



# Allegheny County

JUNE 2020

## Retirees Association

# NEWSLETTER

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## Message from THE PRESIDENT

It is a quiet Easter Sunday as I write this. Travel restrictions, social distancing and sequestration make this Easter unlike any other in my lifetime. I think back to biblical times and realize there are some present-day analogies to the first Easter. The geographic magnitude is not as great; but there are some similarities. Followers of Christ were in hiding for fear of the threat posed by the Roman officials and the religious hierarchy of Judaism. These forces roamed freely through the land. Death was a possibility. The resurrection of Christ brought hope in real time to those early Christians. The threat was still there but the fear subsided, and they again resumed their lives in public. My hope for all of us is that we will endure during this time of fearing the pandemic and that the Easter season will mark the beginning of a turnaround; and we will shortly enjoy a return to normal living.

In response to the health threat we canceled the March, April and May luncheons. Hopefully the situation will have improved significantly to permit us to get back together for lunch at the Doubletree on June 24. It will be a celebratory, stress reducer gathering. We have rescheduled our annual picnic from June to July 15 at the Spreading Oaks pavilion in South Park. You will receive notice of both the June luncheon and the July picnic. You can always check our web site for the latest information.

The programs for the luncheons that were canceled will be rescheduled for a later date.

You may ask why this column is being written so far in advance of the June 1 release of this newsletter. It takes a significant amount of time to put the newsletter together. Several members of the board voluntarily solicit and edit articles, write articles, take pictures, lay out the document, and arrange graphics before sending it to the printer.

The printer formats the issue with our editor, adds some visual embellishments to improve the appearance of the document. It then takes some time to print and mail over 1000 copies of the newsletter. During this quarantine period the printer is available on a limited basis, thus requiring an even longer lead time.

If you want to contact your Association, our email, voice mail and post office address are available. We may not be able to respond as quickly as we have in the past, but we will respond.

Hopefully this medical emergency with its isolation requirement will be over by the time you receive this newsletter and we will be looking to catch up with each other after such a long hiatus. I am looking forward to getting together again. Keep safe and healthy.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The ACRA Board held a Zoom meeting on May 5, 2020 to discuss the possibility and safety of holding the scheduled luncheon in June and the annual picnic in July. We acknowledged that our members are in the most vulnerable target age for the Coronavirus. So, it is with a heavy heart that we have made the decision to cancel the June 24th luncheon and the July 15th picnic. We are hopeful that we will be able to safely host the monthly luncheons in September, October, and November and the annual holiday party in December.\* Until we meet in September, please stay safe and healthy.

*\*Fall programs will depend on the status of the Stay at Home order. Check our website for updates.*

**September 16, 2020**

Battle of Homestead

**October 21, 2020**

History of Sarris Candies, Inc.

**November 18, 2020**

Pension & Medicare Updates

**December 16, 2020**

Annual ACRA Holiday Party

# *In the Spotlight:* **FRANK DICRISTOFARO**

*by Connie Przybyla*

This past March, Frank DiCristofaro retired from the Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Department as a Probation Officer after approximately 31 years of service. Prior to his employment at Juvenile Probation, Frank was a Youth Care Worker at Shuman Center for three and half years.

Frank held various positions in the Allegheny Court Association of Professional Employees for the past 30 years, starting as an Alternate Steward and eventually becoming the President until he made the decision to retire. Approximately 20 years ago, Frank along with other members of the board were instrumental in securing for Probation Officers the ability to retire at 55 years of age by succeeding in getting the necessary legislation enacted.

Frank has been a member of the Allegheny County Retirement Board for the last six years. He said his main goal is making sure the fund is stable and secure for years to come. Frank said he has always had a keen interest in the well-being of his fellow County employees. He said growing up his parents instilled in him to always do the right thing and take care of people.

As a recent retiree Frank wants to take some time to relax before he maybe looks for a part-time job. Being retired now gives him more time to spend with his son, Nicholas, who he describes as his best friend. Family



**Frank DiCristofaro and his son, Nicholas**

is very important to Frank. He said his retirement will allow him to spend more time taking care of his elderly parents, Rita and Jerry.

Frank and his son are ardent sports fans and enjoy attending football, baseball and hockey games or just spending time together. Their favorite team is the Pittsburgh Steelers. Frank particularly enjoys watching his son play soccer at Serra High School, where he is a Junior on the Eagles' team.

Frank and his family have a home in South Carolina where he intends to spend some time at now that he is retired.

**We wish Frank a long, healthy and happy retirement.  
Welcome to ACRA as a newly retired member!**



## **PENSION FUND NOTES**

*by Guy Tumolo*

In this time of financial turmoil some of you are probably worrying about your pension. We would like to present some figures from the telephonic meeting of the Retirement Board held on April 16. The latest unaudited report from the County Controller shows a bottom-line position of \$929.1 million available for pensions as of February 29, 2020, that same figure for January 31, 2020 was \$961.7 million. Pay outs to retirees this year at the end of March have increased by \$1.9 million over the same time last year. There have been 175 retirements year to date compared to 194 last year in

the same time period. Although the asset value of the fund has decreased, the managers seemed to have positioned the fund to reduce risk in this volatile time. The rate of employees retiring also appears to be slowing down, thus slowing down the future demand on the fund.

These are stressful times. I don't know how you feel, but every fourth Thursday of the month I feel confident that my pension check will appear in my checking account. Please pray that we will all endure this period of isolation in good health.

**15%  
DISCOUNT**

## **DISCOUNT OFFER**

Kohl's offers a special 15% discount every Wednesday in their stores. This special discount is valid in store only for customers aged 60 or older. For Senior Discount, please bring identification to verify your age for this offer.

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# THE GREAT FIRE OF 1845

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by Connie Przybyla

*The following article is the second in a series of articles where we will be detailing some fascinating and interesting history of our great County. We hope you enjoy.*

The City of Pittsburgh originated in the mid-18th century as a French military settlement at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers. The city's growth had been unsystematic, resulting in a hodge-podge of rich homes and businesses of the city fathers intermingled with tightly packed abutting wooden structures housing its largely-immigrant labor force. Its infrastructure provided poor water pressure and an insufficient volume to its ten ill-equipped volunteer fire companies, which were more social clubs than effective public service organizations.

The year before, the city had completed a new reservoir, but then closed the old one. However, the water lines and pumpers were inadequate. There were just two water mains for the entire city, and the fire companies had insufficient hoses to reach the center of the city from the rivers, most of the existing hoses having been condemned.

One of the worst disasters to happen to the residents of the City of Pittsburgh was the Great Fire of 1845. The early morning of April 10, 1845 was a warm but windy day. Just before noon, Ann Brooks left unattended a newly stoked fire. A spark from this fire ignited a nearby icehouse located on Second Avenue and spread to the Golden Triangle. Fire companies responded but got nothing but a scrawny stream of muddy water from the firemen's hoses. The flames swiftly spread to several buildings owned by Colonel Diehl, including his home, and to the Globe Cotton Factory.

The bells of the Third Presbyterian Church gave the original alarm, but the church itself was only preserved by dropping its burning wooden cornice into the street. Once saved, its stone walls served as a barrier to the further spread of the fire toward the north and west. Then the wind turned to the southeast and gave the fire added strength. A witness stated that "the roar of the flames was terrific, and their horrible glare, as they leaped through the dense black clouds of smoke, sweeping earth and sky, was appalling."

By 2:00 pm, with embers flying new fires started where they landed. Citizens who had been fighting the flames instead fled to save their own possessions. During its height, between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., the fire funneled block by block through the intermingled structures of Pittsburgh's poor and elite, residences and businesses, with "the loftiest buildings melting before the ocean of flame," which consumed wood, melted metal and glass, and collapsed stone and brick.



The Bank of Pittsburgh, thought to be fireproof, fell victim when the heat of the fire shattered the windows and melted the zinc roof, the molten metal igniting the wooden interior and burning all except the contents of the vault. A similar fate met the grand Monongahela House, called the "finest Hotel in the west," when its cupola caught fire and collapsed, resulting in a total loss. The mayor's offices and churches fell, as it spread up Second Street to Market Street destroying the region where the city's physicians had been concentrated.

Although the flames were quite intense, they moved slowly enough that residents had time to remove themselves and many of their belongings. Some fled to the highlands to the east (the modern Hill District), then undeveloped except for

the newly built courthouse, an area which remained untouched by the flames. Of those who fled south to the Monongahela River, some were able to cross the Monongahela Bridge (located at the site of the present Smithfield Street Bridge), which connected the city to the southern bank of the river and was the first of what would be many bridges spanning Pittsburgh's rivers.

However, this soon became congested, and then the wood-covered structure ignited, being fully consumed in about 15 minutes and leaving nothing but its supporting pylons.

The docks and warehouses on the waterfront were consumed, and as were the residences. Attempts to save materials from the warehouses by bringing them to the riverbank only delayed their destruction. The fire followed the river into Pipetown, an area of workers' housing and factories, again spreading destruction. It only stopped when the winds died down about 6:00 pm, and by 7:00 pm it had fully subsided within the city, having burned its way to the river and cooler hills. The factories of Pipetown burned on until about 9:00 pm. Throughout the night, there were flare-ups along with the sounds of buildings collapsing.

The fire companies found themselves overwhelmed. In a city flanked by rivers, their equipment and infrastructure were insufficient to bring water to the site of the blaze. The volunteer companies lost most of their hoses and two of their engines in the blaze.

While the vessels on the Monongahela fled the city, those on the Allegheny side, to the north, were active in ferrying immigrants across the river and bringing back men from Allegheny City to help fight the flames and evacuate residents. Among those crossing to help was a young Stephen Foster, who would later become known as the 'father of American music'.

Congregation members rushed to save the Third Presbyterian Church. Thirteen-year-old John R. Banks went to the roof of the Western University of Pennsylvania (forerunner of the



University of Pittsburgh) in an attempt to prevent it from being ignited by the falling cinders. However, as described by a witness, “the cupola of the University burnt for a few minutes like paper and went down.” The home of the University president was also lost. Others went into the evacuating areas to loot the abandoned homes and goods left in the streets. One hotel was saved within the burned area by using gunpowder to blow up the adjacent structures, creating a gap that the flames did not cross.

By the morning of April 11th, a third of the city was burned to the ground. It was said that “the best half of the city” had been burned, an area representing 60 acres, and the entire Second Ward of the city had just two or three dwellings untouched. The fire destroyed as many as 1200 buildings, while displacing 2000 families, or about 12,000 individuals, from their homes. Household belongings were piled on the hills surrounding the city. Surprisingly, only two people died. Estimates of the cost range from \$5 to \$25 million. Almost none of this was recoverable, as all but one of Pittsburgh’s insurers were bankrupted by the disaster.



The sudden lack of structures resulted in skyrocketing property values and a construction boom that quickly replaced many of the destroyed structures. After two months 400–500 new buildings had been erected in the burned area.

During World War II, the bell from the Third Presbyterian Church generated debate. Should it be melted as scrap for the war effort? The answer was no. What saved the bell was the meaning attached to it from the Great Fire of 1845. Every year since the early 1900’s, just after noon on April 10th, the old bell was used to ring out “1-8-4-5,” a remembrance of the terrible day when flames igniting an inferno that burned for nearly seven hours and consumed more than a third of the city. The annual bell ringing continued but it quietly stopped by the time the Senator John Heinz History Center opened in 1996, where the bell remains to this day.

Sources: *Heinz History Center, The Brookline Connection, Only in Your State, Pittsburgh Archives, Wikipedia*

# NEW RETIREES LIST



## FEBRUARY 2020

Barbieri, Joanne	Ginser, Vincent	Polka, John
Boozel, Thomas	Goble, Diane	Pryor, Delores
Boyle, Maureen	Gouker, Charles	Richey, Jerry
Burkard, Ronald	Hampton, Elliot	Sabo, Robert
Cangelie, Margaret	Held, Maryellen	Seibert, William
Castle, Shirley	Judy, Tammy	Simon, Harry
Constance, Susan	Kelemen, Edward	Sinkler, Craig
Corrado, Anthony	Lees, Ronald	Styslinger, William
Cvejkus, Deborah	Mandarino, Charles	Synan, Nicholas
Demko, Diane	McSwiggen, Cynthia	Tate, Betty
Earley, Karen	Miller, Madalyn	Weber, Marci
Edwards, John	Mitchell, Marlene	White, Kevin
Felmeier, Wendy	Nelson, Barbara	Williams, Richard
Fitzsimmons, Daniel	Palmer, William	Zimecki, Paul
Ford, Rosalyn	Pingor, Thomas	
Gawaldo, Natalie	Piskorik, Barbara	

## MARCH 2020

Bonenberger, Marguerite	Katchmar, Rachel
Cantella, Beth	Kisner, William
Corbett, Christine	Martinelli, Thomas
David, Pecora	McDonald, Alva
Frawley, Tammy	Palochick, Steven
Geyser, Lenora	Vasko-Roeser, Cynthia
Goldberg, Richard	Williams, Sherry
Goodwine, Arzella	Wilson, Richard
Hrizo, Michelle	

## APRIL 2020

Bednar, Mark	Javornick, Roger	Smith, Judy
Broadus, Amelia	Konesky, Robert	Stipanovich, Faith
Conley, Denice	McWilliams, Theresa	Szurley, Larry
Davis, Bonnie	Panucci, Joseph	Tauzel, Elizabeth
DeCouer, John	Parke, Tamara	Theil, William
DiCristofaro, Frank	Pleskovich, Davis	Walsh, Timothy
Fletcher, Lawanda	Riga, Christina	Weber, Patricia
Fluker, Eugeneia	Robinson, Charlene	Webster, Gail
Garritano, Martha	Russ, Dean	White, Michelle
Gehring, Donald	Schurman, Andrew	Williams, Kenneth
Gray, Gary	Sciarretti, Bernadette	Wilson, Cynthia
Hudgins, James	Sherwood, Lisa	Sue Lloyd Deramo*

\*December 2019 Retirement

# BEING KIND IN A DIFFICULT TIME

by Joan McMahon



The Coronavirus has dramatically changed all our lives. Activities which we took for granted like attending church services, meeting a friend for lunch, shopping at the mall, enjoying a cultural event, going to the movies, even going to work, have all been severely impacted by social distancing which is so necessary to slow and hopefully stop the spread of the virus. We are by nature, social beings, and this distancing from others can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Practicing acts of kindness is a way of maintaining positive human connections during this trying time.

## The following are some suggestions:

- There are many elderly, lonely residents in local nursing homes. After checking with the social worker or activities director, you might offer to provide some individual greeting cards, containing a handwritten cheerful, uplifting message, for the residents.
- Is there an activity or event which you and a friend used to enjoy together, but can't do now due to the current restrictions? If so, share with your friend some ideas about future events that you could both plan for and look forward to enjoying when the mitigation measures are lifted.
- We are all stressed out and it's easy to become impatient. Be kind to the people working as cashiers, shelf re-stockers, etc. Smile and thank them for remaining on the job.
- If there are children in the household, make an effort to actively engage with them by turning off the electronic devices for one evening during the week.
- Food insecurity is affecting great numbers of people, as can be seen by viewing TV images of long lines of cars lined up at food distribution centers. Donate money to the local food bank on-line.
- Take the time to call a friend or relative with whom you haven't spoken in a long time. The sound of a human voice is much more consoling and supportive than an email or text.
- Do you have a housebound elderly neighbor? If you are able, offer to pick up some grocery items when you do your shopping.
- Leave a note of appreciation in the mailbox for your mail carrier.
- When taking the trash out to the curb, tape a thank you note to a can or bag, together with \$5 each for your garbage men.
- Lastly, remember to stay regularly connected with family and friends through Zoom, Skype, email, texting, phone, or written note, whichever works best for you. During this unprecedented difficult time, it is essential for mental health and emotional well-being to maintain human connectiveness. Practicing acts of kindness is a powerful way of doing so.

## IN MEMORIAM\*

JANUARY 2020 TO APRIL 2020

Name	Date of Death
ANFANG, DAVID W	2/12/2020
BARR, ROBERT T	1/7/2020
BLANKOWSKI, BEVERLY A	1/3/2020
BRANCEWICZ, IRENE M	2/9/2020
CONLEY, LOUIS F	3/4/2020
COYNE, EDWARD	2/18/2020
CUMMINGS, RONALD F	3/13/2020
DAY, NORA T	2/6/2020
EDKINS, MARGARET M	2/12/2020
FECZKO, RICHARD W	1/25/2020
FLEGAL, CLIFFORD W.	2/7/2020
FRITZ, ROBERT H	3/5/2020
HICKS, ROBERT G	3/5/2020
HILLMAN, JOHN H	2/5/2020
KALINOWSKI, CLAUDETTE C	3/23/2020
KANITH, ROBERT	1/27/2020
KAPP, NANCY J	3/8/2020
KRATSAS, RUTH H	3/20/2020

Name	Date of Death
LEECH, RON P	1/30/2020
LESIC, PAULINE M	1/8/2020
MATOVICH, GEORGE R	2/27/2020
MIHALY, RUTH	3/7/2020
MOLLIKA, ROSS	2/23/2020
PARAVATI, SARA	2/7/2020
PASTIRIK, JOHN D	2/13/2020
PILLION, THOMAS J	2/15/2020
RAINEY, MARGARET	1/10/2020
ROBINSON, WILLIAM H	2/26/2020
STACOVIAK, CAROL A	1/8/2020
STANISH, MARTHA	1/10/2020
SWIECONEK, ELIZABETH	1/8/2020
VILLAGE, DOLORES M	2/8/2020
WALLS, ROBERT	1/12/2020
WINTERHALTER, GLENN	1/15/2020
YOVETICH, RALPH	2/21/2020

\*As provided by the Allegheny County Retirement Board

# PLANTING AND MAINTAINING A CONTAINER GARDEN

by Marge Lubawy

Whether you have a large garden or a small patio or balcony, containers of flowers, or even vegetables, can enhance the look of your outdoor space. Hanging baskets and pots of flowers beautify our homes and brighten our neighborhoods. In some cases, container gardens placed on a balcony or a closed-in patio can save our plants from the deer that seem to be overrunning our neighborhoods. That was my case when I decided to grow cherry tomatoes on a deck last year. I had given up growing vegetables in my garden because of the deer, bunnies and other animals that feasted on my beans, tomatoes and peppers. Also, if you enjoy gardening but are no longer able to take care of an in-ground garden, containers provide the opportunity for you to know the joy of growing plants.

Plants can be grown in just about any container if there are enough holes in the bottom to provide good drainage. Terracotta is porous, so the soil dries out faster. You can plant in a plastic pot and place them in the terracotta or other decorative container to keep the soil from drying out. Terracotta is also damaged in very cold weather, so if you can't move the pot inside in the winter, you might want to choose a glazed, stone, or wooden container.

Fill the containers with the right soil for the needs of the plants. Soil from the garden is not recommended because with regular watering it can become compacted and it can possibly hold pests, disease or weed seeds. A multi-purpose soil mix is appropriate for most annuals or vegetables. A few pebbles, shells, stones or even a paper coffee filter (if using a small or medium size pot) on the bottom inside of the pot will reduce the amount of soil that seeps through the holes when watering. If you are reusing pots, clean them out first with a solution of water and disinfectant, such as bleach, to make sure they are free of pests or disease.



If you are planting more than one type of plant in a container, make sure all the plants require the same type of soil, amount of sun, watering, and fertilizer. There is a variety of flowers and vegetables from which to choose. Regarding edible plants, tomatoes are considered to be the most productive of these, but peppers, chilies, radishes, peas, spinach, kale, lettuce, and, of course, herbs do very well in pots. Lettuce should be planted in a long, wide planter rather than a deep pot. You can even plant beans in a container and train the vine up a trellis.

Maintain your container garden as you would an in-ground garden. Take off dead blossoms to encourage more growth, snip off the lower growth on tomato plants to direct nourishment to the fruit, and water regularly. If you put your finger down into the dirt and it is dry, water. Fertilize according to the plant instructions.

More information on container gardening can be found in the many gardening books and websites available. Enjoy experimenting with your garden.

## RECIPES BY PAM

by Pam Long



### MACARONI SALAD VERONIQUE

#### INGREDIENTS

1 and 3/4 cups uncooked shell macaroni  
2 cups cubed cook ham  
2 cups seedless green grapes halved  
1/2 cup sliced green onions

#### DRESSING

Mix together:  
1/2 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup sour cream  
2 tablespoons cider vinegar  
1 1/2 tablespoons Dijon mustard  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 teaspoon dried dillweed  
1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt

#### DIRECTIONS

- Cook macaroni according to the package directions: drain.
- Rinse with cold water; drain again.
- Combine macaroni, ham, grapes and onions add dressing.
- Toss lightly until well coated.
- Chill 6 hours or overnight.
- Yield 6-8 servings.