

SRP NewsLink

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

WINTER 2011

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NYSUT SRP Leadership Conference a big hit!

NYSUT's School-Related Professionals from around the state began their annual conference in Albany with inspiration and information. More than 240 conference attendees heard emotional speeches and union presentations as they celebrated past leaders and planned a stronger voice for SRPs in the workplace and in NYSUT.

Long-time SRP leader Maria Portalatin was greeted by a standing ovation; her speech produced tears, energy and more applause as members heard her tell her life story of commitment.



"Welcome, sisters and brothers, you have an adventure to follow the rest of your lives," she said. "Every single challenge is an opportunity. In the labor movement, you have the best vehicle to achieve all of life's objectives." NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue, whose office oversees the union's SRP efforts, carried a similar message.

"I love to watch this conference grow year after year," Donahue said. "The work we share unites us despite any age, nationality or gender differences we may have. I urge you to be part of the conversation back home about excellence in your schools."



When Donahue called for the 70 first-time conference attendees to stand, she led the crowd in applause and told them: "Make a plan to make your local stronger and remind the community of your good work."

Martin Dunleavy, the NEA northeast ESP organizational specialist, brought greetings from the NEA officers and in spirited remarks reminded everyone of the importance of their vote on Election Day. His message was simple; a vote for the labor candidates was a vote for their jobs.

Nancy Juliano, chair of the union's SRP Advisory Committee, thanked the attendees for giving up their weekend and reminded them of the important role of SRPs in the union and the workplace.

The conference continued Saturday with two dozen workshops, a donation of 440 SRP-donated books to the



Newburgh city schools and a video message from NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi who was attending the One Nation March in Washington. Through the sale of raffle basket tickets, a donation

of \$2,160 was made to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund, and three huge tubs of toiletries were donated to family and women's shelters.

Saturday evening, Maddy Manzella, a teacher aide from Somers and NYSUT's SRP of the Year, brought greetings to the participants and talked about her role in helping her students achieve.

Her enthusiasm and dedication to her job and union were inspiring to all. The final speaker was the ever-animat-ed Lorretta Johnson, executive vice president of the AFT. She brought the national perspective of the issues SRPs face in their daily work life. She reminded everyone to keep fighting the good fight and to work to keep their union strong and that together we can do great things.

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A Union of Professionals

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For more, see www.nysut.org.

IMPORTANT DATES

NYSUT Health & Safety Conference

Hilton, Saratoga March 4-5
www.nysut.org

National School Breakfast Week

www.asfsa.org March 7-11

NEA ESP Conference

Washington DC March 10-13
www.nea.org/esp

Committee of 100

Desmond, Albany March 21-22
www.nysut.org

AFT PSRP Conference

Las Vegas March 24-27
www.aft.org

SRPNewsLink

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In thanks

By Karen Arthmann, President, RHEA Paraprofessional Chapter, NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee member

Every year I come away from our state conference energized and motivated. This year is no exception. I had the honor and privilege a few weeks ago of hearing two dynamic women, pioneers in the labor movement, speak of the humble beginnings from which they came, and the trials and tribulations that followed before they became the women and the leaders that they are today.

One held the hands of two small boys when she listened in the back of the crowd to Martin Luther King, vowing to make his dream her dream. The second came to this country from an island nation of poverty and need, and became a forerunner in the efforts to bring SRPs into the light shared by teachers and other professionals. The ladies of which I speak are, of course, Mrs. Lorretta Johnson and Mrs. Maria Portalatin.

We are where we are today because of brave women like these, and brave men like Albert Shanker, who believed in us, who knew our worth and wouldn't back down when others would denigrate us and fail to see the value of what we do in keeping our

schools running and taking care of our children. We need to follow in their footsteps, in the paths they



Karen Arthmann

have taken before us, never forgetting what they have sacrificed for us, and never forgetting that together we can accomplish so much more than we can ever accomplish alone.

They have fought for us and with us from the very beginning, against all kinds of adversity, and in the face of ignorance and arrogance. They have helped us become the force to be reckoned with that we are today. Seeing them and hearing them made me feel proud and humble at the same time. They have given us so much, and continue to, just as we need to continue to keep the "united" in NYSUT United, growing ever more strong and powerful, taking care of ourselves, each other and the children and work to which we have devoted our lives.

SRP Recognition Day:

November 16, 2010, was your day!

Nov. 16 — the third Tuesday of November — was SRP Recognition Day. NYSUT sent out over 700 celebration guides and over 226,000 "Proud to be a School-Related Professional" and "Proud to support the School-Related Professionals" stickers to all locals that include SRPs.

The NYSUT officers are proud of the work of our SRP members and believe that SRPs are the very backbone of our schools. Kathleen Donahue, NYSUT vice president, recently said, "This day honors and celebrates the outstanding contributions you make every day in so many capacities. Know that what you do — as partners in education with other school staff — is critical in our ongoing campaign to end the achievement gap. We are pleased to honor you and proud to represent you."

Be sure to contact SRP Coordinator Margaret MacCartney at mmaccart@nysutmail.org with details and photos of your celebration to highlight, along with those already posted on www.nysut.org.



Teacher aide wins award for excellence

Gail Cicchetti, a member of the Western Sullivan United Teachers and School Personnel, received an Award for Excellence for Support Staff Services from the Mid-Hudson School Study Council recently. Cicchetti — a teacher aide for the Sullivan West School district for 21 years — received the award because of her outstanding work ethic, efficiency, and enthusiasm. She works with at-risk students in the 9th grade Academy Program and provided support, consistency, and served as an important link between school and home. Cicchetti's efforts contributed to the success of all the students in that class. Everyone at Sullivan West is proud of Gail.



Welcome new members

NYSUT would like to welcome our newest SRP members! They are the Pleasantville Aides and the East Irondequoit Transportation Association.

SRP of the Year nominations are due January 4

The constituency award nomination forms can be found in the 2011 RA Convention Call packet that went out to local presidents the end of October. Please take the time to nominate an SRP member or leader in your local who has been actively involved in strengthening their union and displays an advocacy for members and union issues. Each local may submit one nomination and the form must be signed by the local president. NYSUT encourages every local to utilize this important way to recognize the hard work SRPs do each day for and with students, and for their union.

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Nancy Juliano

SRP Advisory Committee chair



If you were not one of the 245 people who attended the recent School-Related Professional Leadership Conference at the Desmond in Albany, you missed the best conference ever! If you **were** one of the 70 people who attended the SRP Leadership Conference for the first time, I am so glad you came. Conference attendees participated in an amazing variety of informative and enjoyable professional development sessions. Our keynote speaker on Sunday morning, Dr. Lorretta Johnson, AFT vice president, treated us with her lively and animated message about the important role SRPs play in the education system locally as well as nationally. It was my pleasure to present the president of the Board of Education of the Newburgh Enlarged City School District, our gift of 440 books—all donated by the generous conference participants. Our raffle tickets sales raised \$2,160 for NYSUT's Disaster Relief fund. Mark your calendars now for next year's leadership conference: Oct. 21-23 at the Saratoga Hilton hotel. Hope to see you there!

The holiday season and time for gift giving is upon us. I want to encourage everyone to look for and purchase merchandise made by union workers in the USA. And, if you can, please extend a helping hand to those less fortunate by making a contribution to your local food bank.

Please give to VOTE-COPE. The future of your job, your retirement and your health care hinges on decisions made in Albany and Washington. A donation to VOTE-COPE, your union's political action fund, helps ensure your voice will be heard on issues, large and small, that affect your life. What happens to ONE of us happens to ALL of us.

Thanks for everything you do for the children you serve every single day!

SRPs — take advantage of NEA's complimentary life insurance policy

NEA Complimentary Life is a no-cost, guaranteed benefit of your membership. All eligible members can take advantage of the valuable, automatic term life insurance coverage provided by NEA Complimentary Life Insurance.

Although you are automatically covered by being an eligible member, please take a moment to register a beneficiary of your choice.

NEA Complimentary Life is a guaranteed benefit, provided at no cost to Active, Staff, Reserve and Life[†] members:

- Up to \$1,000 group term life insurance
- Up to \$5,000 accidental death and dismemberment insurance (AD&D)
- \$50,000 AD&D insurance while on the job
- \$150,000 life insurance for unlawful homicide on the job

To receive more information and register your beneficiary, please go to www.neamb.com/complife.

[†] Life members must be actively employed in the field of education.

The new kid on the block at the AFT Programs and Policy Council

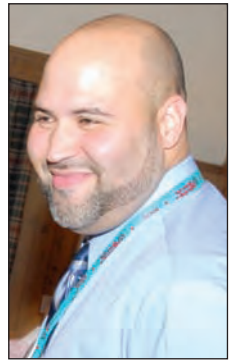
By: Hector Ruiz, Paraprofessional Rep United Federation of Teachers, member of the SRP Advisory Committee

It's not every day that you are appointed to serve on one of the highest policy-making bodies of an organization. However, that was the case when my local president appointed me to the AFT PSRP PPC in July. You're probably asking, so what does that stand for? I know I did. The American Federation of Teachers Paraprofessional and School-Related Professionals Program and Policy Council is just one part of the AFT PPC. The other councils include teachers, health care and higher education. Together we help the AFT executive council shape the policy of our great national union.

This past September, I attended my first AFT PPC meeting in Washington, D.C. All I knew was that some of my New York union sisters served on the council as well. They are Karen Arthmann from the Rush Henrietta EA,

Nancy Juliano from the Syracuse TA and our NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee chair, and Shelyv Young-Abrams of the UFT and NYSUT SRP at-large director. I must say that they were all very helpful in giving me a historical perspective of the PPC, introducing me to everyone, and always guiding me in the right direction. As grateful as I was, there was still an excited, nervous feeling that I couldn't shake. That is until I heard a familiar voice, the voice of my former local president and current national president, Randi Weingarten. Call it a reflex, but when Randi began the executive council meeting everyone, including me, went into work mode. It was great to observe how our national leadership interacted and the passion for our union was quickly evident. The following day began with an orientation breakfast with AFT

Secretary-Treasurer Toni Cortese, another familiar face around NYSUT, and was full of work with AFT Executive Vice President Lorretta Johnson.



I wish everyone had the opportunity to experience the important work that is done on behalf of our members. Whether it's on the NYSUT SRP Committee or the AFT PSRP PPC, I am proud to represent SRPs and promise to always have our members' needs as top priority when serving on these prestigious and important committees. Like our SRP Advisory Committee here at NYSUT where new committee members are put to work instantly, Lorretta has already appointed me to the AFT PSRP Conference Planning Committee. So off to work I go.

Guilderland teaching assistants make a difference

After surviving last year's economic uncertainty, Guilderland teaching assistants started the year with a positive reminder that they make a difference. The Rep Council comprises representatives from each of the seven buildings in the district. The local's secretary and president have a message for each of the more than 140 teaching assistants. A new red-and-white lanyard, "Guilderland Teaching Assistants Make a Difference," will be displayed every day. In addition, a quarterly e-newsletter will be launched for all TAs in the district. The unit will continue its commitment to community service. A successful strategy for union involvement included tapping individuals for specific projects, rather than committing to an entire committee. Members are more likely to participate for a shorter duration where they can express a passion for a particular event.



The Guilderland Teaching Assistants are sponsoring a toy drive for needy children in the area. With the help of Guilderland school district's generous community, the TAs hope to help provide a happy holiday for many children.

Georgianna Pennacchia, president of Saint Vincent De Paul society, received the toys from last year's drive, and explained how the gifts will be distributed again this year. "The first children in line to receive the toys are the foster children and children awaiting foster families," she said. There are

approximately 20 such children from St. Catherine's Home for children and range from newborn to 12 years old. In addition, there are approximately 200 children who are part of local families without the funds to provide holiday gifts. Pennacchia noted that church donations have declined and will not come close to the need which

has been identified.

The 145 members of the Guilderland Teaching Assistants are paraprofessionals who assist students via classroom support across most curriculum areas, often working with individuals and small groups. "Helping these children is a natural extension of what we do all day," said Cheryl Ainspan, president of the TA Unit. This year's project is chaired by Donna Barranca and Sharon Barcomb, Westmere Elementary teaching assistants.

NYSUT's ERS Consultant Program in Action

By: *Patty Lennon, NYSUT ERS Consultant, Nassau region*

Stella L. contacted me to discuss how to go about filing for a pension with the Employees Retirement System. It was a lengthy conversation and ended with making an appointment at NYSUT's Nassau Regional Office in June. Stella arrived and said that on her way to the office she stopped at her district and submitted her letter of retirement. (Her husband had already moved to Florida and she was to join him shortly after that).

When we reviewed all of the information and I read her member statement, Stella did not have 5 years of service credit with the Retirement System. I made a call to the ERS in Albany and the state ERS Information Representative, Stella and I had a conference. She was told that she was only

two months shy of her five-year service and if she left the district, there would not be a pension. I strongly recommended to Stella that she drive right back to her district and request her letter of retirement to be withdrawn, which she did. Stella returned to her position in the district in September, continued her 3 percent contributions, and will put in her papers to retirement at the end of December. She will have a little more than 5 years of service credit and a happy retirement, getting her monthly pension, in Florida with her husband.

Several NYSUT regional offices offer the services of a NYSUT ERS consultant. These consultants give general information about ERS benefits and plans, give in-person or phone consultations, and

provide workshops for groups of 10 or more. They do not do calculations or make recommendations regarding a member's choice of options. For further information, contact Margaret MacCartney at NYSUT headquarters at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.



Payroll, pension deduction can save you money

Payroll deduction of NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs eliminates the writing of checks and the possibility of late payments. This payment option is available to members of any local association that has made arrangements with its employer.

Pension deduction is available to retirees collecting a monthly pension benefit from NYS Teachers' Retirement System, NYC Teachers' Retirement System, NYS Employees' Retirement System or NYC Board of Education Retirement System. It's also an option for retirees who receive income from a monthly lifetime annuity from TIAA-CREF.

Annual premiums are easier to budget, since they are divided into smaller payments deducted from 20 paychecks (26 deductions for members of United University Professions), or from 12 monthly pension benefits.

Payroll and pension deduction also yields reduced premiums and additional coverage at no cost for these endorsed programs: Term Life Insurance; Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance; Long-Term Care Insurance; Disability Insurance; Automobile, Homeowners/Renters, Boat, Personal Excess Liability (Umbrella) and other personal property insurance; Legal Service Plan; Financial Counseling Program and Retiree Dental Plan.

The WrapPlan® II Flexible Premium Adjustable Life Insurance Plan can also be purchased using deductions.

For specifics, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on the Payroll & Pension Deduction tab on the left-hand side of the home page. 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.

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800-342-9810, ext. 6206 [or socsvcs@nysutmail.org](mailto:socsvcs@nysutmail.org)