**RRTA Meeting**

**December 5, 2024**

**Attendance:**  Z. Artson-Crichlow, M. Barnum, P. Brody, J. Cox-Hiler, C. Dean, L. Espinosa, K. Evans, K. Fager, S. Flynn, K. Huey, W. Humphrey, M. Jenkins-Cox, A. Johnson, B. Jones, K. Schultz, G. Shakes, S. Silvio, A. Smith, C. Smith, Y. Wooten, M. Zimmer, J. Zuniga

**Absent:** C. Bonsignore-Kitchen, M. Ferenchak, B. Gerace, D. Jackett, M. Keating, F. Macek, L. Rapkin, E. Robinson, D. Sullivan, B. Swan, F. Valente

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:10.

2. A moment of silence was observed for teachers who have passed away in the past month: Helen Allen and Donna Nash-Bailey. A $25 donation is made to Books for Kids in memory of any RRTA member.

3. The RRTA minutes are posted on line within a week of the meeting. If there are any questions, contact Mary Zimmer and changes will be announced at the next meeting.

4. Guest: Bridget Ryan, the executive director of the program Mercy Bridges, a ministry from the sisters of Mercy since the early 90’s in response to adult (over 18) literacy problems, came to speak to the group looking for volunteers. ([www.mercybridges.org](http://www.mercybridges.org); 1437 Blossom Road, Rochester, NY 14610; email: [mercybridges@sistersofmercy.org](mailto:mercybridges@sistersofmercy.org); 585-288-2710ext526)

They began helping immigrants and those who were educated in the public school system but had slipped through the cracks. It is a one on one tutoring, free to learners one hour a week at a neutral convenient location where there is wifi, i.e. a library. They see many successes with those getting promotions and doing well in their lives. At their office in Mercy High School, you can find materials and resources to help with the tutoring. An assessment is done by a specialized teacher and assigns the student to a volunteer with goals and objectives. There is training for the volunteers done by the teacher assessor.

They have brochures in several languages of the groups that have immigrated to Rochester and have recently received a grant to have 3 more languages be added. It was suggested that Haitian Creole/French be one of these. The group partners with other citywide programs and students will be referred to Mercy Bridges from a group setting. Presently they have 30 students enrolled down from pre-Covid numbers of 85.

A motion was made by Mary Barnum and seconded by Mary Zimmer to include an informational article asking for volunteers in the January RRTA newspaper. The motion passed.

5. **Announcements:**

a) The next RRTA meeting will be January 9.

b) **Medicare** — Everyone should have received your information from Social Security for the 2025 year with your expected monthly deposit. It came with a chart based on your 2023 income statement to IRS which determines your contribution to Medicare Part B and D.

When having to take the Required Minimum Distribution at age 70 1/2 (or recent change at 73) the amount donated to Qualified Charitable Organization is not included in your income statement as long as the money goes directly to the organization and you have not cashed the check.

c)  **RCSD Benefits** — If you have questions about when the bills will start for MVP or when new cards will be issued if you changed Medicare Advantage Plans, you can call the RCSD Benefits office at 262-8206.

6.  **Dress a Girl/Savvy Sewer** — Gaya reported that the November group made 12 dresses, 51 girl’s power packs, and 20 dolls. They prepared a shipment for Johannesburg. Their fundraiser will be at the Holiday Party on December 18 at the Brook House. They also made a generous donation to Kindred Spirits group (a spin off of Dress a Girl) who is going to the Dominican Republic.

Dress a Girl is a 501-c tax deductible organization and willingly accept donations.

7. **Books for Kids** — Kathy Evans reported that the group went to 6 first grade classrooms in #33 school and gave books to 116 students. December the group is going to School 4 that has only 1 first grade and 1 special ed first grade classroom. The group has received donations from some Required Minimum Distributions as previously mentioned and are willing to accept other donations.

8. **Holiday Party** — There are now enough attendees to have the party on December 18 at the Brook House. Please bring in canned goods that will be taken to a food kitchen and come to participate in the Dress a Girl fund raiser.

9. **Vote Cope** — the organization continues to work on Tier 6.

10. **Newspaper** — The deadline is January 2 to get material in to Mary Barnum. The newspaper will include an article about Mercy Bridges and will go only to dues paying members. There are 625 dues payers and in January we will look to send letters to those who have not yet sent in their dues.

11. **Calendar** — December 18 — RRTA Holiday Party

January 9 — RRTA meeting at 10 am

12. Business Good for the Order — Stay aware of federal changes to ACA (also known as Obamacare) and changes to the Federal Education Department. RCSD could lose 10% of its budget if the department is shut down and sent back to the states.

Meeting adjourned at 11:22.

Mary Zimmer

RRTA Secretary