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OSARC newsletter

OSARC In April: A Trip To Wave Hill The Spectacular Bronx Estate



On Wednesday, April 11th, OSARC takes its annual trip, this year to Wave Hill, a landmark estate in the Riverdale section of the Bronx. (*Please remember there is no monthly April meeting; the trip is in lieu of the meeting.*) Wave Hill is a well-known attraction and consists of 28 total acres containing a wide variety of individual gardens, such as flower and wild gardens, as well as a greenhouse conservatory, and an alpine house. The extensive grounds feature wonderful views overlooking the Hudson and the New Jersey Palisades. There are several buildings on the grounds. The original mansion was built in 1843. There have been additions over the years, and Wave Hill has been added to the National Register of Historic Places. It was donated to the City of New York in 1960.

The spacious acreage offers many opportunities for exploring the multiple gardens and spectacular views. The main building is now a cultural center, and can be toured as well. Wave Hill uses its buildings to offer horticulture, education, and arts programs.

Information about the trip was included in the last issue of this *Newsletter*, including instructions on how to sign up. We have reached the capacity on our self-guided tour. We encourage those who have signed up for the trip to plan to eat before or after our visit, although a cafe on site may be available for a quick bite.

Wave Hill is located at West 249th Street and Independence Avenue in Riverdale. Mass transit is recommended. If you reserved a place, plan on driving, and can offer someone a lift (or if plans change and you can't come), call Fred Ranzoni at 718-965-3129.

The preferred route is to take the #1 Broadway subway line to the very last stop at West 242nd Street. OSARCers will meet in front of the Burger King, opposite the subway exit, at 12:30pm. (There is an alternative: taking Metro North to the Riverdale Station leaves you a short walk from Wave Hill.) There is a \$4 fee for seniors for self-directed tours of the gardens and buildings. Those who have signed up should be prepared with \$4 in cash.

On the day of the trip, Fred Ranzoni will coordinate. His cell number (for contact on April 11 only) is 718-916-8651.

Next Organization of Staff Analysts' Retirees Club Event
Wednesday • April 11, 2018 • Gather at 12:30pm

“OSARC April Trip To Wave Hill”

Meet the group at the Burger King opposite the 242nd Street stop on the #1 train.

OSARC Officers 2017-2018

Chairs.....Sybil Allen, Edmond Husbands
 Vice-Chairs.....Serena Freeman, Alice Moise
 Treasurer.....Jean Anmuth (1941-2018)
 Secretary.....Theodore White
 COMRO Representatives.....Mark Lewis, Theodore White, Jay Warshofsky



Newsletter Editor/Writer/Photos.....Rob Spencer
 Reporters: Ted White, Kathryn Nocerino Artwork: Theodore White

We'll Be Seeing You In All The Old Familiar Places

Fifty-Nine (59) OSARC members and friends attended OSARC's March meeting:

Michael Altman, Iris Bailey, Renee Bash, Nanette Beatrice, Andrea Behrens, Judy Berg, Vidyadhar Bhide, Renee Boyce, Paul Cohen, Colleen Cox, Orphia Crump, Bill Douglas, Delois Evans, Stan Greenberg, Al Gundersheimer, Diana Gundersheimer, Mary Hillman, Carolyn Hubbard, Ed Husbands, Rosalia Jackson, Patricia John, Roslyn Jones, Linda Kavanagh, Jeannie Kempson, Rosanne Levitt, Barbara Linder, Linda Lukas, Pat Lynch, Carol Marker, Ray Martinez, Alice Moise, Lillian Ngai, Olivia Parker, Dolores Parson, Eileen Pentel, Fred Ranzoni, Edwin Rivera, Cora Ross, Margarete Rousseau, Ana Sanchez, Joyce Scott, Lorraine Rose Scrofani, John Scrofani, John Sellers, Carl Semper, Reasa Semper, Andrew Sessa, Bill Smarrito, Sallie Stroman, Apinya Sukpanichnant, Deborah Sykes, Ed Tennant, Hattie Thomas, Ruth Verbit, Jay Warshofsky, Regina Weiss, Ted White



Colleen Cox (with mic), and friend and former colleague Deborah Sykes.

Paul Cohen, who retired from the Department of Finance in 2017, and Deborah Sykes, who retired from HRA in 2012, were attending their first OSARC meeting. Welcome Paul and Deborah!

We look forward to seeing you at our next event!

In Memoriam

With sadness, we report the deaths of six retirees. **Carol Von Dalkcom** retired in 2008 as an Assistant Systems Analyst at the Health and Hospitals Corporation. **Patricia Rashkin** retired in 1998 as an Associate Staff Analyst at the Human Resources Administration. **James Nelson** retired in 2008 as a Senior Healthcare Program Planner Analyst at HHC. **Russell Rodriguez** retired in 2001 as a Systems Analyst at HHC's Jacobi Medical Center. **William Baskerville** retired in 2002 as an Administrative Traffic Enforcement Agent at the NYC Police Department. **Daniel O'Leary**, a member of the Uniformed Sanitation Chiefs Assn.

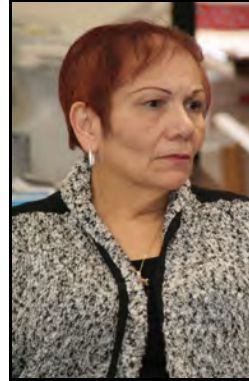
and the OSA Welfare Fund, retired in 2014.

The Newsletter extends its condolences to their family and friends.

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OSARC Continues to Ponder Brooklyn Cyclones Trip

The Brooklyn Cyclones are in the farm system of the New York Mets and play in a very nice stadium in Coney Island from mid-June to early September.



Alice Moise

Several OSARCers have expressed interest in a group outing to see a Cyclones ballgame this summer, especially one against the Staten Island Yankees.

Before committing to one of the options, which range from shared seating alone, to seating and food packages, to purchasing an all-inclusive "suite," we'd like to survey OSARC members on their interest in such a trip.

If you'd be interested, please email OSARC Co-Vice Chair Alice Moise at amoise@osaunion.org or call her at 212-686-1229. Let her know of your interest, how many you would bring with you, as well as any cost cap you would not wish to exceed in your personal outlay. This will help determine interest, feasibility and the best approach to take. We'll keep you posted on developments.

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June 13th Luncheon: Same Excellent Food, New Upper East Side Location and Lower Price

For the past two years, OSARC has held its gala June luncheon at the midtown location of Tony's DiNapoli Restaurant. The meal has been served family style and has featured a range of delicious Italian pasta and meat dishes as well an appetizer, salad and dessert. The dedicated space we were given was on the lower level of the midtown restaurant.

This year, we've chosen the other Tony's DiNapoli location which offers a better physical layout and the same great food. Not only is the location new, but the price is lower as well. Those of you who regularly attend OSARC's monthly meetings know we were charging \$1/person since the Club's founding in 1992 for the monthly luncheon. Last year, we doubled the fee to \$2/person. For the entire history of the Club, the monthly luncheon fee has helped to offset the cost of the June gala luncheon. With that modest price increase, we've been able to reduce the June luncheon fees.

This year, members and spouses/partners will pay only \$40 per person and non-members, their spouses/partners, as well as guests, will pay only \$45 per person.

Enclosed is a flyer for the June luncheon, which is set for Wednesday, June 13th. It provides a complete menu and directions. Take a moment now and reserve your space. Complete and clip the coupon and mail it back to the union, along with a check. We hope to see you there.

Getting Older, Legally

by OSARC Secretary Theodore “Teddy” White



Elder law attorney Britt Burner, at OSARC's March meeting.

OSARC's monthly luncheon was held on a beautiful but brisk March day that included just a few lilting snow flakes here and there during the afternoon. Co-Chair Ed Husbands welcomed the nearly 60 attending OSARC members and informed us that Co-Chair Sybil Allen, was under the weather and home getting better. We all wished her well.

Ed invited all to eat a sumptuous lunch even as it became necessary to set up a few more tables and chairs to accommodate the club members and guests.

We were introduced to new retirees or new attendees: Paul

Cohen, who retired in October of 2017 from the Department of Finance, and Deborah Sykes, who retired from the Human Resources Administration back in February 2012. We learned from Colleen Cox that many, many years ago, she worked with Debbie at the YMCA prior to their both working for the City!

Ed revisited our informative February Black History Month gathering and expressed his strong support for the OSARC members who talked about their own past. He remarked how all of it was quite important and relevant regardless of the race of the several story tellers. Edmond said he is proud of his Black heritage every day, not only in February. Never forget or downplay your individual or family history, Ed added.

Brother Husbands then shared a somewhat chilling story of contemporary racism. One of his fellow Buffalo Soldiers motorcyclists told him how two years ago he was part of a group of bikers committed to riding the amazing journey through the great length of California to their destination of Vancouver, Canada. They stopped at a gas station in Oregon (a state that in 1960 declared they were going to have all white residents) and smelled the aroma of good food and inquired how the group could gain access to the portion of the building in which meals were served. The proprietor said, without emotion or malice, that they could pay for their gasoline, but the restaurant was not for them, and told them “boy, get back on your bike and be on your way.” So, Ed said, you don't have to go back 100 years to find racist treatment. This took place two years ago. He mentioned that Oregon has the most White Supremacist groups in the United States, and that the state of Washington was similar.

Ed introduced the unflappable Jay Warshofsky who summarized the March COMRO meeting that he attended as our representative a couple of hours prior to our monthly OSARC meeting (please read the full COMRO report

elsewhere in this edition of the *Newsletter*.)

Ed then introduced our esteemed guest speaker, attorney Britt Burner of the Burner Law Group. Ms. Burner was accompanied by Michal Lipshitz, an attorney from their Manhattan office. Ms. Lipshitz handed out printed material, Britt's business card, and simple sign-in sheets so we could write our names and email addresses for further contact if we so desired.

Burner Law Group has offered a free initial consultation to any OSARC member who desires one.

Simply remind their receptionist when you call that you are part of OSARC and they will be happy to meet with you. Contact information appears at the end of this article.

The Burner Law Group is a full service Elder Law firm concentrating in the areas of Estate Planning, Trust and Estate Administration and Litigation, Special Needs Planning, Guardianship and Elder Law. They also offer assistance in discharge planning and placement in nursing homes, adult homes, assisted living facilities, and facilitating crucial home care, when necessary.

Ms. Burner speaks with the machine gun pace of a veteran trial attorney, but demonstrated skills born of experience in taking some of the complexities of aging and turning them into palatable bites. Ms. Burner observed that timely and effective planning can help to preserve a client's hard-earned assets while also anticipating the future need for care. The future may seem an abstract but advance planning can be essential in avoiding unexpected consequences.

Immediately, Ms. Burner emphasized the importance of having “Advanced Directives” in place, which include a Health Care Proxy and a Living Will, in order to protect your healthcare wishes. You can only designate one healthcare agent at a time, although it is accepted practice to list subsequent agents that may step up in the unfortunate event the initial agent is no longer available.

Burner asked OSARCers whether we have an advance plan, which she said must include a Health Care Proxy and a Living Will. “Who will make the critical medical decisions for you?” she asked. We were urged to consult our attorney in order to go into detail on these matters as they affect our personal lives.

However, if you request it, the New York State Department of Health will send you a Health Care Proxy Form to fill out or you may download it from their website (www.health.ny.gov/professionals/patients/health_care_proxy/index.htm).



Paul Cohen, at his first OSARC meeting.



Hattie Thomas



Britt Burner, Esq.

Another important document to have in place is a Power of Attorney. A Power of Attorney appoints an agent of our choice and grants them legal authority to conduct financial and business transactions on our behalf. These rights can be extensive or limited, depending on your wishes. No person, not even a spouse, has an automatic right to act on your behalf with regards to finances.

It is important to note that the law changed after 2009. A Power of Attorney must utilize a Statutory Gifts Rider (SGR) to grant specific powers to your agent with regard to transferring assets out of your name, setting up trusts on your behalf, assisting in Medicaid planning, etc. Additionally, if you have a Power of Attorney in place, but it was either created before 2010 or uses an old form, it will likely need to be updated in order to grant these powers to your appointed agent.

One way to protect your assets, should you need Medicaid coverage in the future, is to create a Medicaid Asset Protection Trust, which is an irrevocable trust that includes specific language that safeguards your assets against Medicaid. It is important to note that not all trusts are created equal and just because a trust is deemed "irrevocable" does not mean it will pass muster for the purpose of Medicaid asset protection.

Assuming that you created an irrevocable trust, the next consideration is whether that trust was properly funded. Simply creating the trust is not enough.

In order for assets to be protected in that trust, they need to have been transferred into the trust. Typically, this requires transfer papers to be signed by yourself and whoever you named as trustee. In the case of real property, the transfer into the trust will be accomplished by the execution of a deed. Burner offered case examples and anecdotes even as she welcomed questions while she was answering questions!



Renee Boyce

Burner reminded us that having a written will does not avoid the need for a court-supervised probate process. However, you can avoid probate by utilizing joint owners or

named beneficiaries on your financial accounts. Accounts with named beneficiaries pass outside of probate.

She recommended creating a trust to leave money to a loved one who is under the age of 18. If you name a minor as a beneficiary, she said the money sits in a non-interest earning account until the young person is emancipated.

Naturally, you would seek the advice of a lawyer if you would like to change your documents, including adding or deleting beneficiaries, or updating who will serve as your agent under any of the documents.

Beyond that, a good rule of thumb is that you should check in with your lawyer every five years for an overall review of your estate plan. At that time, the lawyer may suggest certain changes in your plan or may assure you that your plan will still be effective should you become incapacitated or die. You may want to visit with your attorney sooner if you are going through a major life event, such as retirement, sale of the family home, major illness, or the death of a spouse.

Another important reason to update your estate planning documents would be to respond to changes in State or Federal law. For example, in 2009 the New York State statute regarding powers of attorney underwent a major overhaul. While the change did not invalidate documents signed prior to 2009, it left some agents without the power to act in specific circumstances.

Another change in New York State law that impacted many clients' estate plans was an incremental rise of the estate tax exemptions starting in April 2014. Prior to this change in the law there was an estate tax owed if the deceased person had more than \$1 million in assets. As a result of this change, the current New York State exemption is now \$5,250,000. What this means for the individual is that certain tax-saving techniques that may have been part of their original estate plan would no longer be necessary.

In closing her presentation, Burner cordially invited OSARC members to make an appointment with her to review any existing Will or other estate planning documents we may have. You can reach her at Burner Law Group PC, 45 West 34 Street, Suite 1203, New York NY 10001, (212) 867-3520 or bburner@burnerlaw.com. The firm has a website at www.burnerlaw.com

OSARC Co-Chair Ed Husbands declared Ms. Burner's presentation the best of the many he had heard in his 71 years! Those in attendance agreed with Ed.

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Olivia Parker



Ed Husbands

COMRO Reports (For February and March)

The Council of Municipal Retiree Organizations (COMRO) meets monthly, drawing representatives of the retiree sections of municipal unions for a discussion on issues of retiree interest. OSARC representative to COMRO Jay Warshofsky attended the February and March COMRO meetings and reported to OSARCers on the proceedings. The following is based on Jay's reports and minutes prepared by Mike O'Keefe.

The next few quarterly Common Investment Meetings of the five NYC pension systems will be held in 2018 on June 20, September 17 and December 19. The meetings take place at 1 Centre St, 10 floor, Room 1005. Meetings start at 9 am. Warren Lewis said that the discussion at the last meeting was mostly about the large increase in assets that all five plans realized from stock market gains.

Many COMRO participants observed that their deductions for prescription drugs had gone up substantially in January. Stu Eber pointed out that the Municipal Labor Committee is currently negotiating with the City about medical coverage, especially medication costs. These increased costs affect retirees disproportionately as they generally use more medications than active workers.

COMRO's guest speaker in February was Maria Alvarez, the President of the Statewide Senior Action Council. Alvarez provided an update on state issues of importance to seniors and encouraged attendees to talk about actions COMRO may



Andrew Sessa

want to take, including advocacy of programs that are funded by the state legislature.

Governor Cuomo is trying to eliminate IRMAA (the Income Related Medicare Adjustment Amount), the reimbursement for larger Medicare Part B premiums for retirees with pensions and other income greater than \$80,000/year. He is also seeking to cap Medicare Part B reimbursement at the current \$134 a month. Alvarez said Cuomo proposes this every year. Statewide then opposes it, and legislators need to find the funds to continue the full reimbursement.

Alvarez observed that health care has become central to state budget negotiations. Even if you believe cuts to state programs don't apply to you, more and more people who are considered middle class are starting to lose ground and make too much to qualify for assistance programs. She said that more and more people aged 65 and older are going into debt.

Alvarez said that Cuomo included issues of aging in his State of the State speech for the first time, proclaiming New York as the first age-friendly state in the US. He declared people aged 65 and over as vital to the community, and that all state agencies must examine the impact their policies will have on the senior population.

Alvarez is concerned that Cuomo focuses on AARP as the

lead organization for senior affairs. She expressed concern that, although Statewide works with AARP on some issues, AARP takes actions that are in the best interests of its for-profit medical insurance company. For example, when the Medicare Modernization Act was passed back in 2003, AARP supported Bush's Medicare Part D drug program, and has profited from it. Also, AARP only takes action on national issues, Alvarez added. The local chapter is not allowed to support local issues without national AARP approval.



Lillian Ngai

Alvarez observed that the 1965 Older Americans Act, which provides for services such as transportation, senior centers and SNAP (formerly food stamps), has not received funding increases in many years. Federal funding for these programs is supplemented by the states and counties. There are no increases in the New York State budget in this area, and there have not been increases for years.

Alvarez noted that the Governor wants to establish a "Long-Term Planning Council" in connection with his initiative, to be overseen by the NYS Department of Health, a move she believes will lead to the needs of seniors being ignored or becoming "medicalized." This is particularly vexing, she said, since an advisory board on aging, required by statute, already exists but has never been convened under Cuomo. Although the governor declares New York an age-friendly state, there is no money attached to the initiative, which leaves the declaration hollow, according to Alvarez.

Alvarez explained that NY Connects is like a statewide 311 referral number for aging services. Callers are referred to independent living centers in their home counties. Unfortunately, callers are often referred to the wrong county, or given incorrect information. Also, \$14 million was recently diverted from this program to the State Health Department, causing hardship for independent living centers that have hired people and invested in infrastructure.

Alvarez also touched on the shortage of health care workers at a time when more people need them because policies are pushing people out of nursing homes. Home care companies are having trouble hiring people. In many parts of



Carl and Reasa Semper



Bill Smarrito

the state, workers need a reliable car. Employers give them less than full time hours to avoid paying benefits, so many workers only keep the job until something better comes along. With fast food work now drawing a minimum wage of \$15/hour, why would people choose the dirty and difficult work of a home attendant for less money?

Alvarez has asked counties if they have waiting lists of people in need of services. Usually, the counties say either that there is an extremely long waiting list, or else the county doesn't keep a waiting

list, because it wouldn't look good to show so many people waiting for services.

Alvarez also spoke about the Spousal Impoverishment Law. Currently, the community spouse can keep up to \$78,000 and the spouse in a nursing home would still be eligible for Medicaid. The governor wants to reduce this amount to \$24,180. The community spouse has the right to ask that his/her assets not be considered for Medicaid eligibility. Every year, Gov. Cuomo wants to eliminate that provision and the legislature has to put it back.

Alvarez said Cuomo also wants to eliminate the "prescriber prevails" provision, in which the doctor who prescribes a medication is the final authority on whether it is dispensed as written.

Jim Perlstein encouraged COMRO member retiree groups to be a part of the Statewide Senior Action Council and attend their monthly meetings.

When one COMRO member observed that electeds constantly pit one set of needs against another, Alvarez pointed out that we can not fall victim to the idea that money is short and we live in limited economic times. Even in good times, seniors had to fight for these issues. She reminded all that there is money to address these concerns, then and now, and that we have to fight for them.

The COMRO guest speaker for March was DC37 Retirees Chapter President Ed Hysyk, who spoke about pharmaceutical industry malfeasance and Hysyk's desire for a large scale demonstration against Big Pharma.

Hysyk said that his parents were in the union movement. His mother was a UAW member in a factory. His father was a vice-president for grievances in an AFL craft union for window washers.

Ed believes that one particular target could be Pfizer, the large pharmaceutical manufacturer whose main office is in midtown. This is a people issue, Hysyk said, not just a union issue. When Medicare was passed in 1965, drugs were not included because the costs of drugs were so low. Wages have not kept



Michael Altman

pace with drug costs. About 85% of the money for pharmaceutical research and development comes from tax payer dollars through the National Institutes for Health. The R&D focuses on the most profitable drugs, the ones we often see on television advertisements.

City and union pension funds are invested in Big Pharma stocks. They are not forthcoming when pressed for the details. The City pension plans would face a financial penalty if they disinvested in the drug industry within the next five years and, even then, the funds would have to be reinvested in another pharmaceutical company.

District Council 37 has been part of class action suits against Big Pharma, but the payoffs have been modest.

Costs and pricing are closely guarded by every drug manufacturer, pharmaceutical benefit manager (PBM), and pharmacy chain to protect their bottom line. DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido's proposal to have DC 37 partner with NYC Health+Hospitals and/or the Veterans Administration to purchase drugs has not panned out. DC 37's \$200 million/year drug plan is in serious condition.

The late DC37 Retiree head Stu Leibowitz and late City Councilwoman Mary Pinkett, a former DC 37 member, led the passage of the Medicare Part B reimbursement about 25 years ago. The City's Office of Labor Relations is proposing ending the program in exchange for wage increases during the new contract bargaining. We need, said Hysyk, to go back to our unions and remind our active union members that any benefit we lose today will be lost to them as well as they are the next generation of retirees. Hysyk said, "in-service workers are retirees in training!"

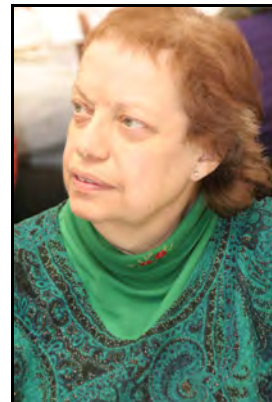
COMRO President Hyland asked everyone to address the idea of a demonstration.

Neal Frumkin of DC37 pointed out the outrageous expense of new drugs. A Hepatitis C pill costs \$1,000/day for 80 days. The DC 37 drug plan cannot afford to reimburse \$80,000 and the member cannot pay for it out-of-pocket. He observed that if the unions do nothing, "we will drown in this tide. It is a working families issue."

A participant observed that politicians receiving money from Big Pharma ought to be targeted. The Labor Day Parade was suggested as a forum for a protest.

George Altomare of the UFT said we need a written resolution to bring back to our unions and one was drafted for consideration at the April COMRO meeting (see below in a text box). Altomare said that the UFT Welfare Fund is doing very well fiscally.

The extreme price difference between the same drug sold in



Lorraine Rose Scrofani



Ruth Verbit

Canada or elsewhere and the US was noted. One COMRO rep pointed out that Trump had campaigned on restraining drug prices. Another suggested an alliance between unions and consumer groups in planning any demonstration.

There was speculation on how to ensure a large turnout at any demonstration, with the recommendation that all the groups need to be involved in planning and therefore invested in the outcome.

COMRO Secretary Stu Eber said the City runs the benefit program for managers and the audit of the Management Benefits Fund shows it to be solvent. He spoke to Managerial Employees Association Retirees Director Adrienne Leaf who said the demonstration was a good idea, but who is concerned about getting a decent turnout.

COMRO passed the following motion: 1)We affirm our interest in pursuing the demonstration in front of Pfizer's Midtown offices. 2)We will go back to our parent unions to research this with our unions. 3)We will come to the April 11 COMRO meeting with our information and make a decision on whether to organize a demonstration. 4)We will form a sub-committee to begin the planning process.

Individuals and organizations interested in contributing to the West Virginia teachers who successfully struck for higher pay in March, to help provide food and child care for their communities, cover emergencies, and make up for lost pay from the strike (for substitutes, aides, and other part-time employees), should make the check payable to Solidarity Fund and mail it to: Solidarity Fund, AFT West Virginia, Attn: Lee Hairston, 1615 Washington Street Suite 300, Charleston, WV 25311-212, Phone Number 304-344-2679

The following motion was approved: 1) COMRO will send a letter of congratulations and support to the West Virginia AFT. 2) The letter will contain a check from COMRO for \$100. 3) We will encourage our unions to do the same if they have not done so already.

Finally, Jay Warshofsky informed COMRO that the New York City Central Labor Council is trying to establish a centralized New York Labor Center at 110 William Street with a 30 year lease and rental charges that will include all services and common areas. The goal is to consolidate common services and spaces, such as meeting rooms, to make it feasible for unions to better work closely together.

Draft COMRO Resolution on Big Pharma To Be Considered April 11, 2018

Resolved:

Whereas the unconscionable costs of prescription drugs cause many working families to choose between necessary medications or paying for rent and food,

And whereas the ongoing increases put a strain on our health and security benefits while imposing increased costs on our members,

Therefore be it resolved that the delegates of COMRO, in concert with our labor and community partners, endorse and mobilize for a demonstration at a target selected by these groups. Our aim shall be the capping of the costs of drugs at or below their current levels and limiting their rate of increase.

A Tale of Two Marches

by OSARCer Kathryn Nocerino



Writer Kathryn Nocerino (seen here looking down in the center of this picture by Sam Bleiberg of the *Chelsee Now* newspaper) on the way to the March for Our Lives.

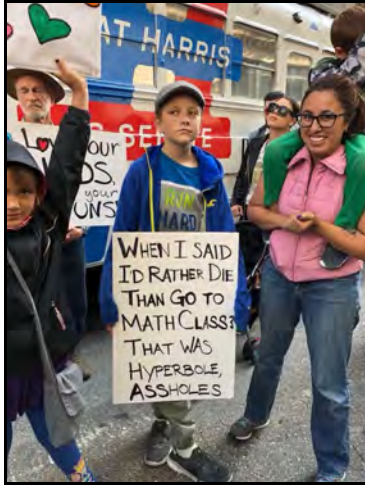
When I got an email from State Senator Brad Hoylman offering a seat on a bus to the 3/23/18 March for Our Lives in Washington D.C., I accepted immediately. Realizing that this event was being run by the kids, I wanted to support them in any way I could: by increasing the body count; by joining in the chants, whatever. Since my vote in the last presidential election had been negated by the electoral college, I was willing to try just about anything to bring sanity back to Washington.

Funding for the bus also came from Assemblyman Richard Gottfried (with whom I actually went to grade school in Flushing), and Assemblywomen Deborah Glick and Linda Rosenthal. We received flyers from Glick and an organization called VoteOutGunMoney. The latter piece chronicled the exact dollar amounts of recorded (and only recorded) contributions made to members of Congress, by state, by the National Rifle Association (NRA). It upset me to learn that Congressman Lee Zeldin, who represents the area of Long Island where my parents' vacation home is situated, took in a whopping \$28,951. But they gave Senator Marco Rubio of Florida \$244,019, a disparity which somehow did not comfort me. Their list showed that 12 members of Congress each received over \$100,000 apiece from the NRA, with John Mc Cain topping the list at \$618,113, followed by Ted Cruz (\$460,367), and Paul Ryan (\$345,489). I actually respect McCain but, jeez!

Our group varied from about one-fifth students, who situated themselves in the back of the bus, to middle-aged and elderly activists. The bus looked exactly like NY City: all the major ethnicities; a guy in a turban (Sikh); marrieds and singles; straights and gays.

The trip took about 4 hours, setting off at around 5:30 am. We stopped midway at a highway rest stop in Delaware which was overwhelmed by the turnout. The staff at the Earl of Sandwich couldn't make the bacon, egg and cheese specials fast enough. The coffee urn emptied fast. At this point I, along with the Turnpike staff, realized exactly how large the event was

going to be. I have seen turnout figures as large as 1 million (the *Daily News*), but most estimates set it at around a quarter million. Who knows. When you tabulate all the people with signs around the City that day and not only on the Avenue, the total will definitely go up.



We parked at one of two immense stadium lots familiar to me from pre-vious demonstrations and took the Metro to Smith-sonian, walking a few long blocks to the event staging area, Pennsylvania Avenue. All along the route, organizers offered participants and the general public free water and organic energy bars (god forbid you should get thirsty or hungry while exercising your First Amendment rights). I also noticed several medical tents (staffed, but empty of patients).

Washington's Metro personnel and the D.C. police force proved to be universally friendly.

I also noticed some National Guard vehicles, including a cute little mini-tank I thought would work fine on the Long Island Expressway. I had to fight the impulse to knock on the driver's side window and name a price.

As we neared the epicenter of the protest, the going got slower and the crowds thicker. We finally came to a standstill on the avenue. Culminating in the far-off Capitol building, it was solid people as far as the eye could see. JumboTrons (theater-sized video screens) were set up all along the route so that everyone could see the speakers and performers close up.

Somebody yelled, "Look where we are!" Turning my head to the right, I saw a Victorian structure, a gingerbread fantasy made out of stone, and above the doorway a big, cheerful gold sign broadcasting the name of You-Know-Who. This, as you will remember, is the same Old Post Office turned hotel in which the Trump Organization accepts very handsome "room rents" from the Republican National Convention, lobbyists, and representatives of foreign governments. It is the same building ennobled at night, shortly after You-Know-Who uttered his "shithole countries" remark, by an artist who projected a light show on the front façade. The images included a smiling cartoon turd-pile and a giant arrow pointing at the front door reading "BRIBES GO HERE!"

All of us knew that, while the students and their supporters gathered in Washington to plead for freedom from gunfire, You-Know-Who was in his golf resort at Mar-a-Lago working very hard. All of my fellow white people know how hard it is to work on a tan. It requires nerves of steel. You have to use all of the bravery and strategic smarts in your possession: do it wrong and you could get blisters.

Congress also fled the city on "Recess." But the students were there. I mark those adults 'ABSENT.' Go to the back of the room and stand with your heads to the wall.

Then the JumboTrons lit up. The kids started talking: kids

who survived and witnessed the recent gunfire at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, kids turned to stone at the point of a gun in Chicago (Mya Middleton, 16); kids robbed of family members in Los Angeles (Edna Chavez). They came from everywhere. They looked like everyone. Victims and witnesses to violence, they spoke with intelligence, passion, and common sense. Around me, I saw adults with tears streaming down their faces. One of the Florida massacre survivors introduced an incredibly charming 9-year-old, Yolanda Renee King, all smiles, who proved to be a granddaughter of Martin Luther King.

The speeches alternated with music. Among the performers, in no particular order but all excellent were: Arianna Grande, Miley Cyrus, Jennifer Hudson, Demi Lovato, Kanye West, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Dwayne ("the Rock") Johnson, and Vic Mensa.

Throughout the event, names got named – the names of the absent. A chant constantly went up: VOTE THEM OUT!"

Scattered throughout the City that day, volunteers ran voter registration booths. There were long lines around each one. Some people should pause their golf games, "dates" or whatever long enough to take notice.

Shortly after the speeches began, we started to hear sirens. The sound kept getting closer and closer. Suddenly, a cordon of police drove into the epicenter of the crowd. The cordon was headed by motorcycle police, followed by police on bicycles, and ended with a police car with its sirens and lights going. When I confronted one of the motorcycle police, the young man said, "We have to clear a fire lane. You will hear about it on the evening news." He sincerely believed whoever on the force ordered him out. I looked for anything about this on the evening news. I am still waiting for it. I suspect I will still be waiting if I reach age 90. The "clearing a fire lane" excuse was patently absurd: the crowd simply closed in again after the cordon moved on. The only effect it had was to disrupt the demonstration at all points down the avenue. The event had been pre-announced, pre-planned, and permitted. If the Washington police deemed a fire lane necessary, they could have positioned barriers along the avenue ahead of time. The only barriers in evidence were those separating the crowd from the Old Post Office/ You-Know-Who Hotel and those protecting the anti-abortion demonstrators (four people, big sign) and the NRA/"Second Amendment Rights"/Tea Party group which numbered seven, count 'em, seven.

I quickly realized that I was witnessing history. I remembered my first Washington demonstration, which took place in October 1969. I had been working for about a year, and a guy in my office said he was going to be driving his VW bus (the archetypal hippie vehicle) to Washington for a demonstration which would end the Vietnam War. You could see the roadway in a few places through the floorboards and the VW made very strange sounds when it started and stopped.

The event, in which high school and college students predominated, had been, in those pre-internet and pre-cell phone days, organized largely by word-of-mouth. Estimates showed a turnout of more than a million. That first great march, happening a few months after Woodstock, was abundantly peaceful. As we walked around on the mall, what we saw was a lot like an immense picnic. Satisfied that we had made our presence known, we turned a corner.

A few agents provocateur were urging a group of pimply,

stoned 14-year-olds to “storm the Justice Department.” Snickering, we went another block and ran into a contingent of National Guard Troops. All of them scrubbed, rosy-cheeked and about our age, they stood like living statues in full battle gear: helmets, nightsticks, guns. They also looked scared out of their wits. Who knows what they were told or what orders they had been given. A hippie chick tried to hand one of them a daisy (gad, what a cliché!), saying, of course, “Make Love, Not War!” and got absolutely no reaction.



Anti-Vietnam War Moratorium Protest, Washington DC, October 1969. (AP Photo on the web)

We moved forward again and rounded another corner. All of a sudden, we heard “pop! pop! pop!” Flocks of birds lifted off every roof. Then we went blind. Our eyes started to burn and all we could see was a blur. A woman pushing an infant in a stroller, probably a local resident, began to scream. One of the guys said, “We need to get inside!” Somehow, we found an open door. Ironically, it proved to be the lobby of the Watergate Hotel. The gas had penetrated inside and it wasn’t much better. Despite many applications of cold water, my sight didn’t clear for another three hours. One of my fellow riders said, “That was pepper gas!” I realized that my own country’s President had ordered his citizens to be tear-gassed by the National Guard. And they did it.

The Vietnam War didn’t end until 1975. In the interim, the hippies turned into Yuppies and then the Yuppies turned into Yuppies. Our demonstration – and what followed – toppled a President (Lyndon Baines Johnson, who opted in 1968 not to run again.) Violence against demonstrators at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago split the Democratic electorate, allowing Richard Nixon to win on a plurality (in a field that included Nixon, Hubert Humphrey and former Governor George Wallace of Alabama.)

I bore a tremendous load of guilt about that election because, considering Hubert Humphrey a hawk in dove’s clothing, I cast my vote for Fred Halstead, the Socialist candidate. I learned this morning that New York State’s electoral votes went to Humphrey anyway, making me feel a little better. In fact, the electoral map for that Presidential contest looked remarkably similar to 2016’s. The nation’s midsection colored itself red.

With the war still raging, Nixon won in a landslide in 1972, painting his opponent, George McGovern, with three letter A’s: “acid, abortion, appeasement!” Nixon won 60 percent of the popular vote, but the electoral map turned nearly a solid red. This last time, the Democratic candidate (remember her?) won by 3 million popular votes but lost in the electoral college. If you care

about this, go online and google “abolish the electoral college.” You will eventually find a link to one of the many petitions calling for this.

Just like the creature who is in office now, Nixon went into conniptions whenever he realized people didn’t like him. There was a famous Enemies List. Engineering a break-in to Democratic party headquarters in the Watergate building to snag inside information about the opposition’s campaign caused his indictment, impeachment and eventual resignation (August 9, 1974). The war finally ended the following April. Today, we have the Wiki-leaking of private Democratic campaign documents, meetings which putatively involved Russian state hackers, and a polling/focus paneling/publicity/event organizing company called Cambridge Analytica directing its efforts to get every last Red State voter all fired up and out to the polls. As you might remember, biggest Trump contributor Rebekah Harper is this group’s president, Steve Bannon the former vice-president, and a Brit called Alexander Nix its CEO. US election laws prohibit foreign nationals from “directly or indirectly participating in the decision-making process” of a political campaign. Hello, does any of this sound familiar?

When I was a gradeschooler, we had “duck and cover” drills. We hid under desks while our teachers told us this would make us safe during an atom bomb attack! Now they make schoolkids hide in closets, telling them this will make them safe from gun massacres. A sixth grader in NY City recently wrote his Will, posting it on Facebook (or SnapChat, or whatever). Mr. Rogers wants to know, “Can you say Enough is Enough?”

Students are now having their parents sign contracts in which they promise to vote only for candidates who pledge to enact specific gun control laws. Students are registering to vote in great numbers. You better believe they will be showing up at the polls this November. It remains to be seen how long the change will take. I am tremendously impressed by the energy, the resolution, and the moral courage of today’s youth. They remind me of what all of us used to be!

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Medicare Rx Costs Up 10x The Inflation Rate

A new report for the minority staff of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee released recently disclosed that prices between 2012 and 2017 for the 20 most-prescribed brand name drugs for seniors have risen an average of 12% each year, nearly ten times the rate of overall inflation. The report urged further investigation to determine the “impact on health care system costs and financial burdens for the growing U.S. senior population.” The report found that Nitrostat, used to relieve chest pain, had increased the most, with a percentage change of 477%. Twelve of the 20 drugs saw their prices increase by more than 50% over the five-year period and six had price increases of over 100%. Lyrica, Novolog, Premarin and Zetia were other drugs that had increases of more than 100%. “If we allowed Medicare to negotiate drug prices directly with the pharmaceutical companies, we would save tens of billions of dollars,” observed Robert Roach, Jr., President of the AFL-CIO-affiliated Alliance for Retired Americans.

Third & Final Dues Notice. Haven't Paid? Please Pay Now!

More than 1,500 OSA retirees have already paid their 2018 OSARC dues and are listed in this *Newsletter* on the last two pages. This edition of the *Newsletter* is mailed to every retiree, member or not, and this is our third and final dues reminder for 2018. If you see your name on the list, thank you, you are fully paid for 2018. If you do not see your name, we do not have a record of having received your 2018 dues. OSARC is only as strong as its members. We are sure you want to keep in touch with your fellow retirees and receive this *Newsletter*, so please take a minute now to write your check payable to OSARC and mail it, along with the coupon below to OSARC, 220 East 23rd Street Suite 707, New York NY 10010. If we do not receive your dues payment by the end of April, you will not receive the May and June issues of the *Newsletter*.



Andrea Behrens, Margarete Rousseau

Dues of \$18 for the calendar year are payable at the beginning of January, regardless of when in the calendar year you first joined or last paid. New retirees only may pro-rate their first year OSARC dues at \$1.50/month from their date of retirement. If we are in error and you have already paid this year's dues, but your name does not appear on the back pages, please send a copy of your canceled check, along with a note, to OSARC at the address above.

OSARC Dues Payment & Membership Form 2018 Third and Final Notice

- Enclosed are my \$18 Dues for 2018 (Mail to: OSARC, 220 East 23rd Street, Suite 707, New York NY 10010)
- I just retired. Enclosed are my \$ _____ Dues for 2018 (\$1.50 per month starting on the date of my retirement).

Name (Please Print): _____

Street Address (Inc. Apt No., if any): _____

City/State/Zip: _____ Home Phone No.: _____

Cell Phone No.: _____ Email Address: _____

Happy Birthday to OSA Retirees Born in April

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