



Allegheny County

February 2025

Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

P.O.Box 15285 • Pittsburgh, PA 15237 • 412-459-7674

Website: <http://acretirees.org> • Email: acretireeassociation@gmail.com

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NEWSLETTER

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Message from PRESIDENT JACK EXLER

HAPPY 2025!

It is the first week of January as I write this; and I am thinking about the wonderful ACRA Holiday Party this past December. There were over 150 attendees at the party. There was a lot of holiday cheer, games, good food and the festivities were capped off with Lenny

Garlicki, at 90 years young, leading us in rousing renditions of Holiday songs, especially the "12 Days of Christmas." Thank you, Lenny!

The ACRA Board has put together exciting programs and outings for 2025. Please go to the ACRA website: <http://acretirees.org> for the complete listing of speakers and special events. I would like to highlight a few important dates. ACRA Annual Picnic is scheduled for June 18th; the Pittsburgh Pirates Game against the Detroit Tigers on the afternoon of July 23rd; and the Annual Holiday Party is December 17th.

Please mark your calendars and join your fellow retirees for good times. For our members who may live in warmer areas and are planning to come back to the Burgh to visit family and friends, why not plan your visit around one of our events and come join us. We love seeing you.

I would like to wish you and your families a healthy and blessed 2025.

Jack Exler
President

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THE FATEFUL DEMISE OF THE MCCREERY & COMPANY DEPARTMENT STORE

by Kathleen Burk

Standing unassumingly on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Wood Street in Downtown Pittsburgh is a 14-story terra cotta building that aptly bears the name “300 Sixth Avenue Building.” Built in 1904, it originally stood grandiose and opulent as McCreery & Company Department Store, better known as McCreery’s. As a mercantile of high-end dry goods, the proprietors catered to the upper class and carried some of the finest merchandise available. The establishment also showcased an elegant tearoom featuring fine China and monogrammed utensils and a menu to rival the most luxurious restaurants in town.

McCreery and Company was known throughout the region as a hallmark of quality and elegance, and as a place where one could purchase almost anything. No excursion to downtown Pittsburgh was complete without stopping for tea and window shopping at McCreery’s. That was until the fateful month of March in 1934 when tragedy struck. Within two



The image on this 1908 postcard shows that the original McCreery's had only 12 stories. The additional two stories, along with a new façade on the lower two floors came long after McCreery's had shut its doors for the last time.

weeks, seven employees had died and another 15 to 20 employees were gravely ill from a mysterious illness.

Oddly enough, the luxurious department store also housed a pet shop of exotic birds on both the fourth and fifth floors. The culprit for the deadly illness was an outbreak of “Parrot Fever,” medically known as psittacosis. In addition to the human casualties, more than 180 exotic birds had also succumbed during that same period.

The concerned proprietors responded by quietly euthanizing the remaining 85 parrots and fumigating the entire store. Unfortunately, the public relations damage was beyond control. The panic that ensued forever changed the course of business for James McCreery. By 1938 the doors were permanently closed and never again was McCreery & Company viewed as the most fashionable shopping mecca in downtown Pittsburgh.

Information for this story was obtained from the Time Magazine website in an article originally published on April 2, 1934

Scam Alert! Caller ID Spoofing

Kathleen Burk

Even the best and the brightest of us can be susceptible to an occasional scam. That is why it is important that we be on our toes when it comes to our income and savings. To do so, we must remain apprised and vigilant of the various tactics that unscrupulous people will use to separate us from our money.

One such scam is called “ID Spoofing.” The scammers will use technology to display a fake name and number on your caller ID. They make it appear that they are calling from your bank, a government agency, or some other trusted entity. After you have answered the call, they will tell you that there is a problem with your account, and they need further

information from you to remedy the situation. Often, they already have some information about you, leading you to accept their legitimacy. You may be asked to give them your account number, social security number, or other personal information. They may even tell you that they will cancel your credit card to prevent further fraud and will send you a new one in two weeks. Meanwhile, as you await the arrival of your “new credit card,” (which never arrives) the scammers are charging up a storm on your existing credit card!

Do not let this happen to you. Never assume that the name or number on your Caller ID is the actual identity of

the caller. Under no circumstances should you give a caller your account information. If you are unsure whether the call was legitimate, contact your bank or other appropriate agency to verify whether there has been a problem with your account.

And most importantly, do not be embarrassed if you have fallen victim to a scam. Your experience may save others from a similar plight. If you have been a victim of ID Spoofing or any other type of scam, you can file a scam complaint with the Pennsylvania Attorney General’s Office at www.attorneygeneral.gov

In the Spotlight **MURRAY BLACK:**

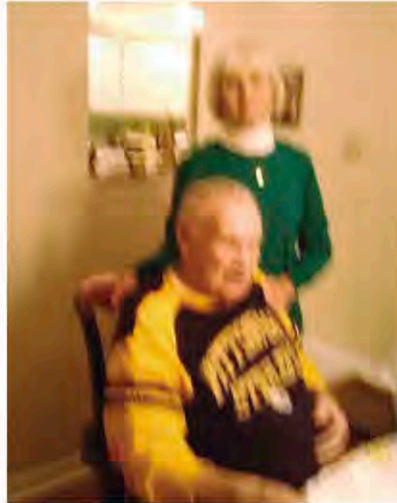
23 Years Helping Older County Residents Live a Better Life

by Guillermo Cole

Murray Black retired in 2011 at the age of 62 after 23 years of service in the Allegheny County Department of Human Services Area Agency on Aging, which helps residents 60 years of age and older live safe, healthy and, when possible, independent lives.

As an Account Clerk, Murray performed various duties in accounting, computer services, mail processing/delivery and office supply services. He worked at the agency's main office in downtown Pittsburgh, initially on Wood Street and then on Smithfield Street when it moved there.

Murray grew up in Baldwin Borough and attended St. Elizabeth grade school and high school, located near the Cloverleaf at Route 51 and Lebanon Church Road. After graduating in 1966, Murray attended Penn State and later enlisted in the U.S. Army.



Upon completion of basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, Murray was stationed at Fort Lewis in Washington state and served overseas in Frankfurt, Germany before his discharge in 1973.

Murray was employed at Pittsburgh National Bank, the forerunner to PNC Bank, prior to his career with DHS Area Agency on Aging. He worked in data processing and used the large mainframe computers commonplace at the time and also worked with high-speed sorting machines used to process cancelled checks.

His experience with Pittsburgh National Bank later helped him land a similar position with a Westmoreland County-based company that processed cancelled checks for small regional banks.

Marrying later in life, Murray lost his beloved wife Barbara after only 10 years of marriage. She passed before he retired but after they moved into their Brookline home, where he still lives. In retirement, Murray enjoys hunting and fishing and spending time taking care of his home.

If you have a story you would like to tell about your retirement experience, we would love to hear from you. Please send us an email at acretireeassociation@gmail.com or leave a message at 412-459-7674.

Holiday Celebration December 2025

With more than 180 people in attendance, the ACRA Holiday Celebration was a booming success.

Highlights of the luncheon are mentioned in President Jack Exler's message at the beginning of this newsletter. A wonderful time was had by all who attended!



If you would like to see many more photos of this and other ACRA events, by all means visit our website: <https://acretirees.org/photos-of-acra-events/>

\$\$ PENSION PLAN UPDATE \$\$

In the September issue of the ACRA newsletter Guy Tumolo penned an article about an issue that affected the Allegheny County Pension Fund. A ten-year agreement between the county and the Allegheny County Airport Authority (ACAA) included a provision that allowed airport employees to participate in the pension fund. Because of their higher salaries and bonuses their pensions were disproportionately higher, and the stability of the retirement funds was being affected. The ten-year agreement expired at the end of 2024.

According to Walt Szymanski of the Allegheny County Retirement Board, "The Retirement Board of Allegheny County approved a resolution and agreement with the ACAA at the December 19, 2024, regular meeting, excluding bonuses paid to highly compensated employees from being counted in pension benefits paid from the County's Pension Fund. On December 20, 2024, the ACAA Board also voted on a sister resolution that accepts the agreement with the Retirement Board and excludes these bonuses from future pension calculations. From now on, all highly compensated ACAA employees that receive a bonus will sign a form acknowledging that the bonus is no longer pensionable."

WORD LADDER

Change the first word into the last word by altering one letter at each step of the ladder.
Each step must be a valid word.

PARTY
LINES

If you are able to solve the word ladder, then you should reach over your shoulder and give yourself a nice pat on the back, for you are truly in possession of a brilliant mind.

Congratulations

NEW RETIREES LIST

NOVEMBER RETIREES

Babcock, Robert
Benaglio, Patti
Young/Boyed, Kathy
Brown, Christopher
Bruno, Raymond
Callahan, Carolyn
Dason, Easter
Diehl, Thomas
Jae, Kenneth
Ligouri, Robert
Moriarty, Kathryn
Oesterle, Don
Powers, Regis
Reutzel, Lisa
Squires, Katherine
Suzio, Charles
Trettel, Veronica
Vahosky, John
Capozoli, Patricia
Herbel, Carrie

DECEMBER RETIREES

Smith, Brent
Brennan, Laurie
Jones, William
Jonas, Craig
Kushner, Sandra
Cooney, Deborah
Mink, David
Walsh, Kim
Mariano, Colleen

JANUARY RETIREES

Aiken, Douglas
Mikolay, Daniel
Dilisio, Lina
Farwell, James
Martin, Mary
Nevels, Laura
Harvey, Valerie Ann
Lovey, Mark
Painter, Richard
Grabowski, Holly
Jedlicka, Lenore

Mark Your Calendar



Wednesday, March 19, 2025

EMS Presentation

David Terkel, Chief of Operations for Medical Rescue Team South Authority will inform us of what we should have in our homes and on our cell phones to prepare for an emergency, and what to expect if you need to call for help. Reservations and payments are due by March 12.

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

How Investor Psychology Affects Us All

Investment advisor and author Ken Kaszak will speak about "biased behavior" and how one's life and experiences can affect their financial decisions. Reservations and payments are due by April 9

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Allegheny County's Earliest Aviation History

Sue Morris and Brian Butko will present fascinating tales that will take us back to the dawn of aviation in Allegheny County at Bettis Field. Their book, Bettis, will be available for purchase at the luncheon for \$21.35. Reservations and payments are due by May 14.

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

ACRA Annual Picnic

Good food, good fun and good friends are the order of the day.

Location: Home Economics Building in South Park
Reservations and payments are due by June 11

Wednesday, July 23, 2025

Pittsburgh Pirates vs Detroit Tigers

Location PNC Park on the North Shore

The cost is \$35 per ticket. Reservations and payments are due by May 30

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

The History of Chatham Village

Learn the history of this innovative housing plan that is both unique and charming. Located right in Mt. Washington, this community is recognized nationally for its living and landscape design. Reservations and payments are due by September 10.

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

Retirement and Medicare Updates

Staff from the Allegheny County Retirement Board and an expert on Medicare will offer updates and answer questions. Reservations and payments are due by October 8.

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

Legends and Lore of Western Pennsylvania

Thomas White will share some folklore and tales of our region. Many of these we may be familiar with from our own youth. Reservations and payments are due by November 12.

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

The Annual Holiday Party

A rollicking good time is promised with food, fun, games and entertainment. All of this, shared in the company of our fellow county retirees. Reservations and payments (\$30 per person) are due by December 10.

Unless otherwise indicated the regular luncheons will take place at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Greentree. Unless otherwise stated, tickets to luncheons are \$22 per member and \$25 per guest. Tickets are not available at the door. No refunds after RSVP date.



RECIPES BY PAM

by Pam Long

POTATO LEEK SOUP

2 tablespoons of olive oil

4 large leeks (white and very light green parts only cleansed thoroughly and chopped)

3 small baking potatoes peeled and diced

4 cups chicken stock or vegetable stock

Salt and pepper to taste

• Heat olive oil and add chopped leeks stirring until tender but not browned, about 20 minutes.

• Stir in potatoes and chicken stock

• Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until potatoes are soft about 30 minutes

• Puree until smooth and season with salt and pepper. (use a blender or an emersion blender)

• Thin, if necessary, with additional stock. May add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of cream to make vichyssoise.

Enjoy!



IN MEMORIAM*



Name	Date of Death	Name	Date of Death
FRIEDMAN, MARY	10/03/2024	BELL, PHYLLIS	11/23/2024
LAFRANKIE, GERALD	10/10/2024	GUERRA, LOUIS	11/24/2024
O'CONNOR, JOHN	10/15/2024	BLETTNER, MARY	11/25/2024
SEPEREK, BETTY	10/17/2024	MADDEN, VIOLA	11/26/2024
DROZD, DAVID	10/17/2024	LENTZ, ROBERT	11/27/2024
DUNCAN, JUDY	10/20/2024	CRAWFORD, CARL	11/28/2024
BONENBERGER, WILLIAM	10/21/2024	SAUNDERS, MARY	11/30/2024
RUTHERFORD, LINDA	10/23/2024	GROTTENTHALER, WILLIAM	12/01/2024
DENSON, CARL	10/24/2024	COHEN, HERMAN	12/03/2024
MAJOR, JOSEPHINE	10/26/2024	PENROD, BRADLEY	12/03/2024
HUGHES, THEODORE, JR.	10/27/2024	MCWILLIAMS, THERESA	12/05/2024
PULLIA, MARY	10/29/2024	HINKEL, HELEN	12/09/2024
FISCHER, THEODORE	11/02/2024	BEAUMONT, SANDRA	12/11/2024
GROSS, JUDY	11/03/2024	JONES, VERA	12/16/2024
DAVIDSON, ARLENE	11/05/2024	TESTA, JOANNE	12/17/2024
JESIONOWSKI, MARK	11/11/2024	HRIZO, MICHELLE	12/22/2024
CHIESI, KATHLEEN	11/13/2024	ISENBERG, DANIEL	12/25/2024
WOODS, RICHARD	11/15/2024	MCINTYRE, KENNETH	12/26/2024
SCHULTISE, JEFFREY	11/15/2024	KUC, JOSEPH	12/31/2024
VERDUCE, JOHN	11/16/2024	LATASTER, JOZEF	12/31/2024
WEBB, KAREN ANN	11/17/2024	STAUFFER, KAREN	12/31/2024
POWELL, LEAANN	11/19/2024		

*As provided by the Allegheny County Retirement Board

WORD LADDER SOLUTION

PARTY

PARTS

PANTS

PINTS

PINES

LINES

*Aging may have its
share of aches and
pains, but it is also a
reminder that we are
alive, and each day
offers a new occasion
to rejoice and make
the most of it.*

