

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

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Director of Communications: Damien LaVera
Lead Editor/Copy Desk Chief: Clarisse Butler Banks
Assistant Editors/Writers: Liza Frenette, Ned Hoskin, Sylvia Saunders, Kara E. Smith, Matt Smith, Andrew Watson
Photo Editor: J. El-Wise Noisette
Lead Designer: Nicole Clayton
Art and Production: Dana Fournier
Advertising: Lori DiVeglia
Online Communications Coordinator: Bryan Thomas
Editorial Support: Julie Malec

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NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS
800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110
518-213-6000 ■ 800-342-9810

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Be ready when anti-union forces come knocking!

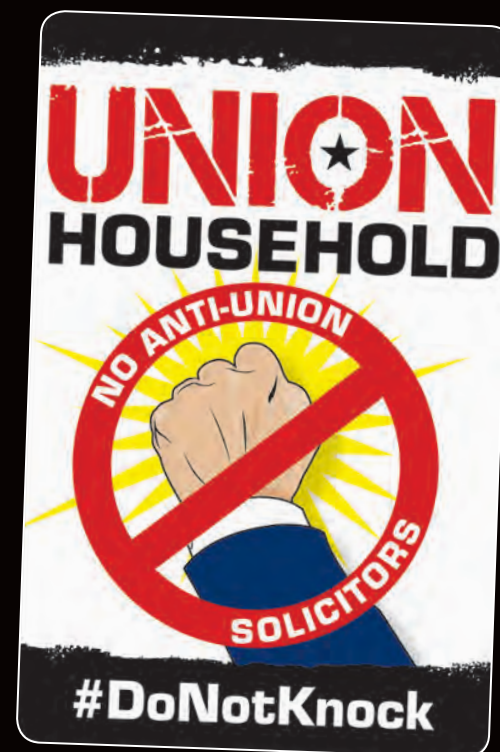
Their goal is to convince you that opting out of your union is in your best interest. It's not. It's in theirs.

They benefit from weaker rights for workers.

Let them know yours is a strong union household.

Get your **FREE** window sticker to show your union values. 

nysut.org/DoNotKnock



Limit one window sticker per household/address.

SRP initiative kicks off with major wins

Visit SupportSchoolStaff.org to get involved

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

In mid-May, NYSUT launched its ongoing initiative to Support School Staff, aimed at supporting and engaging School-Related Professionals, the backbone of our public schools. It includes a new, dedicated web presence at SupportSchoolStaff.org.

"These unsung heroes ensure the safety, health and security of our children, yet they face many challenges in the workplace," said President Andy Pallotta. "With 100,000 SRP members, we knew we could accomplish so much."

The first item on the agenda: Encourage the Legislature to pass bills critical to protecting SRPs and the students they serve, and to ensure due process and fairness on the job.



Little more than a month later — after letter-writing, in-district visits with lawmakers, a special advocacy day in Albany, and even an ice cream giveaway right outside the Capitol — NYSUT SRP members have much to celebrate as most of that legislative agenda passed both houses of the legislature.

■ One new law will require school districts to implement workplace violence prevention programs the same way they are mandated for other public employers. It is a common-sense way to identify weak spots in school safety plans and to address those issues before violence occurs.

■ Another allows school buses to be fitted with cameras on their "STOP" sign arms. The cameras would capture the image and license numbers of scofflaws — who pass buses 50,000 times a day in the state — and bring them to justice.

■ Lawmakers passed a bill that gives SRPs a statutory claim to seniority rights when schools reduce staff due to layoffs.

■ Another ensures that paraprofessionals become members of the City Teachers' Retirement System automatically upon employment.

NYSUT's SupportSchoolStaff.org website sheds greater light on these changes and provides an outlet for SRPs to share how these issues have impacted them and their students.

"These legislative wins are exciting," said NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale. "But we encourage all to visit the website as this initiative continues to organize and engage SRP members in new and creative ways that will grow the union."

SRPs represented by NYSUT include teaching assistants, teacher aides, school nurses, secretaries, clerks, IT professionals, custodians, cleaners, bus drivers, bus monitors, mechanics, food service employees, security personnel, groundskeepers and many others.

COMING UP

June 25
Primary Day*

June 27
NYSUT Board of Directors meets
NYSUT headquarters, Latham

June 28-30
NYSUT Member Organizing Institute
NYSUT headquarters, Latham

July 2-7
NEA Representative Assembly
Houston, Texas

July 11-13
AFT TEACH
Washington, DC

July 11-13
NYSUT Member
Organizing Institute
NYSUT headquarters,
Latham



July 14-19
NYSUT Local Action Project
Gideon Putnam, Saratoga Springs

Aug. 9-15
NYSUT
Education
& Learning
Trust Summer Training
NYSUT headquarters, Latham



Sept. 20-21
NYSUT Board of Directors meets
NYSUT headquarters, Latham

**2019 is the first year state, local and federal primaries will be held on one date.*

ON THE COVER

NYSUT SRP leaders advocate in Albany for passage of bills that would benefit educators and students.

Photo by El-Wise Noisette

SUPPORT SCHOOL STAFF



ANDREW WATSON

Strong legislative finish shows union strength

By Ned Hoskin
nhoskin@nysutmail.org

NYSUT members used their voice last November to elect state Senate candidates who share their concerns for public education, for labor and for social justice.

With a new progressive majority controlling the Senate, the union's agenda began to move soon after the legislative session opened in January. Lawmakers agreed to fix the broken teacher evaluation system right away. Finally!

In a strong finish as the session wound down, union members checked off many more victories. Lawmakers passed bills to allow districts to install school bus stop-arm cameras, institute new workplace violence protections in our schools and provide fair labor protections for School-Related Professionals (see Support School Staff article on p. 3).

They also passed bills to give a break to districts facing punitive financial penalties, help community

colleges find qualified criminal justice faculty, ensure equal pay for equal work, protect patients from exorbitant emergency room bills and enact basic labor rights for farmworkers.

"These victories are a testament to the tireless advocacy of NYSUT members, whom we will continue to fight for in Albany," said President Andy Pallotta.

"With school districts forced to make tough budget choices this spring, we will continue the fight for adequate resources for our schools. We will continue the fight to address the TAP Gap that has squeezed our SUNY and CUNY systems. And we will continue the fight to empower hardworking women and men across New York State," he said.

Farmworkers

Exempt from most labor protections afforded to all other workers, agricultural employees will now have collective bargaining rights and a mandatory day of rest. The bill will also require overtime to be paid after 60 hours of work per week.



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

Erin Smith, Depew Teachers Organization, makes a point at the Committee of 100 in March.

Criminal justice faculty 211 waiver

Community colleges value the expertise of retired law enforcement personnel to teach in criminal justice degree programs. This bill eliminates the waiver requirement for faculty members who are collecting a public safety pension, making it much easier to recruit the best instructors.

*"These victories are a testament to the tireless advocacy of NYSUT members, whom we will continue to fight for in Albany."
— President Andy Pallotta*

Final cost reports

NYSUT won several district-specific bills to correct paperwork errors that had resulted in punitive financial penalties, which fall on taxpayers. Lawmakers recognized the system requires flexibility when an inadvertent clerical error causes the loss of necessary school aid or results in an avoidable financial penalty. Without this remedy, districts faced difficult budgeting choices that would negatively impact student programming and services.

Climate change

Lawmakers reached agreement with the governor on a climate-change law that could make New York a leader on environmental issues, creating jobs and altering the state's energy profile. It targets 100 percent renewables by 2040 and 85 percent fewer carbon emissions by 2050.

Patient protection

NYSUT joined a coalition of organizations that won passage of the Patient Protection Act, which defends patients from excessive hospital fees and helps end surprise bills for patients who wind up in out-of-network hospital emergency rooms.



Voters ask: Who are teachers supporting?

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

The Ithaca Teachers Association and its supporters weren't happy with any of the candidates running for three seats on the school board this spring, so on the day petitions were due, they found a candidate willing to run as a write-in.

Her name: E-R-I-N C-R-O-Y-L-E.

"We knew it was a long shot, but we thought it was important to send a message," said Liz Quadrozzi, political action chair. "Once we started and gained some momentum, it became clear there was a real chance."

And — they won! Quadrozzi said face-to-face canvassing was critical. "We literally spent two weeks talking to people, and they were so happy to hear there would be a new choice.

"Lots of people would immediately ask, 'Who are the teachers supporting?'"

It's a trend. Teachers unions have risen to overcome myriad challenges all over the country, and NYSUT local

unions showed their strength in May's annual school board elections.

In addition to passing more than 98 percent of school budgets on the first try — and 10 of the remaining 12 on the second go around — NYSUT's local affiliates were involved in 229 school board races statewide, with 90 percent of candidates supported by local unions winning election. Volunteers made 52,000 phone calls, on top of their email, mail and door-to-door canvassing efforts.

There are plenty of examples:

■ In Sachem, Suffolk County, "We had five spots open and 13 candidates in all," said John Weston, vice president of the Sachem Central TA. "Our union-endorsed candidates swept all five of them." They included NYSUT members Alex Piccirillo of Three Village TA and Larry Collins of Middle Island TA. "We had two phone banks, made 2,000 phone calls, signs and billboards at major intersections, and a big social media campaign."

■ The Voorheesville TA had not endorsed school board candidates

in the past, but this year was different. With weak school leadership and a "non-collaborative" board, "we felt that our best strategy for change would be to run an opposing candidate," said TA President Kathy Fiero. "The seat up for grabs was the current board president, so we were looking to make a statement."

The union used VOTE-COPE rebate funds to create postcards that volunteers personalized by the hundreds. Fiero said one other personal touch made a big impact: Unique handmade brightly colored signs to place on supporters' lawns, not in public spaces. "We wanted to create ownership," she said. "We had so many requests for signs, we could barely keep up with demand!"

■ In Erie and Niagara counties, nine of nine school-board incumbents were replaced. Union endorsed candidates won in Sweet Home, Frontier, Kenmore-Tonawanda, Williamsville and Grand Island.

In fact, the two available seats in



Grand Island were swept by NYSUT members, Jay Grover from West Seneca TA and Nicole Novak from Buffalo TF.

Grand Island TA President Mike Murray credited campaign chair Cyndi Booker, the candidates and countless volunteers for the win.

"Jay and Nicole stood outside of the polling place from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. They greeted voters with a smile and a positive outlook," Murray said. "We are thrilled to have these professional educators on the school board for the next three years."

NEA, AFT eye 2020 elections

By Kara Smith

ksmith@nysutmail.org

NYSUT's two national affiliates, American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association, have launched new endorsement processes to educate members about candidates, and to heighten member involvement in the 2020 presidential election.

NEA's Strong Public Schools initiative offers members a hub for information and engagement through

StrongPublicSchools.org. Website visitors can find events, submit candidate questions, watch videos, learn more about the candidates running for president and take action to support public education.

"Our goal for the Strong Public Schools 2020 campaign is to listen to you," said NEA President Lily Eskelsen García. "You may not know this, but you have the most powerful voice in the universe, and what we want to do is amplify it."

AFT Votes, the union's 2020 presidential endorsement process, invites

candidates to engage directly with AFT members nationwide through a series of town halls. A group of about two-dozen NYSUT members participated in a town hall with Democratic presidential candidate Rep. Tim Ryan at the 2019 NYSUT RA in May.

"We want the candidates to hear directly from our members," said AFT President Randi Weingarten. "This is going to be a different endorsement process with the greatest member participation ever."

In mid-May, NYSUT members met with Weingarten and Democratic

presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar in Yonkers. The AFT has also held candidate town halls with U.S. Sens. Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren; and Vice President Joe Biden. Visit aftvotes.org for more info.

"In the wake of the ongoing attacks on public education at the federal level, I encourage all members to take advantage of these important initiatives," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "We have the power to make a difference — let's make our voices heard."

Member-to-member visits put a face on union

By **Sylvia Saunders**
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

As Rochester teaching assistant Lisa Rios-Bakari makes hundreds of member-to-member house calls to talk about the power of the union, there's one visit she'll never forget.

Rios-Bakari, who is part of a state-wide network of member organizers, knocked on the door of Kaitlin Curran, a copy clerk in the West Irondequoit School District.

Curran's mom answered the door and was initially reluctant to let Rios-Bakari in.

"She said, 'Does she know you're coming? Do you know she has Down Syndrome?'" But Rios-Bakari didn't hesitate: "She's our member," she said. "I'd really like to talk with her."

Mom opened the door.

What followed was a conversation that not only impacted Curran and her mom, but also Rios-Bakari.

"We talked about how the union is there for you, how we always have your back," she said.

By the end of the visit, Curran's



PROVIDED

Teaching assistant Lisa Rios-Bakari, left, loves connecting with fellow union members, like copy clerk Kaitlin Curran.

mom said she is glad her daughter is a member of the Irondequoit Educational Secretaries Association.

While her daughter's employment situation is fine right now, one never knows what might happen in the future or with different administrators, she said. They are both grateful for Curran's union protections so she

never feels alone.

Rios-Bakari has had many other uplifting visits as well, like a conversation with a cancer patient who was thankful union membership provided excellent medical insurance and leave time. Others appreciated the union's advocacy for members' legal rights and safety on the job.

"Sometimes members are a little surprised we're making home visits, but once we start talking they really appreciate the face-to-face connection," said Rios-Bakari, a member of the Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals.

Rios-Bakari, a graduate of NYSUT's Member Organizing Institute, is one of hundreds of members who will be out in force this summer to meet face-to-face with fellow union members and counter the ongoing union-busting attacks and home visits funded by wealthy special interests.

"There will be hundreds of in-service members, SRPs, retirees and higher education activists going

door-to-door around the state," said NYSUT Organizing Manager Megan O'Brien. "They'll be carrying a message of 'We're in this together' and asking members to stick with the union."

Judging by Rios-Bakari's experience so far, members are overwhelmingly choosing to stay with their union. Of the hundreds of visits she's made in the last year, she only had one negative experience.

"Every conversation is different, whether it's talking about union benefits, protections or the power of solidarity," Rios-Bakari said. "It's been really inspiring."

Passionate about the union?

There are limited openings in NYSUT's upcoming Member Organizing Institute, slated for June 28-30 and July 11-13 at NYSUT Headquarters in Latham.

Paid participants must complete either 12 or 18 four-hour shifts, attend a two-and-a-half day training, be comfortable using a smartphone, and be able to walk for most of their shift. For info, go to www.nysut.org/moi.

North Country event showcases student artists



PHOTOS: ANDREW WATSON

The Tri-County Art Teachers' Association celebrated its 36th year showcasing the work of North Country students from 21 schools in an impressive community-wide celebration. At left, Watertown High School student McKenna Lalonde and high school art teacher Kimberly LaForty, Watertown Education Association. Above, NYSUT Board member Jeanette Stapley and Brian Hallett, South Jefferson Teachers Association.

Members are the strength of the union

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

During the first NYSUT Representative Assembly since anti-union forces attempted — but failed — to use the U.S. Supreme Court to deliver a blow to the nation’s labor movement, labor leaders urged delegates not to take anything for granted and continue fighting for their economic futures and rights on the job.

“We have avoided significant drops so far (in membership) here in New York,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “But our enemies are just getting started. ... We’ve got to stay vigilant.”

Addressing an Albany Capital Center packed with nearly 1,700 NYSUT delegates, alternates and guests, Pallotta urged members to look to — and never forget — the past as they fight for the future.

Pallotta pointed to past strikes — strikes that NYSUT’s newest members are perhaps too young to remember or know of — in New York City, Nyack, Orchard Park, Eastchester and one in North Syracuse led by the late Sylvia Matousek.

Those actions, Pallotta said, “built the foundation of this great union.”

Pointing to the recent U.S. Supreme Court *Janus* decision — which ruled public-sector unions cannot impose mandatory dues on members — Pallotta acknowledged

the last handful of years have been tough as labor worried about its future.

“But I am happy to report that the state of our union is strong,” he said. “Anti-union forces wanted to destroy us, but this challenge made us stronger. Stronger because we did the right thing. We organized.



NYSUT President Andy Pallotta

ANDREW WATSON

We knocked on doors. We built relationships.

“And our membership numbers are up, our members are more engaged than ever ... and they’re sticking with our union.”

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten agreed. In her address to delegates, she said that NYSUT and AFT members ultimately fended off deep, adverse *Janus*-related damage through education and engagement.

“NYSUT is alive and well,” she said. “At the end of the day we survived *Janus*, and we will thrive in spite of it.”

Still, Pallotta warned, “we are not out of the woods.

“The ultimate survival of public

unions will depend not only on merely preventing (membership) drop-outs, but on our ability to convince new employees that union membership is important.”

Pallotta said strength is not only measured in membership totals, but also in member activism — another area in which the union proved its effectiveness this past year, bouncing anti-public education politicians from state office and winning the fight to fix the unfair teacher-evaluation system.

He cautioned that there remains much to be done.

“We can’t stand still,” Pallotta said. “We need to lean into (our) challenges. We need to think long-term, beyond the latest crisis. And, we’re doing that.”

Weingarten pledged to delegates that AFT will fight this year against

“disinvestment” in public education and the “demoralization” of the teaching profession. She urged NYSUT members to demand passage of bills in New York to improve teaching and learning conditions, and promote and protect academic freedom.

Unions, she said, not only build power through collective bargaining, but through “building coalitions, engaging in campaigns and creating communities.”

“This is a ‘which side are you on’ moment,” said Weingarten, adding that during tough times, people respond either by “agonizing or organizing.”

“We choose to organize!”

Video offers powerful lessons for today

One of the RA highlights was a video remembering NYSUT pioneer Sylvia Matousek through the story of the North Syracuse Education Association strike she led in 1976.

“It’s a story of sacrifice, of the blood, sweat and tears of our foremothers and forefathers — a sacrifice that enables us all to enjoy the benefits of being in this great union, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said.

Matousek, who passed away earlier this year, was the driving force behind the historic strike — one of several around the state during the 1970’s. By the time it was over, the NSEA 10-day strike led to the tragic death of science teacher Emilio Colabello, who was struck and killed by a car while picketing. In addition, six union leaders, including Matousek, were jailed.

“I remind you of our roots, our founders, lest we forget where we came from and what it took us to get here,” Pallotta said. “For our newest members, these strikes may seem foreign but they built the foundation of this great union.”

To view the video, go to www.nysut.org/matousek.



Delegates demand action from SED Commissioner

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

A day after Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia faced a roomful of angry local union leaders, delegates at the Representative Assembly urgently called on the Board of Regents to demand that Elia fix the state's broken standardized testing system — or else.

"We have lost confidence in the commissioner and the State Education Department to make the

necessary changes on their own," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, who introduced the special order of business.

"Now is the time for the Board of Regents — those who have the authority to evaluate the commissioner — to direct her to make changes on behalf of our schools and our students," DiBrango said. "New York State education isn't failing; the commissioner and SED are."

The unanimous vote came after NYSUT launched its Correct the Tests campaign to raise awareness and demand the state fix the flawed, invalid

ELA and math tests.

The union has spread the word on parents' opt-out rights; fact-checked the commissioner's misleading letter to school districts supporting the tests; and compiled a statewide report detailing the horrible testing experiences of hundreds of educators, parents and students.

The resolution notes the commissioner and SED have failed to make the many changes recommended by NYSUT. "They've failed to set appropriate benchmarks to ensure the tests accurately measure student knowledge and learning," DiBrango said.

"They've failed to appropriately reduce the amount of testing. They've failed to make the tests developmentally appropriate. And they've failed miserably, year after year, in their rollout of computer-based testing."

As trust in the state testing system continues to plummet, the commissioner keeps making decisions that mislabel our teachers, children and schools, DiBrango said.

"I feel there's a disconnect between SED and rank-and-file teachers," Vestal TA's Joe Herringshaw said. "Partnership is nonexistent."

"For three and a half years we have seen indifference from the commissioner," said Lakeland Federation of Teachers' Michael Lillis. "She has not listened to us on the abusive nature of testing ... when professionals report abuse, we cannot accept indifference."

Kenmore Teachers Association's Peter Stuhlmiller noted that members have been meeting with their individual Regents members and the Regents "are getting it."

"This resolution puts the heat where it belongs, on the commissioner's boss, the Board of Regents," Stuhlmiller said.

DiBrango said the union would give the Regents six months to bring about meaningful change and begin to return trust in the system.

LeRoy Barr, assistant secretary of the United Federation of Teachers, noted that if the Regents fail to force Elia to fix what's broken, the union will act accordingly.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

As it circled the Empire State Plaza complex throughout the RA, NYSUT's Correct the Tests mobile billboard turned out to be a popular photo op for delegates, including from left: Half Hollow Hills TA's Debra Rothar, Horseheads TA's Dora Leland and Kenmore TA's Cheryl Hughes.

RA delegates want to keep advocacy front and center

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

From student testing and school bus safety to dues for adjuncts, Representative Assembly delegates approved a wide range of resolutions that will guide the union's work in the coming year.

In all, convention delegates approved 29 resolutions and two special orders of business. Other proposals were withdrawn, defeated or referred to the Board of Directors.

After a passionate speech by NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, delegates unanimously approved a special order of business calling on the Board of Regents to demand that Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia and the State Education Department finally fix the state's broken standardized testing system. (See story at left.)

In other educational issues, delegates urged NYSUT to fight for the repeal of the state's receivership law, saying it unfairly labels and punishes districts serving the neediest students.



ANDREW WATSON

NYSUT Executive VP Jolene DiBrango introduces a special order of business calling for the Board of Regents to direct the Commissioner to take meaningful steps to fix the state's testing system.

"It's not being funded equitably. We're getting \$25,000 a school ... while independent monitors are paid up to \$250,000 to check off boxes," said Syracuse TA's Megan Root.

Superintendents are abusing receivership "to target and threaten union officials," said Yonkers Federation of Teachers President Samantha Rosado-Ciriello.

Delegates also approved resolutions calling for expedited approval and disbursement of Smart Schools bond funds; expansion of certification and retention programs for Career and Technical Education teachers; and a school library media specialist in every school library.

The convention directed NYSUT to

work with national affiliates to oppose Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's efforts to undermine long-established anti-discrimination and sexual violence protections under Title IX.

There were several resolutions on school safety. A number of School-Related Professionals spoke in favor of a resolution urging NYSUT to work with legislators to make it easier to prosecute motorists who illegally pass a school bus.

"I really urge NYSUT to work on this ... to help our members protect our children," said Cheryl Rockhill, a school and bus monitor and president of the Brushton-Moira Support Staff Association. NYSUT was successful in getting the measure to pass in the Legislature.

Delegates also approved a resolution opposing any legislation that would mandate or permit the arming of public school teachers, and urging NYSUT to demand that any "active shooter drills" are conducted at times when students are not present.

Delegates directed NYSUT to

seek legislation requiring individual crisis response planning for students with disabilities, plus state action on a bill that would set minimum and maximum temperatures allowed in classrooms.

Roberta Elins, president of the United College Employees at the Fashion Institute of Technology, spoke in favor of a resolution calling for a NYSUT task force to study the feasibility of a separate dues category specifically for adjunct faculty. "Adjuncts cobble together a living by working at two or three institutions and they're paying dues two or three times," she said.

Seen at the RA



State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli on attacks on worker rights:

“When the going gets tough, you stand together. ... The only way to win this fight is if you stay united.**”**

Assembly Education Committee Chairman Michael Benedetto:

“Just continue to do what you do so well, and we in the Legislature will be there to support you.**”**



NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento on anti-labor forces:

“They thought they would silence the voice of labor in this country. Boy, were they wrong. The reality is, you are stronger.**”**

Visit www.nysut.org/ra for coverage of the 2019 NYSUT RA.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Yonkers Federation of Teachers President Samantha Rosado-Ciriello speaks in favor of a resolution urging the repeal of the state's receivership law and more funding for targeted schools.

Youth forum highlights diversity, acceptance



By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org

They may be young, but when it comes to fighting for equality and justice, the members of the Rural and Migrant Ministry's Youth Economic Education Group are mighty. YEG members hosted a Youth Empowerment Forum in May at NYSUT's Mid-Hudson Regional Office to help educators understand the many complex issues facing LGBTQ, racial minority and undocumented students.

A YEG member proposed the forum after his school responded poorly to an incident in which a student was ridiculed for wearing a hijab. The event included a panel discussion of students, educators, administrators and community

activists; brainstorming sessions; and remarks by Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president emeritus. A goal was to help educators become better advocates for diverse students through greater understanding.

"It's critical for educators to learn how to have what could be uncomfortable conversations on ... topics relating to discrimination, acceptance and inclusion," said Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers & SRPs member Diana Zuckerman, who attended the forum with students from her school's Human Rights Club, which she advises. "It's our responsibility as educators to create environments and opportunities for students to reflect on biases."

Students enjoyed the opportunity to take the lead and learn about

the experiences of those in other districts. "It helped us realize that our concerns are similar to other students," said Victoria Nazario, one of Zuckerman's students. "It shows what change needs to happen."

Kasey Arnold, who also attended with Zuckerman, pledged to "share what I learned" and to help others create better classroom and school environments.

YEG is a Sullivan County based youth leadership program under the auspices of the Rural and Migrant Ministry. Through its youth-run cooperative, Bags for Justice, YEG members produce a line of Fair Trade bags and T-shirts; its members are represented by NYSUT. For more information about Bags for Justice, visit bagsforjustice.com.

Farmworkers score court, legislative wins



In the final hours of the legislative session, both houses passed a bill to deliver to farmworkers the basic labor, safety and health protections they deserve.

It was a long time coming.

Farmworkers this year had cause for optimism when they scored a major court victory. The Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court ruled that excluding farmworkers from the state labor law is unconstitutional. The ruling affirmed the workers' right to organize and bargain collectively.

NYSUT has long supported labor protections and improved pay for agricultural workers and has advocated for years alongside the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State. NYSUT delegates at the union's May convention approved a resolution urging the union to lobby in support of the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act, which would also guarantee a day off and overtime pay.

The issue stirred passionate debate at the RA. After one delegate suggested the measure could lead to higher food prices, Professional Staff Congress President Barbara Bowen said, "We should not be having cheap food on the backs of laborers."

UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter Leader Shelvly Young Abrams agreed, speaking from personal experience.

"I grew up on a tobacco farm. I know what it's like to live in sub-standard housing and not have clean water to drink," she said. "I know what it's like to work from sun up to sundown without any breaks."

In supporting the measure through his advocacy with the state AFL-CIO, Dutchess County farmer Jack Banning declared, "this is a civil rights issue. ... This is a simple question of equal justice for farmworkers."

As *NYSUT United* went to press, the governor was expected to sign the bill into law.

Anti-bias training is union work



Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, second from left, confers with NYSUT Civil & Human Rights Committee members and staff during an "Implicit Bias" workshop conducted by the NEA Human & Civil Rights Department. NYSUT members and staff will deliver anti-bias workshops in regional offices beginning in the fall.

EL-WISE NOISETTTE

Student debt takes heavy toll on women, communities of color

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Some 45 million people are estimated to have student debt. The average college graduate enters the workforce owing \$37,000, according to the American Federation of Teachers. Since New York State requires teachers to have a master's degree, the challenges can be even greater for educators.

But, there is more to the story of the student-debt crisis than just numbers.

"Student debt has a disproportionate impact on women and people of color, which is why our Civil and Human Rights Committee is working on those aspects of the issue," said J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer.

Women and people of color make up a greater percentage of borrowers. They tend to have higher debt loads because they borrow more money. They also typically earn less than white

males, meaning it takes them longer to pay off their debt.

Fortunately, NYSUT and AFT have made tackling the student debt crisis a major priority.

"The AFT has taken on the student debt crisis as a union issue," said AFT President Randi Weingarten.

For the AFT, that starts with spreading the word to members about public-service loan forgiveness and income-driven repayment programs, both of which are helping people reclaim their financial balance.

More NYSUT members are taking action on income-driven and income-based repayment programs. They work as follows:

The programs use adjusted gross income, family size and the state in which you live to calculate a monthly loan payment based on a percentage of your discretionary income. Each year you must recertify.

There's a payment cap, under which your payment will never be more than you would pay in a standard 10-year repayment plan.

"I think every one of our members, especially the younger ones, needs to hear this," said Selena

Durio, a high school special education teacher in North Babylon and a NYSUT Board member. Durio began using the income-driven program for her two sons

after hearing an AFT presentation at a NYSUT Civil and Human Rights Committee meeting.

To contribute to her sons' college education, she took out student loans in their names that she would pay back. That way, the repayment through the program she signed up for would be based on their income, not hers — a move that left her sons especially protected in the event anything happened to her.

With Durio making timely payments on the loans in their names, it helps her sons establish good credit.

"I did want to give my kids a clean slate," she said.

The program through which Durio obtained the loans is called PAYE — short for "Pay As You Earn" — an income-based student loan program.

Her son Ander went to Suffolk Community College and SUNY Farmingdale. Her son Saben attended the University at Albany for six years, where he earned his undergraduate degree and his master's degree.

Without the income-based loan repayment program, Saben's loan would have been \$814 a month. Using the program, his loans were reduced to \$22 a month, and will be reassessed yearly based on his job situation and tax returns. Ander's loan would have been \$244 a month; now it's \$102, Durio said.

In addition to the AFT's debt counseling presentations, NYSUT's Member Benefits program also offers individualized student loan and debt relief services for union members.

Working in partnership with Cambridge Credit Counseling, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit agency that was recently named the Better

Business Bureau's Credit Counseling Non-Profit of the Year, NYSUT sponsors regional events around the state and Member Benefits sends Cambridge Credit representatives to conferences and some local union meetings.

The company has a dedicated telephone line (888-254-9827) for NYSUT members to get counseling for student loans, or for any other debt management issues.

Since some families have mortgage, credit card and other loans mixed together, this allows Cambridge Credit Counseling to take an all-inclusive approach to debt management.

There is no charge to call and speak with a counselor, who can review members' loans and help determine the best repayment options. "In many cases," said NYSUT Member Benefits staffer Derek Clement, "this may put them on the path for loan forgiveness."

RESOURCES

For more information about AFT's debt clinics, email debtclinic@aft.org. NYSUT Member Benefits has a portal on its website that members with multiple loans or complicated situations can access for \$14.95. A report will be provided based on loan information and responses to questions. U.S. Department of Education student loan website: www.studentloans.gov. Forgive My Student Debt: www.forgivemystudentdebt.org Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: www.consumerfinance.gov.



Program helps inmates reclaim their lives

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

Inside the Suffolk County Jail, deep behind the crude barbed wire, cold iron bars and stale-painted walls, inmates accustomed to lockup are freeing themselves.

In a semi-circle they sit — young, old, black, white and Latino, some of them hardened, others baby-faced — opening up to one another about where they've gone wrong and how they can become better.

All of them are members of Council for Unity, an education and outreach program that works in high schools and correctional facilities to keep kids from gang life, and to change the culture of violence in prisons and the lives of inmates inside them.

"What Council has done for me," said Ines Reyes, 19, "is help me become a leader and positive thinker. It gives you the tools to change."

NYSUT is playing an important role, too.

The union is a longtime supporter of CFU. NYSUT President Andy Pallotta is a council board member. And recently, the union started publishing *Amazing Grace* — CFU's new magazine in which inmates write about what led them down their wayward path and how they plan to get back on track.

"NYSUT has made possible through this publication an opportunity for the public to gain a new perception of incarcerated people," said Council founder Bob DeSena, a former English teacher and United Federation of Teachers member. "Everybody in this room is worth reclaiming."

The Council helps inmates "slay their dragons" by confronting and overcoming what triggers anti-social

behavior. Through inmates sharing their stories, the Council also aims to ease the isolation felt by prisoners and create for them a lifelong support network.

Suffolk County Sheriff Errol Toulon Jr. said *Amazing Grace* serves an educational and spiritual purpose.

"Reading and writing is paramount to any success," he said. "Writing also helps them express their feelings. By doing so, you can really dig down deep into your soul to the root causes of what may be going on in your life.

"They have to believe that they can change," Toulon added. "We can reinforce a lot of different personal values. But if they don't realize it themselves, it's never going to work."

Such a realization for inmates isn't easy. You do your time, get released, and suddenly, you're on the street again around the same old crowd, with the same temptations.

"Growing up in Amityville, I was always around negative energy. Going to jail — everybody thought it was the norm," said Kymel Sims, 22. "This last time I came to jail, I found Council for Unity, and I learned about being positive. When I get out, I want to do something with my life, instead of coming back here like I always do."

Taroy Hamilton, 24, agreed.

"I can't let what happened in the past define me," he said. "Council gives you another chance at life. It makes you realize that even though you've made mistakes, there are people willing to give you a second chance."

"The group aspect is important because it helps build confidence. Sharing feedback is very important in group because each person can teach, learn and benefit," said Robert Cummings, a 23-year-old inmate.

But make no mistake: no one is

chanting kumbaya in this men's group.

"There is no coddling here," said DeSena. "If you're fronting, the men in this room will know in five seconds and tear you up. That's as important as all the love and affection."

Inmate Joshua Francois said that honesty is what makes CFU credible.

"When I first came to Council, I thought this was going to be another one of those jail programs that lacked substance. But Bob really cares. He's making an impact on people who are struggling."

"I want for these men what I received — a second chance," said DeSena, a former gang member himself. "Not investing in them costs us a fortune in incarceration. They're paying their price to society, but society isn't paying its price back to make sure they stay out of here. This is about reclamation."



Participants in the Council for Unity's education and outreach program at the Suffolk County jail meet in regular sessions. The program founder Bob DeSena, far right, is a former English teacher and member of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City.

BECKY MILLER



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One teacher's extraordinary gift

By Matt Smith
msmith@nysutmail.org

Ask Sandro Prosperino “why,” and his emotions rise to the surface, but an explanation does not.

On April 29, the Valhalla Middle School special education teacher and boy’s varsity soccer coach donated a kidney to a New Jersey laborer he didn’t know.

Prosperino thinks. He talks about his Italian immigrant parents — his “heroes” — who demonstrated through actions, not words, the importance of “selflessness.” And he mentions that, perhaps, in some way, he was “passing along the same values” to his own children.

“I don’t know,” said the 49-year-old educator, who came to America with his family in 1972. “It just didn’t seem ... far-fetched or crazy.”

His wife would disagree. Prosperino acknowledged she struggled with the idea. His 13-year-old son also expressed worry and fear. Prosperino reassured them, the way a husband and father does, promising, “everything will be just fine.” But it was the words of his 11-year-old

daughter in which he, himself, found assurance: “Dad,” she said, “you are doing a good thing.”

“Maybe this will get people talking, even beyond kidney donation, about being kinder, gentler,” Prosperino said. “It just seems we lost our way as a society. We seem so much harsher now. You go on social media and people are just hammering each other. Or something happens in the community and we’re just all over one another. Maybe this was my chance to do something in my little corner of the world.”

Prosperino, privately, was long considering organ donation. One day, he read that New York Mets legend Ed Kranepool was in need of a kidney. Through his wife, Prosperino had contacts within the Mets organization. Discussions advanced, physicians were involved and plans for a transplant were tentatively set. Then Kranepool found another donor.

Prosperino was undeterred. “I’m not a religious person, but I’ve seen, sometimes, the way the universe intervenes. I thought,

‘whoever this new person is, they’re meant to get it.’”

Enter Gino Spina, a 47-year-old father of three who had been on dialysis four years.

“I was driving when they called me and told me there was a donor,” Spina said. “I had to pull over. I broke down in tears. He saved me. He’s my guardian angel.”

That Prosperino should donate his kidney to Spina seemed more than fitting. Not only is Spina also from Italy, he is from the same town as Prosperino’s parents: Calabria.

The two men — now friends who speak regularly — met the day after surgery.

“I walk into his room. I finally got to put a face to this,” Prosperino said. “Gino starts telling me his story. One heartbreak after another. Then he tries to find the words to express how he’s feeling, and I know he’s not going to find them. He starts crying. I start crying. And I turn around and the entire transplant team is crying.”

Spina and Prosperino both returned to work about a month after the transplant — weeks ahead of schedule.

“I missed the

kids,” said Prosperino. “I guess you could say I need them as much as they need me.”

Prosperino said his local, the Valhalla Teachers Association, led by President Steve Reich provided critical counsel and support leading up to, and after, the transplant. Valhalla is in Westchester County.

“Whether it was my colleagues, or the administration, they were all a big part of this. I walked into surgery in a very good place and I was able to recover so well because of their support.”

“This experience, it changed me,” Prosperino said. “I came out of surgery with one less organ. But I don’t feel like I gave anything that day. I feel more present, more in the moment. I see things clearer. I’m more patient. Less judgmental. I feel like I gained something that day.

“My only fear,” he said, “is it’s fleeting.”



Valhalla TA Treasurer Sandro Prosperino, left, donated a kidney to New Jersey laborer Gino Spina, inset. For information on how you can be a living donor, visit www.donatelife.net.

PHOTOS: BECKY MILLER

Teacher residency program expanding

By **Sylvia Saunders**

ssaunder@nysutmail.org

Teacher resident Kayleigh Ward remembers the exact moment she found her “teacher voice.”

She was helping out after school and giving some pointers to a couple members of the girl’s volleyball team on how to lift weights, when her attending teacher, coach Therese DeCan pulled her aside.

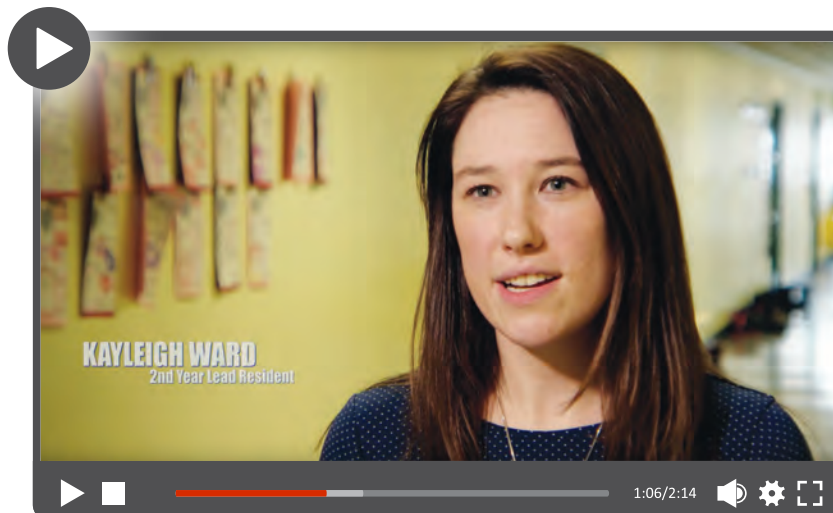
“She said, ‘Remember that voice — that confidence,’ and bring it into the classroom,” said Ward, who was initially a little uneasy standing in front of their sixth-grade class. “That moment totally changed my approach. Therese’s ability to push me — and give me such constructive feedback — really helped me figure out who I am as a teacher.”

Ward’s “aha” moment was one of many personal experiences shared at a June celebration for the first graduates of the Classroom Academy, a union-backed, two-year residency program for SUNY Plattsburgh master’s degree students.

Others talked about how they learned make-or-break classroom management tips; how to handle a difficult parent-teacher conference; or in one case, how to deal with the tragic death of a high school student. All of the teacher residents said they believe the program gave them a leg up in landing job interviews.

“We started small — but at this point, we’re having the happy problem of keeping up with all the placements districts are requesting,” said program director Colleen McDonald, a recently retired Cambridge Faculty Association leader.

The pilot program began with a \$738,000 National Education



Resident Kayleigh Ward, who is featured in a video on the Classroom Academy program, is excited to be starting her career this fall as a fifth-grade teacher in Cambridge. To see the video, go to nysut.org/ClassroomAcademy.

Association grant distributed over three years. Under the model, aspiring teachers with bachelor’s degrees enter SUNY Plattsburgh’s master’s degree program in teaching, with a residency assignment in one of several rural North Country districts or the local BOCES.

The program uses the same lingo as hospital residencies. Candidates are called “residents” and the experienced instructors overseeing their work are known as “attending.”

In addition to gaining extensive hands-on experience in the classroom, each resident receives a \$22,000-a-year living stipend, plenty of individualized and group support, and a year’s service credit toward professional certification.

Residents also take master’s level courses, including up to 15 credits in pedagogy the summer before their classroom placement. The attending teachers receive a \$4,500 stipend.

Aside from the NEA grant, the program is funded through a BOCES contract for shared service, or CoSer, where districts are reimbursed for a

substantial portion of salaries.

In a report before the Board of Regents in May, McDonald said the program is expanding to include two more higher education partners and additional districts including Stillwater and Schenectady City Schools. Current districts

participating are Cambridge, Hudson Falls, Beekmantown and Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex BOCES.

Surveys so far show parents support the residency program and believe having an extra adult in the classroom is beneficial, McDonald said. Research on the program’s impact is promising and McDonald noted that 100 percent of the first-year residents passed their edTPA assessment. She’s eager to track whether the program improves teacher retention rates.

“At a time when we’re facing a teacher shortage, we want to do everything we can to encourage more people to enter the profession,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “And most importantly, we want them to have the support they need to succeed.”



Hudson Falls attending teacher Nathan St. John, left, and first-year resident Lucas Sconzo lead a high school English class. PROVIDED

A CELEBRATION

When education calls

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

People choose a career in teaching for all kinds of reasons. They're called to nurture children or share their passion in a subject area like science, English or art.

For others, it is literally in their blood.

In Troy, education is a family affair. The district is home to at least seven family pairs — mothers who work with their sons and daughters.

In a family tree thick with teaching roots, Genevieve L. Stinson had other plans — any other plans — just not teaching.

Her mom, Janice Strang, was an elementary teacher in Troy. Her grandmother Betty Strang was a middle-school teaching assistant in the library until she was 78

years old.

"I was a pre-law major as a freshman," Stinson said. Then she switched to accounting.

But on a college break she spent time in her mother's classroom to earn required community service credits.

"I fell in love with it," she said. "I went and immediately changed my major."

She's been a teacher for 31 years now and shares the joys and challenges of her profession with her daughter, fourth-generation educator Genevieve M. Stinson.

Genevieve M. remembers playing school with her sister, using magazines as textbooks, and posting rules such as "NO RUNNING" in the dining room. She knew she was headed to the front of the class for her career.

Together, the pair share classroom procedures and organizational

strategies.

"I was ready to jump right into the curriculum," said Genevieve M. "But my first year was a lot more than I envisioned." She tapped mom for help, as well as a mentor through a program established by the Troy Teachers Association, led by President Seth Cohen.

Teaching was not part of Sarah Jabour's plan, either. No way.

"I was a fashion major. I was sure," she said. She went to SUNY Oneonta, which has a cooperative agreement with the Fashion Institute of Technology.

"Very quickly I felt like I wouldn't be making an impact or doing enough," she said, halting her fashion career and choosing a communications major. Another no go. Next came the decision to teach.

Now, she educates fifth-graders, as does her mom, 30-year veteran Ann Marie Jabour — who had long ago figured her daughter for a teacher, hoping Sarah would realize those gifts.

"I saw qualities in her ... she was a planner, an organizer; she always put extra into things," said Ann Marie.

Sarah appreciates her mom's support. "We call each other on the MX (smart board)."

Ann Marie, in turn, taps her daughter for assistance with rapidly changing classroom technology.

"I ask for help ... often," she said. "Which is exactly the type of learner we try to create!"

Sharing professional help is also a plus for mother-daughter duo Deborah St. Onge and daughter Nicole St. Onge.

Nicole is in her first year of teaching sixth grade. "It's always like there's a million things to do," she said. Her colleagues are helpful, as is her union-provided mentor. She also carries with her a familiarity and comfort in classrooms.

"I used to put her in the swing while I set up my class," said Deborah.

Now the pair collaborate on strategies and planning. Deborah said



WOMEN OF TEACHING

her daughter keeps teaching fresh for her, and she enjoys their banter.

Over in the school library, Margaret LeRoux works as a teaching assistant, while her daughter Lauren works in one of the district's elementary schools as she pursues her master's degree to be a teacher.

At the high school level, second-generation educator Beth Willson teaches English; her son Raymond Crobok is a teaching assistant.

After working as a bank teller for 10 years and as a long-term substitute teacher, Willson said she realized that when she was in the classroom it was "the best I felt about myself." She became a teacher, and she, too, saw signs in her son that he was a natural educator.

"Since third grade I felt this child needed to be a teacher. The way he interacted with other kids ... he wanted to be helpful."

Nancy Smith, a 27-year-teacher, works in Troy with her son Rich

Smith, a first-grade teaching assistant who graduated last year with a degree in education.

"School was my catch-all in the 70s," she said. "It was my safe zone. Teachers were my mentors."

Troy is also home to literacy coach Diane Allen and her daughter Kerry Allen, a first-grade teacher. For Diane, it was a bond with a teacher that started her walk on the teaching path. Her college friends were also classroom-bound; they still meet up regularly.

"I have a strong support system for teachers," she said.

That enriched career life was not lost on Kerry. "I always wanted to be a teacher," she said.

It was because she did well in school and loved it that Kerry was able to see the struggle of others with a different story. "I understand it doesn't come easily to everybody, so I wanted to be a teacher that made them want to learn."

From left, Raymond Crobok, Beth Willson, Kerry and Diane Allen, Ann Marie and Sarah Jabour, Nicole St. Onge, Richard Smith, Deb St. Onge, Nancy Smith, Genevieve M. Stinson and her mom Genevieve L. Stinson.

'Thank you' is priceless

By Kara Smith
Ksmith@nysutmail.org

Few words in the English language can match the power of a simple thank you. "Thank you" costs the giver little and can mean the world to the recipient.

Whitesboro Teachers Association member Sue Ellen Williams experienced that a few years ago when a former student contacted her out of the blue. "I got an email asking if I was the Ms. Williams who taught at Niskayuna High School," said Williams, who began her career with a one-year appointment teaching advanced art at her hometown high school near Albany.

The former student was Brian Chesky, co-founder of Airbnb. His request: Would Williams attend his induction ceremony into the Niskayuna High School Hall of Fame? Out of the many teachers he'd had throughout his life, she was one of his favorites.

"I didn't even know he had achieved that level of success," said Williams, a self-described homebody. She hadn't heard from Chesky since leaving the Niskayuna district for a full-time art position in Whitesboro near Utica. Williams attended the ceremony, which dovetailed with Niskayuna's high school graduation,



ANDREW WATSON

Whitesboro art teacher Sue Ellen Williams

met with Chesky and his family, and was thrilled to hear his words of encouragement for the newly minted graduates.

He credits Williams with his decision to attend art school at the Rhode Island School of Design, a choice that initially didn't thrill his parents. "I believed strongly in Brian," said Williams who sat down with Chesky's parents to show them his work and reassure them he had the talent and drive to succeed in the arts. Although many parents worry their children won't find work with an art degree, Williams disagrees. "I tell my students that everything they see was designed by an artist."

Chesky met his future business partner at RISD, and the rest is vacation history.

Wanting to "make an impact" led Williams into teaching in the first place. Her parents were educators and she saw first hand the influence their work had on students.

"It's such a huge honor to be remembered as a positive influence in someone's life," she said.



Granville students: State tests a hot mess

By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org

Madelaine worried that her test wouldn't submit. Paige got a headache after staring at the computer screen for hours. Kiariana considered the test unfair because some "kids had to retake it" after the statewide system crashed.

Those were just a few of the stories students shared with NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango during a visit to Granville Elementary School in Washington County. DiBrango traveled to the school after receiving letters from Granville Teachers Association member Cara Pilch's fifth-grade students about the problems they experienced while taking the state

English language arts and math tests in the spring.

"It's so important for you to have a voice in changing testing for children throughout New York State," said DiBrango, who said she would hand-deliver students' letters to the NYS Education Commissioner. "As students, you know how best to be tested — as adults we need to listen to you."

When Pilch suggested her students write to state officials and NYSUT about their testing troubles, they ran with it. "I told them, 'I'm a teacher, the commissioner has already heard from me,'" she said. "Maybe the voice of a 10-year-old will get through."

For these students and others around the state, computerized testing was once again a headache.



NYSUT EVP Jolene DiBrango thanks students in Cara Pilch's fifth-grade class at Granville Elementary School. The students shared their impressions of the state's computer-based testing in ELA and math with DiBrango. ANDREW WATSON

Since many students lacked keyboard experience, educators spent class periods teaching them how to use a mouse, the drawing tool for the math exam, and other techniques and keyboard shortcuts.

Other student concerns included being distracted by the sound of

others typing; and worry that the computerized format didn't allow them to do their best work. All agree the tests are too long.

"I was excited when Ms. Pilch said you were coming," one student told DiBrango. "It was good to know that I didn't write my letter for nothing."

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Race, ethnicity and education

Union pilot program helps new teachers confront injustice

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

The sticky notes said it all. When asked to write down key takeaways from a racial justice awareness initiative, new members shared how the union-backed pilot project has influenced their thinking both inside and outside the classroom.

"I've learned that in looking at data, numbers do not lie but they don't always tell the whole story," wrote one teacher. "We must ask questions and challenge ourselves."

"My interactions with parents and families are more thoughtful. I make more of an effort to be empathetic," another noted.

"It has impacted my personal life, too," one note read. "I am much more aware of conversation, actions and behavior."

Those were exactly the kind of responses group leaders were hoping for as NYSUT and the Amsterdam, Schenectady and Kingston local unions pioneered an expanded mentoring program to help early career educators better recognize and proactively address systemic injustice in their schools. The pilot is funded through a three-year grant from the National Education Association.

This year's programming included a series of large group and in-district professional learning sessions led by Kathleen McLean, NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust; and University at Albany faculty members Alex Pieterse, a professor in educational and counseling psychology; and Kathryn Schiller of the educational policy and leadership department.

Workshops delved into racial disparities in school discipline; implicit bias; and understanding inequities in educational opportunities.

"Doing this work on cultural bias has a larger benefit for all groups," Pieterse noted. For example, as he took a closer look at why disciplinary

actions disproportionately affected boys of color and students with disabilities, Pieterse's objective shifted. "I've come to appreciate the goal is not (just) to restore balance ... but to reduce the use of discipline that is ineffective. If we do that, everybody benefits."

Schiller, who is working with her doctoral student to evaluate the impact of the program, said online surveys have helped identify school climate perceptions and differences in opinion reported by untenured and tenured educators. "Data talks about how the workshops are impacting districts, but we need to look at how to turn data into action," Schiller said.

"It's this dialogue that moves us, not just diving into the data," said Schenectady Federation of Teachers President Juliet Benaquisto. "It's important we're learning from our new teachers."

In a May debriefing meeting, participants talked about how to bring the program to more educators. Plans include courses offered through NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust, teacher centers and school-based Professional Learning Communities.

"This needs to be mandatory training, not just for new teachers," said SFT's Zach Pearce, a new social studies teacher.

"If it's a top-down mandate, it can be seen as ugly," said Oriana Miles, another new teacher in Schenectady. "You need to give it adequate time and support. Culturally responsive teaching can't be taught in a quick seminar."

"It's important for the union to be behind this," said Damonni Farley, coordinator of family and community relations at Schenectady schools. "When it's a shared value, it lowers the risk and makes it okay."



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Oriana Miles, a new teacher from Schenectady said the union's important work on culturally responsive teaching must be inclusive of all educators – and given adequate time and support.

Meditate with Me: A Step-by-Step Mindfulness Journey

By Mariam Gates



Illustrated by Margarita Surnaite

Recommended by: Alice A. Robinson, West Babylon TA, school librarian

Recommended for: Ages 8 and older

Why I chose it: There is a lot of buzz about mindfulness in the classroom and getting students to calm down and relax. I chose this book because students can act out the scenes as they read them. At the end of the book, both teacher and students feel a sense of peace as their bodies and minds are more relaxed. Students learn to focus on their breathing and on their emotions.

How teachers can use this book:

Teachers can use this book in a variety of ways: at the beginning of a new unit or when they are meeting students for the first time. The book may also be used as an introductory lesson on mindfulness or beginning yoga; or to announce the start of a mindful corner/area, where students can go when they feel the need to get calm and be present. The step-by-step activities will put students in the zone for learning and many of them may be empowered to write their own activities to extend their mindfulness journey.

What I like best: I like that the activities are simple and that the directions are easy to follow. The illustrations really enhance the steps. The activities can be done sitting or standing in a classroom, at the gym or at home. The four steps are also listed in the back of the book, to make copying and displaying them easier.

About the author: Mariam Gates works with young people, combining her love of yoga with mindfulness to help children find strength, confidence, problem-solving and creativity. She offers workshops and teacher trainings. For more info, visit kidpoweryoga.com.

"Check it Out" features books recommended to teachers and parents by school librarians and other educators. Have a recommendation? Send suggestions, along with your name and local union, to lfrenett@nysutmail.org.

Getting to know ... Gail Wikane

Gail Wikane is a paraprofessional at Kerhonkson Elementary School and a member of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals. She was interviewed by Kim McEvoy, treasurer of the Rondout Valley FT&SRPs and chair of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee.

Tell us about your job. Why do you love what you do?

I have worked as a paraprofessional in the Rondout Valley Central School District for more than 20 years and began when our district first adopted the inclusion program. Being a paraprofessional gives the added support which benefits all of the students I work with.

It is quite amazing to watch how much my students mature during this time and become more responsible. I love what I do because I make a difference in the students I work with every day.

What about your union involvement? How did you get involved?

I was approached to run (as a building representative) several years ago. I then shadowed on the par negotiating team to find out about the process and served on the negotiating team to help ensure the paras were getting an equitable contract.

I am thankful for a strong union. I see what my daughter goes through teaching in North Carolina without a union — poor pay, lack of planning time, no support and no due process. I need to ensure our union stands strong, especially today, and stands up to those who want to take away our union. I am also happy that we have just settled our contract.

How do you make a difference?

I love to see the kids I work with learn and grow each day. I love being able to teach students how to read

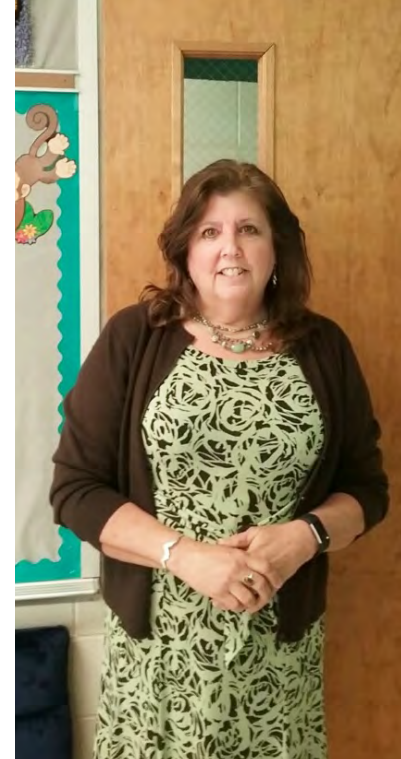
and to learn.

I often get to pull a few students aside who may need additional instruction and support during a whole class lesson. It is during the small group 1:1 time that many students will open up about their problems. I use what I have learned earning a degree in education to meet the social, emotional and educational needs of each and every one of the students I work with.

Knowing that I am someone students can talk to, or help them work over something they did not understand ... well who can ask for anything more?

Tell me about your community engagement, hobbies?

I have been on the Town of Marbletown Youth Commission Board for several years. I volunteer at the Marbletown Food Pantry for the summer backpack program. During the summer months, clients of the



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food pantry who have school-aged children are eligible to get additional food to make up for the free breakfast and lunch that their children would normally receive during the school year.

I am also the Sunday School superintendent and a teacher at the Community Church of High Falls. My husband and I also started a youth group.

[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

Earn CTLE hours with fun STEM events

Interested in learning how to infuse more Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics activities in your classroom? NYSUT is co-sponsoring two STEM professional learning events this summer that are hands-on, industry-led and provide up to 17 hours of Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE).

The STEM Education Collaborative Summer Institute at SUNY Alfred takes place July 28–30, with up to 50 presentations and area industry tours. Open to kindergarten through college-level educators, the event will feature keynote speakers SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson, Clarkson President Tony Collins and Fredonia distinguished math professor Robert Rogers.

The cost is \$120, which includes all meals. In addition to local hotels, on-campus housing will be available for \$55 per night. Visit www.nysstemeducation.org/2019-stem-summer-institute.

Registration is also open for the SEMI High Tech U Teacher Edition Program, sponsored by NYSUT and the SEMI Foundation. The free July 24–25 program at NYSUT Headquarters in Latham offers K–12 teachers and school counselors a combination of hands-on learning plus valuable career exploration information for students. To register, go to www.cvent.com/d/h6qqhh.

For more info on either program, contact Terry McSweeney at tmcsween@nysutmail.org.

SRP Lobby Day



EL-WISE NOISETTTE

NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale and Paula Thomas, United Federation of Teachers, share a moment before Thomas heads off to meetings with lawmakers. Pecorale oversees NYSUT's School-Related Professionals initiatives.

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GOLF PRO SHOP owned by teachers (NYSUT members), offering professional golf clubs (Titleist, Callaway, etc.) to fellow teachers, university professionals, state education employees, league players, etc., at 10% over cost. For prices, email AFT_GOLF@outlook.com. Save this ad.

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ADIRONDACK LAKEFRONT HOME — 110' on Caroga Lake. Skillfully renovated Amish barn and additional outbuilding. Dock, stone patio, deck. 45 minutes to Saratoga. Asking \$350,000. Contact for pictures. 321johngs@gmail.com.

HISTORIC HUDSON RIVER cottage — Charming one-bedroom cottage available in historic cooperative community in Westchester County, off the Hudson River, one hour from NYC. Dating back to 1929, this three-season community has swimming pool, organic community garden, social hall with internet and social activities. \$76,500. www.reynoldshills.org. Contact: cottages@reynoldshills.org.

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**Abe Levine**

A beloved United Federation of Teachers founder, Abe Levine died June 14. He was 89.

Levine joined the Teachers Guild — the UFT's predecessor organization — in 1953. In the mid-1950s, he spearheaded the campaign to win the right to a duty-free lunch for teachers. When the UFT was founded in 1960, he was elected its first vice president for elementary schools, a post he held for 33 years until his retirement in June 1993.

In 2016, Levine was the inaugural recipient of the UFT's Abe Levine Trailblazer Award.

Marie A. Bigsby | April 10, 2019
Cherry Valley-Springfield Teachers Association

John H. Buhr | July 18, 2018
Valley Central Teachers Association

Fred Clarke | Dec. 8, 2018
Watertown Education Association

Eleanor Merritt Darlington
Jan. 16, 2019
Westbury Teachers Association

Jane Fantini | Nov. 28, 2018
Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers

Haden Patten | May 6, 2019
Syracuse Teachers Association

Gerald Vanderheite | March 31, 2019
Newfane Teachers Association

Roger Sorrentino | Feb. 18, 2019
Yonkers Federation of Teachers

Obituary submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact information for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Julie Malec, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email jmalec@nysutmail.org.



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Concerns over excess screen time

By Liza Frenette
lfrenette@nysutmail.org

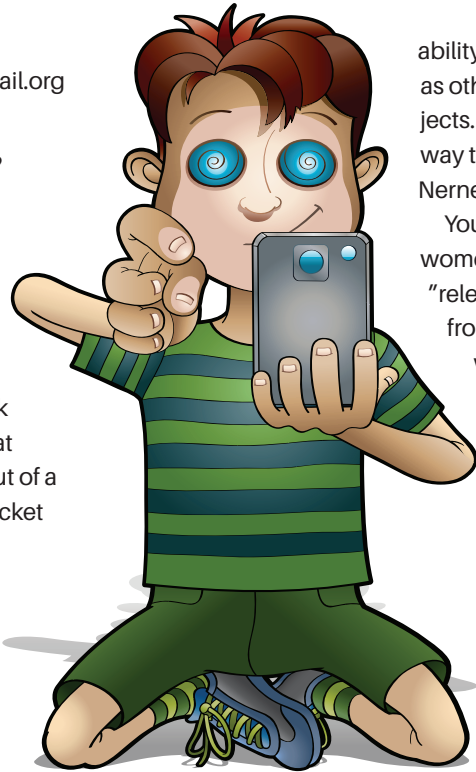
Tardiness?
Hostility?
Sleep deprivation?
Educators with concerns about student behavior might need to look no further than that phone hanging out of a student's back pocket — and their computer and gaming use at home.

If students are struggling with self control, judgment, academics and behavior, there could be a strong correlation to excessive use of screens, according to Michael Nerney, a former teacher, drug counselor and national speaker. Nerney spoke at a recent NYSUT Health Care Professionals Forum, outlining growing concerns about the impact of social media on the adolescent brain.

Concerns over too much screen time are far-ranging, from decreased time for healthy development (being physically active, interacting with people, growing emotionally and being aware and present) to addictions to gaming and gambling and, for growing boys, a change in perception of females.

Increased screen time is also often associated with exposure to pornography and sexually explicit material, which has negative consequences for youth.

"We know there is a distressing change in perception young men have of women. They are losing the



ability to see women as other than sex objects. It changes the way they see sex," Nerney said.

Young men and women also face "relentless pressure" from guys who want to send and receive partial or full nudity photos. Excessive screen time impacts teens' sleep patterns as well. Eight of 10 kids with

smartphones fall asleep with them in their hand, under the pillow, or on the nightstand. Every phone alert disrupts their sleep.

There is also a disturbing, overall pall that has been created from overuse of screens.

"Empathy is the most salient human emotion," Nerney said. "A child can get to empathic development as young as two months. But there is a downturn in empathic response among college students, compared to students from 15 years ago."

Cues are important in reacting and communicating — and that is absent online, Nerney explained. With more time spent in front of screens and less time interacting face-to-face, there is a dangerous disconnect. "There are some really cruel apps. You don't get to see the person's face when she sees that."

Youth now are likely to monitor their popularity by the number of "likes" on something they post,

creating social media anxiety. People even buy "like" applications to boost their numbers.

Schools and communities across the country are fighting back.

More and more schools are tapping into National Screen-Free Week, the first week of May, (www.screenfree.org/events/) as a motivator to set up activities and generate year-long awareness about the consequences of too much screen time.

Responding to concerns about overuse of media, Voorheesville schools in Albany County recently staged their first ever Screen-Free Week, with public swim time, yoga, a state park outing, game nights, an evening bike ride and a potluck dinner hosted by the library. It was far more than a springtime lark — it called attention to the 7.5 hours a day children spend in front of a screen, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Warning signs



A whopping 50 percent of 13–17-year-olds spend 40 hours per week gaming, said Michael Nerney, former director of the Training Institute for Narcotics and Drug Research.

Concerned your teen is logging too much screen time? Look for the following warning signs:

- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Weight gain/weight loss
- Loss of cognitive function
- Higher levels of hostility
- The combination of lack of sleep and constant playing leads to hang-over like conditions
- Compulsive/addicted viewing

Youth are also more vulnerable to cyberbullying attacks due to an increase in the proliferation of gossip apps, many of which can be used anonymously in certain geographic areas.

Screen time studies

The National Institutes of Health conducted a 10-year study on 9- and 10-year-olds. Preliminary data indicate young brains with more than seven hours per day of screen exposure show premature cortex thinning, which could lead to substantial loss of flexible learning capacity. For info on this and other NIH research on screen time, visit www.nih.gov.

Keeping fitness fun

The National Education Association offers lesson plans for educators to encourage students to stay physically fit. K–5 lessons include setting up scooter stations, balancing routines and fitness missions. Find more than 200 fitness lessons for K–12 at www.nea.org/tools/lessons/promoting-physical-fitness.html.

Resources for opioid epidemic

More than 100 Americans die every day from opioid-related overdose. The American Federation of Teachers offers a resource and training guide to address the opioid epidemic at www.aft.org/healthcare/ opioid-crisis-resource-guide.

Members also have access to an AFT e-learning course developed by Harvard Medical School that helps you learn to identify addiction; respond with treatment strategies; support those in recovery; and engage in prevention education.

Multi-hazard emergency training

The State Office of Emergency Management offers a multi-hazard emergency training for school teams from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. July 16–17 at Ulster BOCES conference center in New Paltz. NYSUT members on school health and safety teams can register at www.surveymonkey.com/r/71619G364Ulster. The course covers everything needed to develop or improve an all-hazards school Emergency Response Plan (ERP) that meets state regulatory mandates, and to identify how to train and exercise the school ERP.

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“Quotable”



Ralph Ratto

13 days until I retire! Thanks to my strong defined benefit pension fought for by my union. @nysut (@rratto)

Cement Masons 527

Workers who join unions earn 15% more than nonunion workers. Union membership is also associated with a 19% increase in the likelihood of having employer-provided health insurance and a 25% increase in having employer-sponsored retirement plans. #UnionStrong (@CementMasons527)

Ghostface Vilson

As an educator, I implore my fellow educators to see @WhenTheySeeUs so you don't have to ask me how I reach "trouble kids." Instead, let's work towards a world where the Central Park 5 tragedy never happens again. #EduColor (@TheJLV)

TIME Magazine Union

We have some exciting news to share. Today, @TIME voluntarily recognized the digital editorial employees' request to join our print colleagues in the @nyguild. (@timemagunion)

Annette Romano

Love working with educators that want to support others in pursuing board certification. @bronxvilleschools and @NYSUT Nassau Regional Office. #NBC_NY #NBCTstrong (@aromanonbc)



QUESTIONS FOR... Katie McBride

Stillwater Teachers Association

1. You shut down an event New Choice NY, a union-busting group, was planning at a local restaurant. How did that come about?

I received a "Call to Action" to attend a demonstration at Panza's restaurant in Saratoga. My action to speak to the owner Tony Panza was personal and immediate.

My family has been friends of Mr. Panza and his staff for many years. He has always been supportive of our teachers, students and the families of our school community. We have had many social gatherings, retirement parties, sports booster club banquets and other events at Panza's restaurant and have always felt welcomed and supported. When I told him what the New Choice group was about, he canceled the reservation.

2. What does it mean to have a business make a decision to support educators and their union?

To know that local businesses support our teachers and staff means the world to us; we patronize local businesses everyday. This was a difficult decision for Mr. Panza to make and we sincerely appreciate his support, along with that of other local businesses. His actions show how much local support there is for all union members in our area.

3. The Stillwater TA is an active community partner. How did you accomplish that?

We are a small local of approximately 115 members, but we extend

ourselves selflessly to our school community and area locals.

We participate in the Mechanicville-Stillwater Breast Cancer Walk, Coaches vs. Cancer, the Wounded Warrior Project, local food pantry collections, post-prom donations, and many other drives. The STA also took a very active role when our brothers and sisters of Momentive Local 359 went on strike two years ago during the holiday season. Our members delivered food, and collected toys and money to donate to the striking union members during that 100-day work action.

4. How active was your local in reaching out to members after the Janus Supreme Court decision?

We talked to our members and sent out information that encouraged them to remain active union members. Leaders spent time candidly discussing union membership benefits as well as those hard-fought rights that could disappear, reinforcing the impor-

tance of union solidarity. We also recently approved amendments to our Constitution and By-laws that encourage active membership.

Currently, the Stillwater TA enjoys 100 percent union membership and continues to promote the benefits that come with being an active union member. On the first day of school we took a photo with all of our members wearing their STA T-shirts and captioned it — "This is what 100% looks like!"

5. Clearly, you are passionate about "sticking with our union." What are the values that members can realize from being in a union?

Growing up in a strong union family, the values that relate to union membership are those that also apply to family. Support, encouragement, loyalty and solidarity are all significant values that members can realize through union membership. These values guide union members on a daily basis.

The solidarity and loyalty we enjoy also speaks to "union-buster" activities. We are union strong and will not go away!



DID YOU KNOW?

NYSUT Retiree Services consultants are resources for retired members, retiree councils and in-service locals on NYSUT retiree matters.

Tracy Beatty, RC 1, 2, 3, 44
716-634-7132

Louise Ortman, RC 4, 46
716-664-7425

Peter Randazzo, RC 5, 6
585-454-5550

Anne Marie Voutsinas, RC 7, 8
315-431-4040

Ruth Shippee, RC 9, 10
518-783-7977

Mark Padgett, RC 11, 45
607-786-5742

Jennifer Shaad-Derby, RC 12, 13
518-783-7977

Ellen Pincus, RC 14, 15-16
914-592-4411

Claire Zatorski, RC 17, 18, 19
516-496-2035

Joan Perrini, RC 20, 21, 22, 23
631-273-8822

Judy D. Kalb, RC 43
561-994-4929, ext. 129



At the UFT New Retiree Luncheon in NYC. From left, NYSUT Vice President Paul Pecorale, UFT Retiree Chapter Leader Tom Murphy and NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham.

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Yonkers retiree Jacqueline Baker, RC 16, traveled to the State Capitol to lobby for funding for Sickle Cell disease. From right, Morica Thompson and Anthony Guobadia, Queens Sickle Cell Advocacy Network activists.

PROVIDED



Ralph Smith, right, RC 15, former president of the Putnam Valley Federation of Teachers, is running for Putnam Valley Town Board. He is joined by Marty Sommer, RC 16, NYSUT PAC committee chair.

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From left, Marsha Friedman, RC 43; NYSUT President Andy Pallotta; RC 43 President Deb Peterson; and Bill Cea, RC 43, at the ED 52 meeting at NYSUT Headquarters in Latham.

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REGIONAL CONFERENCES

RC 5 & 6, Oct. 1
RSC: Peter Randazzo

RC 13, Oct. 3
RSC: Jennifer Shaad-Derby

RC 14-16, Oct. 16
RSC: Ellen Pincus

Contiguous At-Large meeting
ED 51-53, Oct. 24-25

RC 17-23, Oct. 29
RSC: Joan Perrini
RSC: Claire Zatorski

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NOTICE OF VACANCY, SPECIAL ELECTION, BOARD OF DIRECTORS NYSUT AT-LARGE DIRECTOR, ELECTION DISTRICT 26 & 27

A vacancy will exist on the NYSUT Board of Directors for the position of At-Large Director for ED 26 & 27, which will be created by the resignation of Howard Schoor, effective Sept. 19, 2019.

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX §6(o), the NYSUT Board of Directors is empowered to fill all At-Large Director vacancies that may occur between election year Representative Assemblies.

Notice is hereby given that a special election to fill the At-Large ED 26 & 27 Director vacancy will be conducted by the NYSUT Board of Directors on Sept. 20, 2019.

The election will be by roll call vote of the members of the NYSUT Board of Directors. A majority vote is required for election. Should a second balloting be necessary to determine the results of an election, the two nominees with the highest number of votes in the first election will be nominees.

In the event that there is a tie for the second highest number of votes, the candidate with the highest number of votes and all candidates tied for second shall be placed on the second ballot. The meeting must remain in session until there are no more than two candidates on the ballot, and one

candidate is elected by the Board.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors for the 2017 Representative Assembly. In order to qualify for the special election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least eight (8) NYSUT members.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Thursday, Aug. 29, 2019. Any NYSUT member in good standing from the Election Districts 24-35 may be a candidate. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysutmail.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 518-213-6000, ext. 6662.

The candidate elected will serve as successor At-Large Director immediately upon being elected and continue to serve as successor At-Large Director to the conclusion of the 2020 Representative Assembly.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING, NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, VACANCY ELECTION, ELECTION DISTRICT 28

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 28. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Arthur Pepper, effective May 1, 2019.

In accordance with the NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §§4(a) and 4(b): "Directors representing Election Districts shall be elected on a roll call vote by a majority of ballots cast by the representatives from their respective constituencies ... [and in] ... the event of a vacancy in the position of Election District Director, the President shall call a special election to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term."

The delegates and alternates of Election Districts 24-35 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a special election meeting to be held as follows:

Date: Aug. 27, 2019

Time: 5 p.m.

**Place: UFT Headquarters, 52 Broadway
New York, NY 10004**

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2019 Representative Assembly representing the members of EDs 24-35 will be eligible to vote in this special election. A reported alternate delegate may vote in the absence of the delegate.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 2017 Representative

Assembly. In order to qualify as a candidate for this special election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least two (2) in-service members from EDs 24-35.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Tuesday, July 16, 2019. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within EDs 24-35 may be a candidate. Only in-service members in good standing from EDs 24-35 may sign a candidate's Nominating Petition. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysutmail.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 518-213-6000, ext. 6662.

At the special election meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a candidates' forum scheduled for 5 p.m. on Aug. 27, at the above location. The special election meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected. The number of votes to which a local is entitled will be evenly distributed among that local's delegates present and voting.

The candidate elected will serve as successor Election District Director immediately upon being elected at the Aug. 27, 2019, special election meeting and continue to serve as the successor director to the conclusion of the 2020 RA.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2019 NYSUT RA from EDs 24-35 are requested to be present for this election.

East Williston Teachers Association

Putting its money where its hopes are — encouraging students to take a look at teaching — the East Williston TA has formed a foundation that annually awards a \$10,000 scholarship to a graduating senior pursuing a career in education.

The effort, which has awarded scholarships since 1983, has already paid classroom and union dividends, said Meryl Fordin, president of the 235-member local. Former recipient Joseph Fina Jr. is a math teacher in the district and treasurer of the East Williston TA. In 2008, the union renamed the award in recognition of founding trustee and longtime EWTA president David K. Israel. To raise money for the foundation, a 501(c)(3), the union raffles off gift baskets and hosts social events to mark different holidays and events throughout the year. The union also solicits donations from local businesses and once a year sends a direct mailing to retirees.

Niagara Wheatfield Teachers Association

Whether they're at a community event, a union fundraiser, or supporting student-athletes, members of the Niagara Wheatfield TA are easy to spot in their vivid, NWTA T-shirts. President Darla Bubar said the local purchased shirts for members who recommitted to the union. Each of the nearly 300 members stuck

with the union, she said, and received a shirt designed by art teacher Tracy Bloom.

NWTA members are actively involved in the community and their union, supporting organizations that help children living in poverty or in homeless shelters.

The union also flexes its fundraising muscle for political action. As a result of the local's new face-to-face education program, annual voluntary VOTE-COPE donations are up to \$34,000 from \$6,800.

Share news about your local's union or community events at united@nysutmail.org; include LIA in the subject line.



Matt Kaderli and Nwta President Darla Bubar model their member-designed T-shirts at the 2019 NYSUT RA.

LIZA FRENETTE

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING, NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, VACANCY ELECTION, ELECTION DISTRICT 33

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 33. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Paul Egan, effective March 11, 2019.

In accordance with the NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(a) and 4(b): "Directors representing Election Districts shall be elected on a roll call vote by a majority of ballots cast by the representatives from their respective constituencies ... [and in] ... the event of a vacancy in the position of Election District Director, the President shall call a special election to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term."

The delegates and alternates of Election Districts 24-35 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a special election meeting to be held as follows:

Date: Aug. 27, 2019

Time: 5 p.m.

**Place: UFT Headquarters, 52 Broadway
New York, NY 10004**

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2019 Representative Assembly representing the members of EDs 24-35 will be eligible to vote in this special election. A reported alternate delegate may vote in the absence of the delegate.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 2017 Representative

Assembly. In order to qualify as a candidate for this special election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least two (2) in-service members from EDs 24-35.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Tuesday, July 16, 2019. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within EDs 24-35 may be a candidate. Only in-service members in good standing from EDs 24-35 may sign a candidate's Nominating Petition. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysutmail.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 518-213-6000, ext. 6662.

At the special election meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a candidates' forum scheduled for 5 p.m. on Aug. 27, at the above location. The special election meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected. The number of votes to which a local is entitled will be evenly distributed among that local's delegates present and voting.

The candidate elected will serve as successor Election District Director immediately upon being elected at the Aug. 27, 2019, special election meeting and continue to serve as the successor director to the conclusion of the 2020 RA.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2019 NYSUT RA from EDs 24-35 are requested to be present for this election.



KUDOS!

It's an honor

Francois Barcomb, Hendrick Hudson Education Association, won the Jeopardy! Teachers Tournament — along with its \$100,000 prize. Barcomb, a physics teacher, beat 14 teachers from across the country to take the top prize. The finals came down to three educators with ties to New York State.

Several members received awards from the Suffolk School Library Media Association. Winners are: **Timothy Horan**, Hauppauge Teachers Association; **Michelle Robinson**, Smithtown TA; **Shannon Alexander**, Middle Island TA; **Anne Bean**, West Islip TA; and **Mary Charters**, Mattituck-Cutchogue TA.

Henry Padron, Rochester TA retiree, has opened an independent children's bookstore in Rochester. Hipocampo Children's Books celebrated its grand opening April 20, carrying literature to celebrate the languages and cultures of the city. For more information, visit www.hipocampochildrensbooks.com.

In print

Librarians **Alice Robinson**, a member of the West Babylon TA, and **Jennifer Freedman**, TA of Lindenhurst, co-authored an article in the May/June 2019 issue of *Knowledge Quest* magazine. "School Librarians Level Up: Transform Your Teaching by Unpacking the AASL Standards Framework and Implementing Shared Foundation V: Explore" is available at knowledgequest.aasl.org.

Helene Verin, a member of the United College Employees at FIT, published *Arsho Baghsarian: A Life in Shoes*. It shares the story of a woman who is regarded as "one of the most important shoe designers of the mid- to late-twentieth century." Baghsarian worked behind the scenes to create designs for famous men's labels, including Christian Dior, Andrew Geller and Stuart Weitzman. The book is available from Schiffer Publishing at www.schifferbooks.com/arsho-baghsarian-a-life-in-shoes-6641.html.

"Kudos!" recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you'd like to share? Email united@nysutmail.org; include "Kudos!" in the subject line.

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The power of the union should serve as a steadfast reminder to all NYSUT members that Member Benefits is here as your advocate. Unlike with purchasing products available to the general public, Member Benefits staff is ready to assist if you ever have any issues or concerns with our endorsed programs.

As a NYSUT member, you have access to a variety of union-endorsed benefits to help save money while enjoying time with family or friends. Whether you are going to a sporting event, taking in a movie, having dinner out or making plans for a weekend excursion, look to the benefits available from NYSUT Member Benefits before making any purchasing decisions.

In addition to the advocacy and savings that we offer, Member Benefits can also assist NYSUT members and their families with planning for life’s major events through participation in our endorsed insurance, financial and legal programs.

The SnapQuote service offered by MetLife Auto & Home gives NYSUT members greater choice when it comes to selecting auto and homeowners coverage to protect their vehicle(s) and home. This new platform allows NYSUT members to choose the insurance coverage

that works best for them from multiple highly rated national carriers. SnapQuote features competitive prices and offers savings from bundled auto and homeowners coverage.

Our newly endorsed UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program from Mid-Island Mortgage offers assistance for those members looking to purchase a home. NYSUT members can save up to \$2,700 in lender fees and closing costs with Mid-Island Mortgage, which has been proudly working with union families for the past 60 years.

Finally, Member Benefits is looking to do its part to assist NYSUT members in dealing with the student loan crisis. Our endorsed Cambridge Credit Counseling program offers individualized student loan and debt relief services. NYSUT members are eligible to receive free, no-obligation, debt and student loan consultations with one of Cambridge’s certified counselors.

These programs are just part of the power of the union. You aren’t just a member to us — you are part of our union family.

To learn more about these endorsed programs along with many other savings opportunities, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.



IT'S WHAT WE DO

John DeMarco, Pearl River Teachers Association

Art teacher John DeMarco has had his work exhibited at the New York Hall of Science in New York City; the Garner Arts Center in the lower Hudson Valley; Green Point Gallery in Brooklyn; Castle Fitzjohns Gallery in Manhattan; The Hopper House in Nyack; and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

Add to that impressive list the Albany-area rail trail.

DeMarco spent part of summer 2018 on a bicycle and walking path in Albany County transforming piers with paint and imagination. He was chosen in a competitive quest for artists to brighten up a section of the nine mile Helderberg-Hudson public rail trail.

Under his brush, ash-colored piers became stylized with oversized wild flowers in bold blues and greens that glow; his nature motif colored with pigments culled from brazen earth and sky. Hollyhock, Queen Anne’s lace, bee balm and long grasses command the space.

The artwork lifts the gloom from this dark spot on the trail, which heads into a low tunnel. His project is named “Full Spectrum.”

“I was mostly focused on the color; it was so dark under there,” he said.

The transformation was made possible with the help of several volunteers, including DeMarco’s wife, Nyack TA special ed teacher Tricia Crafts; their son, Caden; Pearl River TA member and art teacher Andrea della Cava; along with volunteers from the Hudson Mohawk Land Conservancy, students, and random walkers on the trail who helped paint the base colors. The organizers of the project wanted community involvement.

DeMarco is no stranger to large work or public art. He’s painted murals in Lyndonville in Orleans County, and public sculptures in Stamford, CT.

And, he has donated art to the Rockland Center for the Arts fundraiser, and the Pearl River Parent Teacher Student Association to raise money for student scholarships.

DeMarco’s brushstroke verve also is evident in school, where he serves with science teacher Sheryl Palacio as co-adviser to a group of educators and students painting indoor hall murals for the school’s ongoing beautification project.

DeMarco serves on the Pearl River TA executive board. “It’s good to be involved, and so nice to get an understanding of why there are unions.”

To read more about DeMarco’s story, visit www.nysut.org/itswhatwedo.



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The Joint Allowance options allow you to designate a beneficiary to receive all of your pension, or a percentage of your pension, upon your death, for the rest of their life. With these options, the percentage you choose, as well as your age and that of your beneficiary, will determine how much you both receive.

There is a variation called a Pop-Up Joint Allowance. This option usually pays less than the standard Joint Allowance. However, if your beneficiary dies before you, your pension will "pop-up" to the Single Life Allowance amount. With any of the Joint Allowance options, you can choose only one beneficiary.

In every issue, State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and trustee of the Common Retirement Fund, provides information on the System, which delivers retirement benefits to many NYSUT School-Related Professionals and other support staff. If you are an ERS member with a question of general interest, email united@nysutmail.org.

For immediate assistance, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Capital District.

There is also a set of options called Five Year Certain and Ten Year Certain, which allow you to designate one or more beneficiaries. If you die within five or 10 years after you retire (depending upon which option you choose), your beneficiary will be paid the same amount you were receiving for the remainder of the five- or 10-year period.

ERS will provide you with your option amounts when you file your retirement application, or, if you request an estimate before you retire, you'll receive your option amounts as part of that estimate. It is important to know that you cannot change your option election 30 days after your pension benefit becomes payable. You can learn more on our Payment Option Descriptions page at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/planning/options.php.

For more information about the retirement process, including tips for planning and how to request an estimate, read our publication, *How Do I Prepare to Retire?*, at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/vo1709.php.

NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). NYSUT ERS consultants are available to help SRP members navigate the retirement system. Consultants can answer questions, provide forms and help members contact the ERS. Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411
troers@nysutmail.org

Kathy Hine • 585-454-5550, ext. 144
rochers@nysutmail.org

Patti Lennon • 516-496-2035, ext. 324
nroers@nysutmail.org

*Note: Certified teaching assistants belong to the state Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

Working in retirement? Report your earnings!

Q: I'm a retired educator, and in 2018 I was employed in New York State. Do I need to report my earnings to the State Teachers' Retirement System?

A: The answer is yes, if you earned more than \$30,000 during the calendar year; were younger than 65 for the entire year; and were employed by New York State in any form of public employment. If you fit these criteria, you should immediately report your public employment earnings to NYSTRS. Report your wages even if you worked under a waiver, or were hired by a private, third-party entity that contracts with New York State to provide service. Follow this rule of thumb — if you've provided service



to a New York State public employer, and earned money for it, report it to NYSTRS.

Q: Thanks for the information. How do I report my earnings?

A: Use form RMS-64.1, *Reporting Your New York State Public Employment Earnings*, and mail it to NYSTRS, 10 Corporate Woods Drive, Albany, NY 12211. It's available on the NYSTRS website under the "forms" dropdown menu; select "retiree forms." You can also report your 2019 public employment earnings online if you have a MyNYSTRS account.

NYSTRS recommends reporting post-retirement earnings monthly through MyNYSTRS, even if you don't plan to exceed the \$30,000 limit. Timely self-reporting helps you track your earnings and avoid having to repay a portion of your retirement benefit.

For additional information about post-retirement earnings, including the rules governing consultant work, read *Working in Retirement* online at www.nystrs.org/NYSTRS/media/PDF/working.pdf.

Correction

The TRS column in the May/June issue of *NYSUT United* contained an error. Your effective date of retirement must be at least one day *after* your date of resignation.

NYSUT TRS consultants

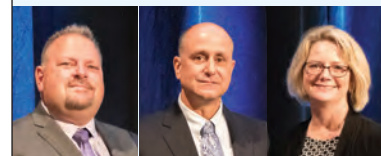
TRS members with questions may call your teacher-members on the New York State Teachers' Retirement System Board of Directors:

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Sheila Sullivan Buck • 585-454-5550
sbuck@nysutmail.org

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