

SRP NewsLink

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S SCHOOL-RELATED PROFESSIONALS LOCAL LEADERS

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SRPs define excellence at 2010 RA

At the NYSUT 2010 Representative Assembly SRPs were defining excellence: leading workshops, advocating for members' needs and seeking information for the members back home.



NYSUT Vice President
Kathleen M. Donahue

"Every year SRPs are playing a stronger role in our union," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue, as she spoke about the union's SRP-related efforts in her speech. "Your voice was heard this year; let's make it louder in 2011." More than 200 SRPs served as RA delegates.

NYSUT staffers Margaret

MacCartney and John Strom facilitated a workshop called "The Role of SRPs in Education Reform," giving a clear-eyed review of the strengths and weaknesses of the Obama administration's proposals on school "transformation." SRPs in attendance had many questions and concerns about the fairness of this law and what it means for all educators and the students we teach.

Delegates applauded NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Lee Cutler's mention of the recent SRP contract victory in Vestal, where a small, determined local stayed united, built relationships with parents and neighbors, and won a contract that begins the work of bringing them closer to a living wage. Delegates from the Guilderland Teaching Assistants bargaining unit, shared the news of their success with negotiating a good agreement late last year with delegates.

Annie McClintock, presi-



NYSUT staffers
Margaret MacCartney
and John Strom lead
the SRPs and
Education Reform
workshop



dent of the Harborfields Teaching Assistants local union, received one of NYSUT's first annual James Scott scholarships, giving her \$5,000 to use on courses to help her become a more informed local leader in order to strengthen her local. Maddy Manzella from Somers School-Related Personnel was honored as SRP of the Year. She has spent years as a union leader, advocate for her students, master school gardener and long-term cancer survivor, "a real inspira-

tion for all of us," as Donahue noted. Maria Portalatin, a founding leader of the UFT's para-professionals in New York City, was honored for a lifetime dedicated to improving the lives of her union brothers

and sisters. Veteran BOCES and statewide leader Sandie Carner-Shafran spoke before the entire convention, supporting a new emphasis on issues that affect women members.

You can read more about the NYSUT Representative Assembly and see video segments of the speeches of the award winners as well as honored guests who addressed the assembly and see many photographs of the event at www.nysut.org.

Tell us about your job!

Our readers like to know about what we do and how we feel about the children we serve and the local unions we support. Take a moment to reflect about your job. Send your submission (400 words, maximum) to Margaret MacCartney, SRP Coordinator at mmaccart@nysutmail.org. Essays may be edited for length and clarity.



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care
For more, see www.nysut.org.

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IMPORTANT DATES

Check the NYSUT Web site for details of these events.

NEA Convention

July 1-6 — New Orleans

AFT Convention

July 7-11 — Seattle

SAVE THE DATE

SRP Leadership Conference Oct. 1-3

Local leaders and SRP activists will soon receive a postcard announcing the 32nd Annual SRP Leadership Conference to be held Oct. 1-3 at The Desmond Hotel in Albany. Conference and registration materials will be available on www.nysut.org. Options include online registration or downloading forms for return by mail. The registration deadline is August 27. For information, contact Marianne Perry in Program Services at 800-342-9810, ext. 6297.

SRPNewsLink

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SRPs win Consistency Awards



Award winners Maddy Manzella (left) and Maria Portalatin (center) with AFT President Randy Weingarten.



Maddy Manzella wins SRP of the Year

Since joining the union in 1991, Maddy Manzella, a third-grade teacher aide at Somers Intermediate School in Westchester County, has been involved on the executive board of the Somers School Related Personnel at many levels, including as vice president and president. While in office, she challenged the membership to strive for excellence and integrity and to take a stand to be the best it can be in any circumstance. She accomplished this promoting trust and creating an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Under her leadership, the union made its first contribution to VOTE-COPE, which now continues annually. In 2004, Manzella helped more than 50 teaching assistants meet the new certification rules, working with NYSUT's

Education & Learning Trust to provide the necessary coursework in the district.

Manzella advocates for anyone who needs help, in or outside of school.

The school is proud of its "Everlasting Garden," which is a result of Manzella's desire to enhance student's hands-on learning about the environment and organic gardening, and combine it with a school initiative on sustainability. She recently garnered a \$10,000 grant from the Somers Education Foundation to expand the gardening program to include a greenhouse for year-round farming.

There's not a person in the district who doesn't know Maddy Manzella. She has touched so many lives.

Maria Portalatin awarded Sandy Feldman NFOA

Maria Portalatin's motto is "Yes, I can. Yes, I will." The spirit behind that conviction brought her this year's "Not for Ourselves Alone:" the Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award. That spirit has also taken her from beauty school to Georgetown University's School of International Labor Relations, from unemployed single parenthood to the vice-presidency of a national labor union, from activism in a local PTA to the leadership of 21,000 New York City public school paraprofessionals.

Her commitment to women, to labor and to the Hispanic community have helped Portalatin win many battles — both personal and professional — and she has inspired hundreds of minority women to follow in her footsteps. Awards from numerous organizations have honored her achievements.

Portalatin believes in activism and involvement. From early in the career, when she strove to involve poor families in the education of their children; to her organization of voter registration campaigns in New York City, she has advocated community involvement as the path for minority advancement.

Similarly, she sees the trade union movement as an important vehicle for minority empowerment, and she has been involved in union organizing in Detroit, Arizona, Connecticut, New Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The National Labor Council for Latin American Advancement — which she has led both nationally and in New York City for more than a decade — is devoted to promoting participation of workers of Latin descent and their families in the American trade union movement and the political process.

Don't delay: Early retirement window is June 1- Aug. 31

Gov. Paterson signed the 55/25 bill for NYSUT members less than 24 hours after it landed on his desk.

Under the one-year plan, NYSUT members in both the New York State Teachers' Retirement System and the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System who are 55 or older and have at least 25 years of service will have an opportunity to retire without incurring a penalty.

"This is a win-win for educators looking to retire and for schools crafting budget plans," NYSUT Executive Vice President Andy Pallotta said. "This bill will help schools better address their local budget needs and avert staff layoffs." The window for NYSUT members in K-12 positions to retire is June 1 through Aug. 31. A timeframe for members in higher education positions at SUNY operated campuses and its community colleges will be set by the SUNY Board of Trustees but must end no later than Dec. 31.

Statewide, more than 6,000 educators and staff will qualify for the early-retirement option; more than 20,000 educators could face layoff under proposed budget cuts. Unlike previous early-retirement incentives, this option is available entirely at the employees' choice and does not require the district to opt-in.

AFT Union Workplace Advocacy Award winner

What did we do to earn our AFT reward?

By Steven Rechner, president of UCATS at NYU and a NYSUT at-large director

Last August, when more than 40 UCATS members faced the possibility of being laid off, we met with each affected member individually — often multiple times — to review their options. These options included a choice of: **1.** An enhanced severance package; **2.** Bumping into another position that involves a complicated formula based on seniority; **3.** Encouraging/helping the member to brush up their resume and bid on available jobs; or **4.** Standard layoff which includes recall rights for six months. Then we made numerous information requests from our employer, New York University, and had three bargaining sessions over the fall semester. Unable to resolve our issues — the most important being transferring work out of the bargaining unit — we filed ULPs (unfair labor practice charges). The NLRB ruled in our favor and issued a complaint on April 30. A hearing is set for June 26, but we continue to work with NYU to resolve our issues.



Loretta Johnson presents Rechner with Advocacy Award at PSRP Conference.

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Nancy Juliano

SRP Advisory Committee chair



Spring has been busy. In addition to dealing with issues and budget cuts in my own district, I have spoken with many of you about the economic crisis and how it affects our members and locals. Several of our colleagues, SRPs and teachers alike, face potential layoffs. This impacts us all. Please call your elected representatives to pass the jobs bill or go to NYSUT's legislative action center at www.nysut.org to send a letter to your elected representatives to get the jobs bill passed. We must be proactive to get the funding we need to save the jobs of our brothers and sisters.

Randi Weingarten, president of the AFT, spoke at the recent AFT PSRP Conference. She said, "SRPs are the heart and soul—the bedrock of public education." When discussing the economy she exclaimed, "YOU have always fought the fight! YOU have families who have lost jobs because of the economy! YOU GET IT! YOU know what it's like to make ends meet on an inadequate income."

Well, she got that right for sure. Visit the NYSUT website now and get involved. Stay strong and remember what happens to one of us, happens to all of us.

At NYSUT's RA, 1,850 delegates moved over 50 resolutions. Four of the five SRP resolutions passed through their committees and the fifth was referred to the Board of Directors. Thank you to everyone who supported that endeavor.

During the awards presentations, I was moved to tears as long-time SRP advocate, Maria Portalatin accepted the Sandy Feldman "Not For Ourselves Alone" award. Congratulations also go to Maddy Manzella, recipient of the SRP of the Year award. Maddy is a teacher aide and past president of Somers School Related Personnel bargaining unit. She is a wonderful representative for our constituency.

I want to send a special thanks to all of the SRPs who work all summer cleaning and maintaining our buildings and grounds, preparing them for a new school year, and to those who navigate through the maze of paperwork and prepare records for September.

Leaders, please watch for a postcard detailing the NYSUT SRP Leadership Conference at the Desmond in Albany October 1-3. I hope to see you there! On behalf of the SRP Advisory Committee, I wish each of you a happy, healthy summer.

Welcome to NYSUT!

NYSUT is pleased to announce that the 160-member Chenango Valley SRP unit has voted to affiliate with NYSUT. Welcome to our new SRP members.

National conferences for SRPs

This spring brought the two national conferences for our support staff members. Both were full of great workshops and speakers, and the networking of SRPs from around the nation was awesome. NYSUT is proud to have offered the 2-for-1 incentive to help more of our members to attend.

In March the NEA ESP Conference was held in Las Vegas. At 95,000 and counting, New York has the largest number of NEA ESPs (SRP) of the 50 states! NYSUT provided a leadership workshop that was attended by workers from around the country. NYSUT also brought forward Carol Herb, a clerical worker from Monroe Woodbury as our NYS candidate for NEA ESP of the year. She was joined by the other state candi-

dates for this high honor. The 2011 conference will be held March 11-13, 2011 in Washington, D.C.

April brought the AFT PSRP Conference in Orlando, Florida. Several of our SRP trainers from the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust conducted top quality workshops. The 150 New York SRPs who attended this conference came away with great materials and information to bring back to their locals. NYSUT won the Community Service Award for all the thousands of books that the SRP members and locals have donated through the fall SRP Leadership Conference. Gifts of books have been donated to several of our schools in need and to schools in disaster areas both in New York State and in



Sandie Carner-Shafran, Shelvy Young Abrams, Lorretta Johnson, Margaret MacCartney holding Community Service award) and Nancy Juliano.

Louisiana. UCATS at NYU also won the Union Workplace Advocacy Award. (See article on page 3). The AFT PSRP conference next year is March 24-27, 2011 in Las Vegas. Check www.aft.org and www.nea.org/esp for further details.

I am ...

By Karen Arthmann, youth assistant, Rush Henrietta EA, SRP Advisory Committee member

I am not a teacher. But I teach every day. I am not a policeman. But I protect and I serve to the best of my ability every day. I am a paraprofessional, a Youth Assistant to be specific, a user-friendly word for someone who works in security in a school district. I work in a large urban school and every day I may have contact with more than 1,500 students and almost 200 adults. Life is never dull, even when I sit at a table checking passes and questioning the motives of the high school students who venture down my hallway. I teach them. I teach them every day. I teach them respect — for adults, for their fellow students, for themselves. I teach them responsibility — that it matters that they get to school on time, get to

class on time, do their homework and study for their tests, and that they follow the school rules. It may not all be a part of my job description, but it is a big part of who I am and what I do.

I may not be the most imposing figure, but my students, for the most part, listen to what I have to say. I am friendly without being their friend, and I earn their respect and compliance by being fair and consistent and by letting them be heard. I lecture. I listen. I care. They know I am there for them every day.

I am not a “just a”. I am not “just a” paraprofessional. I am not “just a” Youth Assistant, or “just a” security guard, like some of the students like to toss out there when put in the awkward position of being held accountable for their actions and possibly disciplined by their administrators. I am their teacher, their mom, their protector, their nurturer, their taskmaster. I am a professional. I am a paraprofessional. I take my job seriously but not myself. I use humor to

diffuse potentially ugly situations and the students respond to it in most situations. I go to work every day to meet the many challenges of a large and diverse community, and I take care of my students and the staff of my building.

There are many of you out there just like me. I see you every day. I hear your stories and I see your dedication, and I am so proud to be one of you. None of us is a “just a”. We are all professionals. We all work hard without looking for kudos that are all too often not forthcoming. We work long hours for too little pay and increasingly diminishing benefits. We do it uncomplainingly and with energy and enthusiasm for our jobs and our students. Don't ever let anyone get away with calling you “just” an anything. We are SRPs. We are School-Related Professionals and we are proud of it. Don't ever forget who we are and what we do. I don't.

New discount travel programs now available

NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation endorses two discount travel programs.

TripMark.travel is an all-inclusive program that provides online and travel agent bookings for flights, hotels, vacation packages, group travel, cruises and more. (Travel agent service may incur a service fee.)

The other program is two-fold: Wyndham Hotel Group provides discounted rates at nearly 7,000 upscale

hotels and resorts as well as more cost-effective hotels and Endless Vacation Rentals by Wyndham Worldwide provides discounted rates at more than 200,000 resort, condo, villa, home and cottage rentals in 100 countries.

Visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on Discounts in the left-hand navigation bar to find details, including the discount code for Wyndham Hotel Group, Endless Vacations and

TripMark.travel group travel, phone numbers and Web site links that ensure the discounted rates are applied. Or call Member Benefits at 800-626-8101.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.