

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

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WE SALUTE #HEALTHCAREHEROES



THIS ISSUE OF NYSUT UNITED CONTAINS IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING UPDATES TO THE 2020 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AND RETIREE COUNCIL ELECTIONS DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

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Union Disaster Relief Fund lifts health care workers

Thanks to generous member donations to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund, the statewide union purchased 145,000 surgical masks for members on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic. The first shipment of much-needed personal protective equipment went to members at the Long Island Community Hospital; the Saint Catherine of Siena Medical Center in Suffolk County; and to the Visiting Nurse Service of New York in Manhattan.

Later deliveries went to SUNY Downstate Health Science University; Stony Brook University Hospital; NYU Langone-Brooklyn; and Staten Island University Hospital. A shipment sent directly to NYSUT headquarters was dispersed to members at UUP Buffalo HSC; Albany County Nursing Home; Westchester Federation of Visiting Nurses; and SUNY Upstate Medical Center University in Syracuse.

"Our health care members are working in unimaginable conditions right now," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "We wanted to find a tangible way to let them know their union is there for them."

"Since New York City and Long Island are hot spots, we felt we could



Member donations to NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund helped to purchase and provide PPE for this special delivery to members of the Saint Catherine's Federation of Health Professionals.

do the most immediate good in those areas," said J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer, whose office heads the Disaster Relief Fund. "But this is just a start — we are currently working to provide even more assistance for our members on the front lines." To date the fund has raised nearly \$80,000.

Although NYSUT sought to purchase National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health certified N95 respirator masks — which provide the best protection and are the most needed — finding a source the union could trust was difficult, given the scarcity of supplies.

The union settled on surgical ear-loop masks with three layers of non-woven polypropylene fabric, which

"have a number of uses and should help lower the spread of the virus for anyone working in the hospital," explained Veronica Foley, NYSUT's assistant in health & safety and health care.

Your donation benefits front-line workers

NYSUT members across the state risk their lives every day serving on the front lines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Your donations to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund are urgently needed. All proceeds will go directly toward purchasing and providing PPE, food and other supplies for health care workers. Visit nysut.org/disasterrelief to donate today.



COMING UP

May 4-5

NYS Board of Regents meets

May 4-8

National Teacher Appreciation week. For ideas, visit nea.org and pta.org.

May 6-12

National Nurses Week. The American Nurses Association has resources available to celebrate nurses all year long. Visit anearofthenurse.org.

May 29

Primary voter registration deadline

June 2

Last scheduled session for New York State Legislature, Albany

June 8-9

NYS Board of Regents meets

June 23

Primary Election Day

ON THE COVER

NYSUT salutes #HealthCareHeroes across the state including these members from the Federation of Nurses/UFT at Staten Island University Hospital South.

Special elections move to June 23

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Andrew Cuomo postponed the state's April 28 presidential primary election — and five special elections — until June 23, the day of the state's own primary elections.

One of the specials involves NYSUT-endorsed John Mannion, president of the West Genesee District Teachers Association, who is running for

a vacant state Senate seat in Central New York. NYSUT also endorsed Michael Marcantonio in a special election for Assembly District 12 on Long Island. Other special elections include a congressional seat in Western New York and vacant Assembly seats in Queens and Rochester. Winners of the specials will need to run again in the November general election for a full two-year term.

May 29 is the last day to postmark your voter registration for June 23. June 16 is the last day to postmark a request for an absentee ballot; June 22 is the last day to pick one up in person. Visit elections.ny.gov.

Watch nysut.org for news of union endorsements as the voting date approaches.

In a crisis, the fight for fairness continues



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta joins members from the union's Committee of 100 and lawmakers at a rally to press for much-needed education funds.

By Ned Hoskin
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The effort was unprecedented, as hundreds of union activists and NYSUT's legislative team traveled the state and swarmed the Capitol for weeks to make the case that this is the year to fully Fund Our Future.

Even with a \$6 billion deficit, the union and a full complement of coalition partners — with the support of the vast majority of voters — argued the investment in public education was essential, and easily affordable with new revenues from proposed taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers. Momentum grew every week.

Then came COVID-19. The economy spiraled out of control and further budget discussions stalled.

The projected deficit in the state's

2020-21 budget grew from \$6 billion to more than \$10 billion. Lawmakers began planning reductions they justified under the term "pandemic adjustments." We fought back against proposed cuts that would hurt students and communities and were able to secure flat funding.

"The economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic makes public services like education, higher education and health care more important now than ever before," said President Andy Pallotta. "Flat funding for K-12 schools and higher education will be tough."

The fight for fair and long overdue funding will continue, however, after this crisis is behind us.

NYSUT leaders and activists toured the state earlier this year on the "Fund Our Future" bus to hear directly from the educators, students and parents who rely on public

schools about the critical funding needs they face.

"If anything, the needs that we saw then have only increased during this pandemic," Pallotta said.

"Our schools and the public hospitals on the front lines of this pandemic need every support they can get," Pallotta said. "There may be uncertainty regarding state revenues moving forward, but we will fight for every resource that public schools, colleges and hospitals need."

The enacted budget authorizes the director of the budget to adjust appropriations at three times during the year if revenues exceed or fall short of projections. Pallotta promised the union will be vigilant in monitoring this process to advocate for the needs of our students, public schools, colleges and universities.

The CARES Act

Notably, the union maintains that

any significant periodic adjustment that reduces state school aid would violate the maintenance of effort provision in the federal CARES Act and would cost the state \$1 billion.

The CARES Act provides nearly \$1 billion that goes directly to institutions of higher education, which does not show up in the state budget.

School Aid

The budget provides a \$95 million (0.35 percent) increase over the 2019-20 school aid amount, for a total of \$27.4 billion, but it freezes Foundation Aid at last year's levels.

Expense-Based Aids

The \$95 million increase goes to this category. NYSUT defeated the proposal to merge expense-based aids categories (BOCES, special services, high tax, charter school transitional, textbook, school library materials, computer software, computer hardware and technology,

supplemental public excess cost, and academic enhancement) into Foundation Aid.

BOCES

The union ensured BOCES aid was not merged into any other expense-based aid category. BOCES can still apply for P-TECH grants for advanced courses; the budget includes \$3.3 million for learning technology programs.

Community Schools

The budget continues to provide \$250 million to community school programs and continues the minimum amount of the district set-aside of \$100,000.

Pre-K Expansion

A total of \$340 million is allocated for Universal Pre-K expansion.

Teacher Centers

Due to the advocacy of NYSUT and its members, the enacted budget restores \$14.26 million in funding for teacher centers. It provides \$2 million for the Mentor Teacher/Intern Program and \$368,000 for National Board Certification.

Charter Schools

The budget does not provide any critical reforms to make charter management operators more transparent and accountable to taxpayers and the public, but NYSUT convinced lawmakers to reject language to circumvent the cap on new charter schools by not counting failed, so-called “zombie charters.”

Rochester Monitor

As a result of NYSUT’s advocacy, the budget provides \$175,000 to support a monitor for the Rochester City Schools who will be appointed solely by the commissioner of education. The district also received \$35 million to address the current-year fiscal shortfall.

Special schools

The budget maintains flat funding

of \$103.9 million for 4201 Schools; but it includes \$17.2 million to increase salaries for staff in 4201, 4410, Special Act and 853 Schools.

Special Education ‘Mandate Relief’

NYSUT helped block an effort to allow school districts, BOCES and private schools to petition SED for flexibility in special education requirements.

English Language Learners

Up to \$18.5 million is allocated in competitive grants for bilingual education for school districts, BOCES, colleges and universities.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The enacted budget provides flat funding of \$730 million for SUNY state-operated campuses and relatively flat funding of \$552 million for CUNY’s senior colleges, where fringe benefits increased \$50 million.

Capital Funding

The capital plan provides \$550 million for state-operated campuses and \$46 million for SUNY Community Colleges. It provides \$284 million for CUNY senior colleges and \$64.3 million for CUNY CCs.

Community College Base Aid

The budget maintains the state base aid per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student at \$2,947. However, the overall base aid amount will be reduced due to reductions in enrollment.

SUNY Hospitals

The state subsidies were not restored for the three SUNY hospitals (Downstate, Upstate and Stony Brook) but Disproportionate Share Hospital support was funded in the amount of \$460 million. DSH payments offset the costs associated with uncompensated care.

Tuition Assistance Program

The enacted budget provides \$1 billion in TAP funding. Lawmakers

rejected the executive proposal to expand the Excelsior Scholarship Program.

We Teach NY

A total of \$3 million is allocated for the We Teach NY Program to address the teacher shortage in identified subject areas.

LABOR

Sick Leave

The budget requires private employers to provide five-to-seven days of sick leave to all their employees.

Janus

NYSUT fought to ensure that public employers keep unions up to date on new hires and the status of members and to allow access to new employee orientations. The new budget language also indemnifies public employers, unions and the comptroller from liability for deducting, receiving or retaining dues or agency shop fees prior to the *Janus* decision.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Medicare Part B and IRMAA

NYSUT quashed a proposal that would have ceased standard Medicare Part B reimbursement and Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts (IRMAA) for NYSHIP retirees, as well as provisions whereby future retirees would pay more toward health insurance.

School Safety Plans

The budget includes \$24 million for extended day programs and school violence prevention programs consistent with school safety plans.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Banning the ‘Pink Tax’

The enacted budget prohibits gender-based pricing discrimination.

Gestational Surrogacy

The budget allows paid gestational surrogacy, which establishes a surrogate’s Bill of Rights.

Get out the vote ... soon!

At the end of March, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed an executive order that postpones school board elections and budget votes until at least June 1 due to social precautions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As of press time, no date had been set for when the elections will be held. By law, most district budget votes and board elections, outside of the state’s Big 5 districts, are held annually on the third Tuesday in May. This year they were slated for May 19.

All the other corresponding dates for preparation of annual budget proposals — draft publications, public hearings, submission to the state Comptroller — work backward from the school budget/board election date. So, those are also all postponed at least a couple of weeks from the normal schedule.

Once the voting date is established, NYSUT will have Get Out the VOTE materials available online for local unions to promote voter participation in their communities. Leaders will be able to download postcards and other materials from NYSUT’s school budget campaigns toolkit for local printing.

Initial filings with the state comptroller’s office showed only 12 school districts planned to seek the 60 percent supermajority required to override their tax cap levies. Much has changed since then. Half of them are facing a negative tax cap levy — the result of several local factors calculated with the statewide 1.81 percent tax cap for this year — so they would need an override just to maintain current taxing levels.

This is a very unusual year for local budget planning due to uncertainty around state school aid and a poor economic situation, noted NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “Complicating the situation is the new budget provision that gives the governor’s budget director the authority to cut school aid at three different points during the fiscal year. We don’t know how school districts will factor that uncertainty into their budget preparation,” Pallotta said.

Special virtual RA to be held May 14

The union's annual policy-making convention will be held May 14 as a limited, virtual event. The Board voted for the change as *NYSUT United* went to press.

"In order to prevent the further spread of the COVID-19 virus, we must continue to take measures to limit physical contact while engaging our members in new, meaningful ways," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "Although we found ourselves under these social distancing restrictions in a matter of days, we understand that they will not be lifted as quickly so we must prepare for a gradual, measured return."

That gradual return means the union convention, originally scheduled for May 1-2 will now be a virtual event.

The virtual RA, open to all reported delegates, will feature an agenda limited to just three items:

- A report of the Credentials Committee;
- A report by President Pallotta outlining the union's path forward and presenting the procedures for mail-ballot elections; and
- A candidate forum to allow those candidates who have previously requested such participation,



in accordance with the 2020 Election Procedures, to speak to delegates.

All other matters before the RA, including resolutions, adoption of the legislative program, and the endorsement of a candidate for the state Teachers' Retirement System board will be referred to the NYSUT Board for consideration at future meetings. RA elections for NYSUT officers, members of the Board, and state delegates and alternate state delegates to the American Federation of Teachers will be conducted according to procedures adopted by the NYSUT Board and

outlined below.

Social distancing guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control has prompted the cancellation or postponement of mass gatherings scheduled throughout the summer months. The Board also voted to cancel or postpone all in-person NYSUT meetings and conferences through Sept. 1, including Leadership Institute, LAP, the NYSUT Endorsement Conference, the New Local Presidents Conference and regional leadership conferences. The union is investigating hosting some events virtually.

For more information, visit nysut.org/ra.

[RULES OF PROCEDURE AND ADDENDUM TO THE CAMPAIGN & ELECTION PROCEDURES]

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT, DUE TO THE GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC THAT HAS RESULTED IN THE WIDESPREAD CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS, COLLEGE CAMPUSES, AND NON-ESSENTIAL WORKPLACES AND THE CANCELLATION OF MASS GATHERINGS ACROSS NEW YORK AS WELL AS MANDATORY STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS AS REQUIRED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK, AN ELECTION FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS, PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 1, 2020, AT 5 P.M., DURING THE 2020 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY AT THE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER EMPIRE STATE PLAZA, ALBANY, N.Y., WILL BE CONDUCTED VIA MAIL BALLOT FOLLOWING A LIMITED, SPECIAL VIRTUAL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2020, AT 5 P.M., IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROCEDURES SPECIFIED BELOW WHICH ARE IN ADDENDUM TO THE 2020 CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION PROCEDURES PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND PUBLISHED IN THE JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE OF *NYSUT UNITED*.

CREDENTIALS AND ELECTORS

All delegates previously reported to NYSUT by the March 11, 2020, Election Certification Report deadline, or otherwise credentialed through the previously established hearing process, will be deemed credentialed delegates to the special meeting of the Representative Assembly to be held May 14, 2020, and are thereby deemed eligible electors to the 2020 NYSUT RA Elections in accordance with the previously adopted 2020 Campaign and Election Procedures.

LIMITED SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

The NYSUT Board of Directors is authorizing a special meeting of the NYSUT Representative Assembly, to be held virtually on May 14, 2020, at 5 p.m., for the limited purpose of hearing from nominees virtually and an explanation of the voting process for the elections that would have occurred at the May 1-2 Representative Assembly, followed by a mail-ballot election described in the procedures below. All other matters that would otherwise be taken up by the 2020 Representative Assembly, including proposed resolutions and special orders of business, will be referred to the NYSUT Board of Directors for consideration at a later date to be determined by the Board.

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE

This notice of addendum to the 2020 Campaign & Election Procedures will be mailed to all reported delegates to the 2020 NYSUT Representative Assembly and will appear in the May/June 2020 issue of *NYSUT United* along with a reminder of the original publication of the 2020 Nomination & Election and Campaign & Election Procedures that appeared in the January/February 2020 issue of *NYSUT United*.

MAILING LABELS

Any candidate who previously requested access to mailing labels in accordance with the adopted 2020 Nomination & Election Campaign and Election Procedures shall be eligible to use a bona fide outside mailing service to deliver campaign material to eligible electors. Requests to utilize such services must be received by the Elections Committee by May 8, 2020. Candidates should contact the Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org if they wish to coordinate such services.

NOMINEE'S FORUM

Nominees for NYSUT Officers, NYSUT At-Large Directors and AFT State Federation Delegates and AFT Alternate State Delegates to the AFT Convention ("statewide offices") and nominees for Election District Director shall be given the opportunity to speak

to the RA during a special meeting of the NYSUT Representative Assembly, to be held virtually on Thursday, May 14, 2020, at 5 p.m., for the limited purpose of hearing from nominees virtually and an explanation of the voting process for the elections that would have occurred at the May 1-2, 2020, Representative Assembly.

In order to be eligible to participate in the Nominees' Forum, a candidate must have completed and returned the Statewide Offices Nominees' Forum Participant Request Form contained in the Candidate Nominating Petition to the Elections Committee by no later than 5 p.m. on Feb. 7, 2020. The time allocated shall be divided equally among the nominees for the same position. The order of speaking shall be determined by lot. Groups of nominees may pool their time. Candidates may withdraw their participation in the Nominees' Forum at any time.

CONDUCTING ELECTIONS

All elections shall be conducted via mail ballot in accordance with the following procedures, and those previously adopted by the NYSUT Board of Directors. If, following the period of open nominations, there was only one candidate who has filed a validated nominating petition to fill any vacant position, the Chair of the Election

Committee shall certify that voting is unnecessary and the Secretary-Treasurer shall be directed to cast a single vote on behalf of that candidate at a Board meeting immediately following the conclusion of the Special Virtual RA on May 14, 2020.

A. Voter Eligibility

In order to be eligible to vote in the mail ballot NYSUT Representative Assembly Elections, a delegate must have been reported to NYSUT by the March 11, 2020 Elections Certification Report deadline, or otherwise credentialed through the previously established hearing process prior to May 14, 2020. A voter eligibility list will be generated based on this list of credentialed

delegates as of May 14, 2020, at 5 p.m.

B. Mailing and Collecting Ballots

Ballots will be mailed to each eligible voter’s last known address, in accordance with LMRDA guidelines, on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, and must be returned to NYSUT postmarked by Monday, June 15, 2020, and received by NYSUT no later than Monday, June 22, 2020, at 5 p.m. at which time, or as soon afterward as possible, tabulation shall commence.

C. Voting Tabulation & Elections Reporting

Election tabulation will be administered by a certified third-party vendor to include tabulation and results

certification.

Write-in votes will not be counted nor be part of any tabulation.

The certified election results and vote total per candidate, following the tabulation of votes and the Elections Committee’s certification of the election, will be reported in the next available *NYSUT United* and posted at nysut.org.

D. Runoff Procedure

In the event that the Elections Committee determines that a run-off election needs to be held, the run-off election or run-off elections will be held as mail-ballot elections at a time to be determined and announced by the Elections Committee Chair.

E. Observers

Candidates may observe or designate an observer or observers to observe the tabulation process in a manner to be determined by the Elections Committee and which is in compliance with public health recommendations. Observers need not be elected delegates or alternates to the Representative Assembly.

Each candidate must register the name of each observer with the NYSUT Elections Committee before 5 p.m. on May 14, 2020, at which point the Elections Committee will determine the method of observation. Candidates may email their requests to the Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org.

Retiree council elections postponed

Due to the COVID-19 health care crisis and related government restrictions of large-group gatherings and business operations across New York, the following Retiree Council meetings and elections, which were previously scheduled for March–July 2020, have been postponed until further notice.

- RC 1** — Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 2** — May 14, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 3** — March 9, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 6** — May 7, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 7** — May 19, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 9** — June 25, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 10** — June 4, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED* (more information available at rc10.ny.aft.org)
- RC 11** — May 4, 2020, Elections

POSTPONED

- RC 14** — Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 15/16** — June 11, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 17** — May 5, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 18** — June 15, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 19** — June 9, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 21** — May 12, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 22** — Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 23** — June 3, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 45** — June 9, 2020, Elections *POSTPONED*
- RC 46** — Elections *POSTPONED*

Retiree council members will be contacted with new information as it becomes available and will be notified by U.S. mail when elections are rescheduled.

Please direct all questions to elections@nysut.org.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCY ELECTION DISTRICT 8

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 8. The vacancy was created by the resignation of David Derouchie, effective April 13, 2020.

In accordance with the NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §§4(a) and 4(b): “Directors representing Election Districts shall be elected on a roll call vote by a majority of ballots cast by the representatives from their respective constituencies ... [and in] ... the event of a vacancy in the position of Election District Director, the President shall call a special election to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.”

The delegates and alternates of ED 8 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a Special Mail-Ballot Election to be held as follows:

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2020 Representative Assembly representing the members of ED 8 will be eligible to vote in this Special Election.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 2020 Representative Assembly. In order to qualify as a candidate for this Special Election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least

two (2) in-service members from ED 8.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (**5 p.m.**) on **Friday, June 5, 2020**. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within ED 8 may be a candidate. Only in-service members in good standing from ED 8 may sign a candidate’s Nominating Petition. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at elections@nysut.org or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at 518-213-6000.

Ballots will be mailed to electors on **Tuesday, July 7, 2020**. Ballots must be returned to NYSUT, postmarked **Friday, July 31, 2020**, and received by NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (**4 p.m.**) on **Thursday, Aug. 6, 2020**, for tabulation at that time, or as soon afterward as possible. Candidates may request to use a bona fide outside mailing service to deliver campaign material to eligible electors. Requests to utilize such services must be received by the Elections Committee at the time of nomination.

The candidate elected will serve as successor Election District Director immediately upon being elected at the conclusion of tabulation and continue to serve as the Successor Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

A thank you to educators in a time of crisis

By Rachel Murat

When you entered college to become an educator, you had a basic idea of what that would entail: working in a building with fellow teachers and staff toward a common goal of helping our students succeed academically and in life.

But what college or professional development course could have ever prepared us for what we are dealing with right now? The circumstances surrounding COVID-19 have challenged us in ways we never could have imagined.

And yet, we are rising to the challenge and beyond.

I don't believe our educational system is taken for granted. But I am not sure most people were aware of

all that takes place behind the scenes to deliver the best education possible to our students. When a school district is successful, it means there are hundreds or thousands of educators working tirelessly to bring relevance to curriculum, help our struggling students find their voice, and provide accessibility to all that we do for all of our students.

I am proud of the way that educators have responded to this crisis. With little-to-no time to prepare, we have shifted our connections to students online — holding Facebook live storytellings, participating in drive-by parades to express how much we miss our kids and calling home to make sure our kids are okay.

The foundational connections you made with them starting in September are what will sustain us



2020 New York State Teacher of the Year Rachel Murat.

EL-WISE NOISETTE

all through this unprecedented time. Thank you for all that you have done to keep that connection open — to them and their families.

You should be proud.

Remember, the importance of your work extends beyond the walls

of your classroom. As we have seen during this crisis, it also serves as the heart of your communities.

2020 New York State Teacher of the Year Rachel Murat is a member of the Maine-Endwell Teachers Association. Visit nysut.org/muratcoronavirus to read her full remarks.



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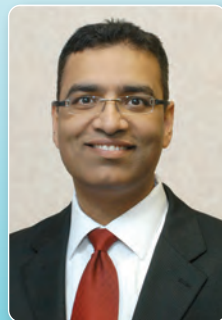
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Feeding the community: Members across the state step in to make sure no family goes hungry

By **Liza Frenette**
liza.frenette@nysut.org

Within four days of the shutdown of school buildings and businesses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, college professor Jill O'Malley opened a community food pantry in Western New York.

"We have several food pantries in the area, but their stipulation is to prove income and need," said O'Malley, a member of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community College. This pop-up pantry was needed because "someone who didn't have a financial need two weeks ago may have one now," she said, noting that many people suddenly became unemployed. The only qualification this pantry requires is residency.

"This is an emergency response," said O'Malley, who was quickly joined in her quest by volunteers from the Kenmore Teachers Association, Buffalo Teachers Federation and Kenmore-Tonawanda School Employees Association.

Many teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, aides, staff and faculty across the broad state are

volunteering to ensure students and community members in need are provided food.

"This crisis has only exacerbated and helped to shine a brighter spotlight on food insecurity. The richest economy in the world should not have its citizens going hungry, let alone its children," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, whose office oversees the union's social justice efforts.

"Our members have been at the forefront of the efforts to allay the negative impacts of poverty and lack of opportunity in their communities for a long time. It is not at all surprising, that yet again, educators have sprung into action and banded together to assist their fellow New Yorkers."

At schools, small teams of food service workers and volunteers have been preparing sandwiches and snacks, adding juice and fruit, for lunch. Cereal and milk are provided for breakfast. Some food is picked up at outside tables by families; other meals are delivered.

In Chatham, a fleet of compact yellow school buses leaves the bus garage every few days to deliver meals to students in need. Darci

Ordway, president of Chatham Central School District Transportation, said bus drivers deliver to any family that has requested assistance. An aide knocks and drops the food at the house.

Teachers also continue to pick up deliveries in central locations from regional food banks for weekend meals for students. Catherine Sample, Peru Teachers Association, sorts supplies from the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York's Backpack Program for Friday deliveries. More than 200 school districts continue to use the food bank even during the shutdown.

Educators also assist neighbors in need by donating, sorting and stocking at hard-hit local food pantries. On Long Island, NYSUT members are using a virtual food bank to boost supplies for Long Island Cares, Inc., a regional food network founded by the late singer-songwriter Harry Chapin. Long Island union leaders from NYSUT's Board of Directors issued a call to action after learning the pantry's donations had dropped and demand had surged. In the first four days, members raised more than 13,000 pounds of food.

O'Malley's bricks-and-mortar pantry was off and running with the help of social media as well. Several hundred people signed up to donate food, time or money immediately after she posted a Facebook page. The pantry is in the same youth center



Pantry founder Jill O'Malley is also board president of the Kenmore Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District.

building where she has been operating a Clothes Closet for seven years.

"The first thing I worried about when our schools closed due to COVID-19 was how my students and their families would get the meals and other services they need," said Laura Waggoner, Kenmore TA member who volunteers at the pantry. Lois O'Malley, Buffalo Teachers Federation, volunteers by shopping for high-need pantry items, such as cereal, and sorting food behind the scenes.

Kara Pezzino, school monitor, volunteers mornings. On pick-up days, she hands two boxes and a bag for each family through a sliding window to Kenmore-Tonawanda SEA colleague Bart Besancon, who pops a trunk and loads it into a family's car.

Another family is fed for another day.



Several days a week, members of the Chatham Central School District Transportation union deliver meals to students and families in need.

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CHOOSE UNION

Union interest on the rise

By Kara Smith

kara.smith@nysut.org

As the coronavirus crisis rages on, there is a bright spot — interest in union membership is on the rise. Over the past few weeks, NYSUT organizers have received scores of new inquiries from workers interested in forming a union.

Megan O'Brien, NYSUT's organizing manager, attributes the increase to workers who see that while their unionized colleagues have a voice and an advocate in the workplace, they're being kept out of the loop.

"For instance, decisions are being made about their health and safety, and by extension the health and safety of their families, without their input," she said.

The inquiries are statewide and cover a wide swath of job titles, ranging from educators, to direct care workers, to social service agency workers. Although the inquiries are in the early stage, O'Brien expects a good number will develop into campaigns.

Despite ongoing anti-union attacks, times of crisis are important reminders about why having a union voice is so important, O'Brien continued. She cited the shortage of personal protective equipment for health care workers and lack of clarity about education issues as two examples where NYSUT continues to advocate on behalf of members. "People on the front lines need someone to protect their workplace rights," she said. "If you need a voice, call us."

Are you interested in forming a union? To find out how, visit nysut.org/organize.

Salute #HealthCareHeroes

Florence Nightingale, recognized as the founder of modern nursing, was born 200 years ago, May 12, 1820. In her honor, the World Health Organization has declared 2020 the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

It's a well-deserved and timely recognition. Health care workers — and all the hospital and facility employees who help make their work possible — have been on the front lines since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, selflessly, courageously, risking their own health to care for our children, our loved ones, for us.

National Nurses Week is May 6–12. In honor of all health care professionals do, let's make sure to thank them. By expressing gratitude to our health care workers as they work heroically on the front lines in the fight

against the coronavirus, we aim to let them know we are thinking of them and are grateful for their selfless dedication.

Take a photo of yourself with your message, and post it to Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, along with the hashtag #HealthCareHeroes. Don't forget to tag @nysut and include the name of your local union.

Visit nysut.org/healthcareheroes to view messages NYSUT members have already shared and to add your own. The site also includes tips for posting your thanks on social media, as well as guidance on donating much-needed personal protective equipment.



Sending love and

prayers to my brother Eddie Armour, RN and all the other Health Care Heroes. Thank you so much for your dedicated service ❤️ #healthcareheroes @nysut



Perfect time to complete the U.S. Census

By Ned Hoskin

ned.hoskin@nysut.org

The nearly unprecedented demands on our society, our economy and our government created by the COVID-19 crisis coincide perfectly with the 2020 U.S. Census survey.

The coronavirus pandemic underscores the importance of our nation's health care system and its ability to respond to crisis. One of the best ways to guarantee that doctors, nurses and hospitals can provide the best care possible is in all of our hands.

Take a few minutes to help ensure an accurate 2020 Census count. The census officially kicked off April 1. Most households will be able to complete the survey online. It takes

mere minutes.

In coming weeks, Census employees will follow up with households that have not responded.

Why is it so important? Billions of dollars in health care funds are based on Census data. If we aren't all counted, New Yorkers stand to lose critical health care resources. That puts us all at risk.

NYSUT 2020
COUNTS census

But it's not just health care. It's public education; it's legislative representation; it's infrastructure and services.

"That's why I'm urging all New Yorkers to do their part to ensure an

accurate 2020 Census count, so that essential services such as public education and health care are funded in full," said North Colonie Teachers Association member Thea MacFawn. "Our children's futures and the health of our loved ones depend on it."

Every 10 years, Congress must carry out a complete count of every person living in the United States. All residents — including non-citizens, children and seniors alike — are counted. This is the Census; it is safe and simple to do.

"Filling out your Census form is the easiest way for you to improve health care in New York, feed hungry children in our schools, and ensure fair representation in Congress," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

For more information, go to nysutcounts.org.

Amid crisis, educators are anything but 'remote'

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Rochester teacher Marie Rice spent more than an hour on a student's front porch Easter Sunday, talking through a window to a kindergartner who needed some extra TLC.

"Her mom just lost her own mother before this all happened and they're both really struggling," Rice said. "Mom texted me to say that Maya missed me and really needed to see me in person. So I went. That's what we do."

As it turned out, the mom needed someone to talk to, as well.

The three-way porch chat was just

another example of how Rice — like so many other educators around the state — has been there to help her students and families get through this unprecedented time.

When schools suddenly shut down statewide, Rice said, fewer than half of her Pinnacle School #35 students had access to an internet-enabled device. With donations of old laptops and help from her husband, an IT support technician at Brockport schools, she provided retrofitted chromebooks so all of her students could participate in remote learning. She's now collecting more laptop donations to provide much-needed devices for other students at her school.

Remote learning continues to be a work in progress. To supplement district-provided learning packets, Rice started with just one online ELA session in the morning, but that's expanded to include an afternoon math lesson and an open office hour block for parents.

Rice is amazed how many of her students log in early, just to socialize with their peers. "They miss school so much," she said. "They desperately want to see their friends' faces and interact with each other."

Rice said every lesson begins and ends with social-emotional learning, whether it's talking about getting outside to play or reassuring them that we can get through this together. "If I notice any concerns, I follow up," she said. "Our families are worried about everything from unemployment to illness. They're really counting on us."

Rice is just one of many educators around the state serving as a lifeline for their students and families during



Rochester kindergarten teacher Marie Rice makes a special house call to talk with one of her students. Rice and educators across the state are finding unique ways to help their students get through this unprecedented time.

this difficult time. While drive-by parades and "We Miss You" videos have been most visible, educators are also dedicating long hours to making phone calls to those lacking internet, writing upbeat personalized letters, postcards and texts to students and stopping by homes to deliver food, books and other care packages.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said the tremendous outreach work by so many of our members has been heartening, but it has also highlighted a wide variety of social-emotional needs, along with access and equity issues.

"I'm so proud of the many ways our members have rallied to provide not only instructional opportunities for students, but also the

non-instructional support," said DiBrango, who hosts Sunday evening #NYSUTchat on Twitter where educators share ideas and concerns.

"Being that constant for so many kids is crucial to them surviving this without being severely traumatized," DiBrango said. "And our focus on social-emotional needs will be just as important when school reopens."



Riverhead's Aquebogue Elementary School staff sent reassuring messages to students in a "We Miss You" video. Above, physical education teacher Antonio Lawrence encourages kids to keep exercising.

FOR MORE INFO

NYSUT has prepared two fact sheets on "Trauma Informed Instructional Practices" and "Teaching Amid the COVID-19 Crisis." Both are available at nysut.org/coronavirus.

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State cancels ELA, math and Regents Exams

By Sylvia Saunders

sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

Students, parents and educators have at least one less thing to worry about this year: State testing.

Thanks in part to union advocacy, the State Education Department halted administration of the state's spring standardized tests, including all grades 3-8 ELA, math and science tests; the K-12 NYSESLAT for English language learners; and the NYSAA for students with severe disabilities. The move came minutes after the federal government announced it would waive standardized testing requirements for the school year.

NYSUT hailed the news and thanked the thousands of union activists who sent emails calling on U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos

to lift the federal testing mandates.

"This is not the time to create more stress for our kids, which is why we called on the federal government to take exactly this action," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "This rightly allows the school community to put our focus where it should be: On staying safe and healthy."

On April 6, the Board of Regents went a step further and canceled the end-of-year Regents exams, which have served as a gateway to graduation for nearly 150 years.

"These are extraordinary decisions for an unprecedented time," said Regents Chancellor Betty A. Rosa.

Students in grades 7-12 who planned to take one or more Regents exams in June will be exempt as long as they pass the related course this school year. In addition, if a district can't provide the full study unit — or



required hands-on lab work, the student would get diploma credit as long as state standards have been met.

The Regents Board also passed a series of important emergency amendments to give schools more regulatory flexibility during the coronavirus closures, such as giving schools additional time to set up support services for students with disabilities and English language learners.

In addition, in response to union advocacy, SED is extending

the deadline for the Statement of Continued Eligibility (SOCE) for special education teachers teaching content in self-contained classes from June 30, 2020, to June 30, 2021. Teachers applying for the SOCE will have three years from the application to meet any of the workshop requirements.

In another major shift, the Regents have delayed implementation of the state's new Next Generation Learning Standards until September 2021, with the new tests postponed until 2022.

NYSUT ELT offers free virtual programs for members

By Sylvia Saunders

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To help members cope during these challenging times, NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust is offering a series of free virtual seminars to help members learn about remote learning, time management, the importance of self-care and how to help students succeed emotionally and academically.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, who oversees ELT, said the union is proud to offer this important programming for members. The 45-minute seminars are free of charge, thanks to a grant from the National Education Association.

"The Airplane Oxygen Mask Principle" (S1) seminar emphasizes



the importance of taking care of yourself before you can effectively take care of others, DiBrango said. While she's heartened by inspiring stories of our members going above and beyond to connect with students and help the community, it's important for them to manage their own well-being amidst the anxiety and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If you've ever flown on a plane, you've heard the flight attendant

explain that if the oxygen mask drops, you should put your own oxygen mask on first, prior to assisting others," DiBrango said. "This concept does not just apply to flying: It's also an analogy for what's happening right now."

The "Developing Virtual SEL Environments for Youth" (S2) seminar offers social and emotional learning techniques and skills to help your students navigate their learning while developing resilience during this pandemic.

Sessions 1 and 2 also include a 15-minute wellness check-in component that will be scheduled by individual instructors to see how participants are doing.

"The Juggle" (S3), is a time

management seminar addressing the challenges of working from home, and "Help! I'm Not Tech Savvy" (S4), offers basic step-by-step instruction to help you navigate Google Classroom and Zoom.

DiBrango said the seminars have so far proven to be popular, with some wait-listed. For more information or to register, go to elt.nysut.org. Please note: the registration site will say the cost is \$75, but members just need to hit the promo code for the free training. For registration help, email ELT@nysut.org.

At the request of members, ELT expanded its offerings of online courses by adding a third session to its spring schedule. In addition, ELT will offer a wide range of online classes this summer for graduate and CTLE credit.

NYSUT STRONG: Inspiration in a time of crisis

*Mindy Pavone,
Mohawk Valley*

Art teacher Mindy Pavone, Clinton TA, holds “office hours” on a video conferencing platform to answer questions about student art projects — also to offer reassuring words as her students try to cope with the anxiety and uncertainty swirling around their lives.



Mindy DeRosa, Central New York

Amateur photographer Mindy DeRosa, Auburn TA, takes pictures of families staying home during the coronavirus pandemic. The fourth-grade teacher asked on Facebook if anyone would be interested in being photographed, from a safe distance, and received a flurry of responses. She has since done scores of photo sessions. “I just thought it would be so nice to do something to tell the community, ‘Hey, we’re still here, we’re still all together,’” said DeRosa.

*Marie Giovanna,
New York*

Nurses and other health professionals across the state are on the front lines battling the pandemic. A registered nurse at Westchester County Hospital South Site in Yonkers, NY, and a member of the New York State Federation of Teachers, Marie Giovanna and her colleagues share their wisdom and sage to stay home and provide social distancing guidance.



The COVID-19 pandemic is a 100-year threat that has put the world on notice in ways most have not seen in this lifetime. Responding to the challenge, NYSUT members and their local unions from Buffalo to Long Island to the North Country, to cities large and small in between, have rallied in solidarity to support their communities, their students, their patients — and our health care heroes.

Teachers made the switch from classroom instruction to remote

learning. Health care professionals persevered in the face of equipment shortages and understaffing. School-Related Professionals prepared and delivered student meals. And members did it all while — in the words of Rachel Murat, New York State’s 2020 Teacher of the Year — “building the plane while flying it through a hurricane.”

“Over and over again, this crisis has shown the vital role public schools, higher education and health care institutions play in communities

throughout the state,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “Our members have so much heart. And I know we’ll continue to work together and be there for one another in the days and weeks ahead.”

To showcase members’ dedication to their communities and students, the statewide union launched NYSUT Strong, a website filled with videos, photos, articles and social media posts exemplifying the spirit and strength of NYSUT members.

Members like Deborah Cowley,

Greece Teachers Association, a first-grade teacher, who sent all 20 of her students a letter and self-addressed stamped envelope so they could be pen pals.

Or Schodack Faculty Association member Eric Biehler, a physical education teacher, who encourages students to stay active by posting videos of him leading his kids through exercises at home.

Other educators have diligently responded to food insecurity unearthed by the crisis. Rondout Valley

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SRPs are among hundreds of union volunteers keeping students and families fed (see page 9).

Hero status belongs to the medical professionals risking their lives to care for the sick and dying. Like the United Federation of Teachers school nurses and hospital nurses working countless hours in facilities throughout New York City. And Carmel Teachers Association member Kristen Dandreano, a school nurse, who joined the front line working at a mobile COVID-19 test site in New Rochelle.

Tech savvy higher education faculty and K-12 educators across the state are stepping in to address the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) by making their own and providing them to health care workers. Who would have thought that stockpiles of forgotten transparencies — once used for report covers and overhead projector presentations — could be rechristened as vital health care tools? Union members like Dave Ecker at SUNY Stony Brook and Aaron Nelson at SUNY New Paltz quickly converted lab space into production facilities where 3D printers churn out face shield head bands, to which shields and elastic are attached. Both faculty belong to United University Professions, the union representing faculty and staff at the State University of New York. K-12 teachers in Eastchester, West Genesee and East Syracuse Minoa are among those making the face shields for medical staff at coronavirus testing sites, hospitals, clinics and medical offices.

All of these efforts make a difference. To add your story and to read more inspiring stories about NYSUT members' response to the pandemic, visit nysut.org/NYSUTStrong.

Joe Cantafio, Western New York

West Seneca schools were able to donate more than 1,400 goggles, a handful of N95 masks, hundreds of gloves, dozens of gowns and thousands of sanitizing wipes, as well as unused overhead transparencies that can be made into face shields. The donation was organized by WSTA President Joe Cantafio, second from right. He'd gotten a call from social studies teacher Audrey Sullivan about the lack of personal protective equipment for health care professionals. Meanwhile science labs were chock full of equipment going unused due to school closures. With the go-ahead from school administrators — and a delivery assist from West Seneca police — the much-needed supplies were donated to the Erie County Medical Center.



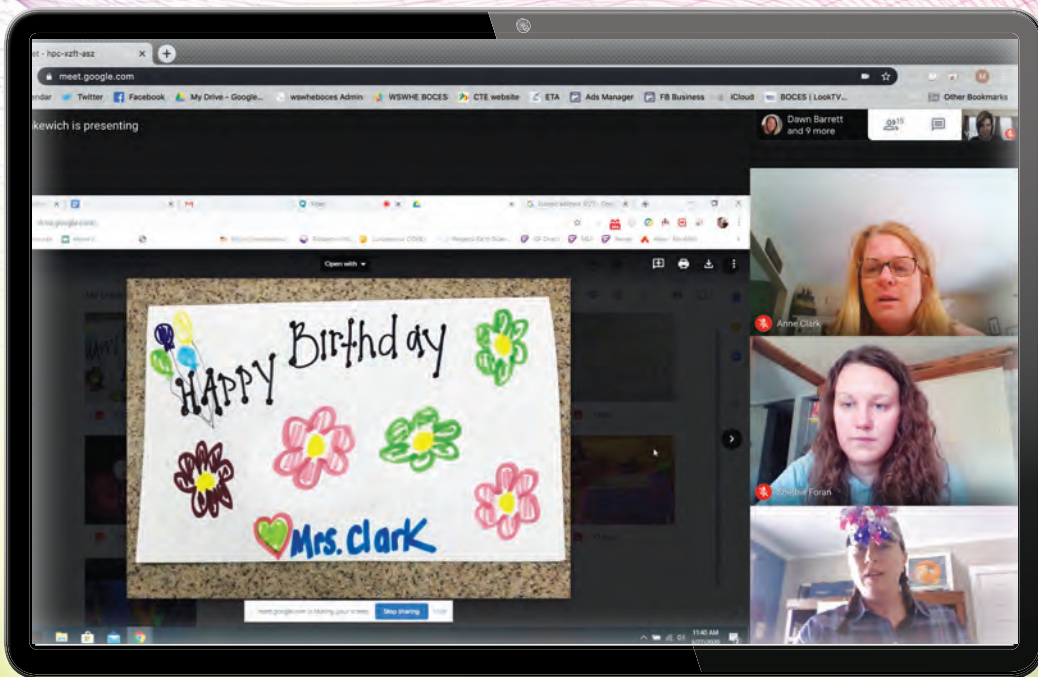
Paul Pecorale, Long Island



NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale makes a delivery to a retired neighbor. As school buildings have closed, members across the state have been doing their part to make sure students and families are not going hungry.

Laurie Hall, North Country

Saratoga Adirondack BOCES Employees Association member Laurie Hall (not pictured), a social worker, organized a virtual "sweet 16" birthday party for one of her students. Hall and nearly a dozen other SABEA members made signs, video chatted with the student and brightened her day.



Higher ed unions boost colleagues and communities

By Ned Hoskin

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As soon as it became apparent that college campuses would shut down and move to online learning due to COVID-19, higher education union leaders began working to ensure that the health and hard-fought rights of union members are protected.

The union has taken “a calm, measured, common-sense approach as we work with SUNY and the governor’s office to address a very difficult situation,” said Fred Kowal, president of United University Professions on SUNY state-operated campuses.

President Barbara Bowen of the Professional Staff Congress at CUNY solicited issues from local chapters and thousands of members who “expressed concern not only for themselves but also for vulnerable students and colleagues,” she said. “The union principle that an injury to one is an injury to all is literally true now.”

The PSC, UUP and NYSUT local unions at community colleges all over the state scrambled to respond. It got very complicated very quickly. Soon, campuses were mostly closed, and all instruction had to move online.

Adjunct Professor Doug Cody, a member of UUP and the Faculty



PROVIDED

Steven Trust, adjunct lecturer at Kingsborough Community College and an intensive care unit RN at NYC Health and Hospitals Bellevue, delivers much-needed supplies donated by members from Kingsboro CC.

Association at Suffolk Community College, had to suddenly convert six courses to online instruction. The longtime unionist said he did what was required to keep everyone safe, but it was a real compromise.

“I really love what I do,” he said, “and I believe face-to-face is the only way to teach people.”

Most faculty members tapped into technology — such as Zoom, Google Meet, or WebEx — to try to convene at times when classes were ordinarily scheduled. But, “It’s just not the

same,” Cody said. “Being face-to-face with students is extremely important. You can tell if they are engaged, and you can see right away if they understand. It cannot possibly be the same.”

Higher ed activists mobilized to support colleagues and health care providers who needed support.

With protective gear running low for front-line health care workers, lab technicians at Kingsborough Community College in New York City donated hundreds of pairs of gloves,

goggles, lab coats and hospital grade disinfectants and hand washes for Bellevue Hospital workers.

Chief lab techs Alicia Trust, John Acevedo, Eulalee Cambridge and Maria Norako, all PSC members, dug through the microbiology and other labs that use personal protective equipment. “We even diverted a new delivery of gloves and alcohol,” Trust said.

UUP purchased 100,000 medical isolation gowns for doctors, nurses and medical staff on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic at SUNY public hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse.

“These are our colleagues, our friends, our neighbors, our health care providers, and they are union members showing up every day, saving lives and fighting this dreaded disease without the appropriate gear,” said UUP’s Kowal. “We wanted to help.”

The PSC is teaming up with the New York State Nurses Association to create a Homework Hotline to provide academic support to the children of nurses while their parents are risking their lives to keep other New Yorkers safe. “We are grateful for the opportunity to have something to offer, even if it’s small, to those who are offering so much,” said Bowen.



PHOTOS: ANDREW WATSON

Making the case for higher ed funding

This spring, the NYSUT Fund our Future campaign made a higher education stop with a campus tour and panel discussion at Corning Community College. The union campaign called on the state to invest more in public education — from pre-K all the way through college. Far left, NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham said a well-rounded education is the social justice issue of our time. “New York needs to educate all students so they can strive to attain their full potential.” At left, economics professor Robert Kephart and Jennifer O’Hara, an instructor in the business department, both members of the Professional Educators of Corning Community College, shared why community colleges need their fair share of funding.



Southern Tier educators brainstorm teacher shortage solutions

By Kara Smith
kara.smith@nysut.org

For Maggie Hill, a senior early childhood education major at SUNY Cortland, teaching is a passion. But she realizes she's lucky. She has the means to pursue her passion. Many economically disadvantaged students don't — a reality brought into broader focus since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down campuses and scattered students back to their homes.

"My education costs a lot more than just tuition," she said noting that for those who don't have a car, for instance, there are few supports for things like getting to off-campus practicums, or paying for expensive, mandatory tests like the edTPA. "Education programs are set up for people who come from a certain position of privilege — that could keep a lot of people from entering the field."

Hill was one of scores of current and future educators who participated in the Southern Tier "Take a Look at Teaching" summit in Elmira

Heights to discuss solutions to the state's teacher shortage. Led by NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, the March event was hosted in partnership with the Elmira Heights and Horseheads teachers associations.

"Last year, I met an educator whose district asked his former (and long retired) science teacher to return to the classroom because the teacher shortage is so great in his area," DiBrango said in welcoming remarks to event participants. She encouraged them to consider partnering with colleagues in higher education to boost recruitment. "We know there will be jobs waiting when students graduate — we can work together to steer candidates into subject shortage areas like ESOL, science, CTE and special education."

Although the NYS Teachers' Retirement System projects that a third of New York State teachers could retire in the next five years, enrollment in state teacher education programs has fallen 53 percent since 2009. It's estimated that New York will

need 180,000 new teachers in the next decade.

Benita Eldridge, a music teacher in the Elmira City School District, noted that recruiting people of color into districts like hers is difficult since the community, for many, feels isolating. For candidates who come from diverse communities, a district like Elmira can feel "like a totally different planet," she said noting that she is the only teacher of color in her middle school building. "They don't stay because they want to return home — that's a big issue."

NYSUT Board member Dora Leland, a Horseheads TA member who helped organize the summit, suggested upfront grant money rather than loan forgiveness would be a better incentive for future teachers.

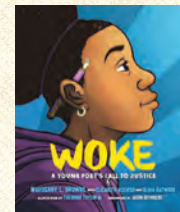
Other suggestions include asking younger educators to join in district recruitment efforts; providing greater mentoring support for new teachers; and instituting payment plans to make teacher tests more affordable for college students.

"I hope this is the start of the conversation not the end of it," said DiBrango, who pledged to compile participants' recruitment ideas and encouraged them to share information about successful future teacher clubs, or grow-your-own educator recruitment programs.

NYSUT's "Take a Look at Teaching" initiative seeks to elevate the teaching profession, raise awareness of and brainstorm solutions to the teacher shortage, highlight challenges to teacher recruitment and encourage more qualified individuals to consider the teaching field, particularly people of color.

Woke: A Young Poet's Guide to Justice

Written by Mahogany L. Browne with Elizabeth Acevedo and Olivia Gatwood



Illustrated by Theodore Taylor III

Recommended by: Stacey Rattner, school librarian, Schodack Faculty Association

Suitable for: grades K-12

Why I chose it: I wanted to share a book that could be used in any classroom, anytime — and this one fits that criteria. I challenge you to find a teacher or student who will not find at least one poem that speaks to them.

What I like best: The poems are thoughtful and powerful and so, well, woke. I love that any grade level or subject area teacher can share the poems with students. A kindergarten teacher could share a poem to teach kindness. And a high school social studies teacher could take the same poem to kick off a unit on prejudice.

How teachers can use this book:

The poems are written with young people in mind. The issues they cover are diverse and include ableism, body positivity, community, gender, immigration, intersectionality and more. Teachers can use these poems as springboards for what will surely be in-depth discussions on current topics and events. Warning: You and your students will love these poems so much that you will want to print out every page and post them around your classroom (not without the publisher's permission of course).

About the author: Mahogany L. Browne has published several poetry collections and books, including *Black Girl Magic*, *Kissing Caskets*, *Redbone*, and *Dear Twitter: Love Letters Hashed Out Online*. Visit mobrowne.com for more information.

"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.



ANDREW WATSON

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango participates in a discussion with attendees at the Elmira Heights "Take a Look at Teaching" summit.



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Feeling stressed? Your union is here for you

By Liza Frenette

liza.frenette@nysut.org

It's not a dystopian novel. It's no science fiction movie. It's real life, today, right here: A deathly worldwide pandemic.

School social workers, counselors and psychologists are helping students cope by staying in contact remotely via phone, online — even drive-by home visits.

Support is also available for the adults — health care professionals, K-12 teachers and School-Related Professionals, and higher ed faculty and staff — whose lives have been upended.

NYSUT's Social Services provides information on a host of available resources. Social Services specialist Ani Shahinian has been fielding calls from members initially focused on primary needs, such as safety, staying healthy and getting food. As the school building and business closures and state pause has progressed, this has been followed by a concentration of more calls relating

to financial concerns, including unemployment of spouses, and some substitute teachers and contractual workers.

"The dominoes are falling," she said. "Every aspect of our lives is impacted."

Shahinian shared helpful tools:

Pay attention to the effects of isolation. Continued isolation for people with mental health issues can be toxic. "Your perspective can become very clouded," she said. If you know someone who lives alone, check in by text, phone or email.

Choose one or two reliable news sources. Do not overdo the news; do not get news from social media.

Set up a routine. "Sleep patterns and self-care are really important right now," Shahinian said. Exercise can be done alone or with family members and classes on the internet.

Play music. Visit sites such as lincolncenter.org to watch performances of dancers, singers and storytellers.

If you live alone, try connecting with pets. Lack of human touch can

be alienating and disorienting.

Post a paper calendar. This will help avoid disorientation about day and time.

Write letters and cards to connect with others. Making homemade cards will tap into your creativity.

Breathing exercises and relaxation apps are helpful.

Be cognizant of what is going well and cultivate gratitude.

Children may be concerned their parents will die. Members may also be concerned about their own mortality. "We're all anxious," Shahinian said. "Believe you're going to be okay if you do what we've been told." She encouraged generating a sense of calm — and doing your part to reduce risk.

"Educators are trying to manage caring for and educating their own children while not sacrificing for their students. These stressors have come upon them very quickly," said John Garruto, president of the New York Association of School Psychologists and a member of the Oswego Classroom TA. "It's a reminder of the importance of taking care of ourselves. If we do not, we become less successful in helping others."

RESOURCES

- Contact NYSUT Social Services at 518-732-6239 or email socialservices@nysut.org.
- In response to the pandemic, the American Federation of Teachers is providing grief counseling at no cost to all members, active and retired, if a death occurs in the immediate family as the result of COVID-19. Access dedicated counselors via video, phone or text. For more information, visit aft.org/benefits/trauma.
- The AFT offers several mental health resources at aft.org/coronavirus. The national union partnered with the Anxiety and Depression Association of America on a host of mental health-related resources, including pro bono therapy for health care providers; and videos and podcasts on managing anxiety and uncertainty. Resources also include *Taking care of yourself in difficult times*, a publication that shares helpful tips including how to recognize changes in your behavior and methods to get realigned.
- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's National Helpline is **800-662-HELP**.

Marshaling mental health resources is vital to staying mentally, emotionally and spiritually fit during this time of great challenge. Licensed clinical psychologist L. Kevin Chapman puts it succinctly: **F.I.G.H.T.**

Focus on what you can control
Identify negative thoughts
Generate alternate thoughts
Highlight adaptive behaviors
Teach someone else the same

Nurses respond STAT to pandemic

By Liza Frenette

liza.frenette@nysut.org

“There are a lot of emergencies, a lot of deaths,” said longtime hospital nurse Nancy Barth-Miller. “You wrap a body and hope to keep the next patient alive.”

A registered nurse at Staten Island University South Hospital, Barth-Miller said everybody is running on adrenalin to deal with the influx of patients dangerously ill from COVID-19. “I’ve been through the AIDS crisis, Ebola, and SARS — but nothing has ever been this severe.” Barth-Miller is chapter leader for the Federation of Nurses/UFT at her hospital.

In New York City, nurses are working long hours at hospitals where entire floors and units normally devoted to different types of patient care were suddenly flipped into treatment for only COVID-19 patients. SUNY Downstate University Hospital at Brooklyn — where many United University Professions members work as doctors, nurse practitioners and nurses — has become a coronavirus-only facility. Hospital rooms have been set up in parks, former nursing homes and convention centers. School nurses have been sent to hospitals to help provide desperately needed care; others have gone to work at testing sites.

While New York City is the state’s epicenter of the highly dangerous and contagious virus, health care workers across the state are on the front lines doing their part to care for patients. Before he was tapped to run the makeshift COVID-19 hospital at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City, Chris Tanski, United University Professions member at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse,



PROVIDED

Lori Pritchett, Sachem Central TA, sent a virtual shoutout via NYSUT’s Health Care Heroes campaign to health care professionals at Stony Brook Children’s Hospital, including her cousin’s girlfriend, Calle (top row, right). Pritchett also shared a message from the nursing staff, “COVID-19 affects kids too. Keep your little ones safe by STAYING home, washing your hands and safe distancing!”

was working to stop the spread of the virus at his Onondaga County hospital. Responding to pressing need, several dozen nurses from Upstate are now working with their colleagues at SUNY Stony Brook.

Securing enough proper personal protective equipment for health care professionals has been a challenge since the virus first descended (see page 3). As *NYSUT United* went to press, nearly 19,000 people in New York had died from the virus; mostly in the New York City area.

Maria Paradiso knows about the pandemic from both sides of the bed: She is a hospital nurse working in critical care and has survived the virus. Paradiso was quarantined at

home for close to three weeks after likely contracting the virus at NYU-Brooklyn, where she serves as FON/UFT chapter leader. At work, she said coronavirus patients were “everywhere,” especially as more units were converted to solely treat COVID-19 patients.

“It’s hard out there right now,” she said. As nurses, “we go in anticipating we’re going to make people better. We’re seeing so much despair.”

Paradiso first noticed her own illness with a sharp, sore throat, but a visit to her doctor revealed no infection. A week later, after several days of 12-hour shifts, she woke drenched in sweat. By 4 p.m. that day, she was short of breath.

“I was so scared,” she said. “It was so fast.” Chest congestion and air hunger plagued her; testing revealed she had COVID-19. “It was the strangest, most sick I’ve ever been. I’ve had the flu, allergies. It’s a whole other level of bad,” said Paradiso. Throughout her ordeal she received text messages and calls of support from her union.

As COVID-19 patients are being released from hospitals and rehab centers, many of them need further care from the crippling virus. For these patients, visiting nurses take the baton from their hospital peers.

“We’re the next line of defense,” said Valerie Fitzgerald, an intake nurse and president of the Westchester Federation of Visiting Nurses, serving patients in parts of Putnam, Dutchess, Westchester and Rockland counties.

“Trying to get equipment is difficult,” she said, mirroring concerns heard across the country. Policies ensure that no Westchester FVN nurses are allowed to treat COVID-19 patients without N95 masks, Fitzgerald said. Some of the union nurses were trained in how to test fit the masks to protect the wearer against airborne particles and liquid contamination.

Further straining resources is a taxing, but necessary, requirement that each at-home patient be outfitted with his or her own blood pressure cuff, thermometer and stethoscope to avoid contamination between patients.

AFT has provided specific protocols to help health care members protect themselves. For more information, visit aft.org/covid19-hc. For guidance on donating much-needed PPE, visit nysut.org/coronavirus.



NYSUT extends a helping hand to retirees

By Kara Smith

kara.smith@nysut.org

As fears of the coronavirus mount, and social distancing becomes the norm, a painful side effect is loneliness. For retirees who have lost a spouse, don't have children or other relatives nearby, or who've been out of the workforce for years, the issue can be particularly acute.

The statewide union launched a pair of initiatives to help retirees stay engaged, beat loneliness and learn new skills. In April, NYSUT launched a series of free, live webinars slated to run through June. The sessions focus on a range of topics including a pension discussion with TRS and ERS representatives; a cooking session on using pantry staples; chair yoga; and how to protect your online privacy and avoid scams. The live sessions will give participants the chance to ask questions and to interact with the presenters and with each other.

"The topics and format were brainstormed and developed by NYSUT's retiree Board representatives and retiree services consultants," said NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, whose office oversees retiree concerns for the union.

"The idea was to give participants the opportunity to not only learn something new, but to socialize with each other," Pecorale added.

The statewide union is also using the NYSUT polling center to check in with retirees and let them know the union is here for them. Carol Davis, a former school librarian and Mechanicville Teachers Association retiree, was one such member who got a call at home.

"It felt nice to have the union check in, to know you were on



someone's radar. I'm fortunate that I'm not alone, but many retirees are," she said.

That simple reassurance, just letting retirees know that NYSUT cares about them, is the main goal, said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "Having that personal connection is so important during isolating times like these," he said, noting that one retiree said the union's check-in was the only call she'd received.

Callers also offered help with filling out census forms, even walking retired members through the submission process if online filing was daunting. In the wake of widespread COVID-19 cases, ensuring that every New York State resident is counted is vitally important. Census numbers are used to determine how more than \$700 billion in federal funding is distributed for schools, hospitals and roads and to allocate congressional seats.

Ken Ulric, first vice-president/acting president for Retiree Council 17, received a similar call from the Farmingdale Federation of Teachers and it made his day.

"They asked me to spread the word among the retirees to reach out if we need help," said Ulric. "They said whether it's food, or money or anything — they're here to help." Cordelia Anthony leads the Farmingdale FT.

An active and involved retiree local that regularly phone banks for union issues and contributes funds, food and time to local organizations like the Farmingdale School District Family Assistance Fund, RC 17 members aren't used to being on the receiving end. But, Ulric admits, "in the 50 plus years that in-service and

retirees have worked together, this is the first time that we might really need some help."

Farmingdale is located in Nassau County, a coronavirus hotspot. Since the disease has a long incubation period and is easily spread, just going to the grocery store is risky for many seniors.

"It really makes me feel good that they made this gesture," said Ulric. "I'm so proud of the people with whom I work."

For a full list of NYSUT retiree webinars, and to register, visit nysut.org/retireewebinars. Upon registration, participants will receive an email link allowing them to connect directly to their chosen webinar. To join, participants will need to open the email and click on the included link at the 2 p.m. start time, on the scheduled date. A pre-webinar reminder, session handouts and any follow-up materials will also

be emailed. All the webinars will be recorded and posted on the NYSUT Retiree website at a later date. For more info about the webinars, contact Tammie Waldenmaier in NYSUT Retiree Constituent Services at tammie.waldenmaier@nysut.org.

For a link to a list of retiree tips and information about COVID-19, visit nysut.org/retirees.

The NYSUT Retirees Webinar Series will focus on a range of topics:

April 28

Staying connected: How to use videoconference programs

April 30

Is my pension OK?

May 7

Chair yoga

May 14

Dealing with coronavirus anxiety and depression

May 21

Pantry basics: How to cook with what you have

May 28

Alleviating financial stress related to COVID-19

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

“Quotable”



Shonda Rhimes

Been homeschooling a 6-year old and 8-year old for one hour and 11 mins. Teachers deserve to make a billion dollars a year. Or a week. (@shondarhimes)

Stephanie

Plachy-Feinstein

Prouder than ever before to be an @NYCSchools @UFT teacher. This week has been exhausting preparing for #remoteteaching, but we got every teacher in my school set up on @GoogleForEdu #Classroom. I'm excited to connect with my kiddos more next week! (@StephaniePlachy)

West Seneca Police

Awesome to see the West Seneca teachers out today placing signs on all of the Senior's lawns in honor of their final year. @West_Seneca @WestSenecaCSD @westsenecata @Joe4WS @coachcant (@wspolice)

UUP

SUNY Solidarity! Thank you to the 22 Upstate Medical University nurses, many who are @NYSPEF members, who are now working on the front lines at Stony Brook Medicine. These are #HealthcareHeroes! (@uupinfo)

East Greenbush CSD

Proud to do our part and help fight COVID-19. We're donating the following supplies from our schools to local hospitals: 60 N95 masks, 12,000 gloves, 5 protective gowns, 8 safety goggles (@EGreenbushCSD)



QUESTIONS FOR ...

Phillipe Nover

Registered nurse, Federation of Nurses/UFT

1. How did you get into nursing as a profession?

My dad was a nurse and he influenced me. At first I was hesitant because there weren't a lot of guys in the field when I started. My friends kind of laughed when I went to nursing school after high school, but I loved it. I'm a people person and I like working in a field where I can help others. I also liked learning about anatomy and the human body. Now a lot of my friends, who laughed at me back then, are going back to school to become nurses themselves.

2. The coronavirus has changed nursing in many ways. What's your average day like?

I work 12-hour shifts, six days a week and then I'm on call. But I feel like if the hospital needs me, I might as well work that extra day to help out my community — it's not like I can do anything, or go anywhere, when I'm at home. We've been lucky with personal protective equipment, since we've always had it; but as things have become more serious, we've started rationing.

3. You work in the epicenter of the pandemic in the state. Do you worry about getting sick?

I believe every day that I might have it. But, since I don't have any symptoms, I haven't gotten tested — I don't want to waste a test. My dad is scared for me. I just want my parents to stay home. I can't picture them

being sick like that. We have about 80 to 90 percent COVID-19 patients at my hospital. Typically all the patients I care for are having respiratory issues. The worst part is seeing colleagues get sick. Your heart just drops.

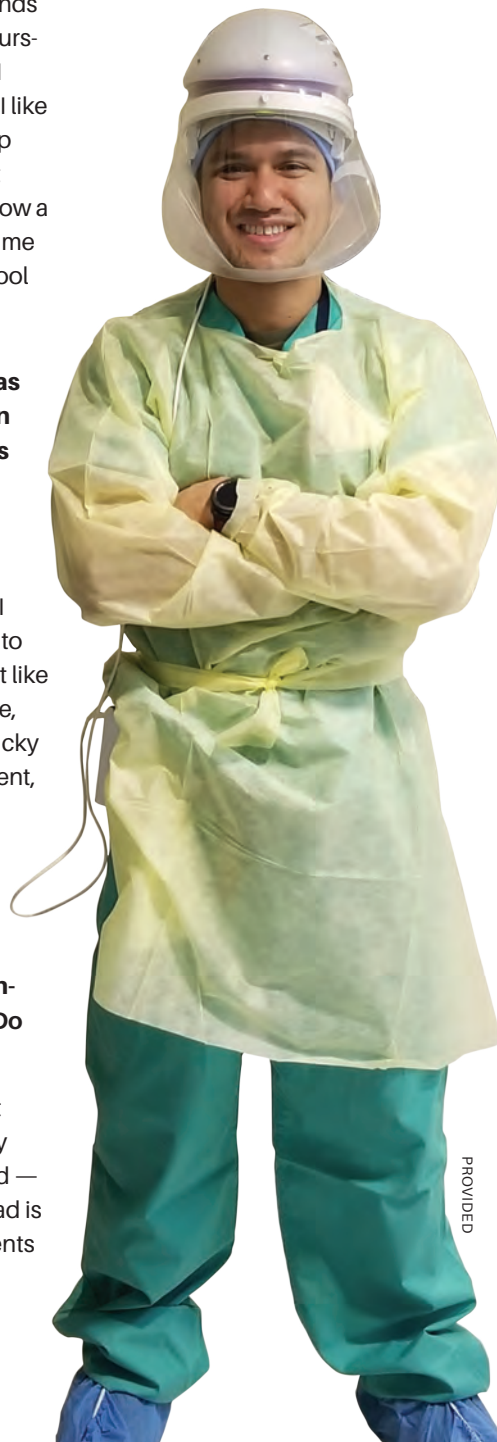
4. In your 20s you competed in mixed martial arts. Any correlation between nursing and fighting?

I trained in martial arts throughout my childhood. One of my friends was training to compete in MMA and I got into it. I loved the thrill of it. In 2008, I tried out for a reality television show, and I made it to the finals. I stayed active until 2017, when I retired. I fought in places like Brazil, the Philippines and at the Barclay Center in Brooklyn in front of my hometown crowd. It was an amazing experience.

MMA prepared me for nursing. When you're fighting in front of 18,000 people, you've got to stay focused. That can be hard to do when your emotions and adrenaline are flowing. When I'm dealing with an emergency at work, it's the same thing. I've got to stay focused on the task at hand so I can do my job.

5. Any last thoughts?

I want to give a big shout out to all the health care workers on the front line, from nurses and doctors, to housekeepers and security workers, to everyone else who enters the hospital to work. Everyone needs to be recognized. Fighting this virus is like fighting a war and we're all in the trenches together, risking our health and the health of our families to do our jobs. I have so much respect for everyone I work with; that includes my union reps who not only work to provide patient care, but to also protect our workplace rights. We will overcome this and, I believe, it will bring us all closer.



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[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

Union COVID-19 resources

Looking for information from your union on the coronavirus pandemic? Visit NYSUT's online toolkit, nysut.org/coronavirus, for the latest news; personal, professional and state government resources; and stories about what union members and local unions across the state are doing to help their communities get through this crisis.

The site also includes quick links to the State Education Department and the State Department of Health, as well as

information on how to donate to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund. If you need help or know a family struggling with food insecurity, the site also includes information on how to find a food bank in your area.

Finally, we want to hear from you. Share inspirational stories about your union colleagues rising to meet the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic.

We appreciate you!

With school buildings across the nation closed going on two months, parents are getting a small taste of what it's like to be a teacher — albeit one with a very small student-to-teacher ratio. And if social media is any indicator, many of them are missing education professionals. (Shonda Rhimes, we concur!)

This year, Teacher Appreciation Week is celebrated May 4–8. While many restaurants and stores that typically offer discounts for educators will likely be closed, be sure to check out their websites for online deals.

Here are two great deals: calm.com offers a plethora of free meditations, sleep stories, movement exercises and soothing music to help relax. Looking for a more creative stress reliever? Check out weareteachers.com. The site offers eight free coloring pages available for download and printing.



Tax deadline extended

State and federal tax deadlines have been extended until July 15. Don't forget to take advantage of deductions your union won. As a result of legislation championed by NYSUT and unions across the state, union members in New York can deduct union dues from their state income taxes if they itemize. While not a dollar-for-dollar deduction, it will offset your taxable income. Be sure to consult with your personal tax preparer. Learn more at nysaficio.org.

For another tax assist, eligible educators can deduct up to \$250 (\$500 if married, filing jointly) of qualified expenses paid in 2019. An eligible educator is a K-12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide who worked at least 900 hours in a school that provides elementary or secondary education as determined by state law.

Visit nysut.org/deductions for a list of qualified expenses. For further information, consult your tax preparer and/or IRS Publication 17, *Your Federal Income Tax for Individuals*.

In Memoriam

We stand in solidarity with our members as they dedicate their lives to improving the lives of others. And when our members pass, we stand in solidarity with those who loved them, ensuring their service and their lives are not forgotten.

These are difficult and uncertain times. But what is certain is that NYSUT is here for you — especially in a time of loss.

We are not only your union, we are family.

Our members spent their lives serving others. They made a difference. Their lives should be celebrated.

Please visit our memorial honoring those members who died due to the coronavirus pandemic at nysut.org/memorial.



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White Plains goes blue for Autism Awareness



Members of the White Plains Teachers Association continued their support of Autism Awareness Month remotely. At left, special education teachers at Ridgeway Elementary School keep up the school's tradition of lighting it up blue on Fridays in April. The WPTA is led by President Kara McCormick-Lyons.

Lake Shore Central Teachers Association

The Lake Shore CTA is doing its part to make sure workers on the front lines are not worried about food. The local, led by President Kevin Schamberger, donated meals from a local restaurant to employees at the Saint Joseph's Hospital. The union included \$200 in grocery store gift cards for any hospital employee who needed the support. The local also donated grocery gift cards to the district staffers who are keeping students fed during the school closure.

Patchogue Medford Congress of Teachers

Members of the PMCT, led by President Beth Warnken, donated 200 containers of homemade soup. "So thankful for health care workers. They're our heroes," Warnken tweeted. The donation was part of a larger Soup4Support effort.

Marlboro Faculty Association

The Marlboro FA held its first Marlboro Faculty Olympics last fall to raise funds to support Marlboro families, students and the community. The event was sponsored by the local's Community Action Team (CAT), which operates the Backpack Food program, the Holiday Food Drive, and many other charitable ventures. The event raised more than \$2,000 for the CAT. The Marlboro FA is led by President Marion Lyons.



Educators compete in a three-legged race during the inaugural Marlboro Faculty Olympics.

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Colette Hardy

East Williston Teachers Association

In springtime in New York City, palettes of color emerge in rampant beds of tulips in Central Park, fields of bluebells in Brooklyn's Botanical Garden and daffodils in backyards in Queens.



And then there are the pianos.

Yes, since 2006, springtime in New York has meant the appearance of 50 pianos painted by talented artists and available for the public to play. Although this year's pandemic prompted suspension of the program, more than 500 pianos have been set out since this public art movement began, creating community and inspiration.

East Williston art teacher Colette Hardy was among last year's artists whose spring pianos appeared throughout the five boroughs as part of the annual Sing for Hope piano project. SFH is a non-profit group that brings music to the public. Hardy's vibrant "Peace" piano was set out at Brooklyn Bridge Park.

"My idea was to support peace, love and hope," she said. "I wanted something bold; something with a positive message."

Hardy successfully applied to be an artist for one of the pianos displayed in public spaces for three weeks. She spent three months commuting from Long Island into New York City to sand, prime and paint the piano on weekends, alongside other artists from around the world in a shared studio space. Her union, the East Williston TA, helped fund the purchase of needed supplies.

"She's an example of teachers and their passion for what they do," said Meryl Fordin, president of the EWTA. "Art is a pretty important part of education, and sometimes it's woefully underfunded."

That's a tune that Sing for Hope recognizes. After the pianos are displayed, each one is tuned and refurbished, then donated to a public school.

To read more about Hardy, her "Peace" piano and the Sing for Hope project, visit nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

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

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

KUDOS!

It's an honor

Elizabeth Bolger, Sayville TA, was honored as the 2019 New York State Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year by the state Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

In print

Herbert Foster, United University Professions-Buffalo Center retiree, published *Ghetto to Ghetto: Yiddish and Jive in Everyday Life*, about the "Yiddish and Jive words historically and presently used on TV, in movies, books, radio, and just about everywhere."

Gail Hennessey, Harpursville TA retiree, published

Mrs. Paddington and the Silver Mousetraps: A Hair-Raising History of Women's Hairstyles in 18th-century London. The picture book delves into the hairstyles worn by women in England and in high-society American colonies.

Joanna H. Kraus, UUP-SUNY Brockport retiree, published *Oh Little Ham of Buffalo: A Korean Adoption Memoir*. Accompanied by photographs, it describes the challenges, difficulties and joys encountered en route to adoption.

"Kudos!" recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you'd like to share? Email united@nysut.org; include "Kudos!" in the subject line.

NYSUT retirees: Maintain your membership

The transition from active employment to retirement brings some challenges that must be carefully handled. We encourage you to look to your union and NYSUT Member Benefits to assist during this important time in your life.

You must maintain NYSUT membership as a retiree to continue participating in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs and services. Please take the appropriate steps now to ensure continuation of your NYSUT membership. You can accomplish this in one of two ways:

1. If your local offers retiree membership, you must continue membership within your local. Compliance with your local's retiree membership requirements is a prerequisite for continued membership in NYSUT and the American Federation of Teachers (one of NYSUT's national affiliates).
2. If your local does not provide some form of retiree membership, you will continue as an at-large retiree member of NYSUT (and AFT) through the retiree council in your region. To ensure continuation of NYSUT membership, make sure your local reports you as retired, and either changes your dues code to "3" or writes "retired" on the membership report sent to NYSUT.

Retiree membership is not automatic for the National Education Association, NYSUT's other national affiliate. You may choose to join NEA as a Lifetime Retiree for a one-time fee of \$300.

At this time, as a current NYSUT member or retiree already participating in NEA Member Benefits, you do not need to purchase retiree membership with NEA. For information on how to join NEA National and an enrollment form, contact NYSUT Retiree Services at 800-342-9810.

If you are a non-lifetime NEA retiree member or know someone who has been lost from the NEA/NY rolls, contact NYSUT Member Records at 800-342-9810, for information on how to join NYSUT and NEA as a retiree.

For questions about establishing retiree membership, contact the following membership departments:

- **United Federation of Teachers** members: 212-598-6855;
- **United University Professions** members: 800-342-4206;
- **Professional Staff Congress/CUNY** members: 212-354-1252.

All other NYSUT members: 800-342-9810.

If you have questions about maintaining your NYSUT membership or would like further info on NYSUT retiree programs, contact the NYSUT Retiree Services consultant serving your region:

- **Buffalo area** (RC 1-3, 44): Tracy Beatty, 716-634-7132
- **Jamestown area** (RC 4, 46): Louise Ortman, 716-664-7425
- **Rochester area** (RC 5-6): Peter Randazzo, 585-454-5550
- **Syracuse/Utica area** (RC 7-8): Anne Marie Voutsinas, 315-431-4040
- **North Country/Capital District** (RC 9-10): Ruth Shippee, 518-825-0730
- **Southern Tier** (RC 11, 45): Mark Padgett, 607-786-5742
- **Greater Capital District/Mid-Hudson area** (RC 12-13): Jennifer Shaad-Derby, 518-783-7977
- **Orange, Rockland, Putnam and Westchester counties** (RC 14-16): Ellen Pincus, 914-592-4411
- **Nassau region** (RC 17-19): Claire Zatorski, 516-496-2035
- **Suffolk region** (RC 20-23): Joan Perrini, 631-273-8822
- **Florida** (RC 43): Judith Kalb, 561-994-4929, ext. 129.

Payroll to pension deduction

The transition from payroll deduction of NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs to pension deduction is neither immediate nor automatic. However, following the steps below should help to ensure a smooth process. **Please note:** You must be receiving your permanent monthly pension benefit from the New York State Teachers' Retirement System, New York City Teachers' Retirement System, New York State Employees' Retirement System, New York City Board of Education Retirement System, or receive income from a monthly lifetime annuity from TIAA to be eligible for pension deduction of Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

- ✓ **Contact Member Benefits** at 800-626-8101 when you know your definite retirement date. Member Benefits will then communicate that information to each plan administrator of the programs you participate in.
- ✓ **Call each plan administrator** of programs you participate in to verify your address so you can be billed at home once your payroll deductions stop; Member Benefits can provide you with the necessary contact information. You should receive a bill for each program you had on payroll deduction. If you do not receive a bill, contact the applicable program administrator to verify a bill was mailed to your proper address. Any discounts you enjoyed with payroll deduction will continue for up to one year with your home billing. Pension deduction yields the same discounts offered as payroll deduction.
- ✓ **Make sure to pay each bill** you receive. You must be on home billing for at least one billing cycle so

your pension system has time to put your permanent monthly pension benefit in place. Even though you may be receiving a monthly pension benefit, this does not mean your permanent benefit has been finalized. Deductions can only be taken from the permanent benefit; this can take up to six months.

- ✓ **When you receive the bill** for the next premium, it should include a Pension Deduction Authorization Card. Complete and sign the card, and send it back with the bill to the plan administrator in lieu of payment. If you do not receive a Pension Deduction Authorization Card with your second bill, contact Member Benefits for one to be sent to you.
 - ✓ **Upon receipt** of your Pension Deduction Authorization Card, the plan administrator will transmit the details to Member Benefits regarding pension deduction of your program(s). Member Benefits will then submit this information to your pension system to start the deductions with your next monthly benefit. This process must be done for each program you participate in. Contact Member Benefits if you have any questions along the way, and allow time for each of the steps above to be completed.
- If you have any questions about continuing NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs or navigating the pension deduction process, please visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements

with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.



How ERS loans work

Members of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) are able to take out a loan against their retirement contributions. Specific eligibility requirements are determined by your tier, but generally speaking, you need to have a certain amount in membership contributions on file, have at least one year of service credit and be on the payroll of a participating employer.

The fastest way to apply for a loan and manage your payments is through your Retirement Online account. Go to osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php and look under "My Account Summary" to see the available loan features. You can also mail a paper application, which you can print from our Forms page at osc.state.ny.us/retire/forms/index.php.

ERS loans are exempt from New York State and local taxes; however, the Internal Revenue Service may consider all or part of an ERS loan taxable if certain conditions are met — for instance, if you borrow above certain limits.

If you already have a loan and you want to take another loan, you can take multiple loans or refinance an existing loan. An additional loan minimizes your possible tax

consequences. Your minimum payment will be higher, but you will pay off your loans faster. Refinancing adds the new loan amount to your existing balance and spreads the entire balance over a new five-year term. Your payment will be lower but your tax consequences may be significantly higher. Sign-in to Retirement Online to view your loan options and to check whether your loan will be taxable.

ERS loans are repaid through payroll deductions. You can increase your payroll deduction amount, make additional payments or pay off your loan (with no prepayment penalties) through Retirement Online. Select "Manage My Loans" in Retirement Online to see a list of your loan balances and payoff amounts. You can also check your loan balance by calling our automated phone service at 866-805-0990 (518-474-7736 in the Albany area). Press "2" for members, then follow the prompts.

For more information, including how retiring with an outstanding loan would affect your pension and what to do if you go off payroll, visit our Loans page at osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/loans.php.

NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). NYSUT ERS consultants are available to help SRP members navigate the retirement system. Consultants can answer questions, provide forms and help members contact the ERS. Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

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

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

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

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.

NYSTRS — Still your best investment

Q: How well-funded is the New York State Teachers' Retirement System — should I be worried?

A: NYSTRS is one of the best-funded public pension plans in the nation. At the end of fiscal year-end 2019, its assets were valued at \$122.5 billion. And as of June 30, 2018, the most recent calculation available, its funded ratio was 100.9 percent, based on the market value of assets, and 99.2 percent based on the actuarial value of assets. NYSTRS has made benefit payments on time and without fail throughout its nearly 100-year history.

NYSTRS plans for market downturns. It routinely looks at how much risk there is in the system, and how much capital it has on hand to meet payroll, if there's a significant downturn in the market. Because of this crisis planning, NYSTRS is well-situated to weather this storm. To read about the fund's health, check out the Annual Financial Report at nysut.org/Library/Publications/Annual-Reports/2019PAFR.pdf.

NYSUT TRS consultants

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

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

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



Q: Retirement is still several years down the road, but I'd like to start planning ahead. Is it too early to attend a PREP seminar or a benefit consultation?

A: Although PREP seminars are currently canceled through the end of the school year, due to COVID-19, the earlier you attend a PREP seminar or benefit consultation, the better. They don't cost a thing, and you can attend as many sessions as you want over the course of your career.

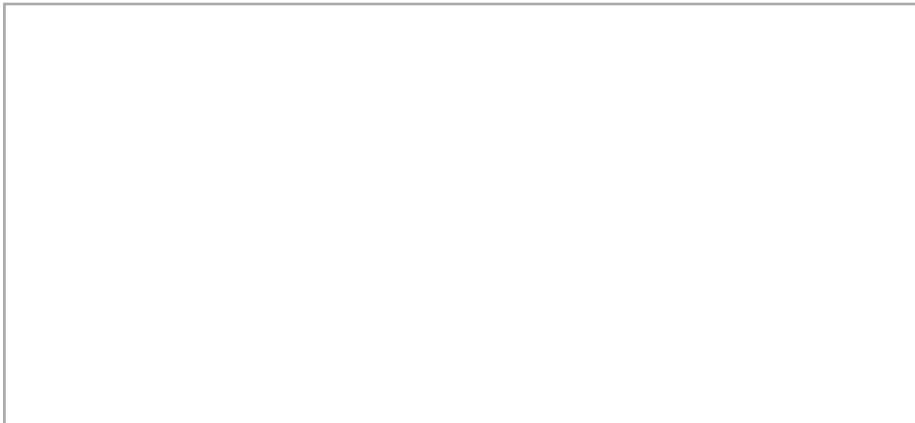
Contacting NYSTRS is the first step. Although free, both services must be scheduled in advance. PREP seminars explain critical, benefit-related decisions and review financial and legal considerations. You can stay for an entire seminar, or select modules that address your concerns. A PREP video, poster and brochure are available at nysut.org. Contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6180, or use your MyNYSTRS account to reserve a PREP seminar seat.

Personalized retirement benefit consultations are also available. Due to the coronavirus, only telephone consultations are available until further notice. To make an appointment, dial 800-348-7298, ext. 6100, or book online through your MyNYSTRS account.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you're on payroll during the state-mandated COVID-19 school shutdown, you should still receive your New York State Teachers' Retirement System service credit. However, the situation is fluid. The system reserves the right to revise its position as warranted.

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



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With NYSUT ELT:

- learn research-based, classroom tested, methods in our seminars and/or graduate courses;
- meet certification requirements; and
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Register:

<http://elt.nysut.org> • 800.528.6208



NYSUT Member Benefits is here for you!

Our continued priority here at NYSUT Member Benefits is to assist NYSUT members and their families -- as it has been for almost 40 years.

There's no need to go it alone when Member Benefits has your back! We act as your advocate for any endorsed program or service that you participate in. Member Benefits strives to quickly resolve any issues or concerns you may have.

We endorse dozens of programs & services across a wide variety of areas -- including **insurance programs, legal & financial services, and shopping, travel and personal offerings** -- and we are thankful to have the opportunity to serve you on a daily basis.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all NYSUT members for all that you do on a daily basis in the education and health care industries.



Learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services by scanning the QR code to the right, visiting **memberbenefits.nysut.org** or calling **800-626-8101**.

