

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

REMEMBER
APPR betrayal
this fall | **4**

UNION STRONG!
More locals reported
at 100 percent | **8**



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Pallotta: Labor will not back down!

By Matt Smith
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Editor's note: As NYSUT United went to press, the U.S. Supreme Court had yet to hand down a ruling in Janus v. AFSCME.

While NYSUT continued to await a decision in the landmark *Janus v. AFSCME* case before the U.S. Supreme Court, its members throughout the state were sending the emphatic message to anti-labor forces that they won't be broken by the latest assault on organized labor.

"Wealthy special interests have been fighting for years to undercut unions and roll back the benefits earned by working families," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "We are ready for this fight."

Bankrolled by wealthy forces intent on crippling organized labor, the *Janus* case will determine whether public unions can continue to collect dues from members to cover the costs associated with collective bargaining.

A decision by the court in favor of the plaintiff could prevent public sector unions from collecting fees from employees who no longer wish to be union members but still are represented by unions and benefit from the negotiations that secure their salary, health coverage and retirement protections. That could not only weaken unions, but also severely hamper their ability to represent and defend members.

NYSUT locals, however, have been hard at work to ensure that's not the case in New York.

Across the state, members have been signing and returning recommitment cards, declaring that they are sticking with their union. From Fort Edward to Central Square, Orchard Park to Watertown, Spencerport to Brentwood, locals



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

Union members take part in the Working People's Day of Action in New York City to stand up to the corporate agenda in Washington, D.C.

— teachers and School-Related Professionals — are reporting at, or near, 100-percent recommitment rates (see page 8).

"Our movement is stronger than ever," said Pallotta. "We are committed to working like never before to encourage every member to stick with their union."

For several years now, there has been a systematic assault on the nation's working men and women. As Wisconsin Education Association Council President Betsy Kippers once warned: It's all part of a national effort to dismember unions "issue by issue."

She would know. In 2010, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker pushed through measures that cut the pay of unionized teachers and dismantled their collective bargaining rights. He followed up by enacting right-to-work legislation. It wasn't long before Ohio, Michigan and Indiana did the same.

Now, the wealthy anti-labor forces that bankrolled the *Janus* case have taken that state-by-state attack and transformed it into a nationwide assault.

Walker drafted a union-busting blueprint that those behind the *Janus* case followed. But it's important to note: The premise of the *Janus* case — that it violates the First Amendment rights of union members

by forcing them to pay dues for political activities with which they might not agree — is predicated on a lie.

Here's the truth: The Supreme Court ruled in 1977 in the *Abood* case that while public sector unions had the right to collect dues to cover the costs of bargaining, public sector union members also had the right to opt out of contributing toward a union's political action activities.

So, make no mistake, *Janus* is about breaking unions so that the rich can get richer on the backs of working people. It is about denying workers a voice on the job. It is about gutting the middle class.

We cannot let that happen. We must rise up and defend ourselves, our professions and our values. Here are some ways to do that:

- First, sign a re-enrollment card. That alone sends the message that we will not let them break us.

- Stay connected to your local. Be active. Be involved. Be engaged.

- Use your voice to spread the value of union membership and the facts — unionists enjoy higher compensation than non-union members; collective bargaining rights, legal representation if needed, good health coverage and a secure retirement.

"We have fought long and hard to protect our brothers and sisters in the labor movement," Pallotta said. "We are not going to back down now."



COMING UP

July 2-5

NEA Representative Assembly
Minneapolis, Minn.

July 13-16

AFT Convention
Pittsburgh, Pa.

July 16-20

NYSUT Local Action Project
Gideon Putnam, Saratoga Springs



July 22-27

NYSUT Leadership Institute
NYSUT Headquarters, Latham

Aug. 6-7

NYSUT Endorsement Conference
Desmond, Albany

Aug. 8

NYSUT Board of Directors meets
NYSUT Headquarters, Latham

Aug. 8-9

New Local Presidents Conference, NYSUT Headquarters, Latham



Aug. 19

Voter registration deadline for September Primary

Sept. 14-15

NYSUT Board of Directors meets
NYSUT Headquarters, Latham

On the cover

Members of the Brentwood Teachers Association are all in!

Photo by El-Wise Noisette

Remember APPR betrayal when you vote this fall

By Ned Hoskin
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Late in April, the state Assembly introduced and quickly passed a bill that would restore local control and collective bargaining in teacher evaluations and fix the state's flawed, test-driven APPR law.

About the same time, the Senate introduced S.8301, identical to the Assembly's bill.

Soon, 87 percent of senators, on both sides of the aisle signed on to "co-sponsor" the bill, and it looked like it would sail through. The governor waited with pen in hand.

Yet on the final day of the 2018 legislative session, weeks after S.8301 was introduced, the gavel came down; Senate GOP conference leader John Flanagan never allowed his members to vote on it. Earlier in the day, he asked them to vote on — and they passed, 35 to 25 — a different APPR bill.

Flanagan's proposal included provisions that empowered SED to help determine the content of local APPR plans, opening the door to continued reliance on state tests and the unfair growth model. It would have reduced local control in the process.

In addition, it was encumbered by hundreds of millions in gifts to charter school operators, whose backers donate to the GOP leadership. The bill also included provisions to reduce curriculum oversight for private, religious Yeshiva schools. Everyone knew it was a deal breaker — Assembly Speaker Heastie called it a "cyanide" pill — but dozens of the senators who professed to support S.8301 broke their promise and voted for Flanagan's tainted, dead-on-arrival bill.



■ NYSUT SRP Board member Karen Arthmann, left, and Pittsford District TA's Kim Chesko say we will remember in November! NED HOSKIN

"Faced with a slam dunk opportunity to roll back the test-and-punish era by passing legislation sponsored by 55 of the 63 senators, Sen. Flanagan, his caucus and five Democrats chose to betray the state's teachers," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

"For what? To steer more than \$375 million from public schools in the suburbs and upstate to charter schools in New York City.

"Make no mistake," Pallotta said, "New York teachers, parents and public school students will remember which senators voted against their public schools when we head to the polls this September and again in November."

NYSUT had mounted an aggressive grassroots and lobbying effort over several weeks to get S.8301 passed, with "no strings attached." The union launched online advocacy blasts, a major press event that drew

senators from both sides of the aisle and protests at the district offices of senators all over the state. The union also held high-visibility actions at the Capitol, including balloons delivered to GOP lawmakers, musical groups marching and playing as time ran out, and a free ice cream event on the last day of session.

Some asked why the Flanagan bill was unacceptable. Could the union make a deal accepting charter language or watered down oversight of Yeshivas?

Pallotta explained, "We firmly believe that there should be a moratorium on the authorization of any new charter schools until the state enacts critically needed reforms to make charter management operators more transparent and accountable to taxpayers and the public."

And, "NYSUT strongly objects to taking the oversight of SED out of the secular curriculum that Yeshivas,

NYSUT calls for action

As part of this year's legislative push, NYSUT released *The Tyranny of Testing*, a compilation of first-hand accounts detailing the many problems educators and students experienced during this spring's grades 3–8 state standardized testing.

Many of the stories are painful to read — accounts of children as young as 8–9 years old testing for more than five hours to finish what was billed as a 90-minute test; students crying and becoming physically ill; and children having their online tests completely erased due to computer glitches.

"It's crucial for our education policymakers to hear these on-the-ground reports so they realize how great the need is to fix New York's broken testing system," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

Read the report at www.nysut.org/tyranny.

State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia also heard directly from local union presidents and retiree leaders at a Q&A session held prior to NYSUT's Representative Assembly in April. For more on the Q&A, go to www.nysut.org/RA.



or religious schools for that matter, provide," he said.

Now this issue becomes a major focus as NYSUT begins its summer endorsement process for primaries in September and the general election in November.

Most recently in the campaign to defeat the constitutional convention referendum last fall, the statewide union has been impressively effective at the ballot box.

"We will remember," Pallotta said.

Union wins suit challenging ‘fake’ certification of charter schoolteachers

A state judge has put the brakes on SUNY regulations that would have allowed charter schools to “self-certify” teachers with only a month of in-house coursework and just one week of practice teaching. They wouldn’t have been required to pass certification exams, or even have a bachelor’s degree.

The suit, which charged SUNY’s action exceeded its authority and would have created a two-tier certification system, was brought by NYSUT, the United Federation of Teachers, as well as the State Education Commissioner and the Regents.

Acting Supreme Court Justice Debra J. Young agreed, ruling that the authority for setting minimum

teacher certification standards rests with the State Education Department. She said SUNY would be “free to require more of the teachers they hire but they must meet the minimum standards set” by SED for other teachers.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta praised the decision, calling it “a victory in our fight to ensure excellence in education at all schools.”

Pallotta thanked NYSUT’s legal team, as well as numerous activists who pushed back against the illegal regulations.

Immediately after learning of the proposed regulations, NYSUT demonstrated outside a SUNY Board of Trustees meeting last fall in a protest that attracted teachers, higher education faculty, retirees, parents and

public school advocates who carried signs that read “Real Teachers for All” and “No EZ-Teach!”

“This victory is a result of all of that hard work,” Pallotta said. “Together, we derailed regulations that would have significantly undercut the quality of teaching in SUNY-approved charter schools. And we showed what happens when the statewide union mobilizes and launches a full-throttle campaign to protect public education.”



EL-WISE NOISETTE

■ NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, right, leads a rally opposing SUNY’s plan to allow charter schools to certify their own teachers.

While a SUNY official said the decision is likely to be appealed, the ruling blocks plans by the Success Academy Charter network and the Bronx Charter School for Better Learning to launch their in-house teacher certification programs before schools start this fall.

Labor calls for a moral revival



EL-WISE NOISETTE

■ Hundreds of activists marched in Albany for the kickoff of the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. Events were planned in 36 states to call attention to “racism, poverty, the war economy and ecological devastation.” Above, from left, Andrew Marcum, CUNY; Sophia Howard-Johnson and Eve Shippens, Buffalo Teachers Federation; NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham; Rev. Claudia de la Cruz, NY Poor People’s Campaign co-chair; Juan Peralta, People’s Forum; and artist and organizer Gammy Alvarez.

Educators supporting the arts



ANDREW WATSON

■ The 35th annual Tri-County Art Show showcased more than 1,300 works submitted by students from schools in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. The event was organized by the Tri-County Art Educators Association made up of mostly NYSUT members from the participating schools. Inset, pictured from left: Brian Hallett, Tri-County Art Show treasurer and a member of the South Jefferson TA; Best in Show winner Abigail Piddock, grade 10; and NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, who served as one of the presenters.

It's a wrap! Legislature limps out of town

Solidarity helped pass many key bills, and defeated a lot of clunkers

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

In the closing days of the 2018 session, the NYSUT legislative team worked tirelessly to ensure the passage of good legislation and the defeat of a number of bad bills.

"Their advocacy efforts, directed by NYSUT's members and leaders, resulted in many achievements," said President Andy Pallotta.

In spite of the Legislature's failure to function well enough to effectively address the APPR law (see page 4), NYSUT's solidarity and activism helped accomplish several significant advances.

Bills passed

The following are some of the NYSUT-backed bills passed by both houses of the Legislature that will be submitted for the governor's signature:

Aid to school districts for charter school tuition

If enacted by the governor's signature, this would ensure that certain school districts are reimbursed in the current year — rather than the following year, as it is now — for the supplemental tuition they must pay to charter schools in their districts.

Tax cap exemption for BOCES capital projects

This bill would relieve pressure on BOCES component districts and clear the way for several projects throughout the state.

Final cost reports

This necessary bill would fix a



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

Kevin Peterman of the Faculty Association of Suffolk Community College, left, and NYSUT's Andy Pallotta meet with lawmakers on Higher Ed Lobby Day.

technical flaw and help reduce unreasonable penalties for school districts that file paperwork late. It would immediately save millions for numerous districts and communities caught in a bureaucratic bind.

Aid to Yonkers

NYSUT gained additional state aid and local funds for Yonkers, helping to prevent hundreds of layoffs in the school district. Another bill would allow more flexibility in Yonkers for bonding, to help with the financial situation there.

Rate methodology for Special Acts

This would launch an SED study to develop a rate methodology that will more accurately reflect the costs associated with special act school districts.

Full-day kindergarten

The bill would expand full-day kindergarten conversion aid to a five-year transition program, expanding the current incentive aid program. It would help New York move closer to providing full-day kindergarten to all students regardless of where they live.

Enhanced 'Maintenance of Effort' (MOE)

If signed by the governor, this will provide public higher education institutions with an enhanced state maintenance of effort (MOE), requiring the state to cover critical mandatory costs such as building rentals, utility costs and other inflationary costs for CUNY, SUNY and the SUNY hospitals.

Five-year capital planning for SUNY and CUNY

This would require the governor to

include, as part of the executive budget proposal, a five-year capital plan for SUNY state operated campuses and CUNY senior colleges.

UUP pay bill

This is required to authorize and implement the new collective bargaining agreement with the state, which is retroactive to 2016 and expires in 2022. The bill would enact the provisions of the agreement, including retroactive salary and benefit increases, and appropriate the funds to pay for them.

Unused sick time to offset retiree health care costs

This bill would add community colleges to the list of public entities that allow employees to bank sick leave to offset the cost of health care coverage upon retirement.

School-based health centers

This legislation would create a School-Based Health Centers Fund, and a personal income tax check-off box for donations to the fund.

Small schools BOCES health care consortiums

This would allow for the sale of stop loss coverages to certain small groups and exempt certain municipal corporations from small group rating standards.

Child abuse prevention

The legislation would establish a temporary task force to examine current prevention efforts with the goal of reducing child removals, lowering foster care placements and increasing family reunification.

Give to VOTE-COPE ... and call me in the morning

In what has become an annual tradition, NYSUT's George Jessel of political action donations, better known as Jeff Zuckerman, retired from Bronxville Teachers Association, took the challenge to collect contributions in a real-time sprint on the floor of the Representative Assembly in Buffalo.

He talked, he joked, he cajoled, he teased and he pulled it off, again.

This year, the donations all would go to the NYSUT Advocacy Fund,



a separate campaign devoted to countering the corporate, anti-labor agenda manifested in the *Janus v. AFSCME* case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court (see page 3).

Individual delegates and reps of local unions filled buckets with cash and checks as tellers and sergeants buzzed throughout the room. The grand total was nearly \$11,000.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

President Andy Pallotta, left, with Cobleskill-Richmondville TA President Dawn Kaminsky Townsend and Jeff Zuckerman.

Many delegates came up on the dais to submit their donations, and grabbed the chance to take a quick "selfie" with President Andy Pallotta.

Zuckerman also offered a chance to get a specially designed T-shirt that prescribed a cure for the *Janus* blues: "Take two VOTE-COPEs and call me in the morning!"



NED HOSKIN

Executive VP Jolene DiBrango meets the press during NYSUT's final push to get the Senate to pass S.8301, the teacher evaluation bill.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Anne Goldman and Mary Jo Ginese of UFT representing health care professionals in a meeting with legislators.

Stopping bad bills

Here are some of the bills NYSUT worked to defeat, because they would have disadvantaged union members:

Education tax credits

There were several versions of the Educational Affordability Act, the Education Investment Tax Credit and legislation that would convert the College Choice Savings Account to a

primary and secondary educational voucher.

Permanent tax cap

Proposed legislation sought to make permanent the tax cap for municipalities and school districts.

School district audits

A number of bills would have relaxed or removed the mandate for annual internal audits.

School year start date

Several pieces of legislation sought to allow districts to begin the school year before Sept. 1.

Statewide insurance reserve funds

This would have allowed any district to create a health insurance reserve fund without consulting and partnering with a local union.

Anti-labor legislation

Several proposals could have negatively impacted union members. One, for example, would place time limits on contract negotiations under the Triborough amendment to the Taylor Law. Another would place newly hired employees in 401(k) style retirement plans instead of the public pension system. There were several of these put forward by anti-labor lawmakers.

All in! Sticking with Our Union!

The following locals recently reported 100 percent membership cards signed.

Babylon Teachers Association, led by Robert Richardelli

Batavia Clerical Association, led by Jennifer Jacobs

Beaver River TA, led by Kelly Hawksley

Berne-Knox-Westerlo Teacher Support Staff, led by Diane Chrysler, Brenda Dibble and Eileen Dunston

Blythedale TA, led by Corey Moeller

Bolton TA, led by Daniel Hull

Brookfield TA, led by Sharon Cossette

Chateaugay TA, led by Nicole Dumas

Cleveland Hill Education Association, led by Serena Kotch

Hammondsport Educational Support Personnel Association, led by Darcie Haynes

Hampton Bays TA, led by Andrew Fotopoulos

Hannibal EA, led by Cynthia Sullivan and Karen Upcraft

Lake Shore Central TA, led by Kevin Schamberger

Menands TA, led by Charles Blanchet

Miller Place TA, led by Nancy Sanders

Mount Morris Non-Teaching Association, led by Esther Howe and Marion Lee

Pearl River TA, led by Kevin O'Connor

Phelps-Clifton Springs Aides & Secretaries Association, led by Laurie Schmitt

Pioneer Faculty Association, led by Carolyn Richards

Port Byron TA, led by Angelee Hitchcock

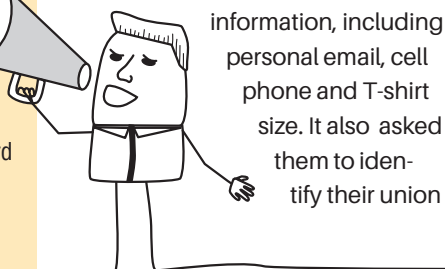
Red Jacket FA, led by Christine Cobos

Springville-Griffith Institute CSD Clerical Association, led by Crystal Sopko

Union-Endicott Maintenance Workers Association, led by Alvin Williams

Webutuck TA, led by Rebecca Garrard

Worcester CS Non-Teaching Personnel, led by Misty Blanchard



Brentwood TA stronger than ever

By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org

Getting 100 percent of your membership to recommit to their union by signing re-enrollment cards is a noteworthy accomplishment. When you have more than 1,400 members, and you reach that goal within 15 days, it's even more impressive.

The Brentwood Teachers Association, under the leadership of Kevin Coyne, recently did just that. If you ask Coyne for the secret to the local's success, you'll get a simple answer — hard work and planning.

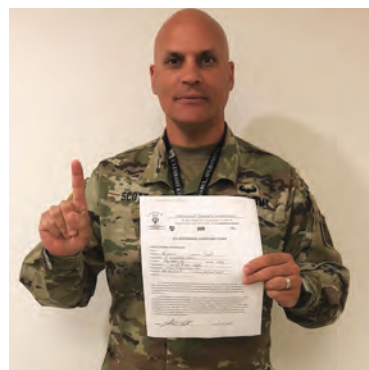
"We knew that after Nov. 7, when the [constitutional convention] campaign ended, the focus from Nov. 8 on would be Janus," Coyne said.

For Coyne that meant educating members about the risks of Janus and why they need to stick with the BTA, teaching them how to fight back and ensuring that every member signed their union card. The local kicked off a monthly action plan in December with a Janus workshop developed in collaboration with the NYSUT Suffolk Regional Office for BTA's 147 elected representatives.

With a 10-to-1 ratio of representatives to rank-and-file members, face-to-face interactions were key. Outreach began in January with a "BTA Pride" information card, which delegates hand delivered to members to spark union-value conversations. The cards requested the member's contact information, including personal email, cell phone and T-shirt size. It also asked them to identify their union

representatives and included two questions: "What do I value most about the union?" and "What would I like to see my union do?"

"Everyone who filled out a card got a green 'Proud to be a BTA Member' lanyard," said Coyne explaining that each monthly action featured prizes or other incentives to encourage participation. Weekly Janus emails from BTA Vice President Bill Van Der Beek kept members informed.



PROVIDED

■ BTA member Nicholas Scott has been on assignment for the U.S. Army. He faxed in his signed card.

March launched a "Lucky to be in a Union" faculty room bulletin board contest among the local's 18 school buildings with a bagel breakfast for the winning high school, middle school and elementary school bulletin boards. Throughout March and April, officers held informational meetings in each school building to educate members about the risks of Janus and highlight benefits in their union contract. "We had members sign in and asked that if they missed their building meeting they attend one at another school," said Coyne. The local made it clear that without support from the membership their contract and benefits are at risk.

April featured an "I'm Sticking With my Union" video contest. Members

submitted two-minute videos telling how the BTA protected their rights and why they were signing their union cards. Brentwood leaders also reached out to NYSUT for membership cards. "When we got the cards we sorted them into piles of 10, for each building, paper clipped them together and distributed them to delegates — we made it really easy for them," said Coyne. The point was also stressed that delegates had to



PROVIDED

■ BTA President Kevin Coyne with more than 1,400 signed recommitment cards.

have face-to-face conversations with members, "not just place the cards in mailboxes," Coyne said.

Representatives had seven days to get all 10 of their cards signed and turned in. Within 15 days, the local was at 100 percent. Members who signed cards received a BTA T-shirt — they now wear the shirts weekly on "solidarity Thursdays."

"The work done by individual elected delegates was monumental — it was the best union work we've ever done," said Coyne who credits the Suffolk Regional Office with providing outstanding support.

"We introduced our members to what the union does and the value it brings to their lives. We are stronger now than we've ever been."

'Pipeline' puts educators in school board seats

By NED HOSKIN
nhoskin@nysutmail.org

An activist and leader in the Greece Teachers Association on the west side of Rochester, David Metzger was one of dozens of NYSUT members who ran May 15 and won seats on school boards in their home districts.

Years ago, Metzger moved to Webster on the east side, "mostly because of the schools," he said, and his family did well there.

Now, coming out of NYSUT's Pipeline Project that encourages members to run for office, he's lending his

expertise and leadership to the community.

"By profession, I'm a counselor, and I think at this point you need voices on the board who have the ability to talk



Metzger

to each other and work things out together," he said.

He lamented the state's encroachment on public education — "instead of allowing professionals to do what they are trained to do" — which has not worked. In backing Metzger, the Webster TA cited his emphasis on the importance of "valuing teachers and the work they do."

On the south side of the city in 2017, René Sanchez-Kazacos, a social studies teacher and political activist in the Rush-Henrietta Educators Association, helped elect



▣ PDTA and other locals produced vote cards for endorsed candidates, including NYSUT member Sanchez-Kazacos, as part of their GOTV efforts.

three members to the board in the Rush-Henrietta district. The same year, NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango asked Sanchez-Kazacos to run for an open seat on the Pittsford school board in her home district; she won to fill out the last year of a former board member who resigned mid-term. This May, she ran unopposed for a full term.

Sanchez-Kazacos listed new learning standards, multiple pathways, social and emotional awareness, local control, the teacher shortage, class sizes and the budget tightrope among the key issues facing schools.

"My main goal is to continue to be a voice that represents all stakeholders and convey their concerns in regard to public education," she told members of the Pittsford District TA.

Across the state on school budget and board election day, voters put their trust in educators to help run their local public schools, newly

electing at least 29 NYSUT members to school board seats. Scores of other NYSUT members already serve on boards.

"Teachers have the best interests of students at heart," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

The Pipeline Project has encouraged, trained and helped elect more than 100 educators to public office over the past four years, including the state Assembly, county legislatures and local school boards.

NYSUT and its local unions were involved in more than 200 races on May 15, sending out tens of thousands of postcards and mailers and making more than 50,000 phone calls on behalf of endorsed school board candidates.

If you are interested in running for office, the Pipeline Project can help you prepare and get elected. Contact your Regional Political Organizer through your NYSUT Regional Office.

Voters approve 99.6 percent of school budgets statewide

In the final analysis following statewide budget voting and board elections May 15 and revotes June 19, voters approved 673 school budgets and defeated three — a 99.6 percent passage rate.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said, "New York parents and community members are part of a national movement to support teachers and public education. They know that public schools are our best investment and they showed their love for their local schools by overwhelmingly approving school budgets statewide."

The estimated 99.6 percent pass rate continues the recent history of strong support for public schools by voters. Over the past three years, voters approved about 99 percent of school budgets.

Of the 16 districts that experienced a budget defeat in May, seven were attempting to exceed their tax levy limit and therefore needed a supermajority (60 percent) for approval. The Eldred Central School District in Sullivan County had to postpone its May vote due to weather.

Of the 17 budget votes held in June, 14 were passed and three were defeated — East Ramapo CSD, Rockland County; Ripley CSD, Chautauqua County; and West Valley CSD, Cattaraugus County. The districts will be required to adopt a contingency budget, which imposes a 0 percent cap.

Districts on contingency will have to look at cuts to staff and programs. The 2018–19 school year will mark the second time in three years West Valley will operate under a contingency budget after the budget proposition also failed to pass in 2016.

New York City teachers union wins paid parental leave

Starting Sept. 4, eligible United Federation of Teachers members will be able to take up to six weeks of paid parental leave. When combined with the contract's sick leave provisions, the new policy will allow mothers to take up to 14 weeks of paid leave after giving birth.

The huge win comes after months of intense negotiations and a public campaign by UFT members that included educators wearing purple on International Women's Day to "Press for Progress," and organizing "baby showers" in schools to educate fellow members about parental leave issues and share their stories.

"This is an extremely significant day in the history of our union," said UFT President Michael Mulgrew, recalling that when the union was founded in 1960, teachers who became pregnant were fired.

"It's been a long fight to be treated fairly, and that wrong has finally been righted," Mulgrew said.

The city will contribute \$51 million a year to the union to help fund the new benefit. To help cover the cost, the UFT agreed to extend its contract by two and a half months.

The policy applies to all parents — mothers and fathers. Benefits also apply to adoptions and foster care. Hours after the union reached the agreement with the city Department of Education, it was unanimously approved at the UFT Delegate Assembly.

The UFT launched its campaign for paid parental leave in November 2017 after nearly two years of behind-the-scenes negotiations. Thousands of members joined the campaign, some sharing deeply personal stories about how lack of paid parental leave

had affected them and their families, while others sent letters urging the mayor to support a fair policy, signed petitions or attended rallies.

Several UFT members who played instrumental roles in the campaign, including teacher Emily James, joined Mulgrew and Mayor Bill de Blasio at City Hall to announce the historic agreement.

"I've been blown away by Mulgrew and our union for fighting for this human right, for not giving up or compromising, for believing in what we deserve," James wrote in a *Daily News* op-ed.

Eric Rubin-Perez, a school counselor, testified at a hearing in April about his experience as a father who was denied paid leave. "I'm very proud to see this through to the finish line."

New mom Melody Anastasiou, chapter leader at PS 68 on Staten



PROVIDED

UFT member Melody Anastasiou and her daughter, Zoe. Anastasiou was one of many members instrumental in the campaign for paid parental leave.

Island, said she was grateful to have contributed to the victory even though she wouldn't be able to take advantage of the new policy.

"We all need to stick together to benefit," she said. "That's what being in a union is about."

— Rachel Nobel contributed to this article

Tentative UUP contract marks gains for adjuncts, families

NYSUT's largest higher education affiliate — United University Professions — reached a tentative agreement on a new six-year contract that includes salary increases, paid family leave and a minimum per-course salary for part-time academics.

"We fought hard for the gains in this pact and we believe our members will recognize that," said UUP President Fred Kowal. UUP represents more than 35,000 academic and professional faculty in the State University of New York system.

The tentative contract is the first labor union agreement with the state that includes paid family leave benefits since the state's leave policy took effect on Jan. 1.

For 2018, the state plan allows employees to take up to eight weeks

of paid leave at half their weekly salary to take care of a newborn or sick relative, or to assist family members who are deployed for military service. Benefits in the plan increase annually and by 2021 eligible employees may take up to 12 weeks at 67 percent of their average weekly pay.

Beginning in 2019, the UUP agreement includes a minimum starting salary for part-time academics for each three-credit course they teach. This is the first time that UUP has been successful in negotiating a minimum salary for adjuncts on SUNY's state-operated campuses.

"This tentative agreement demonstrates the importance of having a union in the workplace," said NYSUT

President Andy Pallotta, who noted the agreement "will better the lives of UUP members and their families, as well as make SUNY a more attractive place for faculty and professionals to work and for students to learn."

Other highlights of the tentative agreement include:

- 2 percent salary increases each year of the contract, retroactive to July 2016;
- a provision allowing UUP to address salary compression and inequity at campuses statewide;
- provisions to address SUNY hospital needs regarding on-call and holiday pay — which will positively impact UUP professionals at all campuses; and
- access to a yearly grant to



help members pay for their child's education at SUNY state-operated campuses.

If ratified, the contract would take effect immediately and run through July 1, 2022. It would be retroactive to July 2, 2016, which is when the union's current contract expired.

As NYSUT *United* went to press, UUP's negotiations team was meeting with members at each chapter to present the tentative agreement. UUP members will receive ballots in August; the American Arbitration Association will conduct the ratification vote on Sept. 5.





Ballston Spa retiree leads collection effort for Puerto Rican school

STUART WILLIAMS

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaander@nysutmail.org

When he was a kindergarten teacher, Ballston Spa Teachers Association retiree Craig Hodgson experienced the tremendous power of helping others. After Hurricane Katrina devastated parts of Louisiana and Mississippi, one of his kindergarten students was concerned that kids impacted by the hurricane weren't going to have "good birthdays."

Hodgson's kindergartners adopted a classroom in Waveland, Miss.,

working with the librarian to replenish books, collecting stuffed animals and providing all the fixings for a special party at the end of the year.

Flash forward more than a decade and Hodgson, now working part time as a bus aide for a special needs student, was talking to bus driver Cesar Garces about how Hurricane Maria had devastated so many schools in Puerto Rico. "He told me his sister, Jeanibell, was an elementary teacher there and her classroom was completely destroyed," Hodgson said. "The school was still standing but they had lost everything."

Remembering the Waveland experience, Hodgson immediately sprung into action. He posted a letter in the bus garage asking for school supplies and was astonished at the immediate response. His transportation department colleagues said they wanted to do more. So every week, Hodgson posted three or four needed items on the bulletin board and the supplies just kept pouring in.

What started as a small school supply drive in a bucket at the bus garage grew into a community collection that filled 67 flat rate boxes. Hodgson kept track of every item,

from crayons to paints to all different kinds of paper. A local business donated backpacks for the entire class. In all, Hodgson said 77,950 items were collected. A bus driver suggested a donation jar to cover shipping costs and cash donations totalled more than \$1,100.

The school is now up and running and Jeanibell received so many items that she was able to share them with other teachers. "It's incredible how a transportation department of just 95 people could do so much," he said. "They really poured their hearts into this."

Unions show up for Puerto Rico

Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham recently joined a delegation of American Federation of Teachers Executive Council members to visit public schools in San Juan and listen to students and teachers talk about the challenges they are still dealing with after Hurricane Maria.

Council members created "care closets" with basic-need items for 14 schools — made possible in part by member contributions to NYSUT's



■ NYSUT's Abraham packs supplies.

Disaster Relief Fund. Abraham, whose travel costs were covered by AFT, presented a \$10,000 check for the Asociación de Maestros de

Puerto Rico to fund grants to members; \$30,000 for Operation Agua to provide water filters and safe, reliable water; and \$10,000 for First Book in the Virgin Islands.

Abraham said many people are still without electricity and water, and lack even the most basic hygiene products. "The hurricane took everything from them," he said. "We're trying to give as much as possible."

Abraham said he was delighted AFT decided to hold its executive council of union leaders in Puerto Rico. "It's one thing to send money,

it's another thing to show up." To see AFT's video about the executive council visit, go to www.nysut.org/socialjustice.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

NYSUT members and supporters have generously donated more than \$140,000 to NYSUT's fund for hurricane relief.

The need is still great. Visit www.nysut.org/disasterrelief to donate online, or make a check payable to NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund and mail to NYSUT Headquarters, Attn. Disaster Relief, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110.

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SUNY program exposes students to nature as classroom

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

In their boots, the students hiked between yellow trout lilies and trillium on a mud-splattered mountain trail. The next day, they paddled red canoes on a lake that's never held motorboats, listening to the high-pitched chatter of a belted kingfisher. They were exposed to far more lessons than to mosquitos or black flies — and in the Adirondack Mountains, in May, that's saying a lot.

The groups came to the Huntington Wildlife Forest in Newcomb to learn at a 15,000-acre campus of SUNY's College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF). They hailed from Canada, Beekmantown, and the ESF campus in Syracuse, staying in rustic housing in this Essex County preserved ecosystem. Here, everything is an outdoor classroom welcoming students with the wide arms of American beech, birch or other northern hardwoods. The greens of white cedars, balsam firs and hemlock collar Arbutus Lake and the sandy shores of Rich Lake, both owned by the college.

Students are welcome throughout the year, where curriculum is tailored to meet individual groups' needs. The education largesse includes science, art, history, ecology, literature, pollution monitoring, stream chemistry or math.

"We're cranking year round," said Paul Hai, associate director of ESF Newcomb and a member of SUNY's higher education union United University Professions. His evening lecture for Beekmantown High School students uses research to connect spirals of American



LIZA FRENETTE

history through writers, artists and philosophers who made a "profound impact on social consciousness about wilderness and nature."

He explains how entrepreneurs followed the lead of artists, building wood and stone guest lodging with outdoor paths to dining and recreation to change the way people view nature. "It allows people to immerse themselves outside. It's a pretty revolutionary idea," Hai said of the time.

He has developed different programs for students of all ages. Students as young as five have walked the trails, as have SUNY students from Potsdam, Cortland and

Plattsburgh. SUNY Maritime faculty and staff come for professional development. "We are never one size fits all," said Hai, who operates on one speed: busy. "My passion is making interdisciplinary connections, and students remember it!"

Biology teacher Alison Brown, Beekmantown TA member, has a similar teaching mantra. She shows her students how fibonacci patterns (each subsequent number is the sum of the previous two) can be found in pine cones. Fibonacci generates geometric patterns that correlate with patterns found in nature.

On the trail, she has students

FOR MORE INFO

The SUNY ESF Newcomb campus is home to the Adirondack Ecological Center (located on the Huntington Wildlife Forest); the Northern Forest Institute; and the Adirondack Interpretive Center.

For details on rates, planning a field study or grants available to school groups, visit www.esf.edu/newcomb or call 518-582-4551, ext. 101.

□ Clockwise from top, Beekmantown High School students and their teachers take a break during a nature hike; UUP member Paul Hai leads a discussion on literature and nature; students use Adirondack guide boats.

identify sporophyte and gametophyte mosses. How do trees grow on top of boulders, she asks, pointing. Moss, leaves and other organic material were once on top — enough for a seed to grow.

Mid-day, students gather to discuss differing opinions on the values of "wilderness": mythopoetic, hunting, aesthetic, spiritual renewal, physical health. They learn how titanium and iron were abundantly mined nearby, building a boom economy but then crashing as production costs shifted. They learned about lake ecology and the history of Adirondack guide boats, which are available at the site.

"These are really rich places to have these conversations," Hai said.

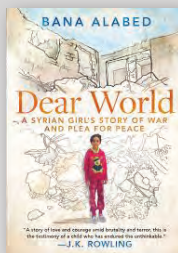
Current ELA modules "limit what we are to do; they tell us what texts to use; what questions to ask. It goes against the discussions we just had in this Socratic Circle," said Kerry Burdo, AP literature teacher and Beekmantown TA member.

Art teacher Renee Hall sends students outside to focus on one thing, and to draw it or write about it.

Students scatter to draw a dead tree, a lake, a flower. In the evening, they share poems they wrote, their words like bright dandelions.

Dear World: A Syrian Girl's Story of War and Plea for Peace

Written by Bana Alabed



Recommended by: Rose Reissman, United Federation of Teachers, IS 62K

Recommended for: Grades 4–12

Why I chose it: The covers show a child standing in front of bombed rubble, and children holding up posters asking for support. Along with traditional writing, Bana Alabed uses the on-target format of Twitter to get her message across. @AlabedBana tweets: “We are not armed, why do you kill us?” Her tweets reached a million people, signifying the power of voices to advocate and plea for peace.

What I like best about it: This work alternates writings of elementary age Bana with chapters written by her mother, Fatemah Alabed, a teacher. The mother shares the anguish of needing to flee and fearing for physical safety for her three young children. She strategizes how to protect them from the dangers they face. Her rationale for not leaving Syria provides insights into citizens who refuse to leave their homelands despite imminent danger. Fatemah helps her daughter tap the power of Twitter to alert the world to the siege of Aleppo. The book includes actual tweets and family album photos, making this work about a distanced war in Syria live and personal.

How teachers can use this work: Elementary students can read the picture book, *Malala's Magic Pencil*, and compare it with the online book trailer, the book and interviews. Grades 6 and beyond can compare *I am Malala*, *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Students can create a blog or PowerPoint about the ongoing Syrian war. They can create “Dear World” messages in journals, letters to the editor, blog posts, or write Twitter poems.

“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.



Best recruiters for profession: Teachers themselves

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunders@nysutmail.org

North Colonie Teachers Association member Jessica Coles was on track to become a police detective when a college internship in a prison made her do an about-face. “I wanted to make a difference,” she said. “Before they got to prison.”

Friends advised Niskayuna TA’s Tracey Newell not to become a teacher at all, suggesting she go to law school instead. They said, “There’s no money in teaching” and, unfortunately, she listened. “I became a corporate attorney but I was miserable,” Newell said. “Teaching is not just a job. There’s no way to describe all the rewards.”

“Really it’s nothing less than being a real-life superhero,” said South Glens Falls physical education teacher Jason Spector, whose mission is to make students feel important, accepted and safe. “It’s the reason I wake up every day.”

The three were part of a June Capital Region teacher recruitment event at Shenendehowa High School East that drew hundreds of students, parents and a number of people thinking about changing careers.



SYLVIA SAUNDERS

From left, Troy Teachers Association’s Lyndsay Cooper, Kyle DePaolo and Kara Zimmerman answer questions about careers in special education.

Administrators said they planned the event because they are already experiencing shortages in high-need areas like special education, math, science and English as a New Language.

When her district recently had a mid-year school librarian opening, only two people applied, said Shenendehowa Assistant Superintendent Elizabeth Wood. There were also few candidates for recent openings for a school psychologist and computer science teacher. Even in popular areas, like secondary English, Wood said she now receives only about 40 applications instead of 200.

NYSUT has been out front sounding the alarm on the looming teacher shortage. NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said the shortage is the result of “a perfect storm” of contributing factors. As baby boomer teachers retire and more leave the profession for a mix of reasons, enrollments in teacher education programs in New York have plummeted 49 percent.

DiBrango said the union is looking at ways to expand connections between K-12 and higher education teacher prep programs.

She is hoping to pilot “campus conversations” where teachers and faculty talk about careers in education. Wherever she speaks, DiBrango notes that the best ambassadors for the profession are teachers themselves.

That sentiment was certainly on display at the Capital Region event. After the panel discussion, teachers hosted more than a dozen breakout sessions divided by subject areas, remaining in classrooms long after the scheduled ending time. College booth staffers also ran into overtime.

There was a long line into a session with two certification experts from local BOCES who talked about different certification pathways and encouraged participants to consider substitute teaching and teaching assistant positions. “Both areas are in extremely high demand,” said Capital Region BOCES’ Ken Ziegler. “It gets your foot in the door and lets you see what it’s like.”

North Country educators see ‘promise’ of community schools project

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

Whitney Point junior Mackenzie St. John had a little confession for a busload of North Country educators who visited her Southern Tier community school program.

“I really hate Wednesdays,” she said. The reason? That’s the only weekday her community school’s drop-in center is not open.

St. John is not the only one who feels that way. A couple of years ago, when the fledgling drop-in center was only open two days a week, students successfully petitioned the district to double the Promise Zone program to four days. They simply needed more.

The drop-in center is a lifeline for students looking for some friendly faces, a little extra support during study hall, or maybe just to avoid the social difficulties of the high school cafeteria.

“There’s no judgment in the



Mackenzie St. John

drop-in center,” St. John said. “People stop in before school, after school, in between classes — it’s just a very welcoming, supportive place.” The center is staffed by Binghamton University graduate students working toward master’s degrees in social work and David Puglisi, the district’s full-time community school coordinator and a member of United University Professions, better known as Mr. P.

The drop-in center, which offers everything from academic support to donated prom dresses, is just one piece of the Broome County/Binghamton University Community Schools program, a partnership of county/community agencies, SUNY Binghamton, Broome-Tioga BOCES and area school districts.

Using a state grant five years ago,

Broome County partners launched its community schools project with nine buildings in five districts. Since then, the state’s only multi-county community school initiative has expanded to 27 buildings in eight districts including Binghamton, Johnson City, Union-Endicott, Whitney Point, Chenango Valley, Windsor, Harpursville, Broome-Tioga BOCES and Elmira.

Overall goals include increasing school attendance, fostering pro-social behavior, strengthening academic achievement and family engagement and expanding access to services to address barriers to success. BU researchers are tracking results of the program and have already seen a drop in disciplinary referrals and improvements in attendance and family engagement.

North Country educators, who made the trek to learn more about the community school concept, quickly found out there was no one-size-fits-all model they could take home in a binder. Services are tailored for each site, depending on needs and available resources. For example, after educators in one rural district noticed grandparents were raising many of the students, the coordinator put together a well-received intergenerational science camp with the help of a BU gerontologist.

Other activities vary from site to site, including a Parent Café to promote positive family/school connections; five-week Summer Zone sessions to avoid learning loss and offer academic/extracurricular enrichment; plus opportunities for health and mental health services, civic engagement, youth leadership and field trips to area colleges.

“It’s not us coming in to save the

world,” said Luann Kida, Promise Zone Community Schools Director and a UUP/Binghamton member. “It’s about using your own community resources — then building from there. It’s looking at what you do have — not what you don’t have.”

For Broome County, it was about seizing the power of students at SUNY Binghamton — not just the MSW students, but also those from many other majors — like the nursing students who offer diabetes education. Promise Zone has also tapped into local foundations and business leaders like Kim Myers, the daughter of the founder of Dick’s Sporting Goods, who has established a Bucks incentive program for kids who reach set goals, such as school attendance.

Kathy Sheehan of Broome-Tioga BOCES urged the North Country visitors not to underestimate the power of BOCES, which can help channel cost-sharing and higher state reimbursement. Community schools can also leverage a wide array of state and federal grants for programs like anti-bullying. In-school mental health clinic services can be billed through Medicaid.

Saranac Lake TA’s Don Carlisto, a NYSUT Board member who helped put the bus trip together with support from American Federation of Teachers and NYSUT, said the field trip proved to be affirming and inspiring. He said the group spent a large part of the long bus ride back brainstorming lists of community partners and programs they’d like to try.

“I was struck by how much potential exists to tailor the community approach to your own district’s needs,” Carlisto said. “We returned home even more committed to bringing the model to the North Country.”



SYLVIA SAUNDERS

North Country educators listen to the Whitney Point team talk about building a community school model from the ground up. Student Mackenzie St. John, who now serves as a program student mentor, is planning to become a social worker.

NYSUT charge: Show union pride, strength

Advocacy for students, fighting for members and relentless political action will all remain front and center for NYSUT, as delegates at this year's policymaking convention in Buffalo urged the union to turn up the heat.

In all, Representative Assembly delegates approved 27 resolutions and five special orders of business. They referred 14 measures to the NYSUT Board of Directors for further action. One resolution failed.

The union's ongoing fight against unfair and inappropriate testing will ramp up in the coming year, as the RA's 1,750 delegates approved a

number of resolutions railing against the state's testing madness.

Delegates approved a resolution sounding the alarm on the State Education Department's rush to computer-based testing. The measure calls for SED to provide research-based studies on the validity and reliability of computerized testing and for additional funding to support districts that choose to move to computerized testing.

In another testing matter, delegates called for SED and the Board of Regents to adopt a clear policy prohibiting schools from punishing or stigmatizing students whose parents opt them out of state testing.

"This is a very serious situation," said Buffalo Teachers Federation President Phil Rumore, who said students whose parents opted them out of state tests were stigmatized and not allowed to go on field trips, attend ice cream socials or enjoy other incentives. In addition, Rumore reported some administrators falsely refused to accept opt-out notes on the day of the test and told teachers that students — even those as young

as third grade — had to verbally refuse to take the test. Some principals directly called parents, Rumore said, urging them to reverse their decisions and telling them their children would not be able to take advanced courses if they did not sit for the exams.

"This is brutalizing and it has to end," Rumore said. "Let's say never again will our students be humiliated and stigmatized because their parents are doing what they believe ... and we know is best for them."

Delegates also approved a special order of business asking the Regents to convene a study of the negative unintended consequences tied to New York's grades 3–8 state tests.

"When Commissioner Elia was asked directly at this week's local presidents conference ... she could not cite a single unintended negative consequence," said Lakeland FT's Michael Lillis. "This level of denial leaves New York's students susceptible to continued emotional abuse with no protections in place, or hope of improvement."

Delegates agreed it's time for SED to solicit feedback about the

emotional experience of students as they take the assessments, the time spent throughout the year preparing students for assessments, the impact of untimed tests on students and the narrowing of the curriculum. If the Board of Regents and SED refuse to conduct such a survey, the resolution urges NYSUT to do its own study.

In other educational policy measures, delegates urged NYSUT to support legislation that would require students entering kindergarten to be 5 years old by Sept. 1 of the year they are attending kindergarten.

"As a kindergarten teacher and the parent of a child who would have been four (entering school), I'm telling you these children are not ready for what's expected now," said Gouverneur TA's Pam Mahay. "Socially and emotionally they're not ready for this."

Mahay offered a long list of expectations, including being able to write five-sentence paragraphs for computer-based testing. The resolution was amended to exempt schools with public pre-K, after delegates questioned what would happen to children who completed preschool but were not 5 years old by Sept. 1.

Delegates also called for NYSUT to offer workshops about transgender students through its Education & Learning Trust. They directed NYSUT to continue advocating for adequate funding for teacher centers.

To help ease acute teacher shortages in BOCES special education programs, delegates directed NYSUT to urge the Regents and SED to change certification regulations to allow BOCES educators to teach outside their grade-level certification and content specialty. Another resolution urges NYSUT to petition SED to allow up to two years spent in teaching assistant positions to count

Constitutional amendments hold dues constant, eliminate VP position

Representative Assembly delegates approved two NYSUT constitutional amendments that will save the statewide union money and maintain state dues for members at their current level for the third year in a row.

In a cost-saving measure, the first constitutional amendment eliminates one of five NYSUT officer positions, the first vice president. J. Philippe Abraham, who has been serving as both first vice president and secretary-treasurer since the resignation of Martin Messner, remains as secretary-treasurer.

The second amendment, also recommended by the NYSUT Board of Directors, keeps NYSUT dues at the same level as 2016–17 and 2017–18. This will be the third straight year that NYSUT dues will remain at \$378 per year for a full dues payer. Rather than specifying the dues rate for a single year, the amendment sets the dues amount for the immediate future until a new rate is approved.

No one voiced opposition to either amendment.



PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISETTE

RA delegates spoke to a number of resolutions. Phil Rumore, president of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, left, shares examples of how students were punished for their parent's decision to opt out of state testing. Pittsford TA's Kathleen Shea, right, speaks in favor of a resolution requiring incoming kindergartners to be 5 years old by Sept. 1.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

UFT Vice President Evelyn DeJesus delivers an emotional appeal in support of educators in Puerto Rico who continue to struggle with the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and now also face attempts by corporate privateers to dismantle public education and erode worker rights.

toward the experience requirement for professional teacher certification.

Political action and civil rights

After an emotional appeal by UFT Vice President Evelyn DeJesus, delegates approved a special order of business in solidarity with educators in Puerto Rico. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, hundreds of schools in Puerto Rico are facing closure, while corporate privateers are using the disaster to dismantle public education and erode worker rights.

A number of resolutions direct NYSUT to continue ongoing lobbying efforts in Albany. One calls for NYSUT to continue seeking repeal of the state’s property tax cap and, until that happens, the union must advocate for amendments to mitigate some of the law’s worst effects.

A parity resolution calls for NYSUT to work with SED and the Division of Budget to gain legislation for an annual automatic increase in funding to the Section 4201 Special Act Schools. Another measure directs NYSUT to advocate for an Excessive Direct Care Staff Turnover Prevention Grant program to help Special Acts, 853, 4410 and 4201 Schools retain staff.

Delegates directed NYSUT to seek legislative support for the return of the Excellence in Teaching/Teacher Support Aid to boost salaries and reduce pressure on local property taxes.

In civil and human rights resolutions, delegates urged NYSUT to support immigrants rights and advocate on behalf of mem-

bers and students who could face deportation. NYSUT shall continue to strongly oppose Immigration and Customs Enforcement entering any public school and removing any students.

In a resolution aimed at ending violence against women, delegates called on NYSUT to advocate for the development of a prevention program for middle school, high school and college students.

On a resolution calling for legislative and educational efforts on climate change, there was considerable debate after delegates tried to insert language urging the state Teachers’ Retirement System to divest itself of fossil fuel company investments. TRS teacher representative Ron Gross of William Floyd United Teachers spoke against the amendment, saying the board would need to study whether such a move would be fiscally responsible. Teacher representatives from the New York City TRS agreed, saying their board is studying the issue.

In the end, the original resolution was approved with no amendments concerning divestiture.

Higher education

Delegates demanded that Columbia University at long last come to the table and bargain in good faith with striking graduate workers. Delegates also approved a measure calling for a minimum level of state aid for campuses and creation of a task force including labor representatives to recommend a stable funding formula.

Another resolution directed NYSUT to advocate for more funding to meet the increased demands resulting from the state’s Excelsior Scholarship program that offers free tuition to eligible students.

Health and safety

On health and safety issues, delegates approved resolutions calling for NYSUT to promote safety with automatic prescription refills; urge the state School Boards Association to make opioid overdose prevention training mandatory; and pressure state lawmakers to enact legislation requiring temperatures inside schools to be between 68 degrees and 76 degrees when students and educators are in the building.

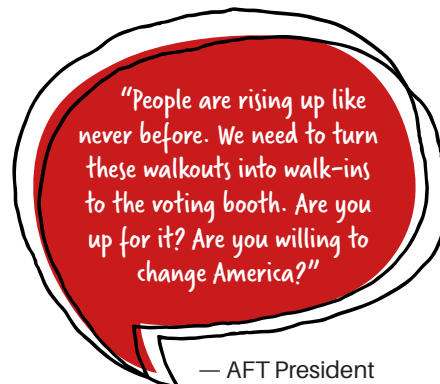
Delegates also urged NYSUT to publicize how the state’s Safe Patient Handling Law, approved in 2014, has helped protect workers and led to reduced workers’ compensation rates for health care facilities.

Pensions and retirement

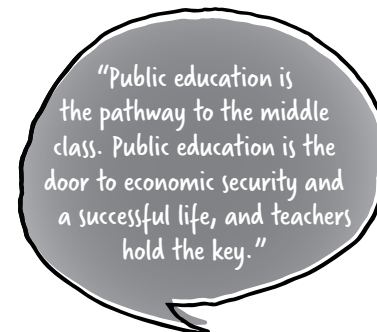
Delegates approved resolutions calling for NYSUT to encourage the state and local retirement systems to allow educators to buy back time accrued in private schools, colleges and universities and hospitals.

Other measures called for NYSUT to work with the state AFL-CIO and other unions to seek comprehensive legislative changes to address the many inequities within Tier 6; and an informational campaign to educate members on the importance of lowering 403(b) investment fees.

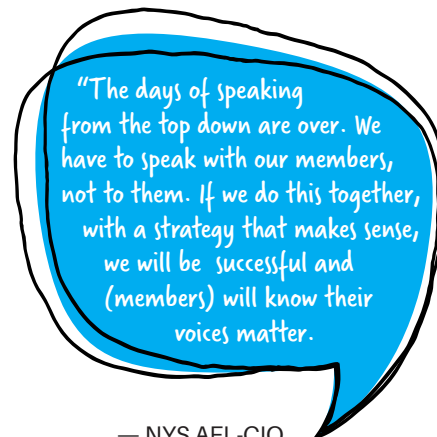
Heard at the RA



— AFT President Randi Weingarten



— New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli



— NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento



For complete convention coverage, including speakers and resolutions, visit www.nysut.org/ra.

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QUESTIONS?

Email Megan O'Brien at mobrien@nysutmail.org

** Members accepted to participate in the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute will receive \$1,800 (18-shift option) or \$1,200 (12-shift option).*

Getting to know ... Margaret Scalzo

Margaret Scalzo is a secretary at the Union-Endicott Central School District. She was interviewed by Andre L. Mathis, co-president of the Union-Endicott Office Personnel Association and member of NYSUT's SRP Advisory Committee.

Tell us about your job and why you love what you do.

I have worked at the Union-Endicott CSD since the fall of 2003, first in the attendance office at the high school and then the special education department. I am the secretary to the Special Education Director. My duties include attending Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) meetings; finding therapists to service CPSE-eligible students; ordering supplies; payroll; preparing requisitions for invoices coming in for payment; entering resolutions for the

Board of Education meetings; and any other duties that are sent my way.

I enjoy coming to work every day because every day is different, challenging and productive.

How are you involved with your union?

As with so many members of my union, I was constantly questioning and not in agreement with many of the decisions being made — not only by the school district but also by the officers of my union. I decided that instead of complaining I should get involved and see why and how these decisions were being made.

I went on to serve as president for two years, then took a couple of years off. Now I am serving as vice president helping the new officers navigate their new positions.

How do you make a difference?

I was involved with the contract negotiation process in 2007. It was quite an education and made me appreciate what others had gone through before me. We were able to institute a member-to-member sick day contribution. Any member who had used all their sick time and sick bank could go to the membership and ask for sick days to help get back to work. In most instances this helped to have the member not only keep his or her job, but to fully recover before coming back to work.

Tell us about your community engagement, hobbies.

I am very committed to my church and serve on many committees, as well as serving at Mass as



PROVIDED

lector, eucharistic minister and usher. Helping to prepare donations to distribute to the neediest in our area is very satisfying and fulfilling for me.

SAVE THE DATES

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School safety plans face scrutiny

By Liza Frenette

lfrenett@nysutmail.org

When fires broke out in schools, taking lives and burning buildings, changes were made to protect students and educators. Schools installed sprinkler systems and fire extinguishers, implemented fire drills and began using fire retardant carpet. As a result, fatalities from school fires are extremely rare.

Schools have not been so fortunate in fending off active shooters.

Since January, there have been more than 15 shootings at middle schools or high schools across the country, resulting in at least 32 fatalities and nearly three dozen students and staff injured.

The increase in shootings has at least one state agency looking into whether the state's schools are prepared for a crisis. State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli recently announced his office is conducting audits of the State Education Department and the New York City Department of Education to determine if they are doing enough to ensure schools

have adequate and up-to-date safety plans in the event of a school shooting or major emergency.

"The epidemic of deadly school shootings in the past few years and the terror wrought in our children's classrooms is horrifying. Sadly, every school district in New York and across the country has to plan for the unthinkable," DiNapoli said.

The audit will examine the state

Safe Schools Against Violence in Education (SAVE) Act that was signed into law in 2000. Part of the act requires schools to implement comprehensive safety plans.

Developing those plans is part of the solution; the other is practicing and making sure educators and students know what to do in case of an emergency or active shooter situation.

Chatham police chief Peter Volkman, a regional liaison coordinator for the International Critical

surroundings, noticing people who seem out of place.

Beth Peters, school counselor and member of the Wayne Teachers Association, said local law enforcement agencies in Steuben County have made a real commitment to increasing situational awareness, and have been touring school buildings. Training in her district includes administrators posing a safety dilemma to educators at faculty meetings and then having small group discussions.

"You cannot respond effectively

the Year.

Facing trauma can activate a range of responses in humans. An acute response to trauma disaster or other critical incidents can result in a failure of coping mechanisms.

In extreme distress, sometimes people freeze. They may not be able to form words or speak. "We do not want our staff at this point," Volkman said. "People can't dial. They forget things. Their vision collapses."

Peters said the only way to counteract the freeze response is to "practice, practice, practice, or rehearse, rehearse, rehearse."

State education law mandates schools conduct a minimum of 12 fire and emergency evacuation drills per year; four have to be lockdown drills. After each drill, school safety teams (which by law must include union participation) should meet and discuss what went right and brainstorm ways to fix any problems.

"The more we can think through problem scenarios, rehearse what we would do in our heads and visualize ourselves doing that right thing, the more able we will be at responding effectively on demand if needed,"

Peters said. "It's like with first aid training or CPR, you always have to retrain because without that practice, you won't know what to do when the emergency happens."

For details on the Active Shooter Action Plan program, visit www.nysut.org/asap.

Clarisse Butler Banks contributed to this article.



Incident Stress Foundation, has developed active shooter training for schools, businesses and communities through the University at Albany School of Public Health. He recently presented the program at NYSUT's Health Care Professionals Forum.

Pre- and post-crisis planning are essential, Volkman said. His Active Shooter Action Plan also stresses situational awareness — checking your

when you cannot even discuss the issues or concerns. The more we practice, the more we will begin to recognize signs; the more we can move toward being proactive," said Peters, who recently was awarded an Empire State Excellence in Teaching Award. She is a member of NYSUT's Health Care Professionals Council and in 2011 she was honored as NYSUT's Health Care Professional of

Nurses' quick thinking saves a life

By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org



Cool heads, professionalism and a healthy dose of good luck helped two school nurses, members of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel, avert tragedy.

Redmond followed protocol. "Since she had no history of allergies, we cleaned and iced the affected area and let her parents know what happened," said Kelly.

After a 20-minute observation, they sent the girl back to class. The student returned several minutes later panicked, wheezing, covered in hives and suffering a full-blown allergic reaction. The pair leapt into action, administering an EpiPen (an epinephrine auto injector), calling 911 and notifying her mother, Kathie Hikade, a teaching assistant at the district's Marbletown Elementary School and fellow RVFTSRP member.

"When I got there, Krista and Joann were working as a team to care for her and administering a second EpiPen when her symptoms continued," said Hikade.

It took the ambulance nearly an hour to reach their isolated district.

"The entire time they were so professional and calm," said Hikade, who is thankful the incident happened while her daughter was at school under the nurses' care. "If it was anywhere else, I don't know what would have happened. They saved her life

and Sierra knows that."

Sierra is fine now, but the incident was serious. She spent two nights at Albany Medical Center and must get monthly desensitizing injections for the next five years. She carries two EpiPens in case of emergency.

According to the state Department of Health, severe, untreated anaphylactic shock, which causes sudden blood pressure drops and constricts airways, can lead to death within minutes. Sierra's experience underscores the importance of having a school nurse onsite and EpiPens available for general use, said Hikade.

Currently, the State Education Department doesn't mandate school nurses in every school, and while districts are allowed to stock EpiPens for general use, they aren't required. "I'm glad we're a school that had the foundation to respond and the resources (EpiPens) to provide," said Kelly. "We're in an isolated area and it's important we have the interventions we need to help students in time."

"Although she had been stung before, Sierra had never had a reaction," said Hikade. "I shudder to think what could have happened."



PROVIDED

From left, Joann Redmond and Krista Kelly, members of the Rondout Valley FTSRP local, saved Sierra Hikade (pictured with her mom, Kathie) after a near-fatal bee sting.

When a sixth-grader at the Rondout Valley Intermediate School in Ulster County suffered a yellow jacket sting, Krista Kelly and Joann

Carthage members save choking student

By Kara Smith
ksmith@nysutmail.org

Julie Cobb, a member of Carthage School Related Personnel in Jefferson County, saved a sixth-grade student from choking this spring by performing the Heimlich maneuver to dislodge food from his windpipe. Cobb works at the Carthage Central School District as a school bus driver and lunchroom monitor. "It was pretty

scary," said Cobb.

Noticing the disturbance, fellow CSR member Nancy Mushtare, a lunchroom server and the school's varsity swim coach, rushed to Cobb's assistance, standing by and offering encouragement. Both she and Cobb have first-aid training. "Julie was doing a good job," said Mushtare. "I was just there to offer support and was ready to take over if needed."

Both members were honored by the district's board of education for

their quick thinking. Cobb received flowers and balloons from her fellow bus drivers.

"I am very proud of Nancy and Julie. They were in the right place at the right time and utilized their training in a quick manner to help a student in distress," said Kevin Lawton, CSR president. "It really speaks to the level of commitment and caring that resides in the support staff here at Carthage."



Spike in building temps cause for concern

Unhealthy, stifling classroom temperatures have been recorded throughout the state. In Cayuga last June, the Department of Environmental Conservation issued an Air Quality Health Advisory for the county when the ozone index for outdoor air was predicted to exceed 100. In Rochester during that same period, record-breaking temperatures were recorded.

"Students can't learn in a hot classroom — little education is accomplished because attention is affected by the heat," said Wendy Hord, NYSUT health and safety specialist. "Teachers are concerned about students' health, and about their own."

Delegates passed a resolution at the spring Representative Assembly requiring NYSUT to pressure lawmakers to enact legislation so that temperatures in schools conform to the recommendations of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration for indoor temperatures during all hours that students and educators are in the building. The union will also advocate for the State Education Department to develop guidelines for procedures to close schools when safe temperatures cannot be maintained.

To share your story or download a two-week temperature log, visit www.nysut.org/heat.

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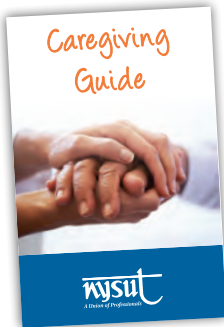
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Updates to the online publications catalog

Several brochures — free to members in limited quantities and/or to download — have been updated and added to our online publications catalog at www.nysut.org/publications:



■ **Caregiving Guide.**

A resource for members who are confronted with caregiving issues for an elderly family member, a disabled spouse or adult child.

■ **A Family Guide to New**

York State Learning Standards in Health Education, Physical Education and Family & Consumer Sciences. Educators in these areas focus on learning activities that foster skills for living and enable students to become confident and responsible adults.

■ **Dealing with Stress, Backpack**

Safety Tips. This two-sided rack card includes tips for helping kids manage back-to-school stress and anxiety.

2018 STEM institute

The NYS STEM Education Collaborative's 2018 Summer Institute for educators, "Innovate to Integrate: Cultivating Tomorrow's Problem Solvers," will be July 29-31 at Alfred State SUNY College of Technology.

The collaborative, composed of statewide math, science, technology and engineering associations, offers presentations for K-20 educators, including tours of a green energy home, a forensics lab and a clean room. Presentation topics include STEAM, nanotechnology, mathematics applied to consumer choices, opioid research and more.

Participants may receive up to 18 state-required CTLE professional development hours. Early registration ends June 29. Guaranteed housing

registration ends July 6. Visit www.nysstemeducation.org.

Spark student interest with ELT

Did you know that NYSUT Education & Learning Trust (elt.nysut.org) offers courses for undergraduate, graduate and in-service credit — including professional development seminars that fulfill state CTLE requirements?



With a special discount for NYSUT members, ELT also offers college programs leading to master's degrees and newly expanded professional learning opportunities for teachers, SRPs and members of the health care community. Many are online so you can take them at your own pace from the comfort of wherever you are over the summer.

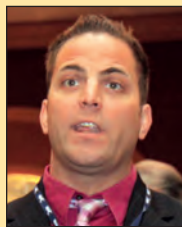


PBS LearningMedia is a free media-on-demand service (with more than 100,000 resources) available to educators nationwide. The site includes classroom-ready, standards-aligned, and media-rich experiences for pre-K-12 educators.

Content for New York educators comes from the state's nine public television stations. The stations also offer outreach programming to schools, provide professional development for teachers and host educational family events. For more info, visit <https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org>.

[PASSINGS]

Eric D. Przykuta, president of the Lancaster Central Teachers Association, died in a fishing accident May 11. He was 43.



A science teacher in the same middle school he attended, Przykuta made learning fun and memorable for his students throughout his nearly 20-year career. He was an avid outdoorsman, vocal supporter of his community and lacrosse coach.

"Eric always put others before himself. He was the first to show up for anyone in need. His passion for the teachers and students of Lancaster was unmatched," said

LCTA Vice President Donald Kirsch. A fierce advocate for public education, Przykuta didn't hesitate to travel to Albany to fight for the funds his district — and others across the state — were losing under the punitive Gap Elimination Adjustment. Przykuta was a delegate to the NYSUT Representative Assembly and his efforts had been recognized with a NYSUT Leadership Award.

He is survived by his wife, Lori, and children Landyn and Emersyn.

Daniel D. Boone | April 2, 2018
Argyle Teachers Association

Denise Cicione | March 30, 2018
Smithtown Teachers Association

Frances A. Crispi | April 4, 2018
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Francis A. Cozzarelli | Jan. 25, 2018
United University Professions-Buffalo Center

K. Daniel Dahl | Jan. 27, 2018
Williamsville Teachers Association

Patricia Hewitt | May 12, 2018
Johnsburg Central School Teachers Association

Sandra Lee Irwin | May 10, 2018
West Genesee District Teachers Association

Andrea Lonnen | April 22, 2018
Medina Teachers Association

Shana Marra | Jan. 10, 2018
South Colonie Teachers Association

Patricia Powers | Dec. 13, 2017
Yonkers Federation of Teachers

Jacqueline Prusak | March 5, 2018
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Rosemarie Reis | March 4, 2018
Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Anna M. Tabolt | Feb. 4, 2018
Retiree Council 9

Elisa Vickers | March 19, 2018
South Colonie Teachers Association

Full obituaries, if provided, are available at www.nysut.org. Submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation and 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.

5

QUESTIONS for ...

Michael Desing

Lake Shore Central Teachers Association

English Teacher

**1. What do you treasure the most about being a teacher?**

The awesome knowledge that I am making a lifelong impact on students. I know that some of the things that happen in my classroom are going to have a profound influence on some of my students for the rest of their lives. I know this is true because it happened for me with my own teachers.

It is an incredible blessing to be called to be part of that incredible process.

2. Your students have been reading *The Things They Carried* and *The Metamorphosis*. How does classic literature still have relevance today in a world filled with fast tweets, social media, gaming, etc.?

They have relevance more than ever. The fast pace of social media and the barrage of stories that students encounter there encourage students to spend a little time processing a lot of information. When we stop and do a deep dive — requiring repeated reading — into substantial texts, students use parts of their brain they may rarely get to exercise.

3. You have overcome a massive life hurdle, facing brain cancer and brain surgery. Do you share your story with students facing challenges?

I absolutely share my story. In the fall of 2014, doctors found a tumor in my nasal cavity. I had been experiencing headaches and stuffiness. Ultimately, I was diagnosed with what one neurosurgeon called a “very, very rare form of brain cancer” at the base of my skull.

I had 18-hour surgery and was cut open from ear to ear. When I woke up 22 hours later, tied to the bed and breathing through a tube, I recited Shakespeare’s “To be or not to be,” a soliloquy I’m especially fond of, to see if my brain was working, checking for timing and processing.

With my 55 stitches, my daughter told me I looked like Frankenstein’s [monster]. My surgery was followed by six weeks of radiation to the brain. I made a video during one treatment to show students, who are part of an annual schoolwide Bald for Bucks campaign to raise money for Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. I wanted them to see where the money goes. I’m a teacher. This was a teachable moment. (When Bald for Bucks was started at Lake Shore 17 years ago, Desing and union President Tony George were the first two who had their heads shaved.)

I know that it’s important as a teacher to model how you navigate difficult life circumstances. Sharing my cancer story with my students has opened many doorways into

allowing them to share their own personal stories, and to share each others’ strengths.

4. In some ways time stops when your life is threatened by illness. How did you move through that?

You have to sift what really matters from the things you may love, but which you can live without. I had to get to the place where I accepted that almost everything could be gone forever, but as long as I had my life and my family I would be okay. Now, I understand that anything beyond that is a gift beyond measure.

5. You make it clear that your union is part of your story. What does the union mean to you?

If I didn’t have this union, I would’ve lost my home and my job. If cancer hadn’t destroyed me, it would’ve still ruined my life.

The Lake Shore Central TA’s contract provided me with

health insurance; job protection for a long recovery; use of a sick bank with days donated by colleagues; and a death benefit. The knowledge that my wife and daughter would be taken care of ... was one layer of stress I didn’t have at all.

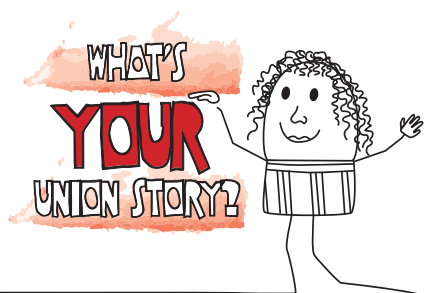
To me, the union means almost \$1 million (\$995,000) — that was the price of my surgery.

All of those things were benefits my union fought for.

To read Desing’s story, visit www.nysut.org/desing.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

There is no “typical” NYSUT member. You are all unique and have a story to tell. We want to hear it. How did you become involved in your union? Do you have experience in a right-to-work state? Do you remember the bad old days? Share your story at the Janus Action Center. Visit www.nysut.org/Janus and click on “Tell it.”



Be proud. You are a teacher.

It is the honor of my career to serve as the 2018 New York State Teacher of the Year. However, it is the joy of my life to be a teacher.

New York has 210,000 teachers and 3.2 million students in public education. Like lighthouses, teachers play significant roles everywhere, lighting the paths for our students and communities. It is vital that teachers believe in themselves. The ripples teachers create in the waters of students' lives have lifelong impacts, some of which we may never know.

Recently, I was teaching narrative writing, presenting strategies that enhance compositions. One student made a wise statement that stuck with me. "Writing is like our town. You can approach it by many different roads; highways, single lane streets and some are even dirt." That 9-year-old's metaphor encapsulates the art of teaching. There are many ways to reach the same goal. All of us

are different, but we are committed to one purpose — guiding our students toward graduation, productive lives and citizenship. Our styles, lessons and classrooms should be diverse. As long as we have a unified goal — the success of our students — we are "heading toward the same town."

Teaching is a combination of art and science. The data-tug has shifted emphasis away from the art of teaching. It is essential teachers believe in their unique styles and develop them. Your distinctive craft is that metaphorical road, which makes every teacher important. If you are traveling the "road less traveled," you may face words from naysayers; parents, students and even colleagues. Consider the naysayers, but do not let them be your catalyst for change. Be at peace with your beliefs, and you will find peace as a teacher.

Take risks on your teaching journey. Some ideas may not work. There is no such thing as failure if we grow from mistakes. Schools face scrutiny as demands for student achievement rise. Fear not to take risks, continue to

grow, and whether or not a moment in time "works," learn from observations. You and your students will grow from this. Finding comfort in the teacher you are, fearless of making mistakes, and having confidence, all contribute to the most important factor for growth: working hard. Progress will not happen by luck or chance. Hard work improves us. We need to expect the same from our students. Embrace hard work on the road you choose to travel. Very few achievements have ever happened without grit.

Finally, a considerable lesson can be taken from the early colonists as they arrived in the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries. Underprepared to farm, hunt and build, survival was everything, and they learned that success depended on every community member contributing. Their service to one another meant life or death. Our lives are different than colonial lives, and so the way we serve has changed. All people, rich or poor, highly educated or struggling to learn, need to

watched students with clipboards sitting criss-cross applesauce, the grass tickling their bare toes while others were perched on benches, as they braced for the next breeze to flicker their papers.

Time stood still as I thought about the beauty and danger of this here and now. The reason I thought these things on this day was not because I was in tune with the carnage that was happening so many miles away, but because the chances of my thinking about an event like this transpiring and it actually existing on the same day are just that great.

When I got home, I began to scroll through my newsfeed and read the headline, "2018 has been deadlier for schoolchildren than service members" sandwiched there between

About letters



Letters are published at the discretion of the editor, who takes space, relevancy, fairness, legal liability and accuracy into account. To submit a letter, email united@nysutmail.org, fax to 518-213-6415 or mail to Letter to the Editor, NYSUT Communications, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110. Please include your name and hometown or union.

be served and learn how to serve. Service has evolved into "service hours" and projects.

There is a need to remember our history. Colonial survival depended on all community members serving each other. The messages from our forefathers needs to echo through our modern society. Service needs to be culture, not a project.

Tomorrow is in our hands today. Seize each moment and be proud. You are a teacher.

Christopher Albrecht, Brockport

Albrecht is the 2018 New York State Teacher of the Year

Schools should be safe spaces

I heard about the shooting in Texas on my drive home from the school where I have taught for 15 years. Today's shooting hit particularly close to home — not literal distance; after all, we were hundreds of miles away, but a figurative close in my mind.

You see, today, I decided to take my students out to the school courtyard. It's a tranquil little garden area in the middle of our school building, so it's completely enclosed. The last time I thought to bring my students there to write, it was on an announced day of a lockdown drill. What was the protocol if students were in the courtyard? Where would I go? The stress of having these factors out of my control

led me to do business as usual in my sauna-like classroom even though the spring air beckoned.

But today, today was one of those days the body just aches to go out and soak in some sun. So I brought my class out into the morning light, let them choose a patch of shade or sun, and get lost in their writing.

I was initially relieved that they could work here freely without the burden of a drill to worry about, when I started to consider that today could be the day of a lockdown that wasn't a drill. And for a moment, I asked myself, what would I do given different scenarios — played them out in my head — thought of where we would hide or where we would run, all as I

details of the royal wedding and commute-disrupting volcanoes. Days like this have been normalized and now blend into the buzz of the world.

I was then reminded of a conversation I had with a student on our way out of the courtyard. He had pointed out a crushed robin's egg that was lying off to the side by a stone pathway and said, "It should have been safe in the middle of the school. What could get in to hurt it?"

I see so much more in his question now. Today students were able to play in this creative place — but more and more even the most tranquil of school spaces aren't able to keep out the force of permeating fear.

Heather Bryer, Guilderland

Bryer wrote this letter after the tragic school shooting May 18 in Santa Fe, Texas.

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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

Jeanette Stapley, 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

TBD, 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



■ Loretta Donlon, RC 7 president and ED 51 director, with NYSUT-endorsed NYS Senate candidate John Mannion, president of the West Genesee District Teachers Association.



■ Yonkers Federation of Teachers retirees, from left, Fran Ruggiero Pasquel, Pat Puleo, John Eshoo and Florence McCue, at-large ED 51-53 director, at a recent RC 15/16 event.



■ Retiree Advisory Committee co-chair Rod Sherman, RC 9, and NYSUT President Andy Pallotta at the 2018 NYSUT RA.



■ Below, from left, Andrea McCue, Haldane Faculty Association president; Paul Pecorale, NYSUT second vice president; Jolene T. DiBrango, NYSUT executive vice president; and Deb Peterson, NYSUT RC 43 president, share a photo at the NYSUT pre-RA conference.

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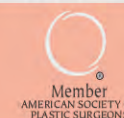
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It's an honor

William Zimpfer, Southern Cayuga Teachers Association, received the 2018 Louis E. Yavner Teaching Award for outstanding teaching on the Holocaust and human rights.

In print

Tom Barnaba, United Federation of Teachers retiree, wrote *In Spite of...Everything: A Young Lady's Guide to Those Who Came Before*, published by **Authorhouse.com**. The book is about influential American women who persevered to gain better acceptance for today's women.

C. David Gierke, Retiree Council 2, has completed *To Caress the Air: Augustus Herring and the Dawn of Flight*. The two-volume, biographical novels chronicle Herring's endeavors, taking the reader back to the cutthroat days of the competition among the men who aspired to be the first to fly. To order, visit **www.davegierkebooks.com**.

Jean Kwiatkowski, Duanesburg TA retiree, has published *Peasful Dining Out with Children: A Collection of Kid Tested Ideas for Keeping Peace While Waiting for Your Restaurant Food*. For a copy, email **jkwiatkowski@nycap.rr.com** or visit **shoptbmbbooks.com**.

Deidre McVey, UFT retiree, has written *The War on Teachers*. Using fictional characters, but "based on actual events," the book tells the story of teacher Joanie Truett and her fight against the city DOE. The book is available at **Amazon.com**.

Laura Reinisch, Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk TA, has self-published *The Snowmobile Named Little Vroom*, with her sister. Books can be purchased at **www.snowmobaby.com**.

"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.

Ithaca Teachers Association

Continuing its social justice mission, the Ithaca Teachers Association supports a living wage for all — including the district's School-Related Professionals. "As administrator salaries continue to rise and be competitive, teachers, paraprofessionals and SRPs are told that higher and competitive wages are not doable," the ITA posted on its Facebook page. "This is wrong and we must continue to inform the community/voting taxpayers." Members from the local recently joined the Tompkins County Workers Center at a March for a Living Wage festival parade.

Rochester Teachers Association



YOUTUBE.COM/ROCHESTERTA

□ Rochester TA's Amy Pickett, a pre-school teacher, is one of more than 40 educators featured in the Rochester Teachers Care video series.

The Rochester TA, led by President Adam Urbanski, is continuing its successful initiative to "highlight the terrific work that Rochester teachers do every day and to educate the public about the exciting learning opportunities in our public schools." The Rochester Teachers Care project spotlights RTA members' exemplary work and dedication through a series of brief videos highlighting the work of individual teachers, groups of colleagues, or

entire Rochester schools. The project is supported by a NYSUT grant. To view the latest video, or the more than 40 different videos available, visit **http://rochesterteachers.org/rochester-teachers-care-videos/**.

Saratoga Springs Teachers Association

Led by President Tim McGuigan, the Saratoga Springs TA sponsored the 12th annual Ryan's Run. The 5K event benefits the Ryan Wersten MIOP Foundation. This year's event raised more than \$21,000 which will go directly to patient support and research for Malignant Infantile Osteopetrosis. The foundation was started by Barbara Wersten, a teacher and building rep with the SSTA. For more info on MIOP, visit **www.curemiop.org**.

United College Employees of the Fashion Institute of Technology

Though the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire took place more than 100 years ago, the lessons learned from the preventable tragedy should never be forgotten. And members of the United College Employees of the Fashion Institute of Technology are doing their part to ensure the world remembers. The local, led by President Roberta Elins, since 2011

has donated \$5,000 annually to the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition to help fund a permanent memorial design at the building where the fire took place. Additionally, the UCE has its own active Health and Safety Committee and helped fashion a campuswide committee.

Watkins Glen Faculty Association

The Watkins Glen Faculty Association, led by Travis Durfee, held its second annual Kickball Classic and Family Fun Night to benefit the Ronald McDonald House Charities. The event, organized and hosted by the union's Local Action Project Team, featured a competitive kickball game between FA members from the high school and elementary school.

During the game, high school student volunteers led activities including a life-sized game of Hungry, Hungry Hippo, tug of war and other activities. The local also hosted a book giveaway.

Although the high school team was victorious, the real winner was the charity — the Ronald McDonald House Charities received \$4,000.

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

Reading Rocks!

The Webutuck TA, led by Rebecca Garrard, hosted a free family literacy night featuring workshops for parents, activities for children, snacks, giveaways — and free books. At right, WTA members get in the spirit and rock out for reading.



FACEBOOK.COM/WEBUTUCKTA

Are you using YOUR union-endorsed benefits?

We all tend to get caught up in our everyday lives and let time slip away. So with the arrival of summer and hopefully a little additional time to focus on yourself, we encourage you to tackle that to-do list.

Whether you want to comparison shop your auto or homeowners insurance policy, update estate planning documents or just enjoy a special weekend away, look to your union-endorsed benefits to take advantage of all that is available to you.

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source, Member Benefits offers that as well. When it comes to shopping, travel and personal programs, we can help you save on everything from movie tickets to restaurants to vacations.

With the endorsed Abenity Discounts program, NYSUT members and their loved ones have access to 290,000 exclusive discounts across 10,000 U.S. cities. Save on tickets to some of the best theme parks, museums and attractions, concert and sporting events, zoos and aquariums, and much more.

If you're someone who prefers to travel during off-peak times, we've got the program for you. Enjoy 40 percent off the "Best Available Rate" along with \$399 select weekly stays (and often even less expensive) at more than 2,400 resort

condo properties in 90 countries with TripBeat by Endless Vacation.

To learn more about these and other programs, visit **memberbenefits.nysut.org** or call 800-626-8101.



NYSUT Member Benefits is pleased to announce the endorsement of Cambridge Credit Counseling to assist NYSUT members and their families with better understanding their student loan repayment and debt consolidation options.

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student loan consultations with one of Cambridge's certified counselors. Cambridge also offers a unique web portal available at a reduced rate that can help explain the various options when paying down student debt, including student loan forgiveness programs, income-based repayment options and more.

NYSUT members that require more in-depth debt solutions, such as debt management and consolidation programs, receive a 10 percent discount on Cambridge's regular rates to help save even more money.

Visit **memberbenefits.nysut.org/cambridge** for more information.

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

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To see how these discounts could really add up, call us toll-free at 1-866-NYSUT-22 (1-866-697-8822). You have the option to speak with a local agent for a free insurance review and no-obligation quote. To find a local agent in your area, visit www.MetLife.com/NYSUT.



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Member Annual Statements coming soon

Your Member Annual Statement gives you personalized information about your retirement account with the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). You should be getting it soon, since ERS members working in school districts receive their statements first.

Your statement is an important resource for understanding your ERS benefits. For instance, your tier (page 2) and retirement plan (page 4) will help you locate your plan book on our Publications page, at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications/index.php. This book provides detailed information about how your retirement plan works, including eligibility requirements and calculations for pension, disability and death benefits.

Your beneficiary and death benefit information is on page 5. Review your beneficiary designation and make any necessary changes. Retirement Online is the convenient and secure way to update your beneficiary information. Sign in at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php then click "Update My Beneficiaries." Our Contact Center cannot release beneficiary names or death benefit amounts over the phone, so it's a good idea to hold on to your

In every issue, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the New York 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.

statement.

You may notice on pages 2 and 7 that, in addition to the registration number you were assigned when you first joined ERS, you now also have a NYSLRS ID number. Use this number when you call or write to us.

On page 6, we provide up to three pension projections. You will also see a description of the pension payment options that are available to you, which can help you understand how your payments may be affected if you choose a beneficiary.

Review the milestones on page 7. They are specific to your retirement plan, and serve as a handy tool for retirement planning.

Stay connected with us by exploring any of the social media sites listed on the back page of your statement. If you haven't already done so, sign up for Retirement Online. It's the fastest way to review your retirement account, make changes or apply for a loan.

For more information about your statement, visit www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/mas_index.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).

The when, and how, of vesting

Q: I'm a Tier 6 member. How many years of membership in the New York State Teachers' Retirement System must I have before I become vested?

A: First a brief definition of vesting. Vested members accrue non-forfeitable rights over their employer's contributions to their NYSTRS retirement plan and are eligible for a future retirement benefit through NYSTRS — provided they haven't transferred or withdrawn their NYSTRS membership.

Prior to becoming vested, members have ownership of their personal system contributions, but aren't entitled to employer contributions.

Your tier membership determines when you become vested. Tier 5 members (those who joined the System between Jan. 1, 2010 and March 31, 2012) and Tier 6 members (those who joined the System on or after April 1, 2012) vest with 10 years of state service credit; all other tiers vest with five years of service credit.

NYSUT TRS consultants

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

David Keefe • 516-741-1241
(Retiree Representative)

Paul Farfaglia • 315-431-4040
pfarfagl@nysutmail.org

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

Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822
rgross@nysutmail.org



Q: I have five years of membership with NYSTRS as a Tier 5 member and I teach full-time. What would happen to my membership if I left my position before I became vested?

A: If you stayed in the teaching profession, you could keep your NYSTRS membership active by working the equivalent of 20 full-time days in a school year for a participating NYSTRS employer every seven years.

However, if you plan to leave the teaching profession, you should probably withdraw your member contributions — and any interest earned — and cancel your membership; remember, members who transfer or withdraw their NYSTRS membership aren't eligible to receive any portion of their employers' contributions.

If you return to teaching at a later date, you do have the option of reinstating your former membership under your former tier. As always, err on the side of caution. Before withdrawing your membership, contact NYSTRS to discuss the implications of doing so, 800-348-7298, ext. 6090.

Did you know

The three teacher-members on the NYSTRS board serve staggered three-year terms and are elected by delegates representing districts statewide at the annual fall meeting.

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As an additional benefit to NYSUT members and their families, your union membership allows you to participate in a variety of programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits. Participation in Member Benefits-endorsed programs also gives you a strong advocate standing by your side in the event that you ever have any issues or concerns with any of these programs.

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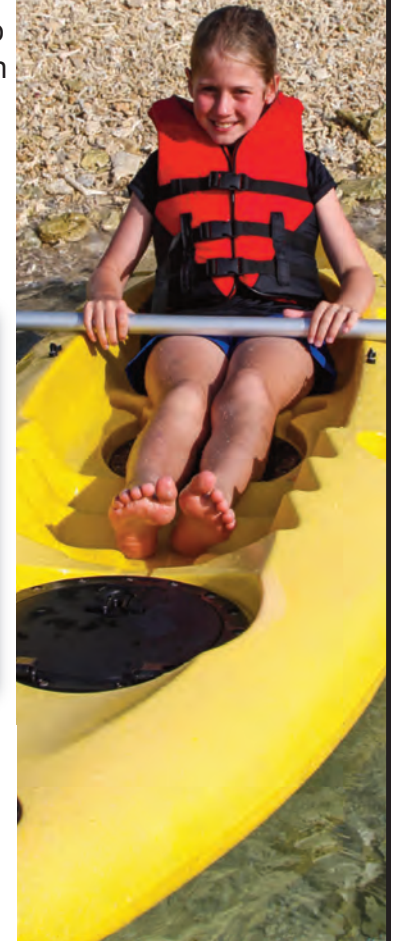
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