

# BCBSM Retirees Newsletter

*Produced for and by members of the  
BCBSM Retiree Association*

**Volume 23, Issue 3 • Fall 2014**

## Tour puts spotlight on Bay City's rich history

Our trip to Bay City on June 26 was an activity-filled day with a bus tour of Bay City's historic district, lunch at a popular Polish restaurant, a cruise on the Saginaw River and shopping.

At our first stop in Bay City we met tour guide Gene Gillette who boarded the bus for an informative one-hour history lesson. He called Bay City, established back in 1837, one of Michigan's "well-kept secrets." He told us it was originally a major center for lumbering, milling and shipbuilding.



**Kathie Helms, Sarah Durrrough and Sharon Jones**

way to Saginaw Bay was the historic city hall and the USS Edson, a Forrest Sherman-class destroyer that is being restored. Much of the riverfront is being refurbished with new housing and shops and it's the site of numerous community activities during the summer months.

Before leaving the city we had an hour for shopping or a snack in the historic shopping district. One of the attractions among members was the Bay City Antiques Center. With three floors packed full of antiques, it was impossible to explore it all, but some of us did go home with a few good bargains.

The Defoe Shipbuilding Co., for instance, which closed in 1975, built Great Lakes freighters as well as destroyer escorts, guided missile destroyers and patrol craft for the U.S. Navy and the Royal Australian Navy – and even the presidential yacht, which President John F. Kennedy named the "Honey Fitz."

Our tour took us through the Center Avenue Historic District where we viewed many beautifully restored historic homes and learned about some of the prominent Bay City residents who lived there, like Henry Clement whose Industrial Works company designed a rail-mounted shovel and crane used in building the Panama Canal.

After the tour, we enjoyed a generous lunch buffet at Krzysiak's House restaurant that included soup, salad, a variety of Polish selections along with standard American fare and dessert.

Our history lesson continued while cruising the Saginaw River aboard the "Islander." Among the sites along the

**Bay City** *continued*



The "Islander"



Tour guide Gene Gillette gave an informative talk on the bus tour of Bay City.



Sandy Guitar and Sharon Sturgell



Audrey Barszcz and Margaret Bucienki



Connie and John Dowe



Bay City's historic city hall viewed from the boat



Stephanie and Raymond Maruszewski of Gladwin, Mich., located just northwest of Bay City. They enjoyed being able to attend a retiree event not far from their home.



The retired destroyer USS Edson is docked on the Saginaw River. It is being restored by the nonprofit Saginaw Valley Naval Ship Museum.

# Meet retiree Corazetter Thomas, sharing her message with others

Corazetter Thomas has a motto she lives by: *“Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass, it’s about learning to dance in the rain.”*

As a COPD patient for more than 10 years, Corazetter has learned to do just that. The key to living with this debilitating disease, she says, is that there are things that happen to your body that you can’t control, but you can change your lifestyle.

“Life is all about accepting change,” said Corazetter. “I didn’t want to be left behind.”

Corazetter was diagnosed with COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, in 2003. That’s the year she retired from the Blues after 40 years with the company.

Now Corazetter is sharing her message of hope with others in a video on a website called *“copd.com Learning More Together”* sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline.



Corazetter Thomas

Corazetter became involved in this project through Beaumont Hospital’s Pulmonary Rehabilitation Services in Royal Oak where she was a client. Her therapist suggested she try out to become an ambassador for the website.

“At first when this opportunity came up, I think my sister was more excited that I was. She really encouraged me to get involved.

“As BCBSM employees, we were introduced to COPD in 1999. At that time, this condition was viewed as a ‘death sentence’ diagnosis. So I wanted to share my story about living with COPD,” said Corazetter.

The first step in the selection process for the video was a phone interview. Then, after being chosen to participate, she traveled to Chicago for training along with other ambassadors from around the country. The video was shot at her home in Detroit and the homes of the other ambassadors.

In the video Corazetter talks about a childhood bout with TB and later how she began smoking with her friends when she was 19 because “it was cool.” She said smoking became a habit and to her chagrin it became “much more” than a habit.

## Facts about COPD

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is an umbrella term to describe progressive lung diseases including emphysema and chronic bronchitis. COPD can develop for years without noticeable shortness of breath or other symptoms.

COPD affects an estimated 24 million individuals in the U.S. Half of these have symptoms but don’t know they have the disease. COPD occurs most often in people with a history of smoking. Not everyone who smokes gets COPD but about 90 percent of those with the disease have smoked.

Inhaling second-hand smoke or harmful pollutants in the workplace may also cause COPD.

Source: COPD Foundation, [www.copdfoundation.com](http://www.copdfoundation.com).

In addition to participating in the video, in October 2013 Corazetter and the other ambassadors were asked to share their stories before an audience of 3,600 at a pharmaceutical company’s marketing and sales seminar in Orlando, Florida.

COPD is “no picnic” she says. But today, though she needs oxygen most of the time, she still enjoys life. She likes decorating and handicrafts. She makes table centerpieces and gifts for people, and she enjoys being with her family and friends.

Corazetter says she “lives her life the best she can,” words we can all strive to live by.

To view the 3-minute video of Corazetter and other ambassadors on the website go to [www.copd.com](http://www.copd.com). Click on “Be Inspired” in the left-hand menu.

# May luncheon at Glen Oaks ushers in spring

Retiree Association members and their guests greeted the season at our annual Spring Luncheon which took place May 22 at Glen Oaks Country Club in Farmington Hills. Since it was a bright sunny day everyone was able to appreciate the view of the golf course from the banquet room. A delicious buffet lunch featured roast top sirloin and herb baked chicken with all the trimmings, and many went back for seconds.

The luncheon ended with a 50/50 raffle and Chinese auction. Winners of the 50/50 were Cathy Elston (\$110, which she kindly donated back to charity), Mary Ann Gehringer (\$90) and Alice Reynolds (\$41). Wanda Black, Linda Burton, Janice Crossland, Greta Grabowski, Kweli Jomo, Barbara Murzin, Marlene Sadlowski, Lesley Ann Seldenright, Sharon Sowinski and Betty Zwolak were winners in the Chinese auction.



Felix Fonseca and Nancy Savinski

◀ First-time attendees at an Association luncheon from left to right, Bernadette Parris, Jean Wilson, Judy Helton, Jean Liddell and Linda Burton



Christine Thomas, Gloria Butler and Edith Ross



Nancy Abramson checks in with Connie Dowe.



Barbara Murzon and Judy Helton



Hiroko Lancour and Dennis DeSmet

## Meet retiree Barbara Lusk, dedicated quilter

In preparing for retirement from the Blues in 2008, Barbara Lusk did all of the usual research about finances and other issues retirees face. Most important to her, however, was deciding what she *really* wanted to do when that day came.

“When I began thinking about retiring, I read lots of advice about being ready, but what I think was most important was to determine just what I was retiring to, and that is just what I did -- I retired to quilt,” said Barb.

Barb was born in New Hampshire but grew up in Royal Oak and Clawson. She graduated from Clawson High School and also attended Henry Ford Hospital School of Nursing, Oakland Community College, Baker College and Central Michigan University. She credits the BCBSM tuition reimbursement program for providing much of her college education.

Barb hired into the Blues in 1985 as a customer service representative in GM Auto; in 1995 she moved to Benefit Policy Administration. She was a team leader in that area when she retired in 2008.

“I loved analyzing issues and finding solutions. I never had a day where I failed to learn something new. I met many interesting and brilliant people during my years at BCBSM and developed wonderful friendships,” she said.

Not long after retiring, in 2009, she opened her business, “Granny Lady Quilts.” Now she makes quilts to order, repairs antique quilts and does the final quilting for other quilters.

“I learned to sew as a child and made clothing for me and my family for years,” Barb said. “But after my children reached high school, they preferred to buy the latest styles of clothing, so I found that quilt making suited me.”

She joined groups of other quilters and took classes to enhance her skills. “I enjoy sewing patchwork quilt

tops, but the actual quilting – sewing the top, batting and backing together with intricate stitching – is what I love doing.”

So in preparation for retirement, Barb bought a “quilting system” which is a large sewing machine, known as a “long arm” machine, equipped with belts, wheels and tracks for moving on a large table. The table has a set of rails for mounting the “quilt sandwich” and sewing the quilt designs. The long arm is controlled by computer and Barb uses digitized designs to do most of the quilting.

When she’s not quilting, Barb and her husband Joe enjoy spending time with their family and traveling. She says they have a bucket list of travel destinations and they’ve visited Hawaii, Alaska, Yellowstone National Park, New England, Tennessee and the Caribbean.

She also assists with child care for two of their seven grandchildren. Her eldest grandchild will be attending college in the fall while grandchild number eight should arrive after the first of the year and, Barb says, that means “more baby quilts to make!”



Barbara Lusk at her quilting machine

## Congratulations and Welcome to Our New Retirees

Zelda Anderson  
Paula Bauman  
Baby Bautista  
Patricia Bojicic  
Felica Burch  
Ronald Comstock  
Charlotte Darby  
Susan Epp  
Roxanne Gammicchia

Susan Gibbs  
Rhonda Gross  
John Hawkins  
Nancy Jones  
Karen Kelly  
Barbara Kilpatrick  
Sandra King  
Cynthia Lewis  
Cecilia Ligiski

Arlene Lubin  
Kathleen Maciag  
Toni McGregor  
Jay Moilanen  
Angelas Murray  
Delisa Norris  
Theresa Pena  
Anita Reece  
Penny Rozek

Catherine Rudolph  
Brenda Selle  
Lois Shannon  
Patricia Slisinger  
Pamela Williams  
Renee Williamson  
Annette Womack  
Margaret Worth



## Tigers fans enjoy game despite loss

Retiree Association members who attended the July 18 outing at Comerica Park could have wished for a better result – Cleveland beat Detroit 9 to 3 – but still enjoyed a pleasant evening. It was Motown night so attendees were treated to the Motown sound throughout the game and heard the Four Tops sing the national anthem. The fireworks display at the end of the game topped off the evening.

Attendees were also pleased that seating was in a lower section this year. The view was great, seats were easier to access with very little climbing and the section was close to restrooms and refreshment stands.



From left to right, Susan Keller, Paula Hunt, Titus Lassiter and Susan's husband

## Members enjoy a great day of golf

The 2014 Bill Burke Memorial Golf Outing on Aug. 15 was held at our new venue, the Fountains Golf and Banquet Center in Clarkston. It was a sunny, cool day, perfect for spending time on the links.

The day began with a continental breakfast followed by a 9:30 a.m. shotgun start. Eleven teams participated. The 1st place winner of the men's division was the team of Ron Price, Jim Kujawa, Jack Dougherty and Tom Cochell. There was a tie in the mixed division. The winners were the teams of Francine Pegues, Mary Washington, Herbert Harris and Jim Bridgeforth, and Brad Gavle, Toni Clark, Brian Maxson and Greg Huffer.

The Association was pleased to have the participation of the Burke family. Sean, Kelly, Kerry and Patricia Burke made up a team and generously sponsored a hole. Several other members of the family joined the golfers for the banquet dinner at the end of the day.



Left to right, Jeanne Carlson, Judy Avallone, Janice Cantelon and Susan Reetz



Matthew Devine, with cake commemorating the 2014 Golf Outing in memory of his grandfather, Bill Burke

The Association thanks our other hole sponsors who each donated \$100 per hole to the event: North Pointe Foot & Ankle in Berkley, Dean Sellers Ford in Troy, Genpact (Jawood), Michigan Business & Professional Association, Health One Credit Union (two holes), CPA Mark Mullin (248-475-4940), Nick Grabowski, Ralph Magreta and Debbie George. Brian Maxson and Greg Huffer of Merrill Lynch each sponsored a hole and also made a donation toward the door prizes.

Appreciation also goes to the organizing committee (Kathy Elston, Brad Gavle, Nick Grabowski, John McCrary, and Ron Price) and volunteers (Janice Crossland, Kay Jones, Joyce Obenhoff and Betty Zwolak).

The day ended with a buffet dinner, awarding of prizes and announcement of the 50/50 winners: Toni Clark (\$50), Maria Kroninger (\$34) and Rod Meyer (\$20).



Sign-in with, from left to right, Joyce Obenhoff, Mike Cartier, David DuBois, Kathy Elston (partially hidden) and Betty Zwolak



Grace Keng and Randa Volbrecht ready to head out to the green

## Meet retiree Cheryl Partin, "Miss July"

Retiree Cheryl Partin is an active member of the Garden City Garden Club. She's involved in long list of community projects like maintaining the Butterfly Garden at Garden City Park, planting flowers in the downtown Commons area and planting a community garden where the club grows vegetables for local food banks.

But posing as Miss July for the "2014 Garden Club Reveals All... About Gardening Calendar" was not something she ever expected to do. "I never thought I would participate in such a risqué 'photo shoot' at this time of my life, or at anytime really. But it was for a great cause and we had a blast doing it," said Cheryl.

Cheryl said that at one of the club's monthly meetings in 2013, when the group was discussing its declining bank account, she jokingly mentioned the movie "Calendar Girls."

"The movie was based on a true story about a garden club in England that raised a lot of money with a risqué calendar," said Cheryl. "Fortunately, a former club member who is a professional photographer attended that meeting. Within minutes, she offered to do the photos for free, and Della, one of our oldest and original members (82 years young) made the motion, we voted and ran with it."

Cheryl said the club sold its initial order of 200 calendars at the October Garden City Chili Cook-off and had to reorder 200 more. "Calls were coming in from all over southeast Michigan and within a few weeks our calendars were being shipped all over the United States." With the sale of the calendars, the club met its goal to continue a scholarship program for local high school students.

The garden club is just one of many activities on Cheryl's busy schedule since she retired from BCBSM in 2009. She was with the company for 38 years and spent the last 24 years in Corporate & Financial Investigations.

She and her husband Kerry are active with local veterans groups, the Garden City Kiwanis and Meals on Wheels. They like to travel and hope to golf all 50 states. "I believe we have golfed in approximately 20 states so far," said Cheryl.

In the last few years, they've traveled to Sedona, Arizona; Golf Shores, Alabama; Williamsburg, Virginia; Branson, Missouri; Cape Cod in Massachusetts and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. They are headed to North Carolina next. Cheryl also enjoys scrapbooking their travels and family events (they have two sons, Jason and Derek) and making cards for all occasions.

"We are truly enjoying our retired life and hope to continue this amazing journey for many more years," said Cheryl.

Anyone interested in the Garden Club's activities can learn more at their website and Facebook page: [gcg.weebly.com](http://gcg.weebly.com) and [www.facebook.com/gcgcmi](http://www.facebook.com/gcgcmi).



Photo of Cheryl that appeared in the Garden City Garden Club's 2014 calendar



# Who's Who in the BCBSM Retiree Association

Executive Board	
President	John McCrary
Vice President	Kathy Elston
Treasurer	Joyce Obenhoff
Secretary	Adrienne Starling
Immediate Past President	Ray Newak
Contact Information	
BCBSM Retiree Association	Website: <a href="http://miretireeassoc.com">miretireeassoc.com</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:information@miretireeassoc.com">information@miretireeassoc.com</a> U.S. Mail: BCBSM Mail Code 0126
BCBSM Retirement Administration	Toll-free: 1-800-922-0699 Local: 313-225-9609 Fax: 1-866-238-3295 E-mail: <a href="mailto:retirementadministration@bcbsm.com">retirementadministration@bcbsm.com</a>
Change of address, phone number	All changes must be made in writing to Retirement Administration via Fax, e-mail or U.S. Mail at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Retirement Administration, Mail Code 0126, 600 East Lafayette Blvd., Detroit, MI 48226.

## ...May they rest in peace

**Paul Namel**

May 25, 2014

**Vivian Adams**

June 11, 2014

**George Lutzenberger**

May 29, 2014

**Rosemary Cartwright**

July 18, 2014

**Rita Burke**

May 31, 2014

**Anna Bove**

July 30, 2014

**Neal McCue**

September 7, 2014

## News & Notes

### Three more events in 2014

Join your fellow retirees for these final events of the year:

- The annual business meeting and luncheon scheduled for the Lakeland Manor banquet center on Oct. 23.
- Tour of the Masonic Temple in Detroit on Nov. 13. After the tour enjoy a buffet lunch served in the Temple Room.
- The holiday party luncheon on Dec. 4 at the Gazebo Banquet Center in Warren.

### Stories wanted

Do you have a travel story to tell or a favorite volunteer activity you'd like to share? If so, we'd like to hear from you. Just send a note to [information@miretireeassoc.com](mailto:information@miretireeassoc.com) or write to us at Blue Cross, mail code 0126.

The *BCBSM Retirees Newsletter* is published three times a year for members of the BCBSM Retiree Association. We'd like to hear from you. If you have a comment on the newsletter or an idea for an article, please contact us at [information@miretireeassoc.com](mailto:information@miretireeassoc.com).

Also be sure to check out our website at [miretireeassoc.com](http://miretireeassoc.com) for information about upcoming events and photos of past events. We're on Facebook, too. You will find the link on our Web site.

**E-mail Directory updates:** The directory is updated periodically and sent via e-mail to members who wish to share their e-mail address with fellow retirees. To add your e-mail address, make a correction or remove your name from the list, send your request to [information@miretireeassoc.com](mailto:information@miretireeassoc.com).