At the recent SRP Leadership Conference in Saratoga Springs, participants embraced the past in a highlight of the first evening with the unveiling of the SRP History Trail. There, SRP guides led small groups through an exhibit of large posters of NYSUT SRPs in action — from the 1960s to present day — advocating for public schools, students, and a better way of life for our members.

At the opening session, Kim McEvoy, chair of the SRP Advisory Committee, and Paul Pecorale, NYSUT second vice president, spoke to the importance of our strong history and celebrated our present victories such as the approval and adoption of resolutions at the 2019 RA, including regulating the practice of toileting students and of respect for all SRPs.

We celebrated the success of NYSUT’s Support School Staff initiative, which resulted in the passing of state legislation on the issues of school bus cameras, workplace violence, and retirement equity for New York City Paraprofessionals.

On Saturday, hundreds of SRPs wore “Support School Staff” T-shirts and looked toward the future of the ongoing success of SRPs. This was reasserted through the NYSUT Officers Cracker Barrel, with all four statewide officers taking the time to speak and to answer our many questions. Next-Gen NYSUT and the importance of being counted in the 2020 Census sessions completed our morning.

We were inspired by this year’s keynote speaker Matthew Powell, the 2019 National Education Association (NEA) Education Support Professional (ESP) of the Year, a member of the Kentucky Education Association. Matthew shared stories about the SRPs who made a difference in his life and discussed the advocacy work he does to make a difference for his community and for the students at Graves County Central Elementary School in Mayfield, Kentucky.

The conference is the result of the commitment and hard work of the SRP committee. With months of in-person meetings and phone conferences, we hoped to offer the best workshops and host activities to allow members to engage and interact with one another. Committee members moderated dozens of high-quality, professional development workshops and facilitated roundtables for the nearly 220 SRPs (including 57 first-timers) who attended representing 58 locals.

Collectively, we donated more than 400 new children’s books to the Buffalo City School District, accepted by Jo Ann Sweat, president of the Buffalo Educational Support Team.

Raffle sales raised $2,675 for the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund.

Three bins of travel-sized toiletries collected were distributed through NYSUT’s NEON Committee to students in the City of Albany schools and to Operation Adopt-a-Soldier.

Save the date. We hope to see you at the Oct. 23-25, 2020, SRP Leadership Conference in Saratoga Springs.

For more information on the workshops offered at the conference, visit www.nysut.org/srpconference.
The issue of toileting in schools has been a concern for many SRPs, who are responsible for toileting and diapering students of all ages in our schools.

I’m a member of the statewide SRP Advisory Committee and toileting safety was an issue we brought forward to NYSUT, as a concern impacting many SRPs. A resolution at the 2019 Representative Assembly on this issue was submitted by 15 NYSUT Locals and one Retiree Council. The resolution was approved and adopted.

At the summer 2019 SRP NYSUT Education and Learning Trust Instructor Training, I decided to be trained in leading the new seminar, which addresses some of the issues we brought up in the resolution, “Working safely in schools: Preventing illness and injuries when toileting students.” I wanted more knowledge of the subject so that I could present it to other SRPs in New York State.

This workshop will help SRPs understand the importance of using protective gear and advocating for its availability. It outlines the dangers of blood borne pathogens. It provides an overview of lifting strategies — including using various assisted devices, since the students that SRPs may need to toilet or diaper may be larger and heavier than the SRPs themselves. The workshop also has several helpful scenarios to help SRPs through many toileting situations.

I’ve been an ELT instructor for 19 years, and am an SRP ELT Mid-Hudson regional coordinator. I am excited to be able to present this informational workshop to other SRPs.

For information about bringing this or other NYSUT ELT workshops to your local, visit www.nysut.org/elt.
2019 SRP Leadership Conference photos

Photos (clockwise from above): Officer Cracker Barrel, with President Andy Pallotta, EVP Jolene DiBrango, 2nd VP Paul Pecorale and Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham; John Pierce, Renee Freeman and Debra Roper-Dowie, United Federation of Teachers, at the cracker barrel; Buffalo Educational Support Team (BEST) President Jo Ann Sweat accepting book donation; Education Support Professionals/Ithaca President Carla Strong (left) and Tracy Voorheis work on a trivia question at Friday’s opening session; Barbara Young, Wantagh United Teachers, calculates the answer for trivia question; SRP Advisory Committee members with some of the books donated by conference attendees to BEST for students in the Buffalo City School District. (PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISTETTE AND ANDREW WATSON)

SRP union value news around the country

Strategizing at the NEA mentoring training in Washington, DC, (from left) Karen McLean and Matee Mahabir of Herricks Teachers Association; and Rhonda Scott, Sonya Flowers (president) and Bridget Doian of Albany Public School United Employees.

The 2019 NYSUT Education & Learning Trust SRP Summer Training for facilitators was held Aug. 19-22 in Albany.

The Oct. 4–6 statewide SRP Leadership Conference was held at the Hilton Hotel in Saratoga Springs. (See page 1.)

The Central New York SRP Council held its 11th Annual Fall Fling Oct. 17 at the NYSUT Syracuse Regional Office. More than 100 SRP members enjoyed workshops, a Member Benefits giveaway and donated non-perishables to the Food Bank of Central New York.

The Mid-Hudson Regional Office held its annual SRP Leadership Conference at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown, Nov. 1–3, was a attended by 150 SRP members.

The NYSUT ELT SRP online turnkey training for facilitators was held on Sept. 14 in Rochester and on Sept. 21 in Albany.

The Rochester Regional Office held an SRP Meet & Greet Nov. 20 for nearly 60 SRP members — including more than a dozen attending an SRP event at the RO for the first time. They learned about the professional services and benefits available to them through the union.
During holidays, note signs of elder decline
By Ani Shahinian, NYSUT Social Services specialist

The holidays are upon us and it is a time to take stock of what we are grateful for when it comes to family and being together. The elders in our families may be traveling to be with us, or we may go and visit them. It is often a time when we begin to notice that our parents, grandparents and other elderly relatives are not functioning in their usual capacity. Aging relatives and their children are often in denial that problems may be occurring.

Early warning signs you may notice as you spend time with your loved ones:
- Disheveled clothing
- Changes in mood or extreme mood swings that were not part of that person’s personality in the past
- Poor personal hygiene
- Depressed or low energy temperament
- Unexplained bruising
- Trouble getting up from a seated position
- Missing important appointments
- Uncertainty or confusion when performing once familiar tasks
- Forgetfulness
- Poor diet or weight loss
- Late payment notices, bounced checks and calls from collections
- Loss of interest in hobbies and activities
- Forgetting to take medications

If you are visiting an elderly relative in their home look for these signs:
- Unexplained dents/scratches on car
- House and yard need care and maintenance
- Newspapers still in plastic wrap or mail piled up
- Spoiled/expired groceries that don’t get thrown away
- Broken appliances
- If you find you are noticing a decline in functioning and want to know what types of services and care are available for your loved one, you can call NYSUT Social Services and speak to a specialist who has access to resources and information that may be helpful.
- Enjoy the holiday and know that your union is here to help you and your family should the need arise. Contact NYSUT Social Services at 800-342-9810 ext. 6041, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m.– 5 p.m.

ERS members, sign up for NYSLRS’ Retirement online

NYSUT SRPs* who belong to the New York State and Local Employees’ Retirement System, (ERS) can now sign up for online access to their retirement information. The New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) has a new way for you to check your retirement information. Retirement Online gives NYSLRS members and retirees a convenient and secure way to review your benefits and manage your account in real time.

With Retirement Online, you can view your benefit information, update your contact information, and view or request an update to your beneficiaries. Active members will be eligible to apply for a loan, and retirees can create their own income verification letters.

In many cases, you’ll be able to use Retirement Online instead of sending forms through the mail or calling NYSLRS. And it’s safe to use – NYSLRS has incorporated several security measures similar to those used by financial institutions.

NYSLRS is committed to providing you a safe and secure experience. When registering, you’ll be asked a series of questions to verify your identity. The questions are provided by a trusted third-party source, and NYSLRS does not store the questions or your answers. It is recommended you use Retirement Online with Internet Explorer.

Visit the NYSLRS website at www.osc.state.ny.us/retire to learn more about Retirement Online, and take a few minutes to create your new account.

NYSLRS is a division of the Office of the State Comptroller. State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli is the administrative head of NYSLRS.

*Most NYSUT SRPs belong to the ERS. However, certified teaching assistants belong to the state’s teachers’ retirement system (TRS). SRPs in New York City have their own retirement plan.

The SRP NewsLink is published periodically by NYSUT Program Services.
Visit: www.nysut.org/srp