

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Catchiest Headline/Title

### Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Voices of a generation

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

I liked this headline for an article about music and musical voices of the 60s. "Voices of a Generation" is a poetic title for this piece, and certainly evokes a nostalgic, yet literary feeling. However, you don't really get the impact or the meaning of the headline until you get into the article. The headline needs to be specific enough to draw you in to the article. I think it would have worked better if it had a "kicker" or second deck that helped introduce readers to the subject of the article. Off the top of my head, something like: "Voices of a Generation – 60's Music Still Relevant Today." But a good headline nevertheless.

### Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Welcome to HI CI

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

I think this head may be more understandable to the newsletter's audience. As an outsider, I had to consider for a moment what "CI" stood for. I'm still not certain about "HI." Although the idea for a column celebrating the lives of former students is an excellent one, I'm not sure the headline conveys the intent of the article. Even something as simple as "Celebrating Alumni Accomplishments" would have given a better idea of the content. The "Star is Born" secondary headline is excellent, however. It's descriptive, and piques the reader's interest.

### Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** My fascination with gold

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

I would have run the head larger so it didn't have to compete with the artwork (which was also well-done.) Calling the article "My fascination with gold" is an interesting way to grab the reader's attention. Who doesn't love gold? But it might be even better to turn it around and pull out a fact that's relevant to the reader, such as "Gold – Is it still a good investment?"

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## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** APPR - What is going on?

**Publication/Website:** RETIRED TIMES

**Issue Date:** May 2013

### Judges' Comments:

Using a question as a headline can be a good way to draw readers into an article, and this is certainly a question that is uppermost on many educators' minds. However, the seemingly random list of secondary topics is somewhat confusing.

## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Move over reading primers ... Bring on the wine primers

**Publication/Website:** RETIRED TIMES

**Issue Date:** Aug 2013

### Judges' Comments:

Once I saw this headline I had to read the article. Also loved the subhead/intro, which began: "Spirits ran high at the June luncheon . . ." Very well done. A very clever headline that does an excellent job of catching the reader's interest, especially because it utilizes a tie-in to educational terminology. And the "spirits" secondary headline, although something of a cliché, is also very effective.



## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Ruckus erupts over raffle at fall luncheon

**Publication/Website:** RETIRED TIMES

**Issue Date:** Nov 2013

### Judges' Comments:

The writer of this headline combined descriptive language, humor and alliteration to create an especially effective title. Who could resist reading an article with both "ruckus" and "raffle" in the headline? Just standing by itself, this is a very well written basic headline that sounds as if it describes a real news event – and certainly could describe a real event. However, it actually describes an imaginative article about a retiree luncheon/fundraiser that featured a "raffle rumble." The headline (and the article itself) show a great deal of creativity in describing what could have been an otherwise very dry subject.

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## ★ Local: Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Awesome Albany Rally!

**Publication/Website:** *PORT OF CALL*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

It's interesting to see how many different ways editors presented stories about the June 2013 NYSUT rally in Albany. This one superimposed the headline "Awesome Albany Rally!" over a large photo of sign-waving participants. The red-and-white headline seems to capture the action of the photo in just three words. It gives readers a clear idea of what information is contained in the article, while the alliteration provides a poetic element. An added plus is that the slogans on the signs in the picture almost function as secondary headlines. An excellent effort. One related comment that has no impact on the judging in this category – I thought the headline colors tended to compete with the colors in the photo, making it a little hard to read.

## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** We live in uncertain times

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2012

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/NovDec2012.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This headline serves a useful purpose in an article that was being published just prior to the presidential election in 2012. It helped remind readers that uncertainties in Social Security, Medicare and other issues made it extremely important to be aware of the issues, how each candidate stood on those issues, and what the outcome of these issues would be, depending on who won. "We Live in Uncertain Times" is a headline that would certainly attract the attention of almost any reader. And the secondary headline does an excellent job of explaining exactly what areas of uncertainty the article will address. Nice work!

## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** We were there 6/08/13

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/julyaug13.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

There are a couple of ways to judge a headline. Standing by itself, this headline is good, provocative and could help draw readers into the article. It certainly does the job it is intended

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to do. However, it is one of many contest headlines that describe a retiree council's attendance at the June 2013 NYSUT rally. When you compare it to that group of entries, there are others that do the job just a little better. But it's a good headline, nevertheless. The words "We Were There 06/08/13" would certainly attract the attention of any reader who understood the significance of the date. For those who didn't know, it might have been better to say something like "We Marched on Albany."

## ★ Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Worth noting – and quoting ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2012

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/SeptOct2012.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This headline effectively captures the reader's attention by both accurately reflecting the content of the story and stressing its importance. The use of rhyme is a nice touch that helps to draw the reader in even more effectively. Very catchy, and it gives editors the opportunity to throw just about anything they want into this column.

## Local: Retiree Council 12

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Jump in!!

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook\\_2013\\_april\\_to\\_go\\_to\\_nysut.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook_2013_april_to_go_to_nysut.pdf)

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is certainly a short, punchy "action" headline. But I think it needs just a little more detail to convince readers to "jump in." It could use a second deck or "kicker" to give readers a better idea of what they are jumping into – in this case, new forms of communication and increased ability to keep up with events.

## Local: Retiree Council 15 & 16

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** The big lie

**Publication/Website:** *Senior Class*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I think this is a case where a somewhat vague headline can draw readers in without providing details to help guide them in. They will simply read the article to have the questions answered: What is the big lie? Who is telling it? How do we stop it? This headline says a lot

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in just three words. But I would have made “The Big Lie” a bigger headline size. Many people would be curious about what the “big lie” is. But in this case, it might have been helpful to use a secondary headline to give another clue about the subject of the article. For example, “Are unions really ruining this country?” would be apt.

## Local: Retiree Council 17

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** We help to pick up pieces

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

**Judges' Comments:**

Good, catchy headline about member involvement in NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund. I would have run the headline larger to make it stand out more, but that criticism doesn't affect the fact that it's a good headline and worthy of note. “We help to pick up pieces” is a much more poetic way of saying “We donate money to relief efforts.” It's also an excellent way to attract the reader's interest without giving away the whole story in the headline.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Education News: Here (FL), There (NY) and Everywhere

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/education-news-here-fl-there-ny-and-everywhere>

**Judges' Comments:**

I like this headline. It could be used just this one time or it could be used over an education news column that runs regularly. Either way, it tells readers exactly what to expect. It does a good job of describing the scope and content of the article, with a little bit of a creative twist. It's an excellent way of drawing readers into the piece. And with a retiree readership, you can't go wrong crafting a headline by dipping in to the Lennon-McCartney songbook.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** High cost – needless pain

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/high-cost-needless-pain>

**Judges' Comments:**

This is a good headline for an editorial comment on congressional action and inaction. It succinctly summarizes what's going on, and not going on, in Washington and how all of this affects the nation. It wouldn't work on a straight news story, but it works great on a

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commentary piece. “High cost, Needless pain” is a creative way of describing a very important problem. However, it might have been more effective with a secondary headline giving a little more information about exactly what the cost is for.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Two states (FL, NY) two lawsuits (Teacher Evaluations, Property Tax Cap) two org (FEA, NYSUT): One voice says we stand together

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/two-states-fl-ny-two-lawsuits-teacher-evaluations-property-tax-cap-two-org-fea-nysut-one-voice>

### **Judges’ Comments:**

The last part of the headline – “One Voice Says We Stand Together” – is an excellent, creative way to draw readers into the story. However, the long, involved and confusing information at the top is difficult to decipher and is more likely to turn the reader off before he gets to the second part. This is the rare case where a headline says too much and becomes too complicated for readers. I would cut it back to say, at the very most: “Two states, two lawsuits, two organizations – one voice.” It’s a good effort, and I love to see editors trying out different techniques, especially with headlines. It just runs a bit longer than it needs to. Alternatively, it might have been better to turn the two around, with the second statement as the headline and the first part as a secondary headline.

## **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Fly me to the moon – In love with LEM

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** April – June 2013

### **Judges’ Comments:**

Nice headline. A great way to attract readers to a first-rate first-person article on space exploration. It not only paints a vivid picture in the mind of the reader, but it also provides the picture with a sound track of the well-known song. Who could resist reading a story so well introduced?

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## Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** I just don't get it when things don't mean the same anymore

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** August 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

The sentiment expressed in the headline is a very common one and, as such, would be of interest to many readers. However, I don't believe enough information is given to tell the reader exactly what topic is being discussed. Instead of "When things don't mean the same anymore," maybe something like "Technology and the topsy-turvy world" would give a better idea of the content. Nevertheless, the headline certainly tells the reader what's coming. I was intrigued by it and read the story to the end. Yes, the headline drew me in. I don't think it was especially creative or provocative, but it pulled me in to the article and that's what it's supposed to do.

## Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Sandy – What's in a name?

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** Dec 12 - Mar 13

### **Judges' Comments:**

This isn't a bad headline, it's tightly written and to the point, but I think it misses the basic point of the article, which is one person's description of how the storm affected her family and neighborhood and the surrounding region. The article also mentions NYSUT's relief fund at the end. At the risk of getting too far afield for this category, I would lead with the future aspect (donating to the fund) and move the description of storm damage farther down in the story since most people would have seen, read and heard about the damage by the time this was in print. If you rework the story, a more appropriate headline will come. Unfortunately, "Sandy" is one of the most recognizable names in the Northeast today. As such, it's certainly an excellent way to attract the reader's interest. But it might have been better to focus the secondary headline on another aspect of the storm, such as its devastation, rather than just the name.

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## Local: Wantagh Schools United Retirees

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Attention: Bookworms

**Publication/Website:** *WSUR*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A cute headline for a brief article on book sharing. Just two words, but they make readers want to find out what's in that short article, illustrated with some line art of a bookworm.

Compare this headline with the headline above it on the same page: November Meeting.

Which article would you read first? The word "Attention" in itself is often a good way to attract the reader's attention. And adding the word "Bookworms" focuses the attention on a specific topic. A creative, catchy headline.

## Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Fall luncheon: heavy issues, light tone

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** October 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a decent headline that is improved by the way it is displayed on the page. The words "heavy issues" are in boldface, while the words "light tone" are in a much lighter typeface.

When done judiciously, little visual tricks like this can help draw attention to an article and its headline. This is a very descriptive headline with a great dichotomy of adjectives. Factual, yet poetic. Very effective.

## Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Madava Farms tour: SWEEEEET!

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A catchy headline for a feature on a field trip to a local farm that produces maple syrup.

Subjects like this lend themselves to creative headlines if you have the time to give them

some thought. When you work this hard on a story it's worth it to spend a few more minutes

on a good headline. As you read the first five or six paragraphs of the story, you understand

the play on the word "sweet." But if there had been a secondary headline describing the type

of farm it is, the joke would have been obvious from the beginning, and even more effective.



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## ★ **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Catchiest Headline/Title

**Name of Entry:** Saranne Rap – A transparent view of issues

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I'm guessing this is a regular column. If not, it should be because when you have a columnist with just the right name you have a golden opportunity to give their column an unforgettable title. In this case we have a columnist with a first name of Saranne and the column is called "Saranne Rap." Brilliant. The secondary line – "a transparent view of the issues" – is just icing on the cake. And who could resist reading an article about "The Joys of Retirement?" That headline not only describes the content, it is an excellent way to draw readers in.

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## Best Creative Writing

### **Local: Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Retirees' corner

**Publication/Website:** *TRIAD*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

A nice piece of nostalgia, generated by the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination. Articles that look back at days gone by are difficult to do well. They tend to be mawkish. But this reminiscence of life in the 1950s and early 60s captures that time period very well without veering into over-sentimentality. The writer's use of vivid and descriptive language to paint a picture of times gone by is extraordinary in this article. The line "We respected our teachers and they respected us" is especially evocative and poignant. And the contrast with attitudes and events after the "unthinkable" happened is described colorfully and completely. An excellent effort.

### **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Cowards, Charlatons and Conspirators

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

This articulate and thought-provoking article doesn't mince words when it comes to characterizing those who espouse a different point of view. Although it certainly offers a convincing argument backed up by well-researched facts and figures, some of the invective – especially the words in all caps – may be slightly over the top. The same effect could have been achieved with less pejorative terms in lower case. I'm guessing that this powerful and emotional plea generated some feedback from readers. It is well-written and well-researched, with pertinent statistics and factual material. It's always good to see local publications – or their contributors – take a stand on a controversial issue.

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## ★ **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Voices of a Generation

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

What a wonderful trip back in time this article is! It's a pleasure to revisit the music described so colorfully, and the addition of lyrics and historic perspective for many of the songs mentioned makes it even more interesting. Whenever I read an article like this one I'm compelled to look for minor factual errors. But I just can't find any here. It's OK to have an author write about something they're passionate about, but it's so much better when the author actually knows something about the subject, as this one does.

## **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** HHHART... On the road

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

### **Judges' Comments:**

A vivid and colorful picture of a wonderful two-week trip through Europe. The descriptions of the events and scenery are excellent, especially the hay wagon and the crowd in Munich. However, it might have been better to have more specific language about the actual sights and less about how the trip came about. It is good as far as it goes. I would like to have seen more details, more information. This, of course, tells you that I enjoyed the article and just wished that the writer had taken it a little further.

## **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Road Scholar trip

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

### **Judges' Comments:**

An excellent and detailed description of a very interesting trip. The colorful language paints a wonderful picture of a place well worth visiting. It would have been even more interesting if the writer had included an anecdote or fact from some of the events of each day. I would have included information on how to take part in the Road Scholar program, as well.

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## 2014 BEST OF THE BEST WINNER

### ★ ★ Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Teaching with teachers in Ethiopia

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

#### **Judges' Comments:**

The use of language here is extraordinary. In an article that is both well-written and well-illustrated with photographs, the author describes her experience teaching reading to teachers in Ethiopia. The author offers detail after detail about the country, the people, the problems, and this one, about a classroom: "Mud walls practically bare but for the peeling blue/green paint; wall- to-wall crude picnic style benches packed with youngsters attempting to share decrepit exercise books; a constant haze of dust amplified by a singular source of light entering through a narrow filmy window; and a lone, rough, loosely mounted slate board." An excellent piece of work and a great reminder of what dedicated unionists are doing every day to make their world a better place.

### Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Have you ever had one more for the road?

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Here is an editorial/comment piece that does a good job of outlining the pitfalls of driving under the influence of drink, drugs and prescription medications. Since this is a Long Island publication, it's good that the writer also touched on operating boats while under the influence. She weaves in a lot of interesting facts about substance-related vehicle deaths, alcohol myths and other trivia, and manages to keep it interesting. The facts are well-researched and used to build a very convincing argument for a topic that literally is of life-and-death importance. One tip: Some of the statistical material could have been run in a chart or similar graphic device. That would make it stand out better and it's more likely to be read. It also opens up the page and breaks up the mass of type.

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## ★ Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** So you want to learn mahjongg?

**Publication/Website:** 'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I enjoyed this feature, which has some very colorful artwork at the top and bottom of the page. The writer delves into the origins of the game and discusses the possible reasons for its longevity. Also good for a retiree readership, she mentions its value at helping players sharpen their mind and memory skills. She does an excellent job of providing an overview of how the game is played, without actually going into the how-to details. The vivid language encourages the reader to explore the topic further, and possibly even try the game, without scaring him (or her) away. And finally, she provides information at the end for those who want to learn. Very nice feature article.

## Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Starting a "New Tradition" (What's old can be NEW again)

**Publication/Website:** 'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'

**Issue Date:** December 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

An excellent and inspirational article about how to infuse the holidays with meaning without breaking the budget. The ideas are laid out clearly and in colorful language, with many ideas for activities that are appropriate for all ages and religious beliefs. This was a good idea for a Christmas issue feature – establishing traditions to make the holidays more meaningful and less commercial. The writer has a nice style for this type of feature, making it entertaining rather than preachy. One important note: Be sure to watch the spelling of words such as Kwanzaa (should have two A's at the end). An error on a word like that could offend some readers.

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## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** January get – together

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This well-written and interesting human-interest story gives a vivid account of the writer's interactions with a group of people unlike any she has ever met. While performing a good deed, she inadvertently broadens her horizons and learns about a different culture – and informs readers in the process. This is a good topic written in the first person – thoughts on turning 70. But it's difficult to develop the potential of any topic in 100 words or less, the approximate length of this article. What's here is good; I'd just like to see more.

## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** January get – together

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Spring 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

When I read a brief item like this one, written by a member about her experiences retiring to a small town in Texas, I just wish I had more detail. This one was especially interesting and I enjoyed the story as far as it went. A colorful and articulate description of the writer's feelings about advancing age that are shared by many. Who hasn't reacted in a similar way to the inexorable march of time? This article would be of interest to almost any reader.

## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Let the creative children create

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This item certainly shows creativity -- a poem lamenting the overtesting in schools and its effects on creative children who no longer have the time or opportunity to create. A good commentary on the state of affairs in public education in New York state. A lovely and meaningful poem that expresses the writer's point of view in a colorful, yet convincing way. Very well done.

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## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** A member writes ...

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Nov 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Nice article, illustrated with the author's own photos, of her 11 years in Egypt, where her husband worked with USAID and she taught ESL. The author briefly describes her life in Egypt and her work on a book she has just published of photos of Egyptian people and her own observations about them. Interesting article, but I'd like to read more about her experiences and the creation of the book.

## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** APPR – What is going on?

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This articulate and thought-provoking article uses well-organized facts to build a strong and persuasive argument against the use of "hastily implemented standardized tests" to assess students and teachers. It's an excellent account of an important topic. This well-written news feature outlines the issues in public education leading up to the NYSUT Rally in Albany last year. The article is brief but complete in its description of the issues ranging from APPR to Common Core and new standardized tests for students. Because the article basically is background information for the upcoming rally itself, I would have devoted a little more space to describing what was planned, etc., for the rally.

## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Move over reading primers ... Bring on the wine primers

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Aug 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I enjoyed this cute feature about retirees getting some hints on wine selection and enjoyment from a sommelier who happens to be a local high school graduate. This is an article not just for wine snobs, but for anyone who wants to learn a little more about how to enjoy their wine, as well as the history of wine production in the Finger Lakes. The speaker's presentation was described in a simple, easy-to-understand way, without overwhelming the reader with extraneous information.

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## Local: Port Jefferson Station Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** The view from here

**Publication/Website:** *A Portal Through Time*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

The writer takes a common retiree subject – retirement vs. working – and finds a way to make it more appealing to just about anyone who has ever been in the classroom. Equally adept at humor and serious commentary, she touches on some universal topics (having Sundays free with no papers to grade), as well as the many educational “innovations” that came and went – some of which she embraced and others she was never – in her words -- able to “own.” She even confronts the irony of having gone from being a young teacher whose ideas were dismissed as “wild and crazy theories” to a mature teacher whose experience suddenly becomes outdated. With some work, this could be a start of a great novel. Very enjoyable – and informative.

## Local: Port Jefferson Station Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** The view from here

**Publication/Website:** *A Portal Through Time*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

The writer here does a great job in an editorial commentary taking on Mayor Michael Bloomberg for comparing teacher unions to the NRA and Congress because in all three “a small group is really carrying the ball and the others aren’t necessarily in agreement.” While keeping it interesting and readable, the writer skillfully refutes every point of the mayor’s ill-chosen remarks. The writer uses colorful and convincing language to build a strong argument against the mayor’s misperceptions of the union leadership and members. The writer not only cites specific instances that point out the mistaken ideas, he also builds strong comparisons to other situations that reinforce his own points. For example, talking about the teachers who died in the Newtown shooting is an excellent way to refute the Mayor’s comparisons to the NRA



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**Local:** Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Thanksgiving ... and the turkey wept

**Publication/Website:** *PORT OF CALL*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**Judges' Comments:**

When someone named "Merry" writes a column called the "Merry Go-Round" that carries a headline "Thanksgiving ...and the Turkey Wept," I have to wonder why I didn't see that entered in the Catchiest Headline category. Nevertheless, this is an amusing collection of observations about what the holidays have become, beginning with the Thanksgiving celebration. This excellent article uses humor to make some very important points. The memories of holidays past, before shopping became the most important activity of the day, are priceless. And the light touch reinforces the importance of the old celebrations, without running the risk of turning the reader off by hitting him over the head with strident invective. Nice job. Humor always has a place in local newsletters, especially when you attach a funny headline to it.

★ **Local:** Retiree Council 12

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Our "non-bucket list" trip

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook\\_2013\\_april\\_to\\_go\\_to\\_nysut.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook_2013_april_to_go_to_nysut.pdf)

**Judges' Comments:**

It's difficult to do justice to a story about a 15-day trip to Africa when it's as brief as this article is. Nevertheless, this report is filled with interesting facts and colorful details. What an enjoyable read! The language is so vivid that you almost feel the heat and the red dust, hear the animals prowling around the camp, and see the amazing wildlife from the car. And what excellent advice: Seize the moment! It is well-illustrated with photographs, although like the article, I wish there had been more photos and that they ran larger.

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## Local: Retiree Council 12

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** You can make a difference!

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook\\_2013\\_dec\\_color.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook_2013_dec_color.pdf)

### **Judges' Comments:**

This story, aptly titled "You Can Make a Difference," looks into a topic that is actually quite interesting and rarely covered – how NYSUT policy is formed. This story takes on a new level of interest by documenting the efforts of two local members who have successfully written resolutions that were ultimately approved at NYSUT's RA – one of which became state law last year. The profiles of these two remarkable people are both inspirational and thought provoking. The writer does an excellent job of laying out the issues faced by these individuals in an easy-to-understand format, and also clearly explains the steps they took to "Make a Difference." In this way, the article encourages others to act on their beliefs in a similar way.

## Local: Retiree Council 15 & 16

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** The big lie

**Publication/Website:** *Senior Class*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This excellent article uses simple yet colorful language to lay out a strong, persuasive argument on a very important subject. It not only relates the topic to the writer's personal experience, the article cites fact after fact that backs up the points. It's not so long that it would turn the reader off, yet takes enough time to build a strong case. This commentary deals well with the general topic of anti-union views and the specific issue of right-to-work laws and their re-emergence. It's a good vehicle to remind members just how much unions have done for them historically and to give them ammunition when they are confronted by union opponents. One nit-picking observation. Avoid use of the passive voice in general, and especially in commentary. It weakens your voice and dilutes the message you're trying to get across. Rather than saying "unions were dismissed ..." (first paragraph) make it a direct, forceful statement like "he dismissed unions ..."

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## Local: Retiree Council 17

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** RC 17 members attend One Voice Rally in Albany

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

### Judges' Comments:

A good, tight report on this Retiree Council's members who attended last year's NYSUT rally in Albany. An interesting description of an important and noteworthy event. The writer uses colorful language to paint a vivid picture of the crowd and its emotions, from the descriptions of the speeches to the words on the signs. Illustrated with two photos of sign-carrying attendees, it sums up the event well. One minor note: The final graf notes that additional photos and videos are available on the NYSUT website but doesn't give the address. I wouldn't assume that everyone knows it.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Spotlight on Emily Schreiber – Our Corresponding Secretary

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This is a detailed profile of the RC's corresponding secretary and newsletter editor. It's very light and readable, but for a category of Creative Writing I'd like to see the many bullet points expanded into more in-depth, interrelated prose. For instance, the item about her volunteer efforts being her "second profession" would make a great lead, rather than just one of ten bullet points. There is great material in this article. It just needs to be drawn out.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Income Inequity? Corporate welfare? Giant subsidies? What's the fuss?

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/income-inequity-corporate-welfare-giant-subsidies-whats-fuss>

### Judges' Comments:

This is a very interesting and well-written article on an important but potentially dull topic – income disparity. Here the author defines the terms, provides the statistics and demonstrates how the decline of the middle class mirrors the decline of unions around the nation. The article also looks at the troubling issues in this wide-ranging topic, including the payment of millions of dollars in farm welfare subsidies to billionaires while

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Congress was slashing the food stamp program. The writer manages to provide useful information on a complicated topic without sounding like an economics textbook. That's the strength of a good writer.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Reclaim the vision, keep the promise through solidarity

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/reclaim-vision-keep-promise-through-solidarity>

### **Judges' Comments:**

Here is a compelling call for solidarity in battling the threats to public education across the country. Despite the setbacks for supporters of public education, the article reminds us that there is strength in numbers, and solidarity "is our best deterrent." Some great and colorful graphics accompany this article that does a good job of bringing together facts, figures and descriptions of events around the country to explain a very significant issue. The research is impressive, but I'm not sure the underlines, caps and bold case add much to the argument. Your writing alone should be strong enough to make the point, and in this case it is.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Unicorns and Fairy Tales

**Publication/Website:** *Odds & Ends*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is an interesting title for an article about global warming and the people who reject it as fact. The article discusses the perils of the rapid climate change and lays out a course of action we all can take. The writer encourages readers to challenge those she calls "climate deniers," particularly members of Congress. This is an excellent treatment of an important subject. Well done. A passionate and very convincing call to action. The writer uses colorful language to vividly describe the serious problem of climate change, and outlines a number of very specific actions the reader can take to address the issue. Very effective.

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## ★ **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** A stubborn little building

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** December 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

A very cute, short feature, nicely illustrated, about a local octagonal 19th-century schoolhouse that has sadly fallen into disrepair but continues to stand – even after Superstorm Sandy. I'm not sure if the writer meant this as a metaphor for public education's ability to continue in the face of adversity, but I got a sense of that in reading this. The colorful language paints an interesting picture of the building's long history and modern modifications, but to learn that the storm was unable to destroy it makes a perfect ending.

## **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** I just don't get it when things don't mean the same anymore

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** August 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Humor is always a nice change of pace for newsletters where the news is often downbeat. This column is a nice bit of observational humor that almost everyone of retirement age can relate to. The writer uses informal language and humor to make some very important points without being pedantic. The colorful analogies and anecdotes make for some fun reading, without obscuring the writer's points. An excellent article.

## **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** The transplanting of two Long Islanders

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Another article that many retirees can relate to, this one deals with the adjustment issues facing a Long Islander who relocates to North Carolina. It relates the ups and downs of such a move without being judgmental about the people or the community, and with the realization that while much is different in a new state, you can also find a lot that's familiar and comfortable if you really look for it. The writer uses vivid language and humor to describe a very significant and life-changing event. By framing the story

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around the differences between her former home and her new surroundings, she makes the story relevant for readers. It's very easy to relate to her descriptions and sympathize with the dilemmas in her new place of residence. Nice job.

## Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Improvements – Old folks may decry new things, but sometimes we're right

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### Judges' Comments:

A very strong, enjoyable list of the annoyances of modern life. Very engaging for those of us of a certain age. Especially loved the lead, actually the first three grafs. We would, however, question the use of the term "Stupid Useless Shit." Seems gratuitous. The guideline that most of the major news organizations follow is to use obscenities, profanities and vulgarities only if they are part of a direct quote AND there is a compelling reason for them.

## Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** I didn't want to go but I'm glad I went

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2012

### Judges' Comments:

This "trip to the hospital" first-person feature was well-written and amusing in parts. The author manages to cleverly turn an adult nightmare into an amusing experience. However, while many of the articles we read in this contest suffer from a lack of detail, this one is certainly doesn't. Our diagnosis is TMI.

## Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Curriculum

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This excellent poem paints a beautiful picture of the writer's months in the woods, and the experiences he wishes his students could have. Rather than lecturing about the beneficial effects of the natural world on learning, he creates wonderful word pictures that bring his concepts to life. Beautiful! Most readers would enjoy and agree with the

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sentiments voiced in this poem, which suggests that students could be better served by being dropped in the wilds to learn survival, beauty, peace and other qualities that can't be found in books and measured in tests. Very enjoyable and thought-provoking.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** Observances from The Morning Line

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A humorous yet somewhat poignant recital of some of the changes that we all face with the years. The writer does a good job of having all the different elements mirror the same construction and wording, which adds to the humor of the piece. In a feature that lists 10 ways that show you're getting older, the author has certainly chosen a topic that retirees can relate to. Two questions: Does anyone of retirement age really need another reminder that they're getting older? And, how did I not notice this man was following ME around?

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Creative Writing

**Name of Entry:** The girls in Miss Corey's class

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** August 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This entertaining poem uses humor to make an important point about teachers that is just as relevant today as it was when the piece was written. There are a few problems with rhyme – “nose” and “nose,” for example – but these are minor points. The overall effect is excellent, offering a bit of a nod to those teachers who do so well at making every student feel special.

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## Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Local:** Central Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Show me the money

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTation*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

**Judges' Comments:**

This is an interesting commentary on the growth of technology in the classroom and how it is enriching tech firms while districts ignore the real keys to classroom success – fulltime pre-school, kindergarten and small class size. The writer points out that districts always seem to find it easier to get money for new technology than to keep from laying off teachers, while research shows that the benefits of new technology depend on good teaching. It does not, however, address a key point of the category: What members are doing to help resolve the issue. This is a well-written and very convincing article about an issue that is relevant in every school district in the country. It would be even better if it focused on a local aspect or effort related to the issue.

**Local:** Central Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Take action Diane Ravitch

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTation*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

**Judges' Comments:**

It's good to see an article about Diane Ravitch, a great friend of education, but I found the article a little hard to follow. It was not until the final paragraph that I learned that she had apparently been speaking at a nearby rally. I had wondered up to that point why she was being featured in the newsletter. This points up the need for a headline to help guide readers to understand what the story is about. Also, I would identify her just briefly in the lead and save the detailed info for later in the article or even in a separate box. The article does not, however, address a key point of this category: How members have rolled up their sleeves and dived in to do the right thing.



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## **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Welcome to HI CI

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTation*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a nice feature – regularly chronicling the careers and successes of former students in the district. The best part is that the alumni submit an email with all the necessary information and the editor does the necessary rewriting and making any necessary improvements so it reads well. I'm still confused by the headline: "Welcome to HI CI," but if it's understandable to the readership it's fine. Also, the article does not touch on one of the basic issues of this category: How members have rolled up their sleeves and dived in to do the right thing. This otherwise excellent article would have been even better – and better suited to the judging category -- if it focused on how a member of the chapter had affected her character growth or career choice.

## **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Input/Output

**Publication/Website:** *THE HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013 [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

### **Judges' Comments:**

An excellent article encouraging members to participate in chapter activities. It's a very good idea to seek input from members on what kind of activities they enjoy. The article seeks to get retiree members interested in taking part in the local's activities, which is fine, but the category is built around what members are already doing, particularly to benefit the community, not what they might do. If this article has been successful in convincing members to become more involved, an article about that renewed involvement, with specific details, would make a great entry next year.

## **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Know Your Benefits

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

### **Judges' Comments:**

Keeping members informed about their benefits is of the utmost importance. This article does a good job of keeping them current with recent changes, and also highlights the activities of the administrator and the active members of the union on their behalf. This

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is certainly an in-depth, well-constructed article on a major life insurance issue that leaders are seeking to resolve for members during contract negotiations with the district. However, at this point it does not address the topic of engaging the community in the issue.

## ★ **Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Great Southbay Quilting Guild

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A fascinating article about a quilting guild that combines a hobby with a strong component of service to the community. Although it's not technically a union activity, the article does an excellent job of describing how this wonderful group works hard to engage the community. From supporting the literacy program to making teddy bears for ill children, members are constantly demonstrating the dedication and good will of local unionists to parents, children and administrators. The article reads well and is well illustrated with photos of members and some of their creations.

## **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Happy notes from our retirees

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** January/ February 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This "happy notes" column gives members of this retiree chapter a chance to tell their own stories, including how they are helping their communities in a variety of activities. Some are taking their union experiences and utilizing them in volunteer activities and even in retirement work that is outside of the classroom. This type of column could be done easily by any local newsletter (if it isn't already) with the members submitting their own stories. While it's an interesting article about members' activities in retirement, it would have been even better if it had touched on retirees' efforts on behalf of local or chapter issues.

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## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** January get-together

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** January/ February 2013

### Judges' Comments:

Nice little article, but it really doesn't address the key points of the category, including engaging the community and helping solve a problem. It would have been better if it had brought in local or chapter issues that had been addressed at the meeting.

## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Our happy notes

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This "Happy Notes" column was submitted earlier in this category. But unlike the other column, it doesn't have any items that deal directly with this category. It's fine as written, but none of the items deal with problem-solving, community involvement, etc. It's certainly important to keep members up-to-date on the joys and sorrows in the lives of other members, and these entries are interesting and inspirational. They don't really address union issues, however.

## Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** APPR – What is going on?

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This article leading up to the NYSUT rally in 2013 demonstrates how parents, students, NYSUT and its locals, and community members would be coming together to convince lawmakers that APPR, over-testing and Common Core just aren't working. The article explains how the union-created and union-driven rally will let parents and other members of the public unite with teachers "in a strong pushback against the state's egregious focus on standardized testing." The rally – and this article – are excellent examples of engaging the community and putting solution-driven unionism to work.

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## **Local: Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Stay connected! Take a stand! Get involved!

**Publication/Website:** *PORT OF CALL*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a great full-page feature that reflects the enthusiasm of the headline. It offers several ways for members to get involved, take a stand and get connected. It even offers a "what can you do?" section with specific instructions. My only observation is that this section encourages members to take action. This category is more concerned with HOW they took action, WHAT did they do to solve a problem, etc. The category is more concerned with the results rather than the recruitment. But make no mistake, this is a great feature and I hope it runs on a regular basis. It's an interesting and well-written article that provides important information on several issues relevant to members. The section on CPI offers an excellent analysis of the situation, and gives readers the information they need to take a stand. The Tax Cap section is also very well done, and gives members the ammunition they need to intelligently discuss the issue and take necessary action.

## **Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** From the president's desk ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** March/April 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/marapr2013.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a truly excellent account of the activities of the chapter leadership on behalf of its members. Rather than just listing each benefit provided, they are all explained in great detail. As such, the article builds a very strong case for why members should contribute to keep the chapter in place. The article does a nice job of laying out many of the issues facing retirees, including potential cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security and gutting of pensions. These president's messages are well written and to the point. However, this one doesn't really address the key points in the description of the category.

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## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** From the president's desk ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/julyaug13.pdf>

### Judges' Comments:

Articles like this one, about the RC's participation in the NYSUT 2013 rally, are perfect for this category, which looks for unionists engaging the community and using solution-driven unionism to solve a problem. The issues at the rally are too large to have been solved at once, but the rally and its support by local unions and members of the community helped demonstrate for lawmakers the power of unified protest. I only wish this article had gone into more detail. It's well done and well-illustrated with several photos, but a bit short. The light tone at the beginning skillfully eases the reader into a discussion about the activities of retirement, and ends by building a strong argument for membership in the chapter. An excellent article.

## Local: Retiree Council 13

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Play a part in the political process

**Publication/Website:** *Mid-Hudson Bridges*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This president's column does a good job of telling members what the key political issues are, both nationally and statewide, and what needs to be done. It is a call to arms — to get involved in the process and renew their membership in the Retiree Council. It's a good message, but like other entries it focuses on what members CAN do, what they SHOULD do, and what they mostly likely WILL do, but it doesn't address any actual member involvement or working with the community.

## Local: Retiree Council 13

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** RC 13 luncheon stresses awareness, involvement

**Publication/Website:** *Mid-Hudson Bridges*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

### Judges' Comments:

This article certainly does call on the membership to be aware of the issues that face them in Albany and Washington, and to be involved in the discussions and debates that influence the ultimate decisions. The excerpts of the president's speech do an excellent job of outlining several significant issues affecting members — and also describe the

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important contributions of several members to the efforts of the chapter. A well-written article but it needs more of an emphasis on what has already been accomplished by members than what might be accomplished.

## ★ **Local: Retiree Council 17**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** RC 17 members attend One Voice Rally in Albany

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a great recap of the NYSUT "One Voice" rally that really speaks to this category's call for articles about "engaging the community and putting solution-driven unionism to work." Describing the various rally participants, including parents, grandparents and those without any children in school, the writer says upfront, "We were there to show the governor and the State Education Department that this was not only a NYSUT issue." She further explores how retirees were able to speak from experience about how over-testing affects teachers, students and families. A great effort at showing how unions can work with the community to help resolve common problems. The colorful language paints a vivid picture of those who participated, and the sights and sounds of a very important day.

## **Local: Retiree Council 17**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** We help to pick up the pieces

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This article outlines how some retiree council member locals raised funds to help those affected by Superstorm Sandy, collecting either for local fundraising efforts or for NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund. It's a story of generosity and sacrifice. Most of the funds, of course, are earmarked specifically for union members and not necessarily for the community. Nevertheless, it's a good story. An excellent description of the efforts of members of several different chapters to assist those in the community who were affected by Sandy and other natural disasters. The article does a good job of reporting how each donation helped a specific number of people, and gives members a way to make even more donations.

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## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Chapter news: Lending more than a helping hand

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Great article from another Long Island Retiree Council about a member local's fund-raising efforts for victims of Superstorm Sandy. This is a heavily detailed report about many different fund-raising projects that were undertaken. The article even discusses how the local dealt with what was being called "compassion and charity fatigue" – people who had donated many times through different outlets and were simply tapped out. The details are what makes this story as good as it is. Congratulations to all who had a part in it. An excellent description of the efforts of individual members and the group as a whole to raise money to assist those in the community affected by Sandy. Instead of a dry recital of sums of money donated to this and that organization, the article focuses on the efforts of a number of individuals to raise funds through a raffle. An inspiring, well-written story of how members truly affected the community.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Helping our NYSUT colleagues, friends, and neighbors

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This brief item outlines the RC's donation to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and provides information on how members can make individual donations to the fund. Nice headline over it all.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Spotlight on our chapters' activities

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This well-written and interesting roundup of activities by the members of different chapters does a good job of documenting the active contributions of each group. A column like this one is a good vehicle for discussing what's going on in the different chapters the Retiree Council comprises. It's well done, items are brief but detailed and four chapters are represented. However, for the purposes of this category we need to see articles that discuss how retiree chapter members are working within the community to come up with union-driven solutions to problems.

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## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Dick Iannuzzi addresses Retiree Council 43

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/dick-iannuzzi-addresses-retiree-council-43>

### **Judges' Comments:**

An excellent and well-written report on an important event. It does an excellent job of highlighting the work done by NYSUT to improve education at the local level, and the importance of participation by retirees to assist in that work. This detailed account of Dick Iannuzzi's address at the Retiree Council's annual meeting will certainly update any member who wasn't able to attend. It's a good example for others to follow with this type of story. However, I don't see how it fits into this category, which calls for articles about "how members from your local or chapter have rolled up their shirtsleeves and dived in to do the right thing."

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Mobilize, organize, recruit, engage!

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/take-action/mobilize-organize-recruit-engage>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This excellent article outlines the activities of chapter members in a number of important community initiatives, and urges the reader to become even more active. By describing the issues in colorful, yet easy-to-understand language, the piece shows the importance of getting involved, and it ends by giving members very specific directions on how to do so. The article deals more with the potential for helping a good cause than it does with actually taking part in a cause, but this is the first call for retirees to join a program aimed at taking targeted, strategic action to support public education. The program as outlined is ambitious and it will be interesting to see how it works out. A followup article on how the recruiting went and how the group is doing would be great to submit in this category next year. One suggestion: Watch the typos. We know that it's a very tough job to put out a retiree newsletter, often with no help, but if you can get someone else to look it over before it goes out, it could help you cut down on the typos.



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## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** One Voice

**Issue Date:** July 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/presidents-desk/desk-president-one-voice-rally-albany>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This colorful description of members' participation in the "One Voice" rally in Albany does an excellent job of outlining the important issues facing education today, and explaining how continued activism can help address these issues. The article points to the importance of "empathetic education stakeholders, including parents, administrators, students and community members" working with unionists "to reaffirm the importance of curriculum-driven instruction" in the classroom. It's great when these articles highlight the efforts of unions and the community to bring a unified voice to lawmakers and state education officials.

## **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Tooting our own horn – A round of applause

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A good accounting of how one retiree unit works to improve conditions for various community members, including deserving high school graduates, the homeless, the hungry and victims of natural disasters. This group is obviously heavily involved in the community. The writer understands the importance of not only doing good work in the chapter and the community, but also keeping members informed about such activities. By providing information about the chapter's accomplishments, "Tooting Our Own Horn" encourages members to become even more active.

## **Local: TRIF - Clearwater Unit**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Cathy's column

**Publication/Website:** *A "C.U.T." ABOVE*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Good use of the president's column as a kind of "bully pulpit" to move members to take action. In this case, the emphasis is on trying to get more young retirees involved in this chapter to replace older members. Because this is a Florida-based chapter whose members come from many different NY locals, the writer describes the problem, gives reasons why members should be concerned, and calls on them to go back to their former locals to get addresses of recent Florida retirees who can be encouraged to join.

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## Local: TRIF - Clearwater Unit

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** EGAN cottage news

**Publication/Website:** *A "C.U.T." ABOVE*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A timely feature about a longtime child-centered chapter project – a local home for children on their own. This full-page feature includes some background on the project and a description of a Thanksgiving dinner at which members of the chapter presented a donation. It also includes a poem written by one of the children. Nice job and a good understanding of the category. A lovely story about a very generous program. It's a tribute to educators that after years of giving in the classroom the same tradition of giving grows in their new community.

## ★ ★ Local: United Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter #2

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** UFT Activism Takes on Major Challenges

**Publication/Website:** *UFT RTC RETIREE*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This well-written and beautifully organized article does an excellent job of outlining all the accomplishments and contributions by members during the preceding year. From helping members and others in the community affected by Sandy to political activism on the local, state and national level, the descriptions of the chapter's activities are impressive. Nice work.

## Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** Observations on elder abuse and an age-integrated society

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

This article on elder abuse and an age-integrated society provides an incredible amount of interesting detail on this subject, with much of it specific to New York state. This was a very good read. It raises important, complex questions. How can our state not have a mandatory reporter requirement? The Mickey Rooney anecdote stays with me – if it could happen to a wealthy ex-star, how many “ordinary” elders face this hidden issue? It does a great job of laying out the issue, but doesn't touch on one of the major elements of this category: “... how members from your local rolled up their shirtsleeves and dived in to do the right thing.”

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## **Local: United University Professions – Retirees**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** UUPers attend first NYSUT Retiree Council 40 – 42 meeting

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

An interesting article on UUP's entry into NYSUT's Retiree Council network and an account of their first meeting with other NYSUT retirees. Provides a good explanation of how the system works and explains to readers many of the benefits that could accrue from this partnership. Very good report on important political development between NYSUT and UUP. I look forward to reading about how this new partnership works on issues big and small.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Article about Local or Chapter Issues

**Name of Entry:** WCT, WCRT march in St. Patrick's parade

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a brief but complete account of Wappingers' inservice and retired teachers' participation in the community's St. Patrick's Day parade. This activity is a great way to literally show the flag and to establish the union and its members as a part of the community. Nice layout, lots of good photos. The banner carried in the parade says it all: Members of this chapter are "still in the game." The colorful description of the members' participation in this community activity highlights their continued connection with former students, parents and coworkers.

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Best Article about Labor History

### ★ ★ Local: Retiree Council 15 & 16

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** The big lie

**Publication/Website:** *Senior Class*

**Issue Date:** January 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

The writer leads this article with some interesting and often forgotten facts about what every worker – union or not – owes to the tireless efforts of organized labor, including Social Security, workers' comp and pensions. This serves as a lead-in to discussing much of the present-day anti-union activity around the country, such as an emergence of the Right to Work movement. The language is simple and informal, and the explanation of the "Right to Work" laws is complete and easy to understand. Best of all, the writer relates recent trends and events to her own experience, contrasting the current state of affairs to what conditions were before unions were working to protect members. It's always good to remind members, especially the newest and youngest, just who is responsible for most of the work-related benefits that too many people take for granted. Very well done.

### Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** 6.8.13 One Voice United

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Good article, but its focus is on the present and the future of public education, not on labor history. When reporting on a massive NYSUT rally, as this entry does, it might have helped to stay within the category of labor history by perhaps describing some of NYSUT's previous rallies, such as the historic one a decade ago that led to the enactment of a permanent Cost of Living Adjustment for teacher pensions. That's a major piece of NYS labor history. This article does a good job of reaffirming the importance of NYSUT in giving teachers a voice in the future of education. It would have been even better if it had tied in some facts about the history of the labor movement, however.

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Honoring our Retiree leaders – Jay Broad and Claire Hochberg

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

An interesting, well-written and inspiring tribute to two long-time local labor leaders. It's good to see an article that recognizes two longtime leaders who each have more than two decades of service to their Retiree Council. This article also goes into the history behind RCs and the reasons for their creation. I would have liked, however, to see a bit more detail, both on the history of RCs and more on the two people being honored. Both of them are the personification of 20 years of labor history. They probably have some interesting stories to tell.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Our work is never done

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Another well-written article, this time on the ongoing threats to Social Security and teacher pensions. But I think it misses the basic intent of the category, which is labor history. A well-written and well-researched article about issues that are of paramount importance to chapter members. It would have been even better if it had tied in some facts about the history of the labor movement, however.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Imagine Labor Day without labor law

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/press/imagine-labor-day-without-labor-law>

### **Judges' Comments:**

Excellent article on U.S. Senate's failure to confirm nominations to the National Labor Relations Board and how it would affect 80 million people. But I don't see any tie to the category of Labor History. This is an excellent article about some very important current issues. It does a good job of simplifying and explaining the concepts involved without being wordy or pedantic. It would have been even better if it had tied in some facts about the history of the labor movement, however.

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## ★ **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Labor has cause to celebrate more than the holiday weekend

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/labor-has-cause-celebrate-more-holiday-weekend>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is an excellent article that ties together a number of national and international labor issues with a historical perspective on an ongoing case. Each issue is explained well, with an emphasis on how it relates to the present state of labor. And the information about the 10-year-old case of the fired CWA worker being supported by German workers is an inspiration for everyone in the labor field today.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Unions show united front

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/press/unions-show-united-front>

### **Judges' Comments:**

A well-written and inspirational article about how union members came together and made their voices heard at the Congressional level. The issues are explained well, and the historical perspective is interesting and relevant. This is a good follow-up to an earlier story on NLRB appointments. It's a great example of solidarity and what unionists can accomplish if they work together, but the article, unfortunately, doesn't fit in the Labor History category.

## ★ **Local: United University Professions – Retirees**

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** Chair recalls 1963 trip to "March on Washington"

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

For the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington and Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, it's nice to get a lovely, first-person recollection of the original event. Because we already know so much about the event itself, it's especially

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interesting to see an article that describes the author's efforts to simply get from New Hampshire to Washington, DC, and then back home again. The accompanying artwork – a button advertising the march – was a nice touch. The story reminds us that the proudest moments in US history are created by generous, thoughtful, committed people putting their personal lives aside for the common good.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Article about Labor History

**Name of Entry:** WCT, WCRT march in St. Patrick's parade

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a great account of the union and its retirees marching in a local St. Patrick's Day parade. Well-written, good, solid quotes from participants, nice layout and photos, including an extra page of pix for email subscribers to the publication. An interesting story about chapter members' participation in a community event. It's well written, and the photos are excellent. It would have been even better if it had tied in some facts about the history of the labor movement, however.

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

### **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Show me the money

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Great article, well-composed and well-researched. Very interesting and thought-provoking, but it doesn't address the key point in the Social Justice category: "... stories about how your members make a positive difference." It would have been better if it had talked about local ramifications of the problem, and how they had been addressed.

### **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Take action Diane Ravitch

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAtion*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Interesting story about a great friend of public education, Diane Ravitch, but it doesn't address the key point in the Social Justice category: "... stories about how your members make a positive difference."

### **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** For your information

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2012

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

#### **Judges' Comments:**

This story is headed in the right direction for the category of social justice. It is an appeal for personal supplies for military troops in Afghanistan. There is every reason to believe that members of this local will come through as they always do to help those in need. But the Social Justice category is based on what members have done, not what they are being asked to do. Once this campaign to help the military is over, a nice article about the local's participation – with details – would make a great entry next year. Supporting our troops overseas is certainly one of the most important projects a chapter can undertake. Just reading the list of items needed gives a pretty good idea of the privations these soldiers are facing. It would be nice to hear from someone who has actually received some of these items, and how they were used.



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**Local:** Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Teaching with teachers in Ethiopia

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

## **Judges' Comments:**

Wow! Here is the very essence of how unions and their members attempt to make a positive difference in their community, their state, their country, or – in this case – the world. In an article that is both well-written and well-illustrated with photographs, the author describes her experience teaching reading to students and to their teachers in Ethiopia.

Starting with the following lead: “The doorways to the government school classrooms appear to be nothing more than intermittent black rectangles on a train-size stretch of turquoise walls. However, they are in fact, nothing less than gateways to a future of either failed or fulfilled possibilities,” the author offers detail after detail about the country, the people, the problems, and this one, about a classroom: “mud walls practically bare but for the peeling blue/green paint; wall- to-wall crude picnic style benches packed with youngsters attempting to share decrepit exercise books; a constant haze of dust amplified by a singular source of light entering through a narrow filmy window; and a lone, rough, loosely mounted slate board.”

The author is also adept at picking up other pertinent details, such as the library’s wide collection of books gathered from the donations of Long Islanders. She concedes that a mission like this has its ups (“teachers, some with no more than a 10th-grade education, not only applied what they had seen but showed initiative, ingenuity, and joy in the process”) and downs (“I hope I am answering the questions they ask and I suddenly feel a queasy mix of inadequacy, frustration, and sadness when a young man raises his hand, looks at me earnestly and says, “How are we to close the gap when we have never learned what we need to teach?”)

This is a truly excellent article about how a chapter member made a huge difference in the lives of children in Ethiopia. The colorful language and descriptions paint a vivid picture of the lives of these children, and how much help is needed.

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Local: Retiree Council 17

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** RC 17 members attend One Voice Rally in Albany

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

### Judges' Comments:

NYSUT's One Voice rally in Albany last year gave all members an opportunity to take sides in the battle for the future of public education, and this Retiree Council provided great coverage of their role in that event. The article provides lots of detail, not only of the council's participation, but of others who took part. A nice job. By adding their voices to the many attendees at the June 18 rally in Albany, chapter members did their part to make a difference and address the many educational issues facing statewide teachers today. The article gives an excellent picture of the day and its events.

## Local: Retiree Council 17

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** We help to pick up the pieces

**Publication/Website:** *Seventeen Soundings*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This entry represents a simple way to get the word out about how unions make a difference. Under a headline reading "We help to pick up the pieces," the article basically outlines the contributions made to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund by some Long Island locals and this Retiree Council for victims of Superstorm Sandy. The efforts of each local and the RC are outlined in separate paragraphs with the local name boldfaced. The last paragraph tells readers how to make a donation of their own to the fund. Good job. It's wonderful to see how the local organizations came together to help those affected by Hurricane Sandy. This article is an excellent documentation of how everyone pitched in to help.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** A Senior Perspective on Some Current Happenings

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/retirees/senior-perspective-some-current-happenings>

### Judges' Comments:

This article contains several national news items that directly affect the well-being of seniors, including a call to support a US senator seeking to reauthorize and strengthen

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programs such as Meals on Wheels. This is a great starting point for a story on a social justice issue, but it doesn't reflect how any of this RC's members actually made a positive difference, only that they have been asked for help. This could make a good entry next year once we know how it turns out.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Education Reform Update

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/education-reform-update>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This excellent article highlights a number of important facts related to so-called "Education Reform" in this country. Certainly poverty, homelessness and school budget cuts are all issues that impact student performance, and this article does a good job of explaining that impact. This is a well written update on all the issues surrounding "education reform." It's detailed and obviously well-researched. But it doesn't directly link to the category of Best Article about a Social Justice Issue, whose key element is "how your members make a positive difference."

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Money Talks

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/news/money-talks>

### **Judges' Comments:**

Starting with the headline, this is a good article on how money affects American politics and what is needed to change this. The influence of immense sums of money on American elections and politics in general is certainly one of the most pressing social justice issues today. This article does an excellent job of explaining the problems caused by such influence and urging specific actions to address them. It's well done, but it doesn't address the question of how this RC's members "make a positive difference" in Social Justice issues.

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## Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** My reflections on the March on Washington for jobs and freedom

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### Judges' Comments:

This moving and inspirational essay on the writer's memories of Dr. King's most famous speech also focuses on the continued prejudice and persecution that exist to this day. Very well written but it doesn't directly address the issue of how members are making "a positive difference."

## ★ Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** People to People Ambassador Programs

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS Newsletter*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### Judges' Comments:

An excellent article about a very worthwhile program and a great example of how a union retiree is "walking the walk" when it comes to the topic of social justice. The writer's description of her People to People Ambassador Program trips is excellent, and highlights the valuable lessons the students – and chaperones – take away from the program. The author, who has led student delegations to 10 different countries, describes a visit to China that would be enough to make many people sign up immediately. Fortunately, she provides information on the program for colleagues who may want to participate. The article cries out for some photos, but that's just nit-picking. All in all, it's a great article.

## Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Tooting our own horn – A round of applause

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### Judges' Comments:

The headline "Tooting Our Own Horn" is an apt one for this article by the organization's treasurer. She caps an otherwise routine financial report with a breakdown of the funds raised by member contributions to the union's Project Hope and its Scholarship Fund. Members may not always be aware of just how important their donations are and just how far their money goes in providing scholarships for local graduates and helping those in need. This article reminds them of how much they do and urges them to give

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themselves a well-deserved pat on the back. This chapter certainly deserves a round of applause. Judging from the colorful description of the members' activities and charitable contributions, they are very active in the community. An excellent article.

## **Local: TRIF - Clearwater Unit**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** EGAN cottage news

**Publication/Website:** A "C.U.T." ABOVE

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This article fits well in the social justice category for the same reasons we gave in judging it for Category 3 -- A timely feature about a longtime child-centered chapter project – a local home for children on their own. This full-page feature includes some background on the project and a description of a Thanksgiving dinner at which members of the chapter presented a donation. It also includes a poem written by one of the children. Nice job. As I re-read it, I'm struck by what a lovely program it is.

## **Local: United University Professions – Retirees**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Chair recalls 1963 trip to March on Washington

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This article, submitted in Category 3, also fits well in the social justice category for its treatment of a landmark event in the struggle for civil rights.

## **★ Local: United University Professions – Retirees**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** The Reading is Fun Program: Where every child is everyone's child

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Fall 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A well-done feature on the Reading is Fun program, a member-founded venture that aims to teach a corps of volunteers how to teach reading readiness skills to the parents or caregivers of four-year-olds in a struggling urban district. The article is well-written and well-organized, providing a very strong explanation of a wonderful program that combines the talents of retirees and the needs of students. The step-by-step description of building the program could be helpful to anyone who wants to emulate it. This truly represents a union response to a critical community need. Very nice job.

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## **Local: Wantagh Schools United Retirees**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** CORTLI Luncheon

**Publication/Website:** *WSUR*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This wide-ranging article about an annual meeting of a retiree coalition deals largely with an address by the state comptroller and a NYSUT Retiree Consultant and makes mention at the end of NYSUT's large contribution to the American Cancer Society for breast cancer research. The announcement that NYSUT is the number one contributor to breast cancer research in the United States is a fact to make all members proud. However, I think the tie to a social justice issue here is tenuous. Had it mentioned the amount this particular chapter had contributed, it would be on the right track, but an entry in the category of Best Article About a Social Justice Issue should be built around the subject of social justice. And the category description states that stories should describe "how your members make a positive difference."

## **★ ★ Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Connolly handles Yellowstone, cancer

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** February 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This compelling article about a newsletter contributor's battle with cancer is written against the backdrop of Yellowstone National Park, where the author spends much of his retirement observing wolves, writing about his experiences and returning some of his publishing profits to the park. An interesting essay about an amazing man. His devotion to the park and its wolves, not to mention his physical accomplishments, would be enough of a story by themselves. But adding in his remarkable fight against cancer makes it all the more mind boggling. A truly excellent article and a great story about "giving back."

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## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Connolly writes, donates books to schools

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

While the previous entry outlined a little bit of how one retiree member has given back to the Yellowstone Park community, this first-person account goes into greater detail about some creative ways he is seeking to protect wolves and educate the public (particularly children) about them. Having written a number of books about wolves, he has been donating copies to libraries, particularly middle-school libraries and urging readers to do the same. He outlines a number of ways readers can help the effort, including donating to a Yellowstone "wolf citizen science" website. Another great story about "giving back." An excellent article that highlights the writer's extensive efforts to preserve endangered wolves. He does a good job of outlining the problem, and then offers the reader multiple ways to contribute to the campaign. Well done.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Article about a Social Justice Issue

**Name of Entry:** Finding the Truth in Election 2012

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** October 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

This column does a good job of trying to separate fact from fiction in the political rhetoric that abounded in recent elections. In addition to refuting some of the most blatant misinformation, the writer recommends a web site that readers can use to test the truth of political statements in the future. "Finding the Truth in Election 2012" is well done and well researched, citing a number of excellent sources. The writing is good and the article is well-composed. It does not, however, deal directly with a social justice issue or the local's efforts in that area. It would fit well in the Best Column/Blog category.

# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## Best Overall Graphic Design

**Local:** Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** glimpses

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

**URL:** www.hhhart.net

**Judges' Comments:**

Member-created artwork is always a plus for local publications, especially cartoons – either editorial cartoons or a comic strip, like this entry. I liked the artist's style. While I usually like to see artwork run as large as possible, I think this would actually have more impact if it ran a bit smaller. An amusing cartoon and one that will definitely tickle the fancy of any experienced teacher, but the reproduction leaves something to be desired. If you start with a sharper, darker and cleaner original, the finished product will be of higher quality.

**Local:** Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** Page 2 President's Message/CORTLI Luncheon, Fall 2013

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

**URL:** www.hhhart.net

**Judges' Comments:**

Nice, clean, uncluttered layout of an inside page. White space is an important element in any layout, and this page uses it very well. The color photo and graphic are excellent additions, but the quality of reproduction could be better. The typeface is easy to read, but the gutter (space between the columns) is too narrow, and the space between the lines is a little tight. It's good to see the type run in two banks instead of across the page, which is harder to read. To make the layout "pop" a little more, I would suggest making the title on the president's message larger so the column is more easily identifiable. Also, the CORTLI luncheon article could do with a real headline, especially when the guest speaker was the state comptroller. Something as simple as: DiNapoli addresses CORTLI luncheon. I assume the "Happy New Year" artwork was run as a filler. If so, it could be run smaller to make room for a headline and even a photo, if you have one from the luncheon. Don't forget that most state agencies have hi-resolution photos of the various commissioners, etc., that can be downloaded from their websites and run in your publication. A head-and-shoulders photo of DiNapoli would have brightened up that corner of the page.



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## Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** 'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'

**Issue Date:** December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This entry follows the same style as the other IRTA entry – Very eye-catching, plenty of color photos and artwork, a typeface you could love or hate (I love it). Lots of interesting and eclectic material. The row of smiling faces on the cover is almost a sure-fire way to get readers to pick up the newsletter. I have the same suggestions as before to consider: basically, more white space, don't pack articles in quite so tightly and think about a two-column format.

## Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** 'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'

**Issue Date:** October 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I love this front page with 25 full-color photos, presumably of new members. It certainly catches the eye. Inside pages get the same kind of colorful treatment with lots of photos, artwork and spot color throughout. The typeface seems to give the publication a kind of casual, relaxed feel. Paper quality is better than what is usually seen on local publications. I don't know if any studies have ever been done, but it seems to me that this heavier paper stock would cause readers (perhaps subliminally) to take the publication more seriously and value it more highly. A few suggestions: I might open up the pages a bit more, add more white space, and consider running type in two banks. It's easier to read than a single column across 8 ½ inches. The photo montage on the cover is colorful and eye-catching, and it's usually a good idea to include the faces of as many people in the newsletter as possible. However, in this case, it might have been better to use fewer, but larger photos. The use of color and photos on the inside are both very good, but larger gutters (space around the type) would make it easier to read.

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## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This attractive and inviting publication uses an excellent combination of a simple typeface, good photos and white space to attract readers. The two-column format is easy to read, and there is plenty of space between the columns. My only suggestions would be to use larger, better quality photos, don't underline the headlines, and use the same typeface for all the stories.

## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** November/December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This second entry reflects much of the style of the previous entry – good use of color photography, a lot of information throughout and an informal style of presenting the material. I would recommend the same changes to the cover page as previously. There is a lot of material on page 1 that is competing for the reader's attention and I would try to simplify it. I would make the photo the focal point of the page, run it larger and incorporate it into the accompanying article. Rather than boxing the individual items in Upcoming Events, I would box the entire section, including the title, to bring it all together. And I would not run the notice of the next meeting twice, especially on the same page. As a plus, I would note that you use a two-column layout in all issues. I think readers find this much easier to read and follow.

## Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This would be my choice for the best of the three entries from this chapter. The front page is less cluttered, with a single theme of how the chapter helps support deserving students. The theme is carried over to the inside pages with an editor's column and some photos. Nice job. I would consider making the p. 1 flag bigger to keep it from getting lost on the page and give the publication more of an identity. The photos on the cover are attractive and colorful, and a great way to pull readers into the publication. There's also plenty of white space, which helps the cover look less cluttered. On the

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inside, the two-column format is easy to read, and there's also plenty of space between the columns. But when you use boxes, make sure there's enough space between the type and the lines, and try to use the same typeface for all the copy in the issue.

## **Local: North Babylon Retirees' Chapter**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Next Step*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This newsletter layout is not fancy, but it's clean, colorful and eye-catching. The body type is something readers would either love or hate. I love it – easy to read. It takes up a lot of space but if you can fit in all of your copy while using a bold, large-point type, I would feel free to do just that – especially when your audience is older. Articles are kept short, which is also nice. If they were to run any longer I would suggest going to a two-column format, rather than having a line of type run across the full width of the page. Two narrower columns are easier to read. A clean, concise, visually pleasing newsletter.

## **Local: Oriskany Retirees' Organization**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *ORO Newsletter*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This attractive publication makes excellent use of graphic elements to enhance the message of the type. For example, the wine bottle and grapes on the cover are not just attractive; they also help to draw the reader into the story. The photos are an excellent enhancement, and white space is used throughout to create a clean, easy-to-read format. The cover page is simple and uncluttered. That simplicity follows through to the inside pages, with a two-column format and judicious use of boxes. Editors take the time to write headlines for all articles and columns, and they are quite good. Nice publication.

## **Local: Oriskany Retirees' Organization**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *ORO Newsletter*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Please see the general comments in the previous entry. What distinguishes this entry from the previous one? I would give this one a slightly higher grade only because the cover story about health insurance changes is a solid piece of new information that

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affects members and their pocketbooks. There is nothing wrong with the wine trip story on the previous entry. It's just that given the choice, I would opt for a front page with a hard news story. But these are both excellent examples of retiree publications getting useful information out to their members in an attractive and colorful way. A very attractive, easy-to-read newsletter with excellent use of photos, graphics and color. The type is a good size, with plenty of white space to set one story off from another. The photo on the cover is attractive, and relevant to the subject matter, but I wish something had been found that contained actual chapter members instead of clip art. Also, it would be better if the same typeface was used consistently throughout.

## **Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

See my general comments from the (Feb 2013) entry. This issue, like the other entries from this association, is well generally well done and full of useful information. My only quibble with this specific entry is that it runs a single column across the cover and parts of a few other pages as well. In addition to being more difficult to read than a two-column format, the first four lines of the cover story wrap around a piece of artwork, making them look like two separate banks of type. It makes it very difficult to follow, while the plethora of headlines fight with each other for the reader's attention and end up just being confusing.

## **Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Feb 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

All three entries from this group show a very professional, well thought-out product with a very clear identity and consistent appearance. The flag is well-done and each cover page contains a single story, a "Save These Dates" box and a table of contents. Each issue carries specific types of information on the same page, with the same title clearly shown at the top of each page: NY/US News, Issues of Importance, Pittsford Reports, Keeping Up With the Times, etc. The layout is clean and uncluttered. What would I change about this particular issue? The layout, generally two-column, changes on several pages to a single column, which is more difficult to read. I liked the VOTE-COPE chart on the cover. It's the first use of a chart I have seen in any of the entries I have read so far. Ironically, it was seeing the chart that first caused me to realize that this is actually a black-and-white publication. It's so well put together and printed on a

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soft ivory-off-white paper stock that it actually gives the impression of having color on the pages. This attractive publication uses shades of black ink on white paper and simple graphics to convey a powerful message. Even without color or complex illustrations, the clean layout with plenty of white space pulls the reader into the articles. My only suggestions would be to add a large headline all the way across the main story on the front page, to let people know what the article is about, and to tie the chart to the story.

## ★ ★ Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Nov 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A very attractive front page with plenty of white space, understated graphics and an easy-to-read two-column format entices readers to pick up the publication. I was immediately drawn into this issue by the cover story and its headline: "Ruckus Erupts Over Raffle at Fall Luncheon." The article was tongue-in-cheek, but the headline remains a good one. I would have simply run it a bit larger.

The inside pages are good, but the lack of uniformity in boxes, column width and typeface interferes with the effectiveness and creates a somewhat confusing jumble of styles.

## Local: Port Jefferson Station Retired Teachers Association

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** The View from Here

**Publication/Website:** *A Portal Through Time*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

I like this layout overall. It's a bit busy on the cover, with several different typefaces for the body type, but I still find it attractive. Nice placement of photos on page 2 and good use of clip art throughout. On page 5 I would break up the type into two or even three columns. It's a lot easier to read than a single column running across the page. On page 6 I would move the jump of "The View" to the top of the page, above the ads. All in all, a nice, attractive publication.

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## **Local: Port Jefferson Station Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** The View from Here

**Publication/Website:** *A Portal Through Time*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

See comments from above entry. Another well-designed picture page here. Another attractive issue.

## **Local: Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *PORT OF CALL*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This publication is well laid-out and generally easy to follow, with some exceptions. Breaking the body type into two columns makes it easier to read. The cover page is colorful and informative, but I find the headline type difficult to read. Inside body type is easy to read except in places where it was compressed, apparently to include more information. One of these places was a section called "We asked to hear from you...and did we ever!" With the number of people who responded with stories of what they are doing in retirement, it's obvious this is a publication that is well read and appreciated by members. Although certainly eye-catching, the crowded jumble of colors, text styles and graphics is not the most effective way to draw readers into the publication. Use color judiciously, simplify the headline text so it's easily readable, and add lots of white space to separate one element from another, and your newsletter will do a much better job of delivering your message.

## **Local: Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** *Retired Educators Chapter: Port Washington Teachers Association Website*

**Publication/Website:** Retired Educators Chapter: Port Washington Teachers Association Website

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**URL:** <http://www.pwta.info/PWRE/>

### **Judges' Comments:**

I enjoyed using this website and found it well laid-out, easy to follow and filled with useful information. The constantly changing photos in the box at the top of the home page are a nice touch that gets plenty of members' faces out there. But I would actually recommend more graphics, particularly on the home page. With the white space

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available there is room to expand the existing travel photo or add others. A very attractive website with a simple, easy-to-use design and links that work well. It does a good job of keeping members informed without a lot of useless bells and whistles. There's a lot of white space, which is good, but the fact that it's between the banner and the content interferes with the reader's ability to see all the content that's available without scrolling down.

## ★ **Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/RC7NovDec2013news.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

This attractive cover does a good job of drawing readers in. The color is not garish, and the three-column format with wide margins and gutters is easy to read, especially with the bold type and bullets at the end of the story. The inside pages are clean and attractive, with lots of white space and appropriate graphics. The cover story is good, and it's illustrated with a photo of NYSUT members.

I would have run the head and photo larger, even if it meant moving the Making Strides box to an inside page. A headshot of the president would add some color to page 2.

## **Local: Retiree Council 7**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/julyaug13.pdf>

### **Judges' Comments:**

There are some very positive common elements between the two entries from this Retiree Council – they make good use of color, particularly with photos or members taking action. The President's column and masthead have a regular place on page 2. And a box that outlines upcoming meetings anchors the cover page. Someone wrote some good headlines for the cover stories in both issues. I would simply make them larger. Actually, I would probably bump up the size of the body type as well. I'm in the same general age group as most of the readers of this publication and it's a bit of a strain for me. However, if the readership isn't clamoring for a change in type size I wouldn't worry about it. The colorful cover adorned by photos of smiling faces is attractive and inviting, and the layout of the inside pages is simple and easy to read. However, some of the elements on the cover are a little crowded. More white space would make everything easier to read and convey the message better.

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## Local: Retiree Council 12

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter\\_rc\\_12\\_september\\_2012\\_approved.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter_rc_12_september_2012_approved.pdf)

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a well laid-out publication. It makes good use of color photography and articles are clean and easy to follow. The layout is clean and uncluttered. If I had to find fault with something it would be the size of the body type. If no one has complained, I wouldn't worry about it, but I found it too small to read comfortably. The colorful flag is a wonderful complement to the headline "Salute to Our Veterans," and is sure to attract the reader's attention. But it might have been better to write a few paragraphs to convey the information about the meeting, rather than fill most of the cover with a schedule and response form. The inside pages are attractive, but more white space and larger type would make them easier to read.

## Local: Retiree Council 13

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *Mid-Hudson Bridges*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a publication with the serious look of a traditional black-and-white newspaper. Three of the four pages are all business, with chapter news and social items gathered on the back page. The three-column format is easy to read and the pages are dotted with photos, particularly the cover. Headlines are well-written and generally sized to fit the story. The headlines on the cover are a good size, and really help to draw readers into the stories. But the photos are too small and much too dark, and they should never be placed in such a way that they break up the first paragraph of a story completely from the rest of the copy. A few larger, brighter pictures would have helped to convey the message of the story much better.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

There are many similarities among the three entries from this Retiree Council, and that is good. Each carries the distinctive flag across the top of page 1, which also includes a President's Corner, and a small box urging readers to contribute articles and photos. The remaining space carries a general-interest story or feature. The editor gets a lot of



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material into four 8-1/2 by 11 pages. I would suggest only that photos could be run larger, along with headlines. Both help break up banks of type. I liked the cartoon on page 1 of this specific entry. We see too few of them. Don't be afraid to run art like this larger. The cartoon, however, is fuzzy and difficult to read. Graphics must be of excellent quality before reproduction. I would also look for opportunities to add color to the front page when you don't have an appropriate photo. For instance, the box containing the President's Corner could have been tinted with something like a pale blue color. This simple, attractive layout does an excellent job of conveying the chapter's message. The type is easy to read, and not crowded out by a bevy of colors and illustrations vying for the reader's attention.

## **Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

See general comments at previous entry. I liked this very newsy front page. I like to see some articles boxed in, as you did with the President's Corner, but I wouldn't have extended the box to include the Lynbrook/Long Beach story unless that was part of the president's column. Kudos on the story honoring the two longtime leaders. New members need to be aware of the hard work done by their predecessors. A picture on the cover is always a good way to attract readers' attention and draw them into reading the stories. This one is a little small, however, and its placement at the bottom of the page doesn't really accomplish that goal. Also, I'm not sure the boxes are necessary to separate all the elements on the cover. And, if you do use boxes, make sure there's plenty of white space between the type and the rules. Don't crowd them in like that.

## **Local: Retiree Council 18**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *THE LINKAGE*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

See general comments above. The story on participation in the rally was well done. To better capture the spirit of your attendance and the excitement of the rally, I would have run the photos larger and moved the Memorial and Tenement Tour to the back page, where there appears to be open space. The simple layout in this publication does a good job of conveying the chapter's message to its members. The pictures on the cover are good, but too small. And there must be more white space inside the boxes to separate the type from the lines.

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## ★ **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** ... And let me play among the stars - Remembering the 60's

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This would have been a great article by itself, but the graphic accompaniments help capture the feeling of the manned space program of the 1960s and early 70s, especially the logo from the Apollo 13 flight. Choosing clip art to accompany a personal essay can be very tricky. But in this case, the colors, the layout, and the illustrations come together almost perfectly to convey the message of this excellent story. Even the white space is used to excellent advantage to draw the reader into the story.

A few quibbles: The bottom right portion of the page seems crowded compared to the "spacey" feel of the rest of the layout, and I would have put quotes around the "Houston, We Have a Problem" line and boxed it in so it would stand out more.

## **Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS NEWSLETTER*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Someone did a lot of work to locate all the historic photos for this issue to illustrate a special section on the 50th anniversary of JFK's assassination and other historic happenings in 1963, including MLK's "I have a dream" speech. The special section is well done, as are other sections of this publication. There is plenty of color throughout the issue, both in photos and graphic enhancements. The layout is clean, all stories are easily identified and there is plenty of white space. One small graphic quibble -- the group shot on the cover looks as though it got distorted when it was sized to fit the space. It's usually an excellent idea to put photos of members on the cover of a publication. However, in this case, the distortion of their faces really negates the advantage. The rest of the newsletter is well designed, attractive and easy to read. The type, the illustrations and the graphic elements are all uniform, and the layout is attractive and straightforward. My only suggestion is to make all the columns a uniform width throughout.

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## **Local: Wantagh Schools United Retirees**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Publication/Website:** *WSUR*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

There is plenty of attention to graphic detail in this publication. It abounds with photos on almost every one of its six pages. The layout is clean and open and everything is easy to find. My one wish for this publication would be a flag at the top of Page 1 that better identifies it and gives the publication an actual name. It's a good publication, but it needs a name. This is a very attractive publication. The clean, simple layout, uniform type and column width make it easy to read, and it's very clear which elements belong together. The two photo pages are nicely laid out, but the photos reproduced very poorly. Also, don't put photos – especially photos of people -- on colored paper.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** 15 new retirees = 383 years experience

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** August 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A great headline sets the stage for this cover article on new retirees and other celebrants, including new national board certifications and newly tenured faculty. It's certainly well illustrated with photos. A nice tribute to all those involved. I always look to make photos as large as possible, especially when you have six of them sharing the cover. I would have made more room for them by eliminating the three refers at the bottom of the page. They duplicate items in the adjoining "In This Issue" box. The inside pages are attractive, with uniform typeface throughout and appropriate graphics. Some of the photos, however, both inside and out, are too small and not sharp enough for publication. It would be better to use fewer, but larger and sharper photos.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** Connolly handles Yellowstone, cancer

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** February 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This four-page article about a frequent contributor's battle with cancer would have been compelling by itself, but it was made even better with the many illustrations scattered throughout – most of which display the covers from the many books this member has

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written. As usual, I'd like to see the artwork run larger but that would have required more space, and as noteworthy and inspiring as this article is, it already runs 4 pages of a 10-page issue. There's nothing wrong with giving over a big chunk of your space to a worthy article, just make sure it's as worthwhile as this one. The wonderful photos and colorful book covers do an excellent job of advancing the message of this inspiring story. I just wish the book covers were sharper, and there was a photo on the first page to introduce the characters.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Overall Graphic Design

**Name of Entry:** Ground Zero: awesome!

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** October 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

When retired teachers get together for a field trip of their own, you can bet they will turn it into a teachable moment for any of their colleagues who didn't go. This publication's cover page account of a field trip to Ground Zero and the surrounding area of NYC does that in well-chosen words and some excellent pictures. A brief but fitting headline leaves plenty of room for the fact-filled article and six pictures that really pop, despite their relatively small size. The photos are a wonderful complement to this excellent story. They really do a lot to advance the message of the story. The layout of the cover is a little disjointed and confusing, with blocks of text cut off from each other, overlapping photos and extraneous information sandwiched in with the feature. The following pages look much better, although still a little crowded. Great idea of the editor taking an opportunity to drum up reader interest in receiving the paper by email when he announces on the cover that he is devoting an additional two pages of the online version to words and pictures about the trip. Nice job all the way around.

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## Best Photo

### ★ **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** CITA June 8th Albany Photo

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTation*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Although the reproduction could have been a little better, this eye-catching photo captures an evocative moment at the NYSUT rally in Albany. The portion of the CITA cap in the foreground juxtaposed with the large screen image of the NYSUT president addressing the crowd is an important moment of the day and highlights the local union's participation. Rally shots are usually panoramic, to show how large the crowd was, but this one is more intimate. A nice photo, made even better by running it large on the page.

### **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** November brunch

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late Autumn 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Shots like this are hard to judge objectively. The two rows of smiling faces at the restaurant are an apt illustration of the group's monthly brunch, and the photo certainly conveys the enjoyment of those attending. But a photo with 13 people seated around a table is tough to reproduce, even run as large as it was. On the other hand, photos like this are a staple of local newspapers and newsletters because they get members faces – and names – in the paper. They serve a purpose. From a technical standpoint, this photo is about as good as you can get, under the circumstances. It is focused, the color is good and the shot is as well composed as possible. It may not be an award-winner, but the photographer certainly made it as good as could be.

### ★ ★ **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** Science Camp Dissection

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

Here is a wonderful candid shot of two kids working on a project at a summer science camp, deeply engrossed in whatever it is they're doing. Nothing posed, no one looking

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into the camera – just two kids having fun while learning. One of the students pictured was able to attend the camp through a donation by this retiree chapter, and this photo truly conveys the value of the scholarship to this boy. The children's absorbed faces and animated attention to the task at hand are an excellent illustration of the value of such experiences, and of the union's donation. Not sure if this is the photo as shot or if it was cropped to improve it, but it's composed perfectly.

My only quibble is not with the photo but the caption. I'd like to know exactly what the kids are doing and I'm guessing other readers would also. It may have been explained in the article but it should be explained in the caption.

## **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** Sledding Fun!

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This colorful and eye-catching photo does an excellent job of capturing the action of the scene. The composition is wonderful, and the focus is very sharp. It's refreshing to see a family-oriented photo like this one in a retiree newsletter. Group shots, photos of talking heads at podiums, and head-and-shoulders photos are a staple of union publications, so we're not criticizing them, but it's good to see an occasional photo like this one, which just shows kids enjoying themselves. I'm not sure if this photo accompanied a story, but it doesn't matter. I like the composition and the action taking place. The photo-mounting corners that make it look like it was pasted in a scrapbook also help give it a nice nostalgic feel. A very nice job. That said, the photo doesn't appear to meet the category requirement that it illustrate "a union story."

## **Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** A Member Writes ...

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Nov 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

We can't quibble with the quality of these photos, taken by a Pittsford retiree. They illustrate the cover of a book of photographs and personal observations she compiled during 11 years in Egypt. We were given black-and-white copies of the originals. As impressive as they are in black-and-white, we went to the author's website and viewed

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them in color and they are absolutely stunning. Hopefully, the local retiree publication will have more access to the photo skills of this member. That said, I don't believe these photos qualify for the category because they obviously are not original to the publication.

## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** "We were there" photo montage

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/julyaug13.pdf>

### Judges' Comments:

This colorful montage does an excellent job of illustrating the story about members' experiences at the rally in Albany. Each face offers an insight into the emotions of the day. I just wish some of them were larger, to make it easier to see the subjects of the photos. I would have devoted the entire front page to these photos and the accompanying story. The photos could have even run by themselves, with a referral to the story running on an inside page. When you have good photos, try to run them as large as you can.

## Local: Retiree Council 12

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** 2012 Award of excellence to James Wood

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter\\_rc\\_12\\_september\\_2012\\_approved.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter_rc_12_september_2012_approved.pdf)

### Judges' Comments:

Good award-recipient photo. The two smiling faces in this excellent photo do a wonderful job of conveying the importance of this award. I wish it had been possible to make it larger, and brighten up his face slightly. This is a very common photo subject in local newsletters and it's hard to find ways to get creative with it. I would have shot this a bit closer, to get less of the surrounding area and more detail on the award. Also note that the microphone cut directly in front of the award.

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## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** June & September 2013 meetings – photo is from June meeting

**Publication/Website:** [THE LINKAGE](#)

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Groups that are seated like this one are especially hard to shoot, even for professional photographers. Since it's impossible to get everyone in the photo, no matter how far back you stand, I would concentrate on some shots of individuals, maybe talking together, watching the speaker, reacting in some way. This photo does a good job of illustrating the impressive turnout at the June meeting. However, it might have been better to have a closeup of just the speaker's animated face and several observers, rather than such a large group shot where no faces are really visible.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** June & September 2013 meetings – photo is from September meeting

**Publication/Website:** [THE LINKAGE](#)

**Issue Date:** Autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

The rows of smiling faces are certainly eye-catching, and the photo is nicely lit. There are so many people in the photo, however, that it's difficult to make out individual people. It's hard to keep track of 28 people in a single photo. I'm not sure I even counted them accurately. But this photographer did as good a job as possible arranging the photo and the participants. This is a good official photo for the files, one that could be emailed to all the participants as a keepsake, or run in the Retiree Council's newsletter or on the website. But group photos simply aren't the best candidates for the Best Photo category.

## Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** M.O.R.E. Program

**Publication/Website:** [New York State Teacher Retirees in Florida Facebook](#)

**Issue Date:** September 2013

### **URL:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=560757143973825&set=pb.166355720080638.-2207520000.1390849810.&type=3&theater>

### **Judges' Comments:**

The smiling faces in front of the large sign tell the whole story of this excellent photo. It's nicely lit, and everyone looks happy to be there. Unfortunately there is almost no way to



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get creative or especially eye-catching with a group photo of seven people. However, it's a good photo and it's good that you are running them. They are a necessary item in all union publications, but they rarely rise to competition level.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** RC43/TRIF Founder

**Publication/Website:** *New York State Teacher Retirees in Florida Facebook*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

**URL:**

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=484903918225815&set=a.484903274892546.1073741825.166355720080638&type=3&theater>

**Judges' Comments:**

A closeup of people's faces is almost always more interesting than a wide shot of a crowd. This photo is nicely arranged and lit. As in the other Best Photo entry, I praise you for understanding the importance of running these group photos in the publication. They get members' names and faces in the newsletter or on the website or Facebook page. Unfortunately, it's almost impossible to turn group photos into contest winners.

## **Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers**

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** Connolly writes, donates books to schools

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

**Judges' Comments:**

Who could resist a photo of a child holding a book? And when the book in the photo was written by the child's grandfather, it's not just eye-catching but an excellent illustration for the story. You don't often see photos like this in union and retiree council publications. The grip-and-grin photos, the check presentation photos and the ubiquitous group shots are important and very necessary, but they leave little opportunity for creativity. It's always nice when a photo like this comes along.

Our only quibbles: Photo could have been bigger, and with the information in a cutline, not in the body of the story.

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## Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** The Triumvirate of Power and Unity

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This excellent photo captures an animated moment of conversation, rather than just showing three people standing in a row looking at the camera. The photo is not just expressive, it truly illustrates the point of the story. This photo of two union leaders chatting with the school superintendent is a good illustration for an article about an upcoming school budget vote. It's a photo that serves its purpose well, but I don't believe it rises to the level of Best Photo competition. I tend to think of photos like this as utilitarian. They do a job and they do it well, but by their very nature they don't usually win contests.

## Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Best Photo

**Name of Entry:** WCT, WCRT march in St. Patrick's parade

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

What a wonderful collection of colorful and expressive photos. Many of them show people in action, or with animated faces, and most pick out small parts of the crowd to illustrate, rather than trying to pack as many people as possible into a small area. They all do an excellent job of illustrating the stories. We see a lot of parade photos, but these really stood out for their variety, composition and general good quality. Kudos for running a second page of photos for email subscribers. And nice job on the layout.

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## Best Use of Digital Media

### ★ ★ Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Use of Digital Media

**Name of Entry:** New York State Teacher Retirees in Florida Facebook

**Publication/Website:** *New York State Teacher Retirees in Florida Facebook*

**URL:** <https://www.facebook.com/pages/New-York-State-United-Teacher-Retirees-In-Florida/166355720080638>

#### **Judges' Comments:**

An excellent use of Facebook to keep members informed about important events and issues. A wonderful photo at the top of the page invites visitors to linger and peruse the postings. The links to meeting schedules, NYSUT information and the president's report are all good choices. The page is very active and obviously kept up to date. In addition to its own inhouse-generated material, it makes good use of information from the Florida EA, NYSUT, AFT and NEA. Lots of photos. While it doesn't seem to attract a lot of posts from members, there are plenty of "likes" for the various articles, so it has obvious value to the membership.

One editing comment: The description of the organization, just below the main photo, uses "it's" when it should say "its". We certainly believe that routine postings on Facebook and Twitter, as well as emails, are casual and of the moment and can be excused for the occasional misspelling, typo or bad grammar. But this misuse of "its" is part of the permanent display on the page and should be correct.

### Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Use of Digital Media

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org>

#### **Judges' Comments:**

This website gives members of this huge organization yet another source for up-to-date information of interest and importance to NYSUT retirees now living in Florida. It works well with the group's Facebook page, providing info about the Facebook page and a link that advises users that they don't need to join Facebook to see the page. Like the Facebook page, there are many photos and many respected sources for the news and information carried on the site, which is straightforward and easy to navigate. However, on the day that I judged the site, I noticed a major typo in the headline of the lead news article on the home page. It's certainly tough putting together a site like this, which is otherwise

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excellent, but readers tend to judge the accuracy of an entire publication, website, Facebook page, etc., by a single error, especially in something as noticeable as a headline.

## **Local: Retiree Council 43**

**Category:** Best Use of Digital Media

**Name of Entry:** *One Voice*

**Issue Date:** July 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/presidents-desk/desk-president-one-voice-rally-albany>

### **Judges' Comments:**

Nice president's column/editorial on the June 2013 "One Voice United" rally, illustrated with a large color photo of some rally participants who would be recognizable to most of the membership. This retiree council seems to fully understand that photos – particularly those with several people in them, like this one – need either to be run large or cropped to eliminate some of the people. A nice information package that was obviously available to website users a lot faster than they would have received it in the council's newsletter. This page offers excellent coverage of an important event. The photo is expressive and eye-catching.

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## Most User-Friendly Website

**Local:** Port Washington Teachers Association Retired Educators Chapter

**Category:** Most User-Friendly Website

**Publication/Website:** *Retired Educators Chapter – Port Washington Teachers Association Website*

**Issue Date:** December 2013

**URL:** <http://www.pwta.info/PWRE>

**Judges' Comments:**

This is an information-filled, no-nonsense website that is easy to navigate and filled with items aimed at a retiree audience. My only suggestion would be to use more graphics and illustrations, particularly photos. And run the photos larger than currently. There is a lot of very good material on this site and it's easy to follow. But I think it would draw in more viewers with more graphic art. This website provides quite a bit of interesting information for members. The links all work well and the rotating photos at the top of the page are excellent for attracting interest to the site. There's not a lot of union-related information, however, and the large block of white space between the header and the content on the home page and many other pages is a problem. You want to draw the reader in right away, at the very top of the page, without them having to scroll down.

★ **Local:** Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Most User-Friendly Website

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 7 Website*

**URL:** [www.nysutretireecouncil7.org](http://www.nysutretireecouncil7.org)

**Judges' Comments:**

The colorful headers on each page of this site give it a very professional look and a feeling of consistency. The tabs are self-explanatory and break down a lot of information into clear topics. The site map is a nice feature on any website. The written matter is clean, generally free of typos and well laid-out. I would just look for more opportunities to use photos and other types of artwork and graphic enhancements. They will make this very good site a really great one. Much of the information, especially on the home page, is current, but there are some outdated calendar entries on other pages. Also, it would be nice if the photo at the top of the page were larger.

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## ★ ★ Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Most User-Friendly Website

**Publication/Website:** *NYSUT Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org>

### **Judges' Comments:**

A very bold and colorful home page pulls you right in to this website. The revolving photos at the top of the page are attractive, and clicking on the text leads to information related to the photo. Elsewhere on the home page the links work well, and the information under the photos is current and well-presented. This is a site with lots of news and it's presented very concisely, with just a sentence or two and a link to the rest of the story for those who want more detail.

Some suggestions: More photos, more artwork, more graphic enhancements help draw readers into the news and information, and it might be a good idea to make the header on the page not go down so far, and move the photos up into it, so it's obvious that there's more content on the page without the visitor having to scroll down.

## ★ Local: Retirees of Brentwood Schools

**Category:** Most User-Friendly Website

**Publication/Website:** *ROBS Website*

**URL:** <http://www.robsny.org>

### **Judges' Comments:**

Someone has put a lot of time and effort into this website and it shows. Good use of color throughout. Nice graphics and some impressive features on the Home Page, including a slide show on the evolution of school buildings in Brentwood and a click-on recording of the high school chorale singing "Brentwood in the Pines." The site is well designed -- you don't have to scroll down at all on the home page to get the information, and the links work pretty well. A Newsletter Archive tab opens on retiree newsletters back to 2007. A Photo Gallery section even contains district yearbooks, including HS yearbooks dating to 1957. Meeting schedules, event calendars and announcements are clearly marked by tabs and easy to follow.

There's lots of great information, but many of the calendar and events listings have passed. If you must put the calendar of events for the whole school year on the site at once, consider taking the top ones off every month, so the rest are current.

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## Best Column/Blog by a Leader

### **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Take Action Diane Ravitch

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAction*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

This article obviously reflects a lot of research and/or a close following of the so-called reform movement in education, including charter schools, education financing and the growing number of tests. It is chockful of useful information for readers, and Diane Ravitch is a staunch defender of public education. I think the article could have made a stronger impression, however, with a little restructuring, starting with a headline that sets the scene for readers. Although Diane Ravitch is mentioned by name in the headline, and the article leads with her bio, it is not until the end that I got answers to a couple of the five W's that would have been more helpful at the beginning – WHY is she being quoted, WHEN was she interviewed, WHERE did this take place, WHAT did I miss?

### **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** The Broad Superintendents Academy

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTAction*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

#### **Judges' Comments:**

I enjoyed this article on the Broad Superintendents Academy and its billionaire founder and “venture philanthropist,” Eli Broad. I suspect it educated a number of people who read it. I know it gave me a lot of interesting facts that I was not aware of. This article cries out for a headline that will draw readers to the information that is contained there. The article uses the term “venture philanthropy,” which I had never seen before. I would have tried to work that term into a headline. Maybe something like: “The high price of venture philanthropy.” The column is well researched, and backs up its arguments with multiple facts. However, it would have been better to begin with a statement of the point or purpose of the article, rather than a list of facts about a person whose relationship to the issue is not clear.

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## **Local: Central Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** The selfish age

**Publication/Website:** *The CIRTation*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

Generally a headline as brief as "The selfish age" would be considered a little too vague to pique the curiosity of a potential reader, but it works for this article, in which the author uses that term to characterize the Tea Party and its unifying concepts. The article does a good job of outlining the budget plan of the former Republican VP candidate and how it would negatively affect all Americans. By comparing certain members of Congress to selfish little boys, this column builds a strong argument against budget items that affect Social Security, the progressive tax system and Medicaid. The conversational tone, backed up by a well-researched recital of facts, does an excellent job of communicating the message to readers.

## **Local: Half Hollow Hills Active Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** President's Message

**Publication/Website:** *The HHHART BEAT*

**Issue Date:** Winter 2012

**URL:** [www.hhhart.net](http://www.hhhart.net)

### **Judges' Comments:**

Here is a good example of a president's message to her members on issues that have national, state and local impact. Her lead paragraph outlines the issues of concern to members, including APPR, the 2012 elections and changes to the local prescription drug coverage. Great job of getting useful information out to the troops. This column does a good job of reviewing recent events of interest to members, and offers essential information about changes to members' prescription coverage. The new system is explained well and completely, and gives the reader a way to get even more information about the new plan.



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## ★ **Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From the president

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** June 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This president does an excellent job of explaining how the 2 percent tax cap is hurting school districts, and provides a great deal of information on how the cap works and how it violates the "one person, one vote" standard in law. Writing concisely and using simple language, the writer states the problem – the harm caused by the tax cap – and then backs up her statement with facts, figures and data from other states. She closes by urging members to take specific actions -- contacting local representatives to seek reform and attending a NYSUT rally in Albany. Nothing fancy here, just a well-written message.

## **Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** The president's corner

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** March 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

A good mix of useful information in this president's column – everything from a demographic breakdown of where retiree members are living to an update on Social Security and Medicare changes and some tips on how to keep health care costs down. It's well-written, informal and fact-filled. This column offers information on a variety of subjects in a concise, easy-to-understand format. Some of the information is merely interesting – where members live, for example – while other items can have a huge impact on readers' lives – such as how to save money on health care costs. A very good column.

## **Local: Islip Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** The president's message

**Publication/Website:** *'ISLIP CONNECTIONS'*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

In the last of three entries, this president issues a more traditional "call to arms," urging members to vote in the upcoming general election and explaining why their vote is so important. The writing is tight and to the point. Urging members to vote in an election and, furthermore, to vote for those candidates whose views will benefit the education system and safeguard members' pension benefits is one of the most important functions of an

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association newsletter. This column does an excellent job of laying out the issues that make every vote count, and how members can get more information on where each candidate stands. Very well done.

## **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From our editor ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** November/December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This editor's column takes on the issue of excessive testing, which is a frequent topic for leader-driven editorials. Unlike many of those other columns, this one makes its point in approximately 200 words, which is commendable. If you're going to be asking members to join you in a crusade, as this column does, try to make your point(s) as quickly as possible, as this column does.

## **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** My viewpoint by Emily Schreiber

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This column is a good reminder to members that retirees should (and do) continue to contribute to the schools where they once taught. As the writer notes in the lead: "There are no longer classrooms with our names on the doors, but we're continuing to make a difference." It outlines several student activities the local has been involved in and closes with a gentle reminder of how all members can help – either with time or a donation. Nice work. This column does an excellent job of describing the continuing contributions made to students in the district by members of the association. The writer's visit to Discovery Camp and her description of the activities of the scholarship students is both interesting and inspirational. Personal reflection is an excellent way to engage readers.

## **Local: Malverne Teachers' Association Retiree Chapter**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** My viewpoint by Emily Schreiber

**Publication/Website:** *The Retiree ReView*

**Issue Date:** Late autumn 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This entry demonstrates that a leader's column can take many forms, particularly when the topic (sacrificing student creativity for test-prepping) is something that is written about

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frequently. Here, the author ran one of her own poems on the topic “Let the Creative Children Create.” The author found a creative way of her own to get a point across. A poem is a clever way to express an opinion and engage readers at the same time. This poem does an excellent job of showing how excessive testing limits the children’s creativity, without hitting the reader over the head with pedantic prose. Very well done.

### **Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Notes ... From President Nanette Sorrentino

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** May 2013

#### **Judges’ Comments:**

The author does a great job of keeping members up to date on a variety of issues in a very casual style and still finds room to encourage participation in many of the local’s ongoing activities, including VOTE-COPE. One of the most important functions of a President’s Column is to keep members informed about the activities of the association, and another is to encourage them to participate in these events. This column fulfills both functions to a very high degree. It’s clearly written in informal language that is easy to follow, and the descriptions of coming events highlight the most interesting aspects.

### **Local: Pittsford District Retired Teachers Association**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Notes ... From President Nanette Sorrentino

**Publication/Website:** *RETIRED TIMES*

**Issue Date:** Nov 2013

#### **Judges’ Comments:**

A very newsy column, with a number of different items of interest to members, including some IT issues, reminders of upcoming events, getting new members involved in activities and notes on district graduates who are doing well. This column does an excellent job of keeping members informed about the activities of the association, and the resources available to them. The description of upcoming events and opportunities for donations is impressive and enticing. An excellent way to keep members informed and involved. One layout-related observation that doesn’t affect judging: The page layout was a bit unusual – with the president’s column beginning in the second column on the page and then jumping to the first column. These two columns could have easily been reversed, with the president’s column running the entire first column (under a two-column headline) and then jumping to the top of the second column. A story about a holiday party, also on that page, could have been moved to the bottom of either column.

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## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Don't be fooled: Romney/Ryan and Congresswoman Buerkle will cut Medicare

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Sept/Oct 2012

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/SeptOct2012.pdf>

### Judges' Comments:

A few weeks prior to the 2012 general election, this author provides a well-done treatment of how the election of Romney/Ryan and a local Republican congresswoman would ultimately mean an end to Medicare as we know it. The author eschews emotion and editorial comment, relying instead on facts, figures and the words of the candidates themselves. Very nice job of summarizing a complex issue and advising readers: "Don't be fooled." This column does an excellent job of building a persuasive argument against repealing the Affordable Care Act and changing the Medicare program. Based on impressive research, the article lays out very specific ways in which such changes would affect members of the group and their families. Very well done.

## ★ Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From the president's desk ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** September 2013

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/RC7Sept2013.pdf>

### Judges' Comments:

This column does an excellent job of explaining a "boring but important" issue, namely, the chained CPI. The facts are laid out clearly and concisely, and the specific examples of how the changes would affect the reader make the column anything but boring. The column not only engages the reader, it ends by urging specific action to prevent the changes from taking place. Very well done.

## Local: Retiree Council 7

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From The president's desk ...

**Publication/Website:** *The Central New Yorker*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2012

**URL:** <http://nysutretireecouncil7.org/uploads/NovDec2012.pdf>

### Judges' Comments:

Here, this local president ably demonstrates how to "fact-check" Republican campaign claims and political ads, particularly through some vetted websites. A great lead paragraph

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helps bring readers into a column full of useful pre-election information, including a reminder to check the NYSUT website for a list of endorsed candidates. A wonderful service for readers.

## ★ **Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From the president's desk ...

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook\\_2013\\_april\\_to\\_go\\_to\\_nysut.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/outlook_2013_april_to_go_to_nysut.pdf)

### **Judges' Comments:**

Like all good columns, this one begins with an anecdote that leads into the main topic -- Social Security and what is REALLY needed to strengthen it without sacrificing benefits and shortchanging recipients. This is well written and very informative without being overly technical or mechanical. One layout technique that really helps this article is the use of subheads over each section. It breaks up the large area of type and makes the article more readable and easier to follow.

This column is so well done that I hate to bring up one very serious issue. The article frequently references a conference call with US Sen. Tom Harkin, who introduced a bill to strengthen Social Security. Every reference to him spells his name Harkins.

## **Local: Retiree Council 12**

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** From the president's desk ... Get involved in determining your future Medicare and Social Security benefits

**Publication/Website:** *THE OUTLOOK*

**Issue Date:** September 2012

**URL:** [http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter\\_rc\\_12\\_september\\_2012\\_approved.pdf](http://rc12.ny.aft.org/files/newsletter_rc_12_september_2012_approved.pdf)

### **Judges' Comments:**

This is a well-written column that addresses a number of issues affecting members, including endorsements for political offices, a note on a Supreme Court ruling involving the Affordable Care Act, and the results of a Retiree Council election. A good mix of items, all of potential interest to readers. Keeping members informed about candidates' views on issues that directly affect their lives and the public education system as a whole is an important function of a president's column. And this article does an excellent job of telling members exactly who to vote for in each district, and how the endorsements were determined. It also urges members to vote in the upcoming election, which is equally important.

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## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** A victory

**Publication/Website:** [THE LINKAGE](#)

**Issue Date:** November/December 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

This column is based on a valid assumption – show readers how their efforts and unity helped achieve a major victory, thank them for their efforts and you can fire them up to do battle in another arena. Here, the author outlined new state legislation aimed at ending the potentially costly confusion for hospital patients about whether they have been admitted or just placed in observation status. She followed up with a call to members to keep the momentum going and support two other measures. This column does an excellent job of describing a recent legislative victory in New York state, then lays out several important issues that are still languishing in Washington. The issues are described well, and readers are provided with a website to visit for more information. Good job.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** President's Corner – Making sense of membership records

**Publication/Website:** [THE LINKAGE](#)

**Issue Date:** January 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Good headline on this column seeking the membership's help in updating NYSUT member records. The column itself seems unnecessarily complicated at times but certainly provides a valuable service. This is a good use of the column to communicate quickly with members and get them involved in a project that will benefit all. Confusion about membership records is a serious problem facing NYSUT's retiree councils. This column does an excellent job describing how the problem occurred, and what local organizations can do to address it.

## Local: Retiree Council 18

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Report on Committee of 100 – March 5-6, 2013

**Publication/Website:** [THE LINKAGE](#)

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

An in-depth report on a Retiree Council's participation in Committee of 100, like this one, is a good topic for a leader column or blog. It gives a good rundown on the issues discussed with area state lawmakers in Albany. My only suggestion would be to put subheads in at the start of each paragraph that describes a specific issue. It makes the entire column

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easier to read and easier for readers to follow. An excellent report describing the issues discussed at an important regional meeting. The column does a good job of explaining the problems, citing the layoff of 99 teachers as one of the unfortunate outcomes of recent cutbacks, and reporting NYSUT's success in preventing the implementation of IRMAA reimbursement.

### Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** It's the season, you have a reason to be grateful

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/commentary/its-season-you-have-reason-be-grateful>

### Judges' Comments:

A good headline and some artwork (too often left out of columns like these) add to this leader's brief seasonal message on hypocritical politicians who claim to support veterans and teachers, then vote to cut funding to both groups. Good topic well-handled. However, watch the spelling of "hypocrisy" and "hypocrite." Although short and to the point, the column does a good job of pointing out the hypocrites in Washington, DC, who claim to support veterans but refuse to give them the support and benefits they need. Urging readers to take time during the Thanksgiving season to be grateful to those who serve their country is appropriate and effective.

### Local: Retiree Council 43

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Who is looking at the BIG picture? A commentary

**Publication/Website:** *Retiree Council 43 Website*

**Issue Date:** August 2013

**URL:** <http://rc43.ny.aft.org/commentary/who-looking-big-picture-commentary>

### Judges' Comments:

This column provides good commentary on the state of inaction in a dysfunctional Congress. It's a topic that has been discussed over and over, but this column keeps it to relatively brief amount of type that is easy to read. The gridlock in Washington, DC, is an important issue that affects virtually every person in this country. This column does an excellent job of laying out the issues that contribute to this inaction, and what may be the real motives behind it. It's not so long that it loses the reader's interest, and the language is simple, conversational and easy to understand. My only suggestion for change would have been to close it out by asking readers to take some kind of action – writing to lawmakers, giving to VOTE-COPE, etc.

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## Local: TRIF - Clearwater Unit

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Cathy's column

**Publication/Website:** *A "C.U.T." ABOVE*

**Issue Date:** November 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Same observations apply here as in the entry for Category 3 – Good use of the president's column as a kind of "bully pulpit" to move members to take action. Well-written call to action.

## Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Privatize ... Privatize ... Privatize

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Summer 2013

### **Judges' Comments:**

Excellent article on privatization and the potential destruction of public education. Well-documented, but it avoids taking a scholarly tone. It's conversational and a good read. Another well-reasoned, well-documented argument against the privatization of SUNY, CUNY and public educations. This piece alerts readers to the wolves at our doors.

## Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** What price inequality?

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** Nov/Dec 2012

### **Judges' Comments:**

Well-written and compelling column on how income inequality threatens American democracy. Written just prior to the 2012 presidential election, it points to the need for campaign finance reform. In addition to being well-written, the article is attractively laid-out, has a compelling headline, artwork and a fitting pull quote to draw readers in. Very good summary of the great political debate of this decade – income inequality.

Makes a very compelling case for action and change. All of this very professional work makes the number of typos and punctuation errors all the more serious.



# NYSUT Communications Competition 2014

## ★ Local: United University Professions – Retirees

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** What's happening to our country?

**Publication/Website:** *The Active Retiree*

**Issue Date:** April 2013

### Judges' Comments:

A well-written column that outlines a problem and offers suggestions for its resolution. Another compelling case for political change, focusing on the issues of the day with a call and reflection on returning to the activism of the 60s. It's attractively laid out with a good headline. Nice work.

## ★★ Local: Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

**Category:** Best Column/Blog by a Leader

**Name of Entry:** Concern over health insurance

**Publication/Website:** *PostScript*

**Issue Date:** October 2013

### Judges' Comments:

The threat of cuts to retirees' health benefits is an extremely serious one in this economic climate. This column does an excellent job of laying out the legal ramifications of future contract changes in the district and describing the problem in simple, easy-to-understand language. The column does a good job of capturing the mood in the state as the local continues to seek a new contract, and the article aptly closes with an appeal to support VOTE-COPE. Ending with a specific call to action is the way to encourage reader involvement in the issue.

★★ FIRST PLACE

★ AWARD OF DISTINCTION

