

Minutes: December 5, 2006

The meeting of WCREA was held on the above date at the “The Pump House” Restaurant in Hackettstown, NJ. President Pat Kollar called the meeting to order at 10:35 and led the Pledge of Allegiance, which was followed by the singing of “America”, led by Barbara Esposito, and a thought for the day, a poem, “Merry Christmas Friends,” read by Shirley Sloyer. The secretary’s report was read and treasurer Vicki Rhinehart reported a balance of \$1,899.39 and \$858 in the WCREA Award fund. Both reports were approved as read. Vicki reported that our membership stands at 200 with five new members. Corresponding Secretary Carol Mertz had nothing to report.

Under old business, President Pat reported that Robert Menendez had been



Barbara Esposito
at the phone bank

elected to the U. S. Senate, where the Democrats now have the majority. He is a Democrat, endorsed by the NJEA/PAC. She also reported that at the NJREA Convention, hot topics discussed were the proposed changes to the State Health Benefits Program (bill S-2282/A-3618), by Senator Gormley and Assemblyman O’Toole). They are trying to take things back from state workers and educators.



Pat Kollar at
the phone bank

Pat reported on the NJREA Delegate Council meeting of Nov. 8, 2006. It was reported that changes which could happen to health benefits included elimination of full coverage, elimination of coordination of benefits, and mandatory mail order and generic prescriptions. Dennis Testa will fight to have the Pension Convention moved to the NJEA Convention.

Sandy Beck distributed information on the NYC trip to see “Spamalot” on Sunday, March 4, 2007. The money (\$125 per person) is due to Sandy this week. Two buses have been ordered and there is room for fifteen more people.

Under new business, Pat reported that she, Barb Esposito, Doug Morris and Vicki Rhinehart attended the Lobby Day on Dec. 4. They met with Sen. L. Lance who assured them that he is for education and educators. Other Lobby Days are Dec. 7 and 14. If attending, meet at NJEA headquarters between 9:15 and 9:30. Pat, Carol Mertz and Doug Morris urged people to attend the rally day to let legislators know how you feel. They all agreed that lobbying is much easier today than years ago as NJEA provides talking points and a lobbyist to accompany each group. A sign-up sheet was circulated.

A “Back Off!” rally has been scheduled for Mon., Dec. 11 in Trenton from 11am-1pm, co-ordinated by NJEA and other state workers unions. It’s important for as many NJREA members to attend as possible, since school is in session and limited actives can participate. WCEA is providing a bus. Meet at Panera Bread in P’burg Mall at 9:00. A box lunch will be provided. A sign-up sheet for this was circulated.

President Pat reminded those under 65 that it is mandatory to sign up for Medicare Parts A & B upon reaching 65, Social Security sends packets out about 3 months before. Also stressed was “Don’t sign up for Part D”. She also reported that

members may change health plan type once per year, and the Dept. of Pensions must be notified on the death of a spouse. She urged people to send post cards to Gov. Corzine opposing any changes to health benefits. Personal notes are more effective than bulk mailings.

Doug Morris reported on a workshop he attended on “Identity Theft”, which was presented by a Secret Service member. It is a growing problem. Avoid putting bills into your home mailbox, beware of e-mails or newspaper ads offering low interest loans, consolidation of debts, etc. If you suspect identity theft, file a fraud report with the credit card company, close the account and contact local police.

Ruth Ann McLaughlin thanked volunteers to send out birthday cards. Lists will be sent out soon and the program will begin in Jan.

The next meeting will be on Tue. April 3, at “Good Times” in Oxford. Entertainment will be “Joyful Noise Ministries”.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15. Entertainment was provided by the Phillipsburg Middle School Choir under the direction of Linda Pettinelli. In the 50/50 raffle, \$100 was won by an employee at Flynn’s, a chocolate decorated Christmas tree was won by Sandy Beck and a gift basket was won by Barbara Fitzgerald. Finally, a family-style roast beef dinner was served.



Phillipsburg Middle School Choir



Members listening to the Phillipsburg Middle School Choir

Respectfully submitted
Theresa Ravenburg
Recording Secretary, WCREA