



# BRTA NEWSLETTER

[www.bрта.biz](http://www.bрта.biz)

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President: Thomas Giambra

Recording Sec.: Marie Wu

1st VP: Stephen Parada

Corresponding Sec.: Elisa Harting

2nd VP: Renate Yuhnke

Membership Sec.: Linda Parada

Treasurer: Floyd Kruschke

Past Pres: Al Marabella

At Large: Josephine Cross, Russell Gervasi, Arnold Harting

Board Members: Carolyn Cardarella, Clarann Josef, Michael Marszalek,  
Cynthia Mehary, Suzanne Nyitrai, Theresa Pope,  
Peter Riester, Dolores Scanlon, Guy Schiavi,

Winter Edition

November, 2019

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**December 5, 2019**—  
Holiday Luncheon. Information on page 6

**February, 2020**—Winter Luncheon

**Feb. 26-Mar. 9, 2020**—  
Treasures of Egypt

**May, 2020**—Spring Luncheon

**September, 2020**—Fall Luncheon

## President's Message

I hope everyone is enjoying the fall weather. It has always been my favorite time of the year. That has to do with cooler temperatures and changing colors of the leaves. I have never been a fan of hot weather. However, winter does not do much for me either.

It was nice to see so many of you at the BRTA Fall Luncheon. I hope that you had a good time and enjoyed the food. As always thank you for your support of the split club drawing. The money will be used for the scholarship fund.

It will be my honor and privilege to serve as the President of BRTA. It was not an office that I sought. However, I will do my best to live up to the proud tradition set by the previous holders of this office. If you have any suggestions or comments, please do not hesitate to let me know.

One thing that I would like to do is to provide our members with suggestions of volunteer opportunities that they might be interested in getting involved in. I realize that many of our members already do a great deal of volunteer work. The hope is to provide suggestions that you might be interested in.

Please check out the travel news in this issue. I need to thank Al Marabella and Russell Gervasi for all the work that they do in organizing and running these trips. There is a great deal of planning involved in setting up these activities.

It will soon be time to decide if you want to make a change in the healthcare plan that you are currently enrolled in. Perhaps you want to investigate what other options are offered to you by the board. Just make sure that the plan that you might consider changing to really meets your needs.

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Benefits Available to  
BRTA Members

**Long-term Care Insurance; BRTA Discounts on Long-term Care Insurance:** 1-800-655-4899

Tonawanda, NY 716-694-4388

**Dental Discounts**

The North Park Dental Group  
716-836-2242

**Vital Savings by Aetna**—Mention membership when you are inquiring about discount programs designed to help you save on dental or pharmaceuticals. 1-877-MY-VITAL (1-800-698-4825) or [www.vitalsavings.com](http://www.vitalsavings.com)

**Ballroom, Latin, Swing and Other Styles of Dance**—Tara Scime at 716-491-0186 or [TMSDance@yahoo.com](mailto:TMSDance@yahoo.com). Mention your BRTA membership and receive a discount.

**Faculty Rewards**—Discount magazine subscriptions. Go to [www.facultyrewards.com](http://www.facultyrewards.com) and use code 403360

**BPO**-Call Janet Field at 885-5001 for discount tickets

**West Herr Select Vehicle Purchase Plan**

Activate benefit plan ***before*** going to the dealership. Go to [www.westherrselect.com](http://www.westherrselect.com) or call your **Select Benefit Concierge (716) 202-3091**.

***IN MEMORIAM***

<i>John N. Gallagher</i>	<i>Kenneth Parton</i>
<i>Betty L. Griffith</i>	<i>Margaret Rizzo</i>
<i>Edward Holewinski</i>	<i>Margaret Songin</i>
<i>Rita T. Lankes</i>	<i>Mildred Stalling</i>
<i>Richard A. Lee</i>	<i>William Storey</i>

BRTA would like to acknowledge the passing of those teachers who served the children of Buffalo. If you would like to have someone included in the "In Memoriam" listings, please notify Josephine Cross (636-3014).

**CONGRATULATIONS to the following on their 50th  
wedding anniversary:**

Stephen and Shirley Banko

William and Gail Boyle

Walter and Donna Kozinski

Kenneth and Jo Ann Meyer

Daniel and Margaret McLaughlin

Richard and Jeanne Phillips

Ronald and Linda Young

Frequently Requested Numbers

Website: [www.brta.biz](http://www.brta.biz) Email: [brtamembership@yahoo.com](mailto:brtamembership@yahoo.com)

**President:** Thomas Giambra—877-7796

**Membership:** Linda Parada—875-3392

**Luncheons:** Mary Agnes Marabella—635-9530 **Travel:** Al Marabella—635-9530, Russ Gervasi—839-5781

**Newsletter:** Elisa Harting—838-3708

**Friendly Service:** Josephine Cross—636-3014

## **President's Report** (continued from page 1)

I attended the NYSTRS Workshop at the NYSRTA Convention. Representatives of the retirement system gave an update on the current health of the retirement system. The system is in good shape. The funding status as of June 30, 2018 was at 99.2%. The five year rate of return on investments was 9.3% as of the same date. It is still one of the best funded retirement plans in the country. For example, New Jersey's teachers retirement plan funding status is about 40%. By way there are currently just over 169,000 receiving benefits from the retirement system.

Attempts are still being made to increase the COLA. However, it has been very difficult to get the legislature to go along with any increase. The members of the legislature are concerned with the costs involved with increasing it.

I am sorry to report that Margaret Songin has passed away. As many of you know, she would give the invocation at the BRTA luncheons for many years. Margaret would always give such wonderfully crafted and thoughtful invocations. Margaret retired from the Buffalo Public Schools with 38 years of service.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the BRTA Holiday Luncheon at Salvatore's. The date of the luncheon is December 5, 2019. It is hard to believe that the holiday season is almost here. Until then take care.

---Tom Giambra

## **HOME ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS OUTREACH (HELLO) LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS**

The HELLO Program is English as a New Language program for newly arrived refugees at the International Institute of Buffalo who cannot make it to class here. This includes stay-at-home mothers, people over 65 who choose not to come to class, Survivor Support clients, full-time workers with scheduling conflicts and anyone with an impairment that keeps them from getting to and from the Institute. Some topics that are covered include greetings, where you are from and where you live, how to use a phone, how to count and use money, what to expect at a doctor's office, etc. No previous experience in teaching English is required.

Volunteers would meet with a client once a week for at least 2 hours and should commit to a 3 month placement. Volunteers must submit to a background check and will maintain a professional relationship with the client. HELLO will provide a comprehensive orientation, a complete curriculum and support materials. More information is found on the BRTA website ([www.brta.biz](http://www.brta.biz)). If interested, contact Eric Shaver, SUNY at Buffalo Anthropology, ITCS Public Sites Supervisor at [ericshav@buffalo.edu](mailto:ericshav@buffalo.edu).

## Depression in Older Adults and the Elderly

As the days get shorter, you may find yourself feeling sad or low in energy. You might be suffering from a type of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). But there are other causes of depressions. I believe one of the major problems with getting help could be that you are just too tired or depressed to deal with it. Thus it continues. PLEASE! Do not ignore this or feel hopeless. There is help available. The following are two excellent sources of information for this all-to-common malady:

Helpguide.org ([http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression\\_elderly.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/depression_elderly.htm) and The National Alliance on Mental Illness ([www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org))

The changes that often come in later life—retirement, death of loved ones, increased isolation, medical problems—can lead to depression. Depression prevents you from enjoying life, as you used to do. But its effects go far beyond mood. It impacts your energy, sleep, appetite, and physical health. However, depression is not an inevitable part of aging, and there are many steps you can take to overcome the symptoms, no matter what challenges you face. *You can't beat depression by sheer willpower, but you do have some control—even if your depression is severe and stubbornly persistent.* Depression in older adults often goes untreated because many people think that it is a normal part of aging. While older adults face noteworthy challenges to their relationships and often face medical vulnerability, many do not recognize the symptoms of depression, aren't aware that it can be treated and often mistake the symptoms of depression as signs of dementia, Alzheimer's, heart disease, Parkinson's disease, stroke or thyroid disorders. You may be reluctant to talk about your feelings or ask for help. Other causes could include: health problems, loneliness and isolation, reduced sense of purpose, fear or recent bereavements.

*If you are depressed, you may not do anything or see anybody. But isolation and inactivity only make depression worse. The more active you are—physically, mentally and socially—the better you will feel.* The following are suggestions to help you overcome depression: Exercise...physical activity has powerful mood-boosting effects. Research suggests it may be just as effective as antidepressant drugs. You don't have to hit the gym. Make small inroads to add to your movements: park farther from the store, walk the stairs, do light housework, or enjoy a short walk. Even if you are ill, frail or disabled, there are many safe exercises you can do to build your strength and boost your mood—even from a chair or wheelchair. Connect with others...getting the support you need plays a big role in lifting the fog of depression. It can be difficult to maintain perspective on your own. Make an effort to connect with others, and limit the time you are alone. If you can't get out, invite loved ones to visit you, or keep in touch with friends and relatives by phone. If you are feeling overwhelmed by stress and the pressures of daily life, it may be time to learn new emotional management and emotional intelligence skills.

Other tips to combat and prevent depression include: Get enough sleep...aim for 7-9 hours per night; Maintain a healthy diet...avoid eating too much sugar and junk food, choosing healthy foods; Participate in activities you enjoy...pursue a hobby or pastime that used to bring you joy; Volunteer your time...helping others is one of the best ways to feel better about yourself and expands your social network; Take care of a pet...a pet can keep you company and can offer some exercise; Learn a new skill...pick something you've wanted to learn or that sparks your interest; Create opportunities to laugh...laughter provides a mood boost, so swap humorous stories with friends or loved ones, watch a comedy or read a funny book.

Whatever the situation, there is help and there is hope!! Be well!

—Jo Ann Meyer

## A brief word about our Switzerland, Austria & Bavaria Trip

There were 33 people in our group joined by 9 people from California.

This picture shows the Buffalo group in the town of Vaduz in Liechtenstein, the smallest and richest German-speaking country in the world and the only country to lie entirely within the Alps, really a principality.



While in Salzburg, we visited the Mirabell Gardens, famously featured in the movie, "The Sound of Music." Of course, we couldn't resist standing on those famous stairs and singing "Do, Re, Mi." Other sights included the famous Olympic ski jump in Innsbruck, a visit to Mount Pilatus (7000 feet above sea level) using gondolas on the trip up and a cog railway at a grade of 48% on the way down. Some of our group were selected to demonstrate the making of apple strudel in a country cottage visit. We rode a Golden Pass Panoramic Train from Montreux to Gstaad, an Alpine ski resort with numerous wooden chalets. We saw many beautiful churches, enjoyed wonderful local cuisine, and enjoyed the beautiful pedestrians squares while eating and shopping. We went to Oberammergau where the famous Passion Play is performed every 10 years, fulfilling a promise made when the village was spared from the Plague in 1633. All in all, we enjoyed good weather, good company and a wonderful time.

—Russell Gervasi

Cordially Invites Members & Guests to attend its

*BRTA Holiday Luncheon*

To be held at

**Salvatore's Italian Gardens**

6461 Transit Road

Depew, NY

716-683-7990

**Thursday, December 5, 2019**

Social Hour: 11:15 AM Complimentary Fruit Punch & Cash Bar

Luncheon: 12:15 PM Choice of:

1. Prime Rib w/ au jus
2. Poached Salmon w/ lobster dill sauce
3. Chicken Milanese w/ tomatoes, red onion & shaved asiago
4. Roasted Vegetables w/ Mediterranean orzo

Luncheon includes Caesar Salad, Vegetable, Cheesecake with Raspberry Sauce and Beverage

Cost: \$27.00 for Members - \$32.00 for Non-member Guests  
(BRTA subsidizes cost for members)

Payment: **Due by Tuesday, November 19, 2019**

Payable to: Buffalo Retired Teachers Association

Mail to: Mary Agnes Marabella (635-9530)  
2 Steinway Court  
Williamsville, NY 14221

**N.B. No cash refunds given after reservation deadline**

**Detach and mail lower portion only. Keep upper portion as your reminder.**

Please list your name and the names of all other persons included in the enclosed payment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ BRTA Member Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Meal Choice (Number) \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ BRTA Member Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Meal Choice (Number) \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ BRTA Member Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Meal Choice (Number) \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_**