



Allegheny County

December 2014

Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 5335 • Pittsburgh, PA 15206-0335 • 412-539-9307

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

We have a surprise for you!

It's time for our Annual Christmas Party! If you've attended in the past, you know what a good time is in store—good food, fellowship with your Allegheny County friends and colleagues, and the chance to win wonderful prizes. But that's not all. This year we'll be hosting the Southminster Bell Ringers whose Christmas music will usher us into the holiday spirit. We'll be eating a little earlier than usual (12:15),

so allow yourself extra time to view the Auction items and door prizes. (Note: Some of our members generously donate items for door prizes. There is no requirement to do so; but if you are so inclined, we ask that the door prize items not be wrapped. And thank you for your generosity!). So send in your reservations now and join us on December 10. You won't be disappointed.

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412-661-1438

GOOGLE IS DIFFERENT

By Roger Westman



Were you inspired by the County office facilities you worked in? Well the Google offices at Bakery Square in the East End of Pittsburgh are designed to inspire and

encourage innovation as well as collaboration. Google helps their employees handle some of the frustrations of daily life so that one can be more innovative at work. Take for instance the

three meals a day they provide, except for Friday dinner, so that there's no worrying about packing a bag lunch. Friday dinner is not served so that folks will leave early and spend the weekends with their families or friends. Employees there are never more than 150 feet away from a mini food-service station. You can drop off your dry cleaning at the reception desk in the morning and have it taken care of for you. They provide a hairstylist and a massage therapist on site as well, but mostly at your own cost. However, flu shots are free.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT *Continued from page 1*

Your COLA petitions.

We've been addressing the Retirement Board for over a year now making the case for a cost of living increase for our members. It's been five years (2009) since we last received a \$20.00 a month increase. Active employees have received salary increases during that period. The pension fund is healthy. There is no good reason why the Board has withheld relief for the retirees. Over 1,000 of you returned your petition.. They have literally been tied up with a bow and will be presented to the Board at their November meeting. What are our chances? I honestly don't know, but we won't have long to wait; the last Retirement Board meeting of 2014 is December 18. Stay tuned.

Walk-ins.

We've talked quite a bit about the problems created when large numbers of people show up for our luncheons without reservations. We don't want to discourage people from attending; on the other hand, it means those who have sent in their reservations often have nowhere to sit. The luncheon program is delayed while wait

staff sets up more tables. There is further delay while the tables are set. The luncheon program gets "squeezed" because we have to wrap up by 12:45 when the food is due to be served. We initially added a \$3.00 "surcharge" to the luncheon price for walk-ins; but because that didn't seem to address the problem, last month your Board moved to increase the penalty to \$25.00 for ACRA members [who show up without a reservation] and \$30.00 for non-members and guests. This policy will go into effect with our December luncheon. So avoid the penalty; send in your reservation as soon as you receive your postcard reminder.

A safer way home.

For those of you traveling onto Rt. 376 East: Instead of accessing 376 East from Mansfield Avenue, follow Mansfield all the way up to Greentree Road. Make a left at Greentree Road. At the second light, make a right into Parkway Center Mall and follow the 376 Detour signs. They will take you right to the mouth of the Ft. Pitt Tunnels, where access is a lot safer than the top of Greentree hill.

Our thanks to outgoing Board members.

We'd like to acknowledge the contributions made by Eileen McFadden Drake and Diane Welsh during their respective terms on the ACRA Board. There's no doubt that the Board dynamic reflects the personalities in its make-up. Both Eileen and Diane brought their strengths and sensibilities to your organization, making it better and stronger for their contributions. Our thanks to both women.

'Til spring.

After the Christmas luncheon, ACRA observes a winter hiatus of several months, during which time we'll be planning your programs for the new year. That means there will be lots of news to watch for in the spring edition of the Newsletter.

So enjoy your holiday season, stay warm through the winter, and we'll see you next when the daffodils bloom.



OCTOBER'S LUNCHEON SPEAKER

By Roger Westman

Besides specific issues with the various health policies and hospital stays, Bill McKendree of APPRISE emphasized that, when it comes to health insurance coverage, everyone should "assume nothing because nothing is guaranteed," and approach the insurance options we now have before us as a lawyer would. He urged everyone to check with each physician's office manager (not the doctor) about whether they will accept a particular insurance coverage. When seeing

a doctor, ask how the doctor will code a particular treatment, and always ask about "facility fees" when going to a hospital. He stressed that patients should be willing to hold a doctor and their practice responsible if and when needed. Bill invited anyone with questions to call APPRISE at 412-661-1438. APPRISE is a state program to help seniors understand and choose the best insurance coverage for them.

MEXICAN WAR STREETS

By Mary Ann Sapienza

Photos by Bill Doman

On September 12, a walking tour of the Mexican War Streets was enjoyed by sixteen ACRA members and guests. The tour began at Allegheny Commons Park where Jeff, our docent, pointed out beautifully mature trees such as Ginkgo (which has medicinal properties for memory), Sycamore and Londonplane, which is similar in appearance to Sycamore, but was originally grown in London. We passed the historic Garden Theatre and walked up Arch Street where we saw the original Fire House, built in 1822.

Randy Land was the next stop. Randy came out to



greet us, fresh from the 60s. He wore a painted shirt and shorts and a peace symbol around his neck. He explained how he had collected rocks and trash to decorate his colorful building. He also has a community garden with vegetables and beautiful flowers.

On the way back, we passed the historic landmarks of the Civil War widows' homes and the Cowley School site. At the Aviary, we paused to gander at the giant condor in his outdoor cage. The tour ended with a sumptuous lunch at Max's Allegheny Tavern. A fun time was had by all.



"I don't feel old.
I don't feel anything
until noon. Then it's
time for my nap!"

- Bob Hope

TWO IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Retirement Board of Allegheny County (RBAC): 412.350.4674
Call for issues on pensions, benefits and life insurance.

Allegheny County Retirees Association (ACRA): 412.539.9307
Call for questions about your membership, luncheons or other activities.

In Memoriam

AYERS, JUDITH ANN 10/22/2014
 BRADSTREET, FLORENCE 09/17/2014
 BUEL, WILLIAM C. 09/22/2014
 BUNDA, FRANK T. 08/17/2014
 CERRA, MARY JANE 09/24/2014
 CLAYTON, ELSIE K. 10/21/2014
 COLAMARINO, EUGENE F. 08/06/2014
 COREY, JOHN R. 09/16/2014
 DAILEY, JUNE L. 08/01/2014
 DAVIS, PINKIE L. 08/12/2014
 FEKETE, GEORGE E. 08/15/2014
 GASIOR, JOHN W. 09/25/2014
 GORDON, MARJORIE C. 08/22/2014
 GREENAWALD, MARGARET E. 09/26/2014
 HUDEC, JOHN D. 08/31/2014
 KELLY, NICHOLAS J. 09/18/2014
 KELLY, ROSEMARY M. 10/10/2014

KROBOT, RALPH W. 10/24/2014
 LENDIS, BIANCA 09/27/2014
 MASLOFF, SOPHIE F. 08/17/2014
 O'BRYON, LLOYD 08/22/2014
 PETRELLI, DANIEL D. 09/06/2014
 PLISH, CHARLES 08/10/2014
 QUICK, DOLORES 10/17/2014
 RITTER, DOROTHY C. 08/08/2014
 RONEY, JOHN M. 09/08/2014
 SALOPEK, JOHN A. 08/31/2014
 SCHMITT, URSULA L. 10/23/2014
 SHORT, MARY GALE 08/10/2014
 STEINMILLER, HELEN 09/19/2014
 TORBIN, LEE I. 08/09/2014
 WEAVER, HERBERT C. 04/24/2014
 ZDRALE, GEORGE J. 10/12/2014

GOOGLE IS DIFFERENT

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Get stuck at something at work? Take a break. Try playing pinball, or pool, table hockey, a video game, or even the musical instruments in a separate room. There is a library for book exchange and quiet reading places. These things are there to encourage employees to take a break to refresh their minds.

The design of the offices is something else. One floor has all the offices named for Nabisco products (the building is the former Nabisco cookie factory); another floor has rooms named for rides at Kennywood and park items on the walls. There are even fun house mirrors of which the "make you look skinny" is the favorite.

No one has his/her own office because the pods of workspaces promote collaboration. The building is green, energy efficient and essentially paperless. There's a roof garden for the chef to grow vegetables for the cafeteria, and a chicken hutch up there for a few fresh eggs everyday.



We also looked down on a full-size growing tree inside on a floor below.

What I particularly liked is the double stairway leading from one floor down to another. At the top center is a real car from the Kennywood Thunderbolt and the walls around the stairs are covered in 270 degree two-story picture murals of being on the rollercoaster. For just a moment walking down the stairs, it felt like I was riding the coaster.

This walk 'n' talk took us to offices like the County never would, and never could, provide.