



Fall 2023

## Musings from Mary Ellen

*"Life is a balance between holding on and letting go."* - Rumi

I would like to introduce myself: I am the new president of GBRTA, Mary Ellen Minichiello. I am excited and honored to lead our organization through the next few years, as our world changes and yet stays the same. I like Rumi's simple, yet elegant, definition of life; as retired teachers, we are continually wondering about what ideas, material possessions, and relationships are important to keep in our lives, as well as those that are no longer relevant and need to be discarded.

I personally want to hold on to my relationships with past students and peers; I want to hold on to my relationships with family and close friends. I want to let go of the those things that sucked my energy dry at times, when I was a young teacher, mother, daughter, and wife. I feel emancipated as an older retiree. I can focus more clearly on what is important and relevant to me now.

**A little about me:** I taught for more than 35 years in Milford and changed from high school English teacher to journalism and philosophy teacher and then became certified as a school library media specialist and district coordinator. When the district eliminated coordinators, I became an elementary school librarian and retired after six years. I presently teach part-time at Southern CT State University and supervise student teachers in library media. Along the way, I have become active in state, regional, and national associations in journalism, public libraries, and school library media. I recently ran as a candidate for a seat on Connecticut Teachers' Retirement Board. Although I was unsuccessful, I met wonderful and inspirational people through my candidacy. I believe that my willingness to accept this position as your president evolved from my interest in the issues surrounding CT retired teachers.

**Back to GBRTA:** Our association needs to be relevant to all of us if we want to grow our membership and educate both new retirees and existing members on their healthcare benefits and pensions. I would like to encourage volunteers to reach out to members, who might not have resumed attending the luncheons since COVID hit. We need to connect with as many retired teachers in our region as possible, so that we can continue to do what we did so well for so many years: influence and educate others, and in turn, live meaningful lives.

In this newsletter, you will read about the important fall election for two new members of the Connecticut Teachers Retirement Board. It is essential that you participate by voting in this election.

I hope that you will want to "hold on" to your GBRTA membership by becoming involved in committees to plan activities that interest you. I look forward to seeing you at our fall luncheon on September 14th at the Mill River Country Club in Stratford. Please introduce yourself to me! I would love to get to know you!

Best,

Mary Ellen

### Legislative Notes

GBRTA asked for your help and you responded—far beyond our expectations! GBRTA shared information about legislation important to retired teachers and asked you to communicate with your legislators about the legislation and you did. The Connecticut legislature's Appropriations Committee reported receiving hundreds of letters, phone calls and emails from retired teachers. You chatted with them at the supermarket and whenever you saw them as just one of your neighbors. You made your presence and issues known.

Cont'd on page 2



**September 14, 2023 Lunch Meeting**

**Mill River Country Club      4567 Main Street      Stratford, CT**

**Menu Selections and Prices:**

|                           |       |                              |       |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|
| Penne Pasta Primavera     | \$ 28 | Chicken Marsala              | \$ 36 |
| Seared Salmon/maple glaze | \$ 40 | English Cut Prime rib au jus | \$ 42 |

**Dessert:** Raspberry Layered Cake

All meals will include salad, rolls, potato (except pasta selection), vegetable, dessert, coffee and tea. Since the price for each meal is different, there can be no substitutions. Please do not request changes to the set menu.

**Details:** The business portion of the meeting will begin at 10:30 am, followed by the program. Lunch will be served at noon. If you are attending the business portion of the meeting and not staying for lunch, please call to let us know that you are coming so we can arrange seating for you.

Make check payable to GBRTA with date, menu choice and your phone number on the check. Only one reservation per check. Checks must accompany reservations.

**Reservations and payment by August 31 to:**

**Sandra Petrucelli-Carbone**  
**203-463-8403**

**607 Juniper Court    Oxford, CT 06478**  
**spcdkg@comcast.net**

**Program:** Seniors are special targets of scammers. Most of us are too polite to just hang up on phone callers. Many of us give generously to a variety of charities and are willing to contribute to what seems to be a worthy organization without checking whether or not the request for funds is legitimate. And there is always the “Grandma I’ve been in an accident. Please don’t tell my father . . .” In 2022, the Federal Trade Commission reported that five million complaints and nine billion dollars in losses resulted from scams but most scams go unreported.

John Wilson and Lloyd Stableford of the Connecticut AARP Fraud Watch Network will present information about the most common types of fraud and will offer advice on how to avoid them . They will also discuss what to do if

**Legislative Notes**

Cont’d from page 1

As the end of the legislative session neared, many proposed bills were dropped or consolidated. Eventually, the issues most important to retired teachers jelled into HB 6489, *An Act Concerning Retiree Members of the Teachers’ Retirement Board*. Thanks to **your** efforts, the bill passed unanimously and was signed into law on June 6, 2023.

The bill provides for the addition of two retired teachers to the Teachers’ Retirement Board. Previously the Board had included four active and two retired teachers. Retirees were underrepresented. The legislation requires that retired teachers, receiving a pension benefit from the TRB , be nominated and elected by the vote of **retired teacher members** and serve four-year terms. The act requires that elections for these new members be as prescribed by the board and held quadrennially by **October 1 starting in 2023**.

The new legislation is important to you because the teacher representation is now equitable; retired teachers will be elected by retired teachers; and the date of the election is clearly specified. The last election of retired teachers to the Board had only 6.59% of active teachers voting but 32.05% of eligible retired teachers cast a vote. Clearly, retired teachers are more likely to be aware of, and concerned with issues specific teachers.

Congratulations!!!! The vote is now in your hands.

**In Brief:**

**GBRTA Officers**

President ..... Mary Ellen Minichiello  
 1st Vice President..... Pat Decoster  
 2nd Vice President..... Rosemary D’Aquila  
 Corresponding Secretary ..... Karol Fleegal  
 Recording Secretary ..... Sheena Graham  
 Treasurer ..... Rosemary Seaman

**Committee Chairs**

Communications..... Barbara Kmetz  
 Community Service..... Karol Fleegal  
 Finance ..... Marilyn Feranec  
 Legislation..... Marie Petitti  
    Rita Mc Dougald-Campbell  
 Meetings..... Sandra Petrucelli-Carbone  
 Member Services..... Marie Reshenk  
 Membership ..... Ann Block  
 Scholarships..... Marilyn Mitchell  
 Parliamentary ..... Bob Pitzschler  
 Webmaster ..... Cathy Larson

**In Memoriam**

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| Doris E. Tariska | 2/04/23 |
| Ilse Levi        | 5/07/23 |
| Sondra Berkman   | 5/12/23 |
| Barbara King     | 6/21/23 |
| Barbara Firisin  | 6/24/23 |
| Robert Caciopoli | 7/23/23 |

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Annual Dues—\$20**

**Life Membership \$250**

GBRTA’s 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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_ School System \_\_\_\_\_

New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Amount of check \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ **Please 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  
    annblock93@gmail.com    203-268-1577

**Still Working On It!**

GBRTA is an affiliate of and collaborates with the state-wide Association of Retired Teachers of Connecticut (ARTC) to advocate for your benefits. The passage of HB 6489 was the result of a vigorous campaign by GBRTA, ARTC and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

- The election of two additional retired teachers to the Teachers’ Retirement Board is important to you. Our Health Insurance contracts are due for renewal. TRB’s voices and votes will impact your costs and benefits. **GBRTA will keep you informed about the candidates for the Board.** The vote will be up to you.
- WEP/GPO very likely affects your retirement income. GBRTA has been actively supportive of restoring your full Social Security benefits. Contact *Social Security Fairness* (<https://ssfairness.org/>) for information about the organization and its planned **WEP/GPO REPEAL Advocacy Summit** on September 13, 2023 in Washington DC.
- Health Insurance costs are steadily rising and the disparity between the costs of the two policies offered by the TRB has been increasing. When the TRB first offered both a Medicare Supplement Plan and a Medicare Advantage Plan, there was a moderate difference in the cost of the plans. This difference has accelerated as plans are renewed.
- GBRTA/ARTC lobbied for the elimination of the State Income Tax on retired teachers’ pensions. It has been reduced by 50% and we will continue to advocate for its elimination with no income restrictions.

**GBRTA**  
**23 Regency Dr.**  
**North Haven CT**  
**06473**

**GBRTA.org@gmail.com**  
**www.GBRTA.org**

Check your name on the address block. If it's followed by anything other than *Life Member* or the date is earlier than **September 1, 2024** (09/01/24), you're behind in your dues. Please use the form on page 3 to catch up!

***Save the Date!***  
***Holiday Celebration,***  
***December 14, 2023,***  
***Tashua Knolls, Trumbull.***

## **2023 Scholarship Awardees**

### **Bridgeport**

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Bassick High School | Mikolo Harrow<br>UCONN                            |
| Central High School | Teah Conquest<br>UCONN                            |
| Bullard Havens      | Cynthia Poblano Aguilar<br>Housatonic CC          |
| Fairchild Wheeler   | Julianna Patterson<br>University of Massachusetts |

### **Easton**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Joel Barlow High School | Hailey Romano<br>Coastal Carolina University |
|-------------------------|--|

### **Fairfield**

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Ludlowe High School | Amelia Shankle<br>University of Denver     |
| Warde High School   | Alexandra Ortiz<br>Sacred Heart University |

### **Milford**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Jonathan Law High School | Olivia Coddington<br>Central Connecticut         |
| Joseph Foran High School | Rowan Soracco<br>Southern Connecticut University |

### **Monroe**

|                   |                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Masuk High School | Liam Rooney<br>University of Maine |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|

### **Shelton**

|                     |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Shelton High School | Emily Codere<br>Westminister College |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|

### **Stratford**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Bunnell High School   | Andrea Serreti<br>UCONN                 |
| Stratford High School | Leticia Asante<br>Quinnipiac University |

### **Trumbull**

|                      |                                 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Trumbull High School | Maura Carbone<br>Boston College |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|