

SRP NewsLink

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

New SRP Advisory Committee seated

The 2020-2023 NYSUT School-Related Professionals Advisory Committee was constituted in the fall, with many first time members joining returning members for their three-year term.

In his remarks to the committee at its first meeting, held virtually Jan. 13, NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, whose office oversees SRP issues for the union, outlined the challenges ahead for SRPs and thanked the committee for its work. "We can't do this work without you. Last year at this time who would have imagined we would could do this committee work virtually?"

The committee members shared concerns impacting their locals and surrounding locals, such as furloughs and layoffs, COVID-19 and other health and safety concerns, and general concerns about the uncertainty of the current times, among others.

Gross introduced the committee's new chairperson, Cheryl Rockhill, president of the Brushton-Moira Support Staffs' Association who said that the committee would begin its work on the challenges facing SRPs in several key areas.

They are: demonstrating union value to SRPs; enhancing support and

professional development for SRP local leaders; continuing to advocate for member health and safety concerns; and fighting for fair funding for schools, so that budgetary shortfalls do not unfairly impact SRP jobs.

The SRP Advisory Committee was created in 1978, and aims to tap into the hearts and minds of SRPs statewide, and serves to amplify their voice within their communities and at the statewide union. Working closely with the SRP At-Large



NYSUT 2nd VP
Ronald Gross

Directors, the SRP Advisory Committee makes an impact on many SRP issues during its term.

The newly seated SRP Advisory Committee's members are from all over the state and from many of the nine SRP career families.

Committee outreach

Committee members are charged with reaching out to locals in their regions to learn what is going on in other locals and bring those concerns back to the committee.



The committee will be reaching out to SRP leaders in their region to introduce themselves through their local regional offices.

"Local leaders will be receiving a letter from their NYSUT Regional Staff Director with their SRP Advisory Committee member's contact information," said Gross. "I encourage local leaders to reach out and invite committee members to their upcoming meetings or other events."

To learn more about the SRP Advisory Committee visit www.nysut.org/srpcommittee. Leaders who would like to invite an SRP Advisory Committee member to a local union meeting or event may email NYSUT SRP Coordinator Leslie Fottrell at Leslie.Fottrell@nysut.org or call 1-800-342-9800.

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School-Related Professionals

Thinking about retirement?

Join us for a free ERS retirement workshop

Tuesday, Feb. 23, or Thursday, Feb. 25 (virtual)

This workshop covers the critical elements involved in pension benefit calculation to maximize these benefits. *

Register at: <https://cvent.me/zPaNy1>

*Suitable for NYSUT members who are members of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and considering retiring within the next five years.

IMPORTANT DATES:

Virtual ERS workshop

Feb. 23 or Feb. 25
<https://cvent.me/zPaNy1>

National School Breakfast Week

March 8–12
schoolnutrition.org

NEA ESP Conference

March 19–21, Virtual
www.nea.org/esp

Administrative Professionals Day

April 21
www.iaap-hq.org

NYSUT Local & Retiree Council Presidents Conference

April 29–30, Virtual

NYSUT RA

April 30–May 1, Virtual
www.nysut.org/ra

National School Nurse Day

May 12

National Nurses Week

May 6–12

Health and Safety Conference

May 21–23, Virtual
www.nysut.org/healthandsafety

SRP Recognition Day contest winners

Celebrating 2020 New York State School-Related Professionals Recognition Day required ingenuity and perseverance. The contest winners planned wonderful and COVID-friendly celebrations, incorporating the theme “SRPs Care for their Community.”

The two first place winners will receive a 2-for-1 entry to the Oct. 29-31, 2021, SRP Leadership Conference. Congratulations to:

Half Hollow Hills Teachers Association, led by Richard Haas. Members decorated entrance ways and a main hallway with post-it notes of thanks, created cute selfie frames and distributed “SRPs care for their Community” car magnets. Each SRP received a bag of pretzels with a note reading, “we would KNOT be able to do this without you.”

First place also goes to: **Onteora Teachers Association**, led by Mary Gilbert. This local thanked the SRPs in the Onteora Non-Teaching Employees Union by partnering with their local Hannaford to provide individually wrapped bagels and cream cheese and with a local baker who created SRP cookies. These were distributed in a designated area in each building. They also made cards and posted thank you messages on the teachers union social media sites.

Honorable mention goes to: **Parishville-Hopkinton Teachers Association**, co-led by Donald Cannamela and Christopher Brand, for celebrating its affiliated SRP unit, the Parishville-Hopkinton Non-Teaching Employees Association.



Photos: (Above) Half Hollow Hills TA celebration; (below) Onteora TA celebration.



New York State SRP Recognition Day is celebrated on the third Tuesday of November, often during American Education week. In 2021 SRP Recognition Day is Nov. 16. It is never too early for locals to begin planning how to celebrate SRPs

Visit www.nysut.org/srpday for information about celebrating the day.

School Breakfast Week is March 8–12



National School Breakfast Week is March 8–12 and this year’s theme is “Score Big with

School Breakfast.” Permanently established in 1975 by an act of Congress, the School Breakfast Program serves more than 14 million children each school day nationwide.

The pandemic has altered the way many school districts in New York

state provide breakfast to students, but it has not lessened the need to do so.

Indeed, NYSUT SRPs continue to step up in kitchens, cafeterias and at various distribution points, including on school busses, to provide nutritious and tasty meals to students.

Visit www.schoolnutrition.org to access free downloadable materials, including: graphics; printable coloring and activity sheets for students; a 21-page toolkit, which includes strategies for celebrating safely during the pandemic; and other resources to help you announce and highlight



#NSBW2021.



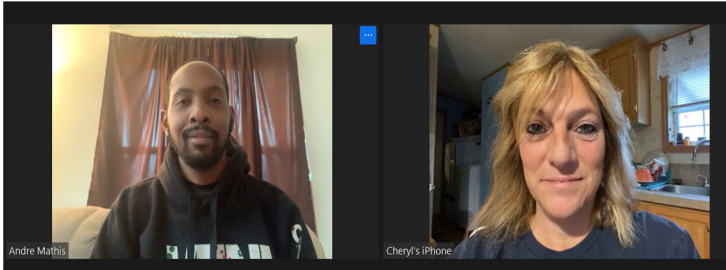
NEA ESP Conference registration open

NYSUT SRP members may register now for the National Education Association’s 2021 Education Support Professionals Conference, held virtually, March 19–21.

There is no cost to NEA members, but there is a 2,000 seat capacity, which will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Registration ends Feb. 26.

Visit nea.org/espconference for more information and to view the agenda.

Vigil speech sparks thoughtful conversation between unionists



Last spring Andre Mathis spoke during, “Together we rise: A virtual vigil for justice, action and peace.” The NYSUT vigil called for an end to racial and economic inequities and honored the life of George Floyd and other lives senselessly ended.

In his remarks Mathis said these events were “the flare up of a pandemic that the country has been experiencing for a long time, and pointed to the irony of it occurring as the country battles a health pandemic.” He spoke of the fear that black and brown people face just walking out of their homes. He spoke of the need for one-to-one conversations. And of the need for school support staff and teachers to be at the forefront of advocating for change.

After the program Mathis, who is president of the Union-Endicott School District Office Personnel Association in the Southern Tier, received a text from his friend Cheryl Rockhill, president of the Brushton-Moira Support Staffs’ Association in the North Country. Both serve on NYSUT’s statewide SRP Advisory Committee, and for the previous three years the pair worked together on

the committee’s communications subcommittee.

From that text, a dialogue emerged. How could they make a difference? And what would they like to discuss in the *SRP NewsLink*?

“When Andre spoke, I realized how naïve I had been,” said Rockhill.

“But I had no idea what he has to go through, just being him. I wanted to educate myself.”

Mathis was happy to speak to Rockhill. “I think the one-to-one conversations are important,” he says, although cautioning, it may get uncomfortable as people try to see things from another person’s perspective.

Just what does being black impact for Mathis? Everything. Things that should be simple require extra planning.

“During the pandemic we were putting out lawn signs to support high school seniors,” said Mathis, whose school district is predominantly white. “I wanted to participate, but I made sure I wore every piece of district-branded clothing I owned, before I went out,” so that he could be easily identified as working for the school district. Mathis also shared that when he enters a store he always keeps his hands visible, no matter

the weather. “I like to make sure everyone can see my hands and see that there is nothing in them.”

Rockhill remembered an incident while door knocking for the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute. “I approached one house, and — although am I a white woman — I was scared to death because there were signs about trespassing, and ‘if you can see this sign, then you are in range of my gun,’” she said. “But what if that had been Andre walking up to the house?”

“I probably would have skipped that house,” quipped Mathis.

“I think, like Andre suggested, we should talk to each other,” as first step in healing and moving forward in the fight for racial equity, Rockhill said.

“NYSUT started this rolling and it is up to us to keep it going.”

In the vigil Mathis had said: “Our call to action must not end when the protests end; it must not end when the cameras stop rolling . . . It must be something we must do every day and work hard to ensuring.”

They plan to bring this to the SRP Advisory Committee to flesh out how to continue this work on one-to-one conversations, and other topics such as implicit bias.

You can see a recording of the vigil at: www.nysut.org/news/2020/june/vigil.

NYSUT has many social justice resources, including racial justice resources available online at www.nysut.org/socialjustice.



Free mental health referrals for members

NYSUT Social Services has a confidential referral service for members and their families.

If you are feeling anxious and overwhelmed, you may reach out to NYSUT Social Services and speak to a specialist for a one-to-one consultation.

Contact NYSUT Social Services at 800-342-9810 or visit www.nysut.org/socialservices.



Where NYSUT members learn from NYSUT members

NYSUT Education & Learning Trust offers affordable seminars for School-Related Professionals, in both synchronous and asynchronous formats. Registrants earn CTLE credit by taking ELT seminars.

Virtual seminars, presented via Zoom, provide synchronous learning. Online seminars, are available on the Moodle platform, and let SRPs learn at their own pace, within a 30-day window of their own choosing. Visit www.nysut.org/elt to view the current offerings and see how affordable professional learning can be.

NYSUT ELT, celebrating more than 40 years of providing NYSUT members with high-quality professional development. Call 800-528-6208.

SRP Leadership Conference a virtual hit

By Andre Mathis, president, Union Endicott School District Office Personnel Association

SRP leaders from across the state attended the 2020 NYSUT SRP Virtual Leadership Conference from the comfort and safety of their own homes this fall. It was the spirit of solidarity that connected us from Babylon, to Brooklyn, to Binghamton, out to Buffalo and everywhere in between.

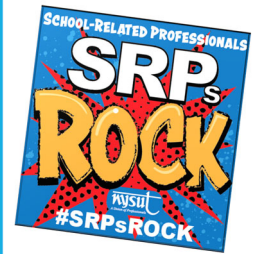
The fast-paced opening session was hosted by NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, who introduced President Andy Pallotta by screening the NYSUT produced thank you to SRPs for the work they have continued to do throughout the pandemic. You can see the video online at <http://nysut.cc/srpthanks>.

SRP leaders responded warmly to President Pallotta, Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, and Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham. Their remarks reflected the challenges SRPs have been facing since March 2020 and how support staff stepped up to meet those challenges.

They spoke about food service professionals advocacy and hard work to ensure students received meals while schools were closed and continuing to do so in this new hybrid/remote model that we are adjusting to. They spoke

about school bus drivers, monitors and aides collaborating with teacher aides, teaching assistants, and paraprofessionals to make sure that instructional materials were getting to students so they could stay the course in their school work. Stories like these and many others, summed up that SRPs are that backbone of their districts and they get the job done.

Alithia Rodriguez-Rolon, NYSUT Director of Legislation and John Green, NYSUT Legislative Representative gave an informed recap of legislation at both the federal and state levels and the impact it could have on SRPs. There was a clear message about how SRPs could impact legislation and that was through the simple action of voting, which resonated with the more than 100 attendees. SRPs were reminded to make a plan on how to vote, encourage others to vote, and more importantly actually voting. The NYSUT Member Benefits presentation boasted two raffle giveaways. On Saturday attendees could choose to take up to four of the eight different workshops that focused on improving the lives of their members and their community. One workshop, "Organizing Members in Times of



Crisis," focused on the dynamics of organizing members around issues that impact the local, and included practice in breakout rooms. The breakout sessions also allowed participants to network and meet SRP colleagues from around the state.

On Sunday, local presidents and chapter leaders participated in a Roundtable session with the SRP At-Large Directors and NYSUT 2nd VP Ron Gross, where local leaders discussed regional issues.

In all, the weekend provided up to six hours of professional development for SRPs, who rated the experience as highly successful in the survey.

Save the date: The 2021 SRP Leadership Conference is scheduled for Oct. 29-31 in Saratoga Springs.

Registration will begin in the summer at www.nysut.org/srpconference.

ERS members: access to more NYSLRS retirement information now available online



The New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) has added new member features to Retirement Online. Retirement Online provides members and retirees secure access to your retirement account information.

With Retirement Online, you can now get real-time information about your benefits, estimate your pension benefit, apply for retirement, purchase service credit, manage loan and service credit payments, submit beneficiary changes and more.

In many cases, you'll be able to use Retirement Online instead of sending

forms through the mail or calling NYSLRS. And it's safe to use – NYSLRS has incorporated many security measures similar to those used by financial institutions.

NYSLRS is committed to providing you a safe and secure experience. When registering, you'll be asked a series of questions to verify your identity. The questions are provided by a trusted third-party source, and NYSLRS does not store the questions or your answers. It is recommended you use Retirement Online with Internet Explorer or Google Chrome.

Visit the NYSLRS website at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire to learn more about Retirement Online, and take a few minutes to create your new account.

NYSLRS is a division of the Office of the State Comptroller. State Comp-

troller Thomas P. DiNapoli is the administrative head of NYSLRS.

NYSUT is hosting a free ERS workshop. See the cover page for information about, and to register for, the virtual ERS workshop on Feb. 23 or Feb. 25, 6-8 p.m.

**Most NYSUT SRPs belong to the ERS. However, certified teaching assistants belong to the state's teacher retirement system (TRS). SRPs in New York City have their own retirement plan.*

The SRP NewsLink is published periodically by NYSUT Program Services.

Visit: www.nysut.org/srp

