



**The Newsletter of the Stony Brook Health Sciences Chapter
of United University Professions**

Lighting Up The Winter Blues

December 2004

Doris R. Weisman, NP, MS

As beautifully painted leaves depart from their heights with the wind and time, and as the sun rises later and sets earlier, many of us begin to wane with the fading light and warmth of the summer. The public media messages herald the forthcoming holidays and tell us to come home for the celebration and to reward each other with gifts of love. For those who cannot participate in these festivities and closeness with friends and family, anticipation of the oncoming season increases the down feelings. Many become sad, develop "winter blues" or what may be Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Others enjoy the cold, the snow, say good riddance to heat, ski and become energized. Are we sad, reacting just to the isolation of the winter, or is it the decreased hours of daylight?

SAD can range from self-limiting to overwhelming depression. It can be more than just "blues". Frequently SAD is associated with increased anxiety, irritability, aggressiveness, insomnia, fatigue, loss of energy and enthusiasm, and strained relationships with loved ones. If you experience sad or depressed feelings, take the time to seek professional help and have an evaluation. SAD is a recognized mood disorder and is treatable.

Looking back at early descriptions on mental illness, we find that depression was among the first diseases recognized as a specific illness. The first medical document in existence, the Eber Papyrus, (approx. 1900 B.C.) refers to specific conditions such as depression.

In medieval times and throughout the Dark Ages, the emphasis was on saving souls, not bodies. Mental illness was believed to be possession by the devil. Witches were real to the Middle Ages. Depression was treated by the church, not medicine, and many were tortured and burned at the stake. The Renaissance brought a new vision of mental illness. Phillippe Pinel, a leader of the French Revolution, and considered the founding father of modern psychiatry, in the 1800's, changed the methods of treating the hospitalized mentally ill who were frequently placed in chains. He introduced psychotherapy- moral treatment. The mind-body concept emerged basing illness in chemical imbalances for many conditions. The brain is extremely fascinating, not only does it control bodily functions but also how we experience and react to our environment and experiences. There is scientifically based information regarding the relationship between mood, the light-dark cycle (circadian rhythm), the seasonal changes (circannual), the pineal gland secretion of melatonin and the role it plays in the brain. The amount of light will determine how much melatonin the pineal gland secretes, i.e. more light less melatonin and the reverse. Melatonin decreases body temperature, increases sleep, reduces activity and depresses our mood. More light contributes to less depression. We have a need then to find the light and the warmth especially in the darkness of winter.

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The President's Letter

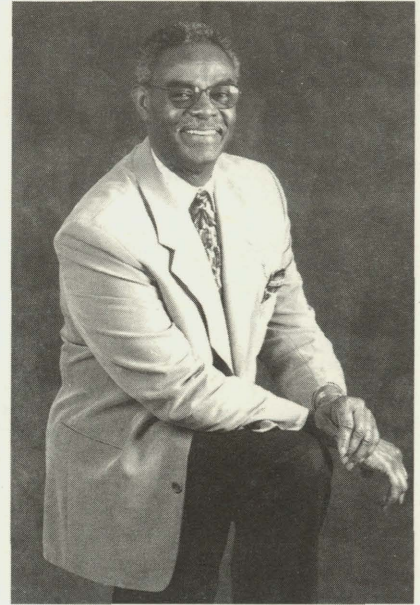
Brothers and Sisters,

We are about to celebrate another holiday season. I am sure we are anticipating many joyous events to celebrate. The kids are eagerly awaiting presents, time away from school, and good food.

During this festive time, your union will be hard at work to make sure that your contractual rights are protected. We continue to work with management to try and resolve any problems that may arise.

This is also the time to apply for the Professional Development Award. This award will allow our employees to possibly go to a conference or a seminar or to take a course to enhance your professional development. Applications may be obtained in the union office.

The dates for the holiday meetings are as follows; the holiday meeting at Tech Park will be on December 14th at 12:00p.m. Breakfast will be held in the HSC Level 3 Gallaria on December 15. The time is 7 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Dinner for evening shift will be the same day at 3:30pm-6:30pm. The holiday meeting at the LISVH will be on December 16th at 12:00p.m. The Coram Health Center will hold their holiday meeting on December 21st at 12 noon. I hope to see all of you attending. RSVP to the union office at 4-1505. Tickets will be required to enter.

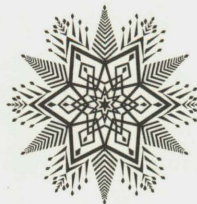


The Stony Brook community is invited to attend Stony Brook Day in Albany 2005. The date is March 1, 2005. This event is our annual advocacy day in the State Capital. It is a partnership between the University President and United University Professions. **Take the Ride. Show Your Pride.** Register now online at: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/albany>. If you have any questions, contact Pat Cruso at patricia.cruso@stonybrook.edu or call her at 2-4309.

Keep your eyes open for any food or toy drop off boxes. Help someone less fortunate smile this season.

Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season and all the best in the coming year!

Ed Drummond, President



Individual Development Awards Program - July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2005

The Individual Development Awards program is designed to support a variety of professional development activities by employees in the UUP bargaining unit. The maximum amount that can be awarded to an applicant for an activity under this program is \$1000.00.

The deadline for applying is March 1, 2005.

Examples of Projects or Activities

Only one application will be accepted and only one project or activity may be funded. Projects or activities must fall within the following categories:

- Basic, applied or historical research.
- Curriculum or instructional material development.
- Workshop, seminar, internship or course work not covered by Contract Article 46 or SUNY tuition waiver.
- Conference participation or attendance.
- Preparation of material for publication.
- Grant proposal development.
- Artistic or creative endeavors.
- Professional reading or independent study.
- Other work-related professional development projects or activities.

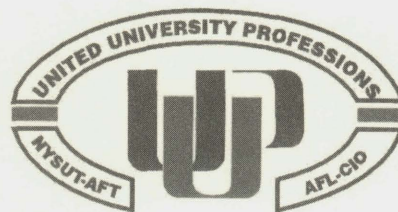
Types of Support

- Registration fees for conference or workshop.
- Consumable supplies (paper, pens, postage, etc.).
- Non-consumable supplies (books, software, etc.).
- Travel and related expenses (including lodging and meals).
- Research support (e.g., computer time, network access or support, clerical support).
- Equipment lease or purchase (any equipment purchase with Professional Development Committee funds will become the property of the State of New York/State University of New York).
- Tuition and course related supplies. The maximum allowance for tuition is the SUNY rate at time of application (currently \$137 per undergraduate credit or \$213 per graduate credit).

All funding requests must conform with the State Comptroller's Rules and Regulations and limitations contained therein. Specific questions about travel and other items should be addressed to your Campus Fiscal Office. Additional justification for specific items may be requested. Please note that software, books and other non-consumable supplies purchased with Professional Development Committee funds must remain the property of the State of New York/State University of New York.

Applications and required material (3 copies) should be sent to:
UUP, HSC, Level 5 – 572, Zip 8553.

For application forms and guidelines please call the UUP office at 4-1505.



OPEN LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Dear Editor:

It has come to my attention over the past few months that many of our members are not aware of a program that exists that will aid them in a time of need. This program called "Leave Donation Program" was established during the last contract period from 1991 – 1995. It was developed during contract negotiations with the State of New York to address issues related to leaves for employees who have exhausted all other leave credits. This program was meant to be a means for employees to continue with State service and be able to receive a paycheck when they were not able to work because of an extended non- work related illness or disability.

In the last few months there have been two members who have been able to receive benefits from this program, yet they were not aware of how to access the program or what benefits they were entitled to. It is my intention in this open letter, to describe the program and its benefits, so all employees will know of its existence. It is hoped that any employee will not need this program, but if they do, they will know about it and how to access it.

The Leave Donation Program is open to all State employees. There are specific guidelines for each bargaining unit (CSEA, PEF, UUP, MC). I will address those guidelines only related to UUP represented employees. For employees to be eligible to receive leave donations they must:

1. Be calendar year or college year employees eligible to accrue vacation leave credit.
2. Have completed at least one year of State service.
3. Be expected to be absent for at least two biweekly payroll periods following the exhaustion of all leave benefits.
4. Must not have had any disciplinary actions, or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of State employment.
5. There is no maximum number of days an employee can accept provided that they cannot be used to extend employment beyond the point it would otherwise end.
6. There is no maximum number of employees who may donate to an eligible employee who may accept donations.
7. Human Resources at least every 30 days or more frequently if appropriate will review continuing eligibility to participate in this program.
8. Medical Documentation will be necessary for continuation in the program.
9. Donations can be used in full or half-day units after exhausting all other leave benefits and prior to attaining eligibility to receive disability benefits under the University's Group Disability Insurance Program. After becoming eligible to receive disability benefits, but prior to receipt of such benefits, donated credits may only be used in full day units. Once disability benefits begin, leave credits may no longer be used.
10. Employees who receive donation credits will be considered to be in "leave without pay" status.
11. Employees do not earn vacation or sick time while using donated leave credits, nor do they earn holidays.
12. Employees using donated credits will continue to have health insurance premiums, retirement contributions and other payroll deductions withheld from his/her check so long as the paycheck is enough to cover these deductions.
13. Employees using donated credits do continue to receive retirement service credit for days in pay status.
14. Donations can be solicited by the recipient employee, by coworkers or by union representatives.
15. The recipient employee must request to be part of this program through Human Resources. Forms are available at the UUP office.

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16. All unused credits will be returned to any donor whose donation is not fully utilized.
17. Employees who wish to donate to any employee requesting leave donation, must fill out a form that is available at the union office, which will then be forwarded to Human Resources. The only form of donation is accrued vacation time, not sick time. In order to donate the employee must have 10 days vacation remaining after the donation. There is no limit on the amount that an employee may donate, as long as they meet the 10-day limit.

I hope this outline of the program has been helpful. This program was developed by UUP as a fail safe for its employees who have extended illnesses, and it does work if used correctly. The union office is available for all employees to discuss this program further and to provide assistance in a time of need. I hope that no other employee has a need for the program, but if they do please take advantage of its benefits.



Sincerely

Donald Pisani
Vice President for Professionals

Continued from cover story.

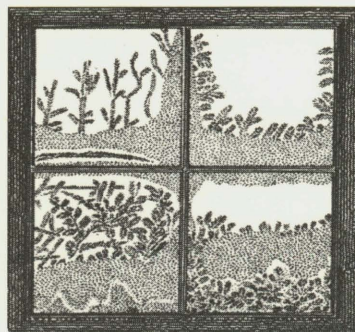
Throughout history there were many celebrations of light, especially in winter. December 25th the Christmas tree is full of lights, house lights are put up, light beams wherever we shop and go. Chanukah, the festival of lights, lasts for 8 days. Multi tree lighting ceremonies take place. Candle making is a very profitable market. In reviewing history we may find that these lightings were based not on true historical dates but a need for a way to light up our lives in the dark, cold winter. Even cats follow the sunlight coming in through the window, for their sunlit naps.

We need to light up the winter blues and avoid SAD. Here is how to help yourself!



- Be sensitive to your moods and energy and if they are sinking take action –seek professional help.
- Keep active and do things you enjoy... before the blues set in.
- Be in the light as much as you can. Indoors or out, home or vacation.
- Anticipate the winter darkness. It is a part of our world, work with it.
- Good music, good food, good company help keep a balance between work and play.

A Stitch In Time Saves Nine and Lights Up the Winter Blues.



Attention: Members of the NYS Teacher's Retirement System

Kathleen Southerton, RNC, PhD
TRS delegate

I recently returned from the 84th annual meeting of the NYS TRS delegates. I am the delegate representing SUNY Stony Brook Health Science Center TRS members. As a delegate, I receive newsletters with the latest benefit and retirement system developments. If you would like me to share this information with you directly, please contact me with your contact information. You may reach me at 444-3783 or via e-mail: ksoutherton@notes.cc.sunysb.edu

The following seven common, yet preventable retirement mistakes were discussed at the convention. Take a moment to review them now so you may avoid making them later.

1. Failing to become familiar with TRS publications and website information.

Read all correspondence that you receive from the TRS, including the *Your Source* newsletter. Check out the website for valuable information. www.nystrs.org

2. Basing important retirement decisions upon information you receive from the faculty/ staff "guru"

If this guru gives you incorrect information, which often is the case, you will be the one to pay the price. Accurate and up-to-date information can be obtained from a TRS representative.

3. **Not taking the time to clearly understand the irrevocable decisions made at retirement-** such as selecting the date of your retirement and choosing a payment option.

4. Not taking the time to actually file for retirement with the TRS

Notifying your employer of your intent to retire will not result in your receipt of retirement funds. The TRS must be notified and you must file with them directly.

5. Delaying retirement after you stop working until you are older so you can collect a larger pension

While this may seem like a reasonable choice for you, be sure to check with a TRS representative before you make this decision. The representative can give you retirement payment projections that you will want to review before making a choice to delay retirement.

6. Not updating your records with the TRS

Remember to change your beneficiary as needed. If you listed a parent as your beneficiary when you first started working and you subsequently married or your parent has died, you will need to update your records. Also, and don't think this doesn't happen, your ex-spouse may benefit from your failure to update your records.

7. Failing to be aware of key retirement benchmarks or thresholds

Examples: After one year in the TRS: You are entitled to a death benefit
After five years: You are vested- your pension is guaranteed
After 10 yrs. (if you are in Tiers 3 or 4): you no longer make 3% contribution
After 20 yrs: You will have a higher pension calculation

Taking advantage of the following TRS services will help you to avoid the above noted mistakes:

- Preretirement Planning Seminars: For TRS members 45 years and older and their spouses/companions. These daylong meetings are designed to help members prepare for retirement. Topics include: financial planning, taxes, legal affairs, adjusting to retirement, social security and retirement system benefits. You must make a reservation for these seminars. Fee: \$10 for members and \$5.00 for guests. Note: These seminars are very popular and fill up quickly. You are advised to make your reservations early.

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-Video Conferences: Through the use of video technology, you meet with a staff member of TRS. The staff member can access your file and produce estimates of your retirement benefits and answer your questions.

-Personalized Benefit Profile: Each January you receive this comprehensive document. It includes summaries of your service credit, contribution and loan information, and your beneficiary designation along with current and future benefit projections.

-On-line benefits summary: The retirement system now offers a secure area on their website. Once registered, members can access personal information about their TRS benefits through this secure area at anytime day or night.

If you'd like further information on any of the above services, please contact the TRS directly.
1 800 348-7298 ext. 6250
www.nystrs.org

A final word from the TRS regarding your pension:

Your benefits are secure! The system administers a **defined benefit plan**. You can be assured that those payments WILL be there at retirement. A defined benefit plan provides you with a specific benefit that is based on factors such as your age, years of service and final average salary. Once your benefit is "locked in", it can never be taken away or diminished. New York State is the **ONLY** state with a constitutional guarantee that those benefits will not be lowered.

Although the TRS fund has been impacted by short-term market fluctuations, current and future benefit payments to members are not affected.

You should have peace of mind knowing that the benefits you have will be there for you in the future.

NYSUT Members with Special Needs Children can Use MetDESK MetLife's Division of Estate Planning for Special Kids

Parents of children who have disabilities have to take extra care to provide for their children's current and future legal and financial needs.

The MetLife family of companies has arranged for a network of specialists to help families negotiate the maze of rules and regulations that can be so much of an obstacle to securing both a lifetime of care and an optimum quality of life.

Information about this service can be obtained by calling 1-877-MetDESK or at www.metlife.com/desk.



State Employee Holiday Schedule

Thanksgiving Day	Thursday Nov. 25, 2004
Christmas Day	Saturday Dec. 25, 2004
New Year's Day	Saturday Jan. 01, 2005
MLK Jr. Day (observed)	Monday Jan. 17, 2005
Lincoln's Birthday	Saturday Feb. 12, 2005
Washington's Birthday (observed)	Monday Feb. 21, 2005
Memorial Day	Monday May 30, 2005
Independence Day	Monday July 04, 2005
Labor Day	Monday Sept. 05, 2005

-Classes will be in session and offices will remain open on Washington's Birthday.

-Part-time employees who are eligible to observe holidays are entitled to observe only those holidays that fall on days when they are regularly scheduled to work or are directed to work, with the exception of Saturday holidays.

-Saturday Holidays: (Part-time UUP) employees who are eligible to observe holidays will be credited with holiday compensatory time.

(Full-time) UUP, CSEA, PEF, M/C, Council

82 & NYSCOPBA employees who are eligible to observe holidays and for whom Saturday is a regularly scheduled day off (pass day) will be credited with Holiday compensatory time.

- UUP: -The day after Thanksgiving is observed as a holiday.

-Lincoln's Birthday is NOT an observed holiday.

Office: HSC Level 5, Room 572, Zip 8553
Hours: Mon. - Thurs., 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Telephone: 444-1505; FAX 444-7566

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The opinions expressed in *Bridges* are those of the authors, the editor, or the Stony Brook HSC Chapter of UUP and are not necessarily the opinions of the United University Professions.

The UUP Newsletter welcomes articles and letters submitted by members of the Stony Brook community. Remember, this is *your* newsletter. Share your thoughts with us, we want to hear from you. Persons who have material they wish to submit should contact: Joel at 4-2245 or 4-1505.