



Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Guy Tumolo, *President*

Marge Lubawy, *Vice-President*

JoAnna McQuaide, *Secretary*

Cathy Thomas, *Treasurer*

Connie Przybyla, *Editor*

Donzella Johnson-Smith

Pam Long

Joan McMahon

Message from **THE PRESIDENT**

Welcome to the first newsletter of a new year. We hope you are all well and gearing up for the approaching Spring. Stay tuned for a full year of informative luncheons and enjoyable special activities.

PENSION NEWS

By now most of you must have noticed an increase in your pension checks. In November, the County Retirement Board approved a thirty dollar increase in the monthly benefit payments for all members of the pension system who have been retired at least one year. The increase went into effect in January 2022. In addition, the Board adopted a new criteria for consideration of future cost of living increases. A copy of that policy, as adopted, appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

The current increase is the result of a request for consideration your association made to the Board in September. It is the largest single increase the Board has awarded to date. They are to be congratulated in their astute management of the Pension Fund that enabled this increase to be realized. We hope it brings you at least some relief in these tough economic times.

The Retirement System will be holding elections for one of the two positions elected by the membership. One of our members, Frank DiCristofaro, will be running for reelection. Frank was profiled in the June 2020 edition of this newsletter. He spoke at our Annual Meeting in November and has always been available to assist the Association.



YEAR END REVIEW

We ended last year with a joyful holiday party with over 130 people in attendance. We had a sing-along led by our own, Lenny Garlicki, good food and conversation, a program pamphlet with song lyrics, riddles and a truffle recipe, many prizes, and a raffle for tickets to a Penguin game. The Penguin ticket raffle raised \$150 for the Kane Foundation. Photos of the party are viewable on our website: <http://acretirees.org>

THE NEW YEAR

The new year begins a two-year term for your board officers. The one change is in the office of vice president. Pete Schepis opted not to run again. Marge Lubawy, a board member, was elected to that position. Donzella Johnson-Smith was voted by the board to fill her unexpired position as board member.

We're back with a full year of luncheons and other activities. Join your friends and former coworkers for good food and conversation at the luncheons scheduled March through May and September through December. There is a picnic being planned for North Park in June. Special activities currently being considered are a Gateway Clipper event, a visit to a winery, and a tour of the Botanical Garden. If you have any suggestions for an enjoyable activity, let us know.

We invite you to enjoy all the functions or just come to those that you feel like. They are there for you to enjoy and most of you have an extra \$30 to spend. See you later!

RETIREMENT CHECK DATES

- January 27, 2022
- February 24, 2022
- March 24, 2022
- April 28, 2022
- May 26, 2022
- June 23, 2022
- July 28, 2022
- August 25, 2022
- September 22, 2022
- October 27, 2022
- November 23, 2022
- December 22, 2022



In the Spotlight - **DONZELLA JOHNSON-SMITH**

by Connie Przybyla

After 41 years working at the Allegheny County Health Department, Housing Division, Donzella (Donna) Johnson-Smith retired in 2010. When she retired her position was Housing Inspector. As a Housing Inspector she inspected the interiors of homes in Allegheny County for health violations.

Donzella has a strong commitment to her community. She is a board member and treasurer of Jada House International a non-profit organization, she is a lifetime member and trustee of the Bon Ami Temple #49. Additionally, she is a trustee of I.B.P.O.E.W (Improved Benevolent and Protective Order Elks of the World), whose mission is to practice charity by providing and performing charitable services in the community and world. She is also a trustee of the Alfa Council of Elks. Lucky for ACRA, she has just agreed to become a board member to fill a vacant position on the board.

Donna is an accomplished seamstress but doesn't have much time to sew anymore. Her skill is so good that she made her daughter's beautiful and intricate wedding gown and veil. Occasionally she will make clothing on assignment but prefers to sew for family.

Donna has a passion for travel. Her travels have taken her to Alabama, California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. She has also traveled many times outside the US to Jamaica, Mexico, and the Caribbean. She already has three trips scheduled for 2022, Negril, Jamaica, in April, Georgia in July and Alabama in August.

In 2017, Donna became a widow after several years of marriage. She has one daughter, LaSsun, who lives in New Jersey and two grandsons, Kevar and Keenan. Kevar is a chef and married to Rochelle. He has two children, Kelly, and Prince. Keenan is in the Navy and stationed in Japan.

The ACRA Board looks forward to working with Donna in the upcoming year. We applaud Donna on her deep commitment to her community and wish her many more years of traveling to warm and sunny locations.

2022

LUNCHEON DATES

- **NO January Luncheon/Meeting**
- **NO February Luncheon/Meeting**
- **March 16, 2022** - Officer Risher - Identity Theft
- **April 20, 2022** - Edd Hale - U.S. Brig Niagara
- **May 11, 2022** - Pittsburgh Botanic Garden
- **June 15, 2022** - Annual Picnic - North Park
- **NO July Luncheon/Meeting**
- **NO August Luncheon/Meeting**
- **September 21, 2022** - County Rangers - County Facilities
- **October 19, 2022** - Speaker Not Confirmed
- **November 16, 2022** - Medicare & Retirement Updates
- **December 14, 2022** - Annual Holiday Party

*Visit our website at <http://acretirees.org/> for more information



RECIPES BY PAM

by Pam Long

SWISS CHEESE POTATOES

- 7-8 large red potatoes
- 1-pound Swiss cheese grated
 - Fresh chives
 - 1/2 stick butter

Cover and boil potatoes in salted water for about 20 minutes. Do not overcook. Refrigerate potatoes overnight.

Peel and grate potatoes. I use my food processor. Grate cheese.

Grease a 3-quart baking dish. I use butter. Layer 1/2 of the grated potatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with chives.

Layer 1/2 of the grated cheese. Layer the rest of the potatoes, season again. Add the remaining chives and cheese. Dot with butter.

Bake at 350 for 1 hour. Serves 12-14.



HOLIDAY PARTY

by JoAnna McQuaide

This year's holiday party was extra special. After a hiatus for the pandemic in 2020, 130 members and guests were able to congregate at the Greentree Doubletree for our best attended holiday party in the recent past if not ever. Several changes have been made to the festivities. After check-in members were offered the opportunity to purchase more tickets than the three free ones for the gift raffle, tickets for the 50/50, and 2 Penguin hockey tickets to benefit the Kane Foundation (thanks to Hugh Hackmeister).

Our holiday menu included wedding soup, roasted chicken breasts, rigatoni, and a variety of desserts. There were a record seventeen tables since we wanted tables of eight, not the normal ten due to increased pandemic activity in December. We wanted the attendees to be comfortable. Throughout the buffet, items that were raffled off included a Lenox lamp, Christmas pillow, mitts, salad bowl, Google Nest, DIY Italian dinner basket, and a Santa. Lenny Garkicki entertained us with a carol sing-along, a Polish carol and ended the singing with the 12 days of Christmas with each table responsible for a day.

Other new additions were reindeer food for the grandchildren, a photo montage of previous ACRA events, and a photo area. To ensure that every table had a winner a new game was introduced, and the seventeen winners all received a free lunch for a meeting of their choice.

Thanks go to Connie Przybyla for her inspirations and the committee for putting together such a memorable post-pandemic holiday party.



Thank You, ANGELA and PETE



ACRA Board members, Pete Schepis and Angela Conti, have ended their service on the board. Angela has been the senior member of the ACRA board in years of service. She has worked tirelessly for ACRA members for many years. She is best remembered for her work in bringing you the annual Christmas Party and the annual picnic. Her sage advice on many of the issues before the board was much appreciated.

Pete has held the positions of ACRA vice-president and treasurer throughout the years. He has always been available to help with financial reports after his treasurer term concluded. He also helped arrange the tour of PNC Park and the Pirate Club house. For the past few years, he has managed the ACRA voicemail and addressed the needs of the callers. Pete has represented the association at pension board meetings and has volunteered to continue helping with the door prize and 50/50 raffles.

We acknowledge and appreciation Angie & Pete for their service. Thank you.

IN MEMORIAM*

Name	Date of Death	Name	Date of Death	Name	Date of Death
Arnone, Rosalie	11/5/2021	Giesman, Sharon	8/20/2021	Ostrowski, Michael	10/2/2021
Augenstene, David	8/11/2021	Gitzen, Colette	10/26/2021	Oswald, Edward	11/15/2021
Barrett, Edward	7/26/2021	Harper, Charles	10/26/2021	Palumbo, Robert	10/8/2021
Bednark, Michelle	11/7/2021	Hoag, Janet	8/27/2021	Parent, Emil	10/18/2021
Bell, Fred	10/26/2021	Kaufer, Dale	10/21/2021	Roth, Joseph	11/3/2021
Bucy, Raymond	10/30/2021	Kelly, Regis	7/23/2021	Sabo, Ernest	6/2/2021
Campbell, Leo	11/7/2021	Kiss, Sam	9/15/2021	Saikia, Dhyan	10/18/2021
Cline, Harold	10/4/2021	Knepper, Audrey	9/21/2021	Schiefer, Darlene	9/28/2021
Croyle, Ralph	10/4/2021	Konesky, Victoria	9/8/2021	Stukus, Gloria	10/20/2021
Davis, Elizabeth	10/26/2021	Krebs, Patricia	10/10/2021	Tackis, Dell	8/25/2021
Deberson, Iris	8/28/2021	Lee, Nancy	10/10/2021	Taylor, Wilma	9/13/2021
Delaney, Barbara	5/21/2021	Lewis, Audrey	8/10/2021	Walsh, Catherine	3/19/2021
Dixon, Jacqueline	10/16/2021	Lonzo, Michael	9/26/2021	Way, Jane	8/17/2021
Farabaugh, Marie	9/15/2021	Mather, Janet	9/18/2021	Wood, Myrtle	8/26/2021
Fatata, John	10/27/2021	Meyers, Robert	10/11/2021	Wright, Bruce	9/1/2021
Ford, Rose	8/28/2021	Miller, Patrick	9/18/2021	Zitelli, Marcella	10/7/2021
Gerst, Elmer	9/27/2021	Nagy, Gary	9/27/2021		
Gialanella, Ralph	10/21/2021	Neppach, Karen	10/4/2021		

*As provided by the Allegheny County Retirement Board

PLAN FOR REGULAR COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) REVIEW

Allegheny County Employees' Retirement System Cost of Living Adjustment Policy Provisions

**2022 - Recommendation of \$30/month increase in monthly benefit
for all members retired at least one year. (December)**

The Board will consider future flat dollar uniform COLA (s) if certain criteria are met:

Criteria for future Board Consideration

- Solvency Test
 - Solvency less than 20 years
 - No COLA is to be considered
- Solvency at least 20 years but less than 30 years
 - Consider a COLA of up to 2% of the median monthly benefit for current retired members
- Solvency at least 30 years but not indefinitely
 - Consider a COLA of up to 3% of the median monthly benefit for current retired members
- Solvency projected to last indefinitely
 - Consider a COLA of up to 5% of the median monthly benefit for current retired members
 - Projection must maintain solvency indefinitely after COLA

Discretion

- The Board retains the full discretion to approve or disapprove any COLA, even if the criteria for Solvency is met
- The Board may consider a COLA no more often than once a year



FRAUD SQUAD ALERT

by Allegheny County
District Attorney Zappala's Office

**Don't let your guard down,
scams are on the rise.**

“SHOPPING” SCAMS

- Watch out for “non-delivery,” where the victim pays for an item they never receive.
- Or “non-payment,” where the victim provides a service or product but never gets paid.
- If a deal looks too good to be true, it probably is. Before making a purchase, verify the legitimacy of buyers or sellers. Buy directly from secure and reputable websites.
- Check bank and credit card statements routinely. Never give personal information.

“CHARITY” SCAMS

- Some scammers use names that sound a lot like the names of real charities. This is one reason it pays to do careful research before giving.
- If someone wants donations in cash, by gift card, or by wiring money, don't do it.
- To be safer, pay by credit card or check.
- Don't let anyone rush you into donating.
- Scammers can change caller ID to make a call look like it's from a local area code.

“GIFT CARD” SCAMS

- Gift cards are for gifts, not for payments. Scammers like gift cards because they're easy for people to find and buy.
- Consumers should beware of offers of payment in exchange for the numbers on the back of a gift card.
- Gift cards have fewer protections for buyers compared to some other payment options.

“YOU'VE WON” SCAMS

- You NEVER have to pay to get your prize. Only scammers ask you to pay a fee for “taxes,” shipping and handling charges,” or “processing fees.”
- Scammers say “paying a fee” increases your odds of winning. But real sweepstakes are free and winning is by chance. It's illegal to pay to increase your odds of winnings.

There's absolutely no reason to ever give your bank account or credit card number to claim any prize or sweepstakes.

STAYING CONNECTED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by Joan McMahon



Everyone needs social connection in order to thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic with the need to practice physical distancing has presented a challenge even to people who were well connected with large supportive social networks. Public health social distancing guidelines have slowed the spread of the virus, but they have made it harder for people to see family and friends. Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to face factors such as living alone, loss of spouse and family, and chronic illness.

Health Risks of Loneliness

Although it is difficult to precisely measure social isolation and loneliness, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that recent studies indicate:

- Social isolation significantly increased a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity.
- Social isolation was associated with about a 50% increased risk of dementia.
- Loneliness was associated with higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide.
- Increased risk of death, 68% increased risk of hospitalization, and 57% increased risk of emergency department visits.
- People who are lonely may get too little exercise, drink too much alcohol, smoke, and often don't sleep well.

Maintaining Active Social Connections

While older adults need to follow the COVID-19 mitigating guidelines, it is critical that they maintain active social connections. Some ways to do this are:

- Take an online class to learn something new.
- Schedule time each day to stay in touch with family, friends, and neighbors by phone, social media, or text. Communicate with people you trust and honestly share your feelings.
- If you are tech savvy, arrange with family and friends to schedule regular Zoom sessions.
- If you are not tech savvy, sign up for an online class to help you learn how to use email and social media. Meanwhile, write a note or send a card.

Need Help with Social Isolation or Feeling Lonely?

Talk with your health care provider. In Allegheny County, contact the Area Agency on Aging at 412-350-4234, or <http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/olderadults>

(Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>)

NEW RETIREES LIST

NOVEMBER

Aldridge, Amanda
Boyle, Wayne
Butanoic, Julie
Comer, Robert
Dore, Timothy
Graber, Lyle
Hoffman, Rosemary
Ignaz, Margaret
Kostyak, Richard
Melle, Madonna
Merrick, Thomas
Naiditch, Paul
Parhetta, Frank
Scisciani, Linda
Sorg, Howard
Tatton, Kimberly
Wilson Clinton, June
Winslow, Jonathan
Yost, Bart

DECEMBER

Atkins, Bruce
Blair, Eric

Curges, Timothy
D'uva, Thomas
Edwards, Patricia
Etzel, Sandra
Farrell, Patti
Fleming, Howard
Gaines, Rosemarie
George, Jennifer
Hammel, Wendy
Hardy, Richard
McMeekin, William
Mullins, Ladena
Mullins, Regena
Nelson, Debra
Nelson, Keith
Peays, Stephanie
Simon, Kathleen

Sprague, Lisa
Stramaski, Brian
Taylor, Marc
Vesci, Elizabeth
Salkowski, Valerie
Zelinsky, Raymond
Zivkovich, Mark
Zozom, David

JANUARY

Bayer, Sandra
Brandon, Geoffrey
Bucko, Donna
D'Abarno, Arnaldo
Dimoff, John
Evans, Sheryl
Gergely-Buzzard, Gina

Graham, Wendy
Griffy, Charles
Haver, Susan
Hayes, Wendelyn
Heinz, Kathy
Homer, Max
Leffler, Casandra
Levenson, Mark
McGregor, Edward
Miller, IVO
Mulroy, Kevin
Niziol, Suzanne
Pattera, Emidio
Philburn, Beth
Platek, Walter
Queer, Edward
Roche, Anthony
Ross, Judy
Selden, Christine
Sprague, Lisa
Timko, Albert
Wakeley, John
Walsh, Carol
Younkins, David



ACRA ANNUAL DUES

If you have not renewed your 2022 ACRA membership, please renew now by completing the form below and sending your \$15 to **ACRA, RENEWAL DUES, PO Box 15285, Pittsburgh, PA 15237**. Additionally, if you have not given us your email address, please consider giving it to us, so you are kept up to date on all ACRA events. We do **NOT** share information. Thank you.

ACRA RENEWAL FORM - \$15 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE

Last Name _____ First Name _____

I am the Retiree YES NO I am the Spouse of a Retiree YES NO

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email Address _____

Dept. You Retired From _____ Year of Retirement _____