

RETIREE

news & views



A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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Welcome New Retirees!

The Retiree Division Staff would like to congratulate you on your retirement. We understand that retiring can be a very exciting yet stressful time in your life. You have left behind work routines, co-workers, and friends to start a new chapter in your life.

Retirement comes with benefits as a member of the Teamsters Local 237. To assist you with the transition into retirement life, we have prepared a New Retiree Orientation online. This orientation will be available for you to access at your convenience. It will explain your benefits and how to get access to them. You will receive a letter in a few weeks with website link on where you can access the information. If you do not have computer access you can call the Retiree Division staff at 212-807-0555 leave a message with the call center and a Retiree Division staff member can go over benefits with you and other any questions you may have.

The Retiree Division staff is **Susan Milisits**, Co-Director, **Julie Kobi**, Co-Director, **Edith Johnston**, Assistant Director, **Luz Carty**, Assistant to the Director, **Shavon Banks**, Secretary, and **Noelia Quinones**, Assistant Secretary. We are here to assist, support and guide you through this special time of your life. Local 237 remains with you throughout your life...

RETIRED FROM WORK... NOT FROM THE UNION!

Local 237 Retiree Division 216 West 14th Street, 8th Fl., NY, NY 10011

Tel: **212-807-0555** Email: **Retirees2@local237.org**

WHAT RETIREEES ARE UP TO LATELY.



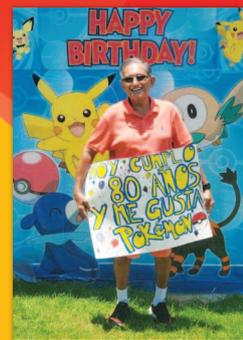
DOROTHY ROSS THOMPSON
Going for a walk and keeping busy.



ROCCO BRIENZA
Mask Making



JESSE KASOWITZ
Enjoys volunteering his time.



JOSE MELENDEZ
Celebrated his 80th Birthday. Feliz Cumpleanos!



ANTHONY COTTONE
In the garden with his grandchildren.

Our Summer 2020:

Fun activities that can be done from the comfort of your own home.

AARP

has a long list of activities to do from home

<https://local.aarp.org/new-york-ny/aarp-events/?cmp=CSN-KNC-AARPLOCAL-ECPPAID-SEARCH-NEW-YORK-2020GOOGLE&gclid=C1jphd2DgusCFYK-swody-0BUw>

NYC Parks

have free summer events for seniors

<https://www.nycgovparks.org/events/seniors>

Senior Planet

has a long list of different events that can be done online or over the phone from art to yoga and Tai chi.

<https://seniorplanet.org/locations/new-york-city/events/>

Thrillist.com

This site provides another great long list of events from virtual visits to museums, the Botanical Garden to Shakespeare in the Park to mention a few.

<https://www.thrillist.com/lifestyle/new-york/things-to-do-in-nyc/events/>

nyc-arts.org

If you love art, this website is for you.

https://www.nyc-arts.org/resources/NYC-ARTS_Manhattan_Seniors_Guide.pdf



by **Gregory Floyd**

President, Teamsters Local 237
and Vice President-at-Large on the
General Board of the International
Brotherhood of Teamsters

Former President Barack Obama said:
*“When times are tough,
we don’t give up. We get up.”*

That’s precisely what municipal workers did when the Coronavirus struck.

At a time of unimaginable grief... when a sudden, highly contagious virus rocked the entire world — and our own personal, little world — City workers, including members of my union, Local 237, didn’t give up, they got up and went to work.

School Safety Agents, NYCHA workers, special police officers in public hospitals, homeless shelters and on CUNY campuses, the food service workers in public schools and the radiologists in neonatal units — to name just a few of the titles our members hold — were on the job. Seemingly overnight, the status of being an “essential worker” took on a new and often deadly meaning. And so, during these tough times, that drenched us in dread, paralyzed so many in fear — an unnerving time that sadly, for some, meant there would be no final hug, goodbye or sacraments to meet our maker — City workers went to work. Those who were lost or became ill were our friends, our co-workers, our mentors, our “students”. Together, we shared family good times and bad, complained about the job — and often, each other. We hung Christmas decorations in the lunch room, sang “Happy Birthday” and devoured the cake we all chipped in to buy. We’d have heated debates about why the Knicks blew their lead, swap recipes for the best-ever chili — with samples brought in to share — and sling good-natured barbs about any changes to their “style”. To us, our co-workers are not just the reported stats on the numbers of positive tests or fatalities. They are our union brothers and sisters for whom our usual work routines took a turn never expected, and unable to be ignored.

In the years to come, there will be countless books written — movies too, college courses and

a message from the president

WE GET UP

TV “talking heads” galore, all trying to explain and help us understand this horrific time in the history of the world which resulted in so much loss. And those losses are almost incalculable, not just in terms of people and their livelihood, but in terms of their loss of confidence in government and our leaders too. Confidence is shattered in so many ways — in the quality and equality of our health care system as well as in our nation’s ability to achieve true racial justice. It is no wonder that tensions are high, with instances of police brutality being met head-on with protesters, underscoring why Black Lives Matter is a movement and not just a moment in our nation’s history. How ironic it is that we just recently lost one of America’s great heroes, civil rights icon and 17-term congressman, John Lewis, who although dying of pancreatic cancer, appeared publicly for the last time in June — looking frail and holding a cane — to visit the new Black Lives Matter mural painted on 16th Street in Washington, D.C., next to the White House. Standing there, Lewis said: *“I think the people in D.C. and around the nation are sending a mightily powerful and strong message to the rest of the world that we will get there.”* He spoke as a man who never gave up his belief in nonviolence, even though he had been brutally beaten many times as he engaged in peaceful marches and demonstrations, and, who 67 years ago, at age 23, stood a few blocks away at the Lincoln Memorial and declared at the March on Washington: *“We cannot be patient. We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now.”*

No doubt, in the years ahead, there will be numerous analyses on the pandemic and all of the heartache it generated... studies designed to bolster or refute the endless rounds of the blame-game that will be played by political wannabees and pundits. And, we’ll also pause to reflect how something so devastating could have crept up on us... could catch us off-guard. How could this nation have lost more lives in just three months than in 10 years of our fighting the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Afghanistan War, and Iraq War combined? And the racial inequality of the lives lost! The pandemic crisis is like a movie. A bad movie. But, who would ever have thought that a 2-hour movie you could have enjoyed with buttered popcorn and M&Ms — a movie that scared you silly the whole time it was on the big screen — but nonetheless, didn’t stop you from enjoying your burger and fries at McDonald’s after the mayhem from Hollywood had ended — who would ever have thought that the movie would be coming to us in real-life and in real time? The actors in this flick don’t take off their pancake makeup at the end of the day’s filming and head over to their favorite pub to throw back a few. No backlot here. The “actors”, unfortunately, are all of us! In the beginning, we may have been hopeful for a happy, Hollywood-style ending, but the problem and the pain didn’t quickly subside and seemed never-ending.

But in all of this darkness, there are many examples of the best of people on display. Health

care professionals, first responders, transit workers — are among those who risk their lives to save the lives of others. And how about the 22,000 volunteers from other states who rushed to New York to help us out — in a place they don’t know, for people they don’t know. All they knew was that there are people in need. But we also don’t need to look beyond our own municipal workers to see the best examples of the best of people. Our members at Local 237, like their brothers and sisters in the other public sector unions, did their jobs to safeguard the most vulnerable populations in New York City. Those workers, defined as essential workers, did their work to help keep New York functioning and help it rebound. Unfortunately, many made the ultimate sacrifice doing it. True to former President Obama’s words, public workers did “get up”. They epitomize what David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times wrote in a recent column: *“One of the lessons of this crisis is that help isn’t coming from some centralized place at the top of society. If you want real leadership look around you.”*

So, what do we do now? Certainly, we are all prayerful that this pandemic ends soon and for good. We must have more testing, reliable treatments, and a preventive cure. The frightening facts of the quality and inequities of our nation’s health care cannot be ignored. They must be fixed. But, there is also another concern to consider: What will we do when the health crisis ends? Will the heart-break and bitterness end too? And, what about the long-time, systemic race problems in our nation, which once again reached a boiling point — no doubt instigated by the raw inequalities of COVID-19 — and is just as deadly as any virus. That makes me wonder about a Holocaust survivor who suffered the unimaginable inhumanity of a Nazi concentration camp; or the viciousness many African Americans endured living in the deep south of this country in the ‘50s and ‘60s; the brutality of genocide in Uganda or the savagery of the 9-11 terrorist attack at the World Trade Towers — a day none of us will ever forget! How did those victims... those families, live on? How do our city workers, and the families of our lost union brothers and sisters live on? Or, does the pain from this Coronavirus and the grief it brought destroy us forever? But, what does lingering bitterness get you? Though I leave the speculation to historians, there seems to be some undeniable lessons to learn: We should savor the good times; prioritize what truly matters and don’t squander our blessings. Human kindness is a treasure more valuable than any stack of gold. And the love and support of our family, friends and coworkers makes us billionaires. And remember what John Lewis, a sharecropper’s son, who went on to become a revered member of Congress, said: *“Sometimes, in the very essence of anguish that is liberating, cleansing, redemptive... adding that suffering opens us and those around us to a force beyond ourselves, a force that is right and moral, the force of righteous truth that is at the basis of human conscience.”* ■

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a message from the co-directors

Voting during a pandemic



by **Susan Milisits, LCSW** & **Julie Kobi, MSW**
Co-Director of the Retiree Division Co-Director of the Retiree Division



Worried about voting during this fall's elections? This is completely understandable given our current health pandemic. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic and the need to social distance make us question our ability to vote safely. It's certainly anxiety provoking especially during such a crucial election. We would like to share some important information about this year's elections. Many states are attempting to make it easier for citizens to vote absentee by mail this year due to the coronavirus. For a listing of absentee ballots by states please visit <https://www.usa.gov/absentee-voting>. The usa.gov website provides a detailed listing on how to file an absentee ballot state by state. We have retirees all over the United States, therefore it is important you check with your state's guidelines. State laws vary greatly, so be sure to pay attention to the information provided by your election officials or contact your local election office for help.

Here are some important information about this year's voting:

Check your voter registration status

We know you have heard it a thousand times "are you a registered voter? This year due to the coronavirus, many offices are closed or have limited capacity. To check your voter registration status, you can go to <https://www.usa.gov/confirm-voter-registration>. The website is quick, and your will get your status in a few minutes.

Voting by Mail-In Absentee Ballot

You must request a mail in ballot in writing. There is specific criteria in order to complete a mail in ballot such as: unable to appear due to temporary or permanent illness or if you are the primary caregiver caring for someone who is ill, hospitalization etc. Due to the current health pandemic the coronavirus qualifies for "temporary illness" per the election board for the prevention of possible spread of coronavirus. To request a mail in ballot you can call, email, or write your election board to request your ballot. To find your State or Local Election office please visit <https://www.usa.gov/election-office>.

Voting in person

Be prepared for an extended wait time at your local polling site. Due to coronavirus there will likely be safety provision put in place at the polling sites. Also, according to the United States government website changing of polling sites can occur during the coronavirus. Please be sure to check with your local election board.

Early Voting

Early voting may be possible due to pandemic. Most states have early voting. This allows registered voters

the option to vote on specific dates prior to Election Day. For a list by state, please visit <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/early-voting-in-state-elections.aspx#Early%2520Voting%2520Law%2520Table>.

The right to vote for all has been a long battle in the United States. This year is the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the Women's Right to Vote and also marks the 55th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This act has helped Americans reinforce and protect citizens' right to vote. It provides nationwide voting rights protection, by prohibiting any local law that discriminate against racial minorities as well as the use of literacy tests to determine the ability to vote. It is important to get out and vote. We need to protect our democracy. Look at the candidates and what they stand for. Remember to always look at which candidate has your best interest in mind.

We hope that this information is helpful to you during this unique voting experience. For more information on topics including voting, mail in ballots, and general voting information please visit <https://www.usa.gov>.



Loneliness during a pandemic

by **Edith Johnston, LCSW**

Assistant Director, Retiree Division

For 15 years before joining the amazing team at the Retiree Division of Local 237, I worked as a hospital social worker. My job involved making home visits to homebound seniors and connecting them to services and benefits, among other responsibilities. Early on, I learned how feelings of loneliness made many of my patients sad or disengaged, and impacted their mental and physical well-being. Being engaged in meaningful activities can make a big difference; human contact and connection to the outside world can make a tremendous impact to someone who is isolated. Most of my patients were isolated due to health reasons, not their choice. Getting them connected with friends and family was one of my priorities. However, when no family or friends existed, creating other meaningful contacts such as friendly visitors or new friends became one of my goals.

At the present we are in the middle of a pandemic and staying away from the people we love is not a choice, but a responsibility to protect one another. This is especially true when it comes to those who are more vulnerable, such as seniors and people with chronic health issues, who are at higher risk of dying if they get infected with COVID-19. Therefore, a lot of family members and friends are abstaining from visiting parents, grandparents, or relatives who are at higher risk.

Many people may be feeling isolated because our routine has changed drastically. For example, the union building at 14th Street has been closed for months. I am the newest member of the retiree team, but during the time I worked from the office I really enjoyed meeting with members, seeing my coworkers daily, even commuting on the crowded train. I was looking forward to the classes, community meetings, and other events and celebrations. I was looking forward to the opportunity to meet as many of our retirees as possible. At the present, I am working from home and I am grateful for it, but oftentimes when I speak with someone who needs assistance with a form or does not know how to use a computer or e-mail, I wish I could tell the person to come to the office for assistance. But since that is not possible, I have learned to be more resourceful and I am sure many of you have too.

If you are feeling lonely, sad or isolated, think about creative projects that you can do to overcome those feelings. What hidden talents do you have? How can you use those talents to help yourself and others? Do you have any friends who may be feeling the same way? Can you connect with someone who was a source of support to you in the past? Do you have any project that you have not done because you were too busy before the pandemic to do it? I have heard many stories of people who are cleaning up their closets or garages, or working on writing their memoirs, or learning a new skill.

If none of the above works for you, please feel free to call us at the Retiree Division. We are always willing to help you, we can provide support and assistance. Remember that it may feel that the light at the end of the tunnel is really far away, but there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The human race has seen many pandemics and they have all ended. This too shall pass and we will have gatherings, meetings, and celebrations again. ■

En español: Durante 15 años antes de unirme al increíble equipo de la División de Jubilados del Local 237, trabajé como trabajador social en un hospital. Mi trabajo consistía en hacer visitas domiciliarias a personas mayores confinadas en el hogar y conectarlos con servicios y beneficios, entre otras responsabilidades. Desde los primeros años en el trabajo aprendí cómo los sentimientos de soledad entrincentaban o desconectaban a muchos de mis pacientes y afectaban su bienestar mental y físico. Estar involucrado en actividades significativas puede hacer una gran diferencia; El contacto humano y la conexión con el mundo exterior pueden tener un impacto tremendo en alguien que está aislado. La mayoría de mis pacientes estaban aislados por razones de salud, no por su elección. Conectarlos con amigos y familiares era una de mis prioridades, sin embargo, cuando no existían familiares o amigos, crear nuevas relaciones era uno de mis objetivos, como visitas amistosas o nuevos amigos.

En este momento estamos en medio de una pandemia y alejarnos de las personas que amamos no es una opción, sino una responsabilidad de protegernos unos a otros. Esto es especialmente cierto cuando se trata de las personas más vulnerables, como las personas mayores y las personas con problemas de salud crónicos, que corren un mayor riesgo de morir si se infectan con COVID-19. Por lo tanto, muchos miembros de la familia y amigos se abstienen de visitar a los padres, abuelos o familiares que corren un mayor riesgo.

Muchas personas pueden sentirse aisladas porque nuestra rutina ha cambiado drásticamente. Por ejemplo, el edificio del sindicato en la calle 14 ha estado cerrado durante meses. Soy el miembro más nuevo del equipo de jubilados, pero durante el tiempo que trabajé desde la oficina, realmente disfruté reunirme con los miembros, ver a mis compañeros de trabajo todos los días, incluso viajar en el tren lleno de gente. Estaba esperando las clases, las reuniones comunitarias y otros eventos y celebraciones. Estaba esperando la oportunidad de conocer a la mayor cantidad posible de nuestros jubilados. Actualmente, estoy trabajando desde casa y estoy agradecido por ello, pero a menudo cuando hablo con alguien que necesita ayuda con un formulario o no sabe cómo usar una computadora o un correo electrónico, desearía poder decirle a la persona que puede venir a la oficina a pedir ayuda, pero como eso no es posible, he aprendido a ser más ingenioso y estoy seguro de que muchos de ustedes también lo han hecho.

Si se siente solo, triste o aislado, piense en proyectos creativos que pueda hacer para superar esos sentimientos. ¿Qué talentos ocultos tienes? ¿Cómo puedes usar esos talentos para ayudarte a ti mismo y a los demás? ¿Tienes amigos que puedan estar sintiendo lo mismo? ¿Puedes conectarte con alguien que fue una fuente de apoyo para ti en el pasado? ¿Tiene algún proyecto que no haya hecho porque estaba demasiado ocupado antes de la pandemia para hacerlo? He escuchado muchas historias de personas que están limpiando sus armarios o garajes, o trabajando en escribir sus memorias, o aprendiendo una nueva habilidad. Si nada de lo anterior funciona para usted, no dude en llamarnos a la División de Jubilados. Siempre estamos dispuestos a ayudarlo, podemos brindarle apoyo y asistencia. Recuerde que puede parecer que la luz al final del túnel está muy lejos, pero hay una luz al final del túnel. La raza humana ha visto muchas pandemias y todas han terminado; esto también pasará y tendremos clases, reuniones y celebraciones nuevamente. ■

La Local 237, División de Jubilados lo invita a un Grupo de apoyo telefónico. Dada la situación actual, no podemos estar juntos físicamente, pero queremos apoyarlo en nuestros dos grupos de apoyo telefónico.
Cuándo: Martes Inglés
Jueves Español
Hora: 11:00 am
Por favor comuníquese con Edith Johnston al 212-807-0555 o vía e-mail ejohnston@local237.org



Néstor Murray-Irizarry
Photo by George Malave

Por Néstor Murray-Irizarry
historiador y gestor cultural

CUENTO DE CUENTOS- Parte 1

Hace varios días, con motivo de los temblores y tormentas en Puerto Rico, me la he pasado releendo el libro que editamos para el Local 237 de los Teamsters de Nueva York: **Memoria de boricuas peregrinos**. Les confieso que cada día me gusta más, sencillamente es un gran libro de narraciones, de cuentos maravillosos que recogimos de los trabajadores latinoamericanos unionados más genuinamente humildes del Local 237. No era para menos y felicito nuevamente a los miembros que participaron en las entrevistas y que le dieron forma o contenido a este manojito de cuentos.

Esta nueva experiencia que significa volver a repasar el libro anteriormente mencionado me llevo directamente a mi biblioteca a repasar otro buen libro titulado *Cuentos de Cuentos* del periodista Néstor Luján publicado por la editorial Folio de España en 1992. Son dos tomos llenos de gran sabiduría sobre el origen y aventura de ciertas palabras y frases proverbiales o de la vida cotidiana española, que como todos sabemos el pueblo de Puerto Rico estuvo en una relación política por cientos de años y de vinculación cultural, hasta el presente. Nuestra cultura puertorriqueña y por consiguiente latinoamericana, en parte se enriqueció o se alimentó precisamente, como decía el poeta chileno, Pablo Neruda, con la palabra: "se lo llevaron todo y nos lo dejaron todo, a través de la PALABRA".

El tocayo Néstor Luján nos deleita con una cantidad considerable de cuentos que ustedes al igual que yo disfrutaran o recordaron haberlas escuchados de boca de familiares y amigos, en algún momento de nuestras vidas. Veamos:

"A tontas y a locas"

Esta expresión significa, *hacer una cosa con desbaratamiento, sin orden, ni concierto*, es una frase muy antigua que se encuentra ya en el libro *El Quijote*. También aparece registrada en libros publicados en el siglo XVI Y XVII.

"Alcahuete"

Esta palabra, vieja como nuestra lengua, tiene

varias acepciones, una de ellas esta relacionada con la persona que acepta todo mandato o deseo de otra persona a quien considera servirle incondicionalmente. También refiriéndose "lambe ojo". Aparece en 1251. Es muy popular en los siglos XIV, XV Y XVI junto a sus derivados 'alcahuetería, alcahueteo y alcahuetazgo'. Es de procedencia árabe.

"Apaga y vámonos"

El origen de esta expresión procede de un cuento andaluz [de Andalucía, de la región de España de donde emigraron a Puerto Rico la mayoría de los nuevos pobladores europeos durante los primeros tres siglos de conquista.] Se emplea al conocer que una cosa toca a su fino al oír o ver algo escandaloso o disparatado.

"Arrimar la ascua [brasa o pedazo rojo e incandescente o carbón] a la sardina"

Aprovechar las ocasiones en beneficio propio. Es la inclinación que todos tenemos a defender lo que nos pertenece.

"Baño de María o baño María"

Vaso con agua puesto a la lumbre y en el cual se mete otra vasija para que su contenido reciba el calor suave y constante. Ya en 1892 se ponderó este procedimiento que impide que se corten ciertas salsas que el fuego directo echaría a perder y que sirve también para recalentar alimentos o conservarlos calientes. Su nombre viene de María la hermana de Moisés y Aarón nacida en Egipto cerca del año 1578.

"Bigote"

Pelo que nace en el labio superior. Procede de la frase germánica *bey Gott -vive Dios-empleada para llamar a las personas con bigotes y luego el bigote mismo*. Lo formaron nuestros antepasados viendo y oyendo que un alemán retorciéndose el pelo del labio superior exclamaba *bey Gott*.

"Buscarle tres patas al gato"

Expresión conocida desde el año 1611, en plena conquista por los europeos en muchos sitios de América, Es empeñarse temerariamente en cosas que pueden acarrearle daño.

"Caérsele la casa encima"

Se dice caérsele a uno la casa encima o cuando sobreviene una grave contrariedad o un inesper-

ado contratiempo.

"Carmen"

La palabra latina Carmen tiene tres significados claramente distintos: 1) verso o composición poética; 2) quinta o huerto con jardín y 3) un nombre femenino. También, en muchos lugares es sinónimo de mujer española o hispanoamericana. Se usa desde el siglo XV. Además, está muy relacionada con el Monte Carmelo y para otros, desde el año 1156, con la Virgen del Carmen.

"Dar matraca"

Significa burlarse con pesadez de alguno o insistir con impertinencia en alguna cosa enfadada. Viene de la molestia que causa el sonido de la matraca cuando la tocan. Así la define el Diccionario de Autoridades del año 1726. La matraca era o es una especie de aspas formada por tablas en la que se cuelgan mazos, que al girar producen un fuerte ruido. Usábase en algunos conventos para convocar a eventos en lugar de campanas. También tiene otra acepción o significado: molestia, burla o fastidio que se provoca a base de una arenga o discurso. Que es la que más se conoce en Puerto Rico: ¡ y "dale Juana al canasto" o sencillamente, decimos "este va a seguir con la matraca esa".

Considero que estas frases coloquiales a veces nos hacen reír o llorar, pero forman parte de nuestras vidas de familia. Responden siempre como parte de una conversación. En estos días de pura crisis de pandemias, de elecciones inconclusas, de huracanes y temblores, de distanciamiento individual podemos continuar poniéndole un poco de positivismo a nuestras vidas y con mucha alegrías y siempre pesando que "a mal tiempo, buena cara", "el ultimo que ríe, ríe mejor". "Dios aprieta, pero no ahoga" "claro no podemos descuidarnos porque "ca-marón que se duerme se lo lleva la corriente".

Nota: Si puedes envíame tus experiencias, cuentos o anécdotas o de tus familiares con palabras, frases, refranes o expresiones de tu vida diaria que yo pueda utilizar para redactar mi próxima columna Favor de escribirme a la siguiente dirección electrónica: murraynestor@gmail.com ■

NEW

We are excited to introduce a new column to Retiree News and Views entitled Retirees Corner. Retiree Corner will be a space for retirees to share a story, poem, drawing, recipes and more. If you are interested in sharing a piece for the retirees corner please email retirees2@local237.org subject line Retirees Corner. We look forward to hearing from you.

Nos complace presentar una nueva columna de Noticias y opiniones para jubilados titulada Rincón de los jubilados. Retiree Corner será un espacio para que los jubilados compartan una historia, un poema, un dibujo, recetas y más. Si está interesado en compartir un artículo para los jubilados, envíe un correo electrónico a retirees2@local237.org, línea de asunto Retirees Corner. Esperamos con interés escuchar de usted.



RETIREE'S CORNER

by Jesse Kasowitz
Retired from ACS in 2015

For the new column Retiree Corner, I will share how I have been coping with isolation being shut in because of the COVID risk. The following are practices that I suggest to help overcome the loneliness and stress that comes from COVID isolation. As you could imagine we are all feeling a sense of isolation, The feeling of loneliness is even greater for those of us who live alone. This is worsened by our inability to visit family members in the hospital, or to attend celebrations or funerals.

First, take care of your health. Don't be inactive. I do physical therapy exercises at home for certain knee and back conditions. I also do power walks for cardio health, at least a half hour five days per week. (Avoid the crowds when you do this). This will enable you to get out for a change of scenery - ideally in a public park, even a walk around the block will help. As to eating, I find a

tendency when I'm home most of the day to overeat. I struggle to keep myself well-nourished but also to watch my weight. This is not easy. I treat myself to one good takeout dinner every week. (Think of the money that you're saving by not having dinner out at restaurants). Many struggle with alcohol and drug problems at this time. Do not hesitate to seek help if it's needed. Referrals are available from the retiree division.

I also reach out to stay connected with friends and family by phone. This can be done by a simple telephone call or free video conferencing with WhatsApp, FaceTime, and other smart phone apps. This is of course less than ideal, but it helps. I try to stay in touch with other Local 237 retirees during a weekly conference call 11am every Tuesday. You introduce yourself and you'll make several new friends.

Keep yourself busy so as not to focus constantly on the loneliness and isolation. I find these months a good opportunity to go through old letters and documents and clean up the clutter in my home.

There are now special TV presentations on

Channel 13 from the Met Opera and Broadway Theaters. There are many opportunities to stream movies concerts and theater with a computer or a tablet or even a Smart Phone. There are several companies such as Netflix, or Amazon to get movies from the internet to your home TV.

I'm also a member of a book club, so I do a lot of reading. The club is in my former workplace at ACS. We have meetings on Zoom communications. This is also done with a smart phone or a tablet. The libraries are partially open now so that you can reserve and borrow a book. You can also borrow a free library e-book from your home if you have an e-reader such as a Kindle or a Nook. There are e-reader apps to enable you to read on your home tablet or smart phone. Go to the NYPL library website for directions.

Finally, there are volunteer opportunities to contact other people from your home who are also shut in and isolated. This can be done by letter writing or a phone calling. Elderly and disabled people appreciate the contacts. ■



Support from Aetna for those taking Specialty Drugs

by **Mitch Goldberg**

Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

Aetna provides a dedicated team to support your treatment. The Aetna care management team is here for you. They help members with chronic conditions stay on track and get support for their treatment. These conditions include:

Asthma (pediatric and adult), Crohn's Disease, Hepatitis C, HIV, Multiple Sclerosis, Cancer, Osteoporosis, Rheumatoid Arthritis and Transplants.

Managing these conditions can be challenging. Treatment often means taking specialty drugs. These drugs are injected, infused or taken by mouth. They can require special storage conditions, such as refrigeration. It's a lot to handle, especially if you're just diagnosed. Care can include personal attention from a nurse. You'll have your own care management nurse to support you through your treatment. He or she can: Give you information about your condition, counsel you about your specialty medicine, help you stay on track with your treatment, alert you to potential treatment side effects and help you manage them, connect with your doctor's office and ask questions on your behalf, help you avoid trips to the doctor's office or hospital. Your nurse is there to discuss any questions or concerns you may have and help improve your quality of life.

The care management team can also connect you to additional support resources such as: Copayment assistance (groups that offer assistance paying for copays or premiums), and Aetna Community resources (support groups, education groups, counseling).

If you take a specialty drug for one of these conditions and want to learn more about this extra nurse support, please call the care management nurse team. The toll-free number is **1-866-237-3320**. This material is for information only. Health information programs provide general health information and are not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a physician or other health care professionals. While these support services can play a vital role in your overall care, please consult your physician if you are in doubt or need reassurance that the advice you are receiving is best for the condition he or she is treating you for. ■

Staying connected is extremely important during these difficult times. As result, we are starting a telephone tree to stay in contact with you.

If you would like a call from the Retiree Division staff, please let us know. We can be reached by telephone at **212-807-0555** please leave a message with the call center or via email retirees2@local237.org to set your individual call. We looking to speaking to you.

*Mantenerse conectado es extremadamente importante durante estos tiempos difíciles. Como resultado, estamos iniciando un árbol telefónico para mantenernos en contacto con usted. Si desea recibir una llamada del personal de la División de Jubilados, háganoslo saber. Puede comunicarse con nosotros por teléfono al **212-807-0555**. Deje un mensaje en el centro de llamadas o por correo electrónico a retirees2@local237.org para programar su llamada individual. Esperamos hablar con usted.*



CENSUS 2020 All Retirees Count

by **Luz Nieves-Carty, MPA**

Assistant to the Directors, Retiree Division

It's time to be counted in the Census 2020. According to Kevin Shippy, Partnership Specialist at the New York Regional Census Center, "The US Constitution mandates the country must count its residents every 10 years, also known as the Decennial Census. The Census provides the default statistical metrics for the next 10 years determining legislative representation in the House of Representatives. Equally important is the proportionate division of federal funds supporting road improvements, quality of schools, healthcare and critical social services which count on these funds for survival." In other words, it's mandatory by law. Being counted in your community will help the government to allocate funds to programs in your neighborhood.

It's so important ALL residents are counted in order for their communities to be recognized as a representative snapshot of the country's diversity. Mr Shippy assures us, "Responding to the Census is safe, easy, important, and takes just 10 minutes to complete. Never will you be asked citizenship status, banking information or your social security identification. The Supreme Court guarantees no information disclosed can be shared with any other governmental department (such as Immigration & Customs Enforcement or ICE)."

If you haven't already, log online to complete at www.2020census.gov or call **(844) 330-2020**, where you also can complete the questionnaire in your 59 languages.

Phone Support: Beginning March 12, the Census Bureau will offer live, non-English help by phone between 7am-2am ET. Below are phone numbers for help in specified languages:

- English: 844-330-2020
- Spanish: 844-468-2020
- Chinese (Mandarin): 844-391-2020
- Chinese (Cantonese): 844-398-2020
- Vietnamese: 844-461-2020
- Korean: 844-392-2020
- Russian: 844-417-2020
- Arabic: 844-416-2020
- Tagalog: 844-478-2020
- Polish: 844-479-2020
- French: 844-494-2020
- Haitian Creole: 844-477-2020
- Portuguese: 844-474-2020
- Japanese: 844-460-2020
- English (Puerto Rico residents): 844-418-2020
- Spanish (Puerto Rico residents): 844-426-2020
- Telephone Display Device (TDD): 844-467-2020 will also be available for people who have hearing impairments.

Remember the law is clear. Under Title 13 of the US Code, no personal information can be shared. So complete your Census 2020 TODAY. You will be helping your community. www.2020census.gov ■

PLANNING FOR THE FALL

Caregiver Workshop

We are planning to have a workshop for caregivers on **October 20, 2020**. Instructions on how to access this video workshop will be placed on the Local 237 website <https://www.local237.org/home/retiring>.

Here are few things to think about:

Are You Caring for a Family Member or a Friend?

Do you help with anyone with any of the following tasks?



- Preparing meals
- Bathing or dressing
- Transportation
- Cleaning a house
- Managing medications
- Getting in and out of bed
- Arranging services
- Paying bills
- Grocery shopping

If so... you're a caregiver!
The workshop will be informative and helpful to you in caring for your loved one.

on a personal note... In Memoriam

To the family of retiree **Carolyn Harrell**, we extend our sympathy. Ms. Harrell, a retired NYCHA Housing assistant, passed away July 6, 2020. She attended classes and was a strong contributor to the Black History Committee. She will be deeply missed.



Please be sure to contact the union if your phone number or address has changed. In addition to notifying the union please contact the Social Security Administration, your pension system, and the Office of Labor Relations. You do not want to miss out on important information.

RETIREE news & views

216 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011



Affiliate of



PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID AT
NEW YORK,
NY

JULY/AUGUST 2020

Farmer's Market Nutrition Program



The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) is designed to provide low-income seniors with access to locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Those who are eligible are provided coupons to redeem fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets and farm stands. The program's purpose is to promote improved nutrition through increased consumption of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and expand sales at farmers' markets and farm stands.

How to Apply

- To participate, fill out an online application.
- Seniors who meet the following eligibility requirements can apply for coupon booklets online:
 - Are 60 years of age or older; and earning either
 - \$1,968/month (for a one-person household); or
 - \$2,658/month (for a two-person household); or
 - \$3,349/month (for a three-person household).
- If an older adult does not have access to the internet, they can contact Aging Connect at **212-244-6469** to request a mail-in application form.

2020 Pension Payment Calendar

NYCERS NYC EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

January							February							March							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
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July							August							September							
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						27	28	29	30	31			

● Check Mailing Date

■ Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Date

Pension Payment Schedule Fact Sheet #713 - Page 1

340 Jay Street, Brooklyn, NY
Mezzanine level

www.nycers.org

(347) 643-3000

30-30 47th Avenue, 10th Floor
Long Island City, NY 11101

NYCERS WALK-IN and CALL CENTER Hours: Monday & Wednesday 8 am - 6 pm | Tuesday & Thursday 8 am - 5 pm | Friday 8 am - 3 pm

Important Notice from the Office of Labor Relations

The Health Benefits Retiree client service walk-in center is closed.

Due to the closure of the office, retirees who mailed or faxed forms or correspondence March 11, 2020 or after, we cannot access or process that form. Please resubmit your documents as follows:

- Inquiries and questions can be emailed to healthbenefits@olr.nyc.gov
- Forms/documents can be sent via email to NYCRetireesHBP@emblemhealth.com

Please do NOT include your Social Security number, include your Employee ID or pension number only.

- For questions regarding the PICA prescription drug benefit program please call 1-800-467-2006.
- If you are a HIP-HMO member turning 65 or on Medicare due to a disability, please contact HIP at (800) 447-9169 to enroll over the phone. Please identify yourself as a City of New York retiree or dependent of a retiree. For all other members enrolled in a HMO plan, please contact your health plan at the customer service numbers on the back of your ID card.

Please check our website periodically for updates.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/olr/health/healthhome.page>