

RETIREE news & views

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2016: A Year of Retiree Activism, Achievement and Enrichment

President Abraham Lincoln once said: **“It’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”** Clearly, he could have been talking about the retirees of Teamsters Local 237. Our retirees are activists who participate in many projects that range from political to historical, from the arts to education, from unionism to community engagement, and from

health care to planning for the future. The retirees get involved. Throughout 2016, there were celebrations, seminars, parades, exhibitions, classes, trips and calls to action in which the retirees enthusiastically participated. Here are just some of the highlights of the year that underscore retiree activism, achievement and enrichment.



Counter-clockwise from the left:

■ Retirees participated in a “Get-Out-The Vote” phone bank for the presidential election. Pictured: Olga Vassallo Perez, Elsie Ortiz, Doris Welch and James Spicer. Charles W. Thompson and Nora Davila (not in photo) also participated.

■ There was a Founding Convention in April of the NYS Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund, at the NYSUT Headquarters in Latham, NY. Pictured on the left, first row, is Barry Kaufman, the state president; left, back row, is Robert Roach Jr., the national president, and Doris Welch, center, president of the NYC chapter.

■ Retiree Division hosted the Florida Retiree Conference in March at the Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista. The conference provided retirees with information on health and union benefits with representatives from GHI, Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield and several Florida-based plans on hand to answer questions. Pictured: Florida retirees at the Statewide Conference in Orlando. A similar meeting will take place in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on December 2.

■ Retirees marched in the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Left to right, Cejester Walker; Jose Alicea; Bandleader Papo Pepin (who also performed on the float); Nancy True, Director of the Retiree Division; Elsa Nias; Nora Davila; Olga Vasallo Perez and Leroy Nias.

■ New York State leads the nation with the highest percentage of unionized workers, more than doubling the national average. One in four workers are unionized and approximately 70% of public sector workers are union members. With a huge turnout at the Labor Day Parade on

September 10, union strength was clearly on display with members of the Retiree Division and Division staff joining the march in solidarity and pride.

■ The Presidential election and what’s at stake was the theme of this year’s Founders Day. A well-informed panel engaged in an insightful discussion on the topic. At the luncheon which followed the panel discussion, Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237 (pictured at the podium), told the audience “I always look forward to Founders Day. It gives me a chance to catch up with so many friends. And I get to talk with people who have history with our union and understand the struggle to protect the rights of working men and women and retirees.”

■ Teamsters Local 237 has a proud and important history in the City of New York. Retired members as founders and builders of our Local, understand the importance of preserving this history for future generations of members. The Teamsters Local 237 Oral History Project, over the past 20 years, has been preserving materials like hiring letters, photographs and other “artifacts” that bring the union’s history to life. Many shared their photos and “artifacts” or were interviewed in both New York City and in Puerto Rico. The Oral History Project reminds them: “At Local 237, we have a history in need of preservation. Our history is not written in books. The history of our union resides in the heads and hearts (and sometimes in the closets) of those who have been part of it.” A video of The Oral History Project won the First-Place prize of the New York Metro Council of Labor Communicators. The video can be viewed on the Local 237 website by clicking onto: OralHistory@FoundersDay.



More of our year of activism, achievement and enrichment on page 5



A Message From the President

Gregory Floyd

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

A New Yorker In The White House

After 12 consecutive presidents from somewhere other than New York, this time, no matter who won, Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, the president would be known as a New Yorker. Six other presidents who were from New York occupied the White House throughout our nation's history. Each one exhibited that certain New York style and swagger.

Martin Van Buren, our 8th president, who served from 1837 to 1841, was a Democrat who quit school at age 14 but managed to pass the bar and become a lawyer by age 23. A memorable quote of his is: "As president, the two happiest days of my life were those of my entry upon office and the day of my surrender of it."

Millard Fillmore was the 13th president. He completed the term of President Zachary Taylor, who died after serving only one year in office. Fillmore, a member of the Whig Party, was neither a Democrat nor a Republican.

Chester A. Arthur was born in Vermont but lived near Schenectady. As a young abolitionist lawyer, he represented a black woman in a civil rights case that resulted in the desegregation of New York City street cars more than 100 years before Rosa Parks. He served the remaining term of President James Garfield, who died two months after being shot by an assassin in 1881.

Grover Cleveland, whose face is on the \$1,000 bill, was the first Democrat elected president after the Civil War, and the only president to serve two nonconsecutive terms. He was both the 22nd and 24th

president.

Theodore Roosevelt, a Republican, had a wide variety of interests and abilities, from lawyer, to cowboy, to big-game hunter, to serving as New York City Police Commissioner. He took office upon the assassination of President William McKinley and served from 1901 to 1909. He became the first president to receive the Nobel Peace Prize and was largely responsible for building the Panama Canal.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Theodore's cousin, led the nation through the Great Depression and World War II. A Democrat from Hyde Park, he was stricken with polio at age 39 — a fact he hid from the public. Roosevelt was a president of many firsts. He served more than two terms (term limits did not go into effect until 1951). He had a presidential airplane, appeared on television and appointed a female cabinet member among his long list of presidential first-ers.

Now, we have a native New Yorker, Donald Trump, born and raised in Jamaica Estates, Queens, as the 45th President of the United States. He certainly bears the essential traits of a typical New Yorker with a determined style and swagger.

While political pundits will be writing about this election for years to come, including questioning how the outcome was miscalculated by almost all of the pollsters, and analyzing its meaning and forecasting our actions going forward, one thing is for sure: our next president may live at the White House, but will still call New York "home."



Glass Ceiling Cracked, Not Yet Shattered

By Nancy B. True, Director, Retiree Division

In the view of many political pollsters, things were supposed to be different. On election night, under the glass dome of the Jacob Javits Center, Hillary Clinton was going to shatter the ceiling and face the endless sky above, symbolically and politically. As we all know, that didn't happen.

The election outcome was not only a huge disappointment to Democrats, but also to many who thought that history would be made by electing the first woman to the White House. In 1984, when Queens native Geraldine Ferraro was chosen by Democratic Vice

President Walter Mondale to be his running mate in his bid for the presidency, he said: "History speaks to us today. Our founders said in the Constitution 'We the people' — not just the rich, or men, or white, but all of us. Our message is that America is for everyone who works hard and contributes to our blessed country."

Mondale's advisors hailed this move as a major step forward, saying: "We have broken the barrier."

In accepting Mondale's offer to become the first woman to run as Vice President of a major party, Ferraro noted: "There's an electricity in the air, an excitement, a sense of new possibilities and of pride." Upon hearing the news, Representative Charles Rangel called her and said, "Gerry, my heart is full." Ferraro said quietly, "So is mine."

For some, this selection of more than 30 years ago seemed like the women's movement had gotten ahead of itself, astonishing many people at the time.

But Geraldine Ferraro was not the first woman to break political barriers. In 1972, Brooklyn Representative Shirley Chisholm, the first woman elected to Congress, declared her candidacy for president. Announcing her run, Chisholm said: "I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women's movement in this country, although I am a woman, and I am proud. I am the candidate of the people of America."

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Diversity Is Our Greatest Asset

In the 1960s, New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously called our nation “a great melting pot” where people from across the world have come to live, lending their unique cultural traditions to an impressive mix that blends into one tapestry called America. Today, we live beyond the melting pot, in a “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. We celebrate and share the richness of our cultural differences.

Latino Heritage Celebration

El Comité Latino of the Retiree Division, right, planned the fabulous Latino Heritage Celebration, which took place on September 30, showcasing the history, culture and food of Latino nations.

Among the highlights of this annual event were:

- Coronation of Eva L. Miller and Salvador Tacoronte as the 2016 Queen and King, left, joined by Kenneth Fox and Sandra Moczo, the King and Queen of 2015.

- Honoring Sergio T. Rivera with the first “El Ritmo de la Ciudad” award for his renowned musical accomplishments, presented by Jeanette Taveras, Executive Board Trustee and School Safety Business Agent, second from the left, with Nancy B. True, Director of the Retiree Division, and Winston George, its Deputy Director.

- A musical performance by Jose Ortiz and the BombaYo Community Project, which inspired many retirees to dance along to the music.

- Teamster Local 237 President, Gregory Floyd, center, dropping by to chat with Winston George, Deputy Director of the Retiree Division, left, and retirees Chaio-Chun Chen, Anthony Cottone and Winston Edwards.

- A display of memorabilia rich in Latino culture, which caught the eye of Nydia Torres, retired School Safety Agent.



Italian Heritage Celebration

On October 20, the Retiree Division held the Italian Heritage Celebration, saluting Sicily, its culture, history and people. Guest speaker Carlo Mignano, author and film maker, showed a video about a young Sicilian boy and his struggles and challenges as he moved to adulthood. He engaged the audience in a lively discussion about the island's past and present. Johnny Mandolin and percussionist Tom Burns performed Italian favorites and, of course, what celebration of Italian heritage would be complete without serving delicious pasta, sauce and other mouth-watering culinary specialties.



Oral History Project in Ponce, Puerto Rico

The Ponce Cultural Center was the setting for the September videotaping for the Oral History Project in Puerto Rico. Retired members living in Puerto Rico relished the opportunity to participate in this undertaking, which is dedicated to preserving the history of Local 237.

The Oral History Project collects photographs, written materials and other "artifacts" that help to document the 64 years since the union was chartered. Nothing, however, seems to bring the past of Local 237 to life better than the remembrances of retirees, with their highly personal and lively accounts of the history of our union against the backdrop of the history of our city and the nation.

By hearing their experiences, and recording them for posterity, we, and future generations, learn and appreciate the many challenges, changes and "firsts" that occurred in Local 237 over the years.

Pictured for the videotaping session are members of the Oral History Project in Ponce, Puerto Rico. Left to right, back row: Jesus Ortiz; Nilsa Gonzalez, Pablo Molina, Nancy True, Gloria Melendez, Professor Nestor Murray Irizarry, and Elba Ruiz. First row, left to right: Ramiro Alvarez, Luis Carrasquillo, Julio Gonzalez, Iris Beltran, Jose Melendez and Babel Ruiz.



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■ Throughout the year, retired members participated in neighborhood meetings in Brooklyn, Bronx/Westchester, Queens and Long Island. Retirees in Puerto Rico met throughout the island in the homes of the retirees. In all meetings, strong bonds were formed, problems were solved and benefits questions were answered. Pictured at right is Len Proctor, Deputy Director, Health and Welfare Fund, who addressed a group of Queens retirees. Len said: "It was a great day to have a full house of enthusiastic retirees waiting to receive updates on their Fund benefits."

■ Retired members, like Julio Gonzalez, far right, of Fajardo, PR, retired maintenance worker and shop steward, were the eyes and ears of the union — advising Retiree Division staff of problems with accessing benefits. In the case of Julio, he told the union of problems using Quest Laboratory Services in PR. Through his involvement, the problem was solved.



■ The Retiree Division's art show, below right, highlighted and celebrated the creativity of Local 237 Retirees. At the opening, the retiree artists were toasted by their union brothers and sisters.

■ Left, the Retiree Division held a Retiree Summit in May and September. Participants included community group chairs and vice chairs, Latino and Italian Heritage committee leaders, classroom activists and both recent and more experienced retirees. The summit provided the opportunity to discuss retiree division activities, programs and

services to Local 237 retirees and to create a structure, similar to a think tank, for determining future directions for the Division as it approaches its 40th anniversary.



Glass Ceiling Cracked, Not Yet Shattered

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Seeking the Democratic nomination against rivals George McGovern and George C. Wallace, Chisholm faced tremendous challenges and displayed great courage in running. She noted: "I have certainly met much more discrimination in terms of being a woman than being a black in the field of politics." At the Democratic convention, she received 152 delegate votes.

Chisholm was not the first woman to run for president in the United States. In 1964, Republican Senator from Maine, Margaret Chase Smith, was actually the first woman to be placed in nomination for the presidency, losing to Barry Goldwater. And in 1872, 136 years before Hillary Clinton made her first run at the White House in 2008, suffragette Victoria Woodhull, under the banner of the "Equal Rights Party," made a White House bid even though she could not vote for herself — the 19th amendment which gave women the right to vote, was not passed until 1920.

Breaking gender barriers is not exclusive to the presidency. Women throughout our nation's history have fought to bring equality to countless other areas, such as health care, ed-

ucation, the military, business and the workplace. Among retirees of Teamsters Local 237, there have many female members who helped to advance women's rights as human rights. Nora Davila, who worked as a NYCHA Assistant Housing Manager for 11 years, stated: "Just about six years ago, I was selling my parents' home for my mother after my father died. I was astonished as each prospective buyer would negotiate an offer first with the neighboring men, then come to me.

"Because it wasn't how I saw things, I held off selling and when I did sell at my original estimate, one of the locals eyed me with underlying surprise that I hit the 'proper' property evaluation. I had been validated, I realized, because another man had sold at the same price. But still, it gave him pause."

Linda Tavolaro, who worked for NYCHA for 30 years, and was a Housing Manager for 20 of those years before retiring, stated: "During that time I supervised many men and women. I always encouraged women to consider nontraditional jobs where there were more job titles and more room for advancement. I was proud of what these women achieved although they had many challenges. I am so happy that I

worked with an organization that encouraged equal rights and equal standards for women."

Doris Welch, a NYCHA Superintendent who retired after 28 years, made the point that "Since I worked with a staff that was 99% male, I focused on how fairly the work was distributed and how well it was being done. Once I was seen as honest and firm, I was accepted by both men and women workers."

Hillary Clinton's loss will be analyzed for years to come, but there is one immutable fact: She showed tremendous grace throughout her campaign and especially in her losing. In her concession speech, she said: "Our campaign was never about one person, or even one election. It was about the country we love, and building an America that is hopeful, inclusive and big-hearted.... Our constitutional democracy demands our participation, not just every four years, but all the time.... And breaking down all the barriers that hold any American back from achieving their dreams.... This loss hurts, but please never stop believing that fighting for what's right is worth it.... And to all of the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue your own dreams."

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Happy Holidays!

Wishing you and your loved ones the joys of the season plus health and happiness for the New Year.

From Nancy B. True and the Staff of the Retiree Division, Winston A. George, Susan Milisits, Luz Carty, Shavon Banks, Noelia Quiñones and Paul Asaro.



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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016

Planning for Your Disabled Adult Child

By **Mary Sheridan**

Director, Legal Services Plan

When our children turn 18, they are officially adults and have the right to make their own decisions about finances, medical treatment, their education and life choices. What happens when a child is not competent to understand the decisions and the consequences



of those decisions? Before leaping to guardianship one should explore other less restrictive alternatives. Mental illness or intellectual disability does not necessarily equate with an inability to make one's own life decisions.

Powers of Attorney are certainly a possi-

bility if a person has periods of time where he or she is considered competent. The Power of Attorney can designate the person/agent to act on all matters except for medical decisions. A Health Care Proxy could be signed designating the person to make medical decisions in times of incompetency.

If your adult child receives government benefits such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), the Social Security Administration (SSA) has a process by which one can be named a Representative Payee for the disabled person. Although this process requires detailed medical records, among other things, it is a far simpler process than the guardianship process. Where there is no other source of income or resources aside from Social Security benefits, parents may prefer to avoid the guardianship appointment and pursue this simpler Representative Payee process.

Joint ownership of bank accounts can also help the person manage his or her finances and avoid the guardianship process, which is not an all or nothing proposition. In New York, the guardianship request is made through an Article 81 proceeding in Supreme Court. Areas can be carved out that leave your son or daughter with the power to make important decisions and have control over certain areas of his or her life.

Special Needs Trusts should be considered where your son or daughter is receiving public benefits. A Special Needs Trust can supplement the income of adult children without impacting their benefits eligibility. A consultation with an experienced attorney is important. One should also consider life insurance and arrange for proceeds to be deposited in a trust for the adult disabled child. Lastly, if a divorce happens, it may be appropriate to revise your existing Will and also change the beneficiary on insurance and retirement benefits so that property and proceeds are diverted to the Special Needs Trust.

On a personal note...

Congratulations!

Happy Anniversary to retired Food Service Manager **Jack Panzer** and his wife Barbara, married 65 years ago on November 15.

Retired NYCHA Supervisor **Tony Cottone** and his wife Grace celebrated their 50th anniversary with a visit to Disney World accompanied by their son Charles, his wife Tiffany, and their daughter Graziella, pictured with Mickey Mouse.



Deacon Jacob Hill, retired Senior Cook, was honored with an award presented to him by the New York City Housing Authority Police Service Areas #4 Community Council in recognition of his many years of support.



To **Pete Gutierrez**, who retired after 41 years of caring and commitment to a job well-done. Pete is pictured with Winston George, Deputy Director, and Nancy B. True, Director of the Retiree Division, at his June retirement party where he was honored for his dedication to Local 237.

We Offer Condolences...

...To the family of retired NYCHA Housing Assistant, **Dabney Montgomery**, who was a famed Tuskegee Airman — the legendary black Army Air Corps group — who died at the age of 93 in his Harlem home on September 4.

The World War II hero served in Southern Italy from 1943 to 1945 and was a Congressional Gold Medal recipient. Montgomery was also one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s bodyguards in the historic Civil Rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March of 1965. He donated the tie and shoes he wore on the march to the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, which was officially open on September 24.

...To Jerry Wade on the passing of his cherished mother, retired HHC Food Services Supervisor **Evadne Wade**, who died on October 26.

...To retiree **Adolph Piazza**, who worked as an HPT for more than 25 years, on the death of his beloved daughter, Elizabeth Mendez.

