

SRP NewsLink

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

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SRP Leadership Conference a resounding success

The 33rd annual School-Related Professionals Leadership Conference was a fantastic event. More than 200 SRP leaders and activists gathered for a weekend of union leadership, professional development workshops, networking and sharing.

Karen Arthmann, chair of the SRP Advisory Committee, kicked off the conference with her message of leadership. "We are all here because we are leaders. Take all the information you can get here, and all the networking you can do, and all the good ideas and practices back with you to your districts and to your regions. Share them. Use what you learn to keep us strong. We ARE our union."

Calling the conference "a great weekend for us all," NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue said: "The energy and enthusiasm that the SRP's brought to this conference was amazing. Their desire to get involved in the union movement, their commitment to social justice issues and their drive to improve the institutions in which they work does not go unrecognized."

Participants had many workshops to choose from, covering the newest professional information SRPs need to stay current in their fields, including diversity training, strategies for helping children affected by domestic violence and dealing with cyberbullying. Workshops on union issues included contract negotiation, NYS retirement system information and how to address negative media.

"The diversity here is amazing and yet we have so many commonalities," said first time conference attendee Sheryl Brown. A member of the Association of Vestal School Paraprofessionals, Brown said she wanted to brush up on skills she will need as part of her unit's grievance committee.

Paul Roll, a member of the Alden Central School Employees Association and a veteran of 15 conferences, said he passes his learning experience along in the membership newsletter he edits.

"The administrators go for training. I think we need to go also."

Attendees honored Janis Bianco, the 2011 NYSUT School-Related Professional of the Year.

Members of the Johnson City EA, including President Carolyn Toner (second from right) and Pat Weiwurm of the SRP Advisory Committee (right).



NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue and NEA Vice President Lily Eskelsen.

Bianco is a senior stenographer at Rondout Valley Middle School and first vice president of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals. Her tireless work for the Rondout Valley students and staff, and her years of union activism earned her this prestigious honor.

The generosity and kindness of New York state's SRP locals shone brightly with donations of more than 1,000 new elementary-level books. Many eyes in the audience grew misty as these were donated to two locals in the Southern

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

IMPORTANT DATES

Save the Date

NEA ESP Conference

March 9–11
Memphis, TN
www.nea.org/esp

Committee of 100

March 19–20
Desmond, Albany

AFT PSRP Conference

April 19–22
Washington, DC
www.aft.org

NYSUT Local Presidents Conference

April 25–26
Buffalo, NY
www.nysut.org

NYSUT Representative Assembly

April 26–28
Buffalo, NY
www.nysut.org

SRP NewsLink

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Nov. 15 was SRP Recognition Day

Statewide celebrations included breakfasts, luncheons, flowers, donuts, coffee, stickers and honors to the hard-working School-Related Professionals who work in our schools supporting the education of our children. Whether on the front lines or behind the scenes, every SRP has a role in the smooth running of our school. Each year, NYSUT supports this day by sending out celebration planning packets to local presidents. These packets included suggested ways to celebrate, the history of the day and stickers that show pride and support of these workers. NYSUT wants to hear about your celebrations! Send quotes, photos and information to Margaret MacCartney, SRP coordinator, at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.



Welcome to NYSUT!

Welcome to the per diem school nurses and teaching assistants in Northport who were just accreted into the United Teachers of Northport Per Diem Substitute Teachers unit.

ERS member? Close to retirement? Time to request an estimate!

If you're eligible to retire within 18 months, consider requesting an estimate of your retirement benefit. The estimate will include your approximate final average salary, total years of credited service, any contributions made and other information that they have on file for you. Send a completed Request for Estimate form (RS6030 found on the website below) to receive an estimate. Sign up to receive emails on other topics of interest from the Comptroller's Office Link: www.osc.state.ny.us/email/index.php

Many NYSUT regional offices have a part-time ERS consultant to help you with your questions. If you would like to speak to a consultant, call your regional office or contact Margaret

MacCartney, SRP Coordinator, at NYSUT headquarters at 800-342-9810 ext. 6318 or email her at mmaccart@nysutmail.org, and she will put you in touch with the ERS consultant in your area.



SRP Leadership Conference

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Tier, where floods had devastated schools and homes. Accepting the books for his district, Jim Miller, president of the Owego-Apalachin EA, offered emotional words of appreciation. Pat Weinwurm, a member of the Johnson City EA and member of the SRP Advisory Committee, added heartfelt thanks to all who have had the people in the flood-hit areas in their thoughts and prayers, and said that the children in her district will treasure these gifts.

Locals also donated baskets of goodies, which were raffled off during the weekend and raised an amazing \$2,712! The money was donated to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund and is earmarked for helping NYSUT members in the Southern Tier to get back on their feet.

Educators also collected toiletries which will be delivered to the Schenectady Battered Women's Shelter and to Joseph House — a homeless shelter in Troy. Since most of the organizations' clients stay for short periods of time, the small-size toiletries are perfect for their needs.

The 2012 SRP Leadership Conference will be Oct. 26-28, at the Hilton in Saratoga. Save the date!

SRP Leadership Conference 2011 stats

Our generous SRPs

- Participants — 248
- Locals represented — 72
- First timers — 89
- New books donated — 1,130
- \$ raised for NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund — 2,712
- Large tubs of toiletries for shelters — 2

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Karen Arthmann
SRP Advisory Committee chair



Smiling faces ready to learn and to share, informative workshops, some brand new and some old favorites; it was a recipe for an amazing weekend in Saratoga Springs as we celebrated our 33rd annual School-Related Professionals Conference. I can't believe it has already been two months since it took place.

Our guest speaker Friday night was NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue who, as always, brings us a wealth of knowledge and experience. Our Sunday morning keynote address was given by Lily Eskelsen, vice president of the NEA. Her words were timely and inspirational, and very moving, as she spoke not only of how she, but also her family, has a strong history of union involvement. She is intelligent, humorous, grounded and one of us. If you ever have the chance to hear her speak, you should allow yourself that privilege.

Although I had no idea what anyone else was speaking about, my speech coincided with everyone else's, and dealt with that dirty word — politics — and how it permeates our entire lives, whether we realize it or not. It is the involvement of dedicated, hard-working union members such as you, which will continue to keep our union strong and move it forward.

Since then, we have had elections in our towns and cities, and I sincerely hope you voted. I also hope you educated yourself on the issues. The most important and immediate thing we can do for ourselves and for our union is to make sure we are registered and to vote. I won't tell you how to vote. What I will tell you is lawmakers have supported legislation necessary to further our educational goals, and keep our schools safe and healthy, fostering a positive environment in which to learn. The people we put in office determine not only the future of our state and nation, but our own personal futures as well. The vote in Ohio has proven to us that unions are as strong as their members make them. Senate Bill 5 was voted down because of the number of union members who worked tirelessly to bring the issue to the forefront and who not only showed up in person, but who also made thousands of phone calls. This preserved collective bargaining rights and showed the governor and Legislature that it is more important to be able to live and work with their employees, and not off of them and their hard work. In the months and years to come, we need to stay vigilant, to be aware of situations in which the rights and benefits we have earned may be threatened. We need to stay together and to stay strong. We need to stay united.

On Nov.15, we celebrated our own day. I look forward to hearing stories about how you celebrated! A bill, passed several years ago, makes the third Tuesday of each November New York State School-Related Professionals Recognition Day. I hope you encouraged your district and your Board of Education to recognize you, and made them aware of the significance of that day, and of your importance to your district. If they didn't recognize you, I hope you celebrated yourselves. You've earned it. You deserve it. We can no longer afford to be the unsung heroes. Be loud and be proud. You are an SRP.

Have a safe and happy holiday as we look forward to a new year, and please remember to buy USA. Thank you for all you do every single day.

Professional development by SRPs for SRPs

On Nov. 8 many districts held their Superintendent's Conference Day. Preparing for a successful attendee experience typically starts in the spring of the previous school year. Professional development teams or

committees first identify specific district initiatives or goals they plan to address for the year and then they map out when and how they will train teachers and staff over the school year and who will deliver the content.

That is where NYSUT Education & Learning Trust comes in. Many districts call NYSUT ELT because they know they will get an experienced presenter for a current educational topic or issue for a reasonable

price. Even more so, NYSUT ELT offers seminars specifically for SRPs that meet their individual needs.

In Watervliet City School District, a group of 39 teaching assistants and hall monitors attended one of ELT's newest seminars, "Addressing aggressive student behaviors in schools," with ELT instructor, Colleen Condoloro. For three hours, these participants were engaged

in their groups, collaborating constructively and asking pertinent questions regarding techniques and strategies in diminishing inappropriate behaviors. The feedback on the seminar to the instructors was that "the workshop was



Massapequa teaching assistants

very helpful, insightful and informative, which will assist me in my daily duties." An administrator shared that he overheard several participants saying the workshop was excellent.

Twenty-six TAs, crisis reps, nurses and a social worker from a Dutchess BOCES alternative school also enjoyed and appreciated the student behaviors in schools seminar with veteran instructor, Donna Christmas. They found the content beneficial and were pleased to be in a curriculum workshop that was useful for them and the job they do.

Moving downstate, 34 certified

teaching assistants attending "The IEP: Supporting student instruction" in Yorktown Heights expressed satisfaction that their presenter, Hilda Monfredo, was an SRP, instead of a teacher. This was because she understood them very well and had numerous examples to share that were pertinent to what they did in the classroom. Several participants stated that the information was excellent and that they received so much information in an engaging way.

Finally, 23 teaching assistants from the Massapequa school district attended the seminar "Bully, bullied or bystander." They felt the video that was shown was "powerful," "should be viewed by students," and "emotional." They commented that the workshop was very relevant and the information was something they could immediately implement. They enjoyed the fact that the workshop was not just lecturing but chock full of activities that really kept their interest and allowed time to talk to their colleagues and share ideas.

Participants leaving their schools on Nov. 8 were pleased as they walked away with a greater knowledge base thanks to the SRP instructors of NYSUT ELT.

Real protection for your family, NYSUT Member Benefits

Every major life change has a big impact on your financial well-being. Having the right type of insurance can help provide peace of mind for you today and prevent unnecessary stress for your loved ones in the future.

Term life insurance can give your family — the most important people in your life — the means to pay off debt, handle financial burdens and live a comfortable life in the event you are not there to support them.

You insure your home and vehicle; it makes sense to protect your income as well with disability insurance. Getting coverage for if you become disabled and are unable to work may be something you want to consider.

Insurance can mean the difference between knowing whether or not your family is financially secure. Looking to determine the right insurance for your situation? Make sure to discuss what is important to you with a company or agent that you can trust.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust stands behind several endorsed insurance plans that can help protect the assets of

the hardworking members of NYSUT and their families.

For more information about your options, please contact Marsh U.S. Consumer — the plan administrator — toll-free at 888-386-9788. Feel free to also contact Member Benefits with any questions at 800-626-8101 or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

For information about this program or about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



New York State Pay Equity Coalition

Many SRP conference participants took the time to stop by the NYS Pay Equity Coalition (NYSPEC) exhibit during conference registration. This exhibit featured information about the NYSPEC, which was founded to educate the public and legislators about comparable worth and work for the passage of pay equity legislation.

Jobs traditionally done by women and people of color have been systematically undervalued in the marketplace. The amount of that underpayment can be estimated and corrected even though the job titles involve different work. Though they are different jobs, clerical, custodial, grounds keepers, bus drivers and teaching assistant job titles (as well as other job titles) can be compared using common-denominator job requirements such as levels of education and responsibility and hazards encountered. Such job evaluation systems that use common denominators to evaluate different jobs have been in use for more than 70 years.

To correct these inequities, NYSPEC is working to pass the New York State Fair Pay Act which provides that all who work in New York state, in both the public and private sectors, receive equal pay for job titles of comparable value. The New York state Assembly has passed pay equity bills since 2000, but the New York state Senate has not passed a single bill.

Those visiting the exhibit took the informal "Marble Survey," which took a look at the perceptions of the salaries in their school districts. The findings of the 90-plus participants who took the Marble Survey were:

1. In your district, is the hourly rate paid for entry-level cleaners higher than the hourly rate paid for entry-level teacher's aides?

- 70 — said Yes, I think so
- 13 — said No, I don't think so
- 10 — said I don't know

2. In your district, is the hourly rate paid for entry-level cleaners higher than the hourly rate paid for entry-level teaching assistants?

- 42 — said Yes, I think so
- 34 — said No, I don't think so
- 17 — said I don't know

3. In your district, is the hourly rate paid for entry-level cleaners higher than the hourly rate paid for entry-level clericals?

- 35 — said Yes, I think so
- 38 — said No, I don't think so
- 23 — said I don't know

What can you do? Contact your state Senator and ask her/him to support the pay equity bills that are passed by the Assembly and sent to the Senate – particularly the NYS Fair Pay Act. If you would like more information, visit www.pay-equity.org or contact Margaret MacCartney, SRP coordinator, at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.

Don't Let Stress Ruin the Holiday Season

Feeling overwhelmed? Frustrated?

If you don't manage your stress, it will manage you.

Give yourself a break and call NYSUT Social Services for information and referrals on a wide range of personal issues and problems.



Free, confidential and responsive
800-342-9810 ext. 6206

Happy Holidays!

