

RETIREE

news & views

A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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Todos Somos Latinos. We are all Latinos.

LATINO HERITAGE CELEBRATION

In his inaugural address in January of 1990, David Dinkins, the 106th Mayor of the City of New York and first African American to assume that high office, said: "I see New York as a gorgeous mosaic of race and religious faith, of national origin and sexual orientation." In 1977, when he ran for mayor of New York City, Mario Cuomo called the city a "magnificent mosaic." In the 1960s, New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously wrote about our nation as "a great melting pot" and Jesse Jackson, over the years, has used the down-home image of a patchwork quilt to describe the American people. But, Mayor Dinkins, who actually first described the city as a mosaic when he ran for Manhattan borough president in 1985, said that he never liked the idea of denying cultural differences either. "I never liked 'melting pot,'" he said. "Our strength is not in melting together, but in keeping our cultures." The idea that, in New York, everybody from everywhere is blended into one big stew may seem charming but misses the great asset that the multiplicity of cultures brought by people from across the globe gives to the "salad bowl" model where our ethnic, racial and religious differences are not totally absorbed and obscured, but extolled and applauded.

The Retiree Division of Local 237 recognizes that diversity is our greatest asset, and commemorated the richness of our cultural differences at the Latino Heritage Celebration. ■



The El Comité Latino, whose members include: Jose and Rosa Alicea, Donaldo Castellar, Evangelista Fabian, Rogelio Sponton, Luz Garcia, Elsie Ortiz, Sandra Mocco, Baldomero Lluen, Leroy and Elsa Nias, Cejester Walker, Wilfredo Velez and Olga Perez-Vasallo, helped to create a celebration of Latino heritage that was both informative and fun. The theme of the celebration was Carnival! Joyous dancing led by "Cabezudos" (Bimbo Rivas, Carmen Pabon, Tato Laviera and Adela Fargas) that brought everyone to their feet. Committee members also presented recollections of their homeland that provided cultural insights and historical perspectives. The presentations included: Olga Perez-Vasallo — A tour of Carnival; Rogelio Sponton — Argentina; Luz Garcia and Donaldo Castellar — Colombia; Evangelista Fabian — Dominican Republic; Leroy and Elsa Nias and Cejester Walker — Panama; Baldomero Lluen — Peru; Jose and Rosa Alicea, Elsie Ortiz, Sandra Mocco, and Wilfredo Velez — Puerto Rico. Additionally, the Latino Heritage Celebration featured the crowning of this year's King and Queen: Queen Nubia Imani Beazer and King Howard Knopf. Another highlight of the event was the opening of the Retiree Art Exhibit. Instructor Antonia Maria Reyes Galbraith and curator George Zavala succeeded in cultivating and showcasing the artistic talents of our retirees. And no heritage celebration would be complete without enjoying the fabulous Latin cuisine, which was provided by Sabor Borinqueño.



by **Gregory Floyd**

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

It's not so easy to find a holiday that crosses all religious, racial, ethnic and gender lines. Your political party, favorite color and years of education matter little too. For sure, it's not easy to find a holiday which most Americans celebrate in similar ways — usually involving a hot dog or two. Yes, Labor Day is a rarity: A holiday we can agree upon.

Congress created Labor Day in 1894 by making the first Monday in September a national holiday. But it only did so in response to the death of 34 striking Pullman workers of the American Railway Union at the hands of U.S. Army soldiers and Marshals.

And then there's the Labor Day Parade. It's not held on Labor Day, when so many of us are sad about the summer's end and trying to get in those last rays of summer sun, a swim at the beach, flipping burgers on the BBQ, or hunting for "Back to School" sales. Instead, the parade is held a week later.

New York City hosted the nation's first parade by labor—organized by the New York City Central Labor Council—in 1882, when 25,000 took off from their jobs in celebration of workers, and marched from Union Square to City Hall. Through the years, Labor Day and the parade have come to symbolize the long-lasting presence and indestructible power of the labor

a message from the president

SKIP THE GREETING CARD. NO PRESENTS NEEDED. LABOR DAY—A HOLIDAY LIKE NO OTHER WHOSE IMPORTANCE LASTS BEYOND A SINGLE DAY

movement despite the efforts—which today are ever-increasing—to do us in. Currently, union membership is at an all-time low of only 10.7% nationwide (equaling one in 10 workers) as compared with peak years of the mid-1950s when membership was 40% of all American workers (or four out of every ten workers). New York State leads the nation with the highest percentage of union workers, at roughly 24%. Of that number, nearly 70% are public sector workers, with African-Americans making up the largest component of that group.

At Teamsters Local 237, we understand the value of unity. And our commitment to it is both practical and moral. We know, for example, that non-union workers earn on average 20% less than union members. We know too that the 40-hour work week, health benefits, paid vacation and family leave, and the \$15-an-hour minimum wage are just some of the hard fought—and won—battles. We also know that workers' rights and civil rights are unquestionably intertwined. Let's not forget that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was assassinated in 1968 in Memphis, when he joined striking sanitation workers—men who made \$1.65-an-hour and were treated by their bosses like the garbage they collected. Dr. King believed that: "The labor movement did not diminish the strength of the nation but enlarged it. By raising the living standard of millions, labor miraculously created a market for industry and lifted the whole nation to undreamed of levels of production. Those who attack labor forget these simple truths, but history remembers."

It seems that many Americans are starting to agree—again. In fact, the approval rating of labor unions has recently increased to 64%—up 16% from 2009—and, not surprisingly, a recent MIT study found

that 46% of non-union workers would like to join a union. This increase may have a link to the elusive quest of achieving the "American Dream." The phrase, coined by historian James Truslow Adams during the Great Depression, symbolizes the desire for a better future that could be obtained in this country through hard work. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his 1933 inaugural address, famously described the challenges of troubling times: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" and continued in his speech to emphasize the spiritual qualities underlying the "American Dream" by saying: "Happiness lies not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement."

However it is defined, for some, the "American Dream" remains just a dream; for others, especially many new immigrants, the "Dream" has become a nightmare. In 1997, 72% of Americans thought the "American Dream" was possible. In 2017, and with a new administration in Washington, only 48% still held onto the possibility.

And, here's where labor unions come in. Just like our role in helping to build the middle class in America, we are both the ramrod and equalizer... and the bridge to the "American Dream." We fight for the rights of workers while helping to create a level playing field where the "American Dream" is not the sole property of the corporate 1%. We help give everyone a chance. We help give everyone hope.

This is why we marched. Retirees and active members joined their union brothers and sisters in the recent Labor Day Parade to send a strong message to our elected leaders and to the public at-large: **"You can bash us. You can try to bust us. We are not going away. We're labor strong. Be our friend, not our foe. We have a voice and a vote."** ■



by **Nancy B. True**
Director of the
Retiree Division

In September the Retiree Division celebrated Latino Heritage month. The program, planned by the Retiree Division's el Comité Latino, highlighted CARNAVAL! as celebrated in different countries and Puerto Rico. Committee members reflected on their experiences during CARNAVAL Season in the Dominican Republic, Peru, Argentina, Cuba, Panama, Columbia and Puerto Rico. Music from each country and culture accompanied the reflections of retired members. A group of Cabezudos

We are one - or in the words of Woody Guthrie, "This land was made for you and me."

(large head masks worn by volunteers from the Loisaida Cente, Inc.) representing, Tato Laviera, Carmen Pabon, Adela and Bimbo Rivas — all icons of the Lower East Side — danced with us and celebrated with us. For that day, "Todos somos Latinos". We were all Latinos.

On October 18th, we celebrated Italian heritage. The Italian Heritage Committee organized a program that focused on New York City's Little Italy. Retired member, Vincent Aquilino, spoke about growing up in Little Italy and we saw Mulberry Street, a play about the Caruso family, set in Little Italy during the 1950's. The Carusos were fruit peddlers, who emigrated from Italy to find a new life in America. The play carried a positive message about family, loyalty and the immigrant story. On the 18th, we were "Tutti Italiani!" We were all Italian.

Looking towards February, the Black History Committee will host a program that celebrates Black History. I look forward to the program that will be organized by our brothers and sisters on the committee.

As we start a season of celebrations and cultural activities, I am proud to be a part of an organization that reflects the diversity of America. I am reminded of my own family's immigrant stories — of the Bruce family (that's where the B in Nancy B. True comes from) where my great grandfather James met each ship in Boston Harbor to see if there were immigrants from Scotland without a place to go. A police detective in Everett, Massachusetts, he always made

room in the family home for those without relatives in Boston.

My grandmother True's father, Patrick Moran, hailed from County Cork in Ireland. A tailor by trade, he immigrated to the United States, eventually ending up in Maine. Like all immigrants, he was searching for a better life. A veteran, he fought in the Civil War and lived to see his grandson become a United States Congressman.

Recent immigrants from Central and Latin America are seeking the same "better life" of our ancestors.

Our country is a land of immigrants. No matter how far back our family trees can be traced — we have all come from other countries, unless our roots go back to Native Americans. Some immigrants were willing, others were enslaved and indentured. Yet, we are all part of one country. We are living in a time where many choose to divide us. At Teamsters Local 237, our diverse family stands out as a shining light. Our union brothers and sisters represent the beauty of the gorgeous mosaic that is New York. In these divisive times, we all share the responsibility to reach out to others of different backgrounds and races. Sharing our stories with retirees, neighbors and friends can only enrich everyone's life.

In the words of Woody Guthrie, "This land is your land, this land is my land, from California, to the New York Island, from the red-wood forest, to the gulf-stream waters; this land was made for you and me."

As Teamsters Local 237, we will not be divided! ■

RETIREE news & views

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Advanced care planning: what is it all about?

Julie Kobi, LMSW
Assistant Director
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When you hear the words “advanced care planning”, what comes to your mind? For some it brings ideas of end of life or old age. Advanced care planning has very little to do with age and more to do with your wishes in the event something were to happen. At any age, we can experience a medical crisis that may leave us too ill to make medical decisions on our own. As a former hospital social worker, I have seen firsthand the importance of having the conversation with someone about wishes and desires in the event a medical crisis were to occur. Often times these important conversations are left to when we are facing a medical crisis. Speaking to a loved one about advanced care plans can be difficult and uncomfortable; however this conversation is one of the most important conversations to have. We make plans for other aspects of our life: retirement, vacations, and holidays, so why not plan and share your wishes in the event of a medical crisis.

What is advanced care planning?

According to the National Institute On Aging advanced care planning involves learning about the types of decisions that might need to be made, considering those decisions ahead of time, and then letting others know—both your family and your healthcare providers—about your preferences.”

Decisions and preferences are often placed into legal documents called advanced directives. Advanced directives may include but are not limited to the following documents: Living will, durable power of attorney, health care proxy, and do-not-resuscitate (DNR)/do-not-intubate (DNI) to name a few. Having an advanced directive allows an opportunity for you to spell out in great detail your wishes in the event you were unable to speak or make decisions on your own. An important advanced directive we can all do right now is electing a health care proxy. In brief a health care proxy is a document you complete with someone you trust who you name as your proxy to carry out your wishes or your health care decisions in the event you are unable to speak for yourself. Local 237 Legal Services Plan is available to assist you with health care proxy. There is no charge for this service.

Making your wishes known.

Share your wishes with your loves one and medical providers. Make copies of the documents and give one to someone you trust as well as your medical providers or tell a person who you trust where to find the documents. When electing a health care proxy, be sure to let your proxy know you are electing them as your health care proxy. Provide a copy of your health care proxy to your doctor and/or specialist. After all, what good is having a plan that no one knows about?

Next steps....

- Start thinking about advanced care planning. Have a conversation with your family and medical providers.
- Complete a health care proxy with the Local 237 Legal Services Plan or in your primary care doctor's office.
- Keep your documents accessible.

For more information related to this topic please go to the National Institute On Aging website <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/advance-care-planning-health-care-directives#what>

The Legal Services Plan: 216 West 14th St., 4th Fl. They may be reached at 212-924-1220. As always the Retiree Division is here to help if you have any questions. ■



Helping the Bahamas

by Luz Carty, MPA
Assistant to the Director, Retiree Division

The months of May through October are very popular for weddings, vacations and enjoying the weather outside. May is also the start of the hurricane season which runs through November 30th. On September 1, Hurricane Dorian pummeled the Caribbean islands. While Puerto Rico, was spared, Dorian used all its force to come down on the beautiful Bahamian Islands. The government official death toll is at 58 but relief workers and islanders know the number of victims is much higher.

There are many organizations hard at work helping the people of the Bahamas. UNICEF has been focusing its emergency response efforts on Latin American countries, the Caribbean and in the South Pacific. These regions have seen a rise in sea levels and intensifying storms as a result of the climate change. UNICEF's emergency response teams bring lifesaving relief such as water purification tablets, vaccines and nutrition supplements to children and nursing mothers. They also provide temporary shelter, counseling services to help children deal with the trauma, and help reunite children separated from their parents.

The Red Cross is also at work with hundreds of volunteers in the Abaco Islands and Grand Bahama. Stephen McAndrew, deputy director for the Americas of the International Federation of Red Cross, said the most urgent needs were medicine, food, water and communications. He also said there will be a need for psychological support.

Chef Jose Andres' organization, World Central Kitchen, sent relief teams in Nassau to set-up kitchens on the island. WCK relief teams are comprised of professional chefs, volunteers from the local area affected, logistic specialists, and even young people accompanied by adults. They welcome volunteers with commercial cooking experience, 4x4 vehicles, and anyone willing to serve a fresh meal with a smile.

GlobalGiving is another organization which connects nonprofits, donors, and companies in nearly every country around the world. They help local nonprofits access the funding, tools, training, and support they need to become more effective.

Want to help the Bahamas and other places hit by disaster? The following is the contact information for various organizations:

- 1. UNICEF USA**
125 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038. (800) 367-5437, www.unicefusa.org
- 2. AMERICAN RED CROSS** in Greater New York (Main Chapter Location)
520 W 49th Street, New York, 10019, (877) 733-2767, www.redcross.org
- 3. WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN**
1342 Florida Ave. NW, Washington DC, 20009, (202) 844-6430, www.wck.org
- 4. GLOBAL GIVING**
1110 Vermont Ave. NW Suite 550, Washington, DC 20005
(877)605-2314, www.globalgiving.org ■

Labor Day 2019



José Alicea Muñoz: Entre el golf, La Perla y Nueva York



Rosa y José Alicea

Por Néstor Murray-Irizarry
historiador y gestor cultural



Néstor Murray-Irizarry
Photo by George Malave

A José Alicea y a su esposa Rosa los entreviste el 4 de junio de 2019 en Nueva York. Viven en el Bronx.

José nació en el Viejo a San Juan, Puerto Rico el 7 de noviembre de 1937. Rosa nació y se crio en Nueva York. Alicea es hijo de José Eusebio Alicea y de Catalina Muñoz. Su padre trabajaba en los muelles mientras que su madre era ama de casa. Eran siete hermanos. Su esposa Rosa es hija de padres puertorriqueños. Su padre trabajaba en las fabricas en Nueva York, mientras que su madre era ama de casa. Eran siete hermanos. Ella estudió para embellecer a los demás en los salones de belleza. [Beautician]. Tuvo otro trabajo en seguros por dos o tres años y después trabajo en su casa para cuidar a mis hijos y hacía recortes y souvenirs para fiestas, cumpleaños y baby showers. Conoció a José a través de una prima

José, en su niñez tuvo muy buenas experiencias. Al vivir en el Viejo San Juan esto le permitió, además de,

... ir a la escuela, jugábamos el trompo, la algarroba, las canicas. Luego vendía periódico, iba a la playa, iba a pescar. Cadiaba, o sea, cargaba los bolsos de golf en El Morro. En juegos en donde participaban estadounidenses y puertorriqueños. Aprendí a jugar golf. También participe en fiestas que se celebraban en la Plaza de San Sebastián. Eran muy buenas y en calma. Conocí a la alcaldesa, nos llevaba a diferentes sitios. Nos trajo nieve, que duró como 20 minutos. Nos daba uniforme de pelotero, nos daba zapatos y otras cosas." Al paso de los años:

"Estudié en el Barrio La Perla, el primer grado, luego fui a la Escuela Abraham Lincoln en tercer grado hasta sexto grado y luego a la escuela Román Baldorioty de Castro, ahí estudié dibujo y carpintería. Llegué hasta primer año, me salí como a los 16 años. Mi hermano José Domingo López, me llevó a trabajar con él, era mecánico dental y yo me ocupaba de entregar los pedidos. Estuve con él dos años y después viajé para Nueva York, tenía como 20 años.

Me fui a vivir a Nueva York. Tuve la suerte que un buen amigo, que nos criamos en La Perla, me regalo el pasaje. Llegué a vivir al Bronx en la 141, cuando tenía 20 años. Me consiguieron un trabajo en una compañía, coordinando la entrega en el aeropuerto del servicio de comida a los pasajeros de los aviones. Ganaba 75 dólares. semanales, era ayudante de chofer. Estuve seis meses y de ahí me fui a Puerto Rico. Estuve un año sin hacer nada.

Después de un año regresé a Nueva York y conseguí un trabajo en una fábrica de luces de navidad y trabajé ahí cinco años. Ganaba 48 dólares semanales. Volví al aeropuerto y después hice mantenimiento en una escuela

en Manhattan, durante tres años por medio de una unión. Luego fui a otra escuela otros tres años. Quedé desempleado. De ahí pasé a trabajar Housing. Carlos Martínez, supervisor de Housing, era vecino mío y me consiguió trabajo temporal por 6 meses en Housing en el mismo edificio donde vivíamos. Hacía Mantenimiento. Al segundo año, me incorporé a la Unión 237 cuando me dieron el contrato permanente. Me casé en noviembre de 1966.

¿Qué hacías en el trabajo?

Me levantaba, salía de la casa a las 7:30 y ponchaba a las 8:00. Había cuatro edificios y yo iba al segundo edificio donde me daban mis tareas, podaba, sembraba, cortaba árboles... barrer, sacar nieve. Salía a las 4:30, con media hora de almuerzo. Me iba a mi casa. Ya teníamos una hija.

¿Usted cogió algún tipo de examen para ese trabajo a tiempo completo en Housing?

Sí, de Civil Service. Sacaba la basura y me iba arriba a barrer varios pisos. A las 3:00 pm nos reportábamos, tomaba un descanso y luego limpiaba ventanas y revisaba el edificio. Y así estuve 20 años, hasta que me jubilé en septiembre de 1999, con un receso de tres años, porque les dieron preferencia a los soldados que regresaban de Vietnam. En ese tiempo trabajé en mantenimiento en la joyería Tiffany desde 1979 hasta 1981. Yo tenía 62 años. Ahora tengo 82 años.

¿A Usted alguien le orientó sobre la Unión?

Carlos Martínez me orientó sobre la Unión y sobre el Seguro Social

¿Me dice que tienen un hijo que también pertenece a la Unión?

Sí, trabaja en Manhattan.

¿Cuál ha sido su experiencia con la Unión?

No me puedo quejar, me han tratado bien, tengo mi seguro, tengo mi plan médico y estoy retirado del trabajo no de la Unión.

¿Qué significa para usted ser miembro de un sindicato (José)?

No me quejo de la Unión, mejores beneficios que en la otra unión a la que pertencí. Tengo Plan médico para mí y la señora.

¿Qué significa para usted estar jubilado?

Ahora tengo más tiempo para ir a ver a la familia, me distraigo por ahí, voy al cine. ■

National Teamsters Hispanic Caucus

The National Teamsters Bi-Annual Hispanic Caucus, held in September at the Caribe Hilton in San Juan, Puerto Rico, featured a presentation by Nancy True, Local 237's Director of the Retiree Division, on the Oral History Project. Nancy described the importance of preserving union history of Local 237 for future generations, and preserving it in a way that reflects the diversity of union membership. Nancy also discussed the first-ever publication of Local 237's Oral History Project—in Spanish, "Memoria de boricuas peregrinos" and introduced its editor, Professor Nestor Murray-Irizarry. All of the interviews were in Spanish. This was not an accident. The message was loud and clear: We communicate with our members in any way we need to — in the language they speak. Everyone in attendance received a copy of the book and a poster of the book's cover. Nancy is pictured with the Professor (right) and Roberto Arcelay, a convention participant from Texas. ■



Nancy B. True, Roberto Arcelay and Néstor Murray-Irizarry

Intrepid Queens



These retirees are truly intrepid because they didn't give up when faced with adversity. They held their meeting in a nearby park after a sewage back up made their regular meeting space unavailable.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS UNDER NYC'S NEW RENT LAWS

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

Major rent law legislation was enacted in Albany this summer reversing decades long erosion of rent protections. The legislation, called Housing Stability & Tenant Protection Act of 2019 (HSTPA), is sweeping and makes major changes in the rent laws.

For instance, the law makes changes relating to a landlord's ability to increase rents due to Individual Apartment Improvements (IAIs) and Major Capital Improvements (MCIs). In another major victory for tenants, there is no more vacancy, high rent/high income deregulation. Rent demands must now provide tenants with a 14 day time period to make payment. These are only a sampling of the law changes.

Local 237 will be hosting a free KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN HOUSING COURT seminar for members and retirees on Tuesday, December 10, 2019 at the Union Hall starting at 5:30PM.

In addition to summarizing major changes on rent overcharges, preferential rents, Major Capital Improvements, Individual Apartment Improvements and High-Rent/Income Decontrol, members will learn the ins and outs of a housing court proceeding and what to do if your landlord refuses to make repairs.

Call the Legal Services Plan at (212) 924-1220 to RSVP. Know Your Rights! ■



Who do I call when I have questions about my Health Insurance or Welfare Fund Benefits?

by **Mitch Goldberg**
Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

Retirees' Fund and Retiree Division staff are always available to help. However, it is often best to go directly to the source for specific information. As we near the end of the year, I thought it would be helpful to provide important phone numbers that can help you throughout the year.

You may be aware that the Office of Labor Relations recently moved. After many years of being located on Rector Street the offices have now moved to 22 Cortlandt Street 12th floor. Their phone number remains the same: 212-513-0470

Health Insurance

Office of Labor Relations/Employee Benefits Office (22 Cortlandt Street 12th floor, New York, New York 10006) 212-513-0470. Call them regarding health insurance coverage options and enrollment or if you plan to change your health insurance plan. They can also be called about the Medicare Part B reimbursement program.

Retirees' Benefit Fund

If you are having an issue with your Aetna pharmacy benefit please call Aetna directly at the dedicated Teamster customer service line (855) 352-1599. As our Pharmacy Benefit Manager, Aetna should be able to resolve most issues with a phone call. Standard Operating Hours for Aetna's customer service are Monday-Friday: 7:00am to 11:00pm Eastern, Saturday: 7:00am to 9:30pm Eastern, Sunday: 8:00am to 6:00pm Eastern.

If you have questions about how to locate a dental provider or dental specialist you can call Healthplex at (800) 468-0600. Healthplex can also assist you with claims issues. If an issue goes unresolved, sometimes it's necessary for further intervention by the Fund office, in these cases, please call the Retirees' Fund (212) 924-7220.

For those residing in the NY metro area the optical vendor provider is CPS or Comprehensive Professional Systems (212) 675-5745. If you live outside the NY Metro area Davis Optical (800) 999-5431. Whether you are trying to obtain plan information, find a provider or verify eligibility calling either provider, depending on where you live, can usually get you the information you need to receive your optical benefit.

Other important phone numbers:

If you experience any issue with your pharmacy benefit, optical or dental benefits or need further explanation, please call the Fund office and let our staff assist you.

Teamsters Local 237 Retirees' Benefit Fund (prescription benefits, dental, optical benefits, hearing aids and supplemental medical expenses for DME (durable medical equipment) 216 West 14th Street, 3rd Floor, New York, New York 10011. (212) 924-7220 (M-F 8:30 am – 5:00 pm)

Teamsters Local 237 Retiree Division. The Retiree Division provides regular seminars focusing on benefits. These sessions take place at the union hall, as well as at neighborhood meetings (Brooklyn, Bronx/ Westchester, Queens and Long Island. "Out of town" meetings in Florida and Puerto Rico take place once every two years with a primary focus on benefits. Retiree Division staff are available to provide information and guidance to retired members about their health insurance and union benefits.

Other Retiree Division activities include, social work assistance, cultural activities, membership meetings pension assistance, The Local 237 oral history project, retirement planning programs, opportunities for activism and more! Retiree Division staff may be reached at (212)-807-0555 (M-F 9:00am – 5:00pm). ■



Fall Prevention

by **Susan Milisits**
Deputy Director
Retiree Division

Falls are a leading cause of serious injuries in older adults. Many people think falls are a normal part of aging. The truth is, they are not. Most falls can be prevented. And you have the power to reduce your risk.

Health problems such as arthritis, heart disease, muscle weakness, poor balance or vision, foot problems, Parkinson's disease, dementia and even certain medications can increase your chance of falling. (Health in Aging). It is important to keep your home as safe as possible. Slippery throw rugs and poor lighting make falls more likely.

If you fall, it is important to let your doctor know right away. They need to know what might have caused the fall. Did you trip over something, or get dizzy and lose your balance? The more information you can provide will help you avoid falling again.

Bring all your medications with you when you see your doctor. This includes prescription and over the counter medications. You and your doctor can review your medications to see if there are any that that could increase your chance of falling. If so, your doctor can change the dose or prescribe another type of medicine. Your doctor should check your balance, leg strength and function, your blood

pressure, heart rate and rhythm; examine the way you walk and test your vision (Health in Aging). Your doctor may recommend certain exercises, physical therapy, a cane or walker, a change in your eyeglasses prescription or even a change in the shoes you are wearing.

Exercise has been shown to decrease falls and, it is highly recommended for older adults. For balance you may want to consider walking or take a Tai Chi class. Or, you may want to exercise indoors. It is important that you check with your doctor before beginning any exercise routine.

Keeping your home safe is very important. Listed below are some suggestions to help prevent you from falling at home:

- Keep cords from areas where you walk
- Remove loose carpets and rugs or tack down the carpets and only use rugs with non-skid backing
- Add lights in dimly lit areas and at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Put handrails on both sides of steps or stairs both inside and outside your home.
- Add grab bars in the bathroom and a rubber mat in the tub or shower
- Wear firm shoes with a back and a good grip on the bottom

It is important to speak to family members or doctor if you are concerned about falling. Your family and doctor want to help you maintain your mobility and reduce your risk of falling. ■



According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Breast cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer in women after skin cancer. About 1 in 8 women born today in the United States will get breast cancer at some point.

The good news is that most women can survive breast cancer if it's found and treated early.

If you are a woman age 40 to 49, talk with your doctor about when to start getting mammograms and how often to get them.

If you are a woman age 50 to 74, be sure to get a mammogram every 2 years. You may also choose to get them more often.

Talk to a doctor about your risk for breast cancer, especially if a close family member of yours had breast or ovarian cancer. Your doctor can help you decide when and how often to get mammograms.

For more information

<https://healthfinder.gov/nho/octobertoolkit.aspx>

on a personal note...

Congratulations

Retired NYCHA Manager, **Marilyn Findlay** is bursting with pride. Her granddaughter, Kai recently received her Master's Degree in Social Work and has already earned her state licensure. Bravo Kai!

Condolences...

Condolences to retired Sergeant **Julien DeLeon**, from Lincoln Hospital Police in the Bronx, on the passing of her partner Carmen Ortiz who was 58 years old. She will be sorely missed by her family and friends.

Condolences to the family of **Sandra Williams**, our retired clerical staff member of the Welfare Fund. Rest in Peace "Red."

RETIREE news & views

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019

Suprise Reunion



(l-r) Retired members **Cejester Walker** and **Julio Virella** were recently delighted to have a surprise reunion at the union. They were co-workers at Bellevue Hospital prior to their retirements.

News from NYCERS

Have you submitted your Notice of Participation for WTC benefits?

Active or vested members who participated in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations may file for disability retirement under current provisions of the WTC Law. A retiree may apply to be reclassified as a WTC disability retiree.

To be eligible to apply for a disability retirement or for reclassification under the WTC Law, you must have filed a Notice of Participation in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations with NYCERS (Form #622, available on NYCERS' website at www.nycers.org). Your agency must verify your participation in Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up operations at a WTC site.

Track Your Notice Online

Members with a registered MyNYCERS account can log into MyNYCERS and track the status of the verification of their WTC Notice of Participation online. The tracker displays the date NYCERS received the Notice, along with status updates during the verification process (e.g., Pending with Agency, Verified, Not Verified, etc.). Sign up or log in here: www.nycers.org.

WTC Filing Requirements

With the exception of vestees and retirees applying for reclassification, you, a person acting on your behalf, or your agency head must file an application for disability retirement under the WTC Law either: (1) while you are active on City payroll; (2) within 3 months after you were last paid by your employer; or (3) within 12 months after you receive notice that your employment was terminated for medical reasons if you were on an approved medical leave of absence prior to termination.

The current deadline to file Form #622, Notice of Participation in WTC Rescue, Recovery or Clean-Up Operations, is September 11, 2022.

WTC Reclassification

Individuals who are already retired for service or for a non-WTC disability benefit can submit an application for reclassification under WTC Law along with all required participation and medical evidence. If an applicant's participation is verified, the Medical Board finds that the member is disabled from a qualifying WTC condition, and the NYCERS Board of Trustees finds that the WTC Law presumption is not rebutted, then the applicant will be approved for a tax-free WTC benefit that is payable from the date the NYCERS Board of Trustees approves the application.

Additional WTC benefits and information

Individuals who have experienced WTC-related health conditions (except for psychological conditions) can apply for additional benefits through the provision of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). To determine what benefits may be available, in addition to NYCERS WTC disability retirement or death benefits, go to the VCF website at <https://www.vcf.gov/index.html> or call the VCF at 1-855-885-1555.

Visit www.nycers.org/wtc for more information on WTC benefits and filing requirements. You may also sign up for MyNYCERS, the secure online portal to your NYCERS account. MyNYCERS is not required for the WTC disability process, but it will enable you to log in any time to view your account information, change your address, and file certain forms online. ■

Toys for Tots

This year the **Veterans, Black History, El Comité Latino, Italian Heritage, and Sunshine Committees** will join the **U.S. Marines** in their Toys for Tots campaign. Last year the Toys for Tots campaign was able to provide gifts to over 125, 000 children in need in the 5 boroughs. Toys for Tots needs our help to spread holiday cheer to children in need.

Please bring an unwrapped toy valued up to \$20.00 to the Union.

The Toys for Tots drop off box is located on the main floor or on the 8th floor in the Retiree division. For more information about the Toys for Tots campaign please visit <https://www.toysfortots.org> or call the Retiree Division at 212-807-0555.



Members of the committees who joined with the U.S. Marines and Toys For Tots.