

# SFTR NEWSBEAT

Sewanhaka Federation of Teachers Retired

## From Tom Cook:

SFTR Political Action Chair

### In This Issue:

- **Federal Legislation**  
by Anna Zurawinsky  
Page 5
- **Spotlight Carolyn Reres**  
by Maddy Maffetore  
Page 3
- **Invitations:**
  1. Theater/Dine Out April 24
  2. Boat Trip June 16

(Use enclosed tear-offs to make reservations)
- **...and much more**

### The Myth Behind Public School Failure

In an article in YES! Magazine Dean Paton noted:

**“Until about 1980, America’s public schoolteachers were iconic everyday heroes painted with a kind of Norman Rockwell patina—generally respected because they helped most kids learn to read, write and successfully join society.”**

**“Since then,”** he continued, **“what a turnaround...”**

Why have so many trashed what was once treasured?

Why was war declared against our public education system with vouchers, charter schools, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, tax caps, Common Core’s standardized tests, APPR, and so forth?

Much, but not all, of the answer is \$\$\$\$. According to usgovernmentspending.com, for the 2016 fiscal year, local spending on education in the U.S. will amount to 651 billion dollars. Add to that 291.1 billion in spending by state governments, and 126+ billion by the federal government. That’s over \$3,000 per capita. That hefty chunk of change represents the drug of choice for corporate America, and make no mistake about it, profit is the name of their game. One writer in THE DAILY KOS has a slightly different perspective,

**“Corporate America sees no reason to educate working class students beyond the most basic level. They are seen as nothing more than future low paid drones in a brutal**

**dog-eat-dog-cat-eat-mouse economy. The war against public education is a class war being waged by the wealthy against a growing working class resistance.”** (Continued Next Page)

Who has waged this escalating warfare? Investors, politicians in and out of office, celebrities and movie producers, laissez-faire economists, White House wannabes, radio and television evangelists and ideologues, charter school entrepreneurs, and other self-styled reformers who, for over thirty years, have proclaimed and celebrated what they regard as the death of public education. Education experts all? Not really. The personal academic records of some of them are ludicrous, and the percentage that have had any experience teaching would begin with a decimal point, but hey, **“the higher a monkey climbs, the more you see of his ass.”** What’s important to them is that there is money to be made, a great deal of it. So they overcrowd classrooms, tighten the noose around public school budgets, and hand public tax dollars to private, for-profit businesses that demand compliance over creativity from a group of handpicked students. Ignoring the fact that students who live in poverty and/or who come from severely dysfunctional homes might be failing because of the environment in which they live, states mandate perverted and punishing standardized **“bubble”** tests in which corporations set themselves up as the arbiters of success for children, teachers, and their schools, and thus **“prove”** public education to be a failure. Our unions are attacked as obstructionists

**Public education is a cardinal component of our democratic society.** The far reaching repercussions of its assassination may well deform America beyond recognition. That’s not the America we would wish upon our children and grandchildren. We hold ownership of our schools in common and we are collectively responsible for their good health and their success. And so, as good citizens with an eye to the future, we have a duty to dispel this myth of failure at every opportunity. How do we do this? We do it by rising to the defense of public education with our voices and our votes. With our voices we speak to family, friends, and neighbors, and we make sure we are heard in local newspapers. **With our votes, we support those who support public schools, regardless of their party label. Voices and votes - that’s how to be effective in a democracy, and that’s how to defend our public schools.**

In unity, Tom Cook

and grassroots parents’ organizations are derided as silly little soccer moms for daring to challenge this unconscionable crusade.

**Are their darlings, charter schools, doing any better? No!** That’s the real myth, a fable concocted by those desiring to protect their investments. A 2014 study of charter school test results in 27 states by Stanford University showed no improvement or **“significantly worse”** results for 75% in reading and 79% in math. But that’s O.K. **“If the statistics don’t match the argument, they are concealed or doctored to fit”** said Kristen Steele in her article *“Education: The Next Corporate Frontier.”*

The truth is that **“Few if any public schools are actually failing. This is a manufactured myth designed to fool as many people as possible for as long as it takes”** says Llyod Lofthouse, a former U.S. Marine, teacher, and author, **“...a manufactured myth with an agenda behind it that has nothing to do with improving the lives of at-risk children...a tool that serves greedy hedge fund oligarchs or other oligarchs who have their own agenda that has nothing to do with educating children. If the agenda isn’t based on greed,”** Lofthouse concludes, **“then it is based on fundamentalist, far right, religious beliefs or extreme political beliefs...”**

## Spotlight on Carolyn Reres

By Maddy Maffetore

### We spotlight Carolyn Reres as an amazing leader in 2 fields:

Master Teacher, Facilitator, and Committee Chair at HF Carey HS

NYS President of OSIA, the Order of the Sons of Italy in America.

As a teacher at H. Frank Carey HS, Carolyn taught math and computer science, and mentored the Talented and Gifted Program. Professionally, she shared her skills conducting in-service courses in teacher workshops, won 3 mini-grants for Educational Innovation on the topics of: Ethnic Diversity, Global Communications in the Classroom, and Franklin Square History. Carolyn also chaired 2 Middle States School and Community Committees (she used her mini-grant information), presided over the Faculty Scholarship Committee, served as Carey Rep to the Professional Committee, and was appointed Legislative Chair of the SFT Executive Board. That's quite a resume. She was rewarded by receiving the prestigious Nordahl Award for Service to School and Community, as well as, the 1990 Carey Teacher of the Year for innovation and excellence in the field of teaching.

Twenty five years ago, Carolyn moved from Queens to Nassau County where she joined the America Lodge of OSIA in Franklin Square. OSIA is dedicated to numerous cultural, educational, and philanthropic endeavors on behalf of the Italian American community and the community at large. Carolyn, being Carolyn, committed herself to the organization and worked her way up the ranks to president. The leadership and organizational skill demonstrated during her tenure in America Lodge (such as coordinating the Nassau County Italian American Night at Eisenhower Park) brought attentions to her talents to the NYS OSIA where she again

proved herself an asset, justifying her to rise through the various positions on the state level to her election as NYS President last June.

Carolyn's abilities are readily obvious to insiders and outsiders. For example, a prestigious opportunity was afforded Carolyn as she served as Program Chair at an annual NYS OSIA convention. She scheduled a program featuring the NYS Board of Pharmacy. That group was so impressed with her professionalism, that she was asked to serve as a public member of the NYS Board of Pharmacy. She served 2-five year terms.

**On the national OSIA level, she has served 7 terms as a delegate to the national convention, serving on many committees. Who knows? Perhaps she'll climb the ladder to the national presidency.**

**Carolyn, "siamo fieri de ti"-- we are very proud of you.**

## **Target Reading Pays Tribute to Patti Bertini, Student, Friend, Teacher, Reader**

By Julia O'Keeffe

When I started teaching at Carey High School, a young girl sat in my English class, a girl who had a dream of becoming a teacher; and an award winning teacher she did become at Washington Street School. When Target Reading was "born" some seventeen years ago, Patti opened her classroom door to our readers; and when she retired from teaching, she asked to join our group. She became a faithful reader for a few years, until she battled breast cancer, a fight she lost this past January 1, 2016.

When Target Readers return in March to Washington Street School for its *Read Across America* tribute to Dr. Seuss, it would also like to share that tribute with Pat Bertini Blumenstetter. Her students and fellow teachers admired her greatly and are reminded of Patti each day when they walk

by Bertini Gardens, which she established in the Washington Street courtyard. If you would like to participate on March 30 at 2 PM, please give me call at (718) 465-0228. We will be reading *Hooray for Diffendoofer Day!* which celebrates the power of teachers and education. It is always a fun experience.

### **Target Reading Schedule 2016:**

**Garden City Park:** 1:20 PM : June 4, 2016,

**Washington Street School:** 2:00 PM : March 30, 2016: Grade 5

## **Kudos For Marlene Natale**

By Anna Zurawinsky

I am proud to inform our retirees that Marlene Natale, a retiree from H.F. Carey, Math department is a candidate for the AT-LARGE position to the New York State Board of Regents. She is highly qualified as a skilled math teacher on many grade levels, a union activist for 22 years and now as a retiree received many awards for innovative planning and dedication to children. Marlene as a retiree, tutors children at all math levels including Common Core Math, SATS and ACT. She has been active in the anti-common core movement and advocate for the joy of learning.

I am pleased to say Marlene has been endorsed by our unions for this position. Long Island needs to be represented by an educator like Marlene.

**I am asking all of you to urge your assembly person to vote for Marlene Natale**

**WAY TO GO GIRL!!!!**

# Federal Legislation

## US Representative J.P. Larson (CT) introduced a Bill in the House of Representatives

### This legislation would:

1. Gradually increase Social Security benefits by a 2% to the annual increase of about \$300.
2. Ensure a fair Social Security COLA which reflects the actual cost of living expenses not a zero COLA.
3. Cut taxes for 11 million working seniors forced to work to make ends meet.
4. Make millionaires and billionaires pay their fair shares into the Social Security program by eliminating the CAP on Social Security payroll taxes.

This Social Security 2100 Act, if enacted would protect our system and improve benefits for current and future generations.

**Please contact your congressional legislator to pass this Bill.**

The full text of the Bill is available at: [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).

---

## Reimbursement of Medicare Part B and IRMAA-Part K

Governor Cuomo's budget proposal freezes the reimbursement of Medicare Part B to \$104.90 for those enrolled in the New York State Health Insurance Program. It also eliminates the reimbursement of the Medicare Part B Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amount which is paid by high income retirees. This change would affect retirees for whom Medicare is their primary insurance as well as retirees with Medicare from school districts who are enrolled in the NYSHIP Empire plan for health insurance. Retirees who are not enrolled in NYSHIP are not affected.

The executive budget proposal, if enacted, would no longer require employers whose retirees are enrolled in NYSHIP plans to reimburse more than \$104.90 for the cost of Part B for those with Medicare as their primary insurance coverage. NYSHIP believes this would result in additional out of pocket costs for retirees and a diminishment of their established health care benefits.

**Send your legislators a fax using the NYSUT MAC or use the toll free number for the New York State AFL-CIO Switch Board Hot Line, 877-255-9417, to speak with your state senator or assembly person to urge them to reject this proposal.**

**If you live out of state call your family and friends living in New York to call for you.**

## **SFT Teachers and Retirees Work In Unity**

By Anna Zurawinsky

Here are examples of active and retired teachers working together to improve education:

### ◆ **NYSUT/AFT Literacy Truck Load Program**

Ro Mamo, SFT President urged all members to participate in this program which provides eligible communities access to free books. The number of books are based on the number of Request Forms signed by teachers and retirees in our local. The SFT and R were able to provide 5,000 books for the Elmont community which were distributed by our members. Now our goal is to provide 30,000 books in the Spring to other district communities. To achieve this goal last month our retirees received forms to sign and return. The SFT retiree reps thank all those who returned the forms and remind the others to sign and return.

### ◆ **The Empowered Literacy Program**

This program provides free books from pre K to second grade who participates in *Read Across America*. Julia O’Keeffe, Target Reading coordinator has scheduled Read Across America for second graders at the Washington Street School in Franklin Square. Therefore the free books were delivered to the teachers at that school. Needless to say everyone was elated.

**This is how unions work together and for each other.**

### **It’s Party Time**

**Wednesday May 25, 2016 at 3:30 PM**

**Price \$15.00**

**Floral Park Terrace in Floral Park**

**Last year more than 25 of us gathered with active teachers for wonderful camaraderie and fabulous wedding like cocktail hour spread and open bar.**

**Best deal in town... I look forward to seeing you.... Maddy**

## Theatre/ Dine Out

By Norma Bushing

Now that the snows of winter have finally melted, it is time to venture out again. What better way than to spend a Sunday afternoon in April at the SFT Annual Theatre Dine Out? This year's play is a musical set in sunny Spain -

**Man of La Mancha. Based on Miguel de Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote**, the central character fantasizes about righting the wrongs of the world, "an impossible dream". After the play, join friends and colleagues for a scrumptious meal at King Umberto's restaurant. Stories and laughter are always part of the fare.



Mark April 24 on your calendar and meet us at the Broad Hollow Theatre (700 Hempstead Tpke.) at 2:15 p.m. King Umberto's is just a few blocks away on the corner of Meecham Ave. and Hempstead Tpke. We hope you will join us for both the play and the dinner, but if you prefer, you can come for one or the other. See enclosed Tear-off for further details and to make your reservation by April 12, 2016.

## Sea and Land Field Trip

By Anna Zurawinsky

Our final event of the year will take place on June 16, 2016. By popular demand we will board the Explorer for a two hour cruise of the Great South Bay, followed by lunch in a local restaurant in the quaint town of River Head, and finally some time to tour the amazing Atlantis Aquarium. Please check out the enclosed tear-off for further information and to make your reservation by May 15, 2016.

## By Your Student You'll Be Taught

By Maddy Maffetore

My former Student, Dr. Arleen Asti, now retired, volunteers for the Red Cross teaching CPR and the use of the defibrillator. So many institutions, businesses, churches, and schools have defibrillators on premises which necessitates knowledge of their use by members. Arleen will teach us use of the defibrillator on April 12th at our regularly scheduled meeting. It would be to your advantage to take part in this session.

**It pleases me to tell you that on March 9th Arleen will be receiving a national award from the Red Cross in Washington, DC.**



## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2016**

### **Communications Group Meetings\***

Tues: 10:00 AM: SFT Office: April 12, May 17, June 7

### **NYSUT RC18 Meetings\***

Mon: 10:00 AM: April 18, May 16, June 20

North Bellmore Public Library (Newbridge Road and Bellmore Avenue)

\*All members are welcome

### **Target Reading**

**Garden City Park School:** 1:20 PM (arrive 1:00PM): June 7

**Washington Street School:** 2:00 PM: March 30 (Grade 5 ) Diffendoofer play

### **SFTR Events**

#### **Theater/Dine Out**

**Sunday April 24, 2016 2:15**

**Man of La Mancha at Broad Hollow**

**Dinner at Umberto's 5:00 PM**

(Invitation and tear-off enclosed)

#### **It's Party Time**

Wed May 25, 2016 at 3:30 PM Price \$15.00

Floral Park Terrace in Floral Park

#### **Aquarium/Boat Ride**

Thursday June 16, 2016

Atlantis Aquarium

(Invitation and tear-off enclosed)

---

**Anna Zurawinsky, Maddy Maffetore: SFTR Reps**

**Karla Adasse: Newsbeat Editor**

**Contributors: Norma Busching, Tom Cook, Maddy Maffetore,**

**Marlene Natale, Julia O'Keeffe, Anna Zurawinsky**

**Special thanks to Helen Zurawinsky**

**Letters welcome e-mail: [KarlaFSA@aol.com](mailto:KarlaFSA@aol.com)**

**Log onto: [www.sft-nea.org](http://www.sft-nea.org)**

