

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

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Oh no, he didn't!

Flanagan calls Our Unions 'forces of evil'

By Ned Hoskin
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He's going to wish he never said that. State Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, who blocked APPR reform at the end of the 2018 legislative session, labeled Our Union as one of the "forces of evil."

He said it Oct. 15 on the "Capitol Pressroom" radio show hosted by Susan Arbetter. Why? Because NYSUT is keeping our promise to hold senators accountable for their votes against our teacher evaluation reform bill.

"Sen. Flanagan must be getting desperate if he's saying that more than 600,000 educators are forces of evil," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "He had a chance to stand with teachers by reforming the state's broken testing and evaluation system but instead he chose to cozy up to Wall Street billionaires and the charter industry."

You see, NYSUT, the Assembly and the vast majority of senators simply wanted to approve a bill that would

fix the flawed teacher evaluation law and relieve the testing burden, but Leader Flanagan wanted his own bill that would add a huge gift to his donors in the charter school industry, which he knew would fail.

It's not about Democrats or Republicans, Pallotta said. It's about consequences for failing to keep a promise.

"Whether you are a Republican or Democrat, we did not endorse you if you supported Sen. Flanagan's poison pill bill," Pallotta said. "NYSUT wants leadership in Albany that supports public schools and public school teachers."

The backlash was fast and furious. "One word for Sen. Flanagan," said Phil Cleary of the North Syracuse EA: "D'Amato" — referring to the incumbent U.S. senator from Long Island who attacked teachers in 1998. Thanks to NYSUT, he lost in an upset to now Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

"This is uncool, dude," tweeted 2017 State Teacher of the Year Amy Hysick. "I consider myself (and all of my teacher colleagues) a force for

good. I stand with my union."

Scott M. Dolan of the North Colonie TA tweeted: "Is it evil to want fully funded public schools? Is it evil to fight against the privatization of public education? Is it evil to demand an end to our test and punish education system? We gave you enough chances."

Check out our @nysut Twitter moment: Your response was swift, just, pointed — and occasionally hilarious.

"Let's keep working hard to ensure that the biggest response happens on Election Day," Pallotta said. "See our Voter Guide coming in the mail, soon!"

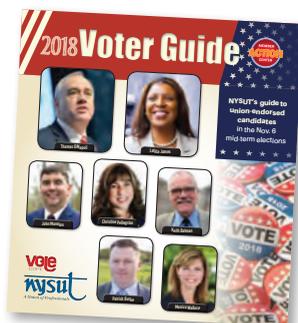


NED HOSKIN
NYSUT SRP Board member Karen Arthmann, left, and Pittsford District TA's Kim Chesko send a message: We will remember in November!

Watch for NYSUT's 2018 Voter Guide

NYSUT members registered to vote in New York State will receive the union's 2018 Voter Guide to union-endorsed candidates in the Nov. 6 mid-term elections. Look for it in the mail about a week before Election Day.

Up and down the ballot are candidates who will support students and public education, who will stand with working



families and who will fight for the issues and values we share.

The guide provides the complete list of NYSUT-endorsed candidates. Please take the

time to read and consider this information before you cast your ballot.

The union uses an exhaustive, democratic process to endorse Republicans and Democrats who share the union's commitment to public education, health care, retirement security, the right to bargain collectively and a strong middle class. It's a long process, but it ensures the endorsed candidates have truly earned NYSUT's support.

COMING UP

Nov. 2-3
NYSUT Women's Committee meets, Latham



Nov. 6
Election Day

Nov. 12-16
American Education Week



Nov. 20
NYS School-Related Professionals Recognition Day



Nov. 25
International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Dec. 1
World AIDS Day

Dec. 7
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

Dec. 7-8
NYSUT Subject Area Committees meet, Latham

Dec. 24-Jan. 2
NYSUT offices closed

ON THE COVER

On Nov. 6, remember to vote for educators and public schools.

Growth scores aren't worth the paper they're printed on

By Sylvia Saunders
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

As teachers received their state-required evaluations, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta suggested the mysterious “growth scores” that pretend to measure their effectiveness aren't worth the paper they are printed on.

“They should be tossed right into the wastepaper basket,” said Pallotta, noting these so-called growth scores are based on last spring's long, frustrating and unreliable state standardized tests that didn't produce useful information for anyone.

Pallotta noted the bogus growth scores — which are tied to indecipherable mathematical formulas and the invalid, inaccurate standardized tests — underscore why it's so important for state lawmakers to act immediately to pass evaluation reform legislation.

Legislation to vastly improve the teacher evaluation process sailed through the Assembly last spring and the governor indicated he would sign it. The Senate companion bill, S.8301, garnered bipartisan support from 55 of the 63 senators, but fell victim to the charter industry's lust for even more funding in the session's waning hours.

“This legislation makes the evaluation system fairer. It would once and for all decouple these flawed standardized tests from teacher evaluations and permanently eliminate the state growth score,” Pallotta said. “Passing this bill — which will return evaluations to local control and help end the state's testing obsession — will be NYSUT's highest legislative priority in the coming session.”



NYSUT wins major victory on opt outs

Sues SED over other problematic ESSA regs

By Sylvia Saunders
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Responding to concerns voiced by NYSUT and hundreds of educators and parents, the State Board of Regents reversed plans in the state's proposed Every Student Succeeds Act regulations to punish schools with high numbers of students opting out of state standardized tests.

“Parents and educators spoke passionately and the Regents listened,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “No school should face any sanction — or the stigma of being placed on a list of academically deficient schools — because parents refuse to have their children take flawed and misused state standardized tests.”

Specifically, the Regents rejected ESSA regulations that would have wrongly diverted federal Title I funds from students attending schools with a less than 95 percent participation rate. In addition, the Regents will now allow schools with high opt-out numbers to exit state accountability

lists as long as students are otherwise meeting academic performance targets. The Regents also prohibited the commissioner from designating schools with low test participation rates as Schools Under Registration Review.

While NYSUT celebrated the victory defending the opt-out rights of parents, state officials unfortunately did not listen to union concerns over other ESSA regs that violate collective bargaining. As a result, NYSUT, along with its local unions in Syracuse and Rochester, filed suit against the Regents and SED, charging that some regulations implementing ESSA exceed the state's legal authority and unconstitutionally interfere with collective bargaining agreements.

“Collective bargaining is the lifeblood of unionism,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “We will always be fierce in protecting our members' rights and the sanctity of their contracts.” The lawsuit seeks to block illegal regulations that would usurp protections negotiated by locals in Syracuse, Rochester and other

districts across the state.

NYSUT's lawsuit, filed in state Supreme Court in Albany, challenges regulations for schools classified as needing Comprehensive Support and Improvement. The lawsuit alleges that by seeking to limit incoming teacher transfers at CSI schools to only teachers rated “highly effective” or “effective” under the state's broken evaluation system, the ESSA regulations exceed SED's authority and violate the Taylor Law.

Similarly, NYSUT is challenging regulations that would limit hiring when SED closes or phases out schools under corrective action. Under the new regulations, SED would circumvent agreed-upon contracts and require that schools only assign teachers to newly constituted schools if they have been rated “highly effective” or “effective” for three consecutive years.

“The Legislature has not approved — or even considered — any such thing,” Pallotta said. “SED must not be allowed to try to accomplish through regulations what has not passed the Legislature.”

Adjuncts are front and center for NYSUT Higher Education Policy Council

NYSUT's higher education local union leaders are stepping up efforts to serve the growing number of adjunct faculty members and make sure they know the value of sticking with the union.

At the union's Higher Education Policy Council meeting this fall, leaders reported a wide range of organizing activities, including adjunct town hall meetings, personal visits and education efforts explaining contract wins specifically for adjuncts.

The council, which advises the union on higher ed policy, also discussed a NYSUT survey of SUNY community college adjuncts on their experiences with collecting unemployment benefits, SUNY's upcoming new state funding proposal for community colleges, efforts to start lobbying earlier and a report on the state's Excelsior Scholarship program.



From left: Higher Ed Policy Council Chair Roberta Elins, United College Employees — FIT; Bethany Gizzi, Monroe CCFA; and NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango discuss the union's adjunct survey.

EL WISE NOISSETTE

Free union programs offer student loan help

By Kara Smith

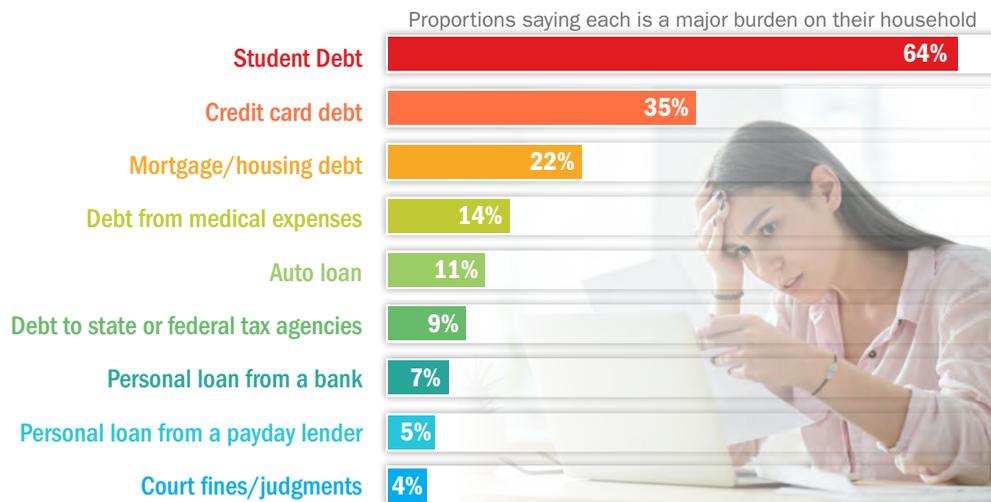
ksmith@nysutmail.org

More than 44 million Americans — including NYSUT members — are struggling to pay off student loans, laboring under an average of \$35,000 in loan debt after graduation, and contributing to \$1.4 trillion in student debt nationally. Your union is here to help.

NYSUT offers the AFT Student Debt Clinic program in partnership with its national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers. The free, 90-minute clinics are available statewide and teach members about two federal programs to reduce student loan payments and help them become debt free sooner: Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Income-Driven Repayment Plans.

Alyssa Picard, director of the AFT's higher education division, said IDR plans calculate monthly loan payments based on a loan holder's annual salary and number of household

STUDENT DEBT: MAJOR DRIVER OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES



SOURCE: WWW.AFT.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PPT_AFT-MEMBER-DEBT_HART2018.PDF

dependents, and are available to qualified federal loan holders. Under IDR plans, loans are forgiven after 20 or 25 years, depending upon program enrollment.

PSLF plans are only available to qualified individuals with direct federal loans who work in the public sector, including public education and public health. The plans offer tax-free loan forgiveness after 120 on-time payments, roughly 10 years. Both plans require applicants to work

full-time and not have loans in default.

"The clinics help us provide members with the information to make informed choices," said Paul Pecorale, NYSUT second vice president.

Carrie Dentino, a member of the Utica Teachers Association, enrolled in a PSLF plan three years ago. She attended a debt clinic in Utica this summer. "It's a good way for members, especially young members, to find out what's available," she said.

J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT

secretary-treasurer agreed.

"Unscrupulous companies sometimes prey on struggling loan holders," he said. "Don't fall for it. Reach out to your union for free, accurate guidance to manage your loans."

Laura Vaughn, a South Huntington Paraprofessional Association member, knows first-hand the value of good information. After receiving a call from a company promising to reduce her student loans — if she paid them \$1,200 — Vaughn's instincts told her to keep looking. She visited the NYSUT Member

Benefits website where she learned about Cambridge Credit Counseling, a free, endorsed union benefit. After speaking with a representative, Vaughn was able to reduce her monthly payment.

Contact your local president to request a student debt clinic in your area. Visit <http://memberbenefits.nysut.org> to learn more about union-provided student loan and debt consolidation options.

AFT lawsuit seeks justice for student loan holders

By Kara Smith

ksmith@nysutmail.org

A lawsuit filed this fall by the American Federation of Teachers, one of NYSUT's national affiliates, accuses student loan servicer Navient of blocking access to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program for thousands of eligible loan holders.

The PSLF program was created by Congress in 2007 to provide debt relief for public service employees.

The suit alleges that Navient knowingly provided inaccurate information and discouraged qualified borrowers from enrolling in the PSLF program to avoid losing accounts. Although Navient and other loan servicers are legally mandated to help borrowers access it, the PSLF program is administered solely by competing loan servicer, FedLoan.

"I have no expectations of any compensation or relief, but I would like to achieve some social justice," said Monroe Community College

Faculty Association member Eldon Gaede, one of nine educators named in the suit. He said he hoped his participation in the suit would draw attention to Navient's practices and help "alleviate the pain and suffering of others."

After requesting information on debt relief, Gaede was told he was ineligible and advised to defer his payments. If he'd received accurate information, he would be more than halfway through a PSLF plan. Instead, at age 68, he has 10 more years of

payments.

"I commend the AFT for pursuing justice on behalf of these members," said Andy Pallotta, NYSUT president.

According to the lawsuit, Navient encouraged struggling loan holders to defer payments rather than enroll in an income adjusted payment plan; and advised borrowers to consolidate their payments into loans that didn't qualify for the PSLF program.

For more information, visit www.aft.org/sites/default/files/hiland-navient-complaint_100318.pdf.

Union continues press for safe classroom temps



The dog days of summer are behind us, but maintaining safe classroom temperatures remains a union priority.

Aging school buildings across the state were put to the test this year with temperatures in May and June rivaling late-summer. The situation was not much better when students returned in September.

Educators have reported classrooms so stifling that students were falling asleep and complaining of nausea, dizziness and headaches. Others noted air quality so bad from the heat that teachers and students were struggling to concentrate, function, and even breathe.

In September and October, teachers were still reporting uncomfortable and sickening indoor temperatures ranging from the mid 80s to the 90s – not including humidity.

NYSUT delegates passed a resolution at the 2018 Representative Assembly directing the union to pressure lawmakers to enact legislation so that temperatures in schools conform to federal OSHA standards, a range of 68–76 degrees when occupied. But while NYSUT's Legislative Department was able to convince bill sponsors in both houses to agree to lower the maximum building occupancy temperature from 90 to 82 degrees, the bill was not passed out of either education committee at the end of session.

The union will seek to have the bill reintroduced in January. NYSUT is also advocating for the State Education Department to develop guidelines for procedures to close schools when safe temperatures cannot be maintained. SED requires a minimum of 65 degrees for cold months but no warm weather maximum.

The union is encouraging K-12 and higher education members to document unsafe classroom temperatures. Download a two-week temperature log at www.nysut.org/heat.

SRPs are fighting for our union

By Liza Frenette
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Teaching assistant Claudia Leone is a go-getter who spent the better part of her summer knocking on doors to speak with Chhattauqua County colleagues about why it's worth being in a union.

"It was almost a life-changing experience," she said. "I met a lot of hardworking School-Related Professionals. Some single moms, some working two jobs to make ends meet. It's tough for a lot of people. We have to bring everyone up."

On those hot summer days, Leone said she sat on porches and visited. "I talked to them about strength in numbers; about how we fight for collective bargaining, due process representation. I talked to them about job safety, job security, living wage."

In fact, SRPs are benefiting from a new state law signed in September that provides enhanced employment protections to the public sector labor class, including SRPs. The union-backed law aims to prevent unfair terminations by ensuring workers now receive due process, have the right to union representation, and will be provided written notice if charges are brought against them.

SRPs are "a phenomenal group of people," said Leone, a member of the Brocton Teachers Association.

Cheryl Rockhill, who serves on NYSUT's statewide SRP Advisory Committee with Leone, also spent the summer knocking on doors — along with a lot of time driving around three rural counties in northern New York. "I covered a lot of miles," she said.

Rockhill, who works as a bus and school monitor and transportation assistant, visited about 300 educators. Only one declined to recommit to the union.



Claudia Leone

"People knew that what they have is because someone in the union fought for it," said Rockhill, president of the Brushton-Moira Support Staff.

Their work was part of NYSUT's successful campaigns to keep members in the union and to attract new hires. Since the *Janus* decision



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

From left, Angie Rivera, Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals president, chats with NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham at the union's fall SRP leadership conference.

allowing employees to opt out of paying dues, NYSUT members have been spending time with members talking about the meaning of union.

"I'm proud to say we're a 100 percent local, including all nine new SRPs," said Kim McEvoy, chair of the SRP Advisory Committee and a member of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and SRPs.

This kind of grassroots action helps people understand the power of collective voice and the history behind it. It is what has fed civil rights movements, social justice causes and employee bargaining. It leads to stronger workplace rights and to better working conditions and pay.



@WPTAPRESIDENTS



New members commit to the union

Unions across the state started the school year off by welcoming new educators to the district — and the union. Left, new members of the White Plains Teachers Association are union proud!

NYSUT helps members pick up the pieces

By Liza Frenette

lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Heather Doyle, a newly minted retiree, was at her home in Kirkwood when two hours of hard rain slammed down in mid-August, flooding parts of the Southern Tier. Downstairs, in a walk-out basement she had renovated, were her elderly parents, including her wheelchair-bound mother.

"It was terrifying," she said. "The most terrifying thing was having my parents." Doyle called the fire department and volunteers helped get her mother upstairs and then carry her out into her dad's car. The basement filled with three feet of water.

"We were standing on my front doorstep and it was like an island," said the Maine-Endwell Teachers Association retired physical education teacher. They lived in a motel for three-and-a-half weeks.

Doyle lost her truck, her furnace, and everything in her parent's living area. Her mother's power recliner was ruined, along with a refrigerator, washer and dryer.

She is one of about a dozen Southern Tier educators who have received support from the NYSUT



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Vestal Teachers Association member Susan Vanderpool, whose home was heavily damaged by a summer flood, is grateful for assistance from the union. The only money she received to help cover damages was from the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund.

Disaster Relief Fund to help recover from flooding that occurred in July and again in August. The NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund is supported by donations from NYSUT members and staff.

"We totally had to gut everything," Doyle said, crediting the support of "awesome" friends who helped her clear out the property. After her house was aired out, a contractor put up new dry wall.

In a separate freakish summer flood, tons of boulders and debris filled the yard of high school social studies teacher Susan Vanderpool. Landscaping and fencing were ripped out and swept away, her basement and deck flooded, steps and sidewalks were broken, and her dogs and a horse barely escaped death.

"The only money I

got from probably \$50,000 in damages was \$500 from the union," said Vanderpool, a member of the Vestal TA. "I'm very grateful to NYSUT."

High waters from a creek near the Waverly home she's lived in for 58 years clogged a bridge, Vanderpool said. "The little creek is dry most of the year. This was a flash flood ... an incredible force of water. It was surreal."

Following the July flood, she spent long, 14-hour days, with help from family members, clearing about 80 tons of rocks and debris left on her property from the flood. Insurance did not cover any damage, she reported. Her family has lived on the property for nearly 100 years. "Nothing like this has ever happened," she said. A narrower bridge opening from work done in 2015 may have contributed, and she said she now lives in fear that her home will be destroyed. In August, waters rose dangerously high again.

"When it rains hard, I get very nervous," she said. "I have a whole new appreciation for what people have

gone through who've been flooded."

She now has federal flood insurance.

HOW TO HELP



The NYSUT Disaster Relief and Scholarship Fund, which depends on voluntary donations, provides relief support for eligible losses stemming from: man-made occurrences (such as an accidental house fire); natural disasters not designated as federally declared qualified disasters; and federally declared qualified disasters.

The fund accepts online donations via credit card and PayPal at www.nysut.org/disasterrelief. Make your check payable to "NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund" and mail to: NYSUT Headquarters, Attn: Disaster Relief, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, New York 12110. NYSUT assumes 100 percent of the administrative costs associated with the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund. Applications are also available online for NYSUT members needing assistance.



Susan Vanderpool, Vestal TA, spent weeks hauling tons of rocks and debris that flooded her property, ripping out hedges, flowers, fences and ruining her basement and deck.

Poughkeepsie TA challenges district's unfair APPR ratings

By Sylvia Saunders

ssaunder@nysutmail.org

In a powerful show of activism, hundreds of Poughkeepsie Public Schools Teachers Association members showed up at school district offices to protest evaluation ratings torpedoed by poor results on a single test.

The line snaked out the door as members waited after school on two late September days to officially file time-stamped appeals.

In all, more than 275 of PPSTA's 380 members were rated either "developing" or "ineffective," putting them at risk of being placed on punitive Teacher Improvement Plans, or TIPs. The stakes were even higher for untenured teachers.

It was the high school English Language Arts Regents that slammed the Poughkeepsie teachers. Under an APPR plan pushed by a former superintendent, the district used the passing rate on the 11th grade Regents Exam as a group measure.

"We told them using a group measure based on a single assessment was a recipe for disaster, years ago," said PPSTA President Stephanie Green. "We questioned it all the way to the State Education Department, but we were told it was not negotiable."

The high-needs district chose the 11th grade ELA Regents Exam



PROVIDED

because it included a high number of students and usually about 70 percent passed it, Green said.

But this past year, after the state changed the 11R ELA grading scale and only 48 percent of the students passed the exam, the single test result sunk nearly every teacher's rating. Green said a small number of secondary teachers, whose ratings were tied to their own students' Regents exam scores, were not affected by the group measure.

Poughkeepsie teachers line up to formally appeal their unfair APPR ratings, as local president Stephanie Green, inset, makes sure their paperwork is in order.

"It's hard when your rating is tied to test scores of students who aren't even in your classroom," Green said. "And it puts a tremendous amount of pressure on the people who are teaching 11th grade ELA. They literally cried the first year."

When the unfair ratings were issued in the first weeks of school, Green said it was crucial to get information out and build solidarity.

"We made sure everyone knew their right to appeal and how to do it — even the exact language to do so," Green said. "We also made it clear that we needed everyone in the pool — that, in the grand scheme, this affected everyone."

Green was stunned by the turnout. Aside from the fact that virtually every

aggrieved teacher showed up to file their challenge, Green was heartened to see so many other PPSTA members turn out to show their strong support for their colleagues.

"We had people who were rated 'highly effective,' and even people who were out on maternity leave," Green said. "It really turned into a rallying event."

With support from NYSUT labor relations specialist Jeff Benton and staff in NYSUT's Research and Educational Services Department, Green met with district officials, including the new superintendent and legal counsel. "The superintendent agreed with us that APPR should be used to help staff grow, not to punish," Green said.

The district and union are hammering out a solution to the appeals issue to ensure that no one is harmed by this year's situation.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango praised the Poughkeepsie local's activism on behalf of its members and noted how important it is for districts to listen to the voice of the teachers' union when designing evaluation systems.

"The APPR needs to be returned to local control so that teachers are at the table to create evaluation systems that support them and help them grow," DiBrango said. "Now is the time for legislators to make changes to the law."

[BRIEFS]

NYSUT welcomes three new unions

Educators at three institutions, including two in Buffalo, have voted to unionize and affiliate with NYSUT.

The new units represent

educators at the Health Sciences Charter School in Buffalo; the staff at the Stanley G. Falk School in Buffalo; and nurses in the Uniondale School District on Long Island. The three new NYSUT local unions will represent more than 300 educators and health care professionals.

"Educators in charter schools and the teachers, counselors and other professionals serving children with special needs — like those at the Falk School — deserve a meaningful voice in the decisions that impact their lives as professionals and the students they care so much about,"

said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "Like so many workers, these educators and nurses see the value in joining together in a union to collectively seek higher wages, better health insurance and improved working conditions. We welcome them to the union family."

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Navigating life together

Getting to know .. Detrius Dixie



Tell us about your job and why you love what you do.

My job as a teaching assistant consists of working in the Computer Lab in the Online Credit Recovery Program (OCR) at Edison. I work alongside a great team of content specialists assisting students with

instructional support in the learning platform. This program offers a chance to recover credits for scholars who have previously failed courses. The flexibility of the OCR Program gives the students the chance to do work before, during and after school.

I love what I do because I get to be part of a school community that provides other alternatives for children to be successful. I am able to encourage and help students who struggle in the traditional classroom setting. There is nothing like seeing a frown turn into a smile, or noticing my students' confidence shooting through the roof when they complete the course. It is an amazing feeling, and I am blessed to be a part of this on a daily basis.

How do you make a difference?

I make a difference by building relationships and being part of the village. I speak positive affirmations and speak from a place of love and understanding. I always remember where my blessings come from.

How are you involved with your union?

I am a building representative and a newly elected executive board member. I have attended union trainings and leadership conferences. I volunteer in phone banks, campaigns and also attend school board meetings. I always bring the information I acquired from the different trainings and meetings back to my members in the building.

I got involved with the union because of the persistence of some of my local leaders and members. RAP

members in the building would seek me out to assist them with issues or concerns. They needed someone to represent them and they nominated me. Since I like challenges and enjoy learning, I decided to run and accepted the position.

Tell us about your community engagement, hobbies.

I try to give 110 percent to the union, work and my community. I am very family oriented and spend lots of time with them. I love listening to music and supporting many musical events. I like all genres of music, but my favorite is gospel, hands down.

Detrius Dixie is a teaching assistant at Edison Career and Technology High School in Rochester. She was interviewed by Angie Rivera, president of the Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals and a member of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee.

Nov. 20 is SRP Recognition Day

New York State SRP Recognition Day, celebrated this year on Nov. 20, is a time to recognize the hard work School-Related Professionals do every day on the front lines and behind the scenes to help our students learn and our schools run efficiently.

SRP Recognition Day acknowledges the contributions of education professionals in helping to educate the whole student. NYSUT's 90,000 SRP members perform a variety of key roles in schools, working as bus drivers, school nurses, custodians, secretaries, food service workers, teaching assistants and aides and in dozens of other job titles. Officially established

in a law passed in 2007, SRP Recognition Day falls on the third Tuesday of each November, often during American Education Week.

We want to hear about your celebrations. How will your local celebrate SRPs this year? Share your ideas with NYSUT via Facebook and twitter, #SRPRecognitionDay.

Also, don't forget to enter the 2018

contest. To be eligible, simply email photos and information about your celebration to Leslie Fottrell, NYSUT SRP coordinator, at lfottrel@nysutmail.org by Dec. 11.

Two first-place winners will receive a two-for-one for the 2019 SRP Conference at the Desmond Hotel in Albany (an approximate

\$250 value) and have their event featured in a NYSUT publication!

Order SRP Recognition Day supplies now

Start planning now to celebrate SRPs in your district. NYSUT has produced a packet that includes celebration ideas, posters, fliers and stickers to help in your festivities. Supplies are limited. Be sure to order kits by Nov. 1 to guarantee delivery by Nov. 20. Orders placed after this date may not be filled. Materials are also available via download. For more information and to order your kit, visit www.nysut.org/eReg/SRPREC2018.



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There's no quit in this 48-year-old future teacher

By Matt Smith

msmith@nysutmail.org

A few years back, scientists identified what they called a “reward molecule” — essentially, higher levels of dopamine — as the link in individuals who develop positive lifelong habits, such as the ability to persevere.

Should budding biology teacher Calvin Edwards ever work this discovery into his classroom curriculum somewhere down the road, he might consider using himself as Exhibit A.

Edwards, a veteran paraprofessional in New York City's public schools who has long dreamed of becoming a science teacher himself, worked on obtaining his degree

— for 26 years.

And finally, at age 48, Calvin Edwards graduated in May with his bachelor's in biology and a minor in education. He went on to pass the edTPA. And soon, he'll be tackling his other certification requirements.

“A colleague said to me, ‘Time's going to keep passing, so you might

as well do the things that will make you a better person,’” said Edwards, a teaching assistant at PS 32 in the Bronx and a UFT member, explaining his refusal to quit. “I just felt like I didn't fulfill my goal. I knew that I could do it.”

So, too, did NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, who Edwards assisted in the classroom back when the statewide union president was teaching in New York City.

“The kids loved him,” Pallotta said of Edwards, who works with students with special needs.

“They looked up to him. He's a role model. Really, he's a gentle giant.”

As Edwards would tell you, it was never his plan to take nearly 30 years to earn his degree when he first entered community college in 1992. But, as often happens in life, he encountered obstacles along the way.

There were kids. Health issues. Family obligations that required him to take on extra jobs. Then, after finally graduating in 2000, Edwards began pursuing his bachelor's. But he encountered more hurdles, this time on the academic end.

“The CUNY system didn't have the courses I needed at night, so I got stuck,” he said. So, for the next 17 years, Edwards would take the

courses he needed whenever they would be offered. It was slow going, but thanks to a UFT benefit that paid for 6 credits per semester, Edwards was able to continue and complete his education.

“I got an education pretty much for free. I had that benefit available to me, why let it go to waste? I always considered it part of my salary. So, I made use of it.”

Pallotta said the perseverance that Edwards displayed in the long pursuit of his degree is the very attribute that makes him an effective educator.

“Calvin's a person of faith who's always seen education as the pathway to a brighter future,” said Pallotta. “He is someone who never gives up on kids. And he's a person of integrity who always does what's right for his students, his school and his community.”

Edwards said his relationship with Pallotta — whom he said has been a friend for 20 years — helped keep him going.

“When I finally told him I graduated, he was so proud of me,” said Edwards, choking up. “He's like a brother.”

By this time next year, Edwards said he expects to be in the classroom, teaching biology to students in either junior high or high school. Credit his perseverance; his union benefits; the encouragement of his colleagues. Credit his “reward molecule.”

Credit, too, a good, old-fashioned dose of motherly guilt.

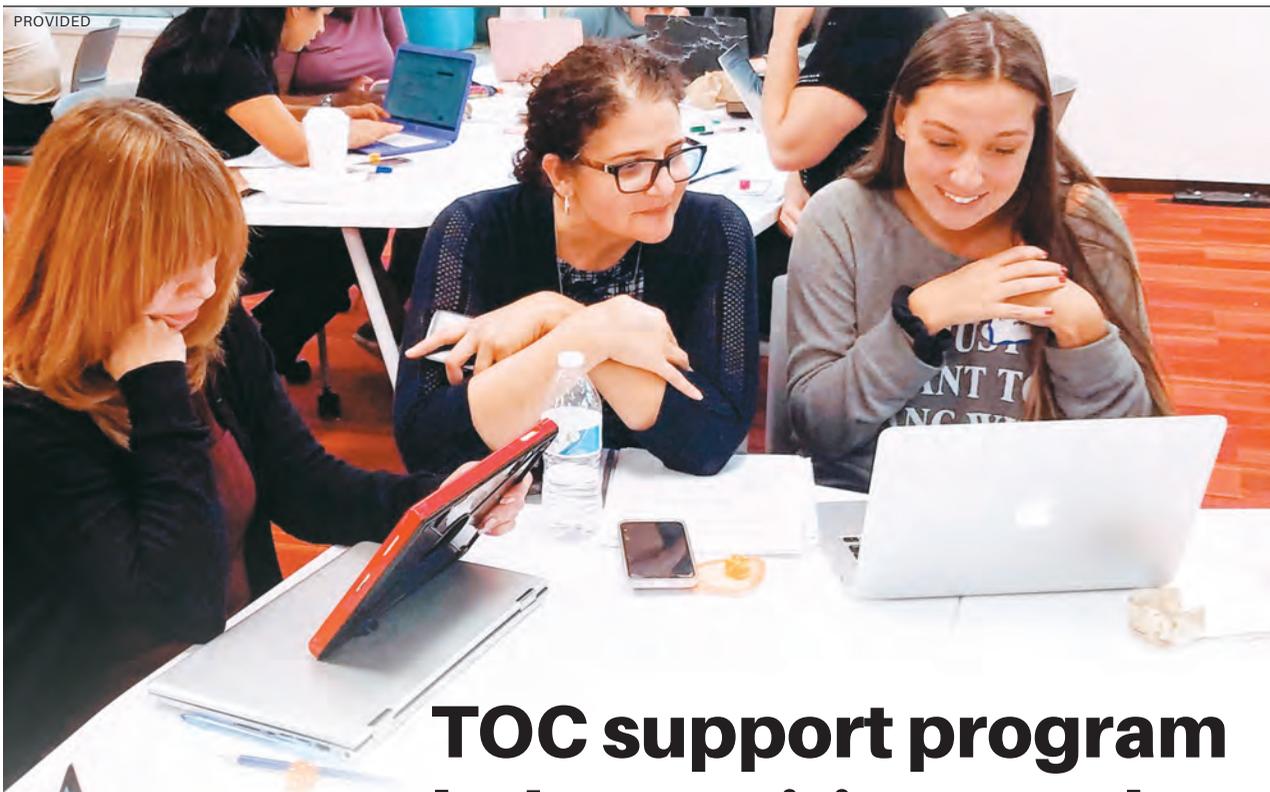
“I had a conversation with my mom,” Edwards laughed. “She said, ‘What's going on? Are you going to wait 'til you're 50 to graduate?’ So, that was motivation also.”



JONATHAN FICKIES

United Federation of Teachers member Calvin Edwards, a teaching assistant at PS 32 in the Bronx, has almost completed all of the requirements to realize his dream of being a teacher.

PROVIDED



TOC support program helps aspiring teachers every step of the way

By **Sylvia Saunders**
ssaunder@nysutmail.org

For Manuela Hurtado, a student in SUNY Old Westbury's Teacher Opportunity Corps (TOC), seeing is believing — and motivational.

An aspiring bilingual teacher, Hurtado said the TOC program's intensive, hands-on approach gave her an early chance to see what a bilingual classroom looks like.

"TOC gives us a head start on student teaching by allowing us to see what actually goes on inside the classroom, not just read about it in a textbook," Hurtado said. After entering TOC in her sophomore year, Hurtado was amazed when she got to see a bilingual kindergarten in action.

"Sitting in on that classroom expanded my vision of the bilingual educator I would like to be one day," said Hurtado, who came to this

country at the age of 3 but never had the chance to attend a bilingual program. "I saw myself in many of these students and I know they will be so much more prepared than I was."

For TOC intern Joshua Barrett, his special ed fieldwork with one of Freeport's mentor teachers has been such a positive experience that he's chosen to continue his placements in her grade 3-4 inclusion class. "I really like her teaching style and I've learned so much," Barrett said.

The early field placements, which continue each semester right up until the traditional student teaching placement senior year, are among the many supportive activities under a statewide grant program to 16 public and private colleges.

"The purpose of TOC is to increase the number of historically underrepresented and economically disadvantaged individuals in teaching careers," said Nancy Brown, dean of

Old Westbury's School of Education.

TOC interns, who must meet admission requirements including a 3.0 grade point average, must be full-time students taking at least 12 credits per semester.

"Our goal is to recruit and support high quality teacher candidates and create a supportive learning community," said Michelle Wohlman-Izakson, an adjunct professor and assistant director of SUNY Old Westbury's TOC. "We emphasize important lifelong skills and culturally responsive teaching. We want to give them all the tools they need to hit the ground running and be successful."

To do this, TOC offers a wide range of support, including tutoring, mentoring, ongoing professional enrichment and leadership opportunities. Aside from the traditional teacher education coursework, interns attend "professional polish" seminars every semester, which include guest

SUNY Old Westbury's Michelle Wohlman-Izakson, center, works with TOC students during a popular "Facing Fractions without Fear" workshop.

speakers and practical workshops such as how to set up a classroom — and tips on how to pay for it.

"The workshops are really valuable," Barrett said. "Last year, we had a resume workshop with a number of principals who came in and told us what they look for, what stands out."

Student interns are encouraged to submit ideas for future seminars, and at times, lead them themselves. They attend various professional learning events sponsored by area schools, colleges and organizations such as The Regional Center for Autism.

"The financial support TOC offers our interns toward tuition, books, certification exam fees, etc., is important; however, our TOC has grown to offer more," said Project Co-Director Jeanne Shimizu, a member of UUP-Old Westbury.

Hurtado agreed, saying the TOC support system is crucial to getting over all the hurdles to becoming a teacher. "Being part of TOC allows us to network with students and faculty on a deeper level," she said. "We are brought into a community of advisers and professionals who help us get through every step of the process."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said expanding promising programs like TOC is essential if the state wants to recruit and retain a more diverse teaching pool. "All students, whether in urban, suburban or rural schools, benefit from a diverse teacher workforce."

TOC grants

The state's Teacher Opportunity Corps II program provides \$3 million annually to 16 public and private colleges, including: SUNY Cortland, Oswego and Old Westbury; and CUNY Brooklyn, Hunter, Medgar Evers, Lehman and Queens colleges.

EDUCATORS ON

Mannion is the man in Senate District 50

I'm a teacher, a dad and a lifelong Central New Yorker, not a politician," says John Mannion. "We can't depend on career politicians to fix Albany. We have to do it ourselves."

Last spring, NYSUT endorsed Mannion, an Advanced Placement biology teacher and local union leader, for state Senate. Union leaders said the 50th Senate District around Syracuse deserves "a dedicated, tireless leader who is knowledgeable and passionate about public education."

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said Mannion, president of the West Genesee Teachers Association and a member of the Onondaga County Teachers Association, would bring a classroom teacher's perspective to the Senate.

He runs on the Democrat, Working Families and Women's Equality Party lines for the seat vacated by retiring Sen. John DeFrancisco. "Too often," Mannion says, "whether it is the

pay-to-play culture or just an entrenched system, I have felt ignored by our elected officials. I'm running for state Senate because I want to be a part of the solution and put public service at the forefront."

Mannion outlines common sense reforms he wants to see enacted immediately to help provide the public service residents of the region deserve:

1. Set term limits for all state elected officials, including a maximum of seven terms for state senators.
2. Get big money out of politics, primarily by closing the LLC loophole that allows individuals to use corporations to circumvent normal contribution limits.
3. Ban outside income for state legislators.
4. Establish an independent redistricting commission to end gerrymandering. The constitutional amendment passed in 2014 that allows for a Legislature-appointed commission is a good first step, but

we need to go further to eliminate the influence of elected officials.

5. Comptroller oversight of public-funded projects.
- Mannion is a graduate of NYSUT's Member Organizing Institute, which helped rally opposi-

tion to the proposed constitutional convention last year. He also emerged from NYSUT's Pipeline Project, which identifies and trains candidates to run for public office. The project helped NYSUT members Monica Wallace of Buffalo and Christine Pellegrino from Nassau County earn Assembly seats in 2017. NYSUT members Pat Burke and Keith Batman are also running for Assembly seats this November.

It's a trend noted by the news media and teachers unions: Motivated by education cuts, over-testing and a spirit of activism, educators are running for legislative seats across the country. A new *Education Week* analysis shows that "teachers are not only running — they're winning."

The *Ed Week* analysis found 158 classroom teachers running for state legislatures; 101 have now moved on to



Nicole Terminelli, Massena FT, fourth from left, running for St. Lawrence County Legislature, with support from local unions.

PROVIDED

the general election. Thirty-seven of them had to win primaries.

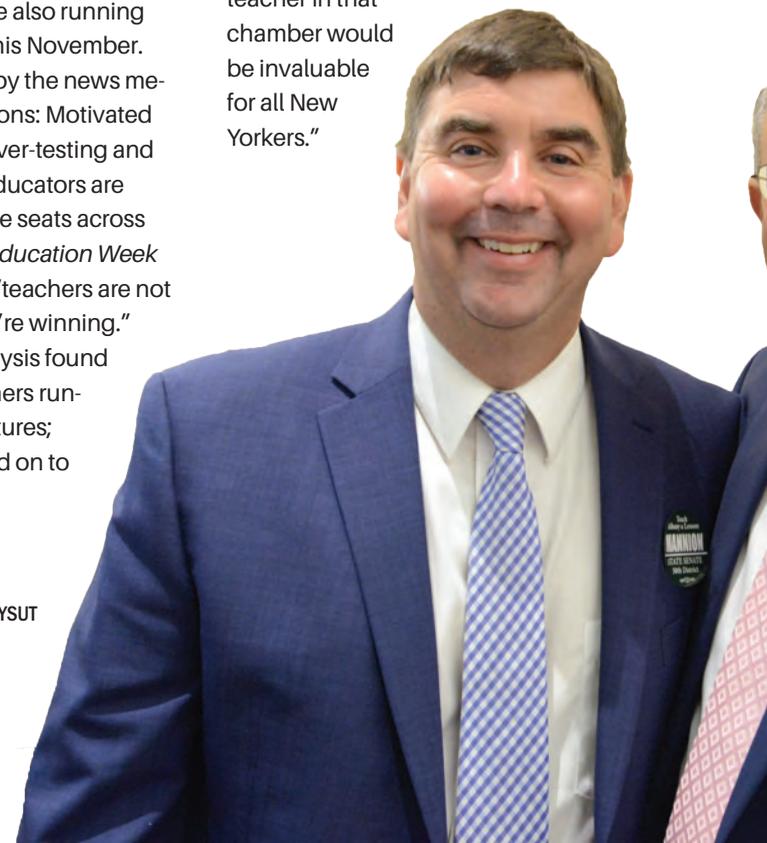
It only makes sense, Pallotta said. "As the Senate debates standardized testing, state funding to our public schools and colleges and countless other important education issues, we believe that the voice and experience of a classroom teacher in that chamber would be invaluable for all New Yorkers."



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

State Senate Democratic leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, center in blue, enjoys the grassroots support of NYSUT members and leaders, including President Pallotta, far right. The senator is a former teacher.

John Mannion, left, and NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.



ON THE BALLOT

It's true what they say, all politics is local

On a damp gray day in early October, Kaitlin Tyndall knocked on the door of a NYSUT member in the village of Madrid, St. Lawrence County. A minute passed, a dog barked inside, and the door opened. Big smiles.

"Hey, I know you, you're Kaitlin," said the woman at the door. "I read about you."

"Yes, hi!" Tyndall said, reaching out to shake the woman's hand. "I'm running for county legislature!"

The small towns in the northern reaches of the state all share the same economic pinch, and they feel the related problems with substance abuse and unemployment. Tyndall, who grew up here, is a teaching assistant in Potsdam and a member of the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES Federation of Instructional Support Personnel. "I am stepping up and want to make a difference in this county," she says.

Tyndall is one of three union members in NYSUT's Pipeline Project running for the St. Lawrence County Legislature this year. The others are Nicole Terminelli, a mem-



Kaitlin Tyndall, left, a NYSUT member running for St. Lawrence County Legislature, visits with Cathy Henry, a member of Madrid-Waddington TA, who used to be Tyndall's physical education teacher.

NED HOSKIN

ber of the Massena Federation of Teachers, and Mike Hammond of the Ogdensburg Education Association. With local union help, Terminelli already won a primary to earn her place on the ballot.

The Pipeline Project provides training and resources for members willing to run for local or state office. Having the union behind them makes a huge difference.

"It's incredible to have that added support and that group of people behind me pushing me forward," Tyndall said. "Helping to hit these doors today is awesome."

The county candidates also

are advocating for NYSUT-endorsed state legislative candidates, and for Tedra Cobb, who is running for Congress in District 21.

A former county legislator, Cobb advocated for funding during difficult times for North Country schools, said Don Carlisto, co-president of the Saranac Lake TA and a member of NYSUT's executive committee. "She's well known to NYSUT members here and the groundswell of support for her candidacy has been unmistakable," he said.

NYSUT doesn't endorse in local elections, but its local affiliate unions do, and they provide the

most valuable resource for local and state endorsed candidates: feet on the street, phone banking and other volunteer needs.

"Candidates who earn the union's support can count on more than just financial support," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. "They can count on grassroots, neighborhood, face-to-face campaigning on their behalf. Through our hundreds of thousands of members and their activism, we are a force to be reckoned with."

By Ned Hoskin
nhoskin@nysutmail.org



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Strictly No Elephants

Written by
Lisa Mantchev

Illustrated by:
Taeun Yoo



Recommended by: Chelsea Phillips, librarian, Chatham Central School Teachers Association

Suitable for: All grades

Why I chose it: *Strictly No Elephants* tells the story of a boy who has a tiny elephant as a pet. When the young boy tries to join a pet club, he is told that elephants are not allowed. This book beautifully covers the importance of being a good friend, even if it means doing things you don't like. It also touches on being kind and accepting to all.

What I like best: The young boy and the elephant leave little messages along the way of how one can be a good friend to others. These include braving the scary things for your friend, never leaving a friend behind, and lifting your friend over the cracks in the sidewalk. Also, who doesn't dream of having a tiny elephant for a pet?!

How teachers can use this book: Teachers in elementary schools can use this book to focus on its message of kindness and being the best friend that you can be. Students could create their own list of what they think are positive qualities in a friend, or share what their dream pet club would look like. High school teachers can use this book as an example of the risks of exclusion, and generate discussions about what people can do to make sure others are being treated equally. Art teachers can have students explore the use of color and images to represent emotions.

About the Author: Lisa Mantchev is the author of young adult and adult novels, as well as other picture books, including *Sister Day* and *Someday, Narwhal*. Explore her work at <http://lisamantchev.com/picture-books/>.

"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 lfrenett@nysutmail.org.

'Obstacles do not have to define your future'

UFTer named 2019 Teacher of the Year

By Matt Smith

msmith@nysutmail.org

Inside Alhassan Susso's classroom at the International Community High School in the Bronx, there are challenges — big challenges.

Every student is a recent immigrant to the United States. They come from more than 15 countries, and places as wide-ranging as Latin America, West Africa and the Middle East. They speak different languages, and hold many different beliefs. Most come from families living below the federal poverty level. And many entered high school reading at a fourth-grade level.

"All my students see all day are obstacles," said Susso, a member of the United Federation of Teachers. He emigrated to the U.S. at 16 from The Gambia, West Africa. "My job is to ensure and guide them so they see their obstacles do not have to define their future."

The State Education Department in September named Susso the 2019 New York State Teacher of the Year. Other finalists were Rachel Murat, a social studies teacher and member of the Maine-Endwell Teachers Association; and William H. Green, a UFT member and high school chemistry teacher at Frederick Douglass Academy III in the Bronx.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said Susso's "incredible life story and unwavering commitment to his students

are an inspiration and a reminder of the dedication, excellence and professionalism found in classrooms" across the state.

Susso's story is incredible, indeed.

Growing up in The Gambia, he was diagnosed with a rare macular degenerative disease that's left him with 20/80 vision. Arriving in the U.S. as a teen, he scrambled to find a homeless shelter in which to stay just hours after taking his first-ever standardized test. Later, desperate attempts to bring his ailing sister to America for medical treatment failed; she died at 19. His education, finally completed at age 27, was interrupted when his grandmother's home collapsed, forcing him to return to Africa to help her rebuild — which took six years. Meanwhile, his vision worsens. Eventually, he expects to go blind.

"That's the gift I have been given," Susso said. "How do I utilize that gift to make a difference in the lives of others? I should not be able to see at all at this point. I consider myself lucky. That's my challenge. But everyone in my classroom has a challenge. Are you going to let that stop you? Or, are you going to use your challenges as an opportunity?"

Susso lives in Poughkeepsie with his wife and two children, and gets up at 4 a.m. to catch a train to the Bronx, where he arrives an hour early at school to prepare. He returns home each night at 8 p.m.

He views teaching as a mission, he said, to ensure kids are provided not only the knowledge, but also the belief in themselves, to succeed. As such, he created a before-school program to develop in his students the leadership, communication and financial-management skills necessary to achieve their dreams.

Last year, every student who completed Susso's course graduated high school and 97 percent are enrolled in college.

Susso is quick to give credit for his success to his colleagues and administration.

"My colleagues are amazing people. They are able to take these students reading at a fourth-grade level and, in four years, develop them to speak the language, pass the state exams and successfully complete high school. And, I am able to soar in my career because of the autonomy that has been given to me by my administration."

Susso said when collaboration exists between labor and management, teachers are "able to explore avenues that did not exist before and, in the process, everyone becomes better.

"What I strive for in my classroom is to give students an opportunity to feel the learning process should be joyful. So there is a lot of laughter. Every day that I am able to put a smile on a child's face, then I consider that a very successful day."

Early detection saves lives

By Liza Frenette

lfrenett@nysutmail.org

If this story were a spy novel, then the mammogram would be the lead detective, searching out cancer in the dark corners.

It's the kind of sleuthing that saves lives. Just ask two teaching colleagues from Port Washington on Long Island.

Physical education teacher Francine Clark, now retired, never misses an annual mammogram. In 2006, a routine mammogram showed something small and suspicious.

"They didn't find a lump. I didn't find a lump. It was so small you wouldn't know you had it unless you went for a mammogram. They picked up something odd, very high up. They told me to come back in six months, and I did. Then the report came back significant for ductal carcinoma. That's when I was sent for a biopsy," Clark said.

"I try to impress upon people the power of early detection. I spoke at a faculty meeting about this and about our wonderful health coverage. When you know you have good insurance that was fought for by your

union, there is no reason to procrastinate about screening for breast cancer. I worked for private schools

where there was no one to defend the rights of employees," Clark said. "NYSUT and the Port Washington Teachers Association were a safety net. I'm so grateful."

The Long Island teacher had surgery and then, six weeks later, she had radiation treatments — every weekday until she hit 33 treatments.

Because of early detection and treatment, she was able to finish her career and is now enjoying her third year of retirement. "I dance ... I do Zumba every single day," said Clark.

She's been walking in Making Strides since 2006. NYSUT has been a flagship sponsor of the American Cancer Society event since 2002, with members generating support, energy, awareness, volunteers and more than \$12 million to fight the disease with research, information,



Fran Clark PROVIDED



Patricia Wright PROVIDED

services and access to mammograms for women who need them.

Clark's walking partner is Patricia

Wright, an art teacher whose cancer was discovered by a routine mammogram in 2015, just after her retirement.

Her first procedure was removal of a thymoma on the side of her lung; a month later she had a bilateral mastectomy.

"At the time, you're just hoping to live. That's all you care about," she said. Wright struggled with her body image — an experience shared by many women with breast removal. She had implants, had them removed after complications, and then had a bilateral deep tissue transfer for breast reconstruction earlier this year. As *NYSUT United* went to press, she was scheduled to join Clark for the Oct. 21 Making Strides walk.

FOR MORE INFO

New York law requires 210 hospitals and hospital extension clinics to offer extended hours for screening for at least four hours per week to help women who have difficulty scheduling mammograms during the typical 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday. The law also mandates no deductible, co-pay or co-insurance charges for mammograms; and elimination of cost sharing for diagnostic testing.

Visit www.ny.gov/new-york-state-breast-cancer-programs/new-york-state-breast-cancer-services.

According to a 2017 union-backed law, every health insurance provider has to provide coverage for mammograms or tomosynthesis (3-D).

For information on free programs for individuals without insurance, including breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening, diagnostic services and referral to treatment and support, call 1-866-442-CANCER (2262).

NYS Making Strides walks

Oct. 28

Glens Falls, Cool Insuring Arena, 12 p.m.

Riverhead, Suffolk County Community College Eastern Campus, 7:30 a.m.



PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISSETTE



Advocating for healthy schools, worksites is union work

Members of NYSUT's Health and Safety Advisory Committee, far left, met this fall to advance a host of health and safety concerns the union is tackling. At candidate debates this fall and when the Legislature convenes in January, the union expects lawmakers and candidates to address legislation mandating safe temperatures in schools (see page 6) and improving water infrastructure, noted NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, left. For more info on NYSUT's health and safety work, visit www.nysut.org.



PROVIDED

Nyack Teachers Association — School-Related Professionals

Members of the Nyack Teachers Association — SRP local raised more than \$450 for the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital in Valhalla. The teaching assistant group, organized by Nyack TA-SRP member Phyllis Viviano, participated in the 14th annual Go the Distance walk and family fun day.

"We chose this event because it was for children — many of whom come from our area," said Amy Romano, Nyack TA-SRP member. "It is the closest specialized children's hospital."

Honeoye Teachers Association

The Honeoye Teachers Association, led by co-presidents Michelle Leitten and Bev Fisher, awards several scholarships each school year to graduating seniors. The union presented four scholarships at the June commencement ceremony. Money for the scholarships, which typically go to seniors who are interested in pursuing a degree in education, comes from member donations.

Ticonderoga Support Services Association

The Ticonderoga Support Services Association, led by President Mike Zent, donated school supplies and 48 backpacks to the Ticonderoga BackPack Program. The program sends young children from half a dozen area schools home for the weekend with backpacks filled with nutritious, shelf-stable and easily prepared foods, according to program coordinator John Bartlett.

The program started in 2013 with 30 students and now helps more than 220 children in the Ticonderoga area. Zent and other TSSA members helped to distribute the supplies to needy families.

Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers

For two weeks this fall, the Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers' First Book Mobile, a 26-foot rented U-Haul truck, traveled school to school delivering thousands of books to the students of the Patchogue-Medford School District.

The local, led by President Beth Warnken, received a grant to secure more than 15,000 books (valued at more than \$140,000) from First Book and the American Federation of Teachers.

Warnken and PMCT Executive Vice President Kevin Toolan visited the district's seven elementary schools, three middle schools and the high school distributing a PMCT bookmark and brand new books to all students. Some of the books were donated to organizations within the Patchogue-Medford community.



PROVIDED

From left, Anthony O'Brien, Patchogue-Medford school board president; Erin Skahill, president of the Patchogue-Medford Administrators' Association; Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers President Beth A. Warnken; Joey Cohen, assistant superintendent for human resources; and PMCT Executive Vice President Kevin Toolan show some of the bounty at the book mobile's stop at Eagle Elementary School. Inset: A student shows off her selections.

"This endeavor would not have been possible without the help of *all* PMCT members," Warnken said, noting the efforts of members Nadine Scalzo and Kerri Simeone to get the process started and support from administrative and support staff colleagues, along with district PTA members. Warnken also acknowledged support for NYSUT.

For the 24th consecutive year, the PMCT and the Patchogue Lions Club also teamed up to provide school supplies for needy students in the district. Kits included notebooks, pencils, glue sticks, crayons and erasers.

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

It's an honor

Amber Rain Chandler, Frontier Central Teachers Association, received the Association for Middle Level Education 2018 Educator of the Year Award. The award recognizes outstanding practitioners in middle level education.

Daniel Travis, Rochester TA; **Lisa Brosnick**, North Collins TA; **Lori Mancuso**, West Seneca TA; and **Mary Howard**, Grand Island TA, were named finalists for the Buffalo Bills and M&T Bank Touchdown for Teachers award. They each received \$500 in grant funds for their school or districts.

Teachers **Shenika Aspinall** and **Charene Chapman-Santiago**, both members of the United Federation of Teachers, won the Brooklyn Nets Teacher Excellence Award. The monthly award recognizes "exceptional teachers for their commitment toward students and education." Aspinall, a teacher for home instruction schools for students with disabilities, was the honoree for the month of April 2018. Chapman-Santiago, an ELA teacher, was the March 2018 honoree.

In print

Don Hartman, United University Professions — Buffalo Center chapter, published *Death By Suggestion: An Anthology of 19th and Early 20th-Century Tales of Hypnotically Induced Murder, Suicide, and Accidental Death*. The book, which Hartman edited, compiles 22 short stories where hypnotism is used to cause death. Available at www.Amazon.com.

Paul Swisher, North Tonawanda United Teachers retiree, wrote *Let 'Em Go Pee: Practical Advice for Those Who Dare to Teach*. The book features a collection of essays, anecdotes and tips "drawn from decades of experience creating learning environments based on goodwill, happiness, and integrity." For more info, visit www.pagepublishing.com.

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

[RETIREES IN ACTION]



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At the August NYS AFL-CIO endorsement conference, from left, NYSTRS Board President David Keefe, RC 18; Mel Stern, RC 20 president; former NYSUT VP, Walter Dunn, RC 21; and Lynn Costello, RC 21.



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Two strong NYSUT women, RC 18 President Barbara Keilty-Michaleski and NYSUT RC 43 President Deb Peterson.

Making the union voice heard, from left, Barbara Carey, RC 16; at-large ED 51-53 Director Florence McCue; and Marty Sommer, RC 16.



PROVIDED

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

Jeanette Stapley, 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

TBD, 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

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

RC 43, Feb. 5, Hilton Garden Inn, Palm Garden Florida, RSC: Judy Kalb

RC 10, May 7, TBA, RSC: Jeanette Stapley

RC 4 & 46, May 13, Radisson Inn Corning, RSC: Louise Ortman

RC 1,2,3 & 44, May 14, Millenium Buffalo, Cheektowaga RSC: Tracy Beatty

RC 12, May 16, Glen Sanders Mansion, RSC: Jennifer Shaad-Derby

RC 9, May 20, TBA, RSC: Jeanette Stapley

RC 11 & 45, May 22, Tinellis Hathaway House, Solon, RSC: Mark Padgett

RC 7 & 8, May 29, Doubletree East Syracuse, RSC: Anne Marie Voutsinas

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Sandra Bliss

A longtime NYSUT leader and staunch union advocate, Sandra Bliss died Aug. 27.

Sandra served as an at-large director on the NYSUT Board from 1974-98 and was recognized as the Sandy Feldman "Not for Ourselves Alone" Award winner at the 2014 Representative Assembly. After retiring with more than 40 years of service with the Frankfort-Schuyler school district, Sandra continued her union work by serving as the president of Retiree Council 12 and as a member of the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee.

Brian Hough

Brian Hough, a SUNY Oswego geology professor, died as a result of a tragic car accident Oct. 6. He was 46.

Brian was "a caring family man and a dedicated, hard-working professor who inspired his students," said United University Professions President Fred Kowal. He is survived by his wife, Jackie, and his son, Benjamin.

Abigail (Abby) Jackson

Abby Jackson, a reading teacher and member of the Amsterdam Teachers Association, died along with her husband, Adam, in a tragic car accident Oct. 6. She was 35.

Abby will be remembered as "a beautiful soul, great teacher, and strong unionist," said ATA President Richard Peters. She is survived by two young daughters.

Mona Goldwasser | May 26, 2018
United Teachers of Island Trees

Jeanette Vanni | July 15, 2017
Nassau BOCES Central Council of Teachers

Obituary submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact information for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Julie Malec, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email jmalec@nysutmail.org.

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5 QUESTIONS FOR...

Carl Coulanges

Faculty Association Suffolk Community College

1. You began a new teaching job at Suffolk County Community College this fall. How did you get here?

After graduating from St. Francis College in Brooklyn, I went into the field of radio and TV freelance, but there were inconsistencies in salary which made it difficult to budget. I always wanted to help kids out, so I went for my master's. I taught at St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School, where I was a member of the Lay Faculty Association, and I was an adjunct at St. Francis College. Being an adjunct can be challenging — if there is low enrollment, then classes get cut, and I'm out of income.

My heart really loves higher education. At SCCC I teach broadcasting, history of electronic media, and copy and script writing.

2. What do you like about what you teach?

I like preparing students for a career. My students have to write a 30-minute broadcast news show on politics, entertainment or news. They also have to prepare a debate with two sources as fact. My job is to teach them objectivity, and to be open-minded.

3. How does the current divisive political atmosphere and claims of "fake news" affect what you teach?

It's important for us to discuss issues we face in broadcast. Clearly there are TV stations that are biased. The media will play a part in which side you choose. It's important to

teach students to choose media with more facts and less opinion; to show them how people can be tricked by "click bait" on social media. I teach them that our job is to report the news; media is an outlet for information. We are the outlet for people to communicate.

4. As a former member of the Lay Faculty Association, you are familiar with unions. Why did you join the Faculty Association of SCC?

Job security. Knowing I have someone to back me up. A team fighting for the right contract, to get paid what we deserve. At new teacher orientation, we met the (leadership) team. I feel camaraderie with the union. I'd like to get to know people and help out, assisting in community outreach.

The union is politically active and it's a positive to know the union is open-minded and not just conservative or liberal, but allows both sides to be presented.

5. This is the first year public sector employees can choose to leave the union. Why did you commit to the union?

Sticking with the union is how we keep it strong. The union is protecting me and investing in me. I'm reaping benefits out of it. Especially in this economy, it's good to be protected. Without a union, who's really going to fight for you?



KEVIN PETERMAN



Quotable

Jenn

So my colleagues & I are "forces of evil." We buy children clothing, feed children, give children emotional support. In addition to our actual teaching duties. We support our public schools b/c we care about our students! #UnionProud @nysut (@msd6thgrade)

Eric Sheninger

Teachers don't just teach. They support, guide, listen, emphasize, care, and love all while dedicating countless hours to making a difference in the lives of kids. For this and many other reasons they deserve our respect and admiration. (@E_Sheninger)

Aida Hartmann

Congratulations (Alhassan Susso) on your ToTY Award. I was raised in the neighborhood in which you teach and am well aware of the hurdles and struggles one needs to overcome. ... Having educational opportunities and teachers who inspire, such as yourself, helped me achieve my goals! Thank you for all you do! (via Facebook)

Bonnie Castillo

Strikes, town halls, rallies, public education campaigns — that's why Amazon workers in the US & UK received a raise. COLLECTIVE. ACTION. WORKS. CEOs don't suddenly become benevolent — it's up to workers to demand better working conditions! #UnionsForAll #UnionStrong (@NNUBonnie)



Are unions necessary?

It was the start of the 1982–83 school year and I had been president of the Spencerport TA for about a year. School started for teachers on the Tuesday after Labor Day and we sat in the auditorium to hear from the superintendent — the district was implementing a new policy of reporting teacher absences. We now had to call our building principal to report an absence. That principal would then relay the message to the substitute calling service.

The reason for this new policy, we were told, was that it was felt that teachers were taking too many sick days, often for silly, invalid reasons.

At our respective building meetings the bigger bomb was dropped. It seems that the principals didn't like the new policy any more than we did and they concocted their own

twist on the issue. Each building was allotted only a five-minute window in which to call the principal. The high school had from 5:55 to 6 a.m. to call — not before and not after. In other words, if you got sick after 6 a.m., too bad, your window was over and you had to report.

It seems, as we found out later, that the principals decided to make the policy so outrageous, it would force the STA to take legal action against the district. They didn't have the backbone to fight for themselves and wanted the STA to be the bad guys.

So we did. The STA, after exhausting all civil attempts to resolve the issue, filed an Improper Practice charge claiming that the matter constituted a change in working conditions and should have been negotiated.

It took until December of that year, four months of living with a ridiculous policy, for the hearing officer to rule in our favor ... The district had to revert back to the former practice of reporting teacher absences.

One side story on this issue involved a new teacher, fresh out of

college, 22 years old and starting his first job. He received his class lists on Tuesday, and taught Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On Saturday, he received a call that his father had died and he was needed immediately at home in Pennsylvania ... He was in a near panic and called his building principal that Saturday afternoon to explain what happened and to say that he wouldn't be in on Monday. The principal put a disciplinary letter in the teacher's file saying that he didn't follow the proper procedures in reporting absences. That principal expected the teacher to wait until 5:55 on Monday to call and report the death. The superintendent ... immediately pulled the letter.

This occurred 36 years ago. It happened once and could happen again.

Ask yourself: Do I need a union?

Peter Randazzo is a Spencerport retiree and past STA president. He is currently a NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant. This is an excerpt of a piece Randazzo wrote for the Spencerport Teachers Association newsletter.

Youth are leading on gun control

I appreciate Catherine Peacock's terrific reasons for not arming teachers; and Sid Reischer for being the wonderful teacher he must have been to have been thanked by Tim "I Was That Shooter" C.

I retired in 2003, just four years after Newtown, but nine years before Newtown. My last few months were the first time any of my principals ever announced a "lock-down drill," and it was the last time that my colleagues could walk through our school without wearing an identification card.

After the Newtown school shooting, I felt confident that the parents of those first-graders would bring about common-sense, life-saving gun control laws. Now I'm hopeful that Parkland, Fla., student leaders and others will finish that job. For their extensive post-shooting efforts alone, I would like to nominate them for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize.

**Richard Siegelman,
Oyster Bay-East Norwich TA
retiree**

WRITE TO US!



Letters are published at the discretion of the editor, who takes space, relevancy, fairness, legal liability and accuracy into account. To submit a letter, email united@nysutmail.org, or mail to Letter to the Editor, NYSUT Communications, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110. Please include your name and union.



PROVIDED

Shenendehowa TA goes #RedforEd

Union members across the country are demanding support for public education and educators by going #RedforEd. Left, members of the Shenendehowa Teachers Association, led by Megan Delarosa, show their public education pride. The #RedforEd initiative, supported by National Education Association, one of NYSUT's national affiliates, aims to bring more attention to public education funding and support for students and educators.



To learn more about #RedforEd, visit neatoday.org/redford/. Be sure to share your #RedforEd pictures on Facebook and Twitter.



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www.eriecanalway.org
Or contact Andy Kitzmann:
Andy_Kitzmann@partner.nps.gov
518-237-7000, ext. 201

The program covers transportation and an educational program.

No-cost union benefits available to NYSUT members

Whether it's an endorsed life, homeowners or auto insurance plan, financial or legal services, or shopping/entertainment/travel offerings, NYSUT members have the "Power of the Union" behind them when participating in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

Unlike with purchasing products available to the general public, there's no need to go it alone when Member Benefits has your back. Member Benefits acts as your advocate for any program in which you participate, and we'll do our best to quickly resolve any issues or concerns you may have.

NYSUT members and their loved ones have access to dozens of endorsed programs available through NYSUT Member Benefits, including auto, homeowners and life insurance; vision and dental plans; legal and financial services; hotel and vacation discounts; car and truck rental discounts; discounted sports and concert tickets; theme park discounts; and much more.

In addition to the voluntary benefits available for purchase, NYSUT members are eligible to receive a number of no-cost benefits offered

by NYSUT Member Benefits along with NYSUT's national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust provides NYSUT members with up to \$1,500 accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D) insurance, including a travel assistance component. This insurance is offered through Chubb Group Insurance Companies and includes travel assistance services provided at no cost by Europ Assistance that focus on offering coordination services to travelers.

New NYSUT members also receive a no-cost term life insurance policy providing coverage for up to \$25,000 for one year as long as NYSUT membership is maintained through their local. This insurance is guaranteed renewable for up to \$25,000 at the end of the year with no medical underwriting.

The Member Benefits Trust-endorsed term life insurance program also includes a free will, living will and power of attorney, along with a variety of support services (beneficiary claim assistance, estate resolution services and a life settlement account).

In addition, all active, working AFT members in good standing are automatically provided \$5,000 AD&D insurance at no cost to them through the national organization; this coverage doubles if the accidental death or injury occurs at the workplace.

Finally, the NEA Members Insurance Trust offers complimentary life insurance at no extra cost to active, staff, reserve and life NEA members, including up to \$5,000 AD&D insurance. This coverage also includes up to \$1,000 of term life insurance, \$50,000 of AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs on the job or while serving as an association leader, and \$150,000 of life insurance for "unlawful homicide" while on the job.

Learn more about these no-cost offerings along with the dozens of voluntary benefits available for purchase by NYSUT members by visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org or calling 800-626-8101.

For information about this program or about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

[RESOURCES FOR YOU]

School bus professionals

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a school bus versus traveling by car.

NYSUT members may get a free copy of the *Pupil Transportation*



Safety Institute's 2019 NYS Laws and Regs for School Bus Drivers, Monitors and Attendants booklet.

The guide contains new laws, regulations and agency clarifications. PTSI also includes a 2019 laws and regs "quizzer" on its website at www.ptsi.org.

For an individual copy or enough for the transportation workers in your local, contact Tammie Waldenmaier at 800-342-9810, ext. 6623, or twaldenm@nysutmail.org.

ELT: Learn on your schedule

Missed the fall 2018 online course registration deadline? Not a problem. You can still take an online seminar with NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust for the same high-quality, professional learning experience.

Online seminar offerings are available for SRPs and teachers. Visit elt.nysut.org for more info.

IT'S WHAT WE DO

Jamir Dickens, United Federation of Teachers

Jamir Dickens is used to hard work: he works full time as a classroom paraprofessional at PS 329 in Brooklyn as a member of the United Federation of Teachers, while going to college at night.

This past summer, he spent two weeks working on the roofs of hurricane-damaged homes in Puerto Rico. His journey took place as part of the governor's New York Stands with Puerto Rico Recovery and Rebuilding Initiative. Many families have been displaced or are living in unsafe homes since Hurricane Maria made landfall in September 2017, killing more than 3,000 people.

Dickens said the experience was "hands on, as soon as we touched down." Volunteers worked with non-governmental organizations. They patched roofs, ceilings and cracks with concrete and then painted them with sealants. Some groups used construction plywood to rebuild roofs and fix interior rooms. Indoor work required wearing a hazmat suit, goggles and gloves, he said, because of mold.

"It's a really sad story in Puerto Rico," he said. "The most challenging part was actually leaving. You're invested, as a construction worker, to complete the mission." But everywhere around him there was more to be done; more homes with blue tarps instead of solid roofing.

To read more about Dickens' story, visit www.nysut.org/itswhatwedo.

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Your retirement fund remains strong

Members of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) can rest assured knowing their pension benefits are safe and secure.

As the administrative head of ERS and trustee of the Common Retirement Fund, I have worked to keep the fund strong and secure. According to Pew Charitable Trusts, we are ranked as one of the best-funded public retirement systems in the U.S. In fact, a new state fiscal year 2018 report from our actuary ranks ERS at 98 percent funded, which puts us well above the national average of 66 percent funded.

In the state fiscal year that ended March 31, the audited value of the Fund grew to \$207.4 billion. This growth can be attributed to a careful approach to investment management, which yields long-term sustainable returns while protecting the Fund from uncertainty. The Fund earned an 11.35 percent return on investments in state fiscal year 2018, which is well above the assumed rate of return of 7 percent. Of the benefits paid, 75 percent came from investment returns, not tax dollars.

As an ERS member, you are part of a defined benefit (DB) pension plan. When you retire, you will receive a monthly retirement benefit based on the amount of salary and service

In every issue, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the New York 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@nysutmail.org.

For immediate assistance, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Capital District.



credit you earned. A DB plan can spread the investment risk over the large number of plan members, providing retirees with stable income that won't run out in retirement.

In contrast, many employees in the U.S., especially in the private sector, participate in defined contribution plans — such as a 401(k) — in which the payout is based on the individual's contributions and investment returns. With this type of plan, a lifetime monthly benefit is not guaranteed, therefore it is possible to outlive your savings.

You can read more about your retirement plan and stay connected to ERS through any of our social media sites or by visiting our website at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/index.php.

Also, I encourage you to sign up for Retirement Online, our self-service tool that allows you to manage your retirement account information, check your total service credit and apply for a loan. You can learn more and sign up at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.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
trovers@nysutmail.org

Kathy Hine • 585-454-5550, ext. 144
rochers@nysutmail.org

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

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

Your pension and divorce

Q: I am retired, and my wife and I recently divorced.

Do I have to personally change the name of my New York State Teachers' Retirement System beneficiary, or will the state automatically make that change for me as part of my divorce filing?

A: Retirees can only change their beneficiary in one of two instances: if you're a Tier 2-6 member with a Paragraph 2 in-service death benefit that was in effect at retirement; or if you selected a lump sum or guaranteed period benefit payment and that coverage is still in effect. If one of these instances doesn't apply to your situation, sorry but changing your beneficiary isn't possible. Also, 30 days after you retire, changes can't be made to the pension option you selected at retirement.

To change your beneficiary under scenario one, file a properly completed Designation of Beneficiary (NET-11.4) form with NYSTRS. To change your beneficiary under scenario two, use one of two forms:

the Designation of Beneficiary for Retirees Who Elected a Guaranteed Period Option (RMS-5.3) form, if you selected a guaranteed period option; or the Designation of Beneficiary for Retirees Who Elected a Lump Sum Option (RMS-5) form if you selected a lump sum option. The forms are available at nystrs.org, or by calling the NYSTRS Hotline at 800-782-0289.

Q: I'm an in-service member, and I'm going through a divorce. Do I have to change my NYSTRS beneficiary, or will the system automatically do that once my divorce is finalized?

A: Thanks to the enactment of Chapter 173 of the Laws of 2008, the answer to that question is yes — NYSTRS will automatically remove your former spouse as your beneficiary in the instance of divorce, annulment or judicial separation. Chapter 173 treats the former spouse as having predeceased the member. However, if a judgment, decree or a domestic relations order specifically directs NYSTRS to provide for the ex-spouse, those directives will be followed.

If you'd like your ex-spouse to remain as your beneficiary, you must file a new NET-11.4 form with NYSTRS following a divorce, annulment or judicial separation.

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)

Paul Farfaglia • 315-431-4040
pfarfagl@nysutmail.org

Sheila Sullivan Buck
585-454-5550
sbuck@nysutmail.org

Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822
rgross@nysutmail.org



DID YOU KNOW?

The New York State Teachers' Retirement System remains one of the best-funded public pension plans in the country, according to a survey of the nation's 100 largest public pension systems by *Pensions & Investments* magazine. As of June 30, 2017, the fund was virtually 100 percent funded based on a market value of assets.



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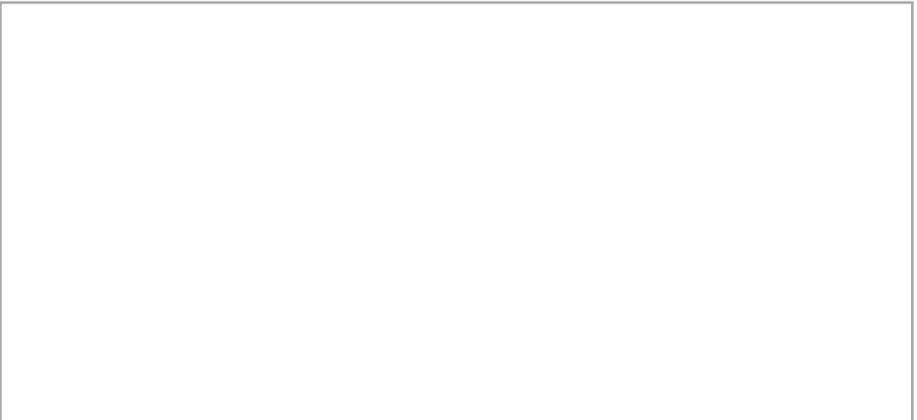
NYSUT members receive a 33% discount off of tuition for graduate courses. ELT is now a CTLE provider and many courses are applicable for NYSED Certification.



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