Protecting Our Futures — We are Older AND Bolder

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he party was over, arranged for me by a longtime friend and colleague at her duplex near the Hudson Street digs of Newsweek magazine, then owned by The Washington Post Company. Celebrating with me were co-workers, editors, reporters and writers I had worked with and advocated for as unit chair of our union.

I had been given a month’s grace past the “leave by” date after taking a buyout, to see current contract negotiations through to conclusion.

I had spent years serving as unit chair and as executive board vice president of The NewsGuild of New York. With the board’s help, I ran a successful organizing campaign aimed at getting younger workers to join our union.

Suddenly I felt adrift.

But then a former Guild colleague said the words that would change my life. Why not join the Retired Members’ Council?

The what? I didn’t need a “why,” just “how” and “where.”

Still there was something troubling me. Why didn’t I, as a NewsGuild activist, know about this retiree council that is part of CWA? I wanted more information, and what I found lit a fire in me.

Among the hundreds of retiree chapters in the RMC there were only two in The NewsGuild (TNG). I set out to change this, to get the word out, not just to those retiring, or taking buyouts, but also to active members.

Thus began my journey to president of the New York TNG-CWA Retired Members Chapter Chapter 31003 and eventually to TNG Retiree Coordinator.

By now you must be asking yourself, okay, so what is the Retired Members Council and why should I care? Here’s one reason: As my colleague and RMC Media Sector V.P. Adolphe Bernotas says, “You are all retirees in training. You just haven’t finished your apprenticeship.”

This is the easy part! To become a Lifetime Member of The Retired Members Council costs $25. With this one-time fee you get a lifetime union card (good for discounts at banks, etc.) membership in Union Plus, and you stay connected to the CWA through the CWA News, and (via e-mail) our weekly CWA Newsletter. It takes only five members to form a chapter.

We now have more than 55,000 RMC members nationwide. We stand together to lobby for retiree concerns like protecting and improving Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and prescription drug benefits. We join forces with local active members to support them whether on a picket line, phone bank, or other demonstration of support.

Remember this: as retirees, we’re not concerned about who sees us handing out leaflets or demonstrating — the time for management retaliation against us is long gone.

Then there are the social benefits. You can stay connected with former colleagues, make new friends, and network. Some locals hold informational meetings. I’ve had a NYC Deputy District Attorney speak about Internet and phone scams and what we can do to protect ourselves. AARP’s educational division, which does NO marketing, sent a representative to one of our meetings to discuss Medicare options and prescription plan info and how to get financial help. These are just a few examples.

And that’s what I want to do: Help you, your shop stewards, and active members learn more about the RMC while members are still active and engaged.

When you leave your job, you don’t have to disconnect from your union. We’re here for you after you retire, take a buyout, or move on, just as The NewsGuild is there for you now.

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