

RETIREE

news & views



A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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Happy Holidays!

From Director Julie Kobi and staff of the Retiree Division
Edith Johnston, Elaine Williams, Luz Carty, Sharon Banks and Noelia Quinones

Dear Retirees,

Our thoughts are with you and your families. We know the pandemic has taken a toll on all our lives but we want you to know that we are thinking of you and wish you a happy and healthy holiday season and best wishes for the New Year. We hope 2022 brings you good health and happiness. Our hope is to celebrate with you in the future.

As always the Retiree Division staff are here for you via telephone at 212-807-0555 or via email at retirees2Local237.org



Retirees Spreading Holiday Cheer



As this year draws close to an end, we like to reflect on the good times shared with family & friends. We give Thanks and Praise to The One Most High within, who has blessed us to spend this wonderful time with those we hold dear. We love to share precious memories, good food & laughter. Beautiful music

is in the air, pulsing, intertwining with the wonderful smells coming from Momma's kitchen. We keep our family traditions with good food passed down through the ages: roast turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, candied yams, collard greens, cornbread, peach cobbler, and sweet potato pie. Red wine, Coquito, with a splash of rum inside.

Babies smiling, children laughing, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons, & daughters sharing special feelings of love for each other. Let us remember to reach out and share love with those we care about. Holiday Time is Family Time, and Our Family To Us Means Love. HAPPY HOLIDAYS & GOD BLESS!

- Rhonda Amirah Brown, Retiree

UNITY
SELF DETERMINATION
Collective Work
& Responsibility
COOPERATIVE
ECONOMICS
PURPOSE
CREATIVITY
FAITH

Nubia Beazer, Retiree, shares the 7 principles of Kwanzaa



"When we get together for Thanksgiving and Christmas the family loves salmon patties, Sweet potato pies, lemonade and cabbage."

- Barbara Whitely, Retiree, shares pictures of the Whitely family.

First as a member of Teamsters Local 237 Retiree Division, I want to wish all the brothers and sisters of Teamsters Local 237 and their families Happy Holidays and a Merry Christmas. This year, 2021, will be my 66th Christmas in the USA. I arrived here on December 20, 1955, from Italy and as I was born there this is what I remember of Christmas. Every household had a nativity set display called (Il presepio). All the children were waiting to receive some presents from Babbo Natale (Santa Claus) on Christmas Day as well as my siblings and I. Italy also celebrates January 6th for La Befana (Epiphany) (The good witch of Christmas). On January 5th in the evening before bedtime we would hang socks so La Befana could fill them for the children. For the well behaved she would put in small delights and for the naughty children she would put in chunks of coal, onions, and garlic. We did not have much in those days during WW II, but as children we were happy and enjoyed the holiday celebrations.

- Rocco Brienza, Retiree



I wish all my fellow retirees, merry Christmas, and a happy New Year. I hope the holidays are filled with exciting moments of joy around your friends and family. Hoping that the new year will be great, filled with happiness, good health, and good weather!

Deseo a todos mis compañeros jubilados, feliz Navidad y un próspero Año Nuevo. Espero que las fiestas estén llenas de momentos emocionantes de alegría alrededor de sus amigos y familiares. ¡Esperando que el nuevo año sea genial, lleno de felicidad, buena salud y buen clima!

- Jose Melendez, Retiree In Puerto Rico





by **Gregory Floyd**

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

On the eve of his victory, with camera lights glaring, the media's microphones strategically placed and an enthusiastic crowd in full view, New York City Mayor-elect Eric Adams, in a reference to the first Black Mayor of this City, David Dinkins, whose inauguration speech famously spoke about New York's "gorgeous mosaic", said: "We are so divided right now that we are missing the beauty of our diversity." He then went on to declare: "Today we take off our intramural jersey and put on one jersey: Team New York."

Another elected official known for his graceful speaking style that brought thought-provoking meaning to his words, was Governor Mario Cuomo. One of his often-quoted remarks was: "You campaign in poetry. You govern in prose." Cynics have come to interpret this as justification for making campaign promises just to get elected,

a message from the president

No Poetry, No Prose, Just Straight Talk

but as the former governor himself explained, it means that there is an idealism and enthusiasm felt in a successful campaign that is often difficult to reproduce in its purest, fullest form. In other words: Although politics and governance are intertwined and have a symbiotic relationship, institutionalizing and codifying the two into policy or law that benefits the people they serve, and meets the public's expectations, presents tremendous challenge.

But the concept of being on a team that delivers its promises is certainly not new, unfamiliar or objectionable to most union members. We get it. We know that unions bring voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless. America's labor movement history is rich with "before" and "after" examples of how our advocacy and perseverance improved working conditions — thereby substantively enhancing the lives of working families. The 40-hour work week, health and vacation benefits, safety requirements and the "fight for \$15" are just a few of the countless campaigns that labor leaders, throughout decades of hard work, have fought and won. More recently, unions' response to Covid-19 and

its variants, have resulted in yet another line in labor's resume. By and large, labor unions were at the helm where other leadership was lacking. We provided help and hope to our members — many of whom were victims of the disease. Clearly, among many of labor's leaders, the standard rule is to try and avoid poetry and prose, and substitute them with Spike Lee's advice to just "Do the right thing!"

With this in mind, labor unions and their members might find themselves in the unique position of having the best fit for that team jersey the New York City Mayor-elect mentioned, and so many other newly elected leaders echoed, on election night. Nearly every victory speech contained calls for unity among all New Yorkers as well as a public acknowledgement that labor played a large role in helping them achieve the office sought. The two are inseparable. New government leaders need labor leaders and their membership not just to wear symbolic apparel, but as significant participants sitting at the key issues table, talking and being heard. No poetry, no prose. Just straight talk from those in the know. ■



by **Julie Kobi** LMSW
Director of the Retiree Division

a message from the director

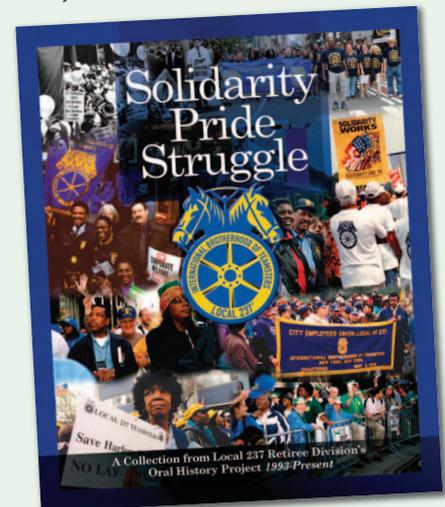
Retiree Division a year in review 2021

As the year comes to an end, I just want to express my deepest gratitude to you, the Retirees for your unwavering connection to the Union and the Retiree Division. You have entrusted the Retiree Division staff on matters regarding benefits as well as some delicate situations along the way. 2021 has certainly been a challenging year for us as well as a year of hope for what the future holds for us. For the Retiree Division this year has shown us a great deal of resilience in all of you and your willingness to try something new whether it was joining a webinar for the first time or taking a class over the phone. This really speaks volumes of your continued commitment to the Union and the Retiree Division.

Here's a review of what we have accomplished together this year.

- Retiree Division answered several hundred calls and emails from Retirees with an array of inquiries from benefits, caregiver support and much more. At the highest peak of Retiree Division telephone call volume, we answered 250 calls per day.
- The pre-retirement seminar was held virtually twice this year. Over 500 pre-retirees joined the meetings.
- The Retiree Division held a new retiree orientation via telephone conference. We were able to connect with many new retirees.
- The Retiree Division held several online/ telephone conferences with topics including caregiver workshop, community groups, webinars and for the first-time spring/ summer telephone class. Over 1,000 retirees joined.
- The Retiree Division brought the pre-retirement series and new orientation materials online. This was the first-time information of this nature was posted online. The materials and forms have been downloaded and viewed several times.
- The Retiree Division is in final stages of our second Oral History book- entitled "Solidarity Pride Struggle" The book started by the Late Nancy B. True truly celebrates the history of our retirees and how you and the retirees have truly paved the ways for the generations

to follow. We can't wait to share the result with you.



We are truly honored and proud to have worked with so many retirees and their families. Though we were unable to see you in person, many of you joined the retiree programming and we were able to connect in many forms and fashions. We look forward to continuing the great work in 2022. Wishing you and your families a happy and healthy holiday season. ■

RETIREE news & views

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Your Legal Services Plan in 2021

by **Mary E. Sheridan, Esq.**
Director of Local 237 Legal Services Plan

Representing members through a pandemic has had its challenges. And yet, your Legal Services Plan has continued to provide intake appointments, attend closings, appear at court hearings and conferences, draft wills for our members, file bankruptcy petitions and commence matrimonial actions.

As with all of us, the Legal Services Plan has needed to be creative and embrace technology as never before. Learning how to conduct a trial remotely has been a challenge and yet we have successfully completed many trials during the pandemic. In the beginning of the pandemic, almost all legal work ground to a halt. We attended real estate closings in parking lots - maintaining more than 6 feet distance from others - over FaceTime and Zoom, and represented many members leaving the 5 Boroughs for the peace and space upstate New York provides. We have conducted intake appointments via telephone and Zoom and struggled with our members with all the technological glitches that come with the new modes of conducting business. We persevere and are assisting members at pre-pandemic numbers with high-quality legal representation.

New York State and City Courts have dramatically changed how cases are managed and heard. We now regularly appear with our members at court conferences via Microsoft TEAMS. Documents are filed electronically, whether through the New York State Courts Electronic Filing System (NYSCEF) or through emails to the Court. Evidence is introduced at trial by sharing documents over TEAMS and witnesses are questioned over video. There has never been such a drastic change in how law is practiced in such a short period of time. These changes will not disappear with the end of the pandemic. Many of the changes have proven useful and constructive, although some may argue that nothing can replace in-person meetings and trials. Still, video-conferencing has meant that a Legal Services attorney often now appears in 3 different courts, in 3 different counties, for 3 different clients all in one day!

The struggles for our members have been real. Family Court cases stagnated in the system and only recently have petitions been calendared and heard. Some people were prevented from seeing their children for months, others paid child support when an Order should have been terminated.

New York's eviction moratorium is ending January 15, 2022. The end of the moratorium will potentially mean a tsunami of eviction cases in the courts. The Legal Services Plan has worked hard to assist members in applying for rental assistance and we are here to represent members if served with eviction papers when the moratorium ends.

Courts are now requiring in-person appearances for certain trials and motions. We imagine this will continue to pick up if COVID numbers remain low. For now, we continue to meet with our clients remotely and are available for all legal matters covered under the Plan. Please visit the Union's website at www.local237.org for a complete list of our services, contact numbers and emails. Wishing you all a very happy and safe New Year. ■



MTA Reduced Fare Card

by **Luz Nieves-Carty MPA**
Assistant to the Director, Retiree Division

The reduced fare MetroCard allows you to ride the subways and local buses at half of the base price. For example, the current base price is \$2.75, so you pay the reduced fare of \$1.35. There is also a reduced fare Auto Gate Metro Card for riders who use mobility aids or have service animals. This card allows you to enter an exit through the Auto Gate. You are eligible for the reduced fare MetroCard if you are 65 years or older and have Medicare. Riders with qualifying disabilities may also be eligible for the card.

There is certain ID required to apply for the reduced fare MetroCard. The MTA accepts the following forms of photo ID:

- Valid driver's license (or legal equivalent) from any state
- Valid passport from any country
- NYC Department of Aging ID card
- Medicare card, along with another form of photo ID

It is free to apply to apply for the reduced fare Metrocard. When you apply, you can use the EasyPay option for automatic refills. This option will add money to your card automatically. If you don't have your card with you, you can still get a reduced fare when you pay with cash. You can apply by mail or in person.

Option 1: Apply by mail

1. Go to www.mta.info/fares/reducedfares — Download and complete an application. — Select the application for people 65 and older or people with disabilities.
2. Include a passport-style photo. It should be 2 inches by 1.5 inches.
3. Include a copy of a valid ID as proof of age. Forms of ID we accept are at the top of this page.
4. For riders with disabilities, include proof of a qualifying disability. A list is on page 2 of the application. An examiner will review this and might contact you for more information.
5. Mail your application and documents to MTA. The address: MTA New York City Transit, Att: Reduced Fare Program, 130 Livingston Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201-9625

If you need help or have questions, call 718-330-1234.

Option 2: Apply in person for the MTA reduced fare Metrocard.

- Call to make an appointment and visit the MTA customer service center. It's located at 3 Stone Street, New York, NY 10004. You can also apply in person at a MetroCard Bus or Van. Call 718-330-1234 to make an appointment or find out when the MetroCard van will be in your neighborhood. You can also visit their website at www.mta.info/fares/reducedfares. You will need to bring two valid IDs. One must be a photo ID. The MTA will have the forms for you and will take your photo.

Retirement is about exploring new places and traveling. New York City is the greatest city in the world. It has many places to visit that are accessible by train or bus. So, get your reduced fare MetroCard and get going! Be well and safe trips! Retiree Division (212) 807-0555. ■



New Year... New Beginnings... Staying Healthy

by **Elaine Williams, LMSW**
Assistant Director, Retiree Division

As we usher in a new year, let us take some time to reflect on the year passed with hearts of gratitude and thankfulness. As we move into 2022 let us all pledge to exercise self-care as we care for each other.

The United States Congress designates January as Cervical Health Awareness month. More than 13,000 women in the USA are diagnosed with Cervical Cancer each year. This disease is virtually always preventable with vaccination, and screening.

(www.ashasexualhealth.org)

What better time for all our members to

think about scheduling your Annual Wellness visit. Your Annual Wellness visit is a yearly appointment with your primary care provider (PCP) to create or update a personalized prevention plan. (www.medicareinteractive.org) During this visit you will have the opportunity to discuss all your needed screenings.

Here is a list of things to do as you prepare for your Wellness visit

1. Schedule your Wellness visit.
2. Take all your current prescription /nonprescription, vitamins, supplements with you to your visit. (Pack them in a bag)



3. Take a list with names and contact numbers of all other health care providers you see.
4. Make a list of questions or things you wish to discuss.
5. Bring a current list of all your immunizations you have already taken.

About 33% of US physicians spends 17-24 minutes per patient. (www.statista.com) It is important as members to go to this visit prepared.

“Don't take your health for granted. Don't take your body for granted. Do something today that communicates to your body that you desire to care for it.” — Jada Pinkett Smith. ■



Will My Benefits Change Under the New MA Plan?

by **Mitch Goldberg**

Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

The Retirees' Benefit Fund (3rd Floor) and the Retiree Division (8th Floor) have received many calls from retired or retiring members about their benefit coverage with the City's change to the Alliance Medicare Advantage Plan.

When the new plan goes into effect your Retiree Benefits will remain the same with the exceptions of the increase in the Prescription Drug coverage, which I will address later in the article.

Many calls are from non-Medicare retirees whose spouse or domestic partner is Medicare eligible. For pre-Medicare retirees, the Retirees' Fund prescription benefit is \$2500 per family per year. Determination of eligibility for the two prescription plans (pre-Medicare or Medicare eligible) is based on the member's Medicare eligibility. The \$2500.00 dollar non-Medicare benefit is considered Non-Creditable coverage by the Center for Medicare Services (CMS). Therefore the retired member's Medicare eligible spouse must enroll in a Medicare Part D prescription plan. When the retired member becomes Medicare eligible, the spouse can drop the outside D plan and re-enroll in the Retirees' Fund plan which is considered to be creditable coverage. Federal law requires that all Medicare eligible individuals be enrolled in a Part D plan or in a plan such as Local 237's that is "creditable coverage."

When you become Medicare eligible by turning 65 or being deemed permanently disabled, if your spouse is Non-Medicare or Medicare eligible, the Teamsters Retiree plan will cover your spouse under your creditable coverage plan. As reminder Medicare eligible retirees are only allowed to have one drug plan under Federal law. The one change which I mentioned earlier is that effective January 1, 2022 the Maximum Annual Benefit (MAB) or drug Cap will increase to \$25,000 from the current \$23,500 in order to remain Creditable Coverage as per the Center for Medicare Services.

Your Optical Benefit remains intact as well with you and any eligible dependents entitled to one exam and a pair of glasses once every 24 months. Our 2 vendors for services are Comprehensive Professional Systems (CPS) and General Vision Services (GVS). The benefit allows \$150 per person as the schedule of covered services allows, any personal choice which exceeds the \$150 is your responsibility.

Dental remains the same as well with a \$1250 MAB for you and any eligible dependents covered under the plan. There are no charges for covered services as per the schedule. If you use a participating provider, you should not be paying for any services on the schedule up to a total of the \$1250 each year which resets on January 1 annually.

The Fund provides for a Hearing Aid Benefit which is \$1000 per eligible retiree and any eligible dependents once every 5 years for purchase, repair, or replacement of a current device. The new MA plan also provides for this benefit which will enhance your ability to reduce you out of pocket expense for a hearing aid.

The Death Benefit which covers the retiree only is \$2500 upon the death of the retiree and is payable to his or her named beneficiary.

The Supplemental Medical Expense Benefit reimburses eligible retirees and their eligible dependents for durable medical equipment (DME) and one-time medical supplies which have been approved by the Board of Trustees. An attending physician must deem the equipment as medically necessary, and a claim must be submitted first to your primary insurance carrier for payment.

The Fund provides benefit coverage, at 80% of the reasonable and customary cost, for purchases and rental of equipment and the medical supplies listed below. Some items that are covered for benefits include: Hospital beds, wheelchairs, braces, prosthetic devices, orthotics, orthopedic shoes, surgical stockings, equipment connected with oxygen therapy, CPAP machines and related equipment. The MAB for reimbursement for the expenses is limited to \$2,500 per family per year.

In reviewing what your benefits are and will be in 2022 I hope I have eased some concerns that NONE of your Teamsters 237 Retiree Benefits will be cut or eliminated.

If you experience any issue with your benefits, please call the Fund office and let our staff assist you. The Fund office receives calls from 8:30 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. Monday thru Friday. The phone number for assistance is (212) 924-7220. ■



Puerto Rico, la navidad y los tres Santos Reyes Magos

Por **Néstor Murray-Irizarry**

historiador y gestor cultural

En Puerto Rico la festividad folclórica conocida como el Día de Reyes, La Fiesta de Reyes, La Promesa de Reyes, Los Tres Santos Reyes, La Rogativa de Reyes son todas acepciones que utiliza el pueblo para denominar una misma celebración: la veneración a los Tres Santos Reyes Magos (Gaspar, Melchor y el Rey Baltasar) al niño Jesús en Belén. La memoria colectiva de la escena tradicional de la Epifanía o Adoración de los Magos en el Portal de Belén de Judea.

La Navidad es la alegría, el gozo que siente un niño inocente de que los Tres Reyes Magos "...visiten su hogar, entren a sus habitaciones cuando están dormidos, le den un beso en sus mejillas y le dejen los esperados regalos" .

En la noche del 5 de enero, los niños de mi generación (1950) ponemos una pequeña caja con agua y yerba, debajo de nuestras camas, para que los caballos -en la tradición de Puerto Rico los Reyes Magos cabalgan en caballo de paso fino, no en camellos- pudieran alimentarse, después de recorrer un viaje tan largo. Otra modalidad de esa misma costumbre consiste en el compromiso o promesa que hace una persona o una familia con los Santos de pagarles todos los años una Promesa, mucha de nuestra gente veneraba a Los Tres Santos Reyes Magos como si fueran un solo santo.

La Promesa de Los Tres Santos Reyes Magos

El que mandaba la promesa podría tener varias necesidades para hacerlo. Sin embargo, ese compromiso era sagrado y se creía que si no se le cumplía el Santo le revocaría la petición de quien mandó la promesa. En nuestro país, según la religiosidad popular de muchos creyentes, hay tres tipos de promesas, también llamadas Rosario: 1) a los santos, 2) a los difuntos y 3) a la Santa Cruz. Debemos recordar que Puerto Rico estuvo desde el año 1508 hasta 1898 bajo la dominación española y su influencia religiosa católica fue decisiva en la totalidad de nuestra población hasta varias décadas antes del final del siglo XIX. Las condiciones geográficas de la Isla obligaron a que nuestra gente, aislada y refugiada en sus respectivas regiones, crearán una complicada religiosidad popular, con influencias católicas. Una de esas expresiones de la religiosidad popular la observamos en el pueblo de Lares fue una promesa que allí le llamaron Rogativa.

Otras experiencias la tuvimos en la década de 1970 en La Playa de Ponce y en la calle Nuevo Norte, donde celebraban con mucha devoción las diversas variantes de la Promesa de Reyes. En la primera, recordamos que doña Rita Negrón Rivera, viuda de Rodríguez, a sus 68 años de edad, nos recreó una Promesa o Rosario de Reyes como ella la presencié a los 6 años de edad, en la casa de sus padres.

En algunas localidades de nuestro suelo, cada Rey Mago tiene un día para celebrarlo. Teodoro Vidal recogió que, en la región de Jayuya, se le dedicaba "a Melchor el día antes de la Epifanía, el 5 de enero; mientras que a Gaspar se honraba el 6 de enero y a Baltasar, el siete.

Deseamos indicar la importancia que representan los Rosarios de Promesas a los Reyes que Elsa Escabí Agostini anotó en las entrevistas que realizará como parte de su trabajo de campo. Elsa fue una gran investigadora y estudiosa del folclor, quien, junto a su hermano, Pedro, legó a nuestra nación un caudal inmenso de materiales folclóricos. Ella anotó, en varios documentos de trabajo, una serie de interesantes observaciones sobre el comportamiento de las personas que participaban en las Promesas o Rosarios de Reyes. Elsa grabó en la residencia de la familia de don Bautista Rodríguez en el barrio Furnias de Las Marías, una promesa a los Tres Santos Reyes. La Promesa a los Reyes Magos consistió en cantarle a los Reyes 22 aguinaldos. (Véase: www.casapaolipr.com)

Consideramos, al igual que muchos estudiosos, que la Epifanía es una de las más importantes celebraciones navideñas puertorriqueñas. Actualmente, para muchos boricuas la Navidad se inicia el Día de Acción de Gracias y finaliza con las octavitas. En las cercanías de Ponce se acostumbra hacer lo que llaman "Petición de aguinaldo". Una gran cantidad de puertorriqueños atesoran esta festividad y, unidas a las trullas, parrandas, el Año Viejo y Año Nuevo, la consideran parte fundamental de nuestra identidad nacional. El pueblo de Aguas Buenas tiene como su Santo Patrón a Los Tres Santos Reyes Magos y al pueblo de Juana Díaz se le conoce como El Belén de Puerto Rico. Además, hay que recordar siempre que todos los años un 7 de enero se celebra, en mi querido Vieques, El Festival de los Reyes Magos.

Para muchos estudiosos de la cultura puertorriqueña es muy probable que muchos pueblos y ciudades del país tengan arraigados símbolos muy vinculados a la religiosidad popular que tiene sus raíces en el catolicismo. También opinan que más que signos de identidad, pudieran ser señales de la memoria colectiva relacionada con nuestra influencia hispánica. ■

4 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE PAYROLL VERIFICATION AFFIDAVIT (FORM #355)



1. It helps NYCERS verify your account. Things change all the time, the Payroll Verification Affidavit is NYCERS' way of ensuring that your benefits are getting to you!
2. Not everyone will receive Form #355 but, if you do, you must complete it, have it notarized, and submit it to NYCERS to avoid suspension of your pension check and possibly your health insurance. If NYCERS cannot verify your account, your pension check will be suspended, which may impact your health insurance.
3. If you don't complete Form #355 within the timeframe specified, NYCERS will send a reminder via mail to the address on file. If you are a registered MyNYCERS user, you'll also receive an alert in your online account.
4. The easiest (and quickest!) way to complete Form #355 is to do so online via your secure MyNYCERS account. You may also submit Form #355 by mail to NYCERS at 30-30 47th Avenue, Suite 1010, Long Island City, NY 11101.

Important Information for Powers of Attorney (POAs)

If You Already Have A Power of Attorney On File at NYCERS

- Review your copy of the POA to make sure that it is valid for NYCERS' transactions.
- If the POA was executed more than one year ago, please have your Attorney-in-Fact also submit Form #203 to ensure that the POA is still valid and in effect for NYCERS.

If You Don't Have A Power of Attorney On File at NYCERS

- If your Attorney-in-Fact has powers to complete NYCERS' transactions and you would like your Attorney-in-Fact to complete the Form #355 on your behalf, please submit a copy of the POA to NYCERS along with the Form #355.
- If your POA does not allow Attorney-in-Fact to complete NYCERS' transactions and you would like to name someone as your Attorney-in-Fact for NYCERS' purposes only, you may submit Form #204. Form #204, and instructions to help you complete it (Fact Sheet #745) are both available at www.nycers.org.

! Remember, Form #355 will be deemed invalid if it is not completed correctly, not notarized, or if it is completed on your behalf by a third party and there is no valid POA on file with NYCERS.

SAVE TIME! GO ONLINE!

Managing your NYCERS retirement account is quick, easy and convenient with a MyNYCERS account. Register or log in to your MyNYCERS account today at www.nycers.org.



The Magic of the Holidays!

by Edith Johnston, LCSW
Deputy Director, Retiree Division

The Holidays are a very special time of the year. I often think of the holiday season as a time to eat good food, see friends and family, and share joyous memories. The holidays help us connect with family and friends and build strong bonds with our community. Last year it was difficult to feel festive. The COVID-19 pandemic kept us from getting together with our loved ones and it was a difficult to do, but it was the right thing to do to stay safe. This year the vaccine has been a game-changer and we should be able to celebrate with those we love.

I love looking at holiday lights, storefronts, and people's faces. I see magic, love, and happiness, regardless of our religion, political views, or problems people may be facing. This time brings us together with one purpose: celebrate, spend time with those people who are special to us, we create new memories, and it helps us to feel a sense of belonging and at the same time we express what is important to us. The holidays connect us with history and help us celebrate generations of families.

For a moment, think about your childhood. What are the best memories you have? was it the food, the time with your family and friends, any games or music you heard or sang during the holidays? Smells are closely linked to our memories, and food is closely linked to special celebrations. For example, when we think about Thanksgiving, we think about turkey, sweet potatoes, and depending on your family traditions any food that you enjoy during that celebration. We love the holidays because even when we don't think about it, they provide us with structure; we don't have to think about what to do because we know what is done. From sharing stories, to making food or raising your glass for a toast, the traditions are already in place to be enjoyed. Holiday traditions are complete with rituals and rituals are an important part of any given culture and community.

During this holiday season, I would like to remind you of those who are less fortunate than you are. Think about your neighbors, do you know anyone who is homebound, anyone who does not have any family or friends nearby? Can you make their holiday joyous? It does not take much to help someone who is lonely. One of the best gifts that we can give someone is the gift of time. Spend some time with someone who may not be feeling as cheerful as you are. If you know someone who has lost a loved one, remember them this holiday season, because the holidays are difficult when you're mourning someone you love. Share some of the food you eat during the holidays and explain to that person why that food is important to you and your culture. Caring for those who are less fortunate than we are an important part of our humanity and will bring us together as society and will brighten not only our holiday season but theirs. HAPPY HOLIDAYS. ■

WE GIVE HONOR TO OUR VETERANS THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN OF OUR ARMED FORCES



We give honor to our veterans. The brave men and women of United States Armed Forces. Here are a few photos of our very own retirees. Thank you for your service.



Anthony Cottone



Betty Willis Harris



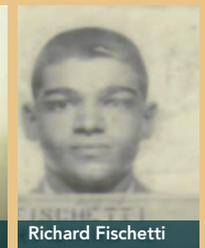
Rocco Brienza



Angel Sanchez



Wilfredo Velez



Richard Fischetti



Left to Right: Richard Fischetti, Anthony Cottone, Angel Sanchez, Betty Willis-Harris, Rocco Brienza, Wilfredo Sanchez



Mr. Cottone was able to participate in this years Veteran's day parade

on a personal note...

In Memoriam



We extend our deepest sympathies to retiree **Lisa Stepson-Howard** as we recently learned of the passing of her beloved mother Madeline G. Stepton. Mrs. Stepson-Howard describes her mother as caring and deeply compassionate for others.

RETIREE news & views

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Preetinder Singh Salooja, retired from New York City Housing Authority



Goerge Waterton, retired from New York City Housing Authority

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021

Important updates about the new NYC Medicare Advantage Plan Program

As many of you already know the implementation of the Medicare Advantage Plan of New York was placed on hold due to a court order issued. As a result of the court proceedings, the judge has requested more information and has extended the date for retirees to decide whether they want to opt-out of the plan. The judge has put the plan on hold until that issue is resolved, therefore the initial January 1, 2022 date for the new plan is on hold as well. A new date for implementation will be announced after a decision by the court. The most important point is until the court has made a decision retirees will not be moved into the new plan. Retirees will remain in your current plan. We will keep you informed of new developments as soon as information is available. Please be sure to check the Local 237 website regularly for updates at <https://local237.org/retirees>

Importante información actualizada sobre el nuevo programa NYC Medicare Advantage Plan
Como muchos de ustedes ya saben, la implementación del Plan Medicare Advantage de Nueva York se suspendió debido a una orden judicial. Como resultado de los procedimientos judiciales, el juez solicitó más información y extendió la fecha para que los jubilados decidan si desean excluirse del plan. El juez ha dejado el plan en espera hasta que se resuelva ese problema, por lo tanto, la fecha inicial del 1 de enero de 2022 para el nuevo plan también está en espera. Se anunciará una nueva fecha de implementación después de una decisión del Tribunal. El punto más importante es hasta que la corte haya tomado una decisión, los jubilados no serán cambiados al nuevo plan. Los jubilados permanecerán en su plan actual. Les mantendremos informado de los nuevos desarrollos tan pronto como la información esté disponible. Asegúrese de visitar el sitio web local de 237 con regularidad para obtener información actualizada en <https://local237.org/retirees>.



Just a friendly reminder...

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.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

SEND PHOTOS, STORIES, FUN RECIPES, SHARE SPECIAL OCCASIONS/EVENTS OR A NEW HOBBY YOU WANT TO SHARE.

EMAIL: RETIREES2@LOCAL237.ORG

OR CALL: 212-807-0555

