! Why Social Security Isn’t Going Broke and How Expanding It will Help Us All*, the session dispelled the myth that Social Security is insolvent.

“Less than a penny is spent for every dollar that’s paid out,” said Kingson, the founding co-director of Social Security Works and co-chair of the Strengthen Social Security Campaign, a coalition of more than 300 national and state organizations, such as the

national AFL-CIO. He urged retirees to “keep blocking destructive legislative proposals, and lobbying for the expansion of Social Security.”



*Author Eric Kingson signs copies of his book Social Security Works! for NYSUT Retirees at RA.*

Steven Leberstein and Bill Friedheim of the retiree chapter of the Professional Staff Congress’ Social Safety Net Working Group — which travels statewide educating about the value of earned-benefit programs — also spoke. PSC represents NYSUT members at CUNY colleges. Friedheim leads the retiree chapter and Leberstein and PSC retiree John Highland lead the safety net

workgroup, created in 2010 in the wake of congressional attacks on earned benefit programs. “The social safety net is under attack,” said Leberstein who urged retirees to educate in-service members about the risks of erosion to the programs.

Peter Savage, NYSUT legislative staffer, highlighted threats posed by the upcoming vote to hold, or not hold, a New York state constitutional convention. A vote on the measure will appear on the November 2017 state election ballot. Since the constitution protects fundamental rights such as guaranteed pension benefits and the right to unionize and bargain collectively, opening it carries great risk.

“Holding a convention could allow for sweeping change to the state constitution,” said Savage, explaining that “literally everything is on the table” if voters vote in favor of holding a constitutional convention. Mobilizing to defeat the measure will be an important campaign in 2017, he said.

*As announced by NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale at the pre-RA Local and Retiree Council Presidents Conference — Retiree Workshop:*



## Signup: NYSUT's new service will help RCs immediately engage new members

At the direction of the officers, NYSUT launches a new service to help retiree councils immediately contact their newly retired members. This new service, which provides retiree contact information in monthly electronic reports, begins on July 1.

This continues ongoing efforts to help NYSUT Retiree Councils reach out to engage newly retired members as soon as possible to organize, mobi-

lize and participate in VOTE-COPE and increase participation in Member Benefits and other NYSUT programs. In spearheading this initiative, NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale has said, "Our growing numbers of retirees are one of our union's greatest assets."



### Sign up in 3 easy steps

1. The retiree council president must con-

tact NYSUT Retiree Services to request the "Retiree Membership List Confidentiality and Nondisclosure Agreement."

2. The retiree council must adopt a resolution to participate in the service.

3. The retiree council president must sign and return the "Retiree Membership List Confidentiality and Nondisclosure Agreement" **and** their retiree council's resolution to NYSUT Retiree Services.

---

## Judith Wishnia wins Higher Ed Member of the Year

Judith Wishnia's four decades of higher education unionism have been marked by one steady attribute: commitment to social justice.

Her selection as a NYSUT Higher Education Member of the Year honors the many ways her commitment has played out, as a labor historian; advocate for fair work conditions;

and a voice for women, the homeless and retirees.

The daughter of a union household, Wishnia was a longtime professor at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In 1976, she joined United University Professions, NYSUT's affiliate representing academic faculty and staff at the State University of New York's state-operated campuses, where her contributions continue into retirement.

She is a former member of the UUP statewide executive board and negotiations team and the recipient of UUP's highest honor, the Nina Mitchell Award for Distinguished Service. She was instrumental in the creation of the NYSUT Retiree Council, which she chaired, and she served for a decade as the chair of UUP's

Committee of Active Retiree Members. She has also served on the women's advisory and housing committees in Suffolk County.

"Judy Wishnia has exemplified higher education unionism, and she has been a strong, articulate voice for the underserved in our society," UUP President Fred Kowal said. "She's also been an outstanding example to a new generation of activists, as a unionist who believed in a lifetime of service."

Wishnia echoed those words when she talked about what it means to join a union.

"I really feel it's a lifelong commitment," she said. "You do it because unions are the vanguard of social justice. They're the ones that are protecting the working people of the country."



*From left, UUP President Fred Kowal, Judith Wishnia and NYSUT VP Paul Pecorale.*



# Retirees saluted for activism at RA meeting



*Clockwise from top left: NYSUT President Karen E. Magee; ED 53 Director Tom Murphy; NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale; incoming ED 52 Director Rosemary Catanzariti; NYSUT ED 51-53 At-Large Director Florence McCue, NYSUT Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta and ED 51 Director Loretta Donlon; outgoing Ed 52 Director Joan Perrini; NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Martin Messner; NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino; and Florence McCue.*

Florence McCue, NYSUT ED 51-53 at-large director, welcomed retirees and thanked them for their outstanding advocacy over the last few months at the NYSUT Retiree Contiguous ED 51-53 (At-Large) meeting at the 43rd annual NYSUT RA. “How many of you could have imagined having half your teacher evaluation based on student test scores?” said McCue. “We understand how unfair this is, and you have been making your voices heard. I encourage you keep it up!”

Paul Pecorale, NYSUT vice president whose office oversees retiree issues, announced a new membership system for retiree leaders. “You asked for it so you got it!” said Pecorale explaining that starting in July, lists of new retirees will be compiled, updated and distributed to retiree leaders monthly so they can quickly and easily contact new retiree members.

The new lists will be formattable for mailings; annual lists of current retirees will continue to be distributed. “It’s critically important that we get new retirees involved and aware of issues.”

Andy Pallotta, NYSUT executive vice president, thanked participants for their political activism and shared news of former New York state Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos’ May indictment. With less than a month left in the legislative session, he encouraged retirees to keep up the pressure. NYSUT President Karen E. Magee, Vice President Catalina Fortino and Secretary-Treasurer Martin Messner also welcomed retirees and thanked them for their support.

The three statewide retiree council directors also spoke. Loretta Donlon, ED 51 director, saluted retirees for their outstanding advocacy, terming them “fellow warriors.” Calling retirees the “institutional mem-

ory” of NYSUT. Tom Murphy, ED 53 director, encouraged members to stand strong, but proceed with caution. Joan Perrini, outgoing ED 52 director, thanked participants for their support, and introduced Rosemary Catanzariti as the new ED 52 director. Catanzariti encouraged retirees to reach out to in-service members and stay abreast of what’s going on in their local districts.

Other speakers included elder law attorney Steven Kramer, who spoke about NYSUT’s legal service plan and Bill Friedheim and Steve Leberstein who discussed the Professional Staff Congress’s Social Safety Net Working Group. The group leads statewide workshops to educate retiree and in-service members about the value of social safety net programs like Social Security and Medicare. Visit [www.psc-cuny.org/social-safety-net](http://www.psc-cuny.org/social-safety-net) for information.

# NYSUT Member Benefits offers travel and entertainment savings!

Whatever your upcoming travel, entertainment or shopping plans may be, NYSUT Member Benefits can help you save a little money along the way. Do you need to rent a vehicle for an upcoming trip? Are you thinking about surprising your children or grandchildren with baseball or theme park tickets? Or maybe you just want to treat yourself or someone special to a new laptop computer?

Have you seen the prices for theme parks tickets lately? Check out the Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed **OrlandoVacation.com** program for discounted tickets to Disney World, Universal Studios, Sea World, Discovery Bay, Aquatica, and other Orlando area attractions; up to 60% off at select

Orlando hotels; and a variety of hotel and theme park ticket travel packages.

Look to the Member Benefits-endorsed **Working Advantage** savings portal for discounted tickets for theme parks, movie theaters, movie rentals, museums and attractions, and the hottest sporting events like Yankees, Mets and Red Sox tickets.

What about savings on car rentals? Member Benefits can help with that as well. NYSUT members can enjoy **discounted rates on car rentals** with Alamo, Avis, Budget, Enterprise, Hertz and National.

And if you want interest-free purchasing, take a look at the **Member Shopping Program powered by PayCheck Direct**. Eligible NYSUT members have

access to thousands of name-brand products (such as computers, tablets, appliances and furniture) with the ability to pay interest-free over 12 months via automatic checking account withdrawals.

Make sure to visit the Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) on a regular basis to stay up-to-date on the latest Member Benefits news. You can also call with any questions at 800-626-8101.

*For information about this program or about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.*

*Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.*



## 2015 NYSUT Retiree Community Service Award Winners

Barbara Allan, RC 20;

Catheryn Berger, RC 13; Dorothy Brown, RC 44; Norma Busching, RC 18; Alice Cumba, RC 24; Eleanor Eckman, RC 21; Myra Entenberg, RC 24; Yvette Geary, RC 24; Louisa Johnston, RC 24; Bonnie Martin, RC 6; Gioia Ottaviano, RC 12; Yvonne Smith, RC 24; Angela Solomon, RC 24; Bernice (Bunny) Steinman, RC 43; Rhoda Stephens, RC 15/16; Janice Strauss, RC 11; and John Torres, RC 24.

## Important deadline reminder



Council presidents: Expect to receive the annual “Newly Elected Delegate/Alternate Report Form” (typically printed on blue paper) for you to complete and return to Retiree Services by June 30. Since the official ED Meeting mailing lists include only those delegates/alternates certified for the 2015 RA, this is your opportunity to add any delegates or alternates elected since the 2015 RA as well as any retiree council presidents that are not elected delegates.

If your council has elected new delegates/alternates that you would like included in the registration process for upcoming ED meetings, please be sure to complete, sign and return the “Newly Elected Delegate/

Alternate Report Form” to Retiree Services.

Since some retiree council elections are scheduled for June and July, please return the database update form and the completed and signed “Newly Elected Delegate/Alternate Report Form” as soon as your election results are known.

Council presidents will also receive the 2015 annual request to update the Retiree Leadership Database in the same mailing.

If retiree council presidents have questions about the “Newly Elected Delegate/Alternate Report Form” or the annual request to update the Retiree Leadership Database, Joyce Smith may be contacted at 800-342-9810, ext. 6291.