

# RETIREE NOTES



AFSCME family mourns passing of retiree activist Charlie Hogan.

## Chapter 31 loses a champion

THIS PAST MARCH, AFSCME Chapter 31 Executive Board member Charlie Hogan passed away. He was not only an exemplary retiree leader but also a passionate activist for working people.

Charlie joined AFSCME Retirees in 1997. Soon after, Chapter 31 began organizing a sub-chapter in the north suburbs of Cook County. Charlie took part from the start and was elected to be the first president of Northern Cook County's sub-chapter 161, a post he held until his death.

Charlie was well-known for his determination to stand up against injustice and engage members and the community at large to stand up for the powerless. His enthusiasm and kindness were a bright spot for many and will be irreplaceable.

## Stay safe! Nursing home precautions

NURSING HOMES HAVE BEEN hit the hardest by COVID-19. As of the end of June, 55% of the deaths in Illinois have been nursing home residents and staff. Yet adequate resources have not been provided to fix the systemic problems.

constant short-staffing—with an average 30% turnover rate in a typical year. This situation has understandably left both residents and staff angry, anxious and scared.

Chapter 31 has been working in conjunction with the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans to address the needs of residents and staff and educate residents and families about their rights.

## Retirees take action during pandemic

WHILE CHAPTER 31 sub-chapters have suspended in-person meetings due to the high risk COVID-19 poses to seniors, members have still been active. AFSCME retirees have been making masks, working with charities and supporting essential workers in a variety of ways.

"I started making masks to help protect the people I care about from this pandemic," said Marcia Little, president of the Kane County sub-chapter. "After graduating from Sauk Valley College's nursing program, I was hired as a new graduate nurse by Community General Hospital (CGH) in Sterling, so it seemed a no-brainer when the call came for volunteers to make masks for CGH staff that I would help."

Little has been joined by many other members, including those in Jacksonville and

Ottawa, who have been making masks to help essential health care workers while staying safely at home.

Jay Ferraro, president of the Rockford-area sub-chapter, volunteered to deliver food to local families in need through a partnership with Rockford United Labor. "I know that many people have lost their jobs and the need is great," said Ferraro, "but there were no volunteers to distribute food in

The sub-chapter in Dixon voted to spend \$500 to provide 200 meals to all staff at Mabley Developmental Center. They coordinated with a local restaurant, Oliver's Market, to provide bagged meals and split the cost evenly with the restaurant.

Other sub-chapters, like those based in Chester, have sent money and food to local area charities and food pantries. "We understand that



Retirees Jay Ferraro and Marcia Little safely stay active with AFSCME.

the area where I live. I felt comfortable stepping up because I knew how to protect myself and others by wearing a mask, contacting folks by phone and leaving the food on the front porch or stoop to maintain social distancing."

many people cannot stay at home during this time and others are facing the loss of their jobs and serious financial hardship," said Little. "So if there's any way those of us who have security can help, we want to do that." 🦋



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Here are some steps you can take to protect your loved ones in long-term care facilities:

- Ask the facility to provide updates on loved ones and whom you should contact if you have questions.
- Ask the administrator to seek permission from the families of other residents to share their email addresses. Families can create a group email and use it to communicate with other family members, bring questions and concerns to the facility or the Ombudsman program, or provide support to one another.
- Find out what steps the facility is taking to keep residents safe. Request that the administrator tell families how the facility performed on its self-assessment.
- Request the facility set up a schedule for when you can connect with your loved one by phone, video, "window visiting" or other methods.
- Speak up about care and rights violations with facility administration, staff and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which provides advocacy for residents, at [aging.sltpcoprogram@illinois.gov](mailto:aging.sltpcoprogram@illinois.gov).