



MEETINGS

General Meetings are held at the Brentwood Public Library, 2nd Avenue and Third Street at 10:00 a.m. on the **first** Friday of the month unless otherwise noted.

February - no meeting

March 3 - Declutter Now and Forever - with Patricia Campbell

April 7 - to be announced

May 5 - to be announced

June 2 - Luncheon to be announced

ROBS CARES CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

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

New and/or **gently-used** children's books are being collected for the **Books to Home Program** at every meeting. Please donate.

OFFICERS

Nick Siciliano - President
kpnici1@aol.com
Kathy Guleksen - 1st VP
Harriet Pepine - 2nd VP
Nancy Churchillo - Secretary
Carmen Roldan - Treasurer
Phyllis Goodwin - President Emerita
Dot Zuckerman - Founder

AFFILIATIONS

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

www.robsny.org

WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON

By Ronda Brooks



I was standing on a crowded street in the 1960's on University Avenue in the Bronx when a motorcade featuring a young, waving Bobby Kennedy in an open convertible came whizzing by. I was on the same packed street another time when NYC Mayor John Lindsay walked through to shake hands with constituents. Presidential candidate George McGovern was the key speaker at a large rally I attended in Yonkers, New York in 1972. My high school friends and I protested the Vietnam War in the early 70's in Getty Square, Yonkers, along with hundreds of other people. (I even made it to the front page of our local newspaper!) There was a Simon and Garfunkel reunion concert in NYC's Central Park in 1981 with an estimated crowd of 500,000. I was there too. Needless to say, I'm ok with big crowds.

And then came January 21, 2017. I boarded a bus at 4 a.m. with about 50 women and men, many of whom are Brentwood employees and retirees. We headed out in the cold, dark, foggy morning on a five-hour journey to the nation's capital to attend the Women's March on Washington. My goal was to be counted among the numbers of people who were protesting the new administration's plan to repeal many hard-earned women's and civil rights.

Our first stop was at a roadside rest area in Delaware. There had to be at least 50 buses in the parking lot, all there for the same reason. Long lines of women in pink knitted caps were patiently waiting to use the facilities and grab a cup of coffee for the road. We all chatted while we waiting, asking each other, "Where are you from?" After a bit we were on road again to our next stop, Silver Springs, Maryland. Because DC was going to be so crowded, our organizer planned for us to take the Metro into the city. The first train that came along was so packed that we couldn't all get on. A second, completely empty train was dispatched and we got a great seat for the 20-minute ride. When we arrived at Judiciary Square and stepped out into the station, the crowd was massive. It took us about 10 minutes to reach the street.

Never have I seen so many people in the same place at the same time. Everywhere, in every direction, as far as the eye could see, there were women, men and children of every age, color, sexual orientation and ability! They were



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TALK TO US

The phone numbers, home addresses, and e-mail addresses of all the Officers and Executive Board Members are in the Directory should you wish to contact us.

Stories, ideas for stories or columns and news items are always welcome.

This newsletter is all about us.

www.robsny.org



NICK'S NOTES - by Nick Siciliano

Another new year and **ROBS'** 26th year in existence.

There are a number of issues confronting us in the new year and I urge you to be aware of them and take appropriate action when called upon to do so.

Right now, what the new federal administration is planning has not been spelled out so I will not discuss potential programs that will have an impact on all of us. Rest assured that **NYSUT** and **ROBS** will make you aware of what is happening, or might happen, and what action we need to take.

An important local issue is membership in **ROBS** so that it will continue in future years. Obviously, we want new retirees to join **ROBS**. The number of new retirees is dwindling each year. We need to get those retirees who were at one time members to rejoin. I call upon you to urge, any retirees who are not members of **ROBS**, to join the organization.

As you are aware, Brentwood encountered some serious problems this last year. Let us agree that if we can help the District in some way, we will be there to help.

On a positive note, I would like to thank all of you who contributed to our **Project Hope** program which was highly successful due to your support.

I would once again like to offer **ROBS'** sincere condolences to the families of those we lost this year.

Remember, this organization's success is based upon your support and involvement.

Wishing you a very **Happy New Year!**



PAYDAY

by John M. Sherin

We've made no secret of the **ROBS'** Executive Board's concern for the future of the organization. Twenty-five years ago, teachers comprised all of our membership. As many as one third of those who were actively participating then are today no longer with us. Our present membership demographic is substantially different. We're stronger now, more inclusive and considerably more representative of a wider cross section of former district employees than ever before. We boast a collaborative community service force of connected, caring and experienced people who embrace full membership as well as associate members including former administrative colleagues, newly-retired members, teachers, and support service secretarial personnel. Some of us are even approaching retirement for a second time.

Mindful of that, and our goal of inclusiveness, in September of last year we addressed the subject of **ROBS'** future at the first scheduled membership meeting when we promised to hold a structured **PAYDAY** for those attending. It seemed to us that for the past several decades public schools have been undervalued, even blamed by scores of taxpayers, politicians and selected media outlets for every manner of societal shortcoming.

Instead of looking for someone or something to blame, we thought it was time to say **Thank You** to the many good people who have come to share time with us. We brought the means with us -- fifty symbolic \$1,000 bills -- and the intention of focusing on positive differences that have been made in our and other people's lives.

The night before our meeting there was a young woman in front of me as I stepped up to check-out at my local dollar store. Yes, I was a bit surprised when without my asking, she signaled me to get ahead of her. She saw all I had in my hand was a stack of counterfeit bills. She had a full basket of items. She said she was a teacher preparing a lesson for her fourth grade students. I thanked her, concluding she'd be paying out of pocket for what she had, like I did, and every other teacher still does.

Though incomes have risen over the years, the practice of paying personally for needed materials continues for most active teachers. Creative educators never run out of ideas to engage their students in different ways. It's currently estimated that the average teacher spends between \$400 and \$1,000 annually for out-of-pocket classroom materials.

Anyhow, the next day's meeting began by introducing new members. Paper plates were handed out to everyone and we asked that they write their names, personal qualities, skills and

talents. The paper plates were then hung around their neck with a piece of yarn. Given 15 minutes to complete the task we moved to an adjacent room where everyone was instructed to circulate freely, stopping for 30 seconds before each person so as to allow enough time to learn about each other by reading their plate. Our instruction was to restrain from talking until we were done.



Johanna Kane

When everyone returned to their seats they were invited to write their names on the back of the \$1,000 bill and then hand it to the one person in the room they believed made an important difference in the lives of students and colleagues and then explained what they had written on the back of the bill.

When the verbal portion of the activity commenced, the goal was to attain universal participation while inviting a comment from each person present summarizing in a few words what they thought about the process and how they felt during any specific part of the activity.

While it was intended that we have fun, it was also intended that we get closer to identifying the next generation of **ROBS** leaders. We are a talented group of gifted givers. We invite. We don't push. We ask. We don't require. Life sometimes ignores prerogatives. It chooses for us. If we fail to participate in the process we surely have to accept what we get. Who will replace the current slate of Executive Board members when they step aside? I don't choose to say what I'm thinking next. The new leaders are out there. They have to look into themselves and acknowledge they still have a lot to give.

Ed: View John's article on the website, www.robsny.org, and read two poems that will provoke introspection and personal purpose.

**FRANK SPENCER****A Man For All Seasons**

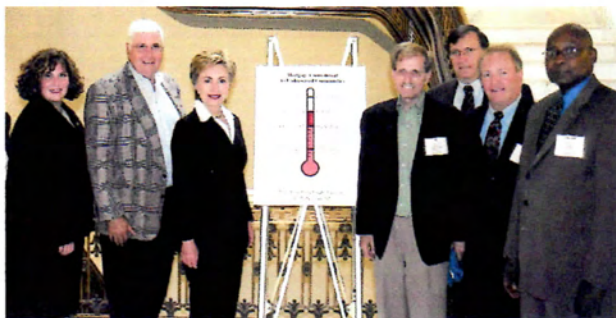
by Paula Moore

Frank Spencer is a friend. He is a gentleman, and in addition, is a gentle, soft-spoken man. He also does not like a lot of attention. He gets things accomplished with little fanfare. But it is time to showcase this man and his many accomplishments.

He began his career as a biology teacher in the high school in 1960 and retired in 1995 as a supervising attendance teacher. A senior class edition of the student newspaper, the Pow Wow, was dedicated to his work on the Human Relations Council. The Pow Wow felt that Frank earned the distinction of being one of the truly dedicated teachers in the Brentwood High School.

As a leader, Frank served, and continues to serve, on the boards of many professional and education-based associations. He has served on the Executive Committee of the Town of Islip NAACP. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Teachers Federal Credit Union where he played an integral role in emphasizing and enhancing the services provided to its members. He is an avid supporter of social justice. He was instrumental in the formation what has become Project Hope. He continues to serve by coming to every general meeting and delivering ROBS' donations to PRONTO.

He was born in Scranton, North Carolina. After graduation from high school he entered the Air Force in 1951 with his first assignment in Wilmington, Delaware followed by a two year tour in Germany at Ramstein Air Force Base.



Undated photo of NYS Senator Hillary Clinton with Frank Spencer



After his discharge from the Air Force in 1955 he entered the Reserves as a member of the Air National Guard as an Air Evacuation Medical Technician.

He is a highly decorated member of the reserves, having been awarded medals such as the Air Force Achievement Medal, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, the Army Good Conduct Medal to mention just a few.

Frank resides in Wheatley Heights, Long Island with his wife of 57 years, the former Vernell Andrews, his college sweetheart, affectionately known as Vern. Vern was also a dedicated educator in the Brentwood schools until her own retirement in 1991. Frank and Vern have a son Wayne.

With all the accolades Frank has received through his military and community service, he feels his most prized recognition is from the smiles and appreciation of the students he mentored and motivated each day as an educator.

Frank's reputation as a man of high values, commitment and dedication, not just to the youth of Brentwood, but to all of Long Island, serves as a source of pride to all who are fortunate to know him.

ROBS is nominating Frank Spencer for the NYSUT 2017 Community Service Award.



IT'S ALL ABOUT US by Carmela Criscione

I am so over 2016. Let's hope that while 2017 may bring us challenges, on all kinds of fronts, it will be gentler than what has gone before.

In November we lost **Maria Canale's** husband. In October, **Ruth Goldstein Leopold** (Elementary/Laurel Park) and in November **Susanne Gusterson** (Special Ed) passed away.

December was truly a terrible month. Our Treasurer, **Carmen Roldan** lost her father, our Secretary, **Nancy Churchillo** lost her husband, **Lee Murphy** (Clerical/HS) her husband and **Jim Varian** (Guidance/HS) his wife. In addition, many retirees also died: **June McGee** (Accounting Supervisor) and husband **Joe**, (Security) died within a short time of each other, **Judy Curran** (English/HS), **Cathy Miceli** (Data Processing), **John Barone** (Elementary), **George Obradovich** (Science/North MS), **Cynthia Hall-Browne** (Music/Elementary), **Marian Carroll** (Clerical/HS) also within days of her husband and on December 31 **Ann Schnal** (Special Ed) also passed. **Mike Bannon** (Science/HS) died on December 25. During the 1980's Mike was named National High School Science Teacher of Year.

Gail Kirkham died on New Year's Day. Ms. Kirkham was a Brentwood School District Trustee as well as a Library Board Trustee for many years. **Yvette Zimmerman** (clerical at the High School) died in early January.

If anyone wants to post a personal remembrance about someone we lost recently please send it on to me.

We sent get-well wishes to **Cheryl Castano** (Math/HS) who had a fall at home and is recovering at her daughter's home.

Birthday wishes to **Louis V. Nannini**, former Superintendent of Schools in the late 1960's, who celebrated his **100th** birthday in December. John Sherin and I interviewed Dr. Nannini several years ago when he was in his mid-nineties. He was as sharp and charming as he could be. He came to a **ROBS** meeting when we presented his video, and he was a **ROCK STAR!**

At a recent luncheon NSYUT honored **Nick Siciliano**, **Harriet Pepine** and **Phyllis Goodwin** for 25 years (and more) of union activities.

Ronda Brooks' daughter, Devon, graduated from SUNY Binghamton in December with a degree in Business Administration and a minor in Education. Congratulations.

If you have any news, please pass it along.



SCHOOL HOUSE RESTORATION

by Ellen Edelstein

After many years of sitting dormant and deteriorating, the Modern Times schoolhouse, our Stubborn Little Building, is coming back to life! As a result of a generous grant from the Robert David Lyon Gardiner Foundation, we were able to start work just before Thanksgiving and in the few weeks since, the building has undergone a remarkable transformation. It is no longer in danger of collapse and it will easily survive anything the winter has in store. Thanks to the skilled eyes and hands of antique carpenter Scott Brown, many original components were discovered and retained. The workmanship that became evident when the interior walls and debris were removed is a testament to the abilities of our Modern Times predecessors.

The building has been rotated to face Third Avenue, and soon it will be placed on a foundation. The cupola will be raised to its original height to accommodate the four windows that were part of the original design. The foyer, which had been removed when the building became residence, will be replaced and once completed, the original surviving siding will be installed, along with custom milled siding to duplicate the original material. We have been promised a donation of windows and doors.

I never thought my retirement would bring me a new job as Clerk of the Works but I learned an enormous amount about both historical structures and construction. The contacts I've made over the years have been invaluable in both saving money and educating me on the intricacies of restoration. The Brentwood community has been very generous with donations of materials, advice, support and dollars, and I look forward to the day when the octagonal schoolhouse is once again open to the public and it takes its place among the most important historical structures on Long Island.



The Stubborn Little Building



On the road to restoration

*Ed: Ellen is President of the Brentwood Historical Society as well as a very active **ROBS** member.*



RING, RING, IT'S UNAVAILABLE CALLING AGAIN

by Carmela Criscione

I get phone calls from some very interesting places: Guam, Washington D. C., San Francisco, from 15 digit numbers, from something called BBBSLI, as well as Florec-da, and, of course, Unavailable. Am I that popular? No, I don't know any of those callers but I am sure they want me to buy their products, subscribe to their services or donate to their cause. I've had the IRS call me to say I owe thousands of dollars, and the Justice Department is coming to clamp me in handcuffs and cart me off to a dark cell in a dismal prison. Really? Really?

The best was when my tearful granddaughter called to say she was in terrible trouble, but a very nice lawyer was helping her if only I would send \$5,000. I don't have a granddaughter. Just another scam.

My advice to you is just don't pick up the phone let the answering machine do it. Most of the calls end in a busy signal when the robocallers realize I'm not going to play their game today.

There was one very persistent caller from something called Alspan. They called 3-4 times a day. Finally I picked up and told them to stop bothering me. They called 4 times in the next 25 minutes. I contacted the FCC and stopped them in their tracks.

There are many worthy charities that need support but do you really know who you are talking to? Never give out personal information on the phone. The mail solicitations come in every day. I am deluged with labels, religious knick knacks, greeting cards and note pads I do not want. How much is it costing the charity to mail all this unwanted stuff?

There was a guy on TV in late December who had a "Fund Me" account on which he had collected \$2,000. His cause? He wanted to go to Hollywood to protect Betty White (a national treasure at age 95) from the malignant last days of 2016 that saw so many of our beloved celebrities die. She's still with us so he was either successful or it just wasn't her time to go.

I'm sure there legitimate "Fund Me" appeals, but please be sure before you give any money.

Everyone seems to be vying for our charitable dollars, but it is not wrong to check out even recognized charities to see how much of your donation goes to administrative costs and how much to the charity.

There are sites, like CharityNavigator.com, where you can check out charities and how they spend your donation dollars.

Appeals on TV are heart wrenching and, I think, a form of emotional blackmail. I don't want to be told that for 63 cents a day or \$19 a month an abused animal will be saved. Multiply that by the number of similar ads and there is not enough money in the world to give to all the children, veterans, polar bears, whales, aged people in dire need, etc. that they purport to represent. When you give to **ROBS** for scholarships or **Project Hope** 100% of your donation goes to the intended cause.

I believe in charitable donations, but I also believe in responsible giving. Americans are very generous people. I hope it always remains so, but we do have to know what we are donating to.





IN MEMORIAM - 2016

FOR THOSE WE LOST

We honestly do not know where
good people go
when they leave us.

We do know what they leave
behind -- love, memories and
people who wish they
were not gone.

We will always remember them.



MARCH

William Lapp - Principal WMS
Beula Vincent - Music/HS

APRIL

Dolores Herrmann - Elementary/North

MAY

Haskell Paster - Social Studies/HS

JULY

Daurice Synder - Teacher of Dance

OCTOBER

Ruth Goldstein Leopold - Elementary/Laurel

NOVEMBER

Suzanne Gusterson - Special Ed
Janice Thorkelson - Music

DECEMBER

Mike Bannon - Science/HS
John Barone - Elementary/Southeast
Marion Carroll - Clerical/HS
Judy Curran - English/HS
Cynthia Hall-Browne - Music
June McGee - Accounting Supervisor
Joe McGee - Security
Cathy Miceli - Data Processing
George Obradovich - Science/NMS
Ann Schnal - Special Education



HELLO, MY NAME IS

OLLIE!

by Carmela Criscione



For several newsletters we asked members to come up with a name for our mascot. Although our mascot has appeared in the corner of all the newsletters, no one had ever named him.

We are celebrating our 25th anniversary so it was time to name him. At our luncheon on June 3, 2016 ballots were handed out, and a vote was taken. "Ollie" was the resounding winner, although "Chauncey" gave him a run.

At our September 9th meeting he was revealed to the membership. He is a 10x12 needlepoint. He stands in front of Brentwood's colors, green and white, and holds a banner with his name and **R.O.B.S., Since 1991**. There are approximately 12,000 individual stitches. It took me 6 weeks to stitch him. He will be present at all our general meetings. Next meeting come up and introduce yourself.

WOMEN'S MARCH ON WASHINGTON

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singing songs and carrying signs, wearing pink hats, pushing baby strollers, chanting, and showing support for the rights of the citizens of the USA and the world. It was incredibly peaceful and awe-inspiring! There was no violence or vandalism and there were no arrests. I have seen crowd estimates from 500,000 to 1.5 million. DC was a virtual sea of humanity, not just gathered on the central mall, but on every street in town.

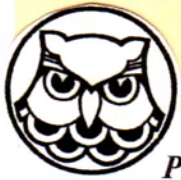
It was so crowded that I never got to the area where the speakers and performers were. I never even heard them. But it didn't matter a bit because the headline act was the crowd. Hundreds of thousands of Americans peaceably assembled to petition the government for a redress of grievance, as guaranteed by the first amendment.

When we went back to the Metro to catch our bus ride home, one of the Metro employees told us that she was overwhelmed at the number of people riding the trains that day. She said there were at least three times as many people as the day before, Inauguration Day. She remarked about how incredibly peaceful this crowd was and that she hadn't heard about any reports of violence.

This was only one of over 650 demonstrations worldwide taking place on all seven continents! Many people I know were unable to attend. It was my honor and privilege to march for everyone! I feel as if my voice was heard along with millions of other marchers that day. This will stand out as one of the most amazing days of my life.

The next March is tentatively scheduled for April 15th. Think about joining us.





PROJECT HOPE SUCCEEDS AGAIN!

by Letty Sustrin

Due to the wonderful generosity and caring ways of our **ROBS** members all over the United States, four families in the Brentwood School District had a very Merry Christmas and Holiday Season. I had many wonderful elves on my committee to help me shop, plus our **ROBS** Executive Committee and many volunteers came to help us with the wrapping. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for all this loyalty to the Brentwood Community.

Just to give you an idea of how caring we are and how seriously we assume this responsibility, I'd like to mention three specific fantastic things that occurred. The families give us their wish lists, and we try as best as we can to fulfill all responsible requests.

One 15 year old very bright high school student in addition to taking some college courses, works at a part time job. His old laptop went to "laptop heaven", and he requested one as all his work is done on it. I was able to get a wonderful refurbished one for him so now he is one happy person.

A 17 year old student in another family had a very unusual wish. His dream was to learn to play the piano. I was able to get him a brand new Casio Digital Keyboard that comes with instructions, and also built-in music. This is one lucky young man, and maybe we'll have another famous musician from Brentwood one day!

The family that Kris Dougherty and her shopping helpers serviced had a little girl who asked Santa Claus for a "Barbie Bike". They made her wish come true.

So, as you can see, our Project Hope committee members take their jobs very seriously. Now we can all relax and enjoy this New Year and look forward to another Project Hope, 2017.

Best wishes to all for a very Happy and Healthy New Year!



NEWSLETTER NEWS

by Carmela Criscione

We are announcing some changes on the editorial board.

Ronda Brooks, our graphic designer, will also be functioning as co-editor. I will continue to collect the articles and send them to her, She will design the layout and insert the pictures.

The whole Editorial Board works very hard on each issue but we want to put a little more "zing" in our presentation.

As always thank you for your support, and continue to send in your articles and comments.

CONGRATULATIONS

JOB WELL DONE



Bruce Fabrizio, President of the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce, awarding Ellen Edelstein with the Distinguished Member of the Year Award, September 2016



THE DAY MY WORLD CHANGED

by Julius Hay

On Thursday October 28, 2013 I had a sister born, named Gianna Michele Fox. On October 30, I met her for the first time. When I walked in the hospital and into the room my sister and my mom were in, I saw my sister on my mother's arm. When I saw her, I knew that my life would change. I knew that I would have to be a lot more responsible and I knew that I would have to protect her. Life was not the same for sure, but I was ready.

Then my brother James held Gianna on a chair. When he was holding her I saw that he was shaking a bit. I thought it would be hard. After washing my hands, it was my turn. Finally I held her.

When I sat down and she was in my arms I felt her little, little toes and saw her tiny fingers. It made me feel like I was not alone.

Then later on my brother, Myles, held her. Also his birthday was the next day. As I glanced over at him. I couldn't help but wonder and think that he had to be feeling mad now since he had to share a birthday, which mean no paintball, no bowling and no hiking. He did not hold her very long.

When I was holding her I felt a lot of responsibility in the future for me. When I saw her, I felt like I would have to play with her 24/7. My mind drifted on all these thoughts, but I was drawn back to the moment and noticed her tiny body, her small toes, her softness, and I felt greatness. I was suddenly very happy. I was not the youngest in my family. In my mind I was having a big great party.

Just yesterday as I walked past her in the room I glanced down her. I remembered what I had to do for her. I remembered the first time I held her, the love that I have for her, and how my life changed that day just over a year ago.

And then when I left the hospital that day, I thought of how rooms would end up, and I thought Myles would moved into my room. But no, actually Gianna moves into my room. But then later on in the year Myles moved into my room and Gianna took over his old room. But I still have to share a room with my step-brother, Domenick.

On that day my life changed when my sister was born and I would have to change my way of living for her.



Moore family photo

Ed: This article may seem like a departure from our usual fare. The millennium generation that this young man belongs to is the greatest numbered generation in history out-numbering the Baby Boomers substantially. This young man is sensitive, intelligent and has an insight which should give us hope for the future. He is proof that education works. There is something wonderful about meeting a sibling for the first time and he captures it well. He was 11 years old when he wrote this. It was not edited, they are his words and feelings. He is Paula Moore's grandson.



ROBS SCHOLARSHIPS

Our Scholarship Committee will shortly be receiving letters and applications from Brentwood High School's 2017 graduating seniors.

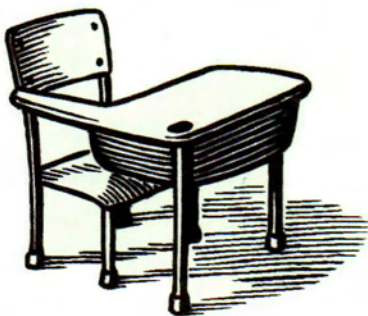
As you know, **ROBS** has been committed from its very beginning to fostering the educational goals of Brentwood students pursuing careers in education.

We will be accepting contributions at all our meetings, and checks can be sent directly to **Carmen Roldan**.

Checks should be made out to **ROBS** with "scholarship fund" on the memo line and sent to Carmen Roldan, 49 Linda Lane, North Babylon, New York 11703.

In the past, our members have been very generous. There is great need. Now more than ever we need motivated young people entering the teacher rolls.

Thank you for your support.



CAN YOU HELP?

Did **Charles Calitri** ever teach you as a graduate or undergraduate student at NYU or Hofstra University?

John Sherin requests that you contact him at jmsherin@optonline.net or 516 931-2971.

Thanks.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?

The Executive Board has been thinking and talking about programs for the up-coming year.

What do you think about the following ideas?

Craft meeting where members can demonstrate a craft with everyone creating one of their own.

A hobby meetings where members highlight an interest of theirs. This could include knitting, crocheting, stamps, collecting teapots, souvenir spoons, etc. Whatever interests you may interest others too.

Creating pictures from adult coloring books and then presenting them to all members.

Writing a short (50-75 words) essay on a provided sentence, such as "Have you ever experienced deja vu? What was it about? How did you feel?"

Valerie Vismale will continue to line up guest speakers. If you have anyone in mind please contact her. If you have any ideas for a meeting please contact her or any one on the Executive Board members.

