



Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 112615 • Pittsburgh, PA 15241-0215 • 412-459-7674

Visit our website at: <http://acretirees.org>

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Message from the President

Spring will be here before you know it. Join us for the Spring Flower show at Phipps Conservatory. Check our website for details. Come have lunch with old friends and meet new ones on the third Wednesday of March, April and May at the Doubletree in Green Tree. Board members have secured good speakers using last year's member survey as a guide to your interests. We will be working on the second half of the year, if anyone has suggestions for future programs, let us know by email, voicemail or in person.

In the last newsletter I outlined the retirement benefits available to you as former County employees. Today, I would like to comment on the pension plan and the death benefit. During 2018 there were 314 persons added to the pension fund. Forty of these were survivors of deceased retirees leaving a net of 274 additional people receiving pensions.

The pension fund is spread over seventy-seven investment managers. This strategy is used to reduce risk and has served the fund well during the "Great Recession" of a few years ago. The stock market has been rather uncertain recently. It has had a lot of flexibility, i.e., ups and downs. At the January meeting of the Retirement Board the financial advisor reported that all the investment managers have had a slight negative return for 2018 and recommended some slight allocation changes. We will return to information on the pension fund after the release of the Financial and Actuarial Report later in the year.

Last month we also covered the ability of retirees to increase their individual insurance death benefit to a maximum of \$10,000. Almost 500 retirees took advantage of the open enrollment period to purchase additional life insurance.

Keep current with what is happening in your Association by checking our website and, if we have your email address, by reading the periodic information bulletins that are sent.

Hoping to see you at our luncheons and other activities this year.

SAVE THE DATE

March 20, 2019 - Luncheon Program

Marketing of the Presidency

April 4, 2019

Phipps Flower Show

April 17, 2019 - Luncheon Program

Alzheimer's Disease - An Update

May 2, 2019

Heinz Field Tour

May 15, 2019 - Luncheon Program

ACRA Luncheon - Speaker Not Confirmed

**For more details visit our website
at <http://acretirees.org/>*

FREE ONLINE CLASSES FOR SENIORS

by Connie Przybyla

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation brings you a program, Virtual Senior Academy, that you connect through online classes on topics ranging from health and wellness to arts and music, to current events and much more.

Connect online to take interactive group classes using video chat LIVE. Participate in classes with your peers on a variety of topics every week.

Easy to use. All you need is access to a computer or tablet with internet and webcam at your home, local library or participating senior center.

The only requirement besides being over the age of 50 is to be living within a zip code starting with either "15" or "16."

Signup for **FREE** at www.VirtualSeniorAcademy.org



VIRTUAL SENIOR ACADEMY

NEW RETIREES LIST

NOVEMBER 2018

Dandridge, Diane
Etherington, Mark
Grabigel, Judith
Hakim, Gary
Hart, Rose
Hennesy, Bartley
Hilf, Jeffrey
Jones, Natalie
Meadows, Rebecca
Ranallo, Michael
Tracy, Mary
Walk, Know
Wozniak, Elaine

DECEMBER 2018

Abrams, Karen
Foreman, Robert Lewin
Hartzel, John
Lirio, Carla
Maier, Cheryl
McGraw, Celeste
Metz, Robert
Peyton, David Jr.
Ross, Michele
Ryan-Nelson, Mary
Sachs, Lawrence
Scalamogna, Frank
Van Landingham, Lynda

JANUARY 2019

Allison, David
Ani, Isaac
Bernaciak, Gregg
Brown, Linda
Colella, Brian
Dubiel, Lawrence
Filsinger, Marylou
Flynn, James
Geffert, Andrew
Gillums-Fisher, Renee
Knox, William
Korczyk, Jeffrey
Kozlowski, Denis



JANUARY 2019

Lentz, Robert
McFarland, Kevin
Mullen, Richard
Olshinsky, Leo
Pribich, Denny
Warden, Susanne
Will, Jerald
Zilch, Glenn

HOME GARDENERS CAN GET STARTED NOW by Marge Lubawy

If you are a gardener, or someone who wants to start gardening, you know that around January and February you start itching to go out and start digging in the dirt. This is the time to think about what you want to plant and where you want to plant it. Remember the rule of thumb, "Plant the right plant in the right place." If you have a yard that does not get a lot of sun, don't put in sun-loving plants. Choose plants, such as the many varieties of hostas or coleus that grow in shade. If your ground has poor drainage, research water-loving shrubs or trees, or build a raised garden and fill it with organic material (compost) and good soil. Also, choose the right size space rather than having to prune a spreading shrub or plant later. Knowing and accommodating the needs of your plant is the key to its healthy growth.

In addition to the above tips, here are some things you can do in early spring:

- You might want to put on paper your plan for your garden. A notebook of what you plant and where will be a reference for what worked in that area of your garden and what did not. It will also save time in designing your garden if you know ahead where certain plants will look good and thrive.
- Healthy soil is a must for a successful garden. If you have not done a soil test in the fall (the best time to do one), or ever, you can do one in the spring. Soil tests are available for \$9 at the Penn State Extension office, 1435 Bedford Avenue or by downloading a form at agsci.psu.edu/aasl/soil-testing/soil-fertility-testing/soil-fertility-submission-forms. Separate tests should be done for vegetable beds, flower beds and for your lawn. The complete instructions are with the kit, and, when you get the results back, you will have the recommendations for what needs to be added to your soil.

- Most plants benefit from yearly pruning. Prune plants that bloom in or after midsummer, such as roses, clematis or most fruit trees in late winter or early spring. Plants, such as forsythia that flower in spring should be pruned in the fall. When in doubt, always check to see when your plant should be pruned. Pruning at the wrong time can remove the flowering stems.
- Plants that can be put in the ground in March are lettuce, radishes, spinach, turnips peas and onion sets. If you are ambitious enough, you can start seeds of broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower indoors. Check online or your gardening books for "how to" steps.



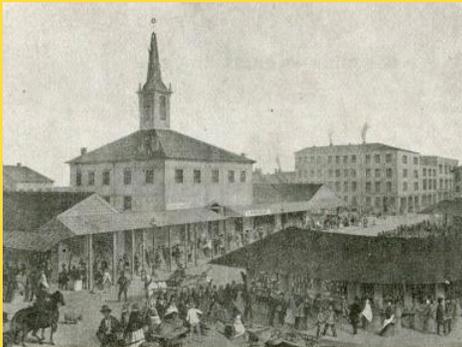
There are many good gardening books on the market that can help with planning and maintaining your home garden. Also, the internet has a wealth of information on plants and gardening. Those sites that are run by the

agricultural departments of universities, such as Penn State University, will have solid researched-based information for home as well as commercial gardeners. The Penn State Garden Hot Line 412-482-3476 is staffed by master gardeners who can help you with your specific question or problem. In addition, Penn State master gardeners offer classes on various gardening topics throughout the county. Both North and South Park have trial gardens where the public can browse and, on Tuesdays at South Park and Wednesdays at North Park master gardeners working in the garden will be glad to answer questions. There is a lot of help out there for beginning and more experienced gardeners. Happy Gardening.

HISTORY OF THE ALLEGHENY COUNTY COURTHOUSE by Connie Przybyla

Did you know that there were three courthouses in Allegheny County?

The original Allegheny County courthouse was occupied in 1794. It was a wooden structure located on Market Square. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court and from December 1818 the Western District of Pennsylvania also held court at the Market Square building. Market Square was also home of the first jail (1795) and the first newspaper (1786) west of the Atlantic Plain, the Pittsburgh Gazette. It was occupied until 1836 when construction was completed on a new Grant Street complex.



First Courthouse in 1794

In April of 1834 a tract of land located at the corner of Forbes Avenue and Grant Street was purchased for a new courthouse. Construction on the new courthouse took place from 1836 to 1840. The building was designed by architect John Chislett. Chislett is also known for his design of the Butler Street gatehouse (1848) of Allegheny Cemetery. His design was a Greek Revival with polished gray sandstone, quarried at Coal Hill (Mt. Washington). The building included a domed cupola housing a rotunda 60 feet high. The courthouse was completed in 1841. The courthouse's second floor served as the headquarters for both the Commonwealth Supreme Court Pittsburgh region and the Federal Western District, serving the latter until a new U.S. Customs House/Post Office opened on Fifth and Smithfield Streets in 1853.

Over time, coal smoke caused corrosion and the building deteriorated. The ornamented surface of the facade dropped off, cornices near the roof began to fall, and the building had a peeling appearance. On May 7, 1882, a fire broke out and destroyed the building and it was demolished.

Following the destruction of the second courthouse, Allegheny County Commissioners decided to hold a competition to design a replacement. The winner of the competition was architect Henry Hobson Richardson and construction was begun by the Norcross Brothers, Richardson's construction firm of choice, in 1884.



Second Courthouse in 1857

The design of the main building, was innovative in that the building was built around an interior courtyard, allowing natural light and fresh air to reach most of the building. The courtyard is surrounded by four stories on three sides. A tower rises five stories from the courtyard's open side. Inside the tower is a chimes system which plays every 15 minutes, as well as strikes the hour each day. Richardson designed the roof steep with dormers placed at all the corners. At the time, the courthouse was the tallest building in Pittsburgh. It remained the tallest building until 1903, when the 24-story Farmers Bank Building was erected.



Bridge of Sighs

The courthouse was connected to the county jail via the "Bridge of Sighs". Richardson's design was based on the Bridge of Sighs in Venice. The entire courthouse was built of large rusticated blocks of granite. The entrance ways and windows were topped with wide arches, giving the building a dignified appearance.

In the 1900's the street level in front of the courthouse was lowered as part of a general re-grading of Pittsburgh. Richardson had anticipated the regrading and courses of finished masonry that had been buried underground were now revealed. Unfortunately, this left the ceremonial entrance a full story above the street. A grand stairway was built to enter the building. In 1928 Grant Street was widened which required the stairway to be removed. The low arched doorways were extended downwards to street level, resulting in visitors not being greeted by the grand entrance hall, but by the low corridors which were once the basement, thereby destroying much of the character of the original entrance designed by Richardson.

In 1937 Vincent Nesbert, a prominent Pittsburgh artist, completed five murals for the courthouse on its first floor: "Industry," "Justice," "Peace," "Fort Duquesne" and "The Battle of Grant's Hill. In 1973, the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1976, it was designated a National Historic Landmark



Third (Current) Courthouse under construction

Through the years many changes were made to the building. The courtyard was restored in the late 1970's and now contains a central fountain. Many of the courtroom's high ceilings have been lowered to accommodate modern conveniences, such as air conditioning. And in 2013, the county executive announced additional restoration and fundraising plans for the courthouse, some of which have been completed.



In Memoriam*

ALTMAN, NANCY L	9/9/2018
BEAVERS, DOROTHY M	9/10/2018
ANDREWS, WILLIAM M	9/14/2018
PELUSO, WILLIAM R	9/14/2018
PARKER, SUMNER L	9/18/2018
CLARK, EDWARD M	9/20/2018
BORMAN, DAVID C	9/21/2018
CLARK, EDITH C	9/21/2018
WYCKOFF, LYNN S	9/22/2018
MELLETT, ANNA MAE	9/27/2018
ROSS, EUNICE L	9/30/2018
WOODRING, JAMES L	10/2/2018
MYTRYSAK, JOHN L	10/7/2018
META, SYLVIA A	10/10/2018
KURPIEWSKI, MARGARET	10/12/2018
KELLY, AGNES	10/18/2018
MCINTYRE, DAVID B	10/18/2018
PONDER, BARBARA A	10/18/2018
SCHARPF, EDITH	10/19/2018
DIULUS, GUY A	10/22/2018
MEELDNER, ROBERT C	10/31/2018
HARBISON, RAYMOND S	11/3/2018
MARETSKY, IDA RUTH	11/3/2018
MATVEY, VIRGINIA L	11/12/2018
MOZZETTI, RONALD M	11/14/2018
BLAHUT, BERNARD J	11/25/2018
BUNYAN, JEANNE M	11/29/2018
STARUSKO, JOHN M	12/1/2018
WILLARD, JOHN L	12/1/2018
GUARINO, MARGARET	12/7/2018
SMIDA, FRANK J	12/12/2018
HOUGH, THOMAS H M	12/22/2018

**As provided by the Allegheny
County Retirement Board*

FACTS ABOUT FALLS AND SENIORS

by Joan McMahon

Did you know that according to a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate, millions of people 65 and older fall? That translates to more than one out of four older persons falling each year. Every year at least 300,000 seniors are hospitalized for hip fractures. And more than 95% of these fractures are caused by falling. In 2015, the total medical costs for falls came to more than \$50 billion, with Medicare and Medicaid covering 75% of these costs.

It is true that many falls do not cause injuries, however, one out of five falls does cause a serious injury such as a broken bone. Such injuries can make it difficult for a person to live on their own or perform everyday activities. Falls can also cause head injuries, especially if the individual is taking certain medications like blood thinners.



What Are Some Risk Factors for Falling?

- Lower body weakness
- Vitamin D deficiency
- Difficulty with balance
- Use of some medications such as tranquilizers, sedatives, antidepressants, and even some over-the-counter medicines
- Vision problems
- Foot pain or poor footwear
- Household hazards such as broken or uneven steps, throw rugs, inadequate lighting, slippery bathtub or shower floors

What Can Be Done to Prevent Falls?

1. The most important thing to do is to talk with your doctor. Become knowledgeable with the side effects, such as drowsiness, of medicines you are taking. Ask about taking vitamin D supplements.
2. Do balance and strength exercises, for example, Tai Chi.
3. Have an annual eye exam.
4. Wear proper fitting shoes.
5. At home, get rid of things you could trip over such as throw rugs or clutter.
6. Add grab bars in your shower and tub areas.
7. Make sure that staircases are adequately lighted and install railings if they are not already there.

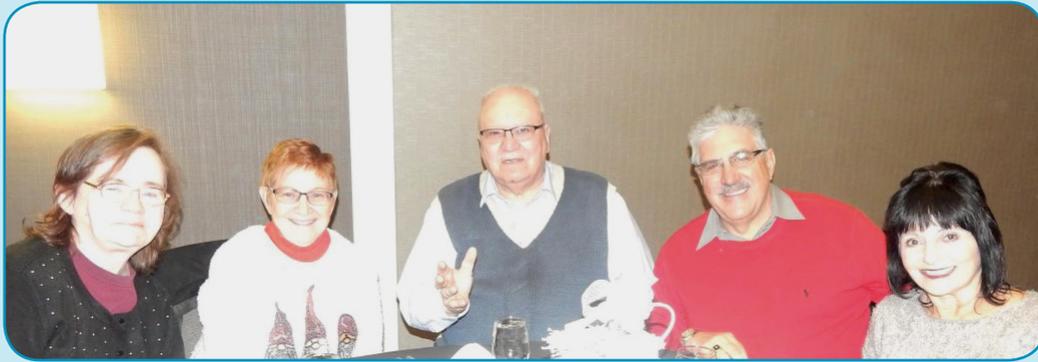
Keep in mind that falls can be prevented and that being proactive with taking preventive measures is so much better than dealing with the many complex consequences of falling.

(Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>)

ACRA HOLIDAY PARTY by JoAnna McQuaide

On December 12th , over 120 members and guests gathered together at the Greentree DoubleTree for the annual holiday party. We had the opportunity to see old colleagues, chat with members and meet new ones. The room was seasonally decorated, and the food was delicious. We had wedding soup, salads, sliced beef, fish, pasta, green beans, various cakes and cookies for dessert. The entertainment was a choral group called The Harmony Singers who performed a number of holiday songs. There was also a sing along for the audience. Over twenty gifts were auctioned throughout the event and there was a 50/50 raffle. The giveaway was \$189! We want to thank Angela Conte and the other helpers and contributors for organizing this festive event.

* If you enjoyed the Harmony Singers at our Christmas party, you might be interested in attending their April concert at Chartiers Valley Intermediate School, 2030 Swallowhill Road on Saturday, April 13 at 7 pm and Sunday April 14 at 2:30 pm. For more information visit their website at www.harmonysingers.org.



Members enjoying the ACRA Annual Party

IN THE SPOTLIGHT SHARON SILVESTRI

by **Connie Przybyla**

After 36 years with Allegheny County, Sharon retired in 2016 as Manager of the Allegheny County Health Department's Infectious Disease Program. Prior to working in the Infectious Disease Program Sharon worked at the Public Health Clinic in Carnegie and Greentree and was also the Nursing Supervisor at the Allegheny County Health Department's McKeesport office.

Since her retirement Sharon has volunteered for the No One Dies Alone Program at Shadyside, Montefiore and UPMC Presbyterian hospitals. As a volunteer she acts as a surrogate family member during the last hours of life for a patient by providing companionship and support (reading to them, praying with them or just sitting with them) for dying individuals. She dedicates three days a week to this program when there is a need. She is also a surgical lounge volunteer at Presbyterian Hospital where she aids family members while their loved ones are in surgery.

Sharon is also an avid traveler. She along with a group of retired Health Department employees has traveled to Vietnam, India, and Morocco. The group is traveling to Cuba this upcoming May.

Sharon's favorite trip abroad was Morocco where she visited the following cities: Rabat (the capital of Morocco) Marrakesh, Fes and Casablanca (yes, that Casablanca where Humphrey Bogart said, "Here's looking at you, kid"). She said the country is beautiful with excellent food, vibrant marketplaces and beautiful leather goods. Her guide was able to expose her to the Moroccan culture, which is rich in history and traditions.

Sharon graduated in 1963 from West Penn Hospital School of Nursing as an RN. While attending school there she met five women who would become lifelong friends. Every year they rent a house together and go on vacation with their husbands. This year they plan on vacationing in St. Augustine, Florida. Her favorite vacation with these ladies was an Alaskan cruise. Sharon also goes on vacation each year to Myrtle Beach with her daughter, Amy.

Sharon's daughter is the Lead Strategic Designer with the Boston Consulting Group in Pittsburgh. She also has a son who passed away in 2001.

It seems to us that Sharon is living her life to the fullest. We wish her many more adventures on her trips with friends and we thank her for her dedication to volunteer work.



Sharon Silvestri watching the sunset in the Sahara Desert



2019 Retirement Check Dates

- January 24, 2019
- February 28, 2019
- March 28, 2019
- April 25, 2019
- May 23, 2019
- June 27, 2019
- July 25, 2019
- August 22, 2019
- September 26, 2019
- October 24, 2019
- November 27, 2019
- December 26, 2019

2019 ACRA Luncheons/Events

- March 20, 2019
Luncheon
- April 4, 2019
Spring Flower Show
- April 17, 2019
Luncheon
- May 2, 2019
Heinz Field Tour
- May 15, 2019
Luncheon
- June 20, 2019
Annual ACRA Picnic
- September 18, 2019
Luncheon
- October 16, 2019
Luncheon
- November 20, 2019
Annual Meeting
- December 11, 2019
Annual ACRA Holiday Party