

SRP NewsLink

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

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Cheryl Peck honored as SRP of the Year

NYSUT delegates honored Cheryl Peck, president of the Lancaster Association of Service Personnel, as the NYSUT 2012 School-Related Professional of the Year at the Representative Assembly in Buffalo.



Cheryl Peck

Peck is the first custodian to win this award. She is also the only female custodian in her district. Whether managing multiple buildings, shoveling snow or advocating for her members and negotiating contracts for her local, she is up for the task.

Peck's busy work day begins early and has her multitasking at multiple locations throughout the district. "I manage three buildings and a warehouse," said Peck. The students are on Peck's mind throughout her day. "I want to give them a clean environment, just like I give my own kids a clean environment." Her work for the union extends far beyond the normal workday.

"I try to attend every school board meeting, so that I know what is going on first-hand." In the past five years, Peck has only missed two such meetings. She listens to her members and advocates for their needs. She has an effective negotiating style. "I find you get more with honey than with vin-



egar," said Peck with a smile. "I also make reasonable requests. I just want what is fair."



Free retiree pins and certificates



NYSUT Retiree Services continues offering locals free pins and certificates for retiring members. These are an excellent way to honor your retiring members and are a welcome addition to any retirement celebration.

Locals may order the free pins and certificates by contacting your NYSUT Regional Office.

Dignity Act goes into effect July 2012: SRPs, are you ready?

The New York State Dignity For All Students Act (DASA) was established to provide a school environment free of discrimination, bullying and harassment based on (but not limited to) race, color, weight, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender on school property, the school bus and school functions. A school's code of conduct must be amended to reflect these changes in age-appropriate plain language, and schools are responsible for training employees to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment.

Your union is here to help you. NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust (ELT) has workshops on bullying that can be brought in to your district. Go to www.nysut.org/ELT or call 800-528-6208 for more information.

Also, www.aft.org has information about AFT's anti-bullying program, "See A Bully, Stop A Bully."

To learn more about the NEA's "Bully Free, It Starts with Me" program and materials as well as great tip sheets for specific SRP job titles, go to www.nea.org/neabullyfree.

INSIDE

RA highlights
Page 2

A view from the Chair
Page 3

Triborough Amendment
primer
Page 5



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care
For more, see www.nysut.org.

IMPORTANT DATES

NEA Convention

June 30–July 5
Washington, DC

AFT Convention

July 27–30
Detroit

BOCES Leadership Conference

Oct. 19–20
Albany

SRP Leadership Conference

Oct. 26–28
Hilton, Saratoga Springs

SRPNewsLink

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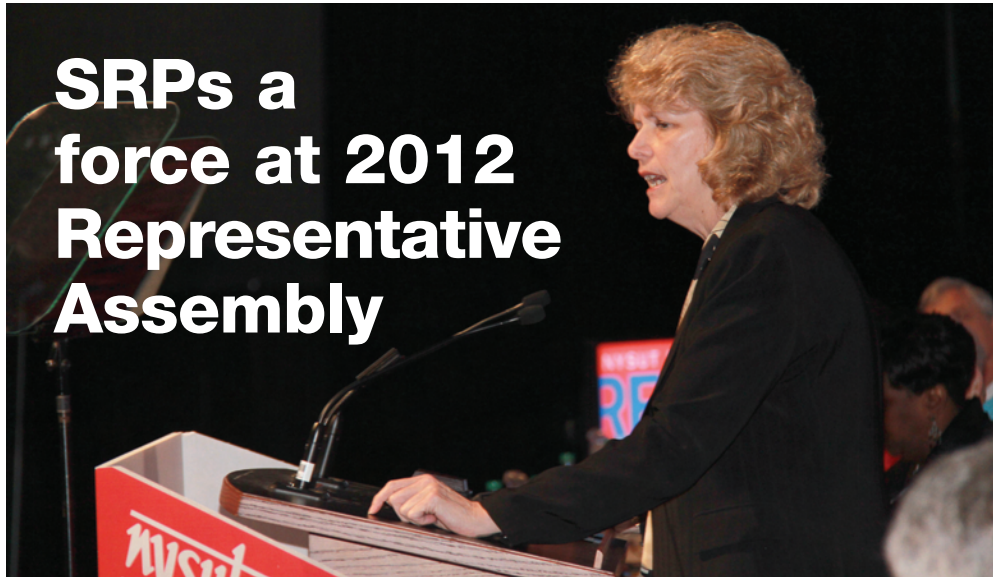
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SRPs a force at 2012 Representative Assembly



NYSUT Vice President, Kathleen Donahue

SRP leaders got right down to business at the pre-RA Local Presidents Conference at a School-Related Professionals session on New York's Dignity for All Students Act, which will be enacted July 1, 2012. Leaders learned what is in the legislation and where to find workshops and training through NYSUT, AFT and NEA. See accompanying "Dignity Act" article on the cover.

Many delegates stopped by the SRP exhibit booth, which was staffed by members of the SRP Advisory Committee and NYSUT SRP Coordinator Margaret MacCartney. Booth staff distributed information for and about SRPs, including bus safety regulations, health and safety items and ERS information.

All six SRP-driven resolutions passed. The union will seek laws that define limitations to description and duties of teaching assistants, (i.e., teaching assistants work under direct supervision of a teacher) and restrict use of teaching assistants especially in cases of replacing certified subject area teachers as a cost cutting measure, and will prohibit teaching assistants from doing work which should be done by certified teachers. The union will also seek statewide consistency of hours required for full-time status for establishing tenure for teaching assistants and pension determinations, and to automatically enroll part-time teaching assistants in the NYS Retirement system.

Delegates also voted for advocacy for laws that will protect teachers and SRPs from bullying and harassment.

The SRP of the Year, Cheryl Peck, president of the Lancaster Association of Service Personnel, was honored at the first session.

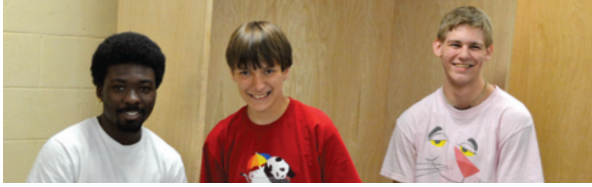
In her RA speech, NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue spoke to delegates of the importance of unity. She reminded them of the time before SRPs were part of the union. She spoke of Al Shanker's decision to organize paraprofessionals and bring them into the union's fold in the 1960s, something Shanker referred to in retirement as the proudest moment of his UFT presidency. This addition was a wise move and added strength to the union.

Donahue told delegates that remaining committed to a culture of unity is vital in these trying times. "Each must remain strongly tied to the others — not allowing outside forces to weaken or tear us apart," she said.

"I am calling on each and every one of you and your members to adopt and embrace a culture of unity. A culture in which, SRPs, K-12 teachers, higher education faculty, health care professionals — all NYSUT members are not branded by job title, or level of pay or work site."

Donahue called upon delegates to "work cooperatively, strategically and intelligently to continue to build this great union and move our agenda forward."

NYSUT locals win AFT PSRP awards



James McKnight, Tyler Cooper and Matt Cardot, under direction of technology teacher Norm Lein, are building closets, where donations to “Phyllis’ Closet” will be stored.



Carolyn Simonelli, Rush-Henrietta SRP, holds dresses in front of the original Phyllis’ Closet.



Karen Arthmann, Sandy Carner-Shafran, Shelvy Young Abrams and Ruby Newbold, AFT PPC Chair, accepting the award for Herricks.

When the 2012 PSRP Awards were announced at the spring AFT PSRP Conference in Washington, DC, two NYSUT locals were among the winners.

Rush-Henrietta EA received the Community Service Award for a new project they are spearheading. Phyllis’ Closet is a school-to-community initiative at the Rush-Henrietta Senior High School in Henrietta. Named after a beloved secretary who worked in their main office for more than 42 years and who always took care of everyone, Phyllis’ Closet provides free, gently worn prom gowns and business attire for students who may not otherwise be able to afford them. In the fall volunteers will begin collecting winter clothing.

The Herricks TA and SRP chapters won the Spotlight Award for the way they celebrated School-Related Professionals Recognition Day. They held a month-long food, clothing, toiletries and baby items drive and donated the items to St. Aidan’s Parish to help those in need in their community during these difficult times. In return, parish members sent heartfelt thanks for a job well done.

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Karen Arthmann
SRP Advisory Committee chair



The past few months have been a whirlwind of wonderful learning experiences for me. In addition to chairing our advisory committee meetings in Albany, I have been to the NEA Conference in Memphis; to the American Association of Classified School Workers Legislative Conference in Washington where I lobbied on Capitol Hill for the Safe Schools Improvement Act; to the AFT Conference in Washington, where my NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee members and I joined the hotel workers at the Marriott Wardman Hotel in an informational picket, which ultimately resulted in a new contract.

Everywhere I go — throughout the state or throughout the nation, with NYSUT, NEA or AFT — I feel the passion and commitment we all have for our union and for our members. We continue to fight — against some pretty strong odds at times — for better working conditions and better pay, for politicians who will stand with us in our struggles and for each other when collective bargaining rights are taken away. We will continue to fight until there are fair and equal wages and safe working environments. We will continue to oppose those who would take away the pensions we have earned over many years of hard, committed work for our schools and for our students. We

will win out over those who would like to strip us of our right to negotiate our own contracts and want to dismantle our safeguards like the Triborough Amendment, which prevents a public employer from unilaterally changing an expired contract.

I hope everyone voted for their school budgets and that they passed resoundingly, sending a message that even though the government in Albany seeks to tie our hands through financial constraints they impose without our consent, we will overcome that too. I hope officials have been elected who will support and defend us, based on the issues and not on party loyalty.

Together we are a strong and powerful voice. Together we will continue to make our lives and the lives of our families, friends and co-workers better so that — with each passing year — our children and grandchildren will understand what it means to be a part of the American dream. We cannot rest on what we have accomplished, but must continue to work hard so that we do not lose, not only what we have gained thus far, but our futures also.

If you think your union doesn’t do anything for you, ask someone who doesn’t have one.

In Solidarity,
Karen Lee Arthmann

Welcome new SRP locals

Congratulations and welcome to these newly affiliated SRP locals. The Webster Central School Education Support Association in the Rochester region, the Leaks and Watts SRPs in the Westchester region, the Carthage District Office Personnel Association in the Watertown region, the Bolton SRP in the Capital Region and the Sachem School Nurses on Long Isand. Welcome aboard!

Remembering the past to ensure a bright future: Lessons learned from the AFT PSRP Conference

By Cheryl Ainspan, president of the
SRP chapter of the Guilderland TA

"I love New York." No, this is not about tourism. This is about lessons learned at the 35th annual AFT PSRP Conference in Washington, DC, that Elma Sprague, a teaching assistant colleague and NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee member, and I attended. In addition to many relevant and interesting workshops, we heard countless stories of labor rights being threatened across this country. Colleagues were there from all over the country.

A look back at our history will help us appreciate what we have in New York now. In 1938, New York amended

the state constitution's Bill of Rights, making collective bargaining as fundamental as free speech. Then in 1967, this was further refined to include public sector employees under the Taylor Law. Since we've been employed in the school system, the Taylor Law has been there for us.

It is hard to imagine what our lives might be like living and working somewhere else. There are five states, which ban collective bargaining: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. We hear news reports of governors who want to limit collective bargaining rights and are attacking the labor movement.

Collective bargaining is more than

just salary negotiation. It provides a unified work force that can approach management regarding concerns; it helps secure a fair settlement of grievances and restricts management from arbitrary action against employees.

How best to stay vigilant and protect our hard-earned rights? Suffice to say that NYSUT has our backs. Whenever a concern arises, information is needed or support is required, we have somewhere to turn. Some of the conference attendees do not have a state organization to turn to, and others are still fighting for rights we may take for granted. New York state is far from perfect, but for a public employee, this is a good place to be.

Heat stress a danger for summer workers in schools

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, workers who are exposed to extreme heat or work in hot environments may be at risk of heat stress. Exposure to extreme heat can result in occupational illnesses and injuries, such as heat stroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps or heat rashes. Heat can also increase the risk of injuries in workers as it may result in sweaty palms, fogged-up safety glasses and dizziness. Burns may also occur as a result of accidental contact with hot surfaces or steam.

Workers at risk of heat stress include many of NYSUT's SRP members. Workers at greater risk of heat stress include those who are 65 or older, are overweight, have heart disease or high blood pressure, or take medications that may be affected by extreme heat.

Prevention of heat stress in workers is important. Workers should avoid exposure to extreme heat, sun exposure and high humidity whenever possible.



When these exposures cannot be avoided, workers should take the following steps to prevent heat stress:

- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting, breathable clothing such as cotton.
- Avoid non-breathing synthetic clothing.
- Gradually build up to heavy work.
- Schedule heavy work during the coolest parts of day.
- Take more breaks in extreme heat and humidity.
- Take breaks in the shade or a cool area when possible.
- Drink water frequently. Drink enough water that you never become thirsty.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine, alcohol and large amounts of sugar.
- Be aware that protective clothing or personal protective equipment may increase the risk of heat stress.
- Monitor your physical condition and that of your coworkers.

Save the dates for the SRP Leadership Conference!

Don't miss this professional development and networking opportunity! Join your SRP colleagues from around the state at the 34th Annual NYSUT SRP Leadership Conference Oct. 26-28 at the Hilton Hotel in Saratoga Springs.

Workshop highlights include:

- Common Core Standards: What SRPs Need to Know
- Political Action Toolkit: School Budget Campaigns
- Financial Planning for Retirement
- Protecting SRP Rights on the Job
- Cyberbullying: The New Age of Harassment
- Union 101: Officers' Roles & Responsibilities
- Conflict Management

Conference and registration materials will be available on the SRP Leader Access page on www.nysut.org. The deadline to register is September 21. For more information, contact Marianne Perry in Program Services at 800-342-9810, ext. 6297.

Triborough Amendment benefits New York state

By Richard E. Casagrande, Esq,
NYSUT General Counsel

Too often media attacks on the Triborough Amendment continue the misperception that this decades old law unfairly advantages public employee unions or guarantees annual raises even after a contract has expired. Neither is true.

Triborough merely provides that when a contract expires, the employer cannot unilaterally lower wages or diminish other contractual terms and conditions of employment, so long as the union refrains from striking. No raises, including salary step increases, are guaran-

teed by Triborough because the law permits such benefits to end, or “sunset,” with the expiration of the contract — if the parties so agreed in their prior negotiations.

By creating this balance, the Triborough Amendment has been enormously successful in deterring strikes. And, during the recession, Triborough has not stopped hundreds of public sector unions, big and small, from agreeing with public employers on new contracts that make difficult compromises to avoid painful job cuts. Such agreements, until now, have been the result of give and take negotiations between parties with some semblance

of negotiating balance.

If Triborough were eliminated, however, this balance would be destroyed. At the end of a contract the employer would have a free hand to change terms and conditions of employment, while the union would remain powerless to strike. Collective bargaining would become collective begging. Of course, that is exactly what many employers and right-wing think tanks want — the incremental or outright elimination of collective bargaining in both the public and private sectors.

For more than 30 years, collective bargaining and unions have been under relentless attack throughout the United States. The result has been wage stagnation for middle class workers, both union and non-union, and the growing income inequality that so threatens

the American dream. Recent attacks on the collective bargaining rights of police, firefighters, teachers and all public employees have been particularly acute in states such as Wisconsin and Ohio.

But New York has long been at the forefront in protecting the rights of working people. Collective bargaining is a right guaranteed by our state’s constitution. In New York and nationally, collective bargaining is the single, fundamental right that gives ordinary people a voice in their working lives and a chance to earn fair wages, decent working conditions and a dignified retirement.

Eliminating or altering Triborough would be a direct assault on collective bargaining and contrary to the best progressive traditions of our state.

Reprinted from the Times Union newspaper.

Have you had your hearing tested?

The ability to hear plays a major role in the learning process and overall development at all ages. A person’s ability to hear affects a variety of factors in his or her life, such as social interactions with others, learning problems and even an impact on vocational choices.

Just think about what you would do if you could no longer hear. How would your professional and personal life be impacted? Hearing is such a critical component of our daily functioning. It not only helps us to communicate, it also helps us achieve balance.

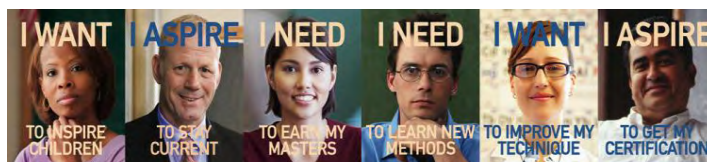
So, if hearing plays such a big role in our survival, why do people put off getting a hearing test? Simple: because people may not realize they even have a hearing issue. Unlike the other senses, it’s much more difficult to realize if your hearing is beginning to diminish.

Getting a hearing test is a great way to screen any potential problems before they become worse. A comprehensive evaluation encompasses a series of non-invasive tests that determine your ability to hear all ranges of pitches and frequencies.

Consider making a hearing exam part of your annual wellness check-up. Contact the EPIC Hearing Service Plan toll-free at 866-956-5400 for a referral to a local audiologist in your area. Feel free to also contact Member Benefits with any questions at 800-626-8101 or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org.

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

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



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