



March 2024

## Musings from Mary Ellen

“If winter has the courage to turn into spring, who says I can’t bloom just the same?”

s.r.w (sian wilmot)

Aloha to all, no matter where you are living! I have just returned from Hawaii and can still feel the sun and the mild breeze, as well as see the beautiful colors of the flowers. When spring comes here in the northeast, we somehow forget the recent snow and cold, as the Snowbells, Crocuses and Violets start to emerge on our lawns. Rejuvenation is part of nature. Our bodies and minds can rejuvenate as well. Our theme for the spring luncheon is “Living Well.” Our speaker will focus on how to live our best lives through healthy eating and gentle movement. Attendees will have the opportunity to do a few activities at their tables. All we need is the courage to bloom again! Details about the April luncheon and June Memorial luncheon are on page 2.

Another important topic for all retired teachers is health insurance premiums. Presently, two proposed state bills concern the amount of money retired teachers, the state and TRB pay towards the Medicare Supplement Plan. The bills would **not change the amount paid towards the Medicare Advantage Plan or change our ability to choose between the two plans.** Instead the bills propose a change in how much retired teachers, the state, and TRB would pay for the Medicare Supplement plan. Below are the salient points:

The TRS Medicare Supplement plan costs \$278/month and the TRS Advantage plan costs \$36/month. Yet the same dollar amount is given as the state subsidy (\$36/month) for both plans.

To appropriately meet the healthcare needs of all retired teachers as they age, it is vital that both an “affordable” Advantage plan and an “affordable” Medicare Supplement plan are always offered through the Teachers’ Retirement System.

Fairness and equity can be achieved by providing a one-third state subsidy with respect to the proportional dollar cost of each health plan. A **one-third state subsidy toward the cost of each TRS Medicare-based health insurance plan** is the solution.

I hope to see all of you at the April and June luncheons. Let’s all spring into action by becoming involved in each other, as we also rejuvenate ourselves.

Best,

Mary Ellen

### Update on 2024 Legislative Session

The 2024 Connecticut Legislature will be in session from February 7 to May 8.

During the first few weeks of session, bill introductions are primarily conceptual in nature. As the session progresses, legislative committees will introduce more of their own bills and more detailed language will be drafted.

In the near future, ARTC’s lobbyist will go through the list of bills important to retired teachers and GBRTA will ask for your help in contacting your legislators.

At the present time, two similar bills titled, **AN ACT CONCERNING A STATE SUBSIDY FOR RETIRED TEACHERS’ HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS** and **AN ACT CONCERNING A SUBSIDY FOR RETIRED TEACHERS’ HEALTH INSURANCE** have been submitted. Both bills require that the state pay a one-third subsidy toward the cost of retired teachers’ Medicare supplement health insurance coverage. It is likely that the two bills will be combined as they work their way through the legislature. GBRTA will contact you with additional information. Please check our website, [www.gbrta.org](http://www.gbrta.org) and check our emails. It’s all up to you.

## GBRTA Spring Luncheon

**Wednesday April 10, 2024 10:30 am**

Tashua Knolls Tashua Knolls Lane Trumbull, CT

**Entrees:** Choice of

Eggplant Parmigiana	\$ 38	Stuffed Boneless Chicken Breast	\$ 40
Stuffed Sole/Lobster Sauce	\$ 40	New York Strip/Bordelaise Sauce	\$ 45

All meals include Fruit Medley, Salad, Bread, Potato, Seasonal Vegetable, Tea and Coffee

**Dessert:** Strawberry Mousse

**Program:** In keeping with our theme of wellness, our speaker Cathy Grosshart, is a National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coach. Her goal is to transform the health and well being of clients. In addition to her private practice and connection with the Integrative Women’s Health Institute, Cathy is the Community Health Educator for the Southwestern Connecticut Agency on Aging (SWCAA) where she manages the **Live Well** programs.

**Reservations and payment must be received by March 25, 2024**

## GBRTA Annual Meeting and Memorial Service

**Wednesday June 12, 2024, 10:30 am**

Tashua Knolls Tashua Knolls Lane Trumbull, CT

**Entrees**

Eggplant Parmigiana	\$ 38	Veal Scaloppini Francaise	\$ 43
Pork Loin/Apricot Glaze	\$ 40	Sesame Salmon/Orange Glaze	\$ 43

All meals include Fruit Medley, Salad, Bread, Rice Pilaf, Seasonal Vegetable, Tea and Coffee

**Dessert:** Ice Cream Sundae

**Reservations and payment must be received by May 27, 2024**

**Details:** Meetings will begin at 10:30 am. Lunch will be served at noon. If you are attending the meeting and not staying for lunch, please call to let us know that you are coming so we can arrange seating for you.

Make your checks payable to GBRTA with date, menu choice and your phone number on the check. Only one reservation per check. Checks must accompany reservations.

**Reservation/Payment to Sandra Petrucelli-Carbone**  
**607 Juniper Court Oxford, CT 06478 (203)463-8403**

### Request from our Membership Chair

#### Keeping Dues Up-to-Date

Your part—pay attention to the date on the address box on your newsletter. **If your name is followed by anything other than *Life Member* or the date is earlier than *September 1, 2024 (09/01/24)*, you're behind in your dues.** Please catch up (or even pay ahead!)

#### Has your address changed?

There is something that you should know about— and we don't have your current address! Our email bounces back; our newsletter is returned as *not at this address*. Please help GBRTA by updating your information with Membership Chair, Ann Block , at 203-268-1577 .

#### In Memoriam

Maureen Grom .....1/04/2024  
Michael Grosso.....2/12/2024  
Jane Preston .....4/21/2022  
Mary Psarras .....4/12/2023

### Survey Results—In Brief

Recently GBRTA members were invited to respond to questions about the types of programs and activities that they preferred. A total of 83 members completed the survey. Members indicated that email contact was preferred, transportation is a problem for members; and about one-third members would be interested in helping to organize a social activity. Most commonly suggested topics of interest to members were:

- Self care, wellness, stress reduction (48.2%)
- Travel or vacation planning (47%)
- Medicare and Health Insurance (47%)
- Personal Security (33%)

When asked to suggest possible “get together” activities, members suggested:

- Local free or inexpensive performances (44.6%)
- Life long learning opportunities (39.8%)
- Virtual trips to Art and history museums (32.6%)
- Library tour (30.1%)
- Historical houses (30.1%)

Results will be used by the Board to provide services and plan events relevant to members.

### GBRTF to Elect New Officers and Board Members

The Greater Bridgeport Retired Teachers Fund, Inc., (GBRTF), established in 1983 through a bequest from Florence Batchelder, will elect new officers and board members in June, 2024. The Fund helps retired teachers in the eight towns served by the GBRTA with insurance premiums, lifeline services, and short-term home health care. Each fall the Fund sends a letter to GBRTA members, outlining requirements and procedures for obtaining help. The governing board manages the affairs and portfolio of the Fund. The slate of officers for 2024-2026 will be presented to the GBRTF board in April, announced following the April GBRTA meeting, and voted on at the GBRTA annual meeting in June.

#### GBRTF—Nominees for Office 2024 – 2026

President: Deborah Broccoli	Recording Secretary: Sheena Graham
1 <sup>st</sup> VP: Marie Petitti	Corresponding Secretary: Sandra Petrucelli-Carbone
2 <sup>nd</sup> VP: Andrew Figlar	Treasurer: Jo-Ann Olsen

#### GBRTF—Nominees for Governing Board 2024 — 2026

Susan Barrett	Walter Drozeck	Gloria Francesconi
Filomena Goncalves	Mary McIntyre	Glen Mudre
Jacqueline Norcel	Charles Sala	Michael Ward



### **Meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Veep—Patricia DeCoster**

Pat proudly identifies as the only native Hawaiian on the GBRTA Board. At 18 she came to the mainland with a full ROTC college scholarship, settled in California, worked in science research, taught and was a full time Mom to two sons.

A move to Connecticut in 1998 began her career in a variety of teaching and administrative positions. Retired in 2022, Dr. Pat (Yes, she fit that into her busy schedule.) is a chemistry adjunct at Sacred Heart University, loves sailing with friends, plays Mahjong, serves on various church and community boards, and reads, reads, reads.

Her goal for GBRTA is to get more members actively involved and to expand the services that the organization offers. Pat created the member-interest survey and plans to use it in guiding future programs.

With her sons now grown, Pat now looks forward to her next career. As she tells us, “My first grandchild is due in April and I can’t wait!”

### **You’ll Be Hearing from—Deborah McNeill**

*With newly defined responsibilities, GBRTA’s By-laws added email communications to the Corresponding Secretary’s duties. Deborah McNeill is a new retiree, and we are pleased to introduce her to you.*

Hi everyone,

My name is Deborah McNeill and I am the new GBRTA Corresponding Secretary. I retired in June after 37 years of teaching in Bridgeport and Stratford as a Home Economics/Family and Consumer Sciences teacher.

I am originally from North Carolina and I currently reside in Shelton with my daughter, Adrienne. I enjoy singing, baking and crafting/sewing and am a regular volunteer at the Baldwin Center in Stratford.

I am looking forward to an exciting year. My goal is to assist with increasing GBRTA membership and to keep our members up to date with Association information. Please look for any correspondence from me using [dmcneill.gbrta@gmail.com](mailto:dmcneill.gbrta@gmail.com) and a mention of GBRTA in the subject line.

Deborah