



Spring 2021

## From the President's Desk

Dear Colleagues,

It has been an exceptionally difficult year. Hopefully this Spring will bring some welcome relief from the virus.

In place of my usual narrative, I decided I would share part of an email that was sent to me. I think that at this time we could all use a good chuckle.

Rose Marie D'Aquila

President GBRTA

### ABSOLUTELY PRICELESS

An Elementary School Teacher presented each child in her classroom the 1st half of a well-known proverb and asked them to come up with the remainder of the proverb. It's hard to believe these were actually done by first graders. Their insight may surprise you. While reading, keep in mind that these are **first-graders, 6-year-olds**. The last one is a classic!

1. Don't change horses until they stop running.
2. Strike while the bug is close.
3. You can lead a horse to water but how?
4. A miss is as good as a Mr.
5. If you lie down with dogs, you'll stink in the morning.
6. Where there's smoke there's pollution.
7. Happy the bride who gets all the presents.
8. A penny saved is not much.
9. Children should be seen and not spanked or grounded.

And the WINNER and last one!

11. Better late than pregnant.

### *We'll meet virtually!*

GBRTA has arranged for two ZOOM meetings—April 8 and May 13. At the April meeting we will meet with Kevin Graff of Graff Public Solutions (GPS) the lobbying firm engaged by the Association of Retired Teachers of Connecticut. GPS has extensive advocacy experience and credibility at all levels of government. Mr. Graff will focus on legislation affecting the pensions and health insurance benefits of retired teachers.

The May 13 meeting will bring Lionel Ketchian to our screens. Ketchian taught a course on happiness at Sacred Heart University and started local Happiness Clubs. His focus is on well-being— a trend that includes Yale's online course, *The Science of Well-Being*, that attracted more than 3.3 million online learners.

The ZOOM meetings are scheduled to begin at 10:30 am. Directions for using ZOOM can be found on page 3. The url for the meetings will be emailed to GBRTA members who have shared their email addresses with us and will be available on our website [www.GBRTA.org](http://www.GBRTA.org)

## Meet Your Officers

Treasurer **Helen Scinto**'s introduction to teaching was at Bassick High School, where she taught English and later became the head of the English Department. She became a stay-at-home mom for the next thirteen years, until she returned to teaching English at Jonathan Law HS in Milford. In 1992 she joined Milford's central office as Supervisor of Curriculum and Staff Development.

Helen has traveled far and wide, including trips throughout the United States, to China and Tibet, the Caribbean, Cape Cod and a particularly memorable trip to Cuba in 2015.

Before Covid transformed the world, Helen was active at the Stratford Senior Center. She co-leads a line dance class there and serves as president of the Stratford Chapter of AARP. She is proud of raising her grape tomatoes from the previous year's seeds and harvesting her raspberries for a new batch of "Helen's Raspberry Jam."



Recording Secretary **Susan Berescik**, English, SAT and journalism teacher at Trumbull High School, advised the *Trillium* yearbook for 17 years and wrote, edited and published 10 editions of *Trumbull Spirit*, a school district newspaper that celebrated academics. A board member of New England Scholastic Press Association at Boston University, Sue also worked part-time for Hometown as writer and substitute editor of six local newspapers.



Mother of adult children Drew and Tara, Sue currently helps high schoolers prepare college applications. After her 2010 retirement, Sue joined Andy, her husband of 51 years, for a six-month U.S. trip, all blogged under [travelswithsuzi.blogspot.com](http://travelswithsuzi.blogspot.com). Some photos of her trips were recently published by Goodheart-Willcox in *Natural Resources Systems*, a textbook co-authored by daughter Tara. In addition, the couple are official chaperones for Tri Valley Central FFA, where Tara teaches AgEd.

"Retirement isn't for slowing down," vows Sue. With free time, she embroiders and hooks rugs.

**Bob Pitzschler**, our 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, is a product of the Bridgeport and Trumbull Public Schools. Completing eighth grade in Trumbull, he went on to Bassick High in Bridgeport since Trumbull did not have a high school. After high school he attended Delaware Valley University in Pennsylvania - planning to become a landscape architect.

Life always has strange twists and turns and Bob ended up teaching science in the Neshaminy, PA school system; joined the Army; served four years on active duty including a tour in Vietnam and then spent 23 years in the Army Reserve before retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Upon discharge from active duty, Bob began teaching at Hillcrest Middle School in Trumbull where he remained for the next 39 years—retiring as the Science Team Leader. He was chosen as Trumbull's Teacher of the Year in 1986. Since "retirement" Bob has kept busy by his involvement in the GBRTA including a four year term as President, membership in the CT Army Retirement Counsel, a Board member at his "55 and better" community, on the Vestry at his church, and serves as Dean of the Greater Bridgeport Ministry Network of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.



### In Brief

- ◆ Once again the Governor's proposed budget does not provide an increase in the exemption of retired teachers' pensions from the State income tax. It remains at 25%. However, *within specific income limits*, certain pensions and annuities receive a 28% exclusion. See the sample for completing line 48b in the directions for the CT State Income Tax.
- ◆ The members of the Teachers' Retirement Board include four active teachers and two retired teachers representing approximately 50,000 active and 38,000 retired teachers. To remedy this imbalance, ARTC has asked that we support HB 6439 which would add an additional retired teacher to the TRB. Members are asked to send a short e-mail in support of better representation of retired teachers on the TRB.  
Send your e-mail to: [APPTestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:APPTestimony@cga.ct.gov) Two additional bills, HB 5605 and HB 6116 would also add one or more retired teachers to the TRB.

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Dues—\$20

Life Membership \$250

The membership year runs from September 1—August 31. Members whose dues are two or more years in arrears will be dropped from the membership file and must repay two years of back dues for reinstatement.

Please check the address label on this newsletter. If the message after your name is anything other than *Life Member* or *any date before September 1, 2021*, your dues are in arrears.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of check \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here if there are any changes to your contact information.

Mail form and check, payable to GBRTA to

Ann Block

60 Ridgeview Avenue

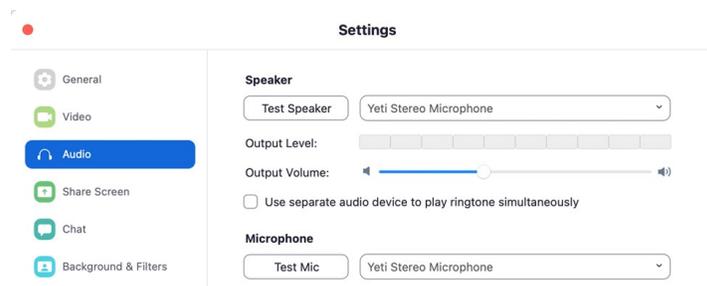
Trumbull, CT 06611

## Join Us on ZOOM

**From a computer, tablet or smart phone:** To Log onto a zoom meeting via computer, tablet or smart phone, you MUST have the Zoom app installed on your device. From the device you are going to use go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) and download the app for that device and install it.

**Before the meeting** you test out your video and audio through the app. Click on the little gear from the zoom window.

There you can test your audio and video. If you have never used Zoom – Please do this in advance of the meeting!



On the day of the meeting – open that app and type in the meeting ID (no spaces) and the Passcode.

**April 8, 2021**

**Meeting ID: 889 1599 0837**

**Passcode: 482021.**

Upon entering you will be muted. We ask that you keep muted unless called on to speak.

**Direct URL - April 8 Zoom Meeting - CLICK HERE TO JOIN!**

**From a Landline:** If you choose to phone in to listen to what is happening, you may call one of these numbers: +1 929 205 6099 US (New York) +1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC) +1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago). **Enter the meeting ID: 889 1599 0837** Enter the **Passcode: 482021.** Check with your carrier to see if any charges apply.

**There will be a direct url posted on the GBRTA website which will allow direct access to the meeting once you allow the Zoom app to open.**



## **Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

It started as a group of Bridgeport retired teachers who met for lunch. By 1951 the group had expanded to include retired teachers from neighboring communities and elected Lucy Curtiss as its first president. The organization was concerned with the welfare of retired teachers, particularly as related to housing.

Fund raising activities - card parties, trips and lunches were popular. Annual dues were \$1.00. Bequests from members added to the treasury. The goal was to provide apartments for retired teachers and several homes were opened. The last of these residences, *Bayview* on Sylvan Avenue in Bridgeport, was closed in 2019.

Soon the members realized that, in order to take advantage of various State and Federal regulations, the organization needed to have a legal Certificate of Incorporation as well as a set of By-laws. These were completed and duly filed on August 14, 1963.

In summary, the Certificate established the mission of the GBRTA as providing for the needs of retired teachers, supporting community charities, and providing scholarship assistance to students in order to promote the teaching profession. The Certificate allowed the organization to solicit and manage funds to support those goals.

Bequests from members allowed the GBRTA first to save and later to invest funds that now support the \$1,000 scholarships that are awarded to a graduating senior in each of the 16 public schools in GBRTA's eight town area. Complex pension and insurance issues pointed out that our group of retired teachers could not keep up with developments in the State legislature. Our influence on legislation was limited.

As a result, the GBRTA along with 14 similar organizations in the State became affiliates of the Association of Retired Teachers of Connecticut (ARTC) with a combined membership of 12,000 retired teachers. This relationship continues with the ARTC providing information on legislative issues, supporting a lobbyist who maintains constant contact with legislators and organizing *Lobby Day* at which retired teachers meet with and inform legislators of issues of concern to them.

While card parties and fashion shows have gone the way of the typewriter, GBRTA maintains its mission of information and advocacy for retired teachers.

### **In Memoriam**

#### **July 1, 2020—March 2021**

Dorothy Sondheim.....	July 21, 2020	Thomas Botillo.....	September 22, 2020
Thomas O'Dwyer .....	July 24, 2020	Doris Daly .....	September 25, 2020
James Hodge.....	July 30, 2020	Sandra Boran .....	October 25, 2020
Judith Boos .....	August 1, 2020	Louise Shimchick .....	October 28, 2020
Lois Hoyt .....	August 2, 2020	Robert Roche.....	November 11, 2020
Marilyn Menta .....	August 9, 2020	Charles Wargo .....	November 12, 2020
Joyce Cordova.....	August 12, 2020	Carolyn Dzurka .....	November 25, 2020
Sonya Hitt .....	August 28, 2020	Nora Goggin.....	January 6, 2021
Charles Lomnitzer .....	September, 2020	Wesley Gregory .....	February 15, 2021
Linda Dorman .....	September 11, 2020	Trudi Black .....	February 17, 2021
Maynard Taylor .....	September 15, 2020	Barbara Buxton.....	March 1, 2021