

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *Edgemont Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Publication/Website: ETA Pipeline

Issue Date: 20161101

Judges' Comments:

This has an easy, conversational style that gets to the point without belaboring it. Because it expresses the writer's opinions it is only appropriate in a column, rather than a news report.

Constitutional Convention - A relevant topic. Need to get right to the point about why this is important and relevant for the individual member. Be careful about getting into the weeds of political commentary.

Local: *Edgemont Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: COMMITTEE OF 100

Publication/Website: ETA Pipeline

Issue Date: 20160401T000000

Judges' Comments:

This is a good story about members dipping their toes in the political puddles of Albany and finding it's not so bad.

Committee of 100 - Helpful and informative...think about writing with a lede that will more effectively engage the individual member rating this article...Draw them in in a way that makes them recognize why this story might be relevant to him or her and encourage them to read more.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *Edgemont Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Common Core Draft Revisions: Discussion with Latimer and Eachus

Publication/Website: ETA Pipeline

Issue Date: 20161101

Judges' Comments:

Overall, this is a good, succinct report on a meeting about an important and complex subject. However, clarity is always a primary concern in news writing and the intended meaning of a comment about an increased focus on "play" going forward seemed ambiguous in this context of learning standards and testing. Perhaps other educators would not find the term murky in this context, but this non-educator does.

Liz Schutt article - An informational article that needs more development to provide appropriate context and more fully explain the issue and its relevance to local members. Framing it in the context of how the issue affects local teachers along with perspective from some of them would be beneficial.

Local: *Edgemont Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Dear ETA Colleagues

Publication/Website: ETA Pipeline

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

This column is generally well written and informative, but it has a serious flaw. The writer suggests at the beginning that she is writing this because members may have questions about how the death of Justice Antonin Scalia might affect the decision pending in the Friedrichs v. CTA case. Although she has a lot to say that's somewhat connected to the issue, she never addresses the question she posed head on. The reader is left as uninformed on that important point as they were before they began to read this.

President's column/Scalia passing - An important issue but be careful with big issues in a local newsletter...Be sure to draw a connection to what it might mean locally and that can be difficult to do without deft presentation of the context that avoids getting into the weeds.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *Edgemont Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: ETA SENDS FOUR TO SUMMER LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Publication/Website: ETA Pipeline

Issue Date: 20160915

Judges' Comments:

What is leadership is the question this writer poses at the start of this thoughtful report, but she never defines it and only concludes by saying that teachers, perhaps the leaders of teachers unions in particular, epitomize leadership because they open their hearts and minds to an ever changing society. It seems inadequate. Once a writer hangs their story on a pivotal question, she has an obligation to deal with it directly, rather than wandering off a bit and gazing back wistfully. If no answer can be found, that should be clearly conceded.

Summer leadership - Another informational article that would be stronger as a feature offering fuller context and perspective...the first person account touches on learning about the importance of what leadership means in today's world and would be even stronger with a more detailed explanation about what was learned, why it's relevant and how it is transferable. Additional perspective with quotes and testimonial from other participants in the program might help deliver this message more effectively.

Local: *Irvington Faculty Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Vote Cope

Publication/Website: The Unionizer

Issue Date: 20160624

Judges' Comments:

This is good standard news writing.

Informational articles that are solid and straightforward. They could be strengthened with ledes that more directly connect the information to the interests of the members.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *New Hartford Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: NYSUT Stands with LGBTQ

Publication/Website: The Chalkboard

Issue Date: 20161215

Judges' Comments:

On one hand this article addresses an important and challenging topic and imparts useful guidance. On the other hand, the writing has some problems with prepositions and pronouns that have nothing to do with the subject matter. It also uses terms such as bears, horses and colored Spartan lines in a specialized, non-literal way that will not be familiar to everyone. It seems like a story that defends and even advocates hypersensitivity to word choices, should try to avoid using language that's coded or just a kind of slang or jargon. Nevertheless, it's a worthwhile effort because it ultimately calls for teachers to be caring, accepting and supportive and to model that behavior for their students.

An informative and valuable article with practical information and suggestions. It would be even stronger with a lede that delivers a more direct message about why this is something that members should care about, particularly in the local.

Local: *Schalmont Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Mary Beth's Message

Publication/Website: STATIC

Issue Date: 20160701

Judges' Comments:

This is an excellent column from the STA president urging her members to appreciate their union and their own critical role in it. It is well written with power and simple eloquence.

A strong statement of solidarity that expresses an important message about community. The message also helps to set the context for the edition and highlight the significance of numerous other features that are presented. It effectively appeals to the heart and the head.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *Schalmont Teachers' Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Political Action Report: A Message from Mike Libertucci

Publication/Website: STATIC

Issue Date: 20160701

Judges' Comments:

The stated 2016 issue date submitted for this entry does not match the 2015-issue date actually printed on the publication that contains this article, which would appear to make it ineligible. The article addresses the Friedrichs v. CTA court case and attempts to explain its significance for members of the STA and other public-employee union members nationwide. The information is mostly correct, although the writer fails to distinguish between dues payers and fee payers, with the former being members of the union and the latter being those who are in the bargaining unit represented by the union but who decline to become members.

Good background information on very important topics. They would be even stronger with a more direct description about how they might affect individual members locally.

Local: *Schalmont Teachers' Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Throwback Thursday Mike Foley

Publication/Website: STATIC

Issue Date: 20160701

Judges' Comments:

An informative first-person account with lots of good information and context. It is obviously heartfelt and offers valuable perspective. It would be even stronger with more descriptive personal experiences cited to flesh out the story.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class I

Local: *Schalmont Teachers' Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Throwback Thursday Carol Carelli

Publication/Website: STATIC

Issue Date: 20160701

Judges' Comments:

Looking back to how she began her teaching career and came to gradually appreciate the union by participating in it, the writer advises new teachers to support the STA. While the phrasing seems a bit garbled in a reference to previous STA presidents, the writing is generally good and makes important points persuasively.

A strong and sincere first-person account about an individual's growing appreciation of union solidarity and community. The article presents relevant and practical information in an engaging way to befriend the reader.

Local: *Schalmont Teachers' Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Throwback Thursday Rick Pepe

Publication/Website: STATIC

Issue Date: 20160701

Judges' Comments:

This "been there, done that" and you should too story is terrific. It's not overly dramatic, but it makes a strong point that STA members would do well to heed. The writing is clear, honest and a good balance of directness and detail. Most of all, this voice of experience speaks with conviction.

A valuable valedictory and call to solidarity with very personal perspective. The information is relevant and to the point and sincerely expressed. Lessons for all and credible supporting arguments.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Faculty Association Suffolk Community College*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Pride: A cast of unlikely characters

Publication/Website: The WORD

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

It's difficult to find fault with this personal take on a film about a real strike fairly long ago and far away. Movie reviews rarely make it into union publications, and no one expects them to shine, but this one does in a matter-of-fact way because it values the struggles of workers and minorities and it celebrates the power of acceptance, mutual respect and caring. The writer presents his case with honesty and simplicity. The message is clear and right on pitch for our times.

An interesting and relevant perspective. The article could be stronger by better connecting the film and its message to the local union membership more directly.

Local: *Faculty Association Suffolk Community College*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Protecting the precarious

Publication/Website: The WORD

Issue Date: 20160401

Judges' Comments:

This is neither a column of personal opinion, nor news reporting. It is actually excerpted comments made by the "co-authors" as panelists at an event. A news report would summarize these remarks and include a few quotes, but the reporter cannot report on herself and her own comments. The comments from the panelists that are provided here are well said and very worthy of sharing with the readers of this publication, but printing such large excerpts uses far more space and more of a reader's time than necessary. The reporter's job is to communicate it more succinctly and directly than a speaker.

A worthwhile topic and some valuable perspective. The feature would be stronger with a clearer lede and some fuller context to connect it more quickly to the shared interests of the individual local membership.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Faculty Association Suffolk Community College*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: The cure for the common allergy to politics

Publication/Website: The WORD

Issue Date: 20161101

Judges' Comments:

This is a timely, well-written opinion/advocacy piece by a union officer who provides data and some local statistics to support her arguments.

An interesting approach to sharing information and encouraging union support of VOTE-COPE. It might be stronger with a more developed pivot to more fully shift perceptions of politics and better engage the reader by recognizing the topic is more nuanced than they might assume and connects to his or her self-interest.

Local: *Faculty Association Suffolk Community College*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: The price of brides in Zimbabwe: FA encourages global awareness

Publication/Website: The WORD

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

This is an enjoyable and interesting account with an exceptionally engaging headline. The reporting and feature writing are good, and this might be one of the rare times leading a story with a direct quote is excusable. The story is well told with enough interesting quotes and information to keep it moving and hold the reader's interest.

An interesting feature that reflects the significance of on-campus consideration of issues and perspectives that many not receive attention in the mainstream media. Some fuller context and background would be helpful. Perhaps an editor's note laying out the circumstances and some of the relevant facts might be appropriate and effective.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Faculty Association Suffolk Community College*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Why should we make strides anyway?

Publication/Website: The WORD

Issue Date: 20161101

Judges' Comments:

This is a relatively brief but persuasive argument for supporting organizations raising money to fight and treat breast cancer and the article begins with a string of quotes from unnamed union members questioning or criticizing the effort as ineffectual. Using quotes, especially a series of them from unnamed sources, for the lede is not a good practice. In this story the real introductory paragraph should be the lede and then the quotes could follow it.

An interesting approach and perspective around a topic that many may either take for granted or dismiss. Be careful however, the way the article and its headline are written, some might assume a negative message here.

Local: *Hyde Park Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A Perspective On Stress

Publication/Website: Contact

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

Nothing puts the crush of day-to-day stressors and everyday problems into perspective like death. And that is what this column is about. There's an unnoted irony in the salutary effect death can have on the survivors, or not. This is written with honest pain and fatigue and self-awareness that makes it compellingly familiar to this reader. It is articulate and avoids self-pity and whining without straining to find humor where there is none.

A moving and relevant firsthand account that connects for all of us. A sincere and straightforward tone enhances the credibility of the message. There are nice references to details and a local sense of community, but the message is universal.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Hyde Park Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A Proud History of Solidarity

Publication/Website: Contact

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

Here's a lesson in labor history that is also a kind of book review that focuses on the conception, gestation and birth of NYSUT, the American Federation of Teachers and the profound effect it has had on education and educators. But birth is only the beginning and now the union fights for its very survival just when America and its children need skillful, caring educators most. The writing is simple and clear, with the exception of a couple of repeated words in the penultimate sentence. The construction is strong and the message of hope and inspiration is timely.

A valuable perspective delivered with a nice personal tone to reinforce the subject's relevance. Lots of good information and a firsthand perspective on it. It could be strengthened for the local readership by connecting it even more directly to the local and their continuing struggles and experiences.

Local: *Hyde Park Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A Tribute To Matthew Walker, Jr.

Publication/Website: Contact

Issue Date: 20160601

Judges' Comments:

This is a white man's eulogy for a black classmate from his youth whose courageous efforts in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s still awe and inspire him 50 years later. It's an honest assessment of the writer's own role and the searing memories of overt violence and bigotry of that time and the struggle to overcome.

An interesting and sincere first-person account that provides important perspective. It might be stronger with some context, perhaps in the form of an editor's note to better set the stage for what the article is all about. It might also benefit from a closer connection to why this story is still so relevant in today's world, and connect it to the obligation that each of us has to try to make this world a better place.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Hyde Park Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: For the Love of Data

Publication/Website: Contact

Issue Date: 20160501

Judges' Comments:

Humor and satire are invaluable defense mechanisms when your data starts to disaggregate on its own. This rueful look at data-obsessed educators provides just enough comic relief to make the cult of popsicle sticks bearable.

An interesting and potentially relevant topic. The article would benefit from show sharper focus and expressing its purpose more directly early on.

Local: *Hyde Park Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Standing Together: The Power of Solidarity

Publication/Website: Contact

Issue Date: 20160601

Judges' Comments:

This is a good we-survived-another-hair-raising-academic-year column that reminds members eager to escape that solidarity was their vital ally and that of their friends and neighbors at Verizon whose winter struggles had been at least as fraught as their own.

A good message and tone. The column might benefit from some clearer context and explanation of the points' relevance - not every member will be as familiar with even labor-related news as activists are.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Mahopac TA*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: What Do Teachers' Unions Really Do

Publication/Website: Mahopac TA Blog

Issue Date: 20160616

URL: <http://mahopacta.blogspot.com/2016/06/what-do-teachers-union-really-do.html>

Judges' Comments:

The answer to the question posed by this story is not the one the U.S. Labor Department needs to hear, but it is a great one for the union's members and the community to hear. This staggering list of good deeds and generosity amassed in just one month is extremely impressive. On the other hand, while any one or two of these efforts makes a good story, the long list becomes a bit wearing when it's all recounted at once. The subject matter is great and the telling is skillful, but it still can wear you out just reading through it.

A valuable and informative presentation of the community connection of the local with excellent examples that would be viewed positively by members and community allies. The piece offers some context and explanation at the very end...Presenting this information at the beginning would strengthen the purposefulness and create better understanding. Working in some appreciation for the way these activities strengthen the union, example-by-example, would also be valuable.

Local: *Nyack Teachers Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Committee of 100: Lobbying for you

Publication/Website: The Bridge

Issue Date: 20160325

Judges' Comments:

It's great to know your message was heard and acted upon, which is the point of this report on lobbying a state legislator who understands the points you make and is motivated to act on them.

The article is informative and purposeful. It would be stronger with more context, including explaining what the Committee of 100 is for those who don't know, and connecting the lobbying activities more directly to how they benefit individual members in the local.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Nyack Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Day of Action: NTA wants fair funding

Publication/Website: The Bridge

Issue Date: 20160325

Judges' Comments:

There are plenty of pitfalls and potholes to dodge when you start reporting on billions of dollars in state funding for schools that is more wish than reality. But dodge this story does, and it offsets the dry numbers with an account of members braving a cold morning to educate parents about the issue.

Valuable information to share about a local effort that connects to a bigger picture for the union as a whole. Be careful about writing about the union as if it were a separate third party entity. Connect the activity to friends and co-workers standing together to create a better education and learning environment in our district.

Local: *Nyack Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Hitting My Stride, Taking the Hills

Publication/Website: The Bridge

Issue Date: 20160620

Judges' Comments:

Self-rediscovery is the subject here and it's told with personal style in the short, choppy breaths of a runner. That's not contrived, it's how she thinks and expresses herself. And it gives the story a rhythm and authenticity that helps propel it forward.

Much to admire in this first person account of self-discovery. Lots of nice detail and insight. The piece would be stronger with some streamlining, sharper focus and a closer connection between how the self-discovery through running actually does make the writer a better teacher. More detail/explanation around that would strengthen the appeal to others to pursue similar activities.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Nyack Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Message from the President: Report students in Crisis

Publication/Website: The Bridge

Issue Date: 20160325

Judges' Comments:

This is a delicate and very serious subject and the NTA president keeps apologizing for bringing it up, but he should not feel he needs to do that. Certainly some members may feel uncomfortable or even defensive when he challenges them to think about how they might react if they were suddenly confronted with a student caught up in an emotional crisis. He does not push the youth suicide rates on them, he just keeps suggesting that this kind of challenge can pop up in front of a teacher at any time, including at home in the middle of the night.

A very worthwhile informational article with important purpose. Some context about the challenges that teachers face, and the prevalent circumstances of youth in crisis, would be a valuable addition along with some vivid detail to make this more real for the reader. No need to apologize to the reader for addressing a relevant and serious topic...use the opening to connect them to issues that teachers encounter in very acute ways.

Local: *Nyack Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Solidarity

Publication/Website: The Bridge

Issue Date: 20160620

Judges' Comments:

Impassioned urgency runs like a live electrical current through this call for solidarity. The writer builds her case for what solidarity can do, has done, must do. The necessity is palpable.

An informational article on a range of important issues. It would be stronger with a clearer context that connects it more directly to teachers in Nyack.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Bad Leaders Make Bad Decisions That Affect Good People

Publication/Website: The Union Sound

Issue Date: 20161001

Judges' Comments:

Talking about the very real risk of bad people making bad decisions that hurt good people is a scenario that most Americans see as not improbable these days. But then the writer calls on each of us to step up the challenge and be the hero that the situation demands. She might have weighted the ending with a bit more convincing examples of how we can be and have been heroes before, just to balance the weight she gave to the threat. Nevertheless, this story is a vibrant and strong call to action.

A solid and positive message that connects a real life issue with a learning lesson. The appeal to tangible actions with a more direct tie-in to everyday opportunities within the local community might make it even stronger.

Local: *Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Finding Your Voice

Publication/Website: The Union Sound

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

This is both a news report and an opinion piece advocating advocacy. It is well written and includes quotes, but it disregards the line between objectivity and subjectivity. Nevertheless, it has a strong voice on an important issue that is both urgent and timeless.

Good information presented here about a surely worthwhile event. A sharper focus on what the reader should do with this information - and why would make the feature stronger.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: The Survivor's Guide to the Future of Public Education

Publication/Website: The Union Sound

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

Another story about education in the federal crosshairs infused with youthful optimism and belief in the power of many people who act together to maximize their power.

A big topic that might benefit for some sharper focus. The second half of this piece offers some constructive examples to provide counter arguments to misguided political directions. Using a more streamlined set up about the political context, and then developing these examples more fully, might strengthen this feature.

Local: *Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: What Now?

Publication/Website: The Union Sound

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

Post-election doubts and fears are the boogey man this writer tries to confront and subdue at least somewhat with knowledge of the 2016 Republican Party platform as a first step.

Some worthwhile perspective here, but framing issues in the context of partisan politics can be polarizing. There might be ways to address the merits of the issues without making it about the political party.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: What Would Our World Look Like?

Publication/Website: The Union Sound

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

Individual actions can precipitate worldwide change and trigger landmark turning points and this writer sets forth plenty of persuasive examples to inspire her readers to stand up and take actions that may turn the tide in favor of working class people and their families.

Lots of great food-for-thought examples here that might be strengthened by focusing on a clear and purposeful point about it earlier in the piece. A more specific call to action would also be beneficial.

Local: *UUP Potsdam*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Excuses

Publication/Website: Fall Chapter Newsletter, humor; Excuses

Issue Date: 20161021

Judges' Comments:

No one likes to fail and this writer shares some of her favorite excuses that she hears from unprepared students.

Interesting anecdotes that would be strengthened with a clear purposeful learning lesson to tie them together.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Wallkill Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Community Relations News... Opportunities to Volunteer and More!

Publication/Website: Impact Volume 29 # 2

Issue Date: 20160401

URL: <http://wallkillteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ImpactApril2016.pdf>

Judges' Comments:

This is a well-written list of upcoming community events in which members can participate if they want to volunteer.

Good informational items. Offering more of an appeal to action coupled with some background on the benefits of local/community interaction would make stronger impact.

Local: *Wallkill Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: President's Letter to Kevin Cahill , page 2

Publication/Website: Impact Volume 29 # 2

Issue Date: 20160401

URL: <http://wallkillteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ImpactApril2016.pdf>

Judges' Comments:

This entry is a reprint of a letter to state Assemblyman Kevin Cahill from the union president memorializing their recent meeting to discuss the thorny issue of naruage,

A lot of information here that might be more effective as excerpts in the context of a news article that explains the situation more fully and why it is relevant to members of the local.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Wallkill Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: President's Message * page 4

Publication/Website: Impact Volume 29 # 2

Issue Date: 20161001

URL: <http://wallkillteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/twoSeptemberOctober2016.pdf>

Judges' Comments:

This president's message to members early in the school year updates them on the status of changes in state education law and policy. It is informative and generally well written with the exception of a couple of small grammatical errors.

A lot of items touched on here. Some streamlining and focus might be helpful and allow for more detail and an explanation about why each issue is relevant to the member.

Local: *Wallkill Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: President's Message *page 2

Publication/Website: Impact Volume 29 # 2

Issue Date: 20160101

URL: <http://wallkillteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/ImpactJanuary2016.pdf>

Judges' Comments:

This is a brief but fairly intense call for members to remain alert and on guard after contract negotiations have recently been completed. It is written as a president's message and it uses a few bulleted facts to support his contention that dangerous threats remain. It is well written.

Nice to give recognition. Carrying through the change idea presented at the start and connecting it to those being recognized might give the column sharper focus.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class II

Local: *Wallkill Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: President's Message *page 2

Publication/Website: Impact Volume 29 # 2

Issue Date: 20160601

URL: <http://wallkillteachers.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/June2016.pdf>

Judges' Comments:

This is a good, brief thank-you message to members from their president at the end of the 2016 academic year.

Important issues are being raised. It's often difficult to fully cover what people need to know about a lot of things in a short space. Touching on a range of issues and sharpening the focus on the priority items can be a way to provide greater understanding and stimulate interest in the other items.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class III

Local: *Buffalo Teachers Federation*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: 235 Teachers Attend NYSUT Sponsored BTF Activist Summit

Publication/Website: The Provocator

Issue Date: 20160321

Judges' Comments:

This is good reporting and news writing. The inclusion of quotes from people who spoke at this event adds to the story in a way paraphrasing cannot. Also, this is written in the third person, which gives it credibility as reporting, rather than opinion.

A lot of comprehensive information about what happened. The article might be stronger with more information about what the event means and how it strengthens the union - especially with perspective being voiced by participants sharing their take on what was presented and what they learned.

Local: *Buffalo Teachers Federation*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: BTF Endorsed Candidates Sweep School Board Elections

Publication/Website: The Provocator

Issue Date: 20160601

Judges' Comments:

National and state elections are not the only ones that count as this story about this teachers union's involvement in the local school board elections reveals. It is a story of surprisingly successful advocacy and campaigning against the odds and strong opposition. The story is well written as news reporting in the third person with liberal quotes from the union president. Generally stories should not begin with a direct quote as this story does, but there is some justification for it in this instance.

A solid account of a victory for better education. More information reflecting the role of member activists, including some quotes from them to provide firsthand perspective would make this a stronger vehicle for solidarity and union ownership.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class III

Local: *Buffalo Teachers Federation*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: BTF Initiates Fund Raiser For Flint

Publication/Website: The Provocator

Issue Date: 20160321

URL: file:///Users/jbull/Desktop/Firefox%20Downloads/Solidarity.pdf

Judges' Comments:

This is a news report on an appeal for members in Buffalo to donate money to help students in Flint, Michigan. It is a factual story written in the third person and quoting the union president's request for help to support these students who have been exposed to heavy lead content in their drinking water for years. The story doesn't mention that fact and the writer apparently assumes the local's members are already well aware of that circumstance. The writer includes the fact that the teachers union in Flint replayed the voicemail offer from the Buffalo teachers at their executive council meeting. That simple inclusion helps to elevate and personalize this news brief.

Straightforward basic information. Needs a stronger hook in the lede to provide context and connection for the reader.

Local: *Buffalo Teachers Federation*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Supporters From Near And Far Attend 'What Buffalo Students Deserve' Rally

Publication/Website: The Provocator

Issue Date: 20160601

Judges' Comments:

This is a well-written third-person news account of a rally for student needs in Buffalo. It includes quotes and mentions the mutual solidarity expressed between the members of the Buffalo Teachers Federation and the Verizon workers who held their own rally immediately following the BTF event.

A lot of facts and information, which would be more purposeful with a stronger lede offering context and connection for the membership. What is the takeaway for advancing the teachers' cause? Quotes from the participants, including many of the guests and supporters would be welcome, particularly if they helped to present the story and give it resonance.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class III

Local: *Buffalo Teachers Federation*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Thousands Rally For New Contract

Publication/Website: The Provocator

Issue Date: 20160901

Judges' Comments:

This is a good third-person news report that makes good use of direct quotes. It reports on a large contract rally and the events that occurred just before and after it.

A lot of information sharing the who, what, when and where of the story; It would be strengthened by explaining more about why it matters for the individual member. Quotes from the participants and supporters would help to tell the story and make it more real.

Local: *Commack Teachers Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: One Teacher's View: Achieving the Dream: Athletics for All

Publication/Website: The Commack Teacher

Issue Date: 20161017

Judges' Comments:

This is first-person advocacy, more than it is a news report. The writer is part of the story that is about a program to involve students with physical disabilities in athletic competitions that he began and still actively supports. He makes the story interesting and expresses persuasive observations about the students who participate in the program.

A valuable and informative first-person account of an important program There is a lot of good information that could be even stronger with more detail about the "nitty-gritty" of the training and competition that these athletes and their coaches experience. Some perspective that offers more specific insight to the benefits for the individuals involved and how that in turn makes a positive impact on the school and community would be welcome and offer a fuller appreciation of this program.

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Class III

Local: *Half Hollow Hills TA*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: A Look at HHH Enrollment Trends

Publication/Website: Communicator

Issue Date: 20161213

Judges' Comments:

This story by the local union president is written in the first-person, but is meant to be an analytical and objective look at the facts regarding the effects of declining enrollment and funding on the union's members. He goes beyond looking at the present, by presenting data and a well-reasoned analysis of the factors that led to the declines. He also uses charts and tables of data to clearly show members what to expect in the coming five to 10 years. It's refreshing to see a union leader take such an objective and penetrating look at such an important situation and share it so effectively with the union's members. This is exceptionally good work.

An ambitious effort to make sense of a wide range of issues based on a demographic report. Be careful about overwhelming the reader with information. Sometimes breaking stories like this down to a main overview and several sidebars can be helpful. You might also try distilling the information into bullet points or factoids for easier understanding.

Local: *Half Hollow Hills TA*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: What the 2016 Elections Will Mean for Us

Publication/Website: Communicator

Issue Date: 20161213

Judges' Comments:

This is a very good post-election message from the union president to the members. He avoids partisan politics and personal attacks. He does not name names or disparage one political party or official. He states how leaders in both parties have taken positions that threaten the things he and his members need and value in their careers and personal lives. He asks all members, regardless of their politics, to join him in defending these things they have worked and fought to achieve in the attacks that surely lie ahead. It's hard to imagine how he could improve upon this message.

A sincere effort to provide some context on the national political scene. Efforts of this kind can often be polarizing despite good intentions. It is often best for union leaders to

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focus in a more granular way on issues in the workplace and how they affect the working environment, work load, impact on children, etc. These may in fact be connected to the national political issues but it can be more effective to approach them in a way that connects more directly to the individual member and perhaps helps them to see it differently.

Class III

Local: *Levittown United Teachers*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: APPR Update

Publication/Website: The Levittown Teacher

Issue Date: 20160226

URL: <https://levittownteachers.org/updates/appr-update>

Judges' Comments:

This is more like a letter to members than a news story. It appears to be a news story in many respects because it presents the facts of a complex issue and puts them in a time context. It is written in the third person until the very last paragraph when it switches to the first person, but it is not an opinion piece and it is not clear whether it is just a news story or a standing column. The story has strong writing that presents complex information with reasonable clarity and directness. A real news story should also contain some quotes and reactions from members about how this change in policy will affect them.

A lot of important information here. Try to avoid jargon and acronyms in headlines. If using acronyms in a piece, write it out fully the first time and then use the acronym. This is about the organization of this information and what is most important for the audience to know? Use that as your lede to draw them in and then try to explain in the simplest possible terms. The denser the information, the more difficult for the reader and often they won't read it at all if they zone out at first blush. Often you can distill information into bullet points or factoids to make it easier to understand and streamline the article.

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Local: *Levittown United Teachers*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Educators, Educate! A Positive Call to Action

Publication/Website: The Levittown Teacher

Issue Date: 20160118

URL: <https://levittownteachers.org/updates/educators-educate-positive-call-action>

Judges' Comments:

Teachers can and must educate other voters about the critical issues and stakes in a general election. That is the core message presented here in a persuasive and well-reasoned argument.

There's a lot of good information here about some challenging big picture issues. The challenge with helping people better understand the big picture is connecting to what it means for them. Approaching the issues presented here in the context of what they might mean for the individual member in this school district might be a helpful approach to moving minds.

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Class III

Local: *Levittown United Teachers*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: NYSHIP Health Insurance Buyout Update

Publication/Website: The Levittown Teacher

Issue Date: 20160920

URL: <https://levittownteachers.org/updates/nyship-health-insurance-buyout-update>

Judges' Comments:

This is a good explanation of an important change in members' ability to be compensated for dropping their employer-paid health insurance, the litigation over this change and an update on where that litigation stands in the courts.

A lot of important technical information presented here. Be careful to try to simplify it and also to distill down what is most important for the member to know.

Local: *Levittown United Teachers*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Why You Should Bother to Vote

Publication/Website: The Levittown Teacher

Issue Date: 20161105

URL: <https://levittownteachers.org/updates/why-you-should-bother-vote>

Judges' Comments:

This is a strong opinion/advocacy piece urging members to vote in the general election. The writer makes a good case for voting and points out the stakes for members of the local and all of organized labor. He also reminds members of their combined voting power at the polls.

There is a continuing challenge for union leaders to stress the importance of voting and being concerned about political and public policy issues. These are critically important but can also be extremely polarizing within the union. It can be difficult to strike the right tone without being strident or pushing the individual member in a particular direction. People have to figure that out for themselves and they don't want the union telling them what to do. A good approach is to connect issues directly to real life in the local school district and encourage people to support candidates who will support what we care about. There are elements of that approach towards the end of this article that might serve well as a template for future messages.

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Class III

Local: *Mount Vernon FT*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Congratulations! You will be missed

Publication/Website: The Agenda

Issue Date: 20160601

Judges' Comments:

This is a personal tribute and thanks from the local union president to his fellow officers who are retiring. It is sincere and personal and should be appreciated by those who are leaving.

Nice recognition on the retirement of some individuals who have been the backbone of the local. The column might be strengthened with specific anecdotes about the individuals that capture their personality and express how it has contributed to the community of the local. Offer some of their pet phrases, serious or humorous examples of something they did or even a valedictory quote from them. Let the individuals emerge from the recognition.

Local: *Mount Vernon FT*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Elections Matter

Publication/Website: The Agenda

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

Timing is everything, and the timing of this well written and persuasive column is odd. He is telling members why they should vote while recognizing the election is over. Perhaps he senses general surprise and disappointment in the election result and feels members who did not vote, or who chose candidates for the wrong reasons, would be more open to these arguments after the election. Hopefully his arguments will not be forgotten when the next election is held.

A worthwhile message but recognize that broad political perspective is always likely to be polarizing in some way. Try to connect the importance of voting to the shared values and interests that people care about locally in your school district community. It is more likely to be effective for moving people.

NYSUT Communications Awards 2017

Class III

Local: *Mount Vernon FT*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Raymond Opticians A Business with a commitment to the Community

Publication/Website: The Agenda

Issue Date: 20161201

Judges' Comments:

A story about a local business that is not owned and operated by a member is an odd duck. At first glance, it seems like it should be a paid promotion. The justification is the 20-year commitment the business has made to the children of the district who cannot afford its services and the fact that those free services are coordinated through the teachers union. The business also gives the teachers a buy-one-get-one-free discount on eyeglasses. The story is not long and a photo of the union president accompanies it with the business owners. This story would be better as a feature news story focused on the services to the children and teacher discounts with quotes at least from teachers or the school nurse. In that format, it could also include a quote from the business owner about their decision and commitment to providing this contribution to the community.

Some good information here that would be stronger with testimonial from members who have used the service and gained something of tangible and intangible value from the relationship.

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Class III

Local: *Mount Vernon FT*
Category: **Best Writing**
Name of Entry: Unions Matter
Publication/Website: The Agenda
Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

This is a good message about why unions matter that depends largely on a long list of contractual and legal benefits that members enjoy because the local or other labor groups have negotiated, lobbied, litigated or campaigned for them. The risk of lists is they are judged as much by the omissions as the inclusions and in this case it is interesting to note that safe and healthy workplaces and working conditions are not mentioned, and neither are the worker's due process rights in disciplinary and termination matters. Nevertheless, it is an impressive list and the writer makes it clear these important benefits could disappear quickly without organized labor to defend them.

A lot of information here that could be stronger with some distillation and greater detail to what it specifically means for the working environment for local members. Stress the detail of the rights, benefits and efforts to build solidarity in the local. When members feel connected to their union and support it because they truly own it, threats like Friedrichs become irrelevant.

Local: *Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers - Local 3150*
Category: **Best Writing**
Name of Entry: The NCCFT's Statement on the Orlando Massacre
Publication/Website: Richard Jeffrey Newman
Issue Date: 20160614
URL: <http://nccft.org/2016/06/14/the-nccfts-statement-on-the-orlando-massacre/>

Judges' Comments:

This is a principled statement on a terrible national tragedy motivated by hate. The statement promises the union's leaders will participate in a public community response and it urges members to join them. It is commendable for union leaders to speak out on such atrocities and help put them in perspective as moral issues.

A good effort to share important information and perspective in the midst of a horrific tragedy. A sharper focus on what this situation means for members locally would strengthen its impact.

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Class III

Local: Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers - Local 3150

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Why Nassau Community College Needs an Independent Middle States Consultant

Publication/Website: Richard Jeffrey Newman

Issue Date: 20160701

URL: <http://nccft.org/2016/07/01/why-nassau-community-college-needs-an-independent-middle-states-consultant/>

Judges' Comments:

This entry appears to be the first in the series of pieces calling for the community college's board of trustees to hire a private consultant to advise it on how to restore the college's full accreditation. It does provide a list of the areas in which the school has been deemed deficient. This call for action seems too much like a single voice crying in the wilderness and it would be more effective if the writer showed how the union members are unified on this point and why. If they are not unified, then perhaps that is where this union leader should begin.

A strong and comprehensive analysis of a complex and relevant issue. It could make stronger impact with some streamlining and distillation and a clearer connection to why this is so important for all faculty.

Local: Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers - Local 3150

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Why Nassau Community College Needs an Independent Middle States Consultant – 2

Publication/Website: Richard Jeffrey Newman

Issue Date: 20160705

URL: <http://nccft.org/2016/07/05/why-nassau-community-college-needs-an-independent-middle-states-consultant-2/>

Judges' Comments:

This entry is the second in a series of articles that advocate for this community college to hire an outside consultant to help it regain accreditation after failing an evaluation. This is clearly a campus and faculty in serious trouble and caught up in a toxic political environment among those fighting over the power to run the campus. The writing here is an opinion piece, but it could use some journalistic tools to make it more powerful. No explanatory facts or data are presented in this part of the series. Neither are statements and quotes from members of the union included. It is difficult to assess this story as a

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stand-alone piece without seeing what went before it or what may come after it.

Some very important and relevant information here about a significant challenge for the school that affects everyone. Much of the most important points about the necessity of faculty involvement is towards the end. The piece would be stronger by streamlining and distilling some of the contextual debate and emphasizing more of the call to action earlier in the article.

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Local: Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers - Local 3150

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: You Have to Let the Process Run Its Course - Our Thoughts on Policy Documents 1200 and 1300

Publication/Website: Richard Jeffrey Newman

Issue Date: 20161003

URL: <http://nccft.org/2016/10/03/you-have-to-let-the-process-run-its-course-our-thoughts-on-policy-documents-1200-1300/>

Judges' Comments:

This is yet another episode in what is clearly a series of emails relating the college's probation and possible loss of accreditation. Since this one is dated October and the other two entries are dated July, it is unclear exactly what happened in the interim, especially regarding the possible hiring of a consultant to advise the school in this matter. It is good to see the union's leadership continuing to inform its members about what is going on. However there is actually little information here to help members fully understand what is happening and how it might affect them. Perhaps the embedded links provide more information in that regard. The writing is clear as far as it goes.

A lot of important and relevant information presented here. It would help to streamline and distill it to get at what is most important for the individual member to know and do. Much of the most important call to action is towards the end; some of this should be introduced much earlier in the presentation to make it clear there is a need to be concerned and involved.

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Class III

Local: *Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: PMCT Express - Layout in December 2016 SpeakOut

Publication/Website: Speak Out

Issue Date: 20161216

URL: [PMCT Express](#)

Judges' Comments:

This is a brief story accompanied by a lot of photos that say a lot more about this float's maiden voyage. It's a good news holiday story, but it could have been a full feature story with quotes from members who helped design and build the float and the kids who rode on it.

A short informational article, which has the potential for a longer more purposeful feature about a project that connected students and the community. Exploring the genesis of the project, some perspective on the work and participation along with comments and testimonials from students and others about the experience would be welcome and valuable for encouraging future opportunities.

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Class III

Local: *Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: PMCT Wins NYSUT Solidarity Grant

Publication/Website: Speak Out

Issue Date: 20160925

URL: <http://patmedteachers.org/2016/09/pmct-wins-nysut-solidarity-grant/>

Judges' Comments:

It is a well-written announcement about the award of the grant and how it will be spent. It does not talk about what the union hopes the grant will accomplish and why the local union and AFT/NYSUT think it is necessary. The story would be better if it at least included a quote from the union president or one of the members who wrote the grant application.

Informational and straightforward article. It would be enhanced by more explanation about why this will be of value and some quote or testimonial from an individual who will make use of the grant to make this more real for the local.

Local: *Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: The Mohawks Lead the Way to Bring Robotics Program to Cuba

Publication/Website: Speak Out

Issue Date: 20161130

Judges' Comments:

This is an interesting news item about high school students who participate in a STEM program and it announces three of these students will travel to Cuba to spend three days with students there to introduce them to the STEM program. The story does not mention teachers or other staff, nor does it include any reference to a union connection. That's really too bad because it would be good to flesh out this brief news item and put it in context. It also could use some quotes from staff and students. Hopefully they will, or have, followed with a report on the trip after the students return. In other words, this is feature story material that's being handled as a news brief.

An informational article about an exciting opportunity. The article could be enhanced with more development about the work of the group that led up to this circumstance and with comments and quotes by them members about what it will truly mean.

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Class III

Local: *Patchogue-Medford Congress of Teachers*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Toot! Toot! Here Comes the Gravy Train

Publication/Website: Speak Out

Issue Date: 20160916

Judges' Comments:

This welcome back to school message is accompanied by good news about an agreement reached with the board of education on a small raise for some of the members. But the tone of this announcement has a wistful tinge as the president says she wishes more members had voted on this agreement and had supported their negotiating officers at the board of education meeting. This president's message is well written, but perhaps too subtle. Members may need a more straightforward and direct approach to jar them out of their apathy or possibly resentful detachment.

Some important information here. While leadership can often be frustrating and feel like a no win situation, be careful about taking a tone in communicating to members and the public that may be counterproductive.

Local: *Smithtown Teachers' Association*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: A Union Carol-The Ghosts of Union Past, Present and Yet to Come

Publication/Website: Faculty Focus

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

This was written early in 2016 before Justice Antonin Scalia's death when this union and others were preparing members for the anticipated shock and challenge of a devastating decision in *Friedrichs v. CTA*. Borrowing the basic concept of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," the writer presents the ghost of the labor in the past in comparison to its present and its future. Its imaginative approach is well done and makes a good beginning in what must be a prolonged education process to help members understand how fragile their working conditions are and how easily our entire society can be profoundly changed for the worse.

A clever and well-intentioned approach to a critically important issue. The challenge with an approach like this is to be sure that the reader will be familiar with the context and circumstance. Some simple explanation about the Friedrich's case in an editor's note or early in the article might strengthen the impact here.

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Class III

Local: *Smithtown Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: From My Daughter's Perspective

Publication/Website: Faculty Focus

Issue Date: 20161121

Judges' Comments:

This is not your dad's political action column, but for one lucky daughter it is. This dad has been listening and he gets it. He is writing this, but his teenage daughter's keen awareness and strong reaction to the political realities she is witnessing are inspiring him. This is a very appropriate perspective for him to share with his fellow teachers whose working world revolves around the generation gap. Well done!

A valuable and interesting perspective. More vivid detail about the daughter's point of view, perhaps even a phrase or two, might make it even stronger by connecting more directly into the point of view that is being shared.

Local: *Smithtown Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Hold the Tomatoes Please

Publication/Website: Faculty Focus

Issue Date:

Judges' Comments:

It's good to see a union publication adding a column on social responsibility and this labor issue is a good place to start. The point is quickly but effectively made and members are encouraged to think more deeply about the choices they make in their busy day-to-day activities. What this story could use is a bit of spit and polish on spellings and grammar, but the flaws don't diminish the message.

Grammatical error in first sentence is a fatal flaw. Article has a worthwhile message but could use a more direct connection to teachers and the local.

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Class III

Local: *Smithtown Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Lessons From the Verizon Strike

Publication/Website: Faculty Focus

Issue Date: 20160617

URL: Faculty Focus Volume 21/ Issue 8

Judges' Comments:

This is a political action column, but this story is about unions and standing up for workers at the bargaining table. It does have one political aspect and that is its account of how the mediation provided by federal officials brought about settlement of the Verizon strike. This is a well written story that gives the facts and says why the workers courageous stand matters, not just to the workers who are directly involved, but to future workers and to workers and their families everywhere.

A valuable and relevant connection between the Verizon strike and the struggles of teachers in the local offers a lesson in Labor Solidarity. Drawing the connect more immediately in the column would provide a stronger construct for drawing the reader in - it would make it clear there's something in it for him or her.

Local: *Smithtown Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: What is Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association?

Publication/Website: Faculty Focus

Issue Date: 20160201

URL: Faculty Focus Volume 21/ Issue 4

Judges' Comments:

This is a very good presentation of the Friedrich's v. CTA case, where it's coming from, its significance and the serious threat it poses to this union and all other public employee unions and ultimately all of organized labor. It leads a special edition of the union's newsletter in February 2016. The story tells just enough and not too much. It is clear and accurate and well organized advocacy journalism.

A commendable effort to provide context and perspective about a serious and relevant challenge facing union members. There is a lot of information here and it's complex, even with an effort to distill it down. Connecting the issue more directly to how it might affect members locally would be a worthwhile effort to pursue and would likely strengthen the impact of the article.

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Class III

Local: *Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff at NYU*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Jasmin Smith accepts faculty position at CUNY

Publication/Website: Momentum

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

It's great to see smart, determined, courageous people step up to the challenges they face, especially at work, and this is a good story about such a member who is moving on to a new workplace with a better position where she will still be represented by a union. This story effectively describes this member's commitment to the union and how her courage and intelligence made a difference for all of its members and will continue even after she leaves. Her story becomes an inspiration and a model for other union members.

A strong feature article about an outstanding and inspiring activist. The feature would be greatly enhanced with a stronger lede that provides a central focus on this unique and pioneering individual who made such an impact for her co-workers. Some sharpening of the focus would also be helpful throughout the rest of the article, as the anecdotes are interesting and relevant and deserve to make a sharper point.

Local: *Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff at NYU*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: NYSUT School Related Professionals Conference

Publication/Website: Momentum

Issue Date: 20161205

Judges' Comments:

This is a good, upbeat story that springboards off of reporting on a conference to themes of communication and activism. From a writing perspective, packing so much into one story is a challenge, but this writer does it pretty well. Each of the three parts could be a story in themselves with the conference report as the main bar and the second and third parts as sidebars. Nevertheless, this story gets the job done.

A lot of wide-ranging information presented here. Some sharper focus about the value of the event for addressing practical workplace challenges would be helpful at the beginning. Presenting an overview article about the benefit of the event would be helpful. Breaking the practical information into individual sidebars might be another way to ensure the information is conveyed more effectively.

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Class III

Local: *Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff at NYU*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: NYU Without UCATS

Publication/Website: Momentum

Issue Date: 20160201

Judges' Comments:

A well-intentioned and factual argument about the importance of unions. Be careful about writing about the union in a way that makes it a third party entity, rather than embracing them as part of it and helping them to feel that. it is a constant challenge in union communication.

Local: *Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff at NYU*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Take that lunch break!

Publication/Website: Momentum

Issue Date: 20160829

Judges' Comments:

This story looks beyond the fast food menu of a new management policy calling for all employees to actually take a lunch break. The writer relates what the contract has to say about this and puts the responsibility back on management to staff adequately so employees are not so overburdened that they feel they can't stop for lunch. The writer also notes that uncompensated work is not just unfair, it's actually a kind of slavery. This is a thoughtful look at what might otherwise seem to be a caring and generous act on the part of management, but it may actually be a reluctance to pay overtime.

There is some valuable information and some important points in this article but it is undermined by snarkiness.

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Class III

Local: *Union of Clerical, Administrative and Technical Staff at NYU*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Unions Dodge a Bullet

Publication/Website: Momentum

Issue Date: 20160511

Judges' Comments:

A story about Friedrichs v. CTA; this one is published after the court is evenly divided and the established precedent prevails, but not before the general election last November. This story, written for members of a private-sector union, looks at all of the history and significance of the case and concludes that the firing squad is simply reloading. This story is well written and informative. It is a call to action, but perhaps lacks the urgency that it might express if it were written after the election. In any event, it creates a sound foundation for the longer-term educational effort that this and all unions must make on this issue.

A comprehensive overview of a complex and challenging case. The article gets into a lot of "inside baseball" and would likely benefit from some streamlining and distillation down to what is most important for the individual in the local to know. In this respect, more emphasis on why this is important and how it might affect an individual member would also enhance the impact.

Local: *UUP Farmingdale Chapter*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: LOCAL LABOR MANAGEMENT

Publication/Website: Unifier

Issue Date:

Judges' Comments:

This report on a recent labor-management meeting highlights the significant topics and how they were handled at the meeting. It's a good, useful report.

Straightforward and informational article about labor-management issues. The information is well organized and broken into digestible chunks. However, some additional context for each issue might be helpful. This always raises a tension between making it more understandable and keeping it to the point.

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Class III

Local: *UUP Farmingdale Chapter*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: Part-Time Contingent Update

Publication/Website: Unifier

Issue Date: 20161025

URL: <http://www.uupfarm.org/unifier.html>

Judges' Comments:

This is an honest and hopeful update on a very important issue at SUNY campuses and at colleges and universities throughout the country. The actions reported in this story are primarily at SUNY Albany, rather than Farmingdale, but any progress is significant.

Nice conversational tone and valuable information...For those new to the party, however, be sure to provide some context and why the issue is important for members locally right at the start...it will help to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Local: *UUP Farmingdale Chapter*

Category: Best Writing

Name of Entry: PROFESSIONAL'S corner

Publication/Website: Unifier

Issue Date: 20161123

Judges' Comments:

This is a very helpful review of information for part-time employees. It is clear and covers essential subjects.

Straightforward and informational article about rights and contract provisions. Always a challenge to share technical information that may be of varying levels of interest to different members. Some nice distillation of some of the info here.

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Class III

Local: *UUP Farmingdale Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association

Publication/Website: Unifier

Issue Date: 20160101

URL: <http://www.uupfarm.org/unifier.html>

Judges' Comments:

Just about every union publication had a story about Friedrichs v. CTA during 2016 and this entry is one of those stories. It's a good one that takes a careful look at the case and its potential significance.

A comprehensive overview about an important issue. There is a good, down-to-earth tone and a worthwhile effort to connect it to the individual member in the local towards the end. There is always a significant challenge in addressing a complex and technical national issue and trying to make it real for people locally. Even here, less might be more. Streamlining and distilling the information even more would likely help enhance this article.

Local: *UUP Farmingdale Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Who's Shrinking the Middle Class

Publication/Website: Unifier

Issue Date: 20160405

Judges' Comments:

The point of this column is that academics should not look down their noses at Walmart for exploiting its workers when academia is doing the same thing, especially with its part-time and contingent employees. The writer sets the reader up to shake his head in disgust over Walmart abuses and then turns the "camera" around to focus on them and their hypocrisy. It's an unexpectedly effective maneuver.

Another strong column- connecting a big picture issue to the local while providing interesting and valuable insight. Some further development of why it's important would make it even stronger.

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Class III

Local: *UUP Oswego Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Brexit and Trump Work To be Done

Publication/Website: In Touch

Issue Date: 20161031

URL: <http://www.uuposwego.org/in-touch-archives/>

Judges' Comments:

It's very helpful and downright fascinating to see things from other vantage points than our own. This writer provides that opportunity because he is an American who grew up in England attending an English boys school, but living at home with his parents who had immigrated there from south Asia. He looks at Brexit and Trumpism and asks himself the same questions we do, but he has a range and depth of experience most of us lack and his experiences continue to be sometimes different than ours. This is an articulate, thoughtful, and insightful look at what seems like tectonic social shifts, but may actually be backlash and powerful resistance to change more than change, itself.

An interesting and well-written personal perspective of some important big picture issues. Some streamlining and distillation along with more effort to connect the article to the interests of people in the local would also strengthen it.

Local: *UUP Oswego Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Vote Oswego Organize or Be Organized

Publication/Website: In Touch

Issue Date: 20161031

URL: <http://www.uuposwego.org/in-touch-archives/>

Judges' Comments:

Cool. That's my reaction to this story about a new campaign as coursework program at SUNY Oswego. The writer is telling the story in the first person because she is the person who conceived and runs the program. Ideally, someone else would interview her and her students about what they are doing and run the story along with some photos of them working on their voter registration campaign. So, this first-person account is not ideal, but the course and campaign are cool and so is this story about them. It's stacked with impressive facts and data to back up the sales pitch. But it begs for other voices to help tell the tale.

A valuable and sincere perspective that offers strong insight into a local initiative around a bigger national challenge. The first person approach makes the information real and

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relevant. The connection to the local community along with valuable context is very helpful to create understanding. The piece might even be stronger with some commentary, quotes, etc., from participating students.

Class III

Local: *UUP Oswego Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: LIU Could it Happen to You?

Publication/Website: In Touch

Issue Date: 20161031

URL: <http://www.uuposwego.org/in-touch-archives/>

Judges' Comments:

This is a lockout story that is full of disgust and dismay at the malevolent and premeditated behavior of the employer and gratitude to the students and parents who are supporting the union members. The story is more of a breaking news report than an analysis and it succeeds at what it attempts to convey.

A strong perspective that provides important information and raises some necessary points for further consideration. The article would be stronger by tying the issue more directly to the interest of people in the local early on. Some streamlining would also help sharpen the focus.

Local: *UUP Oswego Chapter*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: On Strike from Verizon in Syracuse

Publication/Website: In Touch

Issue Date: 20160301

URL: <http://www.uuposwego.org/in-touch-archives/>

Judges' Comments:

This is a report from the front, but it's someone else's front – the CWA strike at Verizon Wireless in 2016. The UUP angle is that it's based on an interview with a graduate of SUNY Oswego who is one of the striking employees, and it is a good way to see labor-management issues when push really comes to shove.

A lot of interesting and valuable information presented here. It would be stronger with some streamlining and distillation into a clearer, more focused narrative that connects the Verizon experience to the challenges members of the local face!

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Class III

Local: *Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A Cautionary Tale

Publication/Website: The Echoes

Issue Date: 20160919

Judges' Comments:

This VOTE-COPE pitch sneaks up on you by focusing on the disaster in Wisconsin and warning that complacency is all it takes to lose everything you have worked all your life to build. So, wake up and pony up for political action. This story isn't so direct and blunt, but it makes its point effectively nevertheless.

A comprehensive overview of critical issue and a call to arms. It is well written with some good supporting information. It is always challenging to translate a big picture issue and make it relevant for people locally. More detail connecting what happened in Wisconsin with the daily challenges that members of the local face would strengthen the impact of this work.

Local: *Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Bad Politician

Publication/Website: The Echoes

Issue Date: 20161010

Judges' Comments:

This is one union member's approach to the 2016 general election. After venting and appraising the field, she concludes that union endorsements will guide her choices and she recommends her co-workers do the same. Her reasoning is not subtle, nor is her presentation guarded. She makes her case and is sticking to it.

It is difficult not to wade into the waters of the today's national political scene. It is also likely to be a no-win situation for a local union. Politics are polarizing. It is better to approach relationship building within the local around issues where common ground can be found.

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Class III

Local: *Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Perfect is Not on the Menu

Publication/Website: The Echoes

Issue Date: 20161010

Judges' Comments:

This writer urges members to vote, and tells them why their choice should be Hillary. She is far from perfect, but still a better choice than her opponent, according to this story. The story is reasonably engaging and it appeared timely, about one month before the election.

See the same commentary for "Bad Politician."

Local: *Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Voting for the Children

Publication/Website: The Echoes

Issue Date: 20161010

Judges' Comments:

This story advises teachers to consider their children when they vote for a president, and he contends Trump has disqualified himself as a role model for children and as someone who truly considers their best interests. The writer cites Trump's behavior and statements to condemn him. The tone is indignant and impassioned. The arguments are persuasive, but only to readers who care to consider them.

While the sentiments here are very understandable, this might have been a stronger argument if it truly focused on voting for the children and articulated a constructive, hopeful set of arguments for what (not who) should matter in our electoral season. Politics will always be polarizing in the local and seeking common ground is a higher road to take.

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Class III

Local: *Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Why I Opt My Children Out

Publication/Website: The Echoes

Issue Date: 20160919

Judges' Comments:

This lays the opt out of testing question right on the line - do it. The writer makes a direct and strong argument for why the tests are insincere and intended to destroy public education.

An informative perspective on a challenging issue presented with good back up and a personal perspective. The article would be even stronger with some specific points about what can be done to produce better results.

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Class IV

Local: *Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A history lesson for the governor

Publication/Website: Clarion

Issue Date: 20160201

URL: [History Lesson for the Governor](#)

Judges' Comments:

A topical and interesting perspective that uses the historical record to address a current political controversy. Well-written and relevant, there is a valuable point here that facts and context matter in public policy. A well written argument that provides important points for an ongoing debate.

Local: *Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: A literary event in defense of CUNY

Publication/Website: Clarion

Issue Date: 20160301

URL: [A literary event in defense of CUNY](#)

Judges' Comments:

Lots of good information and perspective here. The feature is stronger as it develops with more perspective about the importance of the arts and why this event is so significant. The piece would be strengthened by a stronger lede paragraph providing sharper focus to its purpose. The boilerplate info could follow.

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Class IV

Local: *Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Building power, one conversation at a time

Publication/Website: Clarion

Issue Date: 20160201

URL: [Building Power, One Conversation at a Time](#)

Judges' Comments:

An outstanding perspective on a critically important issue facing the local. It also provides a valuable connection about the relationship between the union and members. Informative and timely, the feature offers strong commentary from a range of individuals. Making some of the member comments more central to the lede might make the piece even stronger.

Local: *Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: Muslims want answers on surveillance

Publication/Website: Clarion

Issue Date: 20160901

URL: [Muslims Want Answers on Surveillance](#)

Judges' Comments:

An outstanding and timely feature on a complex and controversial issue. The article provides strong information with an appropriate range of perspective and raises provocative concerns that are relevant to the CUNY community and beyond. Deft connecting of the union to the situation without being heavy-handed. More quotes and commentary from individuals to help voice more of the story would make it even stronger.

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Class IV

Local: *Professional Staff Congress/CUNY*

Category: **Best Writing**

Name of Entry: The age of disinvestment through the eyes of department chairs

Publication/Website: Clarion

Issue Date: 20160501

URL: [Age of Disinvestment Through the Eyes of Department Chairs](#)

Judges' Comments:

An outstanding and comprehensive feature that offers remarkable detail and firsthand perspective on the daily challenges in the workplace. Strong context in the opening Editor's Note and then very real and credible commentary. This reflects the union being in touch with the experiences of members.