

SRP NewsLink

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

SUMMER 2011

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Janis Bianco is named SRP of the Year

Janis Bianco, a senior stenographer at Rondout Valley Central Schools, was honored as New York State United Teachers' School-Related Professional of the Year at the NYSUT Representative Assembly on April 8.

Bianco is a 30-year veteran of Rondout Valley schools. She is the third vice president of the Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals where she is active on the negotiating team. In her career, she has contributed big-picture thinking and creativity to the successful merger of secretarial, paraprofessional and teacher units into an umbrella local union at Rondout Valley.

A dedicated unionist, Bianco finds great value in NYSUT conferences and workshops. "I have been to so many NYSUT SRP conferences I've lost count," she said. "Each and every time NYSUT puts on a conference I sign up."

Bianco has learned about grievances, workplace safety, how to run union meeting and countless other topics. She continues to bring back the information to all her members, since, according to Bianco, "the knowledge you come back with is beneficial to all members, not just SRP members."

Bianco is quick to take responsibility when new tasks arise out of events at school whether initiated by the school district or the union. She helped

organize the Project Elf program at the middle school, in which staff donate

holiday gifts to needy families.

"Janis sees the possibilities in everyone, in every situation," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. "She is an example of compassion informing unionism."

But Bianco shies away from the spotlight. "My greatest joy is just helping people," she said. "I learned early in life from my parents that if you do for others just remember that you are doing everything from your heart and not to expect anything in return. Just seeing people smile or getting them out of a crisis should be your reward."

Bianco has provided leadership even as she has battled cancer. She is an ovarian cancer survivor having been diagnosed at the third stage of the disease in the '90s. She volunteers for the local hospital and the American Cancer Society Relay for Life.

"Her ability to place others before herself, her honesty, ethical character and her unique way of leaving her work environment, school, union as well as her community better for having her in it is what makes Janis the School-Related Professional of the Year," said Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals President Sheryl Delano.



Kathleen Donahue and Janis Bianco

IT'S WHAT WE DO.

You are part of one of the largest, most influential labor movements of the nation. But you are much more. You are one of more than 600,000 individuals who — every day — does your job with the highest level of excellence and commitment.

And that's what we want to show New Yorkers!

On itswhatwedo.nysut.org, we invite you and your colleagues from all different sectors to share your stories — in words, pictures and videos — and to show New Yorkers what you do every day.

First, we need to make sure that every NYSUT member knows about the initiative. Today, we ask you to tell five colleagues about the site.

SRPs — let's show our stuff! On the job and in the community, it's what we do.

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

IMPORTANT DATES

AFT TEACH Conference

July 11-13
Washington, DC

BOCES Leadership Conference

Sept. 23-24
Hilton, Saratoga

School Lunch Week

Oct. 10 -14
www.asfsa.org

Bus Safety Week

Oct. 17-21
www.napt.org

SRP Leadership Conference

Oct. 21-23
Hilton, Saratoga

Community College Conference

Oct. 28-30
Otesaga, Cooperstown

NYS SRP Recognition Day

Nov. 15

SRPNewsLink

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SRPs Take action!

Tell the governor 'No Tax Cap!'

School-Related Professionals are used to doing more with less, but can we do our jobs effectively with the devastating cuts that would come as part of the planned tax cap? If you thought budget cuts were bad, this bill — A-7916 Silver — would cause far more permanent devastation, without providing tax relief to those most in need.

The bill would starve our schools and community colleges, cause massive program closures and layoffs, widen the achievement gap and deprive students of a sound, basic education as required

under our state constitution.

The future of public education is at stake and SRPs can make a difference. Call the hotline at 877-255-9417 and urge our reps to reject the tax cap.

Visit www.nysut.org and click on "Take Action!" This will allow you to send your legislators a fax and make your voice heard. Inspire and encourage your members to do the same.

For our statement on the tax cap bill: www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/bs.xsl/mediareleases_16629.htm

And the award goes to...

From left:
Shelvy Abrams —
UFT Para Chair,
Loretta Johnson —
AFT Vice President
and Karen Arthmann
— Rush-Henrietta
EA Para Chapter
President



Congratulations to the Vestal Paraprofessionals Association for receiving the AFT Militancy Award at the April AFT PSRP Conference! The local's contract campaign — which included community outreach, member involvement and strategic planning — enabled them to win settlement on a four-year contract covering 2007-11. The settlement recognized retroactive payments back to 2007 with a 5 percent-per-year increase for members for all four years.

Shelvy Young Abrams and Karen Arthmann, both members of the AFT PSRP Program and Policy Council and the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee, accepted the award on behalf of the Vestal local. NYSUT also received the Workers Memorial Award for their work in supporting legislation that reduces the use of pesticides around school buildings.

Very important dates: Oct. 21-23 SRP Leadership Conference

Your SRP Advisory Committee has been working together with NYSUT staff at putting together a winning conference program for SRP leaders and activists who attend the SRP Leadership Conference Oct 21-23 at the Hilton in Saratoga. Several new workshops will be offered, as well as others that have been specifically requested to return by conference participants. Learning together, networking with others from your region and state, and sharing with other participants who match your job title and/or duties are just some of the benefits that you will experience at the conference. For more conference information and registration materials, visit the SRP Leader Access site on www.nysut.org. The deadline to register is Sept. 9.

SRP At-Large Director messages



Cathy Rienth, SRP Chapter Leader, Sachem TA

I am honored and very excited to have been elected to serve as an SRP At-Large member of the NYSUT Board of Directors. I look forward to fulfilling the NYSUT mission as an advocate for every member of the Union. I hope to continue to promote NYSUT's

philosophy where every member feels engaged in our representative democracy and is empowered to use our collective voice.

SRPs are a vital part of NYSUT and by working together with our teacher colleagues, higher education members and health care professionals, we will achieve our goal of successfully advocating for students, patients and the citizens of our great state.

Now more than ever — as attacks on unions and public employees continue, — we must tap our greatest resource, our members. We must engage, motivate and mobilize our members to work together to fight for the rights of the working class.

Margie Brumfield, President, Rochester Assoc. of Paraprofessionals



These are challenging times for all of our union members and leaders. Our members are under attack as never before. Everywhere we are facing tough fights trying to keep decent benefits and basic worker rights, as well as the overall quality of the public services we provide to our students daily! Each of us are stakeholders and play a critical role in the changes that are taking place.

As SRPs we automatically come with caring HEARTS. Now it is time for us to come with the HEART of a CHAMPION! With the heart of a champion we will stay mobilized. With the heart of a champion we will have the courage to stand alone and speak out on issues in the midst of criticizing voices. The heart of a champion will give us the ability to see how past circumstances can propel us to future victories. It gives us a boldness to be guided by the truth and not by another's anti-union words. Boldness is contagious! It's time to reach out to our brothers and sisters and to move forward in solidarity.

Summer workers: Heat illness is dangerous

Many of NYSUT's School-Related Professionals work outside in the heat and in non-air conditioned buildings while getting facilities and grounds ready for the start of school in the fall. Heat can be a real danger for these workers.

OSHA has developed heat illness educational materials in English and Spanish as well as a curriculum to be used for workplace training. Additionally, a new Web page provides information and resources on heat illness — including how to prevent it and what to do in case of an emergency — for workers and employers.

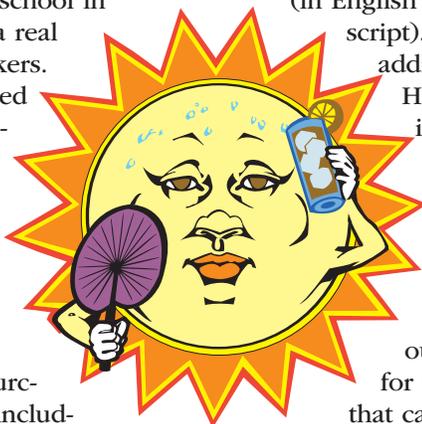
OSHA has also posted a new Heat Illness Web page that includes educational materials in English and Spanish, illustrated fact sheets for workers, worksite and community posters, and

a public service announcement from Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis. The Web page also includes a video from Assistant Secretary Dr. David Michaels (in English with a Spanish trans-

script). OSHA will be posting additional materials on the Heat Illness Web page, including a lesson plan that employers can use to train their workers to stay safe in the heat and a heat index smartphone app.

"If you're working outdoors, you're at risk for heat-related illnesses that can cause serious medical problems and even death," said Secretary Solis. "But heat illness can be prevented. This Labor Department campaign will reach across the country with a very simple message — water, rest and shade."

Visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html for more information.



Welcome new members

NYSUT would like to welcome the SRP members in the newly organized Ulster BOCES Employees Union, the affiliation of the Fairport Transportation Association and the Katonah Food Service Association, and the accretion of the bus drivers into the Spackenkill Support Staff unit.

Happy Summer!

SRP NewsLink will resume publication with the fall edition.

~ Enjoy time with your family ~

~ Learn a new skill ~

~ Do something you've always wanted to do ~

NYSUT Education & Learning Trust saved us thousands!

By: Kristina Palmieri and Betsy Reilly, SCTA Teaching Assistants

Did you know about taking affordable graduate courses through the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust? Well we didn't either! Not until we told colleagues that a local college was charging \$900 a credit were we introduced to this wonderful option by SCTA SRP Chapter Leader Cathy Rienth who also happens to work as a teaching assistant with us at Sagamore Middle School. She explained, "Who would want to pay \$2,700 for a course when you could get it through ELT for about \$645, including the textbook!" After a few phone calls, we were set and we took a course in the spring of 2011.

Not only was the course affordable, it was accepted by NYSED (New York State Education Department) for our Middle Level Certification Extension. It was offered through the College

of Saint Rose, which is a prestigious college for education. The course was 679 CSR (Middle-Level Education Foundations). This course met for only five weeks on Saturdays at Baldwin High School in Nassau County. There are also courses on week-day nights to fit your schedule at locations throughout the state. The course gave practical information and different strategies that can be utilized in middle school classrooms. We also gained insight to the physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs of middle school students. The course was easy to sign up for and the staff was very helpful. Overall, we had a very pleasant experience and would consider taking more courses through ELT.



Many members are NOT aware that NYSUT ELT holds graduate and undergraduate courses throughout the state and will bring them to your school/local for \$645/\$365 with a minimum of 10 participants. Please check with your Teacher Center or ELT at (800) 528-6208 or at www.nysut.org/elt to start your savings now!

NYSUT's ERS consultant program in action

By: Katherine Trozzi, NYSUT ERS consultant, Utica region



As an Employees Retirement System Consultant for NYSUT, one of the many things that I do is to provide workshops for our members. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to meet members and to inform them of the benefits that they are entitled to as members of the New York State Employees Retirement System.

At one of this year's workshops, there was a woman who asked many questions. After the workshop she told me that she was planning to retire this year, but was very confused about all of the paperwork that she needs to get together and the timeline for filing. She also wanted to request service credit for the years that she worked in the school and had not joined the ERS. I told her that I would be very happy to help her through the process.

She called me about two months later overwhelmed with paperwork. It turns out the member had met with a NYS ERS Representative who had subsequently sent her paperwork that she found very confusing.

I met with the member, and I explained that I would help her with every step and we would take one form at a time.

We filled out her request for service credit first and faxed that to ERS right away. We then filled out her retirement application. I put notes on her application of when to file

and what documents were needed to file with the application. I suggested that she drop the completed application off at the state office building with an ERS representative and they would notarize, copy, and file her application. We discussed the option election form and I explained what each option would provide.

I also helped her with the letter of intent to her school district informing them that she was retiring and would like to be afforded all of the benefits the district offers to employees upon retirement.

When we were finished she could not thank me enough. She is a widow, alone; and she said that she never could have done this without my help. She then asked me what the cost is for this service. I explained that her union dues pay for this service and that the NYSUT ERS consultants provide this service for all of their members. I also told her that it was very gratifying for me to know that I had helped her through this process.

Several NYSUT Regional offices offer the services of a NYSUT ERS consultant. These consultants give general information about ERS benefits and plans, give in-person or phone consultations and provide workshops for groups of 10 or more. They do not do calculations or make recommendations regarding a member's choice of options. For further information, contact Margaret MacCartney at NYSUT headquarters at mmaccart@nysutmail.org.

SRPs were a force at the NYSUT Representative Assembly

SRP delegates joined thousands of union brothers and sisters at NYSUT's annual convention in New York City.

The convention was an emotional event. Delegates pledged their support for their brothers and sisters in Wisconsin and other states, as well as for each other, as many locals are facing layoffs, program cuts and bitter budget battles.

As usual, the needs of the students we serve was a top priority as delegates debated and voted on resolutions submitted by locals.

Resolutions supporting a school nurse in every building and stronger nurse-student ratios both passed; as did a resolution advocating for appropriate fueling gloves for school bus drivers. A resolution about supervising students during lunch and recess created a lot of discussion. Delegates agreed that districts should provide mandatory training in CPR, automated external defibrillators and First Aid.

The delegation recognized Janis Bianco as NYSUT's 2011 SRP of the Year (*see story on page 1*). They also

recognized Hazel Ackerly, an aide and member of the Liberty Teaching Assistants, Monitors and Aides, for skillfully performed the Heimlich Maneuver on a choking student, in her second life-saving action on school grounds.

"When SRP delegates come to our annual convention, they get a great sense of our strength in numbers," said NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue. "Make sure your local has taken the right steps to attend next year — we are stronger together."

RAP 'first-timers' impressions of the March AFT PSRP Conference

Rosemary Wilson, Terry Spiva, and Mary Lerkins, leader activists and members of the Rochester Association of Paraprofessionals (RAP) attended the AFT's Paraprofessional and School-Related Professionals Conference this past March. It was the first time that they had attended this national conference.

All three came away from the experience with great knowledge, new connections, and an invigorated spirit of unionism!

Wilson, grateful for the opportunity, liked being part of the New York delegation that attended, all united as one for a great cause. As she spoke with participants from other states and cities, she realized how strong their beliefs were in what the AFT is doing and what it means to be UNION! She felt the Managing Student Behavior for Support Staff workshop was extremely helpful for her work.

Spiva, a building rep and RAP board member, attended several workshops that helped her to better understand her job and her special needs students. She also attended the Managing Student Behavior workshop and said it helped her to better understand why students may at times be out of control, upset, angry, rude and disrespectful toward adult staff and others who have authority over them and how to deal with those situations.

Lerkins, a 1st VP of RAP, felt the conference was filled with many great learning opportunities. She reports that the "First Timers" workshop set the tone for how open, positive and helpful the AFT staff was. They wanted participants to feel free to ask questions and encouraged everyone to participate in all the workshops and activities. Lerkins felt all the workshops she attended were well planned and delivered very professionally. She met people from all different

states and learned how different their contracts are.

Wilson, Spiva and Lerkins agreed that all the conference participants had the same common goals: "what's best for the children" and "protecting everyone's rights." They felt the speakers were dynamic and gave everyone something to reflect upon.



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