

SURE: Celebrating 31 Successful Years

The Beginnings

SURE had its beginnings in 1989 as one of President George H. W. Bush’s Thousand Points of Light Program. The idea of a retiree volunteer organization came from a retiree group formed in Minneapolis supported by the 3M Company. With their help and with the strong endorsement of Westinghouse executives George Dorman and John Marous, a kickoff luncheon meeting to establish a similar organization for Westinghouse retirees was held on July 19, 1989. At a second meeting, the mission statement was established: ***“To identify, focus and mobilize the expertise and interests of Westinghouse Retirees for their personal fulfillment in volunteer services for the benefit of the community.”*** In recent years, our mission has evolved and expanded to include an increased focus on offering services that also benefit our SURE members.

You Can Be SURE

In 1991, the name of the organization was changed to Westinghouse SURE (Service Uniting Retired Employees). From its earliest days, SURE actively searched for volunteer programs its members would be comfortable coordinating. Agnes Sink selected a program to provide volunteers at the VA Hospital – it then blossomed into a Hospital Volunteers Program serving many hospitals. As SURE grew, other projects were added, and that number has become an everchanging fountain of good works for those in need within our communities.

In addition to promoting volunteerism, SURE recognized it could benefit the membership by providing information on topics of vital interest. This started in October 1991 with a program on health insurance, followed the next year with programs on pre-Medicare and post-Medicare insurance programs which were held at the Westinghouse Recreation Center in Forest Hills. An additional program to bring SURE members together has been “Trips and Tours”, varying from one-day local tours to multi-day out-of-town trips.

SURE's first annual meeting was held on June 1992. Until 1998, SURE received an annual stipend from the Westinghouse Electric Corporation to support its operations. When that ended, SURE began asking members for a small annual dues payment, and the membership overwhelmingly responded. Westinghouse, and later CBS, provided SURE with free office and meeting space up until 2012.

SURE's continuing success has been enhanced by the outstanding contributions of many ex-Westinghouse retirees. In the box (this page) are listed SURE's Presidents. These are the people have helped to expand SURE and increase its scope, but credit must also go to those who have accepted the responsibility of other offices, served on the Board of Directors, served as a Project Coordinator and member of the Advisory Council, or who have contributed their volunteer time to one or more of the volunteer projects.

SURE’s Past Chairmen/Presidents

1989-1992	Bob Lawrence
1992-1995	Bob Crouse
1995-1997	Tom Dunn
1997-2000	Maury Fey
2000-2003	Parvin Lippincott
2003-2006	Maury Fey
2006-2009	Howard Finney
2009-2010	John Senko
2010-2016	Maury Fey
2016	Ed Kilpela
2016 – present	Lucio Facchini

Preserving Our Legacy

SURE's Group Spring and Fall Clean Up Projects at the George Westinghouse Memorial in Schenley Park – a Success!



Many thanks to our bevy of SURE members who answered the call for volunteers on the May 7 cleanup activity at the Westinghouse Memorial in Schenley Park. We returned on October 8, again with a great turnout, to participate in our 2nd annual group service project in 2019 at the Westinghouse Memorial. In all, about 20 of our members showed up at each event, with volunteers rolling up their sleeves and getting their hands dirty weeding and cleaning the area surrounding the 89-year-old historic memorial honoring George Westinghouse.



SURE volunteers worked alongside representatives from the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy who provided tools, containers and gardening gloves. A picnic lunch was served to the volunteers at the nearby Westinghouse picnic shelter. Throughout the morning, a variety of Pittsburgh media stopped by, and local coverage included a nice [segment on KDKA TV news](#). It was a great morning of working together to make a difference at this historic landmark that is part



of our shared legacy!

We can be SURE that it's Westinghouse

On Tuesday, August 13, 2019, twenty (20) SURE volunteers visited the site of George Westinghouse's home in Point Breeze – now called Westinghouse Park – to assist on a cleanup project that aligned perfectly with our mission while also supporting George Westinghouse's legacy. SURE's support in this worthy community effort included spreading mulch around the trees along the front of the park front and removing litter from the back of the park. We then enjoyed 'dessert' – a tour of the park's past, present, and future conducted by Westinghouse Park 2nd Century Coalition (WP2CC) member David Bear, followed by Triangle Subs for lunch.



The hardworking SURE Members posed for a photo that included George Westinghouse himself standing in the back for the group shot, along with Mayor Bill Peduto.



Thanks to the SURE members who organized the event – Rich Ekstrom, Dallas Frey and Dave Altman – and to City Parks for providing the mulch, and everyone else all who helped put together what we hope will be an annual event. The photo on the left was taken during the tour of the grounds as the SURE group got to peek into the underground tunnel system that led from the Solitude (GW's home) to his private lab housed in the basement of the carriage house. More excavations at this historic site are planned in the future.

The renewed Westinghouse Memorial

When SURE returned to Schenley Park on October 8 for fall cleanup activities at the Westinghouse Memorial, it marked the fourth SURE group service project in 2019. Kudos to our Members who contributed their time, energy and passion to these Legacy Projects.



Recognition

In 1996, SURE instituted awards and recognition of our outstanding volunteers. The first series of awards were the Spotlight Awards. These awards recognize outstanding volunteers and help to publicize the projects that they work on. A second series of annual awards was instituted to recognize outstanding volunteer service to be presented at the SURE annual meeting. These awards include the Charlie Ruch Lifetime Achievement Award, the Bob Lawrence Special Service Award, the Maury Fey President's Award, the Couple of the Year Award, and the Recruiter of the Year Award. The Charlie Ruch Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes service to SURE or volunteering over a long period of time. This award was initiated in 1999 and awarded posthumously to Charlie Ruch, the longtime and much beloved Westinghouse Historian. Award recipients of this award are listed (right).

The Bob Lawrence Special Service Award, named for SURE's founding President, and the Maury Fey President's Award, named for a longtime SURE president, are intended to recognize outstanding service to the SURE organization. The Couple of the Year Award recognizes couples who work together to volunteer. The Recruiter of the Year Award recognizes project coordinators or others who put forth effort to recruit new volunteers or to recruit new SURE members. At the annual meeting recognition is also given to SURE members who have more than 500 volunteer hours during the past calendar year.

SURE members have also received awards from the organizations where they volunteer and some have been recognized by the local community. Twelve of our members have received the Jefferson Award (see below). The SURE Organization was also recognized in 2002 as a finalist for the state-wide Silver and Gold Award. SURE was honored for "Innovation in Serving Pennsylvanians."

Jefferson Award Winners – The Jefferson Award is the nation's highest award for Volunteering. It honors the achievements and contributions of everyday people who are inspired to help their less fortunate neighbors either directly or by working in volunteer organizations dedicated to various facets of community service. Since 1972, this national award has been honoring those Americans who have demonstrated outstanding volunteer services. And every year, 25 individuals from Western Pennsylvania are selected in each category to be the recipient of this coveted Award. Since 1999, twelve (12) Westinghouse SURE members have been selected by the American Institute for Public Service to receive this coveted award. The SURE members who have received this honor have spent countless hours over many years serving others during their retirement years and have received their Jefferson Awards for decades of volunteer activity. Awardees are honored at an elegant reception and are

Charlie Ruch Lifetime Achievement Award Winners

- 1999 – Charlie Ruch
- 2000 – Bob Lawrence
- 2001 – Maury Fey
- 2002 – Bob Crouse
- 2003 – Bernie Riechers
- 2004 – Agnes Sink
- 2005 – Ted Yearsley
- 2006 – John Komar
- 2007 – Harry McCracken
- 2008 – John Skoogland
- 2009 – Renny Clark
- 2010 – Ed Reis
- 2011 – John Senko
- 2012 – Bob Plummer
- 2013 – Bob Miller
- 2014 – Frank Kravetz
- 2015 – Stu Simpson
- 2016 – William Campbell
- 2017 – Wayne Bickerstaff
- 2018 – Howard J Finney
- **2019 – Mary Bach**

presented bronze Jefferson Award medallions recognizing their remarkable volunteer service to those less fortunate within their communities. The following list includes the names and a summary of the volunteer work of the twelve (12) SURE members who have achieved this distinction. Their tremendous accomplishments coupled with this national recognition sets SURE apart from similar volunteer organizations in Western Pennsylvania, and perhaps the nation as a whole.

Westinghouse SURE’s Jefferson Award Winners and their outstanding activities are as follows:

Mary Bach	1999	Statewide Consumer Advocacy
Fred Kraft	2004	Court Appointed Special Advocate for afflicted children
George Muhlberg	2006	Service Corps of Retired Executives
John Komar	2007	Lifelong Service to the Boy Scouts of America
John Senko	2007	Computer Education for Seniors in Latrobe
John Mellor	2009	Service to numerous Plum Service Organizations
Fritz Ottenheimer	2011	PACE School for Troubled Children in Churchill
Agnes Sink	2012	Organization of SURE’s multitude of Hospital Volunteers
Harry McCracken	2013	Lifelong Fire and Rescue Service in Westmoreland County
Maury Fey	2013	Long term Westinghouse SURE Leadership
Frank Kravitz	2013	American Ex-Prisoners of War Advocacy
Stuart Simpson	2016	Service to Homeless Veterans and Ministry in Prisons

In 2018, the Jefferson Awards Foundation announced the inaugural **Kate Dewey Award for Lifetime Achievement in Public Service**. SURE member **Renny Clark** was honored as a finalist in the new category.

The SURE Newsletter – The initial SURE Planning Committee recognized the need for regular communications to promote volunteerism and to publicize other information of interest to Westinghouse retirees. At that time, Westinghouse published “Passages” with the main content being a listing of retiree death notices. While never officially stated, our current newsletter was originally a local replacement for “Passages.” Issue #1 of the SURE newsletter began at the end of 1991 when Bill Singley took over as Communications Director and newsletter editor and started issuing the SURE newsletter at regular intervals.

Over the years, the size of the newsletter has gradually expanded. In addition to accenting volunteerism with articles about SURE’s projects and recognition of volunteers in the various SURE programs, a number of other regular features have been added. These include information on SURE events (including Roundtable programs and Trips and Tours), and listings of retiree deaths. In addition, regular educational topics are also included: Health care topics by Annette Karnash, financial and tax topics by Bob Miller, as well as the popular "Consumer Corner" by Mary Bach, nationally recognized AARP consumer advocate. We sadly lost Bob Miller in December of 2019; Len Bach agreed to take Bob’s popular column in 2020. Also in 2019, we saw Mary Bach step back from her Consumer

<p>SURE Newsletter Editors</p> <p>1990 to 1992 – Tony Furfari</p> <p>1992 to 1999 – Bill Singley assisted by Ollie Rieley</p> <p>1999 to 2004 – Karen Hanks</p> <p>2004 to 2005 – Bill Singley and Ollie Rieley</p> <p>2005 to 2014 – John Skooglund assisted by Bob Plummer</p> <p>2014 to 2015 – Alan Kuenzel assisted by Nancy Liotta McGough</p> <p>2016 to present – Allan Kuenzel</p>
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Corner column while focusing on her work as chair of the AARP Pennsylvania Consumer Issues Task Force. Caitlin Driscoll of the Better Business Bureau of Western PA was recruited as SURE's new Consumer Corner advocate in our Newsletters. Mary will still be an occasional contributor when she has time away from consumer advocacy across the Commonwealth doing frequent radio show segments and speaking engagements; she also commits time to doing YouTube videos, writing blogs and posting on social media.

SURE Connections – Another important communication medium is the Westinghouse SURE website: www.WestinghouseSURE.org. On our SURE Connections site, members will find past and present newsletters as well as membership applications, information about trips and tours, and links to other websites of interest to Westinghouse retirees. In addition to posting the newsletters on the website, most SURE members now receive the newsletters electronically. This enables the newsletter to contain color pictures and include additional material that does not fit print-size limitations. Westinghouse SURE also introduced its entrée into Social Media in 2014 with the establishment/creation of its Facebook page: www.WestinghouseSURE/Facebook.com. Visitors to SURE's Facebook page find photos of volunteer activity, links to articles, and event notifications. Vintage photos and information updates are also regularly posted. In the 6 years since we launched the SURE Facebook page, member interaction and participation has seen steady growth.

The Financial Roundtable – The first meeting of the Roundtable in October of 1995 was organized by Bob Lawrence and Maury Fey with the vision that members would be interested in financial planning topics, such as managing investments, retirement planning, and estate planning. The first five Roundtables were held at the Westinghouse Recreation Center and featured one or two presentations by SURE members. Beginning with the May 1996 meeting, experts from financial firms including Fidelity Investments, Federated Investors, Smith-Barney, Merrill Lynch, and others, began making presentations. The location for the Roundtable soon moved to the Science and Technology Center. Initially the Roundtable averaged around 30 attendees, but by the end of 1996 the number had doubled. One of SURE's longtime Financial Roundtable coordinators was Bob Miller – he did a phenomenal job of managing the Roundtable for 15 years, or exactly half of our organizational lifespan, and was a huge influence on the success of the program over time. Jim Ciesar and Larry Shockling served 5 years as Coordinators and did a great job of carrying forward the SURE Roundtable legacy. In January of 2019, we welcomed a new team of Roundtable Coordinators: Michele Gutman, Bob McFetridge, and Al O'Neil. Enhancements in 2019 include the video taping of presentations to share with members who are unable to attend in person. If our speakers agree to share their PowerPoint slides, we also share those with our members via email. Currently the Roundtable has over 300 active members and the program continues to meet on a monthly basis. Attendance per meeting is typically about 100 members. The Roundtable meetings are held at the Comfort Inn on Rodi Road in Penn Hills.