

# Western N.Y. NEWS & Views

SUMMER 2026

Reaching out to Retirees in Western New York Retiree Council 1—We are over 6,000 strong

 nysut



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## From the President's Desk by Kathy Brown



### Back to Basics: A Reassuring Reminder

I've been subbing and keeping on top of what is happening in education across the nation. I was inspired by the advocacy of the California parents who are concerned about the overuse of tablets in the early grades. Classrooms today may look different—but research continues to affirm what we have long known: the fundamentals still matter most.

Young children learn best through teacher-led instruction, real books, handwriting, hands-on learning, and face-to-face interaction. Experts, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend that screen use be limited, purposeful, and guided—not a primary teaching tool.

As artificial intelligence enters classrooms, the message remains clear: AI is meant to support—not replace—teachers. The heart of education is still human—connection, guidance, and experience. The methods you used—reading aloud, guiding writing, and fostering curiosity—are not outdated. They are proven practices that remain essential today.

As grandparents and mentors, your voice still matters. By sharing your experience, you help ensure the next generation benefits from both innovation and the strong foundation you helped build. What is old is new again!

We'd love to have you involved. - Kathy

## A Message from Our Coalition President, Lynn Mele

Dear Retirees,

June Primaries are over and now we know who will be on the November ballot in our districts. The Midterm elections may very well change the makeup of Congress and state governments. All 435 seats in House, 33 in the Senate, plus 36 Gubernatorial positions are up for election



If supporting a particular candidate with signs or working a phone bank is not your cup of tea, consider this opportunity...*Election Inspector*. Every county needs a few more Election Inspectors. Plus, you get paid! Call your County Board of Elections, get trained and you will play an important role in the November elections.

Yours in solidarity,  
Lynn Mele

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR: OCTOBER 19, 2026 – NYSUT RETIREES OF WNY FALL LUNCHEON  
TO WELCOME NEW RETIREES/RETIREE RECOGNITION DAY –  
THE COLUMNS ON TRANSIT ROAD, ELMA**



**For up-to-date information on RC's 1, 2 & 3,  
visit our website <http://rcwest.ny.aft.org>**

**SCAN the QR CODE to be taken to our Facebook Page!  
Make a friend request; we are a private group.**

Whether you are a new retiree or a seasoned retiree, there are many organizations around town looking for volunteer help. Take a look – one of these organizations may suit your interests!

**Literacy Volunteers in Your County**

**Local Libraries**

**Teacher's Desk**

**Honor Flight**

**Junior Achievement of WNY** (volunteers go into K-12 classrooms to teach short programs on financial literacy, careers and entrepreneurship)

**International Institute of Buffalo** (volunteers help immigrants and refugees learn English and life skills)

**Buffalo Promise Neighborhood** (volunteers assist in schools and youth programs that support students and families)

**WNY Learning Lab** (a nonprofit providing free tutoring and mentoring for students K-college)

**Explore Buffalo** (volunteers train as education docents and lead educational tours for students and community groups)

**Roger Tory Peterson Institute** (combines art and nature (wildlife art, birding, and environmental science))

**Erie Canal Discovery Center** (explains the history of the Erie Canal and Lockport Locks)

**Niagara County Historical Society and History Center** (features exhibits on the Erie Canal and Niagara County history)

**SPCA**

**Erie County Parks, Recreation and Forestry**

([www.erie.gov/parks/events](http://www.erie.gov/parks/events))

**Messinger Woods Animal Rehab**

**Local School or Town Pantry** – food and clothing

**Fenton History Center** (houses in a Victorian Mansion which has exhibits on Jamestown's industrial and cultural past)

**Museums or Historical Site Education Programs**

\*Buffalo Historical Museum

\*Buffalo Museum of Science

\*Buffalo Transportation Pierce-Arrow Museum

\*Buffalo AKG Art Museum

\*Burchfield Penney Art Center

\*Darwin D. Martin House

\*Graycliff

\*Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site

\*Buffalo and Erie County Naval \* Military Park

\*Old Fort Niagara

\*Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center

\*Michigan Street African American Heritage Center

\*Explore and More Children's Museum

\*Buffalo Niagara Heritage Village in Amherst

\*Steel Plant Museum of WNY (Lackawanna)

\*Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum (North Tonawanda)

\*Museum of disability – focusing on the history of people with disabilities and accessibility rights

\*Colored Musicians Club Jazz Museum – celebrates Buffalo's Jazz history and the African American musician's club

\*Buffalo Harbor Museum (also known as the Lower Lakes Marine Historical Society Museum)

**Announcing the 2026-2029 COALITION OFFICERS**

**President, Lynn Mele**

**Coalition 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Veronica Cavan**

**Coalition 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Liz Dolce**

**Coalition Recording Secretaries, Amy Schaffstall and Nicole Davis**

**Coalition Corresponding Secretary, Kathy Stewart**

**Coalition Co-Treasurers, Ed Haley and Mark Shanahan**

**MINI-GRANT DONATION FORM FOR 2025-2026**

NYSUT Retirees of WNY awards mini-grants up to \$500 to in-service teachers to supplement special projects. Grant monies are funded by our "Share the Wealth" drawings and retiree donations. This past year we were able to award five more mini-grants to local teachers for a total of \$7,000. Information on our mini-grants has been sent to the Union Presidents of each district in our Coalition. Check with your active teachers to see if they have been informed of this opportunity to apply. Our mini-grants help make a difference! Please consider donating to this worthwhile activity.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION AMOUNT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your donation payable to: **NYSUT Retirees of WNY** and mail to: ATTN: Mark Shanahan,  
270 Essjay Road, Williamsville, NY 14221

**ANNOUNCING THE RC 1, RC 2 AND RC3  
NEWLY ELECTED OFFICERS FOR 2026-2029**

**RC1**

President: Tom Spengler  
VPresident: Nancy Keller  
Secretary: Nicole Davis  
NYSUT-AFT Alternates:  
Tracy Beatty  
Maxine Kinsley

**RC2**

President: Eva Mroczka  
VPresident: Darcy Spengler  
Secretary: Joanne Smith  
NYSUT-AFT Alternates:  
Elizabeth Dolce  
Mark Shanahan

**RC3**

President: Lisa Mangino  
VPresident: Dave D'Amato  
Secretary: Jill Wilke  
NYSUT-AFT Alternates:  
Beth Pyskaty  
Kathleen Stewart



**CONGRATULATIONS TO SARA RODLAND –  
SANDY FELDMAN OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP AWARD**

Sara Rodland, a Buffalo educator and union leader since 1971 was recently honored with the 2016 *Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award* for her decades of service and advocacy in Buffalo's education community. Over the years, she served in various BTF roles, including building delegate chairperson, Political Action Committee member, and co-chair of the public relations committee. She was eventually elected secretary of the BTF. She also held leadership positions at the state and national levels, serving as: **NEA NY Board member and delegate, NYSUT Board member and NEA,**

**AFT, and NYSTRS delegate.** Mentorship was central to Rodland's approach. She mentored all new elementary teachers in her district and was active in the policy board for the Buffalo Teacher Resource Center, later becoming its co-director. She also volunteered as the school liaison for **The Teacher's Desk**, a nonprofit that annually distributes over \$8.5 million in classroom supplies to students in need. Rodland retired from teaching in 2010 but quickly became involved in Retiree Council 44, helping build it into a vital part of NYSUT's daytime workforce. She was elected president of RC 44 in 2017 and continues to serve in that role.

*The **Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award** recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication, and impact in advancing education and union representation. Rodland's career reflects a lifelong commitment to fighting for what is right, mentoring others, and strengthening the Buffalo education community.*

**2026 NYSUT Retiree Council Leadership Conference  
Gideon Putnum Hotel, Saratoga Springs  
June 2-3, 2026**



*This most recent conference brought together members from Retiree Councils (RC's), Retiree Service Consultants (RSC'S) and Election District (ED) Directors who serve on NYSUT's Board of Directors. Through focused discussions and workshops, participants were exposed to ways to strengthen their organizing efforts and support the future of their RC. It was a way for participants to make valuable connections with other RC leaders across the state and bring back ideas to implement in their RC. The conference program also included opportunities for personal growth and development, exercise and time to explore the area. The evening of June 2 there was a joint celebration with the American Labor Studies Center to honor AFT President, Randi Weingarten, with the Kate Mullany medal and hear from NYSUT President, Melinda Person. The conference ended with lunch the next day after more valuable workshops on best practices were offered.*

**PARTICIPATION FEE FORM (2026-2027)**

If you have not already sent in your Participation Fee Form, we urge you to support our Retiree Councils by sending in your \$10 participation fee and by encouraging others to support the work we do for all of us. Thank you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ District you retired from \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Retirement \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Make your \$10 contribution payable to **NYSUT Retirees of WNY**.  
 Mail this form to Lisa Byers, c/o NYSUT Retirees of WNY, 270 Essjay Rd., Williamsville, NY 14221

# Member Benefits covers all your summer needs!



May/June 2026

*No matter what your upcoming plans include, NYSUT Member Benefits can help turn this summer into one that you'll always remember.*

If you're seeking excitement, look no further than the Grand Circle Travel & Overseas Adventure Travel program. NYSUT members enjoy reduced pricing (at least a \$150 savings per trip along with many other discount opportunities) on a variety of international and domestic tours, including new "Immersion" adventures (8-12 days in length) designed for travelers seeking a more active style of adventure. "Immersion" tours combine iconic destinations, authentic cultural experiences, and dynamic outdoor activities.

Transform your indoor or outdoor

living space with a variety of options from **Purchasing Power**. Eligible NYSUT members can browse from thousands of items and pay over 12 months through payroll deduction or Automated Clearing House (ACH) withdrawals. Save 20% on your first order and at least 10% on all subsequent purchases. While not a discount program, Purchasing Power offers the benefits of no credit check, no hidden fees, and fixed payments.

Thinking about upgrading your home with new appliances, countertops, or kitchen cabinets? The **Buyer's Edge, Inc.** buying service program can be

used to purchase these items and many others such as new or used vehicles, televisions, furniture, mattresses, desktop and laptop computers, home security systems, and more (all backed by a low price guarantee). With Buyer's Edge, you have the option of purchasing online, by phone, or in-person (in certain benefit categories and geographic regions).

**LEARN MORE  
ABOUT THESE  
BENEFITS AND  
MANY OTHERS**

SCAN ME



Scan the QR code, visit [mb-nysut.org/summerplanning](http://mb-nysut.org/summerplanning), or call 800-626-8101.