

RC 8 Retiree



May/June 2012

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Thanks, Retirees

At the annual Retiree Council 8 spring luncheon, \$115 was collected for the Food Bank of CNY and over \$200 was donated to the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer raffle.

The Dark Side of Chocolate By Kenneth Drake, President

Richard Chrisman, a fourth grade teacher at Boonville Elementary, and five of his fourth grade students spoke to nearly 100 retirees at the RC 8 Annual Spring Luncheon held Thursday, May 3, at Delta Lake Inn in Rome. The students were Keagen Case, Hannah Miller, Katie Effland, Raelyn Horn and Ciara Schaffner. The topic of the presentation was *The Dark Side of Chocolate*.

Richard became aware of the plight of children in cocoa producing countries two years ago by finding information on The Global Exchange webpage. He ordered their video and informational packet. He was appalled at what he learned. Thousands of children work in hazardous conditions on cocoa farms in cocoa producing countries despite efforts by the international community to stop the practice.

Richard decided to bring the injustices children endure in places like West Africa to the attention of his students. He showed them the video to educate them and to encourage them to take action. The students next brainstormed different actions to take and decided to participate in a reverse Halloween to inform people about the children who harvest the cocoa beans. Some of the students also wrote letters to the editor to increase public awareness in the community. The children read their letters to us as part of the presentation.

Richard pledged to continue his mission to help these exploited children. He intends to show the video at a PTA event, incorporate community education prior to major chocolate related holidays and to find and promote merchants that shelve Fair Trade products.

What You Can Do To Help

Major chocolate producers have been aware of the injustices that have transpired for decades and turned a blind eye to the problem. The Harkin-Engel Protocol was an agreement signed in 2001 by the largest chocolate manufacturers in the United States to eliminate abusive child labor and forced labor in the cocoa supply chain by 2005. Most companies signed the agreement but asked for extensions to avoid compliance.

Pressure on chocolate producers to adopt Fair Trade certification has made a difference and must continue. The process insures an independent verification that a company's cocoa sourcing complies with international labor standards.

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RC 8 is a member of the Labor-Religion Coalition. Learn more or order: labor-religion.org

Look for the certification on packages of tea, coffee and chocolate (Certified Fair Trade Coffee is available at the Oneida Price Chopper store).

Buy Fair Trade Products (available at Peter's Cornucopia in New Hartford and Fair World Marketplace in Dewitt) or shop at shop.equalexchange.com

Donate to Global Exchange—Write or e-mail the chocolate manufacturers (Hershey's, Lindt, Ferrero) to take child slave labor out of their chocolate supply chain and to tell them to adhere to the principles set forth in The Harkin-Engel Protocol.

Retiree Council 8 Steering Committee: Adirondack—E. Hendrickson, H. LaFave; Canastota—B. Woodarek; Central Square—C. Richmond; Clinton—G. Adams, M. Duink; Holland Patent—D. Schue, J. Grossman; New Hartford—D. Markson; Oneida—S. Sorrentino, K. Brown; Oneida BOCES—J. Furgal, C. Zammiello; Oriskany—S. McQueen, D. Inserra; Oswego—K. Mantaro; Remsen—N. Revere; Rome—W. Carey; Utica—P. Baker, A. Gorman; VVS—K. Drake, A. Wright; Waterville—M. Berardino; Whitesboro—H. Chomin, F. Wood; Immediate Past President—Peg Corbett

Three Delegates from Retiree Council 8 attend RA

President Ken Drake, Vice President Howard LaFave and Delegate Florence Wood attended the 2012 Representative Assembly on April 25 through 28. What follows is a brief summary of three topics that dominated the talk of the convention.

- Political action by AFT and NYSUT over the next few months will be framed around issues important to teachers and the future of public education specifically, and, to workers in general, such as job creation and the preservation of Social Security and Medicare.
- The Property Tax Cap has proven to be a nightmare for school districts. The supposed two percent tax cap created a problematic nine-step formula for establishing a tax levy that includes multiple exclusions and adjustments. Some school districts will see a zero percent tax levy at some time in the future leaving them in a precarious financial situation. NYSUT is working to repeal this law.
- The SED guidelines for APPR and the integrity of the state tests were discussed at length. The SED has yet to determine how such concerns as absenteeism, special education requirements, cross grade level programs, transfers, the arts, humanities and physical education, will be considered in evaluating teacher performance.

Measuring Inequality in School Funding

No matter which fiscal equity measure is used, it is clear that districts with a high percentage of low-income children are not receiving their fair share of state and local education funding in many states. While some states have made changes to their finance systems in recent years, we hope that more states will recognize the problem of intrastate inequity and take steps to institute reforms. School finance reform inevitably creates winners and losers, and we recognize that change is easier when flush budgets allow for hold-harmless provisions and transition funding schemes. Nonetheless, difficult fiscal conditions should not be used as an excuse to perpetuate inequity. There will never be a perfect time for school finance reform, so now is as good a time as ever for states to prioritize progressive school funding that can help increase the achievement of disadvantaged students.

In the absence of states' efforts to reform themselves, the federal government could play a role in incentivizing states to create more progressive school finance systems. Since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the federal government has played a critical role in ensuring students have equal access to a quality education, and this role remains important today when inequity persists. The Obama administration's Race to the Top program demonstrated that the federal government can encourage significant reform at the state level as 34 states amended or passed new education laws in response to this competitive funding. Congress and the Department of Education should consider using future competitive funding programs as a mechanism for the federal government to encourage states to engage in school finance reform in exchange for federal dollars.

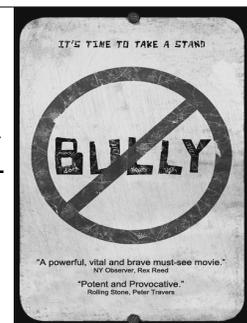
Source: *americanprogress.org*, 5/7/12, Diana Epstein

Did You Know?

- 12 million children will be bullied in the United States this year
- 3 million students are absent each month because they feel unsafe in school

Even though we no longer work in schools, it's important to stay informed about issues affecting the children and the difficulties they face. Bullying is a problem that still needs our attention. Try to find a local showing of the movie *Bully* and check out the web site associated with it. You can find information on the topic at

thebullyproject.com



How to Save Money in the Hospital

The next time you go to the hospital and receive care, make sure to ask one important question: "What is my status: Am I admitted to the hospital or am I under observation?" The answer to this question can mean a difference of thousands of dollars and who pays for your future care—you or your insurance plan.

For the full story, visit www.nysut.org under "Retirees and Retirement."

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We Fondly Remember our Friends and Colleagues

Susan Palmer	Camden
Corinne Hemstreet	Central Square
Janice LeFever	Central Square
Jnaice Trendell	Central Square
Betty Armstrong	Chittenango
Rita Brownson	Chittenango
Margaret Egan	Chittenango
Michael Ferlito	Hannibal
Dennis Kenney	Hannibal
Ellye Slusarczyk	Holland Patent
Cynthia Ure	Holland Patent
Mary Ellen Nevin	New Hartford

James Cavanagh	Oneida
Arnold Furia, Jr.	Oneida BOCES
Elinore Staskowski	Oneida BOCES
Diane Zizzi	Oneida BOCES
Olga Kaish	Phoenix
Rudolph Roscup	Remsen
Mary Downing	Rome
Mary Grove	Sauquoit
Donald Hall	Utica
Vincenza Beratta	Utica
Mary "Molly" Baker	Verona/Boonville
Hatti Lutkowski	Whitesboro

Medicare Reminder: Medicare may help pay for care in a Medicare-certified skilled nursing facility (SNF) if:

- You need skilled nursing care seven days a week or skilled therapy services at least five days a week
- You were formally admitted as an inpatient to a hospital for at least three consecutive days in the 30 days prior to admission in the SNF and
- You had Medicare Part A before you were discharged from the hospital.

If you were admitted to a hospital under observation status or only received emergency room services, this time does not count toward meeting the three-day qualifying stay requirement for SNF coverage.

Every benefit period, Medicare will pay the full cost of the first 20 days you stay in the SNF and part of the cost of another 80 days, as long as your stay is medically necessary. A benefit period begins the day you begin to receive inpatient care and ends when you have been out of the hospital or SNF for 60 consecutive days.

If you need more than 100 days of care in a SNF within one benefit period, you will need to pay for this additional care yourself. If you have long-term care insurance, your policy may cover this care, or if you qualify for Medicaid, Medicaid may cover your stay.

**Affordable
Care Act
Saves Seniors
\$3.4 Billion on
Prescriptions**

A new report out by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) says that the 2010 Affordable Care Act has helped seniors and people with disabilities with Medicare save a total of \$3.4 billion on prescription drugs from the enactment of the law through March of 2012 <http://go.cms.gov/IuOPJf>.

According to CMS, in the first three months of 2012 alone, more than 220,000 people saved an average of \$837 on the prescription drugs they purchased after they hit the prescription drug donut hole, for a total of \$184.5 million in savings. The federal agency noted that in 2010 and 2011, more than 5.1 million people with Medicare saved over \$3.2 billion on prescription drugs. "This is yet another reminder that President Obama's health law is good for seniors. But too many seniors do not know this—we must redouble our efforts to educate our friends and neighbors," said Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Director Edward F. Coyle, who encourages Alliance members to widely share the organization's latest fact sheet on the issue, which can be found at <http://bit.ly/IJ9oCt>.

Save the Date

NYSUT Regional Conference
Reclaim the Dream
September 24, 2012

Doubletree Hotel
East Syracuse

Paul Farfaglia will talk about pensions

More information will follow