North Country Notebook

Spring 2022 NYSUT Retiree Council 9 Newsletter

The North Country Retiree Council (RC) 9 & Sub-Councils

Champlain Valley Council of Retirees, Franklin-St. Lawrence NYSUT United Retirees, Jefferson-Lewis Council of NYSUT Retirees, & Southern Adirondack District

RC 9 Officers:
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Treasurer: John Clancy
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***Secretary:* Open**
NYSUT Delegates: Lynn Hunneyman, Rod Sherman, Joe Vernon
Alternates: Rick Morris, Nan Scinta
Newsletter Editor: Open
RC 9 Website: Open

CVCR Co-President: Rod Sherman & Gary VanCour

Jeff-Lewis CNR President: Lynn Hunneyman
JLNRC Webmaster
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Looking for ways to contribute to your retiree council and sub-councils? The following are a few positions that we need to have a few people work on:

- **RC Secretary:** attends 3-4 retiree council meetings and takes minutes. Assist President as needed. This is a great position to begin to become more involved in the Retiree Council.
- **RC 9 Newsletter Editor**: this could be an individual or group. The materials are provided for you. NYSUT has training to assist you in the formatting. If you enjoy working on the computer, please consider this. There are currently four newsletters per year: roughly taking about 4 hours per edition to format.
- **Website Editors**: As you may have seen, the JLNCR has a great website (*Thank you Carole!)* We are looking to have the other 3 sub-councils and RC 9 in general have a website also. Again, assistance is available from NYSUT to support editors.

As NYSUT celebrates 30 years of Retiree Services, RC 9 wanted to tell some of the Union stories from our ranks.

So many of you, our retirees, worked diligently to develop contracts for school employees. Our salary structures, working conditions and benefits would NEVER have happened if it was not for the work of so many of you. YOU took the risk to rock the boat and fight for the benefits that are now enjoyed. We need to hear your stories—please send YOUR union story to the RC 9 Retiree Services Consultant Ruth Shippee ruth.shippee@nysut.org so we can compile these for everyone.



Here are a few from the RC 9 leadership:

Lynn Hunneyman, President of RC 9 & JLCNR

I started teaching at **Belleville Central School** in 1970, later to become Belleville Henderson in the 1980s. My salary for that first year was $7000. I didn't know it at the time, but annual raises were not always to be expected. The first two

years we were offered $200 each, take it or leave it with no considerations for any other benefits. At the suggestion of other members, I became involved in the negotiations committee half-way through my first year and would be a member of that committee until I retired, 34 years later.

By my fourth year I had become President of the Teachers' Association, we decided with NYSUT's help that we would fight for a better contract. Salaries were of course an issue, but an even bigger issue was "just cause." The Board of Education *at first refused to recognize us becoming part of the union*. In fact when we were negotiating our NYSUT LRS was not even allowed in the building. Instead, he stayed across the street in the home of one of our members, we would then walk back and forth to discuss with him each new step in the process.
We hadn't settled when the new school year started not only upsetting the Board but many of our older faculty members. I remember one Saturday morning in October standing in the driveway of the Board President, we argued for most of an hour, just the two of us. He finally accepted we would be part of NYSUT, we would have a salary schedule and that "just cause" would be part of our first union contract.
There would be many more issues to come but 1974 was our first official union contract. I should note that many of those older teachers who would retire soon realized later that we had more than doubled their retirement income.

Rod Sherman, RC 9 Vice President, Co-chairman of a Sub-Council CVCR- the Champlain Valley Council of Retirees/NYSUT

Post-Employment Benefits

Any of you who have ever been a member of your union's negotiating team know about the give and take in the negotiations process. You know that when your union submits its list of contractual proposals to the school district each member of your team holds many of the items in a differing degree of importance. Some items are of very high importance to all the members. The same is true with the Board of Education's proposals for your districts team.

During that process in the early 1970s the idea of health insurance for union members in retirement began to spread across the north country. Local unions held together hard on making that a priority. During those years inflation beginning to rise and eventually reached double digits. Having health insurance in retirement with the school district paying a percentage of the premium was appropriately seen as something to help our members in retirement to sustain a decent retirement on a fixed income (there were no COLAs in retirement at that time).

For the next 10 years or so after those early wins, the locals from the Plattsburgh Regional Office worked very hard in unison to get health insurance for retirees in all the contracts. I believe that we met that goal. Some were able to get health insurance for retirees with 100% of the premium paid by the district for both the retiree and a dependent as well as Medicare Part B reimbursement. This was an accomplishment that was hard fought then and continues to be a battle.

These benefits came at a cost. I remember that our negotiations team and membership strongly supported the idea that 100% health insurance for retirees was a priority and must be maintained. It was considered a benefit that every one of our in-service members wanted in their retirement.

There are three points that I want to have you get from this short memory clip.

1) **You earned this benefit that you are receiving, be vigilant in protecting it. Hold on to your copy of the collective bargaining agreement as it existed along with any materials the district gave you when you retired.** If there is ever consideration for taking legal action over an improper change in benefits, these materials are crucial for supporting the arguments that the change is improper. NYSUT will help to ensure you are receiving all the benefits to which you are entitled.

2) If available, **stay connected with your local retiree chapter**. Chapter leadership should maintain a productive relationship with the in-service local president and be a resource for discussing issues and concerns of retirees, including potential changes to the contract that could impact retirees. Negotiations can be extremely complex but it's important that the interests of the retirees are understood before any changes are considered.

3) Finally, **maintain your membership in your local NYSUT Retiree Council sub-council.** Your sub-council is an affiliate of NYSUT for retirees. Our meetings are attended by the NYSUT Regional Staff Director. Members of the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee stay connected and informed about statewide health insurance issues.

Knowing the details of our post-employment benefits and maintaining these lines of communication are essential in protecting them.

Rod Sherman is currently Vice President of RC 9, a co-chairman of a RC 9 sub-council- the Champlain Valley Council of Retirees/NYSUT, and a longtime member and former co-chair of the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee. He was president of the Plattsburgh TA from 1973 to 2012 and was a member of the NYSUT Board of Directors and Executive Committee for over a decade.

Upcoming Events:

Annual Conference and Luncheons: There will be a series of get togethers, some virtual and some in person as the year progresses. We will not be having our traditional conference this spring. Please be watching for updates. RC 9 President, Lynn Hunneyman lhunney@twcny.rr.com or NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant, Ruth Shippee ruth.shipppee@nysut.org will send emails to those we have email addresses on as plans are solidified. *Please add them to your contact list to ensure the information does not end up in spam. All are welcome to attend these events.*

March 14 CVCR Luncheon at 11 am MHAB with speaker (CVCR has monthly luncheons on 2nd Monday of month with speakers) RSVP to Candi at Plattsburgh NYSUT office @ 518-825-0730.

March 17 JLNCR Executive Board meeting at Watertown Regional NYSUT office and Zoom 9:30 am Contact Lynn Hunneyman for information

April 1-2 RA (NYSUT Representative Assembly) Representatives from our Retiree Council will be meeting in Albany to assist in guiding the NYSUT body forward in Union business. *This will celebrate the 50 years of NYSUT*.

Did you know that there is a dedicated section of NYSUT.org just for retirees? Please visit and see the information available to you. Follow this link: https://www.nysut.org/members/retirees

Wondering about the issues that NYSUT is working on? Go to https://mac.nysut.org/ to find ways to make phone calls, text and write our law makers to help influence policy on education and workers' rights. You can also install the MAC app on your device.

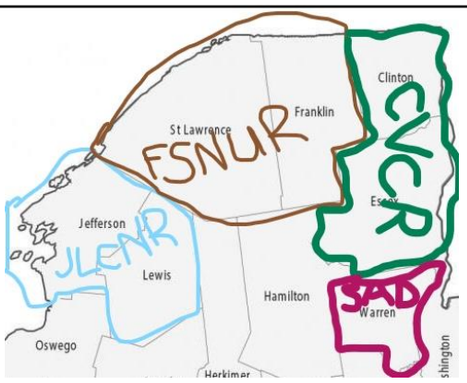
PLEASE UPDATE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES!!!!!! Even if you have sent in your membership form.

We are asking that you take a moment to update your email that we have on record to ensure we have accurate emails for all our RC 9 people. Your email will only be used for RC 9, NYSUT and the regional sub councils (JLCNR, FSNUR, CVCR, or SAD) correspondence. *Thank you to all that have sent or updated these!*

Follow this link to complete a short form to provide this information. https://forms.office.com/r/r6uKT33vct

Or hover your device camera over this QR code to go to link:

RC 9 and sub-councils plan to not send more than two emails per month.



Which Sub-council do you belong to? These are based upon where the district you retired from was located. The JLCNR area is Jefferson-Lewis retirees, the FSNUR is Franklin- St. Lawrence, CVRC is Champlain Valley, and SAD indicates Southern Adirondack District.

A retiree may join a sub-council where they now live if more convenient.

FLORIDA SNOWBIRDS (OR TRANSPLANTS)

Did you know that there is a NYSUT Retiree Council #43? It consists of 10 units throughout the state that will "**Welcome You"** to be a participant while in the Sunshine State.

You do not have to leave your affiliation with RC 9 to join the Florida Council as you can be an associate member of the Florida council and receive information from both New York and Florida. RC 43 provides various programming like social programs, trips, and luncheons as well as political information for those retirees in Florida.

For information contact: RC President Felicia Bruce or visit http://rc43.aft.org or Florida NYSUT Retiree Consultant Judy Kalb @ 516-389-9932.