

Greater Bridgeport Retired Teachers Association

March 2017

Bridgeport Easton Fairfield Milford Monroe Shelton Stratford Trumbull

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From the President's Podium

What a teacher writes on the blackboard of life can never be erased. —Author unknown.



Teaching is not a lost art, but the regard for it is a lost tradition. —Jacques Barzun

Bring a friend to our April lunch meeting! That is our special focus in April. If you know someone who is eligible to be a GBRTA member but who has not joined, invite him or her to join you on April 6. A guest's meal price will be reduced by 50%. Probate Judge T. R. Rowe is our featured speaker. In addition, Board members will report pertinent information about their committees.

Our profession continues to be at the forefront of the news both nationally and locally. The greatest emphasis of that news, unfortunately, has to do much more with funding than with education. Of immediate concern to us as retired teachers are our pension and health-related benefits. After several years of lobbying, retired teachers obtained Connecticut income tax relief, and for 2016 we are "only" being taxed on 75% of our income. For 2017 that is supposed to be reduced further to 50%. The fly in the ointment, however, is the financial quagmire that Connecticut is in, with a large projected deficit and every possible source of income under scrutiny. I urge all of you to set aside March 29 to attend "Lobby Day" in Hartford to meet with your local legislators. A poor turn out sends the message that we don't care, and consideration might then be given to losing the 50% reduction or even returning to full taxation! Don't want to drive? No problem. We will have a bus available. See details in the Lobby Day article on page 2.

In the Governor's budget proposal to the Legislature, teacher pension funding is again a topic. He has proposed that the cities and towns pick up one-third of the cost of the annual payments into the fund. This lessens the state taxation obligation but increases the local taxes. No changes to the benefits are being proposed —simply how to fulfill the funding requirements. Taxpayers are likely to see this news as another burden caused by the teachers' "sweetheart" deals. No mention will be made of the fact that there might not be such a problem if the State had contributed the required payments all along!

Bob Pitzschler



Rosemarie D'Aquila thanks Director Ann Tornillo for the performance of the Trumbull HS Chamber Singers.

Photo by Helen Scinto

Do you know a high school senior in a public school in one of our eight towns who is interested in teaching? If so, advise him or her that the school guidance office has information about GBRTA scholarships.

Upcoming Trips Set for Spring

Contact Lois Hoyt (203-261-6693/ Ldh29@aol.com) or Angela McKelvey (203-227-3222/ lamckelvey@optonline.net) for reservations. Consult the website (www.gbrta.org) for more information.

N.B. Send checks to Angela McKelvey, 273A Agawam Lane, Stratford, CT 06614. Please include your phone number on your check.

April 18-25, 2017

The Outer Banks

From Old Williamsburg to Baltimore's Inner Harbor

See flyer with itinerary at gbrta.org

\$1524 double; \$2124 single; \$1474 triple

Price includes bus, hotels, 15 meals, admissions, gratuities

Payment due by March 7, 2017

April 20, 2017

Westchester Broadway Theatre

"Mama Mia"

\$99 includes bus, lunch, show, gratuities

Payment due by March 10, 2017

April 27, 2017

The Brownstone, Patterson, NJ

"The Rat Pack": a tribute to Sinatra, Martin, Davis

\$109 includes bus, two complimentary drinks,

family style lunch, show, gratuities

Payment due by March 17, 2017

May 7, 2017

"Follies" at Warner Theater in Torrington

Lunch at San Marino in Waterbury

\$98 includes bus, lunch, tickets, gratuity

Payment due by April 1, 2017

May 25, 2017

Newport Playhouse and Cabaret Restaurant

"Lunch with Mrs. Baskin" (romantic comedy)

\$100 includes bus, buffet lunch, show, gratuities

Payment due by April 13, 2017

May 31-June 2, 2017

Boothbay Harbor: Scenery and Greenery

Kennebunkport tour, harbor cruise, Maine Maritime Museum

See flyer with itinerary at gbrta.org

\$550 double; \$650 single; \$530 triple

Includes bus, hotel, 4 meals, admissions, gratuities

Payment due by April 19

And hold these dates:

June 19, 2017 Sail Boston 2017

June 29, 2017 One World Observatory, NYC

Details in May newsletter

Talk to Your Legislators on Lobby Day

This year retired teachers will be able to exclude 25% of their Connecticut pension from 2016 state income taxes (versus 10% last year). That benefit was fought for and won by years of lobbying by the Association of Retired Teachers of CT (ARTC), of which GBRTA is an affiliate. The bill that provided that benefit also calls for a 50% reduction in the 2017 tax year, but, as Bob Pitzschler noted in his president's letter, with the State's budget deficit, that could be in jeopardy.

So speak up for yourself on Lobby Day, scheduled for March 29 at the legislative offices in Hartford. On Lobby Day, co-sponsored this year by ARTC, CEA-R, and UFT, retired teachers meet with their own state senators and representatives to explain the issues that are important to them and their colleagues—not only taxes but their pension and health insurance as well. Don't know what to say? On the morning of Lobby Day, the ARTC lobbyist and legislative committee will meet with retirees and provide fact sheets to facilitate their meetings with the legislators. Legislators and attendees are invited to continue their conversations over a light lunch.

The GBRTA, in conjunction with ARTC, will sponsor a Lobby Day bus to Hartford—with a \$5 charge for GBRTA members and a \$10 charge for non-members. It will pick up at the usual GBRTA stops in Fairfield (Villa Avenue Stop and Shop) at 8:00 AM and Trumbull (Penny Avenue commuter lot) at 8:15 AM. To reserve your place on the bus, send a check for \$5, made out to GBRTA, to Bob Pitzschler at 4 Laurel Ridge, Chatfield Farms, Beacon Falls, CT 06403. The check, with your phone number noted on it, should reach Bob by March 15.

Won't you spend Lobby Day with your colleagues in advocating for your benefits?

GBRTA OFFICERS 2016-2017

President:	Bob Pitzschler	203-723-8488 rbpitz@att.net
1 st Vice-President:	RoseMarie D'Aquila	203-261-4693 eaglesnest@att.net
2 nd Vice-President:	Barbara Kmetz	203-268-8814 bfkmetz@earthlink.net
Treasurer:	Bonnie Drozeck	203-929-4940 bonziedro@gmail.com
Recording Sec.:	Marilyn Feranec	203-521-2432 marilynferanec@ymail.com
Corresponding Sec.:	Sandra Petrucelli-Carbone	203-463-8404 spcdkg@comcast.net

Join Us for Lunch

Testo's Restaurant, Bridgeport, CT
Doors open at 10:00 AM Meeting at 10:30 AM

April 6, 2017

Chicken parmigiana
Roast beef with gravy
Broiled salmon with dill sauce
\$25

Reserve by 3/31

Cancel by 4/4

May 11, 2017

Chicken marsala
Tilapia francaise
Baked Ham
\$25

Reserve by 5/5

Cancel by 5/9

•Make checks payable to GBRTA. Note date and menu choice on check. Only one date per check. Checks must accompany reservations. No checks accepted at the door.

•Members may attend the GBRTA meeting without staying for lunch. There will be a table for meeting-attendees only. To assure adequate seating, please contact Trudi or Larry Black if you are coming.

•Reserve/cancel with Trudi or Larry Black, 487 Church Hill Road, Trumbull, CT 06611 (203-261-6576, trudib@aol.com or larryblak@aol.com).

IN BRIEF

Kudos to Marilyn Mitchell and Debbie Ruby, who raised \$595 for the Scholarship Fund through the December raffle and donations.

On May 11, the annual Memorial Service will precede the business meeting.

Nominating committee members Pat Yacovacci, Greta Stanford, and Joan Capron will present the new slate of officers for 2017-19 at the April meeting.

In May, Member Services chairperson Peggy Vaughn (203-452-8219) will distribute spring flowers to members who are hospitalized, shut-in, or homebound. If you know someone who qualifies, please inform Peggy.

The ARTC spring meeting will be held on May 16 at Aqua Turf. For details call the ARTC office at 860-284-9760. The CEA-R spring meeting is May 25, also at Aqua Turf. For information, contact Greta Stanford at 203-878-8081.

Please notify Nan Stern at 203-261-9791 or nanstern19@aol.com if you change your phone number, home or email address.

ARTC Needs You

Would you spend \$50 a year to support an organization that from its founding in 1954 has:

- worked to maintain your pension and COLA;
- spent a decade lobbying for the exemption of your pension from the CT Income Tax;
- educated legislators about the differences between the funding of pensions of retired teachers and those of other State employees;
- protested the underfunding of your Health Insurance Premium Account;
- pressed for the repeal of the Federal Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP)?

The Association of Retired Teachers of Connecticut (ARTC) has done all that and more. With its 8,000 members and 14 Affiliate Chapters, ARTC sponsors a *Meet and Greet Day* to inform newly elected legislators about the issues that concern retired teachers. To reach all State legislators, ARTC initiated *Lobby Day*, providing retired teachers with the opportunity to learn about the issues and then to meet and talk with legislators about their concerns.

As one of ARTC's 14 affiliates, GBRTA has a seat on ARTC's Board of Directors and its membership, legislative and insurance committees. In addition, GBRTA collaborated in the decade-long struggle to gain legislative approval for the exclusion of portions of retired teachers' pensions from the State income tax. Retired teachers with an average pension of \$50,000 saw their State Income Tax reduced by approximately \$400 on their 2015 tax return. The 2016 return should see a savings of approximately \$1,000, with a projected saving of \$2,000 for 2017 and future years —if the current legislation is maintained.

Numbers matter. ARTC needs you. It needs to add your name to its membership list. It needs your financial support. To join ARTC, see the website at www.ARTCT.org or call their office at (866) 343-2782. You've received the benefits; ARTC has earned your support.

IN MEMORIAM

Jean Foster	5/10/16
Rose Walker	5/15/16
Jane Dionis	11/5/16
James Lehaney	11/16/16
Warren Bosley	12/9/16
Anne Pjura	1/12/17
Edward Gill	1/15/17
Alice Brochinsky	1/18/17
Rita Quatrella	1/25/17



GBRTA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Dues: \$20 Life Membership: \$250

Membership year runs from July 1-June 30. Please keep your dues current. Anyone behind in dues for two years or more will be dropped from the membership file and must repay two-years' back dues to be reinstated.

Mail form and dues (payable to GBRTA) to Nan Stern, 44 Lafayette Drive, Trumbull, CT 06611

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Year retired _____ School system _____