

THE NOR-EASTER/RENY

ACKNOWLEDGING our PROFESSION WHILE SUPPORTING our PAST

In this issue:

- A new advertiser
- Membership forms a committee
- June Luncheon plans

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2025... and with luck, Spring!

Much has transpired since our 11/2024 Newsletter and Luncheon. Depending upon your political persuasion, much of the news relates to the precarious nature of benefits we count on for our longevity as well as fiscal well being. However, not all is lost.. should we choose to unite and fight.

*Our organization is but a part of a statewide Association of Retired Educators who have given their time and talents over the course of many fruitful years. Our strength is in our numbers— as an aggregate as well as in our financial support with dues. RENY keeps our voice **vibrant** and **strident**. jim howard, editor*

RENY Welcomes New Advertiser

This month's edition of your RENY Newsletter welcomes Champlain Valley Audiologists to our advertiser's page.



Champlain Valley Audiology

They are a local business (14 Booth Drive in Plattsburgh) committed to reducing the effects of hearing loss or auditory challenges. Phone #: (518) 324-5707.

A thank you is extended to Marti Martin for making the connection with these folks. . Advertisements in our Newsletter are also posted on our web page. (www.RENYNEZ.com)

Membership VP Report: Sandy Lashua

NEZ continues to grow with 12 new members. Please welcome Lisa Wells, Dennis Hulbert, Sharon Relation, Rosanne LaBarge, Mary Goertsch-Cochran. Cathy Santor, Julie Jock, Mike Waite, Jamie Hall, Nancy St. Dennis, Patti Cook and Linda Sullivan.

We now have a MEMBERSHIP TEAM! Jodi Morrow, Leslie LaValley and Kris Fordham

have joined me and we are working hard, brain-storming ways to attract new members. NEZ still offers a voucher for \$19 to new members.

Community Service: Connie Lalonde

Welcome to 2025 NEZ's community support activities. We will be collecting specified items at each of our 2025 meetings. At the first NEZ luncheon meeting in June: **shampoo, soap, deodorant, toothpaste and toothbrushes.** Items collected will be distributed on a needs-based scale.

Reminders for future collections:

Sept.: hats, mittens, gloves and winter sox

Dec.: toys/cash for the Christmas Bureau & winter sox.

Annual **FOOD DRIVE (June)** will be held at Yando's Big M in Plattsburgh / Grand Union in Peru. Volunteers are welcomed.

A reminder: the Interfaith Food Shelf appreciates donations. Cash donations are especially needed during these ever-changing economic times. I am happy to deliver donations to the food shelf!

cmblalonde@yahoo.com

NEZ Leadership for 2024-25

Elected Officers

President: Tracey Howard

Executive Vice President: Elizabeth Dubay

Secretary: Rebecca Frostick

Treasurer: Kathleen Fessette

Vice President for Legislation: Rod Driscoll

Vice President for Membership: Sandra Lashua

Vice President for Friendly Service: K. Caron

Past President: Kevin Mulligan

Committee Appointments

By-Laws: Pete Atchinson

Community Service: Connie Lalonde

Health Care: Kevin Mulligan / Rod Sherman

Historian: Dick Brogowski

Scholarship: Diane Haight

Newsletter: Jim Howard

Educator Award: Alison Brown / Simone Lutz

Nominations: Kevin Mulligan

Program: Bev Kie, Sandy Lashua

Kevin Mulligan, Glenda Rowe

Public Relations: Cindi LaFountain

Resolutions: Beverly Kie

———Reports———

Legislative: Rod Driscoll

Note: These are critical times for retirees. Rod's full report with details is being emailed without redactions. jh

At the Federal level The administration's actions could have devastating effects on seniors' pensions, access to medical care and nursing homes. Proposed elimination of Federal education aid to public schools would increase local school taxes, result in major program cuts and increase pressure to cut retiree benefits such as health insurance.

We oppose the new administration, with support from congressional majorities, pledging to:

- eliminate the Department of Education and Federal aid to schools, which now funds 14% of the average public school's budgets.

- cut \$2 trillion in Federal spending out of a \$7 trillion dollar annual budget. (Washington Post)

- be open to eliminating vaccine mandates

and Federally funded vaccine programs (NBC News)

- cut or eliminate payroll and Social Security benefit taxes

- cutting and capping Medicaid spending, which is the primary funding mechanism for most nursing home resident care for seniors and the disabled, converting it to block grants to states. (KFF)

Federal Advocacy will:

- Support the Social Security Expansion Act to ensure long term financial security for Social Security and Medicare.

- Support legislation to protect, preserve and strengthen Medicaid.

- Support elimination of Social Security benefit taxes **only if it is not paid for by the Social Security trust fund** to prevent expediting of the depletion of the trust fund.

Oppose all cuts to Federal aid to education and the proposed elimination of the Department of Education.

State Advocacy will continue to:

- work to pass the Health Equity For Retirees Act preserve retiree health insurance benefits and prevent any reductions in benefits or mandates to switch to Medicare Advantage plans.

- work toward further reform to Tiers 5 & 6 to enable districts to attract more prospective teachers to the profession.

- advocate for the state to help pick up the difference for the imminent loss of Federal education aid to school districts.

Advocate for an increase in the base for computing pension cost of living which would greatly help our most elderly members.

Community Service: Kathy Caron

Are you looking to become more active in RENY but do not want to be tied down to a lot of meetings? Maybe just come to find out more about Friendly Service? Please consider joining in! **kcaron9794@gmail.com**

Educator Awards: S. Lutz & A. Brown

Retired Educators of New York (RENY) is offering a \$2000 grant to active educators in Clinton and Essex counties to assist them in their classroom endeavors. To be eligible for the grant, an educator must be a full time teacher, nurse, counselor, or administrator in a public school district that is included in the RENY Northeastern Zone (NEZ). For a list of the eligible school districts, refer to the RENY NEZ website, <https://www.renynez.com>. Deadline for submittal: May 16th!

Health Insurance: K. Mulligan

The content of this article is, in part, from The Coffee Hour meeting of March 6, 2025 and The CEWW Consortium Health Advisory Board meeting I attended in February, 2025. Some very good news was shared at the Coffee Hour that can only be perceived as an additional benefit. Guardian Nurses is a nationwide organization that was recently contracted to provide advocacy for Consortium members in dealing with the “red tape” and confusion of healthcare in the North Country. Two nurses will be hired by Guardian Nurses to assist and guide members, as needed, in Clinton and Essex Counties. Nationally this service has become increasingly important, especially in rural environments. This new service is expected to begin in April or May, 2025. The Health Insurance Consortium website at cewwhealth.org will provide the latest updates on this new program.

A frequently raised topic is “Pre-Authorization Decisions”. Our Consortium health insurance plans **generally** follow the Pre-Authorization procedures and decisions of Medicare. Pre-Authorization forms, if needed, can be found on the Anthem Portal or the Sydney App. (menu My Plan).

Today, for Platinum Plan 1 a family plan will cost \$46,000/yr. beginning July 1, 2025. For Platinum Plan 2, a family plan will cost \$35,813/yr. For many of us on Medicare, Platinum Plan 1 will cost \$11,931/yr. beginning July 1, 2025. Medicare Primary on Platinum Plan 2 will cost \$10,669/yr. beginning July 1,

2025. Most of these costs are being incurred by our area school districts for both active as well as retired employees. Depending on local contracts, a fraction of these expenses may be incurred by the employee and/or retiree. It behooves all of us to be supportive of our area school districts, especially during budget time. Our health insurance is truly a **GIFT to APPRECIATE**.

Certificate of Appreciation: B. Gregware

All members of RENY please put your thinking cap on and submit names of people that could be nominated for “The Distinguished Person Award”. It will be given out at the September meeting. Please submit any names with your reasoning to Bonnie Gregware at btig0318@gmail.com. The deadline for nominations will be July 1. Thank you in advance.

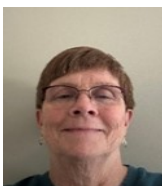
Member Profiles: Cindi Lafountain

NEZ is fortunate to have three members join with Sandy Lashua to form the new **Membership Committee!** Their mission is to continue what Sandy has successfully accomplished for many years: grow our membership! Please extend them a warm welcome.



Jodi Morrow retired from Cumberland Head Elementary after 38 years of service. Jodi and family love to travel, play golf and walk. She is excited to take an active role in RENY.

Kris Fordham retired from Peru Elementary School where she was a fourth grade teacher. Her three grandchildren and three dogs keep her busy. Her family loves traveling in their camper.



Leslie LaValley retired from the Beekmantown Central School system after a 34 year career in special education. Grandchildren, puzzles, crafting and traveling keep her active.

NEZ can now publish in-house, thanks to an anonymous donation!

Northeastern Zone Meeting and Luncheon

June 5, 2025

Valcour Brewery 49 Ohio Avenue Plattsburgh, NY

10:30 am Check in and Socialization Time 11:00 am Meeting Begins

Call to order - Tracey Howard - NEZ President

Pledge of Allegiance

Secretary's Report - Becky Frostick

Treasurer's Report / Presentation of 2025 Budget: Kathy Fessette

Friendly Service- Kathy Caron

Membership - Sandy Lashua

Legislative Action - Rod Driscoll

A. President's Report - Tracey Howard

B. Newsletter/Website - Jim Howard

C. Community Service - Connie Lalonde

D. Hudson / Kramer Memorial Grant -Allison Brown / Simone Lutz

E. Health Insurance - Kevin Mulligan

F. New Business Adjournment

THE TRISTAN FUND



Joining us for our June Program are Jackie & Thom Hallock. They will be speaking about the "Hallock Giving Library/The Tristan Fund" that was created to honor the life of their son, Tristan. The Fund offers free books to children in many areas of the North Country hoping to spark a love of reading. Books are also given to youngsters at local events as well as to the parents of children in the Palliative Care and NICU at the UVM Medical Center. Retirees can help by bringing new children books to the luncheon or by making a cash donation.

New Location!

LUNCHEON RESPONSE FORM



Valcour Brewing Company, 49 Ohio Ave., Plattsburgh, NY

June 5, 2025

Lunch includes: BBQ Chicken, Mac & Cheese, Coleslaw, Mixed Vegetables, Salad, Dinner Rolls, Dessert, Coffee, and Water.

Location: Valcour Brewing Company, Please send in your lunch reservation by **Friday, May 23, 2025.** Your reserved meal is not reimbursable. Make your check payable to RENY-NEZ and send to Kathleen Fessette, 60 Agnew Road, Morrisville, NY 12962

Names Attending: _____

Email Address: _____

Total Luncheon Cost: (\$25.00 per person): _____

Donation to the Scholarship Fund: _____

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

We can now accept VENMO for lunch payments only (no extra donations) @Kathleen-Fessette (last 4 digits of phone number 2040) Please note on your Venmo transaction: Lunch payment by 5/23

President's Message – Tracey Howard

After enjoying an escape from the North Country winter for the months of January-March, I am happy to be back home! Although, you haven't heard much from RENY/NEZ since December, plenty of people across the state and locally have been out there working for us. Our new statewide president, Gayla LePage, from the Northern Zone has taken on her new role with ease. She proves to be a very good listener and advocate for all of us. By now, you have received the President's Appeal asking for support for our organization. Our annual dues continue to help with advocacy for membership, this is also a good opportunity for lifetime members to consider additional support. The current political climate has brought uncertainty and concern to many of us. Now more than ever, we need to be vigilant in our work to secure the benefits we fought for over many years.

While statewide membership numbers are down, NEZ leads the organization in recruiting new members - depositing an additional \$1000 in our coffers again this year. With our newly established Membership Committee, we're already putting that money to work to grow our membership even more this year. We invite current members to volunteer for any of our committees. As always, we welcome your ideas on what you would like to see happening statewide and in our community. Please feel free to reach out to me or a member of the Leadership Team at any time. Our zone may be small, but we are mighty!

It's been a tough year for many of our members across the state, but the Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund continues to provide assistance to many who are experiencing both temporary and long-term financial problems. If you'd like additional information, it's available here: <https://retirededucatorsny.org/financial-assistance/> For direct donations, make checks payable to Robert R DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund and mail to Mary Lou Davis, Treasurer, 125 Andrews Rd, LaGrangeville, NY 12540.

I hope to see new and familiar faces at our upcoming luncheon on June 5th. Please take note of our new location, **Valcour Brewing Company**. They have a beautiful meeting space upstairs which is handicap accessible. We realize the price is a bit higher, but many members requested we try a new venue. Feel free to share your thoughts on this change. As this chilly April fades into our memories, I'll be on the lookout for sunshine and May flowers.



The poster features the NAEP logo at the top left, which includes a gold star and the text "NAEP NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS". To the right of the logo, the text "NAEP is hiring" is written in a large, bold, blue font. Below this, in a smaller black font, it says "In-school data collectors are needed for national assessments at grades 4, 8, and 12, January 26-March 20, 2026." Further down, it says "For more information, visit www.WorkNAEP.com". At the bottom of the poster is a photograph of a female teacher with glasses and dark hair, wearing a white shirt, standing and interacting with a group of diverse students in a classroom. The students are seated at desks, some looking at laptops. Below the photo, in small text, it says "Westat: EOE, including disability/veterans".

Kramer Scholarship News *Diane Haight*


The Northeastern Zone of the Retired Educators of New York will be awarding the Dr. Karl R. and Ruth Kramer Scholarship to a high school senior pursuing the field of education. To be eligible, the student must be a resident of Clinton or Essex Counties, have at least a B average and be accepted at a post-secondary institution. The \$500 scholarship is awarded at the end of the student's first semester in college. Applications are available at all the area high school counseling offices. The deadline for the application was May 1, 2025. Winner announced soon!

Each of the committee members will review the applications according to our evaluation criteria. Then the committee will meet and discuss the applications to decide. The recipient and the recipient's school will receive notification prior to graduation with an announcement to be made at that time.

<p>Northeastern Zone RENY c/o James Howard 21 Pine Ridge Drive Morrisonville, NY 12962</p>	

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