

# RETIREE



VOL. 24, NO.1  
FEBRUARY 2012

THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

## UFT Retiree Outreach Report:

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER

The UFT has always found ways to grow. We do not rest on our laurels. That was true in our in-service careers and continues to be true in our years as retirees.

RTC leadership has built on its predecessors' successes from our RTC founders through Chapter Leaders Rae Kahn, Jeannette DiLorenzo and Tom Pappas. Now it's up to us to build on our strengths.

UFT President Michael Mulgrew has dubbed us "The Daytime Union" for the good reason that we did not hang our social consciences on a hook along with our keys when we retired. He recently honored retiree volunteers who responded to his call to help out in Wisconsin,

Florida and Ohio in the fight against anti-Labor forces (**see photo on last page**). The November 2011 62% to 38% victory in Ohio showed that when we stand up for pro-Labor causes, we can prevail.

The poet John Donne reminds us, "No man is an island, entire to itself." We Labor women and men understand collective action better than most. Our union became stronger as we formed alliances with progressive Labor and with parent, neighbor and community groups. Working together, we can achieve a common goal.

The RTC has been similarly active across the country. We are reaching out to other retirees and in-service activists to make our voice louder, stronger and more effective.

Our San Francisco retiree section is a case in point. Due to changing



demographics, that section has been somewhat static in recent years, so we have taken steps to encourage outreach toward more union and political activism.

In coordination with San Francisco Section Coordinator Blanche Nash, NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue and I sent a letter to UFT and NYSUT retirees in the San Francisco/Oakland area inviting them to the UFT's recent Annual Meeting. We also asked the California Alliance For Retired Americans (CARA) to send representatives to the meeting.

For the first time, about a dozen NYSUT retirees attended along with three local California teacher retirees who are also CARA activists.

Sandra March, UFT Liaison to the RTC, Gerri Herskowitz, Director, Retiree Programs, Blanche Nash and CARA activist Sandra Mack and I made presentations to the 40 attendees, a larger attendance than in recent years. We distributed materials specially provided by NYSUT and CARA and conducted a spirited discussion touching on local and national issues common to all and encouraged networking, intergroup connections and a venue for future union and political activism.

*continued on page 3*



When Tom Murphy walked into the Northern California Annual Meeting on February 3rd he saw someone there who looked like his 6th grade teacher from 1953/1954 whom he had not seen since he graduated from P.S. 11R in 1956. He hurriedly grabbed the registration printout and scanned the names. There was the name: Bob Molinari. They reconnected and started to share old stories about that small grammar school in sleepy Dongan Hills on Staten

Island. Later during the meeting, Tom informed the crowd about the wonderful encounter. Bob got up and said, "It is interesting to hear what a student remembers and takes away, even almost 60 years later. Tom, tell them your memory."

Tom explained: "Being a lover of language and always trying to improve my speaking skills, I recounted that Bob once told us that if he mispronounces the word 'five' by saying 'fie' that we students should remind him to speak properly." In reflecting several days later, I think it showed me at a young age that everyone, including teachers, can progress and learn and grow and improve. Not a bad memory in my book.

# “THE WEST’S AWAKE”

— an old Irish song



RTC leaders recently attended four Annual Meetings in the West in areas where our retiree colleagues now reside.

1. Northern California section coordinator Blanche Nash hosted an extraordinarily innovative meeting in which NYSUT retirees joined UFTers from the greater Northern California area for the first time. Local AFT retirees who are members of the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) gave presentations encouraging our members to connect with pro-Labor and progressive allies as a way to have our voices heard in the public forum.
2. Southern California coordinator Marilyn Goldman (seated far left): “Our section is spread out geographically and we cover inquiries and member concerns from Los Angeles down to San Diego.” The members carefully

listened to news from NYC and eagerly participated in the Q & A discussion.

3. The Arizona Annual Meeting has drawn upwards of 100 or more participants over the years. Leader of the active section, Mickey Abend (standing second from right) proudly says: “We are a very happy group of retirees who participate in meetings, luncheons and many trips so that we can maintain our connection to New York and keep up with what is happening to our union and issues we should be aware of. We appreciate all that the union does for us in retirement.”
4. Las Vegas Coordinator, Rich Miller has involved the union in a whole host of activities, connecting retirees to the AFL-CIO Central Labor Council on which he serves, the Nevada Alliance for Retired Americans (NARA) and political clubs and



campaigns. A signal success last year was to help re-elect Senator Harry Reid in the face of a right wing tsunami. Richie tells us: “The Las Vegas section continues to grow in size and influence. Our retirees enjoy the wonders of Las Vegas. They remain active in their union activities, fighting to protect our retirement benefits.” Former Las Vegas coordinator Irma Frame (pictured with Murphy) entertained the audience with her rendition of “Let Me Entertain You.”

“When I want to have some bragging rights within the UFT and with our statewide and national affiliates, I point to both our Florida East Coast operation and the Las Vegas section as laboratories of how things can develop and models for growth in UFT Outreach Campaigns. The good news is that many retirees all over the country are interested in pursuing these goals,” Murphy said.





Murphy continued from page 1

A spirit of labor collegiality was evident in the enthusiastic interchange that ensued. I think there was also a level of optimism, even as we frankly faced the attacks and challenges being thrown at us from every quarter. There was a clear sense of sticking to our beliefs and of protecting the advances achieved by Labor over the decades, recognizing that losses can be won back if we continue to do the things we have done best over the years. The audience strongly supported using all tools available, especially the Internet.

Although it was a small begin-

ning compared to levels of outreach and activism in other areas that the UFT visits, it was a good one. Now talk must become action, and we expect to follow up in the Northern California region.

In addition to our outreach in California, the RTC holds Annual Meetings, as well as additional benefit meetings, in the greater New York City area and across the country where a significant number of our 60,000 UFT retirees now reside — in Florida, with an RTC office in Boca Raton; North and Mid/South New Jersey, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk counties, Washington,

D.C., Raleigh, Atlanta, Puerto Rico, Phoenix and Las Vegas.

Through the efforts of Marna Davidson and Ken Goodfriend in Florida and Rich Miller in Las Vegas, UFT retirees have formed close working relationships with NYSUT retirees, AFT local in-service and retiree members, AFL-CIO regional groups, the Alliance For Retired American chapters and progressive political activists.

I'll keep you informed on how the follow-up works out and on any reinvigorated activities.

## SHIP keeps on sailing with enhanced benefits

BY IRENE LOSPENUSO, SHIP DIRECTOR

The Supplemental Health Insurance Program (SHIP) is a benefit for retirees of the UFT who enrolled when eligible. Over the last 30 plus years, SHIP has continually tried to help our members when they incurred out-of-pocket expenses for a modest premium.

In January 2010, SHIP improved certain benefits. For example, the lifetime maximum for the dental stipend was removed. SHIP also increased the hearing aid benefit, added a second benefit for a hairpiece/wig and a new benefit was added for an emergency room visit. Since these changes, SHIP has paid out over \$4 million per year in supplemental benefits.

The SHIP Board of Trustees, which includes RTC Chairperson Tom Murphy, voted to enhance certain benefits effective January 1, 2012. The benefits are as follows:

**DENTAL STIPEND:** SHIP increased the reimbursement by \$100 to \$300 every other year — up from \$200.

**EMERGENCY ROOM:** SHIP has added a visit allowing up to two visits per year at a maximum of \$50 each — up from one visit.

**CHIROPRACTOR:** SHIP now reimburses up to \$10 per visit for four visits per year for all enrollees. Previously

only HMO enrollees were eligible. A physician's statement is required stating medical necessity for first claim. *NEW BENEFIT*

### NURSE'S AIDES/HOME HEALTH AIDES:

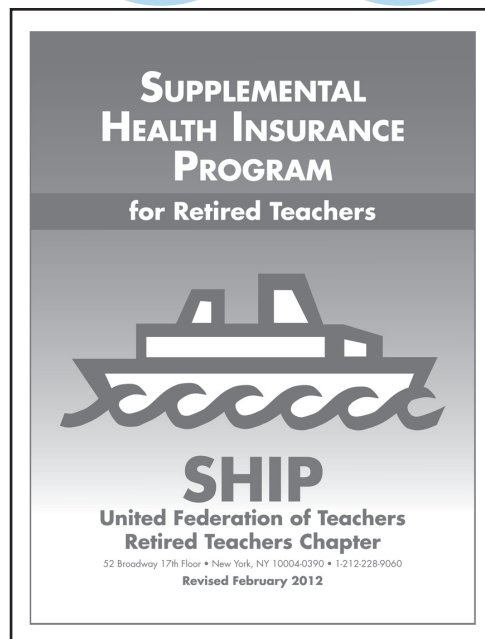
SHIP had to limit the overall period of coverage to a maximum of six months (\$1,250 per month) after a hospital stay of three or more days with a \$7,500 MAXIMUM benefit per incident. This was done in order to add a benefit of two months coverage (\$1,250 per month) with a \$2,500 MAXIMUM benefit per incident after a hospital stay of two days. Lifetime Maximum remains the same.

The rules for both the Surgery/Anesthesia benefit and the Registered/Licensed Practical Nurses while hospitalized are now the same under all plans. This was done to simplify SHIP's benefits to make it easier for enrollees to understand their coverage.

Unless specifically stated, all of the other SHIP benefits remain the same. A new SHIP brochure will be sent to all members by May 30.

The SHIP booklet and claim forms are available online at [www.uft.org](http://www.uft.org).

**Remember:** A separate SHIP claim form is required for each different benefit and each subscriber. Claims must be submitted within one year of date of service or payment by the carrier.



## AFT OBAMA ENDORSEMENT

BY JOHN SOLDINI



A few hours after the American Federation of Teachers Executive Board enthusiastically and unanimously endorsed the re-election of President Obama, AFT President Randy Weingarten invited your RTC Chapter to participate in a national conference call of teacher union activists in order

to explain the rationale for the endorsement and elicit reaction.

The rationale was simple: Randi emphasized that one had only to listen to the debates of the other presidential wannabes to realize there was no other choice but President Obama. She explained that if the wannabes' proposals were enacted they would decimate the middle class, emasculate collective bargaining, impose enormous burdens on the working class, destroy public education and undercut the safety

net provided for seniors in America.

Every participant, except for one activist who questioned the timing of the endorsement, agreed that even though we did disagree with and would continue to fight against a portion of President Obama's educational agenda, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to re-elect this pro-public education president.

(Editor's note: John Soldini represented the RTC at a town hall Internet conference eliciting national feedback on Tuesday, February 7th.)



Wisconsin, Florida and Ohio retiree volunteers (see page 1)

## INCREASED RETIREE VOTING POWER

**GOOD NEWS FOR THE RTC** At the January 18th Delegate Assembly a Constitutional Amendment was over-

whelmingly passed enhancing retiree voting strength. The UFT is one of the few unions that allow retiree members to vote for officers and deliberative bodies such as the Executive Board and the Delegate Assembly. To keep

in-service and retiree voting power in balance, a cap of 18,000 votes was established in 1989. This recent amendment raises that cap to 23,500, recognizing the ongoing commitment of the UFT to its retiree members' interests.



### UFT RETIREE

Michael Mulgrew,  
UFT President  
Tom Murphy,  
Chapter Leader

Sandra March, *UFT Liaison to RTC*  
Gerri Herskowitz, *Director, Retiree Programs*  
Barbara Shiller, *UFT Special Representative for RTC*  
Sasha Greene, *LMSW, Director, Retiree Social Services*  
Lynn Lospenuso, *Editor*

United Federation of Teachers  
52 Broadway  
New York, NY 10004

