



ROBS - RETIREES of the BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

Since 1991 - Still Serving

Issue 2/2010-2011

January, February, March

MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at the Brentwood Public Library, 2nd Ave., & Third St., at 10 a.m., on the **first** Friday of the month.

February - no meeting

March - speaker on vision care

April - speaker on physical fitness

ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Pronto, the community action group we support, is in need of dry or canned goods, paper products and toiletries. **Please** bring your contributions to each meeting.

OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano, President
kpn1c1@aol.com
Kathy Guleksen - 1st V.P.
Harriet Pepine - 2nd V.P.
Lucille Fink - Secretary
Marge Kirchner - Treasurer
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AFFILIATIONS

ROBS is proudly affiliated with
NYSUT, AFT, NEA,
AFL/CIO, RC21 & NYSARA.

www.robsny.org

HAITI

In The Aftermath of Disaster

by Carmela Criscione with the assistance of
Pat Landry and Marge Kirchner



Pat Landry holding a statuette carved by a Haitian artist

We all know "out of sight, out of mind" doesn't really work. We can ignore something, usually unpleasant, but it still remains to give us an occasional twinge of memory that we try to suppress.

The news of the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti a year ago, January, 2010, is one of those twinges. We were all horrified and sympathized; some of us were moved enough to write checks and perhaps even bringing needed supplies to deployment sites. Pat Landry did something more. She volunteered to go and help clear rubble sites, build schools and temporary housing, show how compost increases crop growth and assist at the makeshift hospital. She had done similar work before in Nicaragua, and she decided to do it again.

At the **ROBS** General Meeting of November 5th, 2010, she told us about her month of volunteer service in the town of Leogane, the epicenter of the quake that is 18 miles from Port Au Prince and which was practically leveled by the quake.

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and e-mail addresses of all the
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Directory should you wish to
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www.robsny.org
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NICK'S NOTES by Nick Siciliano

TEACHING IS NOT A BUSINESS

Remember when you started teaching in Brentwood and for most of your career there were new educational developments put forth to teach Math, Science, and other subjects? The constant question was how to improve teaching. After all these years we have not found the best way to teach and are still looking.

This past year has seen two documentaries come out dealing with this problem. The one that has received the most attention has been "Waiting for Superman". The gist of this and the other documentary ("The Cartel") is that the problem with education is the TEACHER. The teachers are solely responsible for why students do not learn. These documentaries and other individuals in and out of education call for radical changes in how teachers are educated, evaluated, and how to get the so-called "bad" teacher out. If we could have only top-notch teachers in the classroom the performance of students would be vastly improved, and all of our concerns that we have had about how students learn would vanish. In addition, there is a call for more charter schools as if in only these schools would we find caring teachers who are able to have success with their students.

Some of the critics of education say that teaching is like a business. If you perform well at your job you are entitled to promotions and better pay. The recent decision by the mayor of New York City to appoint someone from the business field who has had no experience in education to be the next Chancellor is one example. In no way can you compare teaching to someone working in business.

It is time for us even as retirees, to respond whenever we can through various means to inform the public that the teacher is NOT the sole reason for poor education in our schools. NYSUT and the UFT are involved in seeking to improve the quality of education in our society today. The AFT has started an Innovation Fund seeking new ideas from teachers to improve learning in our schools, evaluations of teachers, and any other way that will make our schools better.

We must work together as retirees with our active members to do all we can to counter these unfair attacks on the teaching profession and education in our country.



A REMEMBRANCE OF JOE CAMPO

FAMILY MAN, TEACHER, COACH

By Jim Nanos



Joe Campo with a student wrestler pictured in the 1974 Arrowhead year book

The Brentwood community has lost a great individual in the passing of Joe Campo on September 30, 2010. Joe "the Gov" was nationally recognized as our high school wrestling coach for 22 seasons. He positively affected hundreds of young people with his knowledge and ability to bring the best out in each person (see Newsday edition for 10/3/10).

Joe often said, "Family comes first". He would urge his athletes to be good members of their families, their community and their church. He raised six kids, living nearby in the neighborhood and gave selflessly of his time.

Joe taught physical education at the high school in an era when that was not an easy task. It was difficult to get students into the Ross Building's pool for gym class. Joe was saddened when Brentwood lost students to drowning over the years. He would encourage all his students to "get in and learn to swim".

I observed that many did learn and appreciated his encouragement.

Late in coming, the Brentwood Ross High School gymnasium was dedicated to Joe "the Gov" Campo in 2008. Hundreds of athletes and their families were in attendance. Many wrestlers carry on Joe's traditions by coaching teams of their own. A plan is in the works for a memorial celebration of Joe's life.

Our sympathies go out to his family.

Jim Nanos was also a Brentwood wrestling coach for 15 years.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

FOR ALL MEMBERS

This is a reminder that effective **January 1, 2011** the Executive Board voted to discontinue the policy of offering free membership.

This was a very difficult decision but given the cost of running the organization, it was necessary.

Members in good standing who are presently 75 years of age or over or who were 75 before January 1, 2011, will continue to be eligible for free membership.

See our website, **www.robsny.org**, for other membership information.



HAITI - continued

Throughout its history, the story of Haiti is one of disaster piled upon disaster. The 2010 quake with a 7.0 magnitude left 230,000 people dead out of a total population of 9 million, half of whom are under the age of 21, and 135,000 families living in tent cities with no electricity, sanitary facilities or running water. Recent reports have these numbers even higher.

This is just the latest challenge facing the Haitian people. Since colonial days, natural disasters, political insecurity, corruption and incompetence, the AIDS epidemic, a terrible hurricane in 2003 when 2,400 people perished, to the current cholera outbreak, these people have dealt with unrelenting hardship and yet, Pat reports they go on with their lives.

Pat volunteered with a group of 120 people from 15 countries to remove rubble and try to restore some normalcy to the residents. "It was the hardest thing I ever did in my life, yet it was the most gratifying," she said. With her fellow volunteers from **ALL HANDS VOLUNTEERS**, she built temporary housing that were wooden 12x12 structures with tin roofs and tarp sides with shelves for storage, but often used as sleeping platforms for the little ones. They also taught the people to use clean water filters, how to make compost toilets and worked in the hospital clinic assisting the doctors in simple operative procedures as well as attempting to comfort the sick and mourning.

The volunteers lived in conditions we would have found primitive but were better than most of what the residents had. The heat was intense, and keeping hydrated meant drinking 3-4 gallons of water each day. Days were spent in the never-ending effort of removing the rubble of destroyed buildings so that temporary structures, and eventually permanent ones, could be erected.

The work ethic of the predominately young volunteers restored her hope for the next generation.

Pat kept in touch with her spouse, Marge Kirchner, by cell phone, and the contrast between her daily toil as a volunteer and her usual life was stark. At age 68, she was the oldest of the volunteers in her group, but was able to keep up with them as they worked six long days a week. At the end of the month, July 6-August 6, she had lost 18 pounds but had gained the satisfaction of making a small difference in the lives of the Haitians.

Even as she spoke to us in early November, Haiti was bracing for hurricane Tomas, thankfully downgraded from a level 3 to a level 1-2 storm. Television showed Leogane's dirt streets under 6-8 inches of water and the tent cities, where most of the people lived, were swamped. To Haitians, it was just another day of disaster.

After the quake, Haiti has been visited by high profile people such as Sarah Palin and Greta Von Sustren. I think what Pat did was greater. She just didn't view, she tried to make it better. I admire her greatly.

Most of us can't do what Pat did, but we can try to help by sending contributions to relief groups such as **ALL HANDS VOLUNTEERS**. There is no central government to coordinate efforts and **ALL HANDS** and other governmental organizations (NGOs) are trying to get local governments to work with the many volunteers to coordinate relief efforts.

Please go to the **ROBS** website, www.robsny.org to view the pictures that Pat took as well as information about **ALL HANDS**.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US by Carmela Criscione

Happy New Year! And a healthy and prosperous one to all our **ROBS** members. **ROBS** members certainly made this holiday season a bright one for 5 families (a total of 25 people) with their contributions to **Project Hope**. **Peter Vercillo** reports that our generous members contributed over \$3,600.

Thanksgiving baskets were delivered as were gifts. Thanks are extended to our selfless volunteers, **Letty** and **Sheila Sustrin**, **Lynn Tiscione**, **Ginger Battiste**, **Lynda Romano**, **Johanna Kane**, **Charlene Keely**, **Lois Morella**, **Kris Dougherty**, **Nick Siciliano**, **Phyllis Goodwin** and **Peter**. The "wrap" party at **Kris'** house on December 17th was a lot of fun even when wrapping gifts for 25 people.

Proud mom, **Loretta Ellington**, tells us that son, Dr. Joe C. Ellington, Jr., has been sworn as a representative from the state of West Virginia to the U. S. House of Representatives.. Congratulations.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to one of our newest retirees, **Ronda Brooks**. Ronda had the misfortune of breaking her knee while vacationing in the Poconos recently but hopes to be up and around by early March.

The holiday party at Orlando's in Commack on December 3rd was great. We packed the place. The round tables made it easy to move around and engage your table mates in conversation. Kudos to **Lynda Romano** for a wonderful job. **Ruth McCalla**, who recently moved to Delaware, was there and it was wonderful to catch up on news.

Marty Hochheiser reports another "**Brentwood Sighting**". "Recently while having dinner at a local restaurant, I saw a young woman with a familiar face. I walked over to her table and asked, 'Did you go to school in Brentwood?' She said, 'Mr. Hochheiser you were my guidance counselor at North Middle School!' When asked what she was doing, she informed me that she became a guidance counselor. Good for you, Emma Melendez. Another time while at dinner I met Brian Cruise. He was celebrating his 53rd birthday. He is a remarkable and awe inspiring man. Forty years ago I was his guidance counselor. Being wheelchair bound with muscular dystrophy didn't prevent him from having an independent spirit. Over the years his physical condition has deteriorated but not his strength of will. He propels his chair through a blow tube. He needs around the clock aid. Brian went to college and now through his computer organizes various disabled games tournaments. His condition would have defeated many. Along with his spirit, his intelligence has not abated. I've had many an interesting conversation with him." Just goes to show Brentwood people rock.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of **Pat Gemellaro (Camp)** in late December. Pat was still working as a Special Education teacher. She was a former Maslow-Toffler student of **John Sherin's** who remembers her fondly. Our condolences to her family and friends.

The Scholarship Committee will be meeting to screen candidates. If you are interested in making a contribution to the Scholarship Fund please contact **Marge Kirchner**. Today, perhaps more than any other time, we need to help the young talent we know exists in the Brentwood Schools and encourage their efforts to become teachers.



LET THERE BE MEMORIES

A TIME TO SAY GOODBYE



January, 2010

Florence Worysz, Secretary at Pine Park
Bill Hutnick, Elementary
Jim Watson, English at the High School

April

Virginia Datre, Secretary, Business Office
Joan Young, Elementary

June

Frank D'Andrea, Operational Supervisor at
Buildings and Grounds

July

Ruth Bernhardt, Secretary at Northeast
Ronald Burr, Elementary at Northeast
Joyce Ehlers, Registered Nurse at North

August

Jeanette Collins, Secretary in Central Adm.
Ed Thompson, Purchasing Agent

September

Aram Athanasian, Math at the High School
Joe Campo, Physical Education at the High School

Let there be memories -

fond recollections of special occasions
and everyday things.

Let your heart start on its journey to
healing by feeling the comfort
remembering brings.

Let there be memories -

pictures, mementos, and favorite
stories both funny and sad.

Let your mind wander the paths
of remembrance, reliving the joys
and the good times you've had.

Let there be memories -

signs that our loved ones remain
near in spirit long after they've
gone..tender, surprising, heart-
warming, and welcome -
sweet proof of the promise that
love will live on.

*a poem by Linda Barnes
Hallmark Cards*

*To all who lost someone dear to them this past year our
deepest condolences and warm thoughts go out to you.*



WOODLOCH PINES

A PERFECT GET-AWAY

By Adrienne Eastman

If you are looking for a great year-round vacation resort, you don't have to look any further than Woodloch Pines in Hawley, PA. Situated in the heart of the Pocono Mountains on hundreds of acres, this family-owned paradise is named by Better Homes and Gardens magazine as one of America's favorite resorts featuring endless activities for people of all ages, exciting entertainment, immaculate accommodations and unforgettable dining and hospitality.

Located on Lake Teedyuskung, there is swimming, paddle boating, water skiing and scenic boat rides in the summer and snow tubing, sledding and ice skating in the winter. If the weather isn't cooperating there is a gymnasium, arcade, bingo, movies, participation in games such as Family Feud, You Be The Judge, horseracing and bowling. Each morning a schedule is posted of the day's meals, activities and weather.

There is plenty to keep children amused with arts and crafts, story time, an indoor forest playground, bumper cars, go-karts and soccer, to name just a few, as well as outdoor activities.

Adults are treated to Broadway-quality performances nightly in a full-sized theater. Drinks are served during the performances, and there is live music with dancing after the shows.

Some of the conveniences on the property are an 18-hole golf course with pro-shop. Olympic-sized outdoor pool, gift shop, bakery, country

store, shuffleboard, spa, exercise room, sauna, Jacuzzi and miniature golf.

I have been to Woodloch Pines for the past four years with a group of friends from the Town of Islip Seniors Club #1 and still haven't experienced all the activities Woodloch has to offer. I am planning on going again in April, 2011 and know it will be another fabulous vacation!

If you would like to make a reservation after checking out their website at www.woodloch.com, the number to call is 1 800 572-6658.



a postcard showing winter fun at Woodloch Pines

FORGET SOMETHING?

The deadline for dues was October 31, 2010, if you wanted to be included in the directory. It may be too late for that but is not too late for you to send Marge Kirchner, our Treasurer, your 2010-2011 membership renewal form and dues. You can download the membership form from our website, www.robsny.org.

Don't delay another day. Thank you for your cooperation.



THE SQUIRREL WHISPERER

A CAUTIONARY TALE

By Nick Geraci

In the past few years I've taken to maintaining a bird feeder in my backyard, a harmless enough pastime, and one that allows for a consistent visit from chirping and colorful songbirds in the area. All in all, a pleasant diversion while I sip my morning coffee. That is until you take into account those vermin-colored, birdfeeder-mugging, lawn abusing destroyers of my garden serenity, the squirrels.

My wife didn't believe me, but I swear I actually saw them huddled near the shed in the back of the yard, plotting their attack strategies for the morning, each wearing their little squirrel gang jackets and bandanas. I half-expected them to break out into a "West Side Story" dance routine before they made straight away to the bird feeder, knocking over cardinals and sparrows who were unfortunate enough to be in their way.

It was there and then that I decided to take matters into my own hands. I would somehow avenge the downtrodden masses of backyard birds and reign supreme over their tree-climbing oppressors, sort of "Tarzan of the Squirrels", if you will.

I thought about using a Have-A-Heart style trap, where I would catch them one at a time, and reason with them, explaining that birds need to eat too. But alas, this didn't work out. Have you even seen a squirrel put his hands on his hips and laugh defiantly? It's demoralizing.

Not having the heart to throw anything that might cause permanent damage, I figured I'd use ping-pong balls. The size of the ball might frighten them away and if I were fortunate enough to actually hit one, it's only a ping-pong ball. What's the worst that could

happen? Well, two of them began batting the ball back at me. The others watched. Their team plays China next Thursday.

Lately, I've been standing at the family room window, waiting for one of them to try and climb the pole to the feeder. I'd throw open the sash, and bark like some deranged bloodhound in the hopes of frightening him back to the ground. This seemed to work out all right until I noticed my wife one day watching me from the kitchen, a concerned look in her eyes and a tsk, tsk on her lips.

The therapist says with a little hard work I can show improvement by October.



Nick's squirrels courtesy of the internet archive.

Nick was a teacher, guidance counselor and coordinator in Brentwood. His first book titled "Anna and the Tale of the Wolf", written under the pen name A. C. Nicholas, is out and available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble and other outlets.