



news & views

A PUBLICATION OF LOCAL 237 RETIREE DIVISION

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The Retiree Division turns

40

The Retiree Division is forty this year. And while the Coronavirus will cause us to delay our June Founder's Day celebration—we will celebrate at a later time—no pandemic can erase the accomplishments the those years have brought to Local 237 due to the hard work of so many of our retirees. As we look back on those trail-blazing achievements, enjoy a sense of pride for taking part in those achievements, which will enable generations to come to have a union that is strong, united and sets the gold standard for workers' rights.



Dear Retirees,

Our thoughts are with you and your families at this time. We know that the Coronavirus has taken a toll on all our lives but we want you to know that we are thinking of you. You are not alone!!!!

We understand that moments of isolation can prove to be very challenging. It's not unusual to have feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and confusion among other emotions. It's normal to feel this way as this circumstance is beyond our control. Our lives as we know it has been altered and will be for the foreseeable future. We want to know that Local 237 is with you during this very hard time. Local 237 main office is closed, however the union is available via telephone at 212-924-2000. Retiree Division staff are here to help. We encourage you to take a look at the Local 237 website www.local237.org for the most updated and accurate information. This newsletter will provide you with information regarding and the new procedure of many important offices/ agencies. Our Motto is "Retired from work but not from the Union" this is unchanging during this trying time. We are here to help!!!



by **Gregory Floyd**

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

Who would ever have thought that a 2-hour movie you 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 or enjoy a glass of Chablis on their patios. No, the "actors" of this drama are hunkered down in their homes—if they are lucky enough to have such a place to go—glued to their TVs, reeling in fear from scenes before them, featuring streets they've walked down, people they know, while praying for the best. No backlot here. The "actors", unfortunately, are us!

While we are hopeful for a happy, Hollywood-style ending, for now, the pain of the moment seems never-ending. What to do? We can spend our days angry and sad, wondering how things went so wrong, so fast. We can question if our government leaders let us down. Why weren't we better prepared as a nation? We can look at our family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers—and ourselves—burdened by troubling thoughts and obsessed with vigilant monitoring, worrying about the worst that can happen while hoping to be saved by the best...of plans and people, working to keep us out of harm's way.

Indeed, in all of this darkness, there are

a message from the president RIGHT OUT OF HOLLYWOOD? *Living in a Coronavirus World*

many examples of the best of people on display. Health care professionals, first responders, transit workers—to name just a few—are among those who risk their lives to save the life of another person. 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 know is that there are people in need. But we also don't need to look beyond our own members at Local 237 to see the best examples of the best of people. Our members have had to do their jobs to safeguard the most vulnerable populations in New York City without having adequate safeguards in place for themselves. And, despite our repeated and ongoing demands to the de Blasio Administration to provide these workers with PPE, the City remains unconscionably noncompliant. Our members nonetheless labor on. They are truly inspiring.

And there is one more major example of the best of people: Our Governor, Andrew Cuomo. He gives public service a good name. It's not just that he instills a sense of confidence...of leadership to a frightened nation begging to know that things will eventually be alright, but it's also his display of warmth mixed in with his wisdom. That warmth—that virtual hug, is what is needed now, more than ever before. It's no surprise that his late-morning press conferences are must-TV nationwide. They are a mixture of information and admonishment. He tells it straight. "Here's what we know". The news right now may be grim, but here's what we are doing. He takes responsibility. Also, the Governor's pleas to try to find some solace in staying close to people you love and remembering the good times you've shared and try to replicate them in some small way even at this terrible time. You don't have to be an Italian-American to relate to the Governor's story about Sunday family dinners with his parents and grandparents—marathon meals that started round 2pm and went well into the evening, with tons of long simmering homemade sauce, meatballs, sausages, spaghetti—and conversation. Or his naming the special guidelines he laid out early

on about how to protect the elderly in this crisis, Matilda's Law, after his own mother, saying "She's not expendable. Neither is your mother". That really hit home! Or how about the Governor having his brother, CNN journalist Christopher Cuomo—who has tested positive for the Coronavirus broadcast from the basement of his home where he is quarantined—to describe his experiences and to make the point that this disease doesn't discriminate. Cuomo told us: "I'm the Governor. I'm supposed to know everyone and everything and I couldn't stop my brother from getting this virus. Heed the warnings. It could happen to you too." The Governor then signed off the segment by telling his 49-year old brother, "I love you little brother—call you later." Wow!

So, what do we do now? Certainly, we are all prayerful that this pandemic ends soon and eases its grip on our city, state, nation and the world. In the meanwhile, we will continue to take guidance from those leaders who show the strength of character, operational knowledge and skills to get us through these tough times. However, there is an even bigger question to consider: What will we do when the crisis ends? 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; or 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? Or, does the pain from this Coronavirus destroy us forever? What does lingering bitterness get you? Though I am certain that there will be countless books written on this crisis for decades to come—with stories and speculation to figure this out, 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 Sunday family dinners fill not only our stomachs but our hearts and souls. ■

a message from the co-directors

by **Susan Milisits**

Coronavirus and Loneliness

Co-Director of the
Retiree Division



by **Julie Kobi, LMSW**

Co-Director of the
Retiree Division

As you all know, we are in the middle of a pandemic, Coronavirus or Covid 19. It wasn't too long ago that the terms "social distancing" and "self quarantine" had little meaning to us. Now they are words we use and practice on a

daily basis. Social distancing is a way to slow down the disease.

However, for some, keeping distance from others can cause feelings of isolation and loneliness. And this isolation can take its toll on many of us. We miss going to see friends and family. We are social creatures by nature. Our connections to each other enables us to survive and thrive. Now, our daily activities have ceased including going to religious services among other activities. Maintaining connections to your family and friends is something you have control over even in this time, where things feel out of control.

Unfortunately, loneliness is a predictor of poor health. Loneliness and how it sets in and how it comes and goes at some point can affect us both physically and mentally. When we are indoors for a long period of time it is normal to feel stressed whether it's fear of being alone or the

fear for watching the trauma in the news all day long. All of

this this can be compounded by the fear of getting sick yourself or feeling a deep level of sadness and/or uncertainty of the future. Maintaining connections is an important part of our lives and can contribute to your overall wellness. We may not see the importance of the connections but you are connected to your community in many ways from grocery shopping in the same place for many years, laundry, community outings, religious connections or even stopping by the Union just to say hi.

So, in what ways can we help ourselves as we experience isolation and loneliness? We can maintain connections and combat feelings of loneliness as best we can. We are not saying that loneliness is not par for the course — it is. However, it is important to reach out to others to

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combat these feelings. Keep your connections by calling friends and relatives to tell them how you are feeling can be helpful. The phone calls can be either a voice call or a video chat using applications or apps called Skype, WhatsApp or even Facetime. These application or Apps are generally free of charge, however may require creating an account. If you have a Facebook account there is a feature to video call. You can use Facebook to video chat someone. If you don't have a computer but do have a smartphone you are in luck! The smartphones functions just as well as a computer for some cellphones are the only device they use. It's ok to ask for help when navigating these devices to get started. Trust us, your friends and family will want to do anything in their power to stay connected to you as you do to them. When sharing your feelings you will be surprised to know that your friends and family may feel the same way as you do. Also you will be surprised how video chatting or Facetime may make you feel. You may want to dress up for the

occasion. We know staying in all day may be hard to spruce yourself up but trust us video chatting may make you want to dress the part. Dressing up and preparing for the video call can also improve mood and self-esteem.

If technology is hard for you, you can write letters to family and friends. You can journal every day all the things you are feeling and mail it when you can. You will be surprised at how heart felt a handwritten letter or card can be. It shows you have taken time out to think about what you want to say and truly makes the person feel special. A great way to stay connected is phone calls. Perhaps you can ask the person you are speaking to conference call another friend or a relative. There are many beautiful ways to connect with your friends and loved ones.

We are all connected! We are in this together! We are one large family with over 11,000 brothers and sisters. What family do you know has this many family members? There is power

in the union connections with each other whether it's a retiree you worked with, a retiree you met in one of the retiree division classes, or perhaps a retiree from a committee. Reach out to your fellow retiree just to say hi, I'm checking in. We all have that day when we have someone on our minds we haven't spoken in to in a while. Now is the time to call and check in. Perhaps you and other retirees can create a calling chain one retiree calls checks in on one person, another retiree to check on another so on and so forth. Building a calling chain that connects retirees from New York, to Puerto Rico, to Florida, North and South Carolina. The chain will become larger and even stronger than before. We will be stronger and closer than before. We are here for you!!!! Reach out to the Retiree Division staff, we want to hear from you. If you have other ways you have maintained connections and you want to share them we are open to ideas and suggestions. We can share with everyone. Be well and stay healthy! ■

IMPORTANT NEW INFORMATION ABOUT NYCERS' SERVICES

Pension Payments

Our most critical operation – making pension payments to nearly 155,000 retired members and beneficiaries – is not interrupted by the current health crisis.

Retirement Applications for Incapacitated Members

NYCERS understands that some members may wish to retire but are hospitalized and cannot complete the paperwork themselves, and their loved ones cannot visit to help due to safety restrictions in place at the hospital.

If you have a loved one who is a member of NYCERS and wishes to retire but is hospitalized and cannot complete the paperwork, please email legalquestions@nycers.org. This email box will be monitored from 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Monday – Friday and 9:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Please include your telephone number so you can be contacted if necessary.

Retirement Application Receipts

Please be aware that members who file a retirement application online will receive a confirmation page which they can download and share with their employer. This confirmation page is considered a replacement for the manual retirement receipt.

Health Insurance for Retirees

For health insurance purposes, NYCERS has recently worked out a process with OLR and other Agencies not on the City's PMS System. In this process, NYCERS will generate a daily report of new retirees in lieu of the retirement receipt. OLR will no longer require members to include a retirement receipt with the Health Benefit Enrollment Form. If you require further information about how OLR will process health insurance enrollments, please contact Sang Hong at shong@nyceplans.org.

Notarization

The new MyNYCERS gives members and retirees access to the most commonly requested forms once they register. Submitting these forms on-

line eliminates the notary requirement because (a) the member has already gone through identity proofing during the registration process, and (b) other security measures are in

place to protect NYCERS members. The notary requirement for many of the forms that cannot currently be submitted online remains in effect. If a member has difficulty obtaining a notary during this time, they can follow the steps on the attached PDF, "How to E-Notarize in 6 Easy Steps."

ENHANCED ONLINE SERVICES

The new MyNYCERS is live! Members can now register for their new MyNYCERS account.

- By registering for the enhanced site at www.mynycers.org, NYCERS members can submit many more forms online from the comfort and safety of their home, including:
 - Service Retirement and Option Election
 - Beneficiary
 - Refunds
 - Direct Deposit (EFT; pension payments, loans, refunds)
- Loans, Buyback, Change of Address, and Tax Withholding forms continue to be available online.
- New York City employees who are eligible for NYCERS membership and have not yet joined can now submit a NYCERS Membership Application online.

We encourage you to register at www.mynycers.org and try out the new features. Be sure to use a supported browser: Google Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, or Apple Safari.

Please periodically check the NYCERS website at www.nycers.org for further service updates. ■

New York State
ACADEMY
OF TRIAL LAWYERS

HOW TO
E-NOTARIZE*
in 6 EASY STEPS

- 1

Set-up a video conference allowing for direct, live interaction between the Person and the Notary.
- The Person must present valid photo ID to the Notary.

2
- 3

The Person must affirmatively state that they are present in the State of New York.
- The Person must then sign, and on the same date, e-mail or fax document to the Notary.

4
- 5

The Notary may then notarize the e-mailed or faxed copy and send it back to the Person.
- If a fully executed original is needed, the original and e-notarized documents must be sent to the Notary within 30 days. The Notary may then notarize the original using the e-notarization date.

6

*In response to the COVID 19 emergency, the Governor has issued EO No. 202.7
AUTHORIZING NOTARY SERVICES VIA AUDIO-VIDEO TECHNOLOGY

To view the full Executive Order or for more information, visit:
www.trialacademy.org





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

Legal Services Plan Coronavirus Updates for Local 237 Retirees

The Legal Services Plan continues to support members and retirees during the health crisis by working remotely. Members in need of assistance can contact the Legal Services Plan by leaving a detailed message at (212) 924-2000 or by e-mail at one of the e-mail addresses listed for Legal Services Plan attorneys on Local 237's website. If you already have an assigned attorney working for you, please contact them directly.

If you have a scheduled intake, your assigned attorney will conduct the intake with you at the scheduled time over the phone.

The Court system in New York is only open for extremely limited "essential" filings. There is currently a halt to all evictions and foreclosure actions. While it is true you can not be evicted from your home during this time, rent and mortgage payments continue to accrue and are not being waived. No new divorce actions can be filed. On-going actions are currently being adjourned unless court deemed "essential" matters, such as Orders of Protection, are involved.

The Court system is working to expand remote conferences and any information provided is subject to updates and changes. If you visit the Union's website at local237.org, you will find a detailed listing of Court information that we will continue to update.

Remember — for retirees outside of New York, you are eligible for some reimbursement toward legal fees if your legal matter is one that we would cover in New York. And, as always, should you have a question or are in need of legal assistance, please do not hesitate to leave a message at the number above. Wishing you all the very best during this challenging time. ■



UNCERTAIN TIMES COVID-19

by **Mitch Goldberg**

Director of the Retiree Benefit Fund

As I enter my 4th week of isolation and working remotely from my home I am reminded of how fragile life can be. I, like many others have time to ponder and think about life and the things it brings to us, some happy and some sad. While I am happy that I and my family have been unaffected by the virus many of our Active members on the front lines have been adversely effected by this pandemic. As you all know Teamsters have many job titles that are considered essential to keep life moving in the City of New York. From our Housing Authority personnel to our School Safety Officers and our brothers and sisters who are in the fight every day at our H&H Hospitals. Many of you who are Retirees worked in these same jobs while you were Active. My hope is that none of you, our Retirees is stricken down by this horrible virus. For anyone who is not so lucky we wish you strength and a speedy recovery. Inevitably someone will pass on from this and I want to provide those of you information previously provided about naming a beneficiary and COBRA, both of which will affected surviving spouses and any dependents you may have.

BENEFICIARIES AND COBRA

There are certain important topics that people feel uncomfortable discussing. At the top of this list is the Retirees' Benefit Fund's \$2500 Death

Benefit. This benefit is paid to your designated beneficiary at the time of your death. The beneficiary may be any person of your choice. Beneficiaries can be changed at any time by contacting the Fund office and requesting a new enrollment form and completing the beneficiary designation portion of the enrollment form. In order to be in effect, your designation must be on file in the Fund office. If you made a beneficiary designation, when you were an active member but did not file a new beneficiary designation at the time of your retirement, your beneficiary will be carried over to the Retirees' Fund. If there is no designated beneficiary living at the time of your death, the Death Benefit will be paid to your estate. This creates a delay in payment and can be time consuming for the executor of your estate who must go to Surrogates Court to obtain the proper papers needed by the Fund before payment can be made. Life sometimes brings unexpected changes. Your personal situation may have changed due to divorce, death of the original beneficiary or you may simply want to name a new beneficiary. If you are unsure of who is listed as your beneficiary, we suggest you complete a new enrollment form.

Other life changes (death of a retiree, divorce, loss of dependent child status under the Fund,) affect cover-

age under the Fund. In these cases where coverage would otherwise end, the federal law called COBRA requires that family members be offered the opportunity for a temporary extension of welfare fund benefits coverage (called "continuation coverage"). These provisions apply to the Fund's prescription drug, dental, optical and hearing aid benefits only. (Note: there is separate COBRA coverage for health insurance from the City of New York.) If an eligible family member chooses continuation coverage, he or she will be entitled to the same type of benefits for family members of similarly-situation retirees. There is a cost associated with COBRA. A monthly premium must be paid to continue with the benefit. "Qualifying events" are events that cause a spouse or dependent child to lose his or her group coverage by the Fund. The type of qualifying event determines who is entitled to elect continuation coverage as a result of such event.

The focus of this article is on the general aspects of Local 237's Retirees' Benefit Fund death benefit and COBRA coverage under the plan. It is a good place to start a discussion with your dependent family members. If you require further information or clarification regarding the topics discussed in this article, please call the Fund at (212) 924-7220. We are here to help. ■



Pets are the "Best" friend

by **Luz Nieves-Carty, MPA**

Assistant to the Director, Retiree Division

Older adults who are living alone can sometimes feel isolated and lonely. They can feel cut off from the world. Fortunately, studies have shown that there is someone who can help. Your friendly, cuddly pet! Dogs, cats, birds and fish are common pets kept indoors. They provide attention, and will listen to you. However, a dog is truly man or woman's best pal. Okay, I may be a little biased for I have had my dog for 7 years.

A study at the University of Rochester Medical Center with a group of seniors determined that pets help improve lives overall. Pet ownership can help seniors live a healthier and more fulfilling life. Building a relationship with a four legged friend can also have additional benefits.

An article on the AARP website lists "10 Reasons to Get a Dog When You're Over 50". Dogs keep you fit. They need walks and love to play indoors and outdoors. A good game of Frisbee is sure to get your heart

pumping. Older adults report at least 30 extra minutes a day of activity with their dogs. They just want to have fun! It's been reported dog ownership can help lower blood pressure and risk of a heart attack. Dogs also connect you to others humans. Walking the pooch can open up conversations with strangers, neighbors and other dog lovers. Look around, dog parks are everywhere!

The article points out that dog owners may be more structured. Pets require schedules and consistency. It's also mentioned how "dogs get you". Dogs can pick up on your sad emotions and offer comfort. They can also pick up when you're feeling happy, and want to PLAY! Dogs are known for helping people with disabilities have a better quality of life. Dogs are ears for the deaf, eyes for the blind, and security alarms for many individuals.

It is recommended to adopt older dogs. They usually are calmer and housebroken. Having a dog can

inspire seniors to volunteer. Understanding how great it is to be cared for, some seniors may pay it forward. In short, pets just make you a better person. They see you as their hero. There are many dogs in shelters in need of a loving home. You can reach out to the resources listed or call 311 to connect with an adoption shelter near you.

Sometimes there are housing situations that may prohibit pets. According to the NYC Commission of Human Rights, if a mental health professional deems your pet necessary to your mental well, it is considered an Emotional Support Animal. Your pet doesn't require any special training. Landlords, merchants and airlines are required to allow pets on the premises. You need to provide the documents from your mental specialist. For further information, contact 311 or visit www.nyc.gov If you live in the New York City Housing Authority buildings, please check with management for their rules on pets.

Pets and seniors can have beautiful, loving relationships. Call 311 for your nearest animal rescue center, ASPCA or animal shelter. There may be different adoption processes, but it's so worth it! ■

Tiempos del Corona virus (COVID-19) Los virus que nos separan y nos unen: ¡salud!

Primera Parte

Por Néstor Murray-Irizarry historiador y gestor cultural



Néstor Murray-Irizarry
Photo by George Malave

Esperamos que al leer estas notas se encuentren bien de salud y alejados de los virus y de las enfermedades que nos alejan los unos de los otros y nos acercan espiritualmente y emocionalmente. No olvidemos que la buena salud tiene tres elementos fundamentales: la fase física, la espiritual y la emocional. Hay que ser bien positivo, estas condiciones solo la padecen los vivos. Mi abuela siempre me decía que la pedrá que este pal' perro, a pesar de que se esconda, siempre se la van a dar; y afirmaba que *nadie muere la víspera*.

Claro que hay que ser siempre muy positivo y cuidadoso. En nuestro suelo el gobierno ha decretado un toque de queda o sencillamente *un enciértrate tu* para prevenir, en parte que nuestra gente se contagie con el nuevo virus conocido como *coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Es una triste realidad, pero el llamado aislamiento social, ya se ha probado, en otras tierras y épocas, y salva muchas vidas. Considero que, en Puerto Rico, actualmente, un por ciento considerable de personas *lo han cogido muy en serio*.

Ante este *mal-ido* (así lo esperamos con la ayuda de Dios y de todos) hemos pensado que es bueno hablar con algunos de nuestros jubilados de la Local 237, que viven en Puerto Rico y con su media naranja; sin olvidar anotar mis comentarios, o consejos de los médicos especialistas, que puedan enriquecer con datos históricos o científicos las valiosas narraciones de nuestros jubilados.

Empezamos por la pareja de líderes de los jubilados que residen en Aguada: José Antonio Meléndez y su esposa Gloria Cordero Mejías. Inicio [Lady first] con Gloria (claro y José); tienen 7 nietos y 5 biznietos; mientras José le echa las bendiciones y mantiene el área exterior de su casa en perfectas condiciones, Gloria se ocupa de los *quehaceres de la casa*, además, de ir a hacer la compra de la semana, al supermercado y a la farmacia. Sale a la calle bien tempranito y bien protegida con guantes plásticos que al regresa, rapidito a su casa, los lava con jabón y luego los desecha. Me imagino a Gloria también lavando todos los productos que compró. Se lava bien sus manos con jabón y si adquirió otros en cajas, deja en una esquina del exterior de su residencia esas cajas, por si anteriormente otra persona estornudó en el área donde estuvo localizada esas cajas. (Si la persona estornudó recientemente dicen varios especialistas, al momento en que usted entra en contacto con esas cajas y estuviera infectado con el virus, usted debe cuidarse y dejar de un día para otro, esas cajas, en un lugar fuera del interior de su casa.)

Gloria planifica sus días con mucho esmero y siempre saca tiempo para ayudar a su nieta con sus tres hijos (un varón de 5 años, otro de 3 y el último de 15 días.) Además, teje, como una eterna hilandera y confecciona ropa para sus nietos, igual que lo hizo con sus hijos. Cocina y ¡bueno!; prepara para los nenes *pure* caseros de todas las viandas que puede conseguir en el mercado. A los nietos más grandecitos, después que cumplen seis meses o más, le añade a el *pure*, un poco de pollo o carne de res. Para los adultos hace comidas criollas: sancocho, alcapurrias, viandas con bacalao, salmón, aves, carne roja; *se come de todo*, afirma. Los miembros de la familia se divierten en la piscina, unos pocos, otros corriendo en el inmenso patio de la casa. Todos planifican su día, a su manera. Los grandes y los más jóvenes durante las noches se entretienen jugando diversos tipos de juegos de mesa.

Tanto José como Gloria se comunican todos los días con sus seres queridos que están viviendo en la Florida, Nueva York y Boston. La comunicación es de vital importancia en estos tiempos de tanta confusión. Además, muchos médicos comentan que es posible que las contantes conversaciones que se tienen con familiares, amigos, compañeros de trabajo, vecinos pueden ayudar a evitar condiciones crónicas de salud como lo es el Alzheimer Disease (AD). También sirve para entretenerse, variar la rutina y conocer mejor a los de mas seres humanos y su entorno.

Gloria indica que el Coronavirus es uno muy fuerte y que ella, en sus años de experiencia no

había tenido la oportunidad de encontrarse con algo similar; destaca su experiencia con el virus de la varicela y el sarampión.

Sobre el sarampión el epidemiólogo José Rigau-Pérez, MD, MPH y Evelyn D. Vallejo-Calzada, BST, acaban de publicar en la *Revista PRHSJ, volumen 39, numero 1, pags.20-27* un valioso artículo de investigación científica, en inglés, sobre el sarampión en Puerto Rico titulado: **Measles, Malnutrition and Mortality: Puerto Rico, 1917-1918**. Los que lo interesen y no puedan bajarlo, me pueden escribir y con mucho gusto se lo envío: [nm-irizarry@gmail.com]. Al leerlo podrán darse cuenta de que esa epidemia, ocurrida hace 103 años, es bastante parecida a lo que está ocurriendo hoy día en nuestra tierra. José Meléndez por su parte me hablo sobre el caso de la tuberculosis. Lo tiene muy presente en su memoria. Veamos.

José me narro sus experiencias en su pueblo natal de Guayama. Me señaló que cuando él tenía 8 años murieron varios de sus familiares de tuberculosis. Dos tíos suyos y su abuelo materno fallecieron a consecuencia de la tuberculosis. En Guayama, el gobierno estableció un hospital especial para las personas que padecían de esta enfermedad. Estaba localizado en la calle General MacArthur esquina a la calle de Hostos. Pero, José comentó que, los fines de semana eran los días que se les permitía, a los pacientes de tuberculosis, salir a visitar a sus familiares. *¡Imagínese usted como era la cosa! La madre de José le preparaba comida, cada vez que los tíos y el abuelo los visitaban. Ella, mujer muy inteligente y protectora de sus hijos, separaba todos los utensilios que usaban sus parientes cercanos que ya estaban diagnosticados con tuberculosis y los lavaba con agua hirviendo y los guardaba en un lugar donde nadie los pudiera volver a usar. Al poco tiempo no se supo más de ellos, claro, habían fallecido en el hospital. Recuerda que separaban a las madres infectadas con la tuberculosis de sus hijos y que en vez de mascarillas utilizaban pañuelos de telas para cubrirse la boca y la nariz. Tampoco usaban guantes. Cada vez que José escucha el nombre del nuevo virus viene a su memoria el virus de la tuberculosis:*

"Primero fue un tío mío en morir y que había contagiado a los demás familiares. Al tiempo, después de tantas muertes, Puerto Rico, se cogió la cosa mas en serio. En mi pueblo la tuberculosis les dio a muchas personas ancianas. Fue un virus muy fuerte.

Tengo mucha fe y esperanza de que el coronavirus no nos ataque tan violento. Estoy muy pendiente a que a mis compañeros jubilados en Puerto Rico no les pase nada. Yo estoy muy pendiente. Si algún compañero jubilado siente los síntomas de este virus, estaremos muy pendiente... a esta grave situación..." dijo José Meléndez Vázquez, líder de los jubilados en la Isla.

En Puerto Rico a penas se ha estudiado la historia de las enfermedades. Al parecer es un tema no muy agradable para muchos investigadores o quizás muchos investigadores no lo consideran muy apasionado. Lo cierto es que durante mis años como estudiante de historia y luego como profesor universitario no recuerdo muchos trabajos publicados sobre ese importante tema. Sin embargo, nuestros estudiosos sobre la época precolombina, la conquista y la colonización generalmente dedicaban capítulos a discutir muchos problemas de "salud pública" o simplemente sobre la salud del elemento particular del que era objeto su trabajo de investigación, me refiero a los indígenas o indios, esclavos o los criollos y peninsulares que formaban parte de la sociedad. Así, por ejemplo, nos podemos referir a el español Fray Inigo Abad y Lasierra (1788) y Pedro Tomas de Córdova (1831-1833) en Puerto Rico; José Martín Félix Arrate (1827) en Cuba y Antonio del Monte y Tejada (1853), en Santo Domingo (La Española).

En mi próxima columna continuare comentando la memoria histórica de varios jubilados y la situación actual de ellos y de su familia. ■

Continuara...



by Anny Rosario Diaz

Assistant District Manager,
Social Security in Downtown Manhattan

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Important Information about Social Security Services

We recognize that you may have questions about how the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) will affect Social Security services. The first thing you should know is that we continue to pay Social Security and SSI benefits. Also, beware of scammers who may try to trick you into thinking the pandemic is stopping your Social Security payments. This threat is not true. Don't let the scammers fool you.

We want to share other important information about our services during this pandemic.

To protect you and our employees, and help stop the spread of COVID-19, we cannot accept visitors in our offices at this time. We provide many services online and limited, critical services via phone and email. During the pandemic, we are dedicating available staff to serve people in most critical need of our services.

Need help from Social Security? Many of our services are available online at www.ssa.gov/onlineservices, including:

- Applying for benefits.
- Setting up or changing your direct deposit.
- Changing your address, if you get benefits.
- Getting proof of your benefits.

We strongly encourage you to try our convenient and secure online services before calling us. Save time and go online.

For more information, please visit our COVID-19 page at www.ssa.gov/coronavirus. There you can find out what limited services we can provide by phone, and important information about deadlines we are extending to ease the burden on you and medical providers during this pandemic. You can also subscribe to get an email or text message notification when we update the page so you stay informed.

Please share our COVID-19 page with your friends and family. ■

Beware of calls claiming there's a problem with your Social Security number or account

Social Security and its Office of the Inspector General continue to receive reports about fraudulent phone calls from people claiming to be Social Security employees. These scammers try to trick people into providing personal information or money, and often threaten their victims with arrest. Don't be fooled.

Our employees will never threaten you for information or promise a benefit in exchange for personal information or money. Real Social Security employees also will not:

- Tell you that your Social Security number has been suspended.
- Contact you to demand an immediate payment.
- Ask you for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Require a specific means of debt repayment, like a prepaid debit card, a retail gift card, or cash.
- Demand that you pay a Social Security debt without the ability to appeal the amount you owe.
- Promise a Social Security benefit approval, or increase, in exchange for information or money.

If you receive a suspicious call or are unsure of the identity of someone who claims to be from Social Security:

- Hang up.
- Do not give money or personal information.
- Report the scam to our Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov ■

Retirement in the time of Coronavirus

by Nancy B. True

As a new retiree, settling into retirement life, I followed the usual path of re-doing my monthly budget, spending time with family and friends and making lots of visits to favorite Museums (The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum); going to the Orchid Show at the Bronx Botanical Garden. I had to coordinate these activities with doctor's visits and other medical appointments.

As the retired director of the Retiree Division I had 33 years of training to plan for my own retirement. Or, so I thought.

January was full of activities and time enjoying my apartment. The end of the month featured a milestone event when the union held a retirement party for me. Friends and family traveled from California and Puerto Rico, New Jersey, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, Westchester and Staten Island to join the celebration. I was moved and honored by the love that so many people shared with me. The event was a re-affirmation of the fact that we are all family. Somos familia. A wonderful and loving family.

Although there was news of the coronavirus abroad, in January it didn't seem close to home. In February and March that perception and reality changed drastically. No amount of retirement planning could prepare you for a pandemic.

A retirees, we recognize the importance of human contact. In New York, the union provides opportunities for human contact through classes, membership meetings, cultural activities, and trips. Outside of New York, meetings are held in Florida and in Puerto Rico. I was so happy to be a part of the Division's Black History Celebration in February. It was a pleasure to join the audience as a retiree! We are surrounded by culture and the arts in our great city.

Now, in order to be safe, we must practice social distancing and spend most of the time in our apartments or houses. Grandchildren cannot visit. Children, although nearby, cannot spontaneously stop by. Yet, we cannot take the risk of exposing our families to the Coronavirus. Dinner parties are out of the question.

Here are some of the things that I have been doing (and learning) to stay safe. First and foremost, I speak with family and friends on a daily basis. My children often insist on "Facetime" to have visual confirmation that I am okay. So this has guaranteed that every day I am up and dressed and even put on a bit of makeup (vain, I know, but it makes me feel better).

I have two friends with whom I speak daily; Patricia Stryker and Suleika Cabrera Drinane. We talk about what we cooked on a given day and recently I sang happy birthday to Patricia as she celebrated her 85th birthday. I have other friends with whom I check in on a weekly basis or whenever we feel like it. We talk about our families and strategies for staying connected with each other. We are checking on each other. I am in regular contact with my children, my sisters and their extended families.

As an "at risk" older person, I have made arrangements for delivery of fresh produce, on a weekly basis. I am receiving vegetables that I haven't cooked with in the past – and am getting rather creative in the kitchen. It helps that the produce service also provides recipes for the vegetables of the week. Just last night I made sweet potato and kale "hash." I have never been a fan of kale but it was quite delicious! Today's luncheon salad included the cold "hash" and other ingredients.

Many local grocery stores will shop for you and deliver the food. Sometimes it is a little more expensive – but it is worth looking into. Fairway Supermarket will deliver and my friend, Carol Ann Stokinger (also a new retiree) told me that the Fulton Fish Market will deliver fresh fish.

I am also learning how to pay my bills on line. I have been resistant to this in the past – but recently found that mail service is slower than usual and checks were not arriving on time. So, I figured it out! All of my regular monthly bills are now being deducted from my bank account. On a monthly basis, I can pay credit cards the same way. (I still like to check the charges before I pay the bills.) My ConEd bill is paid directly each month. I use the U.S. Postal Service to send notes to friends because loving notes are always "on time" no matter when they arrive.

Speaking of on-line, I recently had a problem with the coordination of Medicare with my Medicare supplemental plan. I opened an online account with Medicare.gov and discovered that their records were incorrect. I called 1-800-MEDICARE to discuss it with them and they referred me to the Medicare Coordination of Benefits Team (1-855-798-2627) and we were able to resolve the problem. Now is the time to open your own account with Medicare.gov and you can track your medical claims and avoid being surprised by denied bills.

Every time I figure out how to do something online it is a victory. My head cheerleader (and tech advisor) is my son, Oren. If you don't have an email address, ask your children (or more computer adept friends) to help you set one up. Check the unions website (www.local237.org) for updates on benefits and staying in touch with the Retiree Division. If you don't have a computer, you can do all of this on your smartphone.

This a scary time – but if we are careful and take things one day at a time (or as my mother used to say "Don't borrow trouble") we will get through this. Stay safe. Limit your excursions outside to the most essential of activities (doctor's visits, pharmacy pick-ups) and know that you are loved by family and friends and by the union. In the labor movement we say "Solidarity Forever!" and this is clearly a time when we need to stand together, connect with each other (electronically! Or by phone) and support each other. As a newly minted retiree, I feel fortunate to continue to have the union as a part of my life. The Retiree Division is there for us. ■

We are hearing a lot of information on the news about Coronavirus, which can be really scary but it's important for us to armor ourselves with knowledge and factual information. We reached out to Geriatrician Dr. Vanessa Rodriguez with Mount Sinai/ Martha Stewart Center for Living to share information with the Local 237 Retiree's about the Coronavirus. Thank you Dr. Rodriguez for sharing this information with us!!!



Coronavirus

by Vanessa Rodriguez, MD

Geriatrician and Palliative Care
Martha Stewart Center for Living
Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, NY

What is it?

Coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19 (previously known as 2019 novel coronavirus), was first identified in Wuhan China. It is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people.

How is it spread?

It is spread from person-to-person if someone is actively sick with COVID-19 via respiratory droplets or if in contact with contaminated surfaces.

What are the most common symptoms?

An influenza like syndrome with fevers, cough, and difficulty breathing. Some people may experience congestion, diarrhea and myalgias.

Who are more likely to be severely affected?

People who are older, had multiple medical conditions or are immunocompromised. Currently death by coronavirus may considerably be less than 1%.

How to get evaluated?

If you are experiencing concerning symptoms, contact your doctor **immediately** and **stay home** unless instructed differently. Most clinics have a doctor on call that can be contacted off hours and/or during weekends. Make sure to know your doctor's office policies in regard to off hours coverage.

Is there a treatment?

There is no treatment available. Infected people should receive supportive care for their symptoms.

How do I prevent getting infected?

Washing your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds is the main way to prevent getting infected. Alternatively, may use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. This is particularly important after using public transportation. Also avoid contact with people that are sick. There are no current vaccines to prevent COVID-19. CDC **does NOT** recommend that people who are well to wear a mask to protect themselves.

How do I prevent spreading the infection?

Cover your cough with a tissue or with your arm. If using a tissue, throw it in the trash after use. Keep your hands clean by **washing them with soap and water**. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with regular household cleaning sprays and/or wipes. Facemasks should **ONLY** be used by people showing symptoms of COVID-19. Consider **avoiding unnecessary traveling out of the country**.

Please stay informed with facts by searching information in reliable resources such as the Center for Disease Control or discussing your concerns with your primary care provider. **Influenza virus continues to be more of a threat to the United States at this point with estimated 15 million illnesses worldwide, 140,000 hospitalizations, and 8000 deaths.** ■

Interview with Shavon Banks: Adventures of Shavon and Riley: Homeschooling a Kindergartener

Julie: What is home schooling like with your daughter Riley?

Shavon: Well First I want to commend the teachers for all of their hard work. It takes a lot to have to teach your child at home.

Julie: What are your days structured like?

Shavon: We don't have to wake up as early. Classes start at 9:00am. Even though school is at home the day is very structured. The kids have zoom meeting with 5 other students in the class, class. (Zoom is website used for video conferencing.). The schedule includes science, reading and math. The reading is done using Epic an online library. The school also implements fun things for example yesterday was crazy hat day. We has find a crazy hat and send a pictures to the teacher. It's pretty much a full day.

Julie: How is the experience for you?

Shavon: It's a totally different experience than I'm used. I get up to go to work, Riley goes to school. Now it's different everything is online. Now I have a chance to see Riley participate in her class with her classmate. This has given me a better sense of how Riley acts and interacts with her friends in school.

Julie: What do you and Riley do for fun?

Shavon: Riley loves to make slime. (You can hear Riley in the back group giving her slime recipe to the Retiree Division. See slime recipe below). We also like to play games such as Uno. ■

SLIME RECIPE: Glue, clothes detergents, activator, glitter, and balls. You can add anything you want to the slime to make it fun.

Stay tuned for more adventures for Retiree Division Staff...

CORONAVIRUS RESOURCES

Coronavirus – updated information near you: (Please check with your local office for updated information. Phone numbers and text messaging varies in each state.)

New York text COVID19 to 692-692, For information in Spanish text COVIDSP19 to 692-692

New Jersey Call 800-962-1253 for general questions or via text messaging at text NJCOVID to 898-211

Florida COVID 19 call center at 1866-779 6121

Connecticut has an App can be downloaded CTPrepares

North Carolina Dial 211 or call 888-892-1162 or via text messaging text COVIDNC at 898211 to get updates

South Carolina for information please call 1-855-475-3432 between 8am to 6pm

Puerto Rico Llamar al 787-999-6202, Para ayuda emocional/ Llamar 800-981-0023

Dementia Care/Caregiver Resources *Linking caregivers to caregiver support.*

Caring kind 360 Lexington Avenue, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10017

24-hour Helpline (646) 744-2900 helpline@caringskindnyc.org

Alzheimer's Association Call our free 24/7 Helpline 800-272-3900 for help and the latest information.

Emotional/Mental Health Resources

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline (800) 985-5990 that provides 24/7, 365-day-a-year crisis counseling and support to people experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.

For mental health services by state: www.nami.org/find-your-local-nami

EMBLEM HEALTH: Behavioral Health

Caring for your own and your loved ones' behavioral health and well-being is just as important as caring for your physical health. It's not always easy recognizing that you or someone you care about needs help. Behavioral health or substance use issues can vary widely. From depression to anxiety to the misuse of alcohol, medication or other substances. What they all have in common is the ability to affect quality of life. No matter what you or your family are dealing with, there are people who can help through the Emblem Behavioral Health Services Program. Go to **Find a Doctor** and sign in to find doctors, counselors or facilities that offer the care services you or your family need.

Need to talk now? If you're depressed or just need to talk to someone now:

- Call the *Emblem Behavioral Health Program* at 888-447-2526 to talk to someone.
- NYC Well is here to listen and help.
 - Call: 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)
 - Text: WELL to 65173
 - Chat: nyc.gov/nycwell
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (TTY: 800-799-4889)

Telephone Support Group



S O C I A L D I S T A N C I N G

The Local 237, Retiree Division invites you to a Telephone Support Group

Given the current situation, we can't be together physically, but we want to support you on our two telephone support groups.

When: Tuesdays, English

Thursdays, Spanish

Time: 11:00am

Please call our main number for more information and mention that you are interested in the telephone support group
212-807-0555 or via email at retiree2@local237.org

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 llame a nuestra oficina si esta interesado y mensione si esta interezado en participar en el grupo de Apollo.

212-807-0555 o por correo electrónico a retiree2@local237.org

COVID-19: Strategies to manage isolation

The spread of COVID 19 has forced all of us to alter our daily routines in different ways. We all need to follow the guidelines set by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in order to protect ourselves and our loved ones. These are very stressful times and we at Local 237 Retiree Division are thinking of all of you and hoping that you remain safe and healthy at home. It is normal to feel anxious, depressed, or lonely since this is a very unexpected change to our normal routine. I would like to offer you some tips to deal with the current situation.

Deep Breathing

Deep controlled breathing can decrease your heart rate, blood pressure, and anxiety levels. Simply sit quietly, close your eyes, and breathe deeply and slowly in and out. Some experts suggest that you breathe into and count to four, hold breath into count of four, breathe out to a count of four, and hold empty to a count of four.

Exercise

It only takes only 20 minutes of exercise to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Furthermore, research suggest that an on-going exercise program can build your resilience of anxiety and depression. It does not matter what kind of exercise you choose, so long as you get your hearth rate up.

Healthy Eating

Eating a healthy diet helps with nearly every mental health challenge. Eating too little can increase your anxiety, and so can eating too much, for varied reasons. Eating healthy foods in the right amounts, on the other hand, can improve your mood and decrease your anxiety symptoms. The following link provides some suggestions of foods that help you reduce anxiety and stress <https://www.everydayhealth.com/diet-nutrition-pictures/how-to-reduce-stress-with-diet.aspx>

Journaling

One way to deal with fear and worry is to write about it in a journal. Journaling gives you an opportunity to put your anxious feelings into words. As your write, your anxiety may diminish. There are different types of journals. A reflective journal can help you face and manage your emotions, while a gratitude journal or a success journal can help you maintain positive thoughts.

Meditation

If you're feeling anxious, meditation can help you regain your sense of calm. There are many different meditation techniques you can learn and practice. One technique involves simply sitting and focusing on an external object of choice.

Then, close your eyes, keeping the image in your mind the whole time. Mindfulness meditations may be helpful as well. One mindfulness meditation involves sitting quietly, noticing the sensory input coming to you from the environment and paying attention to the present moment only. The following YouTube video can help you get starting. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jyy0ra2WcQQ>

Music

Loud noises and harsh music can make you feel jittery and uncomfortable. However, listening to music can potentially decrease symptoms of anxiety by engaging your senses, activating your brain, and regulating your emotions. Making music is even more helpful. Turn on the tunes, pick up an instrument, or simply sing out loud. You may feel less anxious very soon.

Writing

Writing poetry or other narratives can be a pleasurable and beneficial activity for anxiety reduction and depressive symptoms management. In one study, participants who took part in a poetry therapy experienced less stress and fewer symptoms. Hence, writing your thoughts and feelings in a poetic or narrated way can be useful in managing your anxiety and depression.

Adult Coloring Books

In recent years, many people have been turning to color books as a way to cope with anxiety. These coloring books typically contain very detailed pictures that people usually fill in with colored pencils or markers. One study showed that coloring the complex geometrical patterns of mandalas creates a meditative state that decrease anxiety.

Chocolate

Finally, you have a good reason to eat chocolate! Research shows that eating a small amount of dark chocolate for three consecutive days can reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Humor

When you believe you're facing an immediate threat, laughing can reduce your anxiety. In one study, listening to a humorous tape before facing the threat of being shocked, reduced the participants' anxiety. So, watching a comedy show, reading a funny book, or simply laughing with friends is a great way to cope with anxiety.

Take a shower

Sometimes all it takes to feel better is a refreshing shower or bath. Whether you usually bathe in the morning or evening, taking another one when feeling anxious, can help a great deal.

If you feel you need to speak with someone directly about your feelings, feel free to call the COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline 1-844-863-9314 ■

on a personal note...

In Memoriam



We grieve for our deceased Retirees of Local 237. We pause to honor those we have lost during this crisis. Our thoughts and prayers are with all families and friends.

Condolences...

It is with profound sadness to report the passing of Helen Mashburn on February 9, 2020. For years Helen worked as a Senior Housing Teller for the New York City Housing Authority. As a retiree she played a large role in the Retiree Division. She was well known in the Retiree classes and for years she was the chairperson of the Sunshine Club Committee. Her warmth was known by many. Helen was responsible for the initiation of the Hoops for Haiti Campaign in 2011 after an earthquake devastated the country in 2010. We extend our deepest sympathy to her friends and family.



Felicidades/ Congratulations!



We have a new baby in the Local 237 family. Jose and Gloria Melendez welcomed their third Great Grandchild Sebastian. Sebastian joins his big brothers Mateo and Jayden. Mr. Melendez retired from the New York City Housing Authority.

RETIREE DIVISION RECIPES



Susan's Zucchini Pie

- 3 cups chopped zucchini
- 1 cup Bisquick
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup grated cheese
- 2 tablespoons parsley
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp oregano
- 1/2 tsp garlic
- 1/2 cup oil
- 4 eggs

Mix all ingredients together and put into a greased pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes.

RETIREE news & views

216 West 14th Street
New York, NY 10011



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MARCH/APRIL 2020

PERIODICALS
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NEW YORK,
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Black History Month Celebration



Eric K. Washington is a Columbia University Community Scholar and author of *Boss of the Grips/The Life of James H. Williams* and the *Red Caps of Grand Central Terminal*. Mr. Washington presented at the Local 237 Retiree Division Black History program. Mr. Washington provided a dynamic presentation on the nearly forgotten life of James H. Williams (1878-1948), the former African-American chief of Grand Central Terminal's iconic Red Caps. The mostly Harlem-based baggage porters once formed the essential labor force of America's most impressive railroad station.



Shape our children's future. Start with the 2020 Census.

Young children experience new adventures each day, and little ones need all of the support they can get during these early years.

Responding to the 2020 Census is an easy, safe, and important way to help provide resources for children and their communities for the next 10 years.

Everyone living in the United States is asked to complete a simple questionnaire every ten years that asks for basic information about the people who live or sleep in their home. Children under the age of five, however, are often missed.

Young children who are missed in the census tend to live with large, extended families or with multiple families living under one roof. When newborn babies and children are not counted, support for programs such as health insurance, hospitals, childcare, food assistance, schools, and early childhood development is impacted.

Responding to the census is easier than ever. You can complete the census questionnaire online, by phone, or by mail.

And remember, just as you protect the children in your care, the U.S. Census Bureau protects your information. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect any personal information collected and keep it strictly confidential. All Census Bureau staff take a lifetime oath to protect your personal information and any violation of this oath comes with a penalty of up to \$250,000 and/or up to five years in prison.

**Start shaping their future by
going to 2020CENSUS.GOV.**

Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States
Census
2020