

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

INSIDE

Your vote matters

Educators and their unions push back against voter suppression efforts | **8**

Reopen the right way


Unions push for school reopenings to be safe, sensible and smart | **16**

Her last ride

100-year-old NYSUT bus monitor retires after 50 years | **12**

Race in America

Students step up to save important class | **20**



FIGHTING FOR SAFE SCHOOLS

CONTENTS

5: Without funding, Yonkers kids pay the price

7: Reopening higher ed poses real threats

10: NYSUT offers layoff resources to members in need

13: Our SRPs — Getting to know David Butterfield

18: Summer visits build partnerships with families

26: 5 Questions for math teacher Jose Vilson

31: Local Unions in Action

NYSUT UNITED [September/October 2020, Vol. 11, No. 1]

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

NYSUT United is a member publication of the International Labor Communications Association, Metro New York Labor Communications Council, State Education Association Communicators.

Editorial and Production Department: 518-213-6000 and 800-342-9810 (toll-free)

Annual subscription: \$15. NYSUT members receive a copy of **NYSUT United** as part of their dues benefit. Households with multiple members will receive only one copy. If you do wish to receive more than one copy, please call 518-213-6000.

Address changes: POSTMASTER: Member Records Department, 800 Troy-Schenectady

Road, Latham, NY 12110

UFT member address changes: POSTMASTER: New York Teacher, 52 Broadway, 12th floor, New York, NY 10004
 PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT LATHAM, NY
 ADDITIONAL ENTRY OFFICE
 WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701

NYSUT United (ISSN 21587914) and **nysut.org** are official publications of New York State United Teachers. **NYSUT United** publishes six issues from September to June.

Advertising: Email Lori DiVeglia at lori.diveglia@nysut.org or call 518-213-6000 or 800-448-4ADS.

NYSUT Affiliated with AFT ■ NEA ■ AFL-CIO

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

OFFICERS:

President: Andy Pallotta
Executive Vice President: Jolene T. DiBrango
Second Vice President: Ronald Gross
Secretary-Treasurer: J. Philippe Abraham

ELECTION DISTRICT DIRECTORS:

Peter Stuhlmiller, Michelle Licht, Joseph J. Najuch, Kevin Mole, Adam Urbanski, Andrew Jordan, John Kuryla, David Chizzonite, Jeanette Stapley, Anthony McCann, Joseph Herringshaw, Juliet Benaquisto, Melissa Servant, Sparrow Tobin, Sean Kennedy, Jeffrey Yonkers, Tomia Smith, Frederic Stark, Gregory Perles, John Mansfield, Kevin Coyne, Nancy Sanders, Laura Spencer, Karen Blackwell Alford, Dwayne Clark, Evelyn DeJesus, Amy Arundell, MaryJo Ginese, Mary Atkinson, Anthony Harmon, Michael Mulgrew, Elizabeth Perez, Cassie Prugh, Richard Mantell, LeRoy Barr, Iris DeLutro (City & Private Higher Ed), Steven London (City & Private Higher Ed), Roberta Elinis (Community Colleges), Jamie Dangler (State Higher Ed, UUP), Rowena Blackman-Stroud (State Higher Ed, UUP), Thomas Tucker (State Higher Ed, UUP), Philip Rumore, Adam Piasecki, Dora Leland, Loretta Donlon (Retiree), Rosemary Catanzariti (Retiree), Thomas Murphy (Retiree)

AT-LARGE DIRECTORS:

Cheryl Hughes, Joseph Cantafio, Rick Gallant, Brian Ebertz, Kevin Ahern, Don Carlisto, Maria Pacheco, Raymond Hodges, Samantha Rosado-Ciriello, Cordelia Anthony, Ronald Verderber, Wayne White, Debra Penny, Howard Schoor, Analia Gerard, Thomas Brown, Janella Hinds, Sterling Roberson, Barbara Bowen, Frederick Kowal, Florence McCue, Shelvy Y. Abrams (SRPs), Sandra Carner-Shafran (SRPs), Karen Lee Arthmann (SRPs), Deborah Paulin (SRPs), Angie Rivera (SRPs), Anne Goldman (Health Care), Stephen Rechner (Private Sector Higher Ed), Andrew Sako (Community Colleges), Pamela Malone (Higher Education) and Michael Fabricant (Higher Education)

EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBER:

Melinda Person, Executive Director/NYSUT Political Director

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS:

Antonia Cortese (Emerita), Thomas Y. Hobart Jr. (President Emeritus), Alan B. Lubin (Executive Vice President Emeritus)

AFT VICE PRESIDENTS:

J. Philippe Abraham, Shelvy Y. Abrams, Barbara Bowen, Don Carlisto, Evelyn DeJesus, Jolene T. DiBrango, Anthony M. Harmon, Frederick Kowal, Michael Mulgrew, Andy Pallotta, Paul Pecorale, Adam Urbanski

NEA DIRECTORS:

Serena Kotch, Thomas McMahon
 Alternate Directors: Sue Raichilson, Dora Leland
Executive Committee members are underlined.

Academic Success.

Ready
to Go!



Whether school is in session, virtual, or a combination of the two, your students are more prepared to learn when the obstacle of hunger is eliminated. That's a constant truth that has remained through these unprecedented times.

As an educator, your support for school nutrition programs has been vital, and the payoff - long-term student success - is the goal we're all striving to achieve.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of children, and for ensuring school meals are part of their academic day. Contact us for support at: schools@milk4u.org



AMERICAN DAIRY
ASSOCIATION
NORTH EAST
americandairy.com

©2020 ADANE

Waiting game: Delayed aid and pending results from a chaotic session



NYSUT President Andy Pallotta appears on *Capitol Tonight* to make the case for funding schools need.

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The scheduled state legislative session in Albany ground to a halt this summer, but lawmakers are still operating remotely, with much to be resolved.

Now, schools and colleges are struggling to reopen within days, health care institutions fear a fall resurgence of the coronavirus and key elections approach in mere weeks. The fiscal impact of the pandemic and politics threaten to push the lagging economy over the brink.

In early August, with school

districts around New York working on their plans for the start of the school year, the state Division of Budget (DOB) notified districts that devastating cuts are coming.

In response to a projected \$14.5 billion budget shortfall, DOB said any funding tied to a statutory due date will be reduced by at least 20 percent, and that the state may withhold payments entirely for items with no statutory due date.

Public higher education at SUNY, CUNY and community colleges face similar “delays” that feel more like deprivation.

“New York State should not balance its budget on the backs of our students,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

“Even before this pandemic, it was clear we had a crisis in public education, from pre-K through higher ed,” he said. “Now, because our leaders in Albany and Washington have failed to provide the funds required to meet increasing demands on our institutions and educators in this time of crisis, we face the prospect of draconian cuts that will make a terrible situation worse.

“That is morally repugnant and completely unacceptable,” he said. “Washington needs to do its job and

provide federal funding to support our schools, and Albany needs to stop protecting the ultrawealthy and make them pay their fair share toward education, health care and the essential services New Yorkers rely on.”

Some progress

In spite of the unusual circumstances, NYSUT activists and legislative staffers were able to get some important bills through the Legislature this year. Here are a handful of examples of bills lawmakers passed that await the governor’s action.

Admission to ed programs

Both the Assembly and the state Senate passed a bill to amend the education law by removing the requirement that applicants must have a 3.0 GPA as an undergrad to be admitted into graduate-level teacher and leader education programs.

There is no evidence that GPA requirements significantly predict college success or excellence in teaching. A range of factors are at play in the development of our best prospective teachers. Many candidates’ grades were skewed last semester due to the pandemic; their prospects should not suffer through circumstances beyond their control.

Continued on page 4...

COMING UP

Sept. 14
NYS Board of Regents meets

October 2020
Making Strides Against Breast Cancer events take place across the state. See page 24 for details.



Oct. 9
Deadline to register to vote for the Nov. 3 general elections

Oct. 16
NYSUT Board of Directors meets

Oct. 19
NYS Board of Regents meets

Oct. 23–25
SRP Leadership Conference, Saratoga Springs

Oct. 24–Nov. 1
New York State early voting period

[VOTE] IT'S YOUR RIGHT, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, AND YOUR FUTURE.

Nov. 3
Election Day

Nov. 20–21
NYSUT Women’s Committee meets, Latham

*Please note, some or all of these events may be conducted as virtual meetings in compliance with social distancing guidance



ON THE COVER

NYSUT continues the fight for safe schools for the thousands of educators — and students — across the state.

Design by Nicole Clayton.

DiBrango finds DNC event anything but remote

By **Sylvia Saunders**

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

It wasn't exactly the Democratic National Convention she expected, but NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango found her first time as a DNC delegate to be energizing and inspiring.

"Even though we're so far



apart, I've found it very unifying," said DiBrango, one of about two dozen NYSUT members elected to be DNC delegates.

Instead of traveling to Milwaukee, Wis., DiBrango spent the four days of the virtual convention popping in and out of a series of online meetings — from the labor council to the women's caucus to the New York State delegation breakfasts.

On the second night she attended an educator's watch party with U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren and U.S. Rep. Jahana Hayes (the National Teacher of the Year from Connecticut). "That was the night we heard from Dr. Jill Biden," DiBrango said. "She is a true educator. She's one of us."

Like many viewers, DiBrango was especially touched by the

virtual roll call, which allowed each state delegation to showcase itself, key issues and the diversity of our nation.

"That was phenomenal," she said. "One by one, that state-by-state roll call really made me feel connected to other Americans in a way we haven't been able to connect during this pandemic. It was really powerful."

DiBrango said with a who's who of eloquent speakers throughout the program, the convention did an excellent job of introducing the Biden-Harris team to the nation and making a compelling case for their election.

"We need a president who will work to heal division in our country," DiBrango said. "When it comes to public education, labor, and so much more, everything is at stake in this election."

NYSUT DELEGATES

In addition to NYSUT EVP Jolene DiBrango, nearly two dozen NYSUT members successfully ran to put the union "on the floor" at the 2020 Democratic National Convention.

Mary Agnes Lupien, Rochester Teachers Association
William Alexander, Elena Cohen, Professional Staff Congress

Michael Benedetto, Patricia Blackwell, Michael Mulgrew, Nancy Myers, David Pecoraro, Dilia Schack, Randi Weingarten, United Federation of Teachers

Lynne Boecher, South Glens Falls Faculty Association

Katherine Brezler, United University Professions

Dia Carabajal, Cayuga Community College FA

Francine Drucker, Manhasset Education Association

Jacqueline Gordon, Western Suffolk BOCES FA

Sara Idleman, Greenwich TA

Ronnie Lavine, Glen Cove TA

Florence McCue, Yonkers Federation of Teachers

Bill Scott, Bernard Washington, Syracuse TA

David Seeley, BOCES II TA (Monroe)

... Continued from page 3

Waiting game: Delayed aid

COVID-19 death benefits

Both houses also passed legislation to allow beneficiaries to collect pension death benefits for members of the state and New York City public pension systems who died as a result of their employment as front line workers during the COVID-19 health crisis. The window for collection of these benefits expires Dec. 31.

Since the pandemic, in addition to uniformed and EMS first responders, most people also consider nurses, doctors and teachers to be front line workers — those who selflessly risk their own well-being, even if it means running the risk of dying in the line of duty, to ensure the health, safety and well-being of others.

Aid during pandemic

This bill would ensure that schools that have closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will not be penalized and will receive their full apportionment of state aid for the 2019-20 school year.

Flexibility

This bill would ensure flexibility by authorizing school districts and local governments to spend money from reserve funds to address the COVID-19 pandemic, without needing to comply with current requirements during this emergency.



Census deadline extended

NYSUT 2020 COUNTS census

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting communities and operations across the country, the 2020 Census self-response phase (the time in which people can complete the census online, by phone or by mail) has been extended to Sept. 30.

Go to nysutcounts.org for information on how to be counted and how you can help.

The 2020 U.S. Census is something you can do right now from the comfort of your home. Go to my2020census.gov to ensure your community is accurately counted! #EverybodyCounts

For many reasons, the pandemic included, the response rate in New York State has been lagging behind the usual rate and far behind many other states. An undercount threatens the state's representation in Congress as well as hundreds of millions in federal aid for schools, colleges, health care and infrastructure.

Helping ensure an accurate census count is one of the most important things NYSUT members can do to help their communities.

The census aims to count every person in the United States. We only have one chance every 10 years to get an accurate count that will determine how much federal support New York will have over the next decade.

Without funding, Yonkers kids pay the price

Union fights layoffs, inadequate ventilation and lack of protections.

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

In the last assignment of the 2019-20 school year, the music teachers who were laid off in Yonkers asked students to respond to a statement: "Imagine Your Life Without Music."

The students didn't know their mentors were about to lose their jobs, but their answers were heartbreaking.

"Music is what makes us enjoy life. Life without music is not life at all," said one.

"Life without music is like a morning without chirping, nights without earphones, traffic without horns, and dancing without beats," wrote another. "It connects us to ourselves. Music completes us."

Unfortunately, music was one of the first programs sacrificed as the city schools faced more than 160 job cuts including

dozens of teachers and teaching assistants to deal with the economic crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Yonkers Federation of Teachers, led by Samantha Rosado-Ciriello, gathered educators, administrators, police and labor leaders at Lincoln High School one day last June to seek support for the federal HEROES Act, a COVID-19 fiscal relief bill that is still held up in the U.S. Senate.

Music is a crucial part of a child's education, said Colette Hebert, who has raised funds and written grants to help fund keyboards, strings and band instruments.

"Music lessons significantly enhance children's cognitive abilities, including language-based reasoning, short-term memory and planning, all of which lead to improved academic performance," she said. "Cutting this program is detrimental to their overall growth and learning experience."

In Yonkers, 79 percent of students come from low-income families. The city has been severely affected by the pandemic, in terms of physical and mental health as well as



Laid-off music teacher Colette Hebert tells supporters that cutting music is detrimental to the overall education of Yonkers students.

PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISETTE

the economy.

Erin Giacinto, another laid-off teacher, said students need more support, not less structure, during this stressful, uncertain time. Music fills that void.

"Our students deserve music," said Brian Doherty, another YFT member who got a layoff notice. "They deserve to be part of a school that can educate them socially and emotionally, as well as academically."

Rosado-Ciriello said the struggle continues as the district prepares to reopen. With no progress on federal funding bills and reduced state aid, the staff members are still laid off.

Reopening will be problematic, at best.

"The district's plan calls for a hybrid model," she said. "We are trying to get them to start out remotely and gradually phase in." In addition to staffing, the facilities are not up to par.

"We still have classrooms without windows, others where windows don't open, HVAC units that have not been upgraded and no isolation room," Rosado-Ciriello said. "We have inadequate staffing, we very much need training, and the teachers do not feel comfortable."

"Many other districts are feeling the same way. In fact, more than 50 presidents from Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Rockland counties signed onto a letter highlighting the need for additional funding in order to open schools safely. This is a time for more support for schools and students, not less!"

As NYSUT *United* went to press, the district agreed to a fully remote start to the school year.

A huge caravan of educators, parents and supporters threaded throughout the city with a police escort to demand federal stimulus funding for schools.



Supreme Court: Big wins, big concerns

By Robert Reilly
NYSUT General Counsel

The 2020 term of the Supreme Court was busy. Here we discuss five decisions important to our members.

A trio of decisions addressed religion and the tension between the Constitution's Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses; all favored the Free Exercise clause.

Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue addressed direct state aid to religious schools. The state of Montana enacted a law to provide a tax credit for scholarships made to religious schools. Montana's highest court found that law to be unconstitutional under the state constitution's Blaine Amendment, prohibiting, as does New York's, direct state aid to religious schools. The Supreme Court, however, found that ruling to violate the Free Exercise clause. The decision effectively voided the Blaine Amendment. According to the Court, a state need not subsidize private education, but once it does, it cannot disqualify schools solely because they are religious. With resources for public schools already limited, opponents worry the impact of this decision will further strain those funds.

Next, *Our Lady of Guadalupe v. Morrissey-Berru* addressed the extent to which teachers at religious schools

are protected — or not — by employment discrimination laws. The Court ruled that the teachers fell under the "ministerial exception," barring certain employment-discrimination claims brought against religious organizations. The Court sought to protect the schools' autonomy with respect to internal management decisions essential to the institution's central mission, one component being the selection of the individuals who play certain key roles. The Court found elementary teachers at religious schools to play such key roles, in this case, teaching religion to students. This decision is concerning because the school could determine an educator in any position, including those with primarily non-secular duties, could be deemed a "minister" and thus fired for any reason.

Finally, *Little Sisters of the Poor v. Pennsylvania*, addressed employee health insurance. The Affordable Care Act enacted under the

Obama administration obligated covered employers to provide contraceptive coverage to employees through their group health plans. But subsequent regulation enacted under the Trump administration created a religious exemption. Some states sued, arguing the exemption was unlawful given the ACA, but *Little Sisters*, operating facilities akin to nursing homes, argued that it did not go far enough. The Court, siding with *Little Sisters*, found that the religious exemption applied. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg argued, this decision "leaves women workers to fend for themselves, to seek contraceptive coverage from sources other than their employer's insurer, and absent another available source of funding, to pay for contraceptive services out of their own pockets."

Better news comes from *Bostock v. Clayton County*. Here the Court found Title VII to prohibit discrimination against employees based on their sex-

ual orientation or gender identity. *Bostock* decided three cases, including *Altitude Express Inc. v. Zarda* from the Second Circuit in New York. NYSUT filed an amicus brief in that case. The Court said "[I]t is impossible to discriminate against a person for being homosexual or transgender without discriminating against that individual based on sex."

And, in *Department of Homeland Security v. Regents of the University of California* the Court ruled to save DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, a decision important to young immigrants living in the country illegally who were brought here as children. DACA allows them to work, attend school and live in the US without fear of deportation. The Trump administration sought to dismantle DACA, but its efforts to do so violated the Administrative Procedure Act. While this decision keeps the dream alive, additional legislation or regulation will be needed to assure DACA recipients a path toward legal residency and citizenship. NYSUT filed an amicus brief in the Circuit court.

Looking ahead, three applications for Supreme Court review are pending in post-*Janus* cases. Plaintiffs there allege the unions must pay back dues for the time prior to *Janus*. Those cases were dismissed at the lower level.





Reopening higher ed poses real threats

By **Ned Hoskin**
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

Lives are at stake, United University Professions officers and members said during an August virtual rally for a safe SUNY reopening five months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Thousands of unionists, students, lawmakers and community advocates united online to demand that SUNY upgrade its campus reopening plans.

“All of us are here for one reason,” said UUP President Fred Kowal, “because we are committed to the health and safety of our state.” The union and its advocates have grown increasingly concerned that money, not safety, is driving SUNY’s decision-making.

UUP has pushed SUNY to put safety first in reopening campuses. It calls for routine testing of all students, faculty and staff; tracing and isolation of those with the virus; masks in public locations; and expansion of its telecommuting agreement with the state.

Rowena Blackman-Stroud, the UUP Downstate Medical Center Chapter president, said, “Even though Downstate was a COVID-19-only hospital, they faced shortages of personal protective equipment.”

Hospital staff sickened, and some died. As UUP has repeatedly said, the state must step up financially to not only adequately fund its hospitals, but to pay for testing and protective gear for campuses and hospitals.

In New York City, the Professional Staff Congress Executive Council unanimously supported 10 demands CUNY must meet by Aug. 26 to save lives, save jobs and save the university. If it fails to do that, the PSC puts “all options on the table for union action.”

The administration has repeatedly failed to keep employees safe until forced to do so by the union, said President Barbara Bowen. It failed to comply with the state directive to engage with the PSC on a reopening plan, failed to adhere to its contract with the union, failed to act with urgency in bargaining over the shift to remote work, and failed to comply with the CARES Act requirement on continuity of employment.

“Like all New Yorkers, PSC members have witnessed unbearable loss of life in our city,” Bowen said. “We have seen violent inequities of race and class laid bare, and many of us have joined the movement to end them. We have mourned the loss of friends, students and colleagues, as CUNY has endured more deaths from coronavirus than any other university

in the country.”

The state’s community colleges are still waiting for 20 percent of state aid for the fall, which further compounds their inability to fund accommodations related to COVID-19. In June, SUNY passed troubling emergency regulations that allow SUNY to control the distribution of funds to local CCs with no transparent methodology or formula.

“Our campuses do not have the funds to provide temperature checks, testing and proper cleaning between classes, as well as social distancing and PPE,” said Roberta Elins, president of United College Employees at Fashion Institute of Technology, who represents community colleges

on the NYSUT Board. “Where is that money going to be coming from?”

This year’s budget crunch has only one solution. More revenue. NYSUT legislative efforts continue to push on the federal side, but the CARES 2 and HEROES bills are hung up in Congress. NYSUT also continues to work on the state revenue initiative.

The NYSUT Board of Directors adopted a resolution on “Reopening Colleges and Universities Responsibly.” Among the commitments: “that in the fight to ensure the safety and health of NYSUT members, our students and our communities, we will use every action and tool available to us.”



Downstate Medical Center Chapter members show their union pride after receiving 2,000 face masks purchased by United University Professions for front-line hospital workers.

PROVIDED

Your vote matters — make it count

It's time to push back against vigorous voter suppression, and push forward to get out the vote for the November 2020 presidential and congressional elections.

National, statewide and local unions have been calling for protection of voters' rights, and members will be involved in phone banking, social media and widespread campaigns to get people out voting in this critical election.

It is clear how much a vote matters by the effort and money spent to suppress it. Cuts to funding for the U.S Postal Service limiting hours and delivery could jeopardize the arrival of mail-in and absentee ballots. Limits to early voting, massive closures of polling places — particularly in Black and brown neighborhoods — stricter ID laws, and shorter hours at polling places are all attempts to hinder voting. ID requirements, which differ by state, thwart low-income voters. Purging voter rolls and gerrymandering districts are other harmful practices. Florida even enacted a "poll tax" on some citizens seeking to restore their voting rights — those convicted of a felony who have since completed their sentences.

The current pandemic presents other challenges to voting. A recent article in the *New York Times* noted six states require an excuse for absentee voting, and that excuse cannot be the pandemic. But in nine states and the District of Columbia, every registered voter will be mailed a ballot

ahead of the election: California, D.C. and Vermont will do this for the first time this fall. Thirty-seven states are allowing absentee voting for all.

In late August, New York enacted legislation to allow voters to immediately apply for absentee ballots and to expand who can get them. Absentee ballots postmarked by Election Day or received at the Board of Elections by the day after will be counted. Election day is Tuesday, Nov. 3. The election results affect education funding, citizens' rights, environmental conditions, legal decisions, global affairs, state funding and much more.

"For some time now American citizens, including millions of New Yorkers, have been failing to participate in one of our most important franchises — voting," said Andy Pallotta, NYSUT President. "What's at stake? Your rights, your future, your community, your voice."

In 2008, the United States had its most diverse electorate in its history. But from 2011 to 2012, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, 27 measures passed in 19 different states making it more difficult to vote.

Voting in the U.S. has been mired in controversy since the birth of the nation, when only landholding white men could vote. This summer marked the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which women endured beatings, imprisonment, hunger



On Aug. 26, NYSUT and the union's Women's Committee hosted "NYSUT Women Vote 2020 — A Commemoration and an Education on the 19th Amendment." View the event archive at nysut.org/nysutwomenvote.

strikes and pickets to achieve. But it wasn't until after years of civil rights protest yielded the 1965 Voting Rights Act that Black and brown women were granted the right to vote.

This important act also sought voting protections for Black and brown men — who technically had the right to vote but were intimidated, threatened and often turned away from voting after being forced to take "literacy tests" or pay fees.

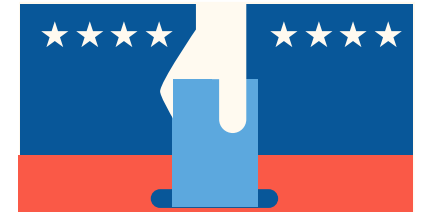
The Voting Rights Act sought to change all that. It was a force that opened doors and voting booths.

With a change in leadership in the U.S., and the appointment of more conservative judges, the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act in the 2013 *Shelby County v. Holder* case. The decision meant that jurisdictions no longer had to get federal preclearance for changes in voting procedures. Voter suppression began in earnest again; some limiting voting acts were passed the very same day.

NYSUT's national affiliates are urging members to stay vigilant in the fight to secure every citizen's right to vote. The American Federation of Teachers passed a resolution calling for federal and state governments to ensure that the 2020 elections are free and fair. This includes the right

to cast ballots by mail, if a person so chooses; "hard copy" paper ballots that can be scanned electronically; disconnecting all voting machines from the internet; auditing of paper ballots; and the provision of extensive in-person early voting, including weekends. Visit aft.org for the full resolution.

The National Education Association encourage members to become involved as Early Vote Educators; to learn to reach out and organize in the community via digital platforms; and to volunteer to work at the polls. Visit educationvotes.nea.org/presidential-2020/vote-by-mail/ for more info.



Voting rules in New York State

If you've voted in New York before, registered in person, or provided ID at the time of registration, you don't need to show ID to vote.

If you're voting in New York for the first time, registered to vote by mail, and didn't provide ID when you registered, be sure to bring a copy of your photo ID, or a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows your name and address when you vote.

For absentee ballots:

If you've voted in New York before, registered in person, or provided ID at the time of registration, you don't need to provide ID to vote by mail.

If you're voting in New York for the first time, registered to vote by mail, and didn't provide ID when you registered, be sure to enclose a copy of your photo ID, or a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document that shows your name and address when you return your ballot.

SOURCE: VOTER.ORG

DID YOU KNOW?

To find your polling location, please call the NYS Board of Elections at 518-474-1953 or 800-367-8683, or visit www.elections.ny.gov.

To register to vote, go to www.elections.ny.gov/votingregister.html.



NYSUT endorses candidates for election Nov. 3

This summer NYSUT issued endorsements in general election races for state Legislature and recommended congressional candidates for endorsements by the union's national affiliates, the American Federation of

Teachers and National Education Association.

The full slate of general election endorsements is available for download at nysut.org.

Endorsed candidates receive grassroots support from NYSUT members, including phone banking,

door knocking and literature distribution. The union also makes financial contributions from voluntary donations through VOTE-COPE, the union's non-partisan political action committee.

U.S. House of Representatives District

- 1 Nancy Goroff
- 2 Jackie Gordon*
- 3 Thomas Suozzi
- 4 Kathleen Rice
- 5 Gregory Meeks
- 6 Grace Meng
- 7 Nydia M. Velazquez
- 8 Hakeem Jeffries
- 9 Yvette D. Clarke
- 10 Jerrold Nadler
- 11 Max Rose
- 12 Carolyn Maloney
- 13 Adriano Espaillat
- 14 Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
- 15 No Endorsement
- 16 Jamaal Bowman
- 17 Mondaire Jones
- 18 Sean Patrick Maloney
- 19 Antonio Delgado
- 20 Paul Tonko
- 21 Tedra Cobb
- 22 Anthony Brindisi
- 23 Tracy Mitrano
- 24 Dana Balter
- 25 Joseph Morelle
- 26 Brian Higgins
- 27 Nate McMurray

New York State Senate District

- 1 No Endorsement
- 2 Mario Mattera
- 3 Monica Martinez
- 4 Philip Boyle
- 5 James Gaughran
- 6 Kevin Thomas
- 7 Anna Kaplan
- 8 John Brooks
- 9 Todd Kaminsky
- 10 James Sanders Jr.

- 11 John Liu
- 12 Michael N. Gianaris
- 13 Jessica Ramos
- 14 Leroy Comrie
- 15 Joseph P. Addabbo Jr.
- 16 Toby Ann Stavisky
- 17 No Endorsement
- 18 Julia Salazar
- 19 Roxanne Persaud
- 20 Zellnor Myrie
- 21 No Endorsement
- 22 Andrew Gounardes
- 23 Diane J. Savino
- 24 No Endorsement
- 25 Jabari Brisport*
- 26 Brian Kavanagh
- 27 Brad Hoylman
- 28 Liz Krueger
- 29 Jose Serrano
- 30 Brian Benjamin
- 31 Robert Jackson
- 32 No Endorsement
- 33 J. Gustavo Rivera
- 34 Alessandra Biaggi
- 35 Andrea Stewart-Cousins
- 36 Jamaal Bailey
- 37 Shelley Mayer
- 38 Elijah Reichlin-Melnick
- 39 James Skoufis
- 40 Peter Harkham
- 41 Karen Smythe
- 42 Jen Metzger
- 43 No Endorsement
- 44 Neil D. Breslin
- 45 Dan Stec
- 46 Michelle Hinchey
- 47 Joseph A. Griffo
- 48 Patty Ritchie
- 49 James Tedisco
- 50 John Mannion*
- 51 Jim Barber
- 52 No Endorsement

- 53 Rachel May
- 54 Pamela Helming
- 55 Samra Brouk
- 56 Jeremy Cooney
- 57 No Endorsement
- 58 Leslie Danks Burke
- 59 No Endorsement
- 60 Sean M. Ryan
- 61 Jacqui Berger*
- 62 No Endorsement
- 63 No Endorsement

New York State Assembly District

- 1 Fred Thiele Jr.
- 2 Laura Jens-Smith
- 3 Joe DeStefano
- 4 Steven C. Englebright
- 5 Douglas Smith
- 6 Philip Ramos
- 7 Jarett Gandolfo
- 8 Dylan Rice
- 9 Michael Durso
- 10 Steve Stern
- 11 Kimberly Jean-Pierre
- 12 Michael Marcantonio
- 13 Charles D. Lavine
- 14 David McDonough
- 15 Michael Montesano
- 16 Gina Sillitti
- 17 John Mikulin
- 18 Taylor Darling
- 19 Edward P. Ra
- 20 Gregory Marks
- 21 Judy Griffin
- 22 Michaelle Solages
- 23 Stacey Pheffer Amato
- 24 David I. Weprin
- 25 Nily Rozic
- 26 Edward C. Braunstein
- 27 Daniel Rosenthal
- 28 Andrew Hevesi

- 29 Alicia Hyndman
- 30 Brian Barnwell
- 31 Khaleel Anderson
- 32 Vivian E. Cook
- 33 Clyde Vanel
- 34 Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas
- 35 Jeffrion L. Aubry
- 36 Zohran Kwame Mamdani
- 37 Catherine T. Nolan
- 38 Jenifer Rajkumar
- 39 Catalina Cruz
- 40 Ronald Kim
- 41 Helene E. Weinstein
- 42 Rodneyse Bichotte
- 43 Diana C. Richardson
- 44 Robert C. Carroll
- 45 Steven Cymbrowitz
- 46 Mathylde Frontus
- 47 William Colton
- 48 Simcha Eichenstein
- 49 Peter J. Abbate Jr.
- 50 Emily Gallagher
- 51 Marcela Mitaynes
- 52 Jo Anne Simon
- 53 No Endorsement
- 54 Erik Dilan
- 55 Latrice Walker
- 56 Stefani Zinerman
- 57 No Endorsement
- 58 N. Nick Perry
- 59 Jaime Williams
- 60 Charles Barron
- 61 Charles Fall
- 62 Michael Reilly
- 63 Michael Cusick
- 64 Brandon Patterson
- 65 Yuh-Line Niou
- 66 Deborah Glick
- 67 Linda B. Rosenthal
- 68 No Endorsement
- 69 Daniel O'Donnell

- 70 Inez Dickens
- 71 Alfred Taylor
- 72 Carmen De La Rosa
- 73 Dan Quart
- 74 Harvey Epstein
- 75 Richard Gottfried
- 76 Rebecca Seawright
- 77 Latoya Joyner
- 78 Jose Rivera
- 79 Chantel Jackson*
- 80 Nathalia Fernandez
- 81 Jeffrey Dinowitz
- 82 Michael Benedetto
- 83 Carl E. Heastie
- 84 No Endorsement
- 85 No Endorsement
- 86 Victor M. Pichardo
- 87 Karines Reyes
- 88 Amy R. Paulin
- 89 James Gary Pretlow
- 90 Nader Sayegh
- 91 Steven Otis
- 92 Thomas Abinanti
- 93 Chris Burdick
- 94 No Endorsement
- 95 Sandra Galef
- 96 Kenneth Zebrowski
- 97 Ellen C. Jaffee
- 98 No Endorsement
- 99 Sarita Bhandarkar
- 100 Aileen Gunther
- 101 Chad McEvoy
- 102 No Endorsement
- 103 Kevin Cahill
- 104 Jonathan Jacobson
- 105 No Endorsement
- 106 Didi Barrett
- 107 Jacob Ashby
- 108 John McDonald III
- 109 Patricia Fahy
- 110 Phil Steck

- 111 Angelo Santabarbara
- 112 Mary Beth Walsh
- 113 Carrie Woerner
- 114 No Endorsement
- 115 D. Billy Jones
- 116 Mark Walczyk
- 117 Ken Blankenbush
- 118 Robert Smullen
- 119 Marianne Buttenschon
- 120 William Barclay
- 121 Dan Buttermann
- 122 No Endorsement
- 123 Donna Lupardo
- 124 Randy Reid
- 125 Anna Kelles
- 126 Dia Carabajal*
- 127 Al Stirpe
- 128 Pamela Hunter
- 129 William Magnarelli
- 130 No Endorsement
- 131 No Endorsement
- 132 Philip A. Palmesano
- 133 ChaRon Sattler-Leblanc
- 134 Josh Jensen
- 135 Jennifer Lunsford
- 136 Sarah Clark
- 137 Demond Meeks
- 138 Harry Bronson
- 139 Stephen M. Hawley
- 140 William Conrad*
- 141 Crystal Peoples-Stokes
- 142 Patrick Burke
- 143 Monica P. Wallace
- 144 Michael Norris
- 145 Angelo Morinello
- 146 Karen McMahan
- 147 No Endorsement
- 148 Joseph Giglio
- 149 Jonathan Rivera
- 150 Andrew Goodell

*Indicates NYSUT member

In times of trouble, NYSUT offers a helping hand

By Kara Smith

kara.smith@nysut.org

Few things are as devastating as losing a job. But in the wake of state budget cuts, due to the lack of additional federal pandemic aid for states, layoffs could be a reality for some members. If you're laid off from your position, know that NYSUT has your back and will continue to advocate for you. Your union membership offers a variety of resources to help you navigate the difficulties of a layoff. Visit nysut.org/layoffs.

Knowing your rights

If you're a teacher, teaching assistant or School-Related Professional facing a layoff, you have legal rights. It's important to know what they are and to understand what your district is legally allowed, and required to do, when issuing layoff notices.

NYSUT's Office of General Counsel offers a pair of resource booklets, in

PDF format, to provide guidance. For teachers and teaching assistants, *Know Your Rights: Layoff and Recall*; for SRPs, *Non-instructional Staff: Layoff and Recall*.

Maintaining your certification

Although maintaining your certification might not be your top concern, if you're a teacher or teaching assistant facing a layoff, it's an important consideration. You don't want to face any certification hurdles when you're searching for, or taking on, a new position.

NYSUT's certification experts have created a variety of resources, available at nysut.org/careercenter, to help.

- NYSUT Fact Sheet 20-13: Certification Changes in Response to COVID-19
- NYSUT Guidance on the Emergency COVID-19 Certificate
- Certification for Classroom Teachers

- Certification for Teaching Assistants and Other School Personnel

Managing student debt

While student debt is an issue in even the best of times for many NYSUT members, it takes on heightened importance after losing a job. To help you understand your options, effectively manage and, hopefully, pay off your student loan debt, NYSUT has partnered with Cambridge Credit Counseling to develop a full-service program for members.

Visit studentloans.nysut.org for more information.

You can also check out the free webinar, *How the CARES Act Affects*



Student Loan Debt, for an overview of how your student loans may be impacted by the federal CARES Act.

Finding a new job

The statewide union offers members access to a wide variety of education-related employment resources and job searches through the NYSUT Career Center. Jobs are listed by these classifications:

- Pre-K / K-12 / SRP Jobs by Region
- Statewide
- Higher Ed
- By Career Category

Many state regions also list jobs through Online Application System (OLAS), an internet-based job application and search service maintained by BOCES. It covers all employment areas for educators in the pre-K-12 education system, including School-Related Professionals. Learn more at olasjob.org.

NYU sergeants seek to organize with NYSUT

By Kara Smith

kara.smith@nysut.org

They took away longevity pay. They took away sick and vacation time sell back. And they took away scheduled raises for the 40-plus sergeants employed by New York University's department of public safety.

"Administrators gave us 48 hours to complete a self-evaluation that would be used to determine our raise, ranging from 0 to 3 percent," said Michael Weitzman, an NYU sergeant. "We said, 'this is wrong, this isn't fair.'"

"They said, 'we can do whatever we want, you don't have a union,'" said Weitzman.

The losses were humbling blows after years of having their workplace conditions mirror those enjoyed by NYU's security guards, represented by Local 1. But they also provided the incentive the sergeants needed to unionize. Now the group's organizing committee is trying, but the path hasn't been easy. The National Labor Relations Act's Section 9(b)(3) "guard exclusion" prohibits security officers from unionizing with non-guard employees — except through voluntary recognition.

After nine failed organizing attempts, the sergeants hope that NYSUT's network of autonomous locals will satisfy the guard-exclusion provision. With the assistance of

NYSUT organizer Julie Berman, the sergeants applied for voluntary recognition as the Security Professionals of Greater New York in mid-August after an overwhelming majority signed authorization cards indicating their support for union representation.

"If NYU recognizes us, we're ready to move forward," said Weitzman, an organizing committee member. If not, the next step is in-person actions like handing out fliers once students return to campus. "Hopefully it won't come to that," said Berman.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new urgency. Initially forbidden to wear masks due to "bad optics," the department's infection rate rose to 20 percent; one officer died, while others

were hospitalized. An urgent email to human resources in March, when more than 4,000 New Yorkers had died of the virus, highlighted the department's paltry supply of personal protective equipment — two boxes of disposable gloves and a single ounce bottle of hand sanitizer per officer. It took administrators 12 days to reply saying that masks weren't available, and that additional supplies weren't necessary since buildings were cleaned regularly and had hand sanitizer dispensers onsite.

"That put us over the edge," said Weitzman. "We risked our lives coming in, and they didn't care — with a collective bargaining agreement, you're obligated to care."

Union initiative takes on institutional racism

By Liza Frenette

liza.frenette@nysut.org

To take on racism, there needs to be an understanding of common humanity and a hard look at its twists and turns. NYSUT has created “Many Threads, One Fabric,” a series of programs to provide that understanding and to challenge institutional racism.

The program opened with an August webinar based on the bestselling book *How to be an Anti-racist* with author Ibram X. Kendi. It will continue with professional development, leadership programs, virtual town halls and training.

NYSUT has set up a dedicated email at socialjustice@nysut.org to receive input, suggestions and feedback from members on this topic, said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham. He leads the union’s social justice initiatives and is spearheading “Many Threads, One Fabric.”

In his virtual talk with hundreds of NYSUT members, Kendi agreed to help provide more resources to union educators. Even with a schedule that would be described as *veeleisende* (demanding) in Afrikaans, Kendi told listeners he would help create “How to be an Anti-Racist” material on AFT’s free Share My Lesson site for educators.

As Kendi explains, it’s not about individuals or groups of people — it’s about the power and policies that set racism into a mindset and into action. He will take on these issues in his new job as director of the new



Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University.

It is not enough to be non-racist, Kendi maintains; being anti-racist is what makes change happen. Being an anti-racist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination, Kendi explained.

From there, it is about examining existing power. The solution, he said, is not about “fixing” people but rather structures and foundations.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, who co-hosted the event with AFT President Randi Weingarten, said removing attitudinal and structural racial barriers — further exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic — would be part of the union’s ongoing activism.

“Racism is all around us,” Pallotta said. “It’s time for us to take that journey to justice.”

“Slavery is one of America’s original sins. Racism and racist behavior have been embedded in our institutions for generations,” Weingarten said.

She noted for racism to become a relic of the past, actively fighting against it “needs to be our fight. All of us. It can’t just be a fight for our African-American brothers and sisters.” The AFT this year passed a 19-point resolution confronting racism and in support of Black lives, which, among other things calls on schools to separate policing from the necessary service of school

security. The resolution also calls on cultural competency and implicit bias training for law enforcement and AFT local leaders and members.

Fighting racism benefits people of all cultures, Kendi said. Fighting aggressive overpolicing of Black and brown communities, for example,

would also help reduce violent police interactions with other people. Working toward a social safety net for people of color — such as paid family leave and access to health care — will help provide a social safety net for all.

Teachers have an important role in cultivating anti-racism, Kendi said.

“If you view the child as precious, you have to view the teacher as precious,” he said. “It took a pandemic for people to realize how important teachers are.”

Calling on his roots as an educator, Kendi said introducing students to the concept of systematic racism begins with defining racism and racist policies — using pedagogy.

“Then a person can assess their own ideas,” he said. “We want to give them tools to examine their world.”

Find social justice resources at nysut.org/socialjustice. The site has links to curriculum provided by educators with the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.



Ibram X. Kendi is one of America’s foremost historians and leading anti-racist voices. Kendi is a former member of United University Professions, the union representing faculty and staff at SUNY, having taught at SUNY Oneonta and the University at Albany. Inset, NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham.

100-year-old monitor steps off bus for last time

By Matt Smith
matt.smith@nysut.org

The little ones, the big ones, the good ones, the naughty ones, the funny ones, the



NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross congratulates 100-year-old Yolanda Imbriano, Oceanside FT, on her recent retirement.

surly ones. Yolanda Imbriano — who at age 100 recently stepped down from her position as a bus monitor in the Oceanside Central School District and did so only because of COVID-19 — not only worked with every type of student imaginable, she has a story about almost every one, as well.

There was Brian, who would never smile. His father would drag him down the driveway to the bus for summer school. He didn't want to go. "I'll take care of him. Don't you worry," Imbriano assured his dad. Brian was always in a mood. But his mother noticed a change after that summer. And in a thank you card sent to Imbriano, she wrote, "You are the only one who made my son smile."

There was Kevin. During high school, he changed buses and Imbriano lost touch. But later, she'd

see him at church. And he never forgot his favorite monitor, greeting her with a great big hug.

And, there were the little kids, the ones Imbriano called her "babies."

"I loved them. And they loved me," said Imbriano, reflecting on a career that spanned 55 years. "I loved working. I loved that I was helping someone."

Imbriano joined Oceanside in 1965. She served as a lunch monitor, then a schoolyard monitor and, finally, a bus monitor. A NYSUT member, she joined the union in 1983 — a move she says helped bring her better pay.

Before the pandemic hit, forcing the closure of schools in March, Imbriano — even at the age of 99 — would rise at 5 a.m. The school bus would pick her up at 6:50. She'd work

until 9:45 a.m., take a two-hour break and then go back to work until 4 in the afternoon.

As for her longevity, she attributes that to: "Olive oil, a glass of red wine every night, and I never smoked."

"You know, I wanted to work," she added. "You couldn't keep me down."

In fact, if her doctor would let her, Imbriano said she'd keep working in her retirement with students on a volunteer basis.

"I don't want any money. I just want to keep moving."

Not one to sit at home, she recently went on a bus trip with some senior citizens. And what did she do?

"I helped them on and off the bus," she said laughing.

Of course she did.



NECK OR BACK PAIN LIMITING YOUR LIFE?

Find out WHY

Dr. Amit Sharma is an expert in diagnosing and treating painful spine conditions with **MINIMALLY INVASIVE PROCEDURES**

- Selected as a top doctor by Castle Connelly, *Newsday* and *New York Magazine*
- Johns Hopkins trained; former Columbia University faculty member

New York City level of care on Long Island with convenient offices in Nassau & Suffolk counties

AmitSharmaMD.com



CALL or text your name & phone number
833-LI-SPINE (833-547-7463)

TESOL, Bilingual, Gifted, Ed Technology, Childhood and Special Education Certification PATHWAYS

Make the Smart Move.

Now offering all courses completely online in all the Individual Certification Pathways. Fall classes start soon!

CONTACT US AT AHAITZ@MOLLOY.EDU

OR 516.323.3572

LEARN MORE AT MOLLOY.EDU/CPS



Getting to know ... David Butterfield

David Butterfield is a member of the St. Regis Falls Central School Non-instructional Association. He was interviewed by Cheryl Rockhill, president of the Brushton-Moira Support Staff Association and a member of the 2017-20 NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee.

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

I am a driver/mechanic for St. Regis Falls Central. I also have the privilege of being a substitute driver for neighboring district Brushton-Moira Central. We are shared transportation districts. I love that I have the ability to serve both school communities when it is needed. Shared services are needed more than one would think. Driver shortages, as we know, are prevalent. Along with keeping up on bus maintenance and school equipment, part of my responsibilities are paperwork and Department of Labor inspections. My relationship with the transportation supervisor is a close one and I assist him in any

way that is needed. I can safely say this position's responsibilities go way past driving and mechanics work.

How are you involved in your union?

I am new to our district and union. We just had a complete change of officers. I would like to become more involved as I know of its importance. Right now I am learning my contract and asking questions if I don't understand. I do seek some advice from a friend who is the president of her local. Upon that advice I feel knowing my contract, then getting onto a committee or two will be my best start. Knowledge is power. I would like to do all I can to strengthen the union in my district.

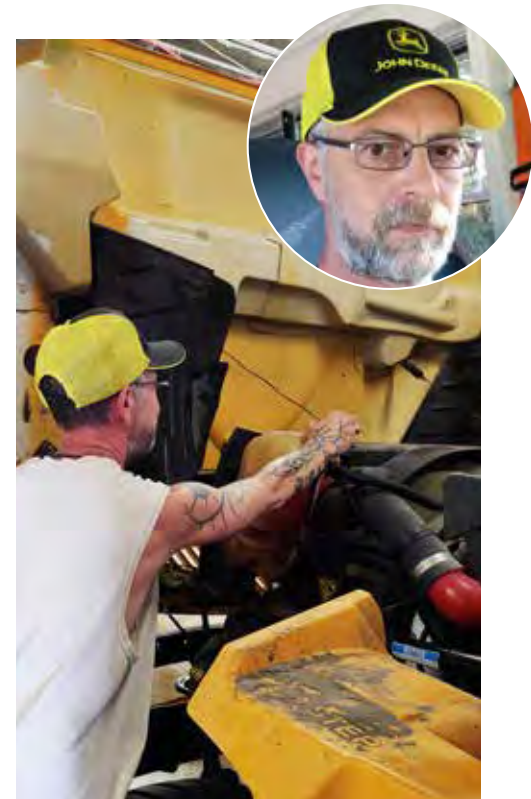
Tell me, how do you make a difference?

As COVID-19 closed our school systems at a moment's notice, there was a scramble to return personal belongings to students in an organized and safe manner. Working with both districts and assisting with this task I

am proud of what I witnessed. All school personnel came together and made this happen in excellent time. As we stepped into meal deliveries, I was put into a driver's position. It was an honor. Just seeing the difference that we were making to these families is an indescribable feeling. We SRPs are making a difference in the lives of our communities' families. I saw "SRP power" first hand.

Do you have any hobbies?

I stay busy working on my property. We suffered a house fire recently and lost everything. My wife's and my union stepped up and were there for us. Now I spend my time rebuilding our lives and our home. I do work for a friend in his small business which is a gun shop. North Country living means hunting and wildlife recreation. I help with gun shows in the spring and fall. COVID-19 has put a temporary end to this but we are hoping to resume soon.



PROVIDED

One positive thing the coronavirus has given us is time with our immediate families. My family has spent it in the woods or at our home.

No time like the present to celebrate SRPs

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

School-Related Professionals have been sure champions during COVID-19 school building closures and preparing for reopening in the quest to make schools clean and safe, keep students fed and capably transported, and keep school offices running. They assist students in learning, whether it is online or in school.

Local unions are encouraged to

honor them for the annual New York State SRP Recognition Day, to be held Nov. 17 this year.

Custodians have been cleaning and disinfecting schools since everyone else left, and continue to do so now. Bus drivers have brought laptops and lunches to students in need, and now ensure the safe transportation of students under guidance necessitated by



the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Since schools closed unexpectedly in the spring, food service employees made sure students in need were still fed — that work continued throughout the summer and as students started a new school year.

"SRPs deserve to be recognized and acknowledged for all they continue to do for our students, our schools and our communities," said NYSUT Second

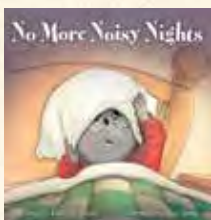
Vice President Ron Gross, whose office oversees SRP initiatives.

Locals requesting a packet providing ideas on how to celebrate SRP Recognition Day can visit nysut.org/srpd. The statewide union is also seeking entries for the SRP Recognition Day contest.

Last year's winning teams were the SUNY Broome Community College Educational Support Personnel Association, led by Mary Gilbert; and Greenburgh Federation #11, led by Jennifer Cole.

No More Noisy Nights

Written by:
Holly L. Niner
Illustrated
by: Guy
Wolek



Recommended by: Rebecca Benjamin, literacy specialist, Schenectady Federation of Teachers

Suitable for: Pre-K-5

Why I chose it: This book features adorable characters and relatable problems, accompanied by detailed illustrations. The main character, Jackson, is a mole who burrowed into a new home only to find that other creatures sharing his space were keeping him from sleeping. Students will find humor in the silly side effects of living without proper rest, and learn from Jackson's creative problem-solving skills.

What I like best: Niner strikes a balance between presenting challenges, demonstrating cause and effect relationships, and infusing humor. Her characters have layers of motivation and empathy.

How teachers can use this book:

This story provides students with opportunities to explore relationship building and conflict resolution. Jackson responds to his problems with kindness to create solutions that work in everyone's best interest. Niner delivers a wonderful foundation for conversations and activities for students to apply to difficulties they face in their own lives for positive socio-emotional growth.

About the author: Holly L. Niner has written *Mr. Worry: A Story about OCD* and *I Can't Stop: A Story about Tourette Syndrome*, a Bank Street College of Education Best Book. For more, visit hollyniner.com.

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

Rosa named Interim State Education Commissioner

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Calling her the right choice at a tumultuous time, NYSUT hailed the appointment of Regents Chancellor Betty Rosa as Interim State Education Commissioner, effective Aug. 14.

"Chancellor Rosa has been a fierce advocate for our schools, students and educators during her tenure on the board, and we can't think of anyone more suited to step in as interim commissioner during this time," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

"Chancellor Rosa doesn't back down from a challenge, and that's exactly the kind of leader SED needs right now," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, who serves as the statewide union's liaison with the Regents and State Education Department.

DiBrango congratulated Vice Chancellor T. Andrew Brown, a Rochester lawyer who was elevated to the regents "presiding officer."

"We are ready to get to work with both in their new roles as we advocate for our students, our members and school communities across New York," DiBrango said.

Rosa is the third interim leader since Commissioner MaryEllen Elia resigned last summer.

"Districts and schools are about to begin an instructional year like no other in our history," Rosa said. "It is imperative that the department continues its important work without interruption, and I am dedicated to providing that constancy as interim commissioner."

Rosa has been a strong advocate for equity in education. "We cannot fail our students, particularly our

students and our families that are struggling," Rosa said during the virtual meeting where she was appointed. "We must find a way to make sure every conversation keeps what's important at the table."

The Board of Regents hoped to find a candidate by summer but the board announced that the search would be extended into the fall, with the private search firm accepting applications through Oct. 1.

Rosa has been a regent since 2008. She was elected chancellor by fellow board members in March 2016 and re-elected last year. She holds three master's degrees and a doctorate. Rosa began her career as a bilingual paraprofessional, teacher and reading coordinator in New York City schools. She has served in many administrative positions, from principal to senior superintendent.

ELT expands online learning for members

In response to tremendous demand, NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust has greatly expanded its online offerings to help members meet students' emotional and academic needs.

With so much uncertainty in the coming year, ELT has put together a wide variety of courses and seminars for this fall to help educators — whether it's in-person instruction, online learning, or a combination.

Some of the new offerings include:

- Assessment as a Tool — Determining where students are and where they need to be.

- Differentiating Instruction and Curriculum for Learner Needs — meeting the learning needs of all students, including vulnerable students who may have had limited or insufficient exposure to remote learning opportunities.

- Interdisciplinary Teaching — Bringing curricular programming into line to meet students where they are and transitioning students from remote learning back to in-person learning.

- Social Emotional Supports — Addressing the emotional and mental health needs of students and staff. To find out more and register, go

to elt.nysut.org. With a 40 percent discount for NYSUT members, classes are filling up quickly. Many of the courses can help members fulfill requirements for certification or salary advancement. Since ELT is an approved provider, they can also be used to meet state Continuing Teacher & Leader Education (CTLE) requirements.



North Country SRPs meet the challenges of an uncertain time

By Matt Smith

matt.smith@nysut.org

Athletic department staff in public schools are planning for a fall sports season that may never happen. Maintenance workers are cleaning and prepping classrooms and offices, still unsure just exactly what they'll need. And food-service personnel are planning meal programs that could very well stretch staff and resources to the limits.

School-Related Professionals across the state are finding that as they work to prepare their districts for a new academic year, the uncertainties surrounding reopening schools during a pandemic are posing a range of potential challenges and what-ifs.

"It's hard. We're supposed to be doing physicals for students, but we can't have students in to get their physicals done," said Kelly Scott, secretary of the Carthage Central School-Related Personnel Association and an athletic department secretary at Carthage High School near Watertown.

"The kids are preparing, excited about the upcoming season. But at the same time, they are also preparing

themselves for disappointment. It's trying to plan for the normal against what we can actually do during such an abnormal time."

CCSRPA President Kevin Lawton said an especially big question for his local — which includes custodial and maintenance staff, secretaries, bus drivers and mechanics, food service workers, aides and library clerks — is whether social distancing will be required on school buses.

"Normally, there are between 50 and 60 students on a bus. If we have to social distance, we'll only be able to transport 16 kids," Lawton said. "Our student population is at least 3,200. That isn't going to work." A possible solution, he said, would be a "hybrid" reopening, in which some students return to school while others learn online.

Lawton said the district is following state Department of Health reopening guidelines, and a task force made up of teachers, SRPs, administrators and parents has been meeting regularly to discuss and address concerns. But, the state guidelines themselves also present challenges, he said, since they require the sanitization of buildings during the day.

"Most of our cleaning staff works after 3 p.m., so the challenge is going to be staffing because we are still



Carthage SRPs Kelly Scott and Kevin Lawton discuss the challenges of preparing for an upcoming school year amid the uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

PHOTOS: ANDREW WATSON

going to have to clean all five buildings (in the district) after the school day as well."

Carthage SRPs have been an essential part of the district's pandemic response. During the statewide shutdown of schools in spring, CCSRPA members served 175,174 total meals between breakfast and lunch to children and families across the sprawling rural district. Custodial staff, bus mechanics, secretaries, teacher aides and bus drivers joined with food service workers to prepare, package and deliver meals — all while doing their own respective jobs as well.

"There was a clear purpose and there was no kickback from anybody," Lawton said. I was proud at how members stepped up. They wanted to help any way they could."

Kim Munn, the union's treasurer who works in the district's Food Service department, said she expects the meal program to be pushed to its limit in the upcoming year.

"We fully expect we'll have to feed in-house and outside and have two different operations going simultaneously, because some families will not be comfortable sending their children to school. That poses a challenge with staff — not having enough. It's going to be an issue."

Still, Munn said, she has no doubt her members will rise to the challenge the same way they did during shutdown.

"For food-service workers," she said, "their passion is the kids, especially in these uncertain times."

Union hot spot helps St. Lawrence County families access internet

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

When the shift to remote learning during the pandemic highlighted a serious lack of internet access for students and staff, the union sounded the alarm — and is answering the call.

The American Federation of Teachers, one of NYSUT's national affiliates, this summer provided the People Project in St. Lawrence County with eight Jet Pack hot spots for educators, students and families to be able to get online.

The year-round, mobile hot spots are being set up in Parishville, Canton, Ogdensburg and Gouverneur. Mary Wills, retired teacher and director of the NYSUT-supported People Project, said Gouverneur alone has four areas with no Wi-Fi access. Districts across the county report 600-900 students without internet access, a major deficit at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic requires many families to rely on remote learning.

"Lack of internet connectivity across our region is due to various factors, but geography and cost are the main obstacles," said Wills.

A Common Sense Media report issued this summer indicated that 726,000 K-12 students in New York — 27 percent — did not have adequate internet access during the pandemic, and neither did 18,000 teachers.

"This pandemic has shined a bright light on the fact that equal access to educational opportunities must include equal access to the devices and to internet infrastructure," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, who leads the union's social justice work. "When we say we're striving for greater social justice across New York, that includes educational equity for every child, regardless of their ZIP code or socio-economic status."

The Canton Teachers Association, led by Kristen Ames, is working with the local housing authority to place their hot spots in high-need areas; others will be placed in areas that are within walking distance for a lot of families, Wills said. The range is about 50 yards, and about 15 users can access the hot spot at a time. The hot spots will also allow families to access online services

for telemedicine and social services.

Educators from the Parishville-Hopkinton TA distribute 100 free meals and books. The event unveiled one of eight hot spots donated by the AFT to assist families without home internet access. The Snack Shack food truck is sponsored by the People Project.



Unions push for school reopenings to be smart, sensible and safe

By Sylvia Saunders
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

In a summer like no other, NYSUT is working closely with local unions and state officials to keep safety — and sanity — front and center as schools decide how and when to reopen this fall.

After Gov. Cuomo announced Aug. 7 that low infection rates for COVID-19 meant New York's schools could reopen, he left it up to individual school districts to determine whether they should.

In addition to planning instruction, Cuomo said that districts needed to develop specific plans for testing, tracing and what to do if a student or staff member contracts the virus. He gave districts just two weeks to conduct online informational meetings with parents and educators to answer questions and address any concerns.

With the clock ticking, union leaders around the state stepped up and took a close look at reopening plans. In locals big and small, leaders polled members, pushed back on a variety of health and safety issues and questioned plans that were incomplete or didn't make sense.

"Educators and parents are in complete agreement: School districts need to err on the side of caution," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "If there are any questions about safety or if any district's plan is missing any details, that district must start with remote learning. Masks and social distancing are a must. If there is a single case of COVID-19 in a school, that building

must shut down for 14 days. And any days of remote learning must count toward the 180-day school requirements. These criteria should be non-negotiable everywhere."

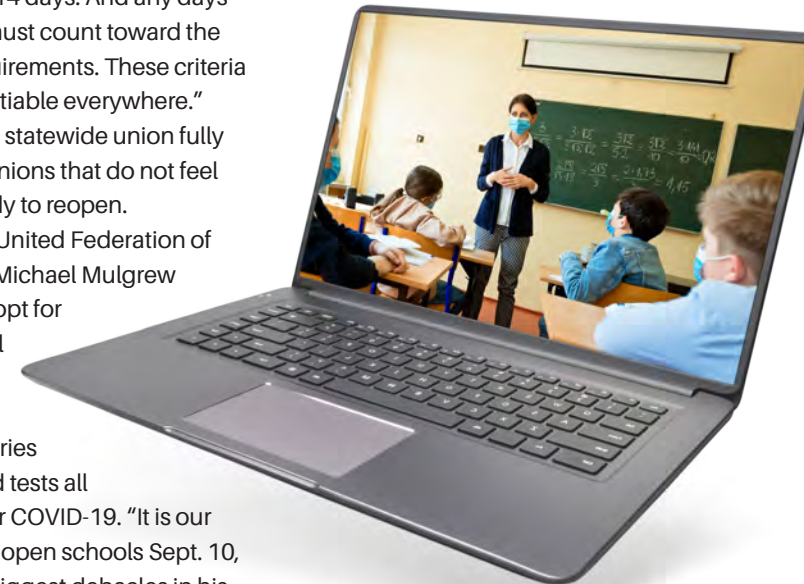
Pallotta noted the statewide union fully supports any local unions that do not feel that schools are ready to reopen.

In New York City, United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew urged all parents to opt for remote learning until the Department of Education conducts a sweeping series of safety reviews and tests all students and staff for COVID-19. "It is our judgment that if you open schools Sept. 10, it will be one of the biggest debacles in history," Mulgrew said, noting the UFT is fully prepared to move forward with litigation and possible job actions, if necessary.

Teacher unions in Rochester, Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany and Yonkers polled membership and approved resolutions declaring that schools were not ready to reopen and should instead start with remote instruction. As NYSUT United went to press, Rochester, Buffalo and Yonkers districts agreed to proceed with remote learning, at least temporarily.

"Teachers do want to return to at-school and in-person instruction but only when it is safe to do so," said RTA President Adam Urbanski.

With old HVAC systems and buildings where windows cannot open, union



leaders in other big cities were working with NYSUT lawyers on possible litigation concerning ventilation problems.

"We only have one chance to get this done safely," said White Plains TA President Kara McCormick-Lyons, whose district was one of many that decided in the final weeks of summer to begin the year fully remote. Others across the state choosing a remote-only opening include West Seneca, Rome, Oneonta, Ballston Spa, Kingston, Wappingers Falls, Suffern, Mount Vernon and New Rochelle. New Paltz postponed its in-person opening after officials found that masks and other personal protective equipment were back-ordered.

Pallotta noted that NYSUT staffers were

working around the clock on a number of fronts to help members throughout the summer. While NYSUT's legislative department advocated for additional federal and state aid and worked to find solutions to childcare issues for members, the union's certification experts answered questions and helped members with emergency credentialing.

Field and legal staff assisted members with a wide range of questions about leave rights, accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, retirement options and numerous other employment issues. A special area on the website, nysut.org/reopeningschools, includes the latest guidance from the state departments of health and education, plus information on health and safety, employment issues and union services. With many districts moving forward with furloughs and cuts, NYSUT updated its layoff guide with important details about unemployment and health insurance.

NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust, the union's professional development arm, offered a number of new online courses to help members with the shift to remote learning and how to help students navigate their learning emotionally and academically.

"The union has been relentless on many fronts," Pallotta said. "And we know these fights will only continue as we head into a very challenging school year."

NYSUT: Responsible reopening plans must put health and safety first

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

NYSUT continues to be proactive in getting members up-to-date, specific information about ways to alleviate the many health and safety concerns of returning to school for work while the pandemic continues.

"It's these issues of health and safety that started the labor movement. This is about people's well-being," said Veronica Foley, NYSUT health and safety specialist.

NYSUT has conducted in-depth research on behalf of teachers, transportation workers, custodians, clerical staff, school nurses and aides in order to ensure their safety. Focus groups have been held with different constituency groups to glean their specific concerns, followed up with resource guides. Foley and the NYSUT officers provided information for union leaders around the state to host their own regional health and safety meetings.

"All of what we're learning now really is best practice, and will help in the future," said Foley, including dealing with influenza.

Job number one for members is to connect with local union leaders, review the information and materials available from the union, and plan for a discussion with administration. "Work with your colleagues, your union leaders and the NYSUT labor relations specialists," Foley said.

NYSUT continues to stress that members work with the school district's health and safety committee, which every district is required by law to have in place. That committee is mandated to have a union member.

Foley said another important tool to assess building health and safety comes from the building condition survey mandated by the State Education Department to be conducted for each building every five years. This comprehensive report looks at engineering, plumbing, ventilation, heating and cooling. Examining the most recent report can provide a wealth of knowledge as to the condition of the school, what has been addressed and what improvements remain to be done.

"It's important that we utilize what we already have a right to," said Foley.

Since proper ventilation plays a major role in keeping a classroom safe for students and educators, NYSUT, in partnership with CSEA, provided vital building assessment tools on two webinars in August.

Participants were outfitted with questions to ask school administrators; HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) tools for schools from the Environmental Protection Agency; and school building planning checklists provided by NYSUT and CSEA.

"This is going to be an ongoing narrative," said Foley.

NYSUT's online Coronavirus Toolkit features a host of resources from the statewide union, the State Department of Health and the State Education Department. Topics include school reopening, cleaning guidance, frequently asked questions and much more. Visit nysut.org/coronavirus.



Summer visits build partnerships with families

By **Sylvia Saunders**

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

In this age of COVID-19, Massena educators weren't sure what kind of response they'd get when they offered to meet in person with families of future kindergartners and seventh-graders this summer.

The North Country teachers and counselors targeted those two grade levels because they're key transition times, as students start school or make the big jump from elementary to middle school.

"It's our second year doing family visits and I was honestly surprised how many families said yes," said Kristin Colarusso-Martin, director of the district's Community Schools program. "We're meeting on porches, in backyards and driveways — wherever families are comfortable and we can practice social distancing."

Teachers at Madison Elementary

set up a canopy-style tent outside the school, while other families preferred a picnic table at the local park.

"The visits have definitely been a lot different this year, but in a way they felt even more important and relevant," said Jessica Jarrett, a family and consumer science teacher at Massena Junior High School. "There's so much uncertainty and everyone had so many questions."

Jarrett, who teamed up with middle school counselor Van Alexander for the visits, said conversations ran the gamut — from a student who was nervous about his transition from a small Catholic school to others who wanted to learn how the district's planned hybrid learning schedule would work.

At one visit at the town park, a grandfather was eager to find out more about online learning and expectations for his granddaughter. What's the difference between

synchronous and asynchronous learning? When are assignments due? And how can she get in touch with teachers? "I felt like our conversation really helped put him at ease," Alexander said.

The visits also help reassure students. "Most kids are really nervous about junior high, even when there's not a pandemic or remote instruction," Alexander said. "We usually do orientation sessions the week before school starts, but obviously we can't do that this year."

Jarrett said it's important for students to understand that middle school is a time for them to become more responsible and independent learners — and learn to speak up for themselves. "Some students really struggled with online learning, so this gave us a chance to discuss what happened and how they can get help when they need it," she said. "It's so important to make that personal connection, and hopefully give them an adult at school they feel like they can go to."

Kindergarten teacher Amanda Taraska said the visits give her a powerful head start on getting to know her students and building trust with parents.

On one recent visit with five-year-old Joey Terminelli, she and school counselor Christine Winston learned about his love for Paw Patrol and Canadiens Hockey. Four-year-old Jamie Plourde proudly showed off his bike and told them he's a big fan of Ryan's Toys videos.

"It means a lot to them that their teacher came to their house and it helps us make connections," Taraska said. "This year we brought them a *Countdown to Kindergarten* book to help them get ready for the big day."

Taraska said the summertime visits also make parents more comfortable. "Rather than meeting the first time at school or Open House night, it's helpful for us to meet on their 'turf,' she said. "It really starts the year on a positive note."

Massena's family visit program is one of several community engagement projects sponsored by NYSUT, with support from National Education Association. Under the grant, NYSUT provided training on best practices for home visits, with an emphasis on how to reengage with families after the school closures this spring. The visits are voluntary and educators are well-trained and compensated.

"The visits are even more important this year because the kids need to have that human contact," Taraska said. "With so much uncertainty, I kept thinking this might be my only chance to connect with them face-to-face. I might not see them in person again."

Nightengale Elementary teacher Amanda Taraska, right, and school counselor Christine Winston talk with kindergartner Joey Terminelli during a family visit this summer. Looking on from the deck are parents Jenilee and Joe Terminelli and little brother Adam.



JASON HUNTER

ATTENTION TEACHERS!

NO FEES

UNION MORTGAGE PROGRAM

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Application Fee | \$0 |
| Appraisal Fee* | \$0 |
| Processing Fee | \$0 |
| Credit Report Fee | \$0 |
| Points to Us | \$0 |
| Broker Fees to Us | \$0 |

TOTAL
Union Member
Mortgage Fees **\$0**

- Celebrating our **20th** Anniversary
- Saved Union Members Over **\$50 Million** in Fees
- More than **35,000** Mortgage Loans Closed
- We are the #1 Originator of **Union Only** Loans
- Originator of "True No Fee" Loans

Receive a \$500.00 Closing Cost Credit

Towards your mortgage closing cost in addition to our "No Fees" Mortgage Loan Program for Union Memberships. Co-ops Excluded.



"Thank you Members Mortgage, you saved me thousands on my mortgage fees! I give you an A+"



Members Mortgage Corp.

600 Old Country Road, Garden City, New York 11530

1-833-99-UNION | MembersMortgageCorp.com

WE ARE A UNION ONLY SERVICE PROVIDER. NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.

Reg. Mtg Broker, NYS Dept of Financial Services Lic#130175 Loans arranged through third party provider

* Lender finance fees, Title Insurance fees, NYS Mortgage tax, Escrow Deposit and Short Term Interest are applicable on all NYS loans. (*) Reimbursement to maximum of \$325.

Students step up to save 'race' class

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Talk about student engagement.

When Amherst English teacher Pamela Fordham learned over a Zoom faculty meeting that her "Race in America" elective was canceled for this fall, she was stunned. Yet with everything turned upside down by the pandemic, she just didn't feel like it was the right time for her to try to fight the decision.

Instead, much to her surprise, three former students stepped up and wouldn't take no for an answer.

As the death of George Floyd ignited nationwide protests over systemic racism, students at the suburban Buffalo school told the administration this is no time to be cutting such an important course. Fordham, who grew up in suburban Buffalo herself, started the elective course about 10 years ago to raise cultural awareness and teach students how to have productive conversations around race.

"In all honesty, the class should be mandatory because it was so educational," said rising senior Maria Alaimo, who emailed principal Gregory Pigeon. Alaimo, who is white, credited Fordham's course with opening her eyes and helping her realize she wants a career in criminal justice reform.

Darion Frederick, a Black student who took the class a year earlier, told a *Buffalo News* columnist the course "opens up conversations and dialogues that aren't often had, but that should be."

While Alaimo and Frederick pushed the administration to restore the class, Aden Clemente, the high school's valedictorian, launched a change.org petition drive to reinstate the class.

The online petition noted that eliminating the class taught by the school's only African-American teacher "would have been unacceptable before, but considering the recent episode of police brutality and the subsequent rise in profile of

the Black Lives Matter movement, there is more of a need for this kind of course than ever before."

Within a few hours of posting the petition, Clemente was on the phone with the principal, who noticed how quickly the petition was gaining signatures. Several of those signing the petition added pointed comments: "By canceling this class (and while you had it, not promoting it very well), you are siding with racism. Do better," wrote one. "What message does this send to Amherst's POC (specifically Black) students when Amherst chooses to remove such an important class," wrote an Amherst alum.

Within five days, the petition gathered nearly 1,300 signatures — and the administration agreed to reinstate the course. Instead of offering it one semester a year, the principal said the course will now be offered twice a year. He emailed parents and students with a list of available electives for the 2020-21 school year, including "Race in America."

Clemente, who is starting at Duke University this fall, posted an update with a "Victory" headline and called it a great first step. Next, he said, the district should focus on hiring a more diverse workforce of educators, especially since students of color comprise more than 30 percent of the school's enrollment.

Fordham, whose father taught African-American studies at Buffalo State and whose mom was a long-time fourth-grade teacher in Buffalo City Schools, was overwhelmed by the students' courage and how they handled themselves.

"As a teacher, you always wonder just how much the kids are absorbing and whether you're getting through to them," she said. "Honestly, I couldn't be prouder."



About "Race in America"

Established as a half-year elective, "Race in America" empowers students to find their voice while having difficult conversations about what can be uncomfortable topics.

The course delves into topics like interracial relations, stereotypes and implicit bias with thought-provoking assignments and discussions. One unit looks at television shows like "black-ish," and "Fresh Off the Boat" as students explore what's funny and what crosses the line. Another unit addresses "the talk" that African-American families must have with their children, especially Black sons, about how to act at the mall or if they're stopped by a police officer. Beyond race, students discuss what "talks" they have in their family. In addition to examining current events, other projects are tailored to student's individual interests, such as sports and discrimination in the make-up industry.

"I try not to have all the answers and I don't want it to be a history class," she said. "I want them to understand there are many ways to use their talents to advocate and protest. If you're a musician, write a song. If you're techy, make a website."

For more information about the course, suggested readings and other resources, go to nysut.org/socialjustice.



PROVIDED

Pamela Fordham, right, an English teacher and member of the Amherst Education Association, poses pre-COVID-19 with former students, from left, Danita Harris and Juwan Baker. Fordham's "Race in America" elective made national news when students petitioned to save the class.

Teens continue work for a better future

Educator-led human rights institutes inspire students in New York, across the country

By Liza Frenette
liza.frenette@nysut.org

Since participating in her first human rights symposium two years ago, Bethlehem student Zoe Thomas has become involved with several activism groups at school and in her community.

She's raised funds to help victims of human trafficking and worked to bring attention to the lack of diversity in her school's curriculum.



PROVIDED

Inspired by her participation with the Capital Region Institute for Human Rights, Bethlehem High School student Zoe Thomas has launched several initiatives at her school.

This summer, she met with the head of her high school English department to discuss why only one Black author has been assigned in four years. Thomas helped stage a read-in where students and alumni,

wearing masks and practicing safe distancing, read a poem or book excerpt from an author of color. It was followed by a protest to address the need for training on racial bias and racism within the school.

Thomas and other teens are driving these kinds of actions after being immersed in NYSUT-supported human rights education.

The 13th Summer Symposium held in Western New York and the Capital Region Institute for Human Rights event were held online via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions. They focus on education, historical perspective and resources to help foster change.

In the Capital Region, 105 students — a record number — swapped summer sunshine for laptops to study the poems of different social movements, and learned about young people at the forefront of social justice and how to reverse runaway inequality.

Kelly Wetherbee, who organizes the summit along with fellow North Colonie Teachers Association member Thea MacFawn, told students they make a difference by what they post on social media. She urged students to “think about what we amplify” and to evaluate news sources for reliability.

“Misinformation is designed to manipulate emotions,” she cautioned. “Emotional responses



override rational thought.” She advised students not to simply retweet or repost, but to investigate the source of information.

All participants also received

Education of an Idealist, written by keynote speaker Samantha Powers, former ambassador to the U.N.

“You are social justice warriors,” NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham told the group. “We’re not free unless we’re all free.”

Abraham urged the young activists to visit NYSUT’s virtual vigil (nysut.org/vigilaction) for justice, peace and action to learn specific steps they can take to get involved.

The Western New York program — under the theme “Women’s Rights are Human Rights” — commemorated the centennial passage of the 19th Amendment. Students from six states and five different countries explored pressing issues facing women. Whether via making art or making a documentary, students learned from women of change about how to get active.

“What is the point of exploring history except to change the future,” said speaker Nada Odeh, a Syrian-born artist and activist.

The Buffalo-based Summer Symposium is sponsored by the Academy for Human Rights, led by Springville TA member Andrew Beiter and co-sponsored by Erie 1 BOCES.

In addition to the student symposium, the Academy offers professional development programs for educators throughout the year.

NYSUT journal focuses on classroom access, equity

Like all children, students with disabilities present a wide range of academic and social strengths and challenges — and they are entitled to an educational experience that will best serve their individual needs. The authors featured in *Educator’s Voice Volume XIII, Students with Disabilities: Access and Equity in the School Community*, detail practices designed to do just that.

“Whether referring to students with disabilities or their peers, there is no single path for educators that ensures success,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “But with thoughtful planning, professional learning, and ample resources, educators can develop a personalized approach that best meets their students’ needs.”

In this volume, read about the intentional design of inclusive classrooms utilizing collaborative teams; how to navigate instructional accommodations with a focus on guided note taking; and cutting-edge research on helping students with autism spectrum disorder via equity-based social-emotional learning.

NYSUT’s journal of best practices in education is dedicated to highlighting research-based classroom and school/district-wide strategies that make a difference in student achievement. Volume XIII will be published this fall at nysut.org/educatorsvoice.

Discover the Overseas Adventure Travel Difference

- **Explore the Road Less Traveled in 85 Countries:** No matter where you decide to travel with us, you'll enjoy a discovery-filled itinerary at an unbeatable value.
- **Small Groups, Big Discoveries:** Journey by land and explore off-the-beaten-path destinations in a small group of just 8-16 travelers (average of 13) with a local Trip Experience Leader. Stay in intimate lodgings, ride unique modes of transportation, and make authentic cultural connections.
- **Small Ships, Greater Access:** Immerse yourself in local cultures as our adventures take you into small ports that larger vessels can't reach. With a local Trip Experience Leader, you'll explore in a small group of 20-25 travelers (average of 22), aboard our privately-owned or chartered 16- to 210-passenger small ships.
- **Your Choice, Your Adventure, Your Way:** Personalize your experience by adding optional pre- or post-trip extensions, break away to do more exploring on your own, and more.

**SAVE \$500 per person
and a FULL 10% off**

the total price of your trip on new reservations—
just be sure to mention code TRAVEL AGAIN and
NYSUT Member Benefits Group Code 25614.
Reserve by 9/30/2020.

Your health and safety is always our #1 priority. To learn more about the health and safety protocols we've created to better protect you, visit www.oattravel.com/health-safety-guidelines.

Call **1-800-955-1925** to reserve your departure
with one of our Adventure Specialists today.

www.oattravel.com



Offer applies to NEW reservations only and CAN be combined with free or low-cost Single Supplements. To save a full 10%, you must reserve by 9/30/2020, mention code: TRAVEL AGAIN, and pay in full by check or electronic funds transfer within 14 days of booking. If you reserve your departure after 9/16/20 you must pay in full by 9/30/20 to receive the 10% savings. 10% savings are calculated after Frequent Traveler Credits, Vacation Ambassador rewards, and Multiple Trips Benefits are deducted from your initial tour price. To receive Good Buy Plan savings, you must pay in full by check or electronic funds transfer by the applicable Good Buy Plan deadline. Standard Policies and Terms & Conditions apply. *Every effort has been made to publish this information accurately. We reserve the right to correct errors.*

O.A.T. is a NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of a percentage of net sales based upon the number of eligible purchasers during a calendar year and 10% of group sales based upon the type of travel booking and paying travelers for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING AND 100% ONLINE



Become a leader in education.

If you're ready to start the path to become a school administrator, consider Canisius College. Our educational leadership program is NYS-approved and offered fully online so you can complete your program without interrupting your career.

- > School Building Leader (SBL) & School District Leader (SDL) certificate programs available
- > Programs lead to certification in New York State
- > Learn from experienced education leaders
- > Three start dates – fall, spring or summer
- > 100% online



SUCCESSFUL HOME OWNERSHIP STARTS WITH A CONVERSATION.

At Citizens Bank, we're ready to help you find the financing that's right for you. So, before you fall in love with a home, let us help you figure out how much you can borrow with a prequalification assessment.

WE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- First-time home buyer programs
- FHA/VA/SONYMA loan programs
- Jumbo loan programs
- Refinancing your current mortgage for a lower payment or cash out

If you have a questions about home financing, call Dan Moschetti today.

Dan Moschetti, Sales Manager

NMLS ID: 420643

daniel.moschetti@citizensbank.com

845-222-9844

lo.citizensbank.com/dmoschetti

Citizens Bank®

Mortgages are offered and originated by Citizens Bank, N.A. Citizens Bank is a brand name of Citizens Bank, N.A. (NMLS ID# 433960) All loans are subject to approval. Equal Housing Lender. CS#801755_Dan Moschetti_4.75x6

HARRIS PLASTIC SURGERY

COSMETIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE PLASTIC SURGERY

"Creating Beautiful Natural Results"



BREAST REDUCTION SURGERY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

WE OFFER MINIMAL INCISION BREAST REDUCTION PROCEDURES

RAPID ONE WEEK RECOVERY

EXPERTISE IN OBTAINING INSURANCE AUTHORIZATIONS

SURGERY CAN BE PERFORMED OVER HOLIDAYS/VACATIONS/SUMMER BREAKS

SPECIAL PRICING FOR BODY CONTOURING PERFORMED AT THE TIME
OF BREAST REDUCTION

PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE TO SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION

STEPHEN U. HARRIS, M.D., FACS

Board Certified Plastic Surgeon

Chief of Plastic Surgery, Good Samaritan Hospital Medical Center, West Islip, NY



500 Montauk Highway, Suite H, West Islip, NY

631•422•9100

www.harrisplasticsurgery.com



Pandemic won't stop the power of pink

The power of sneakers will prevail again this year as NYSUT members venture out to take part in novel fundraising events for the American Cancer Society's annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer campaign.



Sheila Goldberg, a longtime NYSUT activist who urged the union to organize in the fight against breast cancer, died in January. The union's 2020 effort is dedicated to her memory.

ACS staff and communities are exploring everything from road rallies to scavenger hunts, from tribute gardens to socially distant walks, reported Amy Delia, director of marketing for the Northeast region. "Being mindful of the health and well-being of all, Making Strides will look different in each market, but what will remain the same is our shared passion for ending this disease," she said.

The key to keeping the pink-powered program thriving is to sign up at nysut.org/MakingStrides to stay informed about what is being planned in each region.

"Although COVID-19 prevents us from walking in solidarity with cancer survivors, supporters and family members this year, NYSUT remains vigilant in our efforts to raise monies and awareness to find a cure for cancer," said Philippe Abraham, NYSUT

secretary-treasurer.

NYSUT members have raised more than \$15 million since NYSUT became a flagship sponsor of the statewide event.

"Every family, my own included, has been impacted by cancer. During the past year, the passing of Sheila Goldberg, a social justice warrior, NYSUT retiree and activist, has affected our own NYSUT family," Abraham said.

"For decades, Sheila led the fight on Long Island and across the state to urge NYSUT members and labor to organize in the fight against cancer. So, this year we dedicate our NYSUT efforts in Sheila's memory, and to not forget those other heroes we have lost to cancer, including Sandy Feldman, former United Federation of Teachers and American Federation of Teachers president, and Sonia Basko, a former teacher and NYSUT staff member."

Last year, 282,690 NYSUT members raised \$728,000 in 19 different walks all over the state.

Money raised is spent on research, including grants to SUNY and CUNY faculty; lodging for patients and family; rides to treatment; and education.

Several years ago, the American Cancer Society included a Real Men Wear Pink campaign to help give men a leadership role in the fight against breast cancer, which affects men as well.

NYSUT's 2020 ambassador for the campaign is Greece Teachers Association President Brian Ebertz. He earned the title of #1 NYSUT Real Man for his 2019 fundraising efforts. Men participating in the campaign pledge to wear pink throughout the month of October, use social media to raise awareness of the cause and raise at least \$2,500 to help ACS fight



SUPPORT MAKING STRIDES VIRTUALLY

The American Cancer Society offers several ideas for supporting cancer research — and raising much-needed funds — in safe and fun ways.

- Nominate a candidate for Real Men Wear Pink or ResearchHERS
- Add a donate sticker to your Instagram stories
- Run a mile for each online donation you receive
- Host an outdoor or virtual yoga class in exchange for donations
- Offer to mow lawns in exchange for a donation
- Collect jewelry your friends/family don't wear anymore and host an online sale

You can also support NYSUT's T-shirt fundraiser at strides2020.weebly.com



For more ideas to host a virtual Making Strides fundraiser, visit <https://bit.ly/acsvirtual>

breast cancer.

Visit <https://bit.ly/brianpink> to support Ebertz's efforts.

"With all the changes our communities have faced during this pandemic, the impact on our educational system has been one of the greatest. We thank NYSUT members for all their efforts," said Jeff Winters, ACS

director of community development.

Be sure to check out nysut.org/MakingStrides for updates this fall. Also, to order a union-made, American-made T-shirt, check out NYSUT's online store at strides2020.weebly.com. All proceeds go to the American Cancer Society.



PROVIDED

Greece Teachers Association President Brian Ebertz (at right, with Greece TA colleague Lisa Quinn) is this year's NYSUT ambassador for the American Cancer Society's "Real Men Wear Pink" movement.

Retirement far from typical in the age of COVID-19

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

Kim Drummond always thought she would retire with much fanfare. Instead, thanks to COVID-19, the Hempstead Classroom Teachers Association member ended 37 years with barely a whisper, like thousands of other NYSUT members statewide.

"It's not how I expected to leave," said Drummond, whose home and careers classroom was a popular gathering spot. Although her district organized a retirement parade with flowers and well wishes, and coworkers threw a surprise, socially distanced party at a local park, it just wasn't the same. "I missed the interaction with my coworkers and students."

It's a familiar story for 2020 retirees. Gone were the retirement parties, "last lunches" with long-time friends and colleagues and tearful hugs and well wishes from students. Few could have predicted their in-school duties would end in March.

Susan Primicias, Indian River Educators Association, was initially too busy to think about retirement. "Once we knew we weren't going back, I was up to my ears in teaching," she said explaining that she and fellow first-grade teachers divided up the remaining units, restructured them for remote learning and distributed the revised materials to parents.

Reality hit after a June retirement party in a parking lot. "I realized it was the first time we'd all been together since Christmas," and for her, it would probably be the last.

Payroll clerk Laura Haas, president

of the Frontier Central Employees Association, is one of 22 retirees in her local, a number boosted by the pandemic.

"The average age of my members is 57 and some have health problems," said Haas noting that since SRPs handle many of the safety and cleaning protocols, they potentially face a greater infection risk. It's difficult to "socially distance from the kids and many were afraid that schools aren't safe places to be."

Since her members prefer bulletin boards and fliers over emails and Zoom calls, quarantine has made keeping in touch challenging. "We didn't hold elections and haven't had a membership meeting," she said admitting that she worries how her fellow union members will fare after she retires.

Although Walter Robertson,

Dunkirk TA, had retirement plans before quarantine, he's concerned with how reopening will work. "I had classes with 24 students, and everything was cooperative learning. With students six feet apart, you can only fit 12 or 15 students and they're not hiring extra staff and teachers."

As the only male classroom teacher of color, he also worries how Dunkirk's majority-minority students will navigate the racial and political upheaval without him as a sounding board. He advises in-service colleagues to stay strong and follow union guidance. "If you feel unsafe, put your life and family (first)," he said. "As much as we love this career, it's not worth your life."

NYSUT would like to recognize, honor and celebrate your retirement. To request your "Welcome to Retirement Packet," email geralyn.oreilly@nysut.org

DID YOU KNOW?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISETTE

In March, before COVID-19 made social distancing the rule of the day, Mel Stern, RC 20 president and Half Hollow Hills Retiree Chapter co-president, second from right, is one of many retirees advocating as part of NYSUT's annual Committee of 100 lobby day at the State capitol.



NYSUT Vice President Emeritus Alan Lubin joins NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham, and scores of other activists, for the Caravan of Solidarity and Dignity for Farmworkers and Food Chain Workers in Albany. Sponsored by Rural & Migrant Ministry, the May event was held in support of farmworkers and food chain workers.

ED 51-53 At-Large Director Florence McCue, second from right, joins Yonkers Federation of Teachers President Samantha Rosado-Ciriello and other activists seeking support for the federal HEROES Act, a COVID-19 fiscal relief bill currently in limbo in the U.S. Senate. Yonkers city schools face nearly 170 job cuts.



REGIONAL CONFERENCES

RC 12, TBD
RSC Jennifer Shaad-Derby

RC 9, TBD
RSC Ruth Shippee

RC 4, 46, TBD
RSC Louise Ortman

RC 1-3 & 44, TBD
RSC Tracy Beatty

RC 11 & 45, TBD
RSC Mark Padgett

RC 10, TBD
RSC Ruth Shippee

RC 7 & 8, TBD
RSC Anne Marie Voutsinas



5 QUESTIONS FOR...

Jose Vilson

Math teacher, United Federation of Teachers

1. You've spent more than a decade in the classroom. How has that experience influenced your career?

As a 15-year veteran of New York City Public Schools, I've learned the importance of pedagogy when advocating for students, especially when it comes to race and social justice. That's why one of the goals of EduColor, an organization I co-

founded to highlight race and social justice issues in education, curates and creates resources that educators can use with their students.

We've amplified educators' voices by

helping them get big ideas out, including columns in *Education Week* and appearances on PBS *NewsHour*. We also work with organizations to help them improve policy.

2. How did EduColor get started?

I've always had a sense of activism and social awakening, but it really came out around the time of the Trayvon Martin case, when the outcome didn't go the way it should have. We started EduColor because there was no organization exploring racial and social justice issues in education at the national level.

Our 26-member team has experience across the field, including pedagogy, practice, curriculum, policy, labor and communications. The work isn't new, but we bring activism to a new generation of younger teachers.

With more than 21,000 followers on Twitter and more than half a million #EduColor views, we've mobilized the digital community toward concrete action on equity, justice and anti-racism and allowed hundreds of participants to ask questions, provide resources and answer questions.

3. EduColor released a petition, "NYC Schools for Transformative Change." What is the goal?

The petition calls on the governor, mayor and other school leaders to reimagine NYC public schools in 17 specific ways. My top three are giving students a voice, rethinking standardized testing and changing how students are disciplined and classrooms are managed.

Kids don't have the same filters adults do. They're quick

to say "this is wrong," "this is right" and "we should do better." My son's class had a great conversation right after George Floyd was murdered. They wondered why our justice system didn't handle it appropriately. One student even asked why, when there's a pandemic going on, we still have to protest to make things work.

We also need to rethink standardized testing. We've spent years testing students (often at the expense of arts and physical education), but we still haven't made gains in the achievement gap or closed the opportunity gap.

Student discipline and classroom management need less policing of kids, and more relationship building.

4. You're a sought-after speaker and a published author. What inspired your book?

My book, *This is Not a Test: A New Narrative on Race, Class and Education* is an ode to the teacher who stays in the classroom. I've been blogging since I started teaching and I've seen lots of books by teachers who left the classroom, or by celebrities or politicians. My book is personal stories and essays about race, gentrification, LGBTQ issues and the teaching profession through the eyes of a Black-Latino educator — things that went well, the lessons I learned and the teacher I want to be.

5. How important is the union to your work?

Back in 2014, when the UFT was in contract talks, Michael Mulgrew [UFT president] and Janella Hines [UFT vice president of academic high schools] hosted a book talk for me downtown. The next morning, Mulgrew read from the chapter in my book titled "Why Teach?" as he announced that we had a new contract.

Although I'm not a union rep, I couldn't do the work I do without the union.



PROVIDED

Quotable

f Instagram Twitter

Don Carlisto

More grateful than ever to have a nurse in each building in our rural district, but this can not be a privilege afforded to some. (@DCarlisto)

APWU National

There are no red states or blue states for the Postal Service — everyone across the United States is depending on the Postal Service right now. #SaveThePostOffice (@APWUnational)

Patrick Henry

Thanks @nysut for hosting today's ventilation seminar! I still have lots of questions to research, but it was helpful to get an overview from the experts. Really appreciate you putting this together! (@NewPatHenry)

UC Student Workers Union

In a historic win, UC has agreed to rehire the 41 graduate student-workers UCSC fired for demanding a #COLA. This incredible victory is thanks to months of organizing by workers and coalition partners across the state. Make no mistake: when workers fight, they win. #1U (@uaw2865)

Nikki B.

If you have time to police and dress code girls' bodies every damn day, you have time to enforce mask wearing. #NoMaskNoClass (@CatHerder_34)

REAL ESTATE SALES

FLORIDA — BUY, SELL, rent. Specializing in country club, active adult communities and beach areas from Ft. Lauderdale to Jupiter. Call Elly and Ed Lepselter. RE/MAX Advantage Plus, Boca Raton, FL. 561-302-9374.

VACATION RENTAL

SARASOTA — THREE-BEDROOM condo available January through March 2021. Contact adksiesta@gmail.com.

SAINT AUGUSTINE BEACH — Three-bedroom, two-bath condominium. NYSUT discount. rj@jobers.com 716-830-4635.

EDUCATION

ARE CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE problems ruining your teaching career? Make classroom misbehavior a thing of the past! A must book for every classroom educator. Don't wait. Act now! Free copy for UFT-NYSUT members. Write: Teacher Services 044, 1941 Edward Lane, Merrick, NY 11566. Or email: teacherservices044@gmail.com (include your name and address).

INSTRUCTION

Online Programs for High School Educators Earn up to 45 NYSED CTLE Hours!

Enhance student achievement and engagement through innovative writing techniques

www.WriteToLearnNY.com
WriteToLearnNY@gmail.com

516-218-6727

NYSUT UNITED

For information about advertising, call **800-448-4237**

[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

FREE NYSUT poster celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month



NYSUT celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month (celebrated Sept. 15–Oct. 15) with a new poster honoring Jennifer “J-Lo” Lopez and Alex “A-Rod” Rodriguez, a classic power couple with achievements spanning film, music, sports, fashion and business. They also have teamed up to help people in need. Days after Hurricane Maria struck Puerto Rico, Lopez’s ancestral

homeland, the couple solicited \$26 million in corporate donations; personally donated \$1.5 million; and raised an additional \$9 million through One Voice: Somos Live! A Concert for Disaster Relief, organized in partnership with singer Marc Anthony.

Lopez has sold more than 70 million records worldwide, her films have grossed more than \$3.1 billion, and she is the only female entertainer to simultaneously have a number one album and a number one film in the United States. She earned a Golden Globe nomination for her leading role in the 1997 biopic “Selena.”

A child of Dominican immigrants, Rodriguez became

Major League Baseball’s youngest player in his 1994 debut with the Seattle Mariners at 18. He later signed a record-breaking, 10-year, \$252 million contract with the Texas Rangers, and is the youngest player to hit 600 home runs. Rodriguez heads A-Rod Corp, an investment firm focused on real estate, sports and wellness, media, entertainment and other industries.

The poster is available for download in English-language and Spanish-language versions; limited quantities are free for NYSUT members and leaders via the statewide union’s online Publications Ordering Catalog at nysut.org/publications.

Catastrophe Major Medical Plan Open Enrollment

The Trustees of the NYSUT Member Benefits Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance Trust are pleased to offer the opportunity to enroll in the CMM Plan during September 2020, with an effective date of Jan. 1, 2021.

The CMM Plan offers supplemental coverage that you and your eligible family members may need. Once the out-of-pocket deductible has been satisfied, this plan provides benefits for eligible expenses that your basic plan may not fully cover, including prescription drugs. NYSUT members who are in-service and reside in New York State (along with their eligible family members) can enroll along with current CMM Plan participants who would like to add eligible family members.

Visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call Mercer Consumer toll-free at 888-386-9788 to learn more.

Explore all the benefits available to you

NYSUT Member Benefits provides an annual update each September to the readers of *NYSUT United*, including information about our role in the NYSUT organization, how our endorsement process works and our efforts in providing value to the NYSUT membership.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust was created as a separate insurance benefit trust in 1983 by NYSUT to leverage the united buying power of its membership and be able to offer quality benefit programs to members. Since that time, the Trust has grown to include the Member Benefits Corporation and the Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance Trust, allowing it to greatly expand the programs and services available to NYSUT members.

These entities are overseen by a board of appointed trustees and directors to ensure the best interests of NYSUT members are being met. The Member Benefits department falls under the leadership of NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, Chairperson of the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust, and is directed by Jeffrey Hartnett.

How can NYSUT Member Benefits assist me at this time?

NYSUT Member Benefits understands the many struggles and challenges that NYSUT members and their families have faced this year. As we all continue to navigate through these unprecedented times, we want to assure you that we remain ready to assist and support you as we have for almost 40 years.

Now, more than ever, we are committed to helping NYSUT members make prudent decisions when it comes to their financial and essential needs. We understand that every

dollar counts and want to do all we can to help in that regard.

What types of programs and services does Member Benefits offer?

Your NYSUT membership gives you the opportunity to participate in dozens of endorsed programs and services offered by NYSUT Member Benefits, including student loan and financial counseling; legal services; insurance programs; and shopping, travel and personal programs.

Member Benefits endorses crucial insurance programs to protect your family members along with unbiased and sound financial services that offer the convenience of paying through payroll or pension deduction. Members who utilize these payment options to purchase our endorsed programs can save up to 15 percent on annual premiums along with the waiving of service fees in many instances.

We also offer a variety of educational opportunities to the NYSUT membership, including financial counseling, legal education and home buying workshops/webinars.

How can I save money utilizing your endorsed programs?

Our newest endorsed program — Member Benefits Discounts & Deals provided by Access Development — offers NYSUT members the opportunity to save up to 50 percent at more than 700,000 locations on restaurants, groceries and food delivery, hotels and flights, oil changes and vehicle maintenance, and more.

These deals can be utilized either online or from the palm of your hand through Access Development's MB Deals mobile app. This program also provides the ability to recommend that your favorite local business,

restaurant, coffee shop, etc. join the network. To get started, register your account with your NYSUT ID number by visiting mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com.

Meanwhile, NYSUT members can enjoy an average of 30 percent off school and printing

needs, household essentials and cleaning supplies with our endorsed Office Depot/OfficeMax program — with up to 75 percent off preferred products, free delivery on qualifying orders over \$50 and discounted printing prices.

We also offer many other endorsed programs that can provide savings to NYSUT members and their families.

Are there other benefits to participating in your programs?

Unlike when purchasing products available to the general public, participation in Member Benefits-endorsed programs gives you a strong advocate ready to quickly assist you with any issues or concerns that may arise. Our dedicated and knowledgeable staff take great pride in assisting NYSUT members and their families in any way possible.

Is Member Benefits funded through my NYSUT dues?

NYSUT dues dollars are never used to support us. Member Benefits receives funds to cover expenses from negotiated endorsement arrangements with many of the providers of our endorsed programs (including, in some cases, a percentage of premium paid).

MEMBER BENEFITS



Working to Benefit You

These funds are used solely to defray the costs of operating Member Benefits, including staff compensation; rent; office expenses; and the cost of retaining consultants, auditors and attorneys to advise the trustees, directors and their staff. Member Benefits revenue is also used where appropriate to enhance our programs and to help develop new offerings for the NYSUT membership.

No monies are paid to NYSUT except reimbursement for the use of facilities, and for services and personnel provided by NYSUT to Member Benefits (the reasonableness of which amounts are certified annually to the trustees and directors by independent auditors).

We encourage you to visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 to learn more about our endorsed programs and services.

Although some NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs may provide legal or financial advice, Member Benefits itself does not offer investment, legal or tax advice. Participants should consult their own investment, financial, tax and legal advisors to help them with an evaluation of these benefit programs.

Retirement Online adds new features

Retirement Online gives you an easy and secure way to review your New York State Employees' Retirement System benefit information and conduct transactions in real time. In many cases, you can use Retirement Online instead of sending forms through the mail or calling ERS. When Retirement Online was first launched, the system allowed you to apply for a loan and manage your beneficiary and contact information. Earlier this year, new features were added that will help you do even more online, including:

- Estimate your pension using our new online calculator.
- Apply for previous service credit, including military service.
- Apply for a service retirement.
- Manage your loan and service credit purchase payments.
- Update your last name.
- Apply to reinstate an earlier membership date or tier.
- Transfer your membership to another public retirement system within New York State.
- Change your correspondence preference.
- Choose to receive your Member Annual Statement electronically through Retirement Online.

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

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

- Withdraw your membership.
- Upload most of the documentation needed to complete a transaction.

In the three years since we launched Retirement Online, more than a quarter-million members, retirees and beneficiaries have discovered that it's a safe, convenient way to do business with ERS. In the current crisis, that convenience has turned out to be more important than ever. If you haven't tried it yet, signing up is easy. Visit our Retirement Online page at web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php and click "Sign In." You can be sure that your account information is safe. We use several security safeguards to protect your online information.

If you need help, visit the "Tools & Tips" section of the Retirement Online page. You'll find step-by-step guides for registering, signing in for the first time, adding trusted devices, resetting your password, and more. If you have trouble signing up for Retirement Online, call our Contact Center at 866-805-0990 (518-474-7736 in the Albany, NY, area).

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.

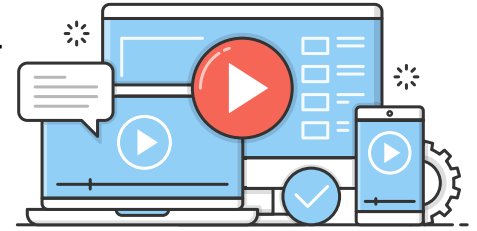
Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411
troers@nysutmail.org

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

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

Retirement prep info available online

Q: I was looking forward to attending a PREP seminar to plan for my retirement, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made that impossible. What other options do I have?



A: Like many organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way the New York State Teachers' Retirement System conducts business. To provide members with the information they need to plan for retirement, NYSTRS produced video versions of their PREP seminar modules and posted them on the PREP page of their website. The page also features the PREP workbook, broken into chapters to correspond with the video modules.

Other online resources include a "Ready to Retire" page with links to retirement-planning publications, videos and forms. If you have a MyNYSTRS account, you can also run projected benefit estimates and securely contact system representatives with specific questions. For general questions, email the system's Information & Communication

Center at communit@nystrs.org or call 800-348-7298, ext. 6250.

Q: Will I get the same information in a telephone consultation that I would have received at an in-person or video consultation?

A: Yes, you will. However, in a telephone consultation, the estimates you would have received during an in-person or video consultation will instead be uploaded to your MyNYSTRS account. A NYSTRS representative will review that information with you over the phone and answer all questions. Documents can also be mailed to you after the call.

If you don't have a MyNYSTRS account, we encourage you to register for one prior to your telephone consultation. You'll need to enter the last four digits of your Social Security Number and your NYSTRS EmplID, so have those handy. Find your EmplID in either your Benefit Profile, sent to you each fall, or in any personal correspondence you've received from NYSTRS. Call NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6100, to book a consultation, or book online via your MyNYSTRS account.

NYSUT TRS consultants

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

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

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

Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040
bchetney@nysutmail.org

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



Did you know?

As of NYSUT United's publication date, NYSTRS canceled all in-person PREP seminars, large meetings and events. Benefit consultations are available only via telephone.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Every Kid Outdoors

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor helps your class experience the National Parks in your backyard!

Take your class on a first rate educational field trip within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Choose from one of four National Parks: Fort Stanwix (Rome), Saratoga (Stillwater), Theodore Roosevelt (Buffalo), or Women's Rights (Seneca Falls).



THIS PROJECT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL PARK FOUNDATION THROUGH GENEROUS SUPPORT OF PARTNERS INCLUDING UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD AND DONORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY; AND BY NYSUT.

This opportunity covers transportation and an educational program. For additional information, locations of providers throughout Upstate New York, and free online curriculum materials:

www.eriecanalway.org

Or contact Andy Kitzmann:
Andy_Kitzmann@partner.nps.gov
518-237-7000, ext. 201

Oswego Classroom Teachers Association



PROVIDED

From left, OCTA President Carrie Patane; Joy Bifera, EVS Manager for Oswego Health; and OCTA Secretary Michelle McManus. The union donated gift cards for a local business to 62 Oswego Health employees.

Led by President Carrie Patane, members of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association supported local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and showed support for workers on the front lines.

Each week for more than three months the union adopted a local business to spotlight for the week. Next, OCTA members donated money via Paypal. Funds were collected Monday through Thursday of each week, with Patane sharing live totals with the membership daily. When all the numbers were tallied, teachers in the Oswego City School District raised \$13,687.50. All of the money went back to local businesses and essential workers throughout the community. The OCTA was also able to buy books for their local bookmobile and purchase ice cream gift cards for all 250 graduating seniors. In the final week of the fundraiser, OCTA held a virtual T-shirt fundraiser, donating all proceeds to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund to purchase personal protective equipment for front-line workers.

"Besides creating an entirely NEW online school, this is how we supported our community during our 'shut down,'" Patane said. "Together, we are unstoppable."

Ithaca educators united

The Ithaca Substitutes Association, led by Jane Atkin, and the Education Support Professionals/Ithaca, led by Carla Strong, joined forces to donate cotton material, cut, assemble and sew non-surgical masks for Tompkins County in April and May. The effort by the teachers and SRPs netted more than 100 colorful masks in different sizes for delivery to local businesses, agencies and individuals.

Pine Plains Federation of Educators

When the COVID-19 pandemic threatened to cancel the Pine Plains Federation of Educators' annual family literacy night, members rallied with just a week's notice and transformed the one-night event into a full virtual Family Literacy Week. Activities were posted daily on individual elementary school's Facebook pages for students and their families.

Activities included read alouds, virtual field trips, secret messages, a virtual obstacle course, photos, dances and more. The PPFE is led by Josefina Wilber.



PROVIDED

Wappingers Congress of Teachers

Members of the Wappingers Congress of Teachers came together while staying apart these past few months to support families, community members and those on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, the local purchased 100 meals for health care workers at Mid-Hudson Regional Hospital. Throughout the month of April, the WCT donated money to support the efforts of several food banks and suppliers in the area.

In May, the local hosted its annual food drive — with a twist. "I didn't want to give up the food drive just because our school buildings could not be open for members to bring in their non-perishable food items," said Kate DeGroat, chairperson of the annual event. Instead, a GoFundMe page was set up so WCT members could make a monetary contribution. Through the page, the WCT collected more than \$10,000 in donations for the Zion Food Pantry in Wappingers Falls.

The WCT is led by President Pasquale Delli Carpini.

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Kingston educators inspire community-wide conversations on race

Sometimes a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single book.

In Kingston, that book is *So You Want To Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo. City residents are reading it as a group called Kingston Reads. A hundred readers attended the first virtual meeting July 2. Sessions continued throughout the month.

Social worker Amy Kapes and librarian Charlotte Adamis — members of the Kingston Federation of Teachers — joined assistant principal Kathy Sellitti to launch the group. In recent years they have worked with colleagues to study racism and have read several books, along with attending workshops and professional development programs.

Kapes decided to bring in the community on this shared journey.

"This is the critical piece of doing the work. You can't do it alone," said Adamis.

"We emphasize that we want it to be a dialogue," Kapes said.

The district's students are about 50 percent white, and 50 percent Black and brown. The faculty is not diverse, and the district has been working to change that.

Reading books allows people to privately wrestle with issues and reflect, and then to engage with others, Kapes said. *So You Want to Talk About Race* discusses the history and context of racism, and the guilt, fear and defensiveness that white people can harbor, she said.

The district offers studies of racial issues for faculty and staff. And a NYSUT program for educators on racial equity, which Kingston has participated in for three years as part of an NEA grant, has been "another layer peeled back," Adamis said.

For more about Kingston Reads, visit nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

On the job and in the community, NYSUT members make a difference.

Advance your career

With NYSUT ELT:

- collaborate with fellow educators across New York state — online or remote!
<https://elt.nysut.org/register/courses>
- learn research-based, classroom-tested methods in our seminars and/or graduate courses; and
- meet certification requirements: Your choice. Your professional learning.

NYSUT members receive a 40% discount off tuition for graduate courses. ELT is now a CTLE provider and many courses are applicable for NYSED Certification.



Register:

<http://elt.nysut.org> • 800.528.6208

NYSUT represents teachers, school-related professionals, higher education faculty, professionals in education, human services and health care, and retirees.



Protecting Your Family — Saving You Money — Advocating for You

- ✔ Protect your family members and pets with quality insurance programs.
- ✔ Get unbiased and sound assistance with your legal, financial and student loan concerns.
- ✔ Save up to 50% on restaurants, groceries and food delivery, oil changes and vehicle maintenance.
- ✔ Enjoy an average of 30% off school and printing needs, household essentials and cleaning supplies.



We Have Your Back

Unlike products available to the general public, participation in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs gives you a strong advocate ready to quickly assist you with any issues or concerns that may arise.

NYSUT Member Benefits endorses dozens of programs and services across a variety of areas — including student loan and financial counseling; legal services; insurance programs; and shopping, travel and personal offerings.

Scan the QR code to the right to get started today!

memberbenefits.nysut.org • 800-626-8101

