

nysut.org | July/August 2022

**NYSUT**  
**UNITED**

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS



**Carly**  
**Santangelo**



## CONTENTS

**6: Union advocacy restores Long Island member's job**

**8: NYSUT committed to safe schools, social justice**

**10: AAPI educators: We need a voice**

**16: BOCES students gain real-world experience**

**19: Peer support line available to members this fall**

**23: NYSUT Board vacancy notice**

**27: Local unions in action; Kudos!**

### NYSUT UNITED [July/August 2022, Vol. 12, No. 6]

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# NYSUT members call for gun reforms

By Ben Amey  
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Students, educators, nurses and community members marched across New York state — and across the country — to end gun violence. Events took place June 11 all over New York, from Buffalo to Long Island, with marchers calling for stronger gun reforms, and for action from politicians in Washington, D.C.

“No parent should have to wonder: ‘Is this the last day I will see my children?’” said NYSUT Executive Director Melinda Person, who spoke at a rally in Albany with her four children beside her. “This is not a red state problem or a blue state problem. We want these laws passed now.”

## LONG ISLAND



Mahopac Teachers Association President Thomas McMahon pointed out that children and teachers being shot and killed in school is something that only happens in the United States. “Our country offers thoughts and prayers and ideas like arming teachers, making Kevlar backpacks for our kids, turning schools into fortresses, and every other crazy idea you could imagine,” McMahon said at a march

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## ALBANY



EL-WISE NOISETTE

in Peekskill. “Let’s be clear — it’s the guns. They are what need to be legislated.”

Seventh-grade student Alex Ciriello, below, implored the adults to act. “We don’t need thoughts and prayers,” the 12-year-old told attendees at the Peekskill rally. “We need action.”

Albany Public Schools TA President Laura Franz is fed up. “I resent being here. I resent that you

## NEW YORK CITY



have to be here,” she told the crowd in Albany. “Not that what we are doing isn’t right ... but because doing whatever it takes to stop mass shootings in our schools and communities should just be common sense.”

Mike Bennett, who was a special education teacher when he was shot by an East Greenbush student in 2004, shared a sobering perspective in the current national environment. “The shooting at Columbia High School would not make national news today because it has become too commonplace, and no one died,” said Bennett, who is now superintendent of the Greenville Central School District in rural Greene County.

“The reason we are here saddens

## HUDSON VALLEY



me, disturbs me, hurts my heart,” said New York Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado at the rally in Albany. “Do not allow yourself to be overcome by evil. Evil manifests itself in inaction.”

A clear majority of Americans support commonsense gun reforms. Nearly 90 percent of voters support universal background checks, while 84 percent support stronger red flag laws. Nearly 70 percent support banning assault rifles like those used in Buffalo and Uvalde.

To read NYSUT’s full coverage of the rallies around the state, visit [nysut.cc/endgunviolence](https://nysut.cc/endgunviolence).

## COMING UP

### June 18-26

Primary Election early voting

### June 28

Primary Election day

### July 3-6

NEA Representative Assembly

### July 11-12

NYS Board of Regents meets

### July 14-17

AFT Convention

### July 18-22

NYSUT LAP Conference

### Aug. 10

NYSUT Board of Directors meets

### Aug. 10-11

New Local Presidents Conference

Please note, some or all of these events may be conducted as virtual meetings in compliance with COVID-19 and social-distancing guidance.

## ON THE COVER

2022 New York State Teacher of the Year Carly Santangelo

Photo by Dan Cappellazzo

# Lawmakers pass union-backed bills by end of session

By Ned Hoskin  
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**T**he state Senate and Assembly passed numerous bills that NYSUT activists and legislative staffers pushed through since the state budget was finalized in early April.

"Many of these wins came down to the last days of session," said President Andy Pallotta, "but our advocacy paid off again this year." Although a few have been enacted, most of the bills await the governor's approval.

"Our attention shifts now to Gov. Kathy Hochul's office to urge her to sign these bills into law," Pallotta said.

Here are some of the dozens of NYSUT-backed bills that passed both houses:

## Labor and pensions

Both houses passed a bill to reaffirm long-standing precedent to allow unions to introduce evidence showing both the employer and employee bargaining units' intent to provide retirees with health insurance for life, regardless of the language in a collective bargaining agreement. The longstanding precedent was recently struck down in court.

With regard to the pandemic,

one bill extends through 2023 the death benefit for public employees who died as a result of exposure to COVID-19. Another extends through 2023 the four-hour paid leave for public employees to obtain COVID-19 vaccine or booster shots.

## LGBTQ pension buyback

This legislation will allow veterans with "qualifying conditions" — which include PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury and Military Sexual Trauma — and "discharged LGBT veterans" to receive credit for their military service.

## Health care

Two bills protect nurses from overtime exploitation. One provides home care nurses, who are often subjected to unscheduled mandatory overtime, with the same protections afforded to other types of nurses with regard to consecutive hours of work.

Another boosts enforcement by authorizing a civil penalty when a health care employer has required a nurse to work more than regularly scheduled work hours — unless there is an emergency declaration in effect. It does not prohibit a nurse from voluntarily working overtime.

## Higher ed

NYSUT fought hard to win adjunct professor loan forgiveness. This bill clarifies and expands the definition of full-time employment for purposes

of the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program to include, among other professions, adjunct professors.

Another bill prohibits degree-granting institutions from withholding a student's transcript because a student owes a debt to the school or institution.

## Special schools

Lawmakers passed bills to establish a public campaign to address and combat the stigma, stereotyping and discrimination faced by students in special schools and adults with developmental disabilities, and to eliminate outdated and derogatory terms for people with disabilities.

Other bills would fix the funding rate method for special education providers and ensure that programs realize the full benefit of the 11 percent growth factor promised by the state.

## Small cities debt limits

This is the first passage of a constitutional amendment that would bring small city school debt limits in line with other independent districts and provide additional fiscal flexibility and control.

## Libraries

A bill provides an additional two years (total of six) for libraries to complete construction projects so

they can remain eligible for construction aid.

## APPR

Among the acts that have already been signed are changes to the APPR and tenure laws as districts and educators continue to deal with ramifications of COVID-19. The changes provide a path to tenure for educators in their probationary period and suspend for a year the annual professional performance review process, while ensuring districts are not penalized for not undertaking APPR in 2021-22.

## Gun violence

Early in June the governor enacted the gun violence legislative package, a number of bills lawmakers passed in the wake of recent tragedies in Buffalo and across the nation.

The bills will close the loopholes in the "Red Flag" law; raise the age limit to purchase semi-automatic rifles from 18 to 21; make it a crime to threaten mass harm; and eliminate grandfathering in large capacity magazines.

## Mayoral control

This bill extends mayoral control of New York City public schools for two years, and includes more parent involvement in schools and educational policy.

# Voters support students and educators

By Ned Hoskin

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The Carmel community in Putnam County had always supported its schools, but in the last couple years things took a strange turn.

In May 2021, the budget went down on the first vote, and in the run up to a second vote the debate went off the rails.

The June meeting on a revised budget opened with a public comment session that went on for hours. Many of the speakers didn't even address the numbers. They only wanted to talk about "critical race theory," an esoteric grad school concept that has been misrepresented by conspiracy theorists as political indoctrination of young students on racial issues. The school board leadership asserted unequivocally that critical race theory is not a part of the district's curriculum.

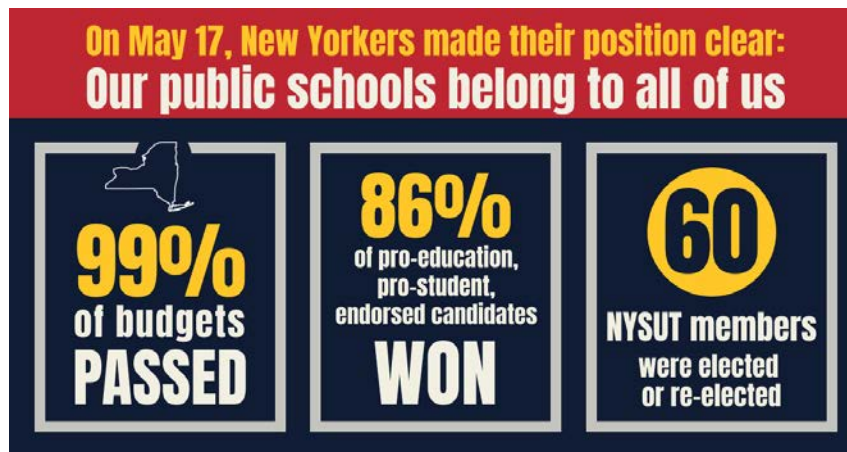
Then a Carmel parent went viral. A video of the woman's histrionic rant at the meeting blew up on social media. It was highlighted on Fox News and covered in *The New York Times*. She accused the district of "emotionally abusing" the kids with its teaching.

In the wake, anti-schools voters defeated the revised budget on the second vote, and the district had to go to a contingency plan that forced painful cuts in programs and staff.

This year, the Carmel Teachers Association was ready.

"We pulled out all of the stops with three mailings, phone calls, robocalls and text messages, lawn signs, and one-to-one meetings with members," said President Lisa Jackson. "We saw the highest voter turnout in Carmel in the past 50 years!"

Two of the three union-endorsed candidates won, and the third open



seat went to an incumbent.

Importantly, voters approved the 2022-23 budget on the first try.

## Culture wars try to divide us

The culture wars invaded school board politics throughout New York this spring as citizens voted on school budgets and elected board candidates May 17.

Amid the relentless divisiveness and conspiratorial rhetoric, voters clearly looked to their teachers and staff for guidance.

In Baldwinsville, Onondaga County, board elections reflected a rift that began with questions about books and values.

Last year, a group of parents rose up to condemn certain books available in classrooms and school libraries. They demanded that the school board ban a number of books, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, *All Boys Aren't Blue* and *All American Boys*.

Educators and other parents defended the literature, saying that parents have a right to restrict access for their own children, but not to deny access to all readers.

More broadly, however, these literary critics called for an end to social-emotional learning and any discussion of diversity, equity and inclusion.

"The real issue came down to people who were following this rhetoric of parent involvement in schools and curriculum, and trying to micromanage what is taught and how it is taught," said Beth Chetney, president of the Baldwinsville TA.

"It represented a real shift from some parents supporting teachers and the profession, to wanting to be drivers of what should be taught."

The BTA worked with the Baldwinsville Educational Support Professional Association, led by Patricia Speech, and a grassroots group of supportive parents to respond. They knocked on doors, distributed fliers and used social media to back three pro-education candidates.

At the same time, a group of parents who called some books in school "pornographic" and accused teachers of indoctrinating students supported at least two other candidates.

## Public Schools Unite Us

On Election Day, voters listened to the educators, and the three union-backed candidates swept in.

It occurred from one end of the state to the other.

In Brentwood, the largest school district on Long Island, voters have

seen their share of anti-public education debates over the years. This year, the Brentwood TA, headed by President Kevin Coyne, led a surge of public school support in the community to defeat the long-time anti-union president of the school board.

Coyne saw unprecedented activism with more than 500 members working to support a slate that included one of their own colleagues. They knocked on doors and phone banked over four weekends leading up to the vote.

"NYSUT's commitment to help locals through VOTE-COPE grants was essential to our success," he said. "There is no better ingredient to organizing, building and maintaining the labor movement than the sweet taste of victory."

In Western New York, voters in several districts— including Orchard Park, Grand Island and Williamsville — also rose up in unprecedented solidarity with NYSUT local unions to assert their communities' values and reject divisiveness.

Through NYSUT's statewide "Public Schools Unite Us" campaign, "we saw a wave of pro-public education school board members elected who we know will prioritize students at every board meeting," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

"Strong boards of education that focus on what unites us instead of what divides us are essential to allow students, educators and families to put public schools at the center of their communities."

More than 1,600 volunteers helped get out the vote this year, making more than 62,000 phone calls to their neighbors and knocking on 5,600 doors in their communities. Residents elected 86 percent of candidates endorsed by local unions and approved 99 percent of budgets.

# Union advocacy restores LI member's job

By Kara Smith  
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**B**enefits like pensions, health care and fair pay can feel like rights rather than hard-fought wins when workplace challenges are few. But when something happens, and you have to fight, that's when the value of union representation really hits home. The hope is that most NYSUT members will never have to experience this. But if you do, know that your union

abolishing Wilson's job as a network communications specialist, which coordinates Wyandanch's technology and information systems.

"The resolution wasn't posted. No one was notified and it wasn't on the meeting agenda," explained Wilson. After nearly 24 years on the job, she was out of work.

Nothing about the move added up. The board's official justification, that the district needed to make a 20 percent budget reduction, was at odds with a *Newsday* article that

endorsed candidates who unsuccessfully ran against the sitting board, inquiries were made about eliminating her job.

"But the superintendent refused, claiming that Wilson's position was necessary," said Wall.

The move also raised eyebrows since Wilson wasn't notified about the district's layoff plans, either as the impacted employee or as the union president. And, since Wilson alone facilitated remote and hybrid learning, firing her while Wyandanch

was still weathering the pandemic didn't make sense. The layoff resolution also incorrectly listed her position as a network and systems administrator, a position she held six years previously. Once the board realized its mistake, it convened a Nov. 30 meeting specifically to axe the network communications specialist job title, Wilson's actual position. Proof, Wall explained, that Wilson, rather than her position, was being targeted for elimination.

As a strong union leader, Wilson was an unapologetic thorn in the district's side. She independently met with the district's state-appointed fiscal monitor to discuss its financial status on Oct. 22; requested a union release day, and later filed a grievance on behalf of members, on Nov. 2; and attended a contentious labor-management meeting with board representatives, administrators and other union leaders on Nov. 4.

"These were all protected activities, but they put her in the district's

crosshairs," explained Wall. Wilson received a formal layoff letter on Dec. 12, 2020. The following week, the union filed an improper practice charge with PERB alleging that Wilson lost her job due to her union activity. Virtual hearings on that charge took place May 26 and June 9, 2021. A PERB hearing on a second charge — alleging that administrators illegally carried out bargaining unit work by assuming Wilson's job duties — was slated to begin later that year. It all came to a close in December when the district offered to settle and negotiations began.

Valentine's Day 2022 was particularly sweet for Wilson. After 14 long, stressful months she returned to her old job and resumed her position as union president. She received all of her back pay plus longevity for 2021; all her accrued sick and vacation time prior to Dec. 11, 2020; and all applicable years of service credits. Technically, she was "made whole," but she still carries scars.

"I had to exhaust my savings and incur credit card debt. To be laid off during the pandemic, when finding another job was especially tough, was just horrible," she said noting that early retirement wasn't an option since she lacked the time. "The loss of my health insurance was also devastating."

She persevered through her faith, help from her family and her union.

"It was a hard fight, but NYSUT came out in full force for me," said Wilson who was appointed a NYSUT SRP ambassador prior to the layoff and plans to share her experience to highlight the importance of union membership. "I've had so many people say they're sorry this happened to me," she said. "But maybe this will stop the district from doing this to other people."



Sharin Wilson's union colleagues helped her through her layoff crisis. From left: Scott O'Brien, Wyandanch Teachers Association president; Anmarie Archer, Wyandanch Administrative Support Association secretary; Wilson; Renee Wall, NYSUT labor relations specialist; and Peter Verdon, NYSUT Long Island regional staff director.

has your back.

Sharin Wilson, president of the Wyandanch Administrative Support Association in Suffolk County, Long Island, learned that first-hand on Nov. 19, 2020. Her morning started out like every other workday. But as she got ready to leave for work, she noticed a missed phone message.

"I had a midnight call from the district's treasurer," said Wilson. The Wyandanch Union Free School District school board "walked in" an 11th hour resolution the night before

ran the following week trumpeting a \$6 million district surplus due to the shutdown, after two years of deficits. And, since Wilson's position was already fully funded for 2020-21, cutting her job had little or no budgetary impact. Suspecting foul play, Wilson reached out to NYSUT for help.

"This wasn't the board's first attempt to abolish her position," said NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist Renee Wall, who represents the WASA. In 2019, after Wilson and other Wyandanch union leaders

# Workers across the country choose labor for stronger voice

By Ben Amey  
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**2**022 is the year of the labor movement across the country. This year, unions have formed at Starbucks nationwide and at an Amazon warehouse on Staten Island, and workers have filed for union elections at Apple stores in Atlanta and New York City.

Two of the more than 120 Starbucks stores that have unionized are in NYSUT's backyard close to Albany headquarters. And recently, NYSUT leadership visited the first Starbucks store to unionize in Buffalo.

Between October 2021 through March 2022, the National Labor Relations Board received 1,174 petitions seeking union representation. That is a 57 percent increase from the same period a year prior, and the most union organizing the NLRB has



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

NYSUT officers J. Philippe Abraham and Andy Pallotta flank Michelle Eisen, organizing member of Starbucks Workers United. AFT and NYSUT leaders met with Starbucks organizers in Buffalo in early June.

seen in a decade.

"Interest in unions is on the rise, and New York continues to set the pace as one of the most unionized states in the nation," NYSUT President Andy Pallotta said. "Public-sector unions have remained strong despite the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision, and it's invigorating

to see workers banding together from Amazon to Starbucks to the agricultural sector. The trajectory for organized labor in this state — and the nation — is one of greater worker voice, better working conditions and more economic justice."

While efforts by the Amazon Labor Union and Starbucks Workers United may seem separate from the work of NYSUT members, they represent one interconnected labor movement. NYSUT and AFT added their names to a letter submitted by the Amazon LU to state Attorney General Letitia James to investigate Amazon for violation of the terms of the Excelsior Jobs Program with their union-busting activities.

"We all must remain vigilant. Support your union siblings where you see them," Pallotta said. "Together we can ensure a fair future for all."

## SRPs score big wins in recent negotiations

By Ben Amey  
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**L**ocal unions scored contract wins for School-Related Professionals in Cobleskill-Richmondville, Hudson Falls and Duanesburg recently.

Members of the Cobleskill-Richmondville Educational Support Personnel Association, led by Ray Sigtermans, won pay increases between 6 and 8 percent for the 2021-22 school year — with additional increases in the following two years. The contract also increases the district's contributions to health reimbursement accounts, and the maximum annual rollover allowed for those accounts; provides stipends for

teacher aides and teaching assistants providing substitute coverage for classes; and simplified rollover of unused vacation days.

In Duanesburg, the new contract raises starting wages for bus drivers to \$20 an hour and includes 4 to 18 percent increases for all currently hired drivers. Salary increases for all other titles were increased between 5 and 8 percent for the 2022-23 school year, and 4 percent for the next two years. The agreement also enhances longevity increases for members and improves benefits for part-time employees. The Duanesburg Educational Support Association is led by Wendy Bell.

In Hudson Falls, a two-year agreement provides a 6.2 to 19 percent

hourly increase to all Hudson Falls SRP Association members for the 2022-23 school year and a 3 to 8 percent increase for all members in the 2023-24 school year. The agreement increased starting rates for each title every year of the agreement. The contract also keeps health premium increases low and includes stipends for RNs and LPNs. Joseph Manney leads the Hudson Falls SRP local.

"Across the state, we are seeing historic shortfalls of SRPs," said NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, whose office oversees SRP issues. "A major reason for this is that SRPs have been underpaid, overworked and underappreciated. These contracts are excellent first steps toward correcting this long injustice."



### Jim Carforo, gone but not forgotten



Within his local and community, Jim Carforo is remembered for his financial acumen, his compassion and support

for his colleagues and students, and, as treasurer and later retiree delegate for the Greenburgh Eleven Federation of Teachers, for his union activism. In 2014, he was instrumental in successfully advocating for legislation that placed public representatives on the boards of Special Acts Schools to protect students and employees.

Carforo was also a skilled contract negotiator, known for quickly analyzing facts at the bargaining table and providing helpful breakdowns for fellow negotiators. And he shared his financial acumen beyond the bargaining table. A champion of 403b deferred tax accounts, Carforo held informational meetings about the plans and encouraged members to consider them. He also advised teacher members to transfer from the New York State Employees' Retirement System into the New York State Teachers' Retirement System, a move many later thanked him for.

"Even as he succumbed to ALS, Jim remembered his students fondly," said David Demnitz, Greenburgh Eleven FT retiree, who nominated Carforo for the Legacy Fund. "Those who Jim taught, worked with and loved will always remember him as a truly lovely man."

To honor an in-service or retiree activist from your area, visit [nysut.org/legacyfund](https://nysut.org/legacyfund).



# NYSUT commits to safe schools, advancing social justice

By Kara Smith  
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The May 14 murders at a Buffalo supermarket in a predominately Black community, and the Robb Elementary school massacre a little over a week later in Uvalde, Texas, sent our state and nation reeling. They left nearly 30 dead — 19 of them children.

Hundreds of education professionals, students and community members from across Buffalo and Western New York rallied in early June to mourn those lost and send the message that unity is more powerful than racism and hate. The statewide union also announced the NYSUT Memorial Scholarship for Buffalo Students and Families, created in partnership with Buffalo-area community groups.

“It’s traumatic to know that just going to the supermarket, or going to school, can get you killed — it shatters your sense

of security,” said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, who traveled to Buffalo for the event with fellow officers Andy Pallotta, NYSUT president, Ron Gross, NYSUT second vice president and Melinda Person, NYSUT executive director. American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten also attended.

Among those murdered in Buffalo were two active NYSUT members, Pearl Young of Substitutes United/ Buffalo and Margus Morrison of Transportation Aides of Buffalo. A third victim was Aaron Salter Jr., a

former Substitutes United/ Buffalo member and a retired police officer. On duty that day as a supermarket security guard, Salter was killed after firing at the gunman.

“We need to take this moment and turn it into a movement for change,” said Abraham, who called on communities to stand together against hatred and bigotry and “fight for stronger laws to protect against gun violence.”

NYSUT launched the Safe Schools for All initiative last month to support safe public schools as the center of

every community and address violence in schools.

Under Abraham’s leadership, the statewide union also instituted an Advancing Racial Justice in Education Agenda. Thanks to the initiative, hundreds of educators statewide have attended *Sticks & Stones: Understanding Implicit Bias & Stereotypes*, a free, four-hour workshop that encourages participants to consider how someone’s ethnicity, race, ability and socio-economic background can impact how they experience our society.



Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, Buffalo Teachers Federation, joins scores of concerned educators and community members at the Buffalo Unity Rally in early June.



From left: NYSUT President Andy Pallotta; NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham; AFT President Randi Weingarten; NYSUT Executive Director Melinda Person; Buffalo Educational Support Team President JoAnn Sweat; NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross; Transportation Aides of Buffalo President Freddie Smith; and Buffalo Teachers Federation President Phil Rumore.

EL-WISE NOISLETTE



# Getting to know ... Melissa Weeks



*Melissa Weeks is a youth assistant at Rush-Henrietta Senior High School. She was interviewed by NYSUT Board member Karen Lee Arthmann, a member of the NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee and president of the Rush-Henrietta Employees Association Paraprofessionals Chapter.*

## **Tell me about your job and why you love what you do.**

I have strong ties to the Rush-Henrietta community. I graduated from the high school; my husband is also an RHCS D graduate. It is the same school district that my children now attend.

One of the big things I love about my job as a youth assistant is the flexibility. I can freely roam the building to maintain safety and

security, and this allows me to interact with many students. I make a difference with the students because they know and trust me. They seek me out to talk to me. They see me as a happy presence in their day and know that I'm there to help them.

## **Why did you join the union?**

In my previous position as a BOCES II student behavior assistant, I also was a union member. It gives me peace of mind knowing we have a union that supports us and negotiates for good benefits and wages for us. There's always someone there to talk to, if you need help or just to vent. That was the first thing I asked when I came to R-H. "How do I sign up for the

union?" I look forward to becoming more involved.

## **How are you involved in your community?**

I attend school functions at different grade levels, but I am also an assistant cheerleading coach for my daughter's club cheerleading team, and have been for the past four to five years. We participate in competitions, as well as cheer for our club football team, the Renegades. I'm always at my son's high school games, currently basketball. I'm my kids' biggest cheerleader — my own and my school kids. I love going to all the concerts and sporting events and knowing I make an impact on them every day.

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# AAPI educators: 'We need a voice'

By **Matthew Hamilton**  
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**M**ary Waring was given two career options growing up. "My mom wanted me to be a lawyer or a doctor," said Waring, a Vietnamese-American who attended SUNY Geneseo to study pre-law. She began volunteering and ended up tutoring part-time at a juvenile detention center. "That's when I realized maybe I could be a teacher."

In her 23rd year of teaching high school English in East Meadow on Long Island, she is now working with colleagues from across the region to share her career pathway story with Asian-American and Pacific Islander students who may not see themselves reflected in the classroom.

Waring, a building representative for the East Meadow Teachers Association, is one of roughly 30 educators from public and private K-12 schools, colleges and education-related fields who last year formed the Asian Pacific American Council of



From left: NYSUT members Randy K. Young, Mary Waring, Soh Young Lee-Segredo and Gus Segredo of the Asian Pacific American Council of Educators-Long Island.

Educators-Long Island. The council took off with encouragement from both the Long Island Latino Teachers Association and Long Island Black Educators Association.

The celebration of Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May brought recognition to the fledgling group. But the association's commitment to uplifting Asian-American educators and encouraging Asian-American students — and their peers of all races and backgrounds — to consider a career in education is year-round. The need is

particularly acute amid the pandemic-era wave of anti-Asian hate crimes.

"Instead of asking, 'Why do people have such hate toward Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders?' I always say, 'How can we solve this problem?'

Number 1 is educating," said Soh Young Lee-Segredo, APACE-LI president and a member of the Hempstead Classroom TA. "We need a voice, we need to stand and advocate for those teachers" who often identify as the only Asian educator in their districts.

Diversifying the education workforce is a core tenet of NYSUT's Take a Look at Teaching initiative, and the need is clear: While students of color make up 56 percent of total enrollment statewide, teachers of color represent only 19 percent of the workforce, according to state statistics. The percentage of

Asian-American teachers statewide is in the single digits, and Lee-Segredo said that on Long Island, the number is just 3 percent. At the same time, the educator pipeline has not been built out to bolster their ranks. A 2019 study from the State Education Department found that just 1 percent of AAPI college students in New York were enrolled in an educator preparation program.

APACE-LI members also want the council to be a resource for parents who may not otherwise feel they have a strong voice to advocate for their children and connect with their school districts. That connection with families doubles as a critical part of encouraging the next generation to pursue a teaching career.

More than two decades later, Waring went back to college, where she happened to have her first ever Asian teacher. To her mom's elation, Waring finally earned that doctorate — in education.

Learn more about APACE-LI by contacting [info@apace-li.org](mailto:info@apace-li.org).

## New York has two primaries

By **Ned Hoskin**  
ned.hoskin@nysut.org

**T**en years ago, the Legislature passed an amendment to create an independent redistricting commission to take partisan gerrymandering out of the process, and the voters ratified it in 2014.

This year, on its maiden voyage, the commission struck an iceberg and sank like the Titanic.

In order to ensure district lines were updated in time for June primaries, the Democrat-controlled

Legislature completed the process.

Ultimately, the state's highest court struck down the new lines for state Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, holding that they were illegally drawn.

So now an independent "special master" has redrawn New York's state Senate and congressional districts. To give candidates enough time to figure out where they might run and circulate petitions, if necessary, primaries for those offices have been pushed back to Aug. 23.

There are dozens of contested congressional and state Senate primaries, the results of which will not be decided until weeks after NYSUT's endorsement conference that was scheduled for early August, said President Andy Pallotta.

"As such, NYSUT has moved its planned endorsement conference in Albany to regional meetings over the summer months," he said. "This change will allow for increased member participation locally."

Primaries for the

governor's office, one U.S. Senate seat and the state Assembly will be on the original date of June 28, with early voting from June 18–26. Check with your county boards of election for locations and times.

NYSUT has endorsed Kathy Hochul for governor and Antonio Delgado for lieutenant governor and has recommended Sen. Chuck Schumer for endorsement by its national affiliates.

NYSUT members can contact their local leadership or log in to [nysut.org](https://nysut.org) to find primary endorsements for Assembly seats.



# 'Grow Your Own' grants rev up recruiting for future educators

By **Sylvia Saunders**  
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

It felt a little like a college recruitment day for athletes — complete with T-shirts and other SUNY Plattsburgh swag.

But for more than 50 high school students from around the North Country, this was a campus tour to woo a different kind of prospect: future educators.

The mid-May event, coordinated by SUNY Plattsburgh teacher educators Alison Puliatte, Emily Hoeh and Michelle Bonati, was funded through a NYSUT/National Education Association Grow Your Own grant. NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango said the grant program is an outgrowth of NYSUT's Take a Look at Teaching initiative, which began four years ago to address the teacher shortage and improve diversity in the educator workforce.

For many of the North Country sophomores and juniors, this was

their first visit to the SUNY Plattsburgh campus. They visited dorm rooms, sampled an impressive cafeteria buffet and heard about teacher ed class requirements and field experiences.

With hands-on demo lessons modeling good teaching techniques, high schoolers learned how to conduct a "morning meeting" with younger students and inject a little fun into activities with Instagram-style poster projects and exit tickets written in the form of tweets.

One of the day's most popular sessions was "The Life of a Teacher Education Student," with current teacher prep students offering an insider's view on their experience and why they've chosen the profession.

The teacher ed students kept it real, with two explaining how they were motivated by their own school experiences.

"I want to be the change I want to see," said Catalina Espinosa, who recalled how an Advanced Placement teacher at her high school "was judgmental and made me feel stupid."



Teacher prep college student Makenna Provost, center, leads a tour for her former high school's Take a Look at Teaching Club. At right are Saranac teachers Karin DeLutis, Theresa Figoni and Beth LePage.

PHOTOS: SYLVIA SAUNDERS

Makenna Provost, who said she struggled in middle school and high school, emphasized how important it is for teachers to be positive and uplifting.

There was lots of information on the application process: High schoolers were happy to hear SATs and ACTs would not be required — and they listened carefully as faculty members explained how they could get their master's degree and multiple certifications in five years. They heard how the current substitute teacher shortage in K-12 schools could enable them to earn money with part-time work.

"We want you to know it's a rewarding profession where job placement rates are high and you can really make a difference," said Denise

Simard, dean of education.

Teachers from area schools said the field trip offered an excellent window into what it's like to be a teacher education student.

"What an opportunity to meet the faculty and hear first-hand from the college students," said Beth LePage, a Saranac TA member and one of the school's TALAT Club advisers. She said it was especially inspiring for Saranac students to meet and walk around the campus with Makenna, who went to their own high school. "I think it makes them think, 'Maybe I can do this, too,'" she said.



SUNY Plattsburgh teacher educators Emily Hoeh, Alison Puliatte and Michelle Bonati are all members of United University Professions.

Want to start a Take a Look at Teaching Club in your school? Go to [takealookatteaching.org](https://takealookatteaching.org) and find activities, tips and other resources.

# A place where every student knows their potential

By Matt Smith

**H**ere in tiny Cuba, New York — a sleepy bucolic village on the western edge of Allegany County famous for its cheese in the same way Buffalo, its urban neighbor 70 miles to the north, is famous for its chicken wings — there are barriers being broken.

There are girls learning trades that traditionally have always been considered male-only — the kind of common long-held perception that often permeates rural communities such as this one where, perhaps, gender has for too long and too often determined fate.

There are boys, rugged and working class, discovering that their female classmates are more than capable of doing the very things their fathers and grandfathers have done for generations.

“It’s amazing to see,” said Joseph Franzen, a history teacher in the Cuba-Rushford Central School District. “You come to some of these rural communities and you look at these ag teachers and welding teachers and think that usually this is some hyper-masculine role.

And sometimes young men have a hard time respecting women teachers in those positions.

“I don’t know exactly what it is about Carly, but those same burly

young men who are driving tractors or digging drainage ditches or winning welding competitions look up to her. She’s an amazing teacher.”

Meet Carly Santangelo: Agriculture and career-tech teacher, mother of two young boys, goat farmer, entrepreneur, welder, tractor driver, NYSUT member and Renaissance woman. She can put brakes on a car, as well.

And, she is the 2022 New York State Teacher of the Year as chosen by the State Education Department.

“My goal every day is to help my students love the thought of coming to school, to love learning and to help them understand how what they are learning connects to the real world,” said Santangelo, a nine-year classroom veteran who teaches middle and high school in Cuba-Rushford.

“My most successful days are the days in which I have conversations with my students. I ask them a lot of questions about how things went and what they understood. The days that I walk out of here feeling good are the days I’m truly able to understand that they ‘got it.’ And that’s what brings me back.”

“Carly represents the very best qualities that educators across the state possess: dedication, passion and mastery of her craft,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “We are proud to call her a NYSUT member. She is a shining example of the kind of professionalism that defines our union.”

Santangelo’s lessons span the concepts of environmental stewardship, agricultural sustainability and community building. With a focus on preparing students for the workforce, she also aims to develop in her students a sense of community through initiatives such as volunteering at the local food bank. And she is adamant about sending the message that all students are capable of success.

“My goal for all of my students, regardless of gender, is for them to see past the boundaries of gender,” said Santangelo, a Cuba-Rushford Teachers Association member. “I had an equal number of students this year, male and female,



participating in tractor driving. In conversations with my (male) students I have seen them gain respect for what women can do. It means the world to me to see my students starting to respect the people that will be in their lives in the future: their girlfriends, their future wives, the future mothers of their children, and understanding that (women) can be turning wrenches, too."

"Carly is not only passionate about ensuring her students are provided the tools and skills necessary for success," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango, "she also helps them to discover their true potential and enables them to realize they all have the opportunity and ability to succeed. That's a powerful message to deliver to students, and Carly's work is as inspiring as it is important."

Cuba-Rushford Central Schools Superintendent Carlos Gildemeister said Santangelo's success is due in large part to her drive.

"She has a humble and quiet disposition yet possesses a strength for doing whatever is necessary so that students have a real-life experience in her classroom," Gildemeister said. "She is tenacious and always does the right thing when it comes to advocating for her students. I love her determination."

Michael Johnson, a Cuba-Rushford technology teacher whom Santangelo considers her mentor, said Santangelo

is successful because her students know she's "real."

"Carly is knowledgeable and enthusiastic," said Johnson. "But I think what's most important is she lives the life; Carly's authentic."

That she is.

A few miles away from the Cuba-Rushford school campus, along a rural highway, Santangelo lives in a small farmhouse on a sizeable plot of land set back from the road and runs a goat farm with her husband. In the near future, the farm will also include a creamery.

That real-life experience and know-how not only comes in handy as an agriculture and career-tech teacher, it is also appreciated by students.

"What I like about her class is there's a lot of hands-on learning," said student Ethan Cole. "Seeing how things are done in front of us and watching her — instead of having someone just stand up there and describe how things are done — really helps us learn."

Franzen — with whom Santangelo founded a World Foods and Diversity course that helps students understand how gender, race, history and other global issues relate to the food we consume — said Santangelo's passion and versatility are keys to her success.

"I think the best teachers, and I would definitely put Carly in that category, can't be pinned down or siloed," he said. "They are passionate



PHOTOS: MATT SMITH

Cuba-Rushford teacher Carly Santangelo works with students in one of her agriculture classes where she emphasizes environmental stewardship, agricultural sustainability and community building. Santangelo secured more than \$10,000 in grants for the district to purchase a high-tunnel greenhouse and to develop a schoolwide composting program.

about teaching, and even more passionate about learning and exploring and then sharing that passion with their students."

Santangelo said, "every teacher can be a career and tech teacher, no matter what their content is."

"We need to prepare students for the workforce, and we can do a better job preparing students by allowing them to solve problems, related to (curriculum) or not," she said. "If you look at the job market these days, that is what employers want. They want employees who can figure it out. Teaching now is much more about helping students manage the information at their fingertips."

Santangelo is especially passionate

about exposing all of her students to the multitude of options that await them in today's workforce to show them that everyone has something to contribute.

"I work really hard at exposing kids to a variety of careers," she said. "There are some students who maybe feel like they haven't found a place yet to be successful. And they come to my class, they come to my shop, and they start to learn new skills, new trades or about new jobs. In exposing them to their options and teaching them new things, they can find what they are good at. And that can really help a kid — who, at first, may have felt less confident in themselves — discover that they do have a place in the world."

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# Connecting through art

In tough times, the arts can be a powerful source of comfort and strength.

Welcoming educators and students to NYSUT's 2022 Visual and Performing Arts Virtual Showcase Premier, NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango thanked educators around the state for continually inspiring their students and knowing how to spark their creativity.

"To our students, art is your superpower to help us all heal," DiBrango said. "Thank you for being brave and sharing your superpower with us."

NYSUT's second virtual showcase, "Imagine if..." features a wide variety of art from about 100 students around the state. The exhibit, co-sponsored by NYSUT's Subject Area Committee for the Arts, was coordinated by Joan Davidson, a retired arts

educator and member of the United Federation of Teachers.

The exhibit can be viewed at [nysut.cc/virtualarts2022](https://nysut.cc/virtualarts2022).

In a regional showcase that returned in May after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Tri-County Art Teachers' Association celebrated its 38th year with an opening reception and award ceremony.

"It's a wonderful event that

promotes a love of art and celebrates students," said Jeanette Stapley, a NYSUT Board member and Schroon Lake retired teacher who helped present awards. "It also honors the many art teachers who inspire them."

For photos of the North Country art show, go to [flickr.com/nysut](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nysut/).

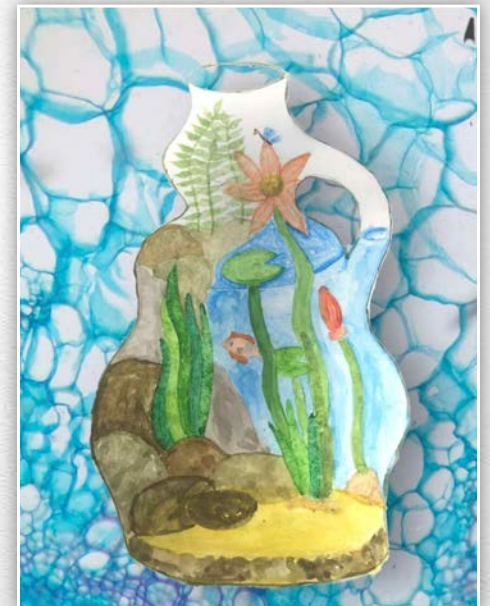


Rylee Crandell | Herkimer CSD | Grade 12 | "Prom Night"  
Teacher Heather McCutcheon | Herkimer FA



ANDREW WATSON

A North Country art show sponsored by local businesses and unions features the works of K-12 students from 16 school districts in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.



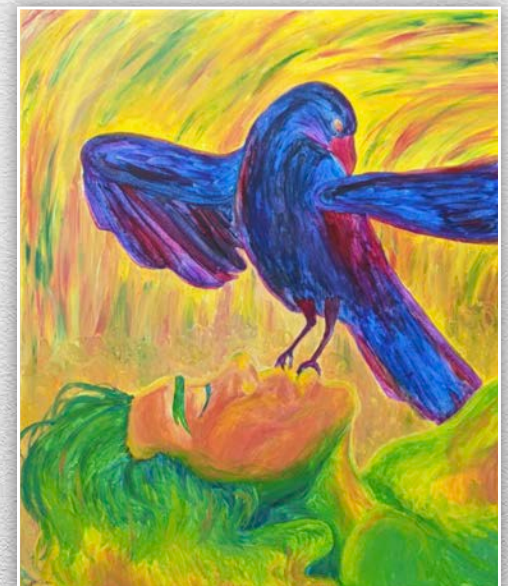
Charlize Baez | East Rockaway SD | Grade 8 | "Peaceful Bottle"  
Teacher Kristie Galante | East Rockaway TA



Rafael Arteta | P.S.20Q John Bowne | Grade 5 | "Starry Night"  
Teacher Amy Schlossberg | United Federation of Teachers



Katellyn Attison | Dix Hills | Grade 12 | "Galactic Sneaker Render"  
Teacher Cindy McEvoy | Western Suffolk BOCES FA



Angelina Broecker | Barker CSD | Grade 11 | "Acceptance"  
Teacher Krista Beth Feltz | Barker Teachers Union

# Ulster BOCES students gain real-world experience, help community

By **Sylvia Saunders**  
sylvia.saunders@nysut.org

It's one thing to learn about electrical wiring in textbooks and classroom practice stations. It's quite another to get hands-on skills by going out into the community, wiring a whole house and being there when the keys are handed over to a grateful family.

In a unique partnership, Ulster BOCES students are not only learning hands-on electrical skills, they're also learning the value of giving back to your community.

Saugerties school counselor Michael Catalano, a master electrician, helped set up the partnership after working with the local Habitat for Humanity group himself. Habitat is a nonprofit organization that recruits volunteers to build affordable homes for those in need.

At first just a few students volunteered with Habitat on Saturdays, under the supervision of Catalano and Ulster BOCES Electrical Construction instructor Bob Jones. But this year, with strong support from BOCES and school district administrators, the hands-on field work was incorporated into the school day — enabling 44 juniors and seniors to research, plan and actually do the electrical work in two Habitat homes.

The students do everything from planning the location of electrical outlets to hanging electrical panels to running

the wires. They also learn about working as a team; following the National Electrical Code and municipal regulations; and navigating challenging work conditions like cold temperatures or working without a schematic. For one house, which was built for a family with a young girl in a wheelchair, the students needed to work within ADA requirements and consider things like lowering switch heights.

"For many of the students, this was their first time at a construction site," Jones said. "They love it. They're working alongside other trades people



Ulster BOCES students work with Saugerties counselor Mike Catalano, fifth from right; Ulster BOCES teaching assistant Michelle Rosu, center; and Ulster BOCES Electrical Construction instructor Bob Jones, fourth from left.

PHOTOS: PROVIDED



like carpenters and HVAC people. And best of all, it ties all the classroom theory into real-world practice."

"At the same time, they're truly helping people in need," Catalano said. "It really puts everything in perspective when you meet the families. There's a tremendous sense of satisfaction when you help make a family's dream of homeownership come true."

There are other benefits, too. At a time when there is a tremendous labor shortage in the trades, Catalano is hopeful that these kind of programs can help spur more interest in the industry.

"The first thing I tell my students is that there's a

tremendous demand for electricians," said Jones, who worked 17 years as an electrician before becoming a BOCES instructor. "Our kids are scooped up immediately — doing rewarding work and making good money. It's a highly desirable career."

"For recruitment, we need to change the mindset that going into the trades is something less," Catalano said. "White collar and blue collar work are equally valuable. And if we make the instructional learning hands-on and meaningful like this, the program will be even more popular."

In the future Catalano hopes the idea can be expanded to students in other trades — and helping other people in need. "Wouldn't it be cool to stretch this into helping the elderly couple that can't afford to have their home safely rewired?" he asked. "The possibilities for community work are endless."

Ulster BOCES student Kaitlyn Lennon says it felt good to know their work is helping a family in need.



# ELT courses a big value for members

By **Sylvia Saunders**  
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**S**ometimes things really aren't "too good to be true."

When New York City teacher Kaitlin Mendez was looking to extend her certification for special education, she stumbled upon NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust courses during a Google search.

"When I saw ELT offered online graduate courses, with a 40 percent discount, I honestly thought it was too good to be true," said Mendez, a member of United Federation of Teachers.

However, when she looked into ELT's 12-credit SUNY Empire State College program, she learned she could extend her certification by

taking four courses, completing one three-hour autism workshop and passing the State Education Department's Content Specialty Test for Students With Disabilities.

"I've always wanted to get my certification for Students With Disabilities, but as a busy mom and teacher, I didn't think it was doable," Mendez said. "ELT made it possible."

The ELT coursework gave her much more than a second certification. "The courses were really practical and I was able to apply a lot of what I was learning directly in my fourth-grade classroom," Mendez



Kaitlin Mendez

said. "The Behavior Management course, in particular, gave me new tools, new ideas and new ways to assess my students."

Herkimer BOCES teacher Greg Crawford similarly found the ELT offerings convenient for earning his special education extension.

The format "worked great with my teaching schedule," he said. "I usually prefer in-person learning, but the instructors were well organized and set clear expectations. It was a lot of fun interacting with other teachers from around the state."

The special education coursework is among the most popular programs

offered by ELT, the union's professional development arm, to help members get certification extensions. Other graduate level strands include early childhood and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certifications.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene T. DiBrango said the union is proud to offer a wide array of opportunities through ELT. In most cases, members taking advantage of the ELT discount save more than the NYSUT portion of their union dues.

ELT coursework can be used for undergraduate, graduate and in-service credit as well as to fulfill Continuing Teacher and Leader Education requirements.

For more information, go to **elt.nysut.org**.



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Where Knowledge and Values Meet

# Vestal school nurse, educators save eighth-grade student

By Liza Frenette

**D**uring the early morning arrival of students and staff, a Vestal school nurse and several educators worked together to save an eighth-grade student's life.

Shelly Wowk, a monitor and member of the Association of Vestal School Paraprofessionals, was the first to notice the student in distress. She was standing outside the cafeteria where she greets students.

"Students were coming up to go to breakfast at 7:20," she said. "He was walking down the hall. I said good morning to him, and when he looked at me, one eye bulged. I did a double take. He went straight down, face first, like a board. He didn't put his arms out or anything."

Wowk asked the boy if he was okay, but he didn't answer.

"I asked again and put my hand on his back. His head lolled. He started to have a seizure," she said. "I've never been so scared in my life."

Wowk asked fellow AVSP member Colleen O'Brien to get the nurse.

Teacher Jeremy Daino had just left the cafeteria. Then teacher Patrick Gray came down the hall.

"Neither of us could get calls to go out," said Gray, who left Daino with the boy so he could run to make the 911 call. Principal Sarah Wiggins, whom O'Brien had alerted, arrived and directed Wowk to go out front and direct the ambulance crews on how to find the stricken student inside the building.

Arriving for work, nurse Michelle

Hroncich rushed to the hallway outside the cafeteria where the student had fallen to the floor. Hroncich instantly put her hospital trauma nursing skills into action. Bending over the boy, she began CPR. She then used an AED to shock his heart.

Hroncich's life-saving actions continued while the ambulance crew came into the school. The student was taken to a local hospital, then airlifted to Syracuse. Later, he was airlifted to New York City. He is reported to be in good condition.

"It was very, very traumatic and very graphic," Gray said. The nurse single-handedly saved his life."

The life-saving actions of the school nurse are a stark and chilling example of why NYSUT continues to advocate with the state Legislature

## AEDs in Schools

Since 2002, state law requires all public schools BOCES and charter schools, to provide and maintain an automated external defibrillator on site. NYSUT successfully advocated for the law, working with Rachel Moyer and the family of Louis Acompora. Each of those families tragically lost a student at a school athletic event who could have been saved by an AED being available and being used.

As part of the union's Future Forward initiative, NYSUT continues to advocate with the state Legislature for a law requiring at least one registered nurse in every school building.



for a law requiring at least one registered nurse in every school building.

"In our district we are lucky to have a nurse in every building. I can't help but think about the consequences if we did not," said Joseph Herringshaw, president of the Vestal Teachers Association and a NYSUT Board member. As a result of collaboration with the district and the union, there are also two school district nurses to ensure every building has a nurse every day.

"The SRPs, teachers and administrator worked to literally save a life. Initially, when the outcome was uncertain, the EMT said that if he survives it's because of the immediate action taken by the staff.

"How is a nurse in every building even a question?" Herringshaw asked.



PROVIDED

In late March, Vestal nurse Michelle Hroncich, center, and educators, from left, Jeremy Daino, Patrick Gray, Colleen O'Brien and Shelly Wowk worked together to save a student. The district is fortunate to employ a school nurse in every building along with two district nurses.

# Peer Support Line available to members this fall

By Kara Smith  
kara.smith@nysut.org

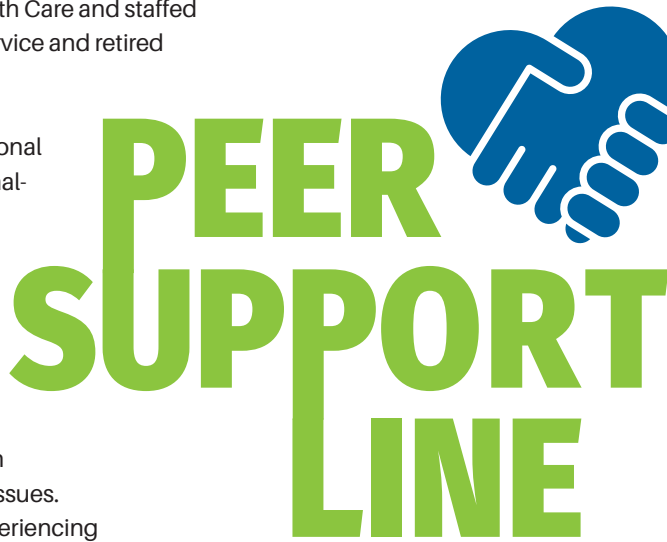
**Y**ou've weathered the stresses of remote instruction and grappled with an ongoing pandemic; and that's on top of the day-to-day demands of your personal life.

"NYSUT members have dealt with a lot over the past few years, and the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust would like to help," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, who chairs the Trust.

Beginning this fall, NYSUT Member Benefits will launch the Peer Support Line, a confidential, peer-to-peer, dial-in helpline available at no cost to members and their families. Provided by Rutgers University

Behavioral Health Care and staffed by trained in-service and retired individuals who understand the unique professional and personal challenges NYSUT members face, the helpline will provide support and information to callers on a wide array of issues.

"If you're experiencing personal or work-related problems, and you're not sure where to turn, give them a call," said Ron Gross, NYSUT second vice president. He explained that the Peer



with Medicare questions. "Peer Support Line staffers have access to thousands of resources and are trained to provide quality assistance with personal, family and work-related concerns," Gross said.

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to work with Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care to offer this valuable benefit to members. For more than 20 years, Rutgers National Call Center partners have developed peer support programs for a variety of groups, including veterans, first responders and health care professionals.

Visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) this fall for details about the Peer Support Line.

Support Line can offer referrals for help with issues such as sourcing elder care, finding an area mental health professional or getting help

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# Meet your NYSUT retiree consultants

## North Country, Southern Tier and Capital Region

By Kara Smith  
kara.smith@nysut.org

**N**YSUT has a network of 11 retiree services consultants who serve as liaisons between retired members, retiree councils and NYSUT headquarters. In honor of the 30th anniversary of NYSUT retiree councils, we're highlighting each regional consultant so retiree members know who to reach out to for assistance. Meet **Ruth Shippee, Mark Padgett** and **Sheryl Baker Delano**, the three retiree consultants representing the North Country, the Southern Tier and the Capital Region.

**Ruth Shippee** represents Retiree Councils 9 and 10 encompassing the counties of Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Essex, Warren, the northern third of Hamilton, Washington, Saratoga, Rensselaer, Albany and parts of Schenectady. Shippee became a consultant after retiring in 2019 from the Washington, Saratoga, Warren, Hamilton, Essex County BOCES, where she headed the Saratoga Adirondack BOCES Employees Association.

Geography is a challenge in her region, which stretches hundreds of miles across the North Country and the Capital Region. Zoom meetings have become welcome tools to keep disparate members connected. Shippee is spearheading a project to preserve regional union history. "When I was a local president my generation took it for granted that the union would always be there; we sometimes forget about the hard work it took," she said. "We need to preserve that history before the history makers aren't with us any longer."

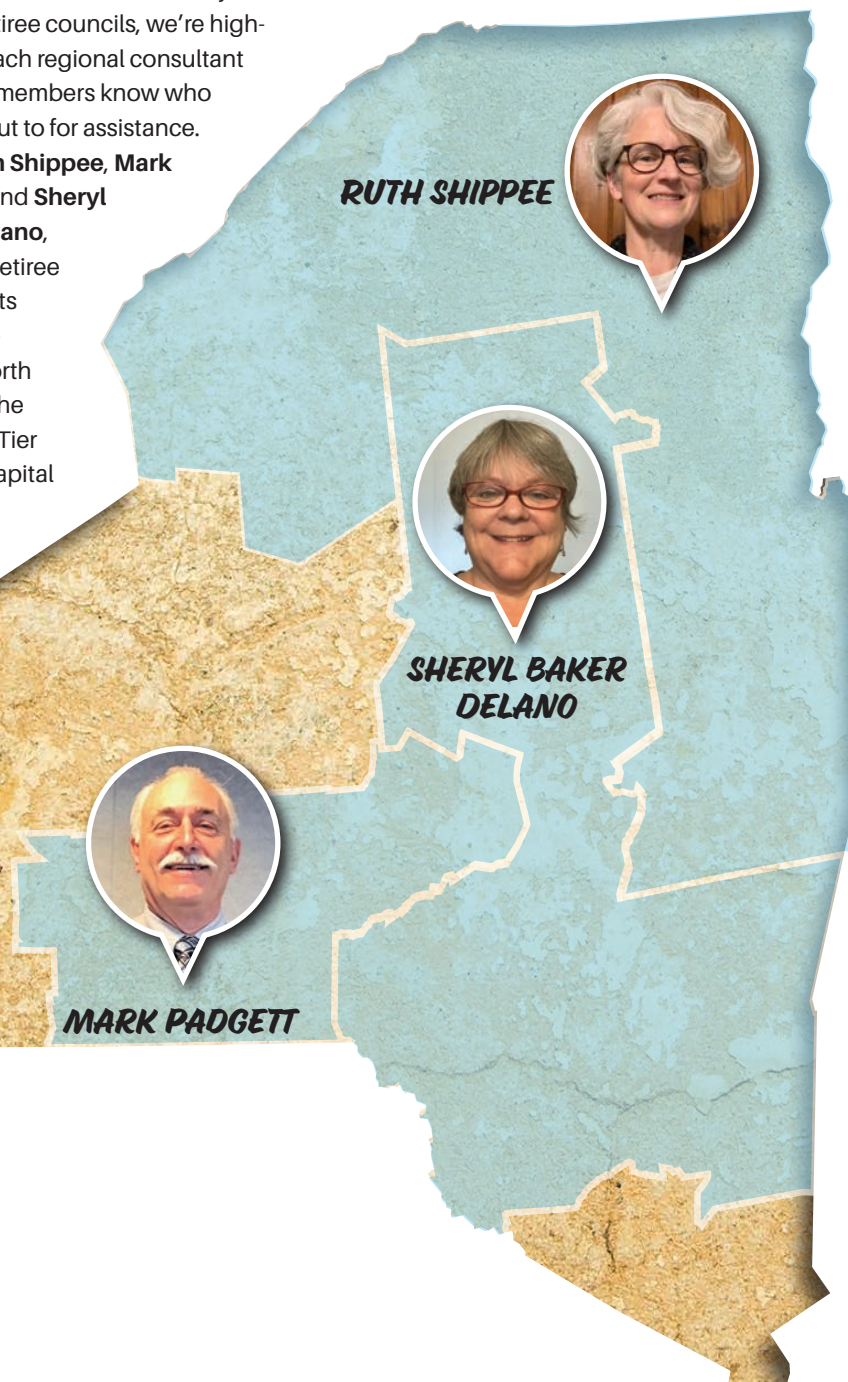
**Mark Padgett** represents Retiree Councils 11 and 45 encompassing the counties of Tompkins, Cortland, Chenango, Otsego, Delaware, Broome and Tioga. A former high school English teacher, Padgett is a Spencer-Van Etten Teachers Association retiree and former vice president.

He's been a consultant since 2017.

His goals include encouraging retirees to "maintain an active voice" and keeping the lines of communication open across his sprawling region. He looks forward to once again hosting regional conferences and in-person meetings. "Keeping retirees engaged in their retirement and in changes to education are important," said Padgett. "Retirees are ready to get involved and help out when needed."

**Sheryl Baker Delano** represents Retiree Councils 12 and 13 encompassing the counties of Chenango, Delaware, Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Otsego, parts of Schenectady, Schoharie, Columbia, Sullivan, Dutchess, Greene and Ulster. One of NYSUT's newest consultants, Baker Delano assumed her duties in February and has spent the months since updating RC websites and developing new social and informational programming for members, including a pre-retirement workshop for in-service members and a new retiree workshop for recent retirees.

The Rondout Valley Federation retiree, and past president, aims to make retirees aware of what's available to them through the statewide union. "I want retirees to know that their NYSUT membership doesn't stop when they retire," said Baker Delano. "NYSUT membership is for life."



### DID YOU KNOW?

NYSUT Retiree Services consultants are resources for retired members, retiree councils and in-service locals on NYSUT retiree matters.

**Janet Goddard**, RC 1, 2, 3, 44  
716-634-7132

**Louise Ortman**, RC 4, 46  
716-664-7425

**Peter Randazzo**, RC 5, 6  
585-454-5550

**Anne Marie Voutsinas**, RC 7, 8  
315-431-4040

**Ruth Shippee**, RC 9, 10  
518-783-7977

**Mark Padgett**, RC 11, 45  
607-786-5742

**Sheryl Baker Delano**, RC 12, 13  
845-339-4450

**Ellen Pincus**, RC 14, 15-16  
914-592-4411

**Claire Zatorski**, RC 17, 18, 19  
516-496-2035

**James Kinnier**, RC 20, 21, 22, 23  
631-273-8822

**TBD**, RC 43

## Quotable



### Blue Cheese

I've been organizing long enough to have some gray in my beard and I have never seen a campaign put up more wins more quickly than @SBWorkers United. It's grassroots, worker-driven and reminding us that people have the power to change their own lives. #UnionStrong (@OptimistsPrime)

### Tom McMahon

I am inspired by our students and their efforts to #endgunviolence We do this for them. #MarchForOurLivesJune11 @nysut @AFTunion @NEAToday (@TMcMahon23)

### Jennifer Iacopelli

School libraries don't need you to donate copies of Maus and other banned books. They need you to step up and run for the school board so the books don't get banned in the first place. (@jennifercarolyn)

### NEA

Our students are too important to let a few politicians block solutions that the vast majority of us favor. We will rise up, and we will stand together to #EndGunViolence. (@NEAToday)

### clearypm

"I happen to believe that no billionaire should be paying a lower tax rate than a teacher, a firefighter, electrician or a cop," Well said, @potus, well said! @AFLCIO @NYS AFLCIO @CNYALF @nysut @AFTunion @NYBATS (@clearypm)



## QUESTIONS FOR...

# Rebecca Benjamin

Schenectady Federation of Teachers

**1. Earning National Board Certification is an impressive feat anytime — but you did it during a pandemic. What was it like?**

Throughout the pandemic, I have tried to appreciate the "gift of time" that has been granted. While many activities were put on hold, I could dive into lesson plans and data analysis. Pursuing National Board Certification had always been a goal of mine. The pandemic accelerated my progress by creating virtual teaching opportunities with accessible opportunities for video recording, and time for writing and revision.

**2. What did you learn about yourself during the process? How has it impacted your teaching?**

I feel effective as an educator when I connect instruction to student needs. Moving through the components of the process prompted me to re-examine how I approach assessments, interventions, instruction and professional development. I recognized improvement in my practice as students made measurable gains when they were given an active role participating in monitoring their progress through activities directly related to content-area goals and instructional strategies.

It is rewarding to present students with appropriate opportunities for learning, and experience joy with them as they recognize their personal growth.

**3. You attended NYSUT's Writing Institute administered by the Catskill Teacher Center. How did that help?**

The supports in place for teachers to pursue board certification are absolutely invaluable. Typically, the expense is daunting, and the (union-backed) Shanker grant helped remove some of the monetary burden. The assistance provided by my school district and Catskill Teacher Center has been instrumental in guiding my process. Other NBCTs brought important insight and perspectives, and contributed feedback that helped me rethink and clarify my plans and reporting. The virtual meetings and online conferencing allowed me to benefit from the expertise of educators across the state.

**4. Schenectady has the state's largest number of NBCTs outside of New York City. What other supports does your district provide to encourage teachers to pursue board certification?**

Schenectady CSD values the process, and our teacher center provides information and support in completing the NBCT components. There were several wonderful and encouraging mentors willing to provide advice, answer questions and offer feedback. Schenectady FT's contract provides a stipend for NBCTs.

**5. What advice would you give colleagues about seeking National Board Certification?**

Many nights were spent working with only the company of my nocturnal hedgehogs. The experience was worthwhile and I enjoyed analyzing my teaching and finding ways to better align my data and instruction. I was simultaneously working on my doctoral dissertation, and it was motivating to have a variety of related projects to prevent burn-out on one task. I would definitely recommend starting after achieving tenure, since that is when teachers are eligible for the Shanker grant!



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**Robin Rapaport, former NYSUT vice president, longtime NEA/NY leader**

Former NYSUT officer, longtime labor leader and political activist Robin D. Rapaport died May 14. He was 81.

Emigrating from Poland to Canada with his family in the years after World War II, and then to the U.S., Robin learned English through the patient efforts of his classroom teachers. The experience ultimately shaped his classroom style during a career that spanned more than 30 years as a teacher on Long Island, in Central New York and the Capital District.

His experiences in Vietnam as an artillery forward observer with the 101st Airborne Division helped sharpen his focus on political action as a key activity for education unionists. It was important, he said, for union members to keep lawmakers accountable as they are the people making decisions about our lives.

Robin served as a NYSUT vice



president from 2006–08, following the unification with NEA/NY that he helped to achieve. Prior to that he had been vice president (1997–2003) and president (2003–06) of NEA/NY.

He is survived by his wife of nearly 40 years,

Linda Rosenblatt Rapaport; daughter Lisa (Charles S. Smith III); son, Adam; grandchildren, Ava and Lily; and a host of family and friends.



**E. Catherine Conrad** | Aug. 3, 2021  
United Federation of Teachers

**Robert Conrad** | May 29, 2022  
United Federation of Teachers

**Jeffrey Guilmette** | Feb. 20, 2022  
Retiree Council 10

**Joseph McKiernan** | April 1, 2022  
Harrison Association of Teachers

**Patricia Mitchell** | May 5, 2022  
South Colonie Teachers Association

**Gloria H. Richman** | April 23, 2022  
Clarkstown Central School District Teachers Association

**Linda Rosekrans** | Feb. 9, 2022  
United University Professions-SUNY Cortland

**Joan A. Valoze** | April 6, 2022  
Retiree Council 10

**Horst J. Vogel** | March 17, 2022  
Arlington Teachers Association

Obituary submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact info for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Julie Malec, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email [julie.malec@nysut.org](mailto:julie.malec@nysut.org).

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION MEETING****NYSUT BOARD OF DIRECTORS VACANCY ELECTION  
ELECTION DISTRICT 4**

A vacancy exists on the NYSUT Board of Directors for Election District 4. The vacancy was created by the resignation of Kevin Mole, effective July 1, 2022.

In accordance with the NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §§4(a) and 4(b): "Directors representing Election Districts shall be elected on a roll call vote by a majority of ballots cast by the representatives from their respective constituencies ... [and in] ... the event of a vacancy in the position of Election District Director, the President shall call a special election to elect a successor who shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term."

The delegates and alternates of Election District 4 are hereby notified that this vacancy will be filled by a Special Election Meeting to be held as follows:

**DATE: Sept. 12, 2022**

**TIME: 5 p.m.**

**PLACE: Holiday Valley Lodge  
6557 Holiday Valley Rd.,  
Ellicottville, NY 14731**

Pursuant to NYSUT Constitution, Article IX, §4(b) and the approved NYSUT Campaign and Election Procedures, NYSUT members who were reported as elected delegates to the 2022 Representative Assembly representing the members of Election District 4 will be eligible to vote in this Special Election. A reported alternate delegate may vote in the absence of the delegate.

Nominations to fill this vacancy will be accepted in accordance with the

Campaign and Election Procedures approved by the NYSUT Board of Directors adopted for the 2020 Representative Assembly. In order to qualify as a candidate for this Special Election, a Nominating Petition must be fully completed and then signed by at least two (2) in-service members from Election District 4.

The completed and signed Nominating Petition must then be received by the NYSUT Elections Committee by the close of business (5 p.m.) on Aug. 19, 2022. Any member in good standing from a NYSUT local within Election District 4 may be a candidate. Only in-service members in good standing from Election District 4 may sign a candidate's Nominating Petition. Nominating Petitions are available by contacting the NYSUT Elections Committee at [elections@nysut.org](mailto:elections@nysut.org) or by contacting the NYSUT Office of the President at (518) 213-6000.

At the Special Election Meeting, each candidate shall be given an opportunity to address the meeting for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes at a Candidates' Forum scheduled for 5 p.m. on Sept. 12, at the above location. The Special Election Meeting will remain in session until a successor director is elected. The number of votes to which a local is entitled will be evenly distributed among that local's delegates present and voting.

The candidate elected will serve as successor Election District Director immediately upon being elected at the Sept. 12, 2022 Special Election Meeting and continue to serve as the Successor Director to the conclusion of the 2023 Representative Assembly.

All elected delegates or their alternates reported for the 2022 NYSUT RA from Election District 4 are requested to be present for this election.

## IT'S WHAT WE DO

### Yaroslav Yuz'vak, Ithaca SD Employees Association

For 22 years, Yaroslav Yuz'vak, pictured below, right, has been at the wheel of the big yellow school bus, driving students around Ithaca.



PROVIDED

Now, he's another kind of conduit, helping to direct much-needed medical supplies, money

and clothing collected by his community, local churches, and his union to help the war-ravaged people of his home country, Ukraine.

"Yaroslav's ability to connect with students is unmatched," said Chris Horstman, above left, president of the Ithaca City School District Employees Association, representing bus drivers. "He currently has a Ukrainian flag in the front of his bus that I am sure has sparked many conversations.

"Our transportation department has taken up donations of food, socks, first aid kits and money to help ship items to where they would be most helpful," Horstman said.

Yuz'vak has been taking part in community meetings for Ukraine twice a week after finishing a typical 11-hour day ferrying students.

"We pack, we prepare, we put on labels," Yuz'vak said. "I'm so tired."

This spring, two volunteers, using money raised in the Cortland-Ithaca area where Yuz'vak lives, traveled to Poland with 600 pounds of supplies.

Read more about Yuz'vak and his efforts at [nysut.org/itswhatwedo](https://nysut.org/itswhatwedo).

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Your NYSUT membership allows you to participate in dozens of endorsed programs offered by NYSUT Member Benefits that can help you to do all of this. Our goal at Member Benefits is to make available important insurance, legal and financial programs along with real discount opportunities to help members save on everyday purchases. Many of our endorsed programs include value-added benefits available exclusively to both in-service and retiree members.

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Note: Our car rental program providers are now available through MB



Discounts & Deals, allowing members to better coordinate their travel plans by bundling hotels, flights and/or car rentals. No matter your plans this summer, you will surely find something exciting through MB Discounts & Deals!

Meanwhile, our Office Depot/OfficeMax program can save members an average of 30 percent on back-to-school or office items, including laptops, tablets, desktop computers, printers, ink and toner, and more. NYSUT members enjoy free delivery on qualifying orders over \$50 and discounted printing prices.

Member Benefits also endorses competitive insurance programs for NYSUT members and their families (including pets) along with important legal and financial services. Many of these programs can be purchased through payroll or pension deduction for greater convenience, savings opportunities and the peace of mind

knowing you'll never miss a premium payment.

We also offer numerous educational opportunities for members, including financial counseling, legal education and home buying workshops/webinars. Our online Financial Learning Center powered by Kiplinger's Personal Finance is a great resource that can help with achieving personal financial goals and better understanding the nuances of insurance, savings, investing and more.

Finally, if you ever have any issues or concerns with an endorsed program provider when using a Member Benefits program, our staff take pride in their ability to quickly step in to assist. Members regularly inform us how grateful they are to have a trusted advocate ready to support them.

Visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](https://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call 800-626-8101 to learn more about all the endorsed programs and services available through your NYSUT membership.

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



## New legislation means five-year vesting for Tier 5 and 6

**A**s of April 9, 2022, Tier 5 and 6 members of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) only need five years of service credit to be vested. Previously, Tier 5 and 6 members needed 10 years of service.

Once you're vested, you have earned the right to receive a retirement benefit, even if you leave public employment before retirement. (Note: If you work part-time, it may take longer to become vested. For example, half-time workers earn six months of credit toward vesting for each year on the job.)

The new legislation means that if you are an ERS Tier 5 or 6 member with five or more years of service and you meet the minimum age requirements for your retirement plan, you may apply for a service retirement benefit. (The new legislation does not change eligibility for disability retirement benefits that are established by your retirement plan.)

While the new law changed the Tier 5 and 6 vesting requirements, it

did not change benefit rules such as how long members must contribute, the calculation of pension benefits, the full retirement age, benefit reductions for early retirement or the cost to purchase previous service.

You can sign in to your Retirement Online account at [web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/sign-in.php](http://web.osc.state.ny.us/retire/sign-in.php) to view your total estimated service credit. Over the next few months, we will update members' accounts to reflect any changes to vesting status as a result of these new vesting requirements. If your total estimated service credit in Retirement Online is more than five years, rest assured, you are considered vested. If you have more than five, but less than 10 years of service, and you need assistance estimating your pension benefit or filing for retirement, visit [contactNYSLRS.com](http://contactNYSLRS.com).

For some employees, such as part-time and seasonal workers, ERS membership is optional. If you are one of these employees and interested in joining ERS, please speak to your employer. Once you join, you can apply to purchase service credit for your previous public employment.

For more information about vesting, visit our website at [osc.state.ny.us/retirement/members/are-you-vested-and-what-it-means](http://osc.state.ny.us/retirement/members/are-you-vested-and-what-it-means).

In every issue, State Comptroller Thomas



P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and trustee of the Common Retirement Fund, provides information

on the System, which delivers retirement benefits to many NYSUT School-Related Professionals and other support staff. If you are an ERS member with a question of general interest, email [united@nysut.org](mailto:united@nysut.org).

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

### NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals\* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

Tarrytown Region:

Trudi Davis | 914-592-4411  
[trudi.davis@nysut.org](mailto:trudi.davis@nysut.org)

Nassau/Suffolk Region:

Karen McLean | 518-625-1966  
[karen.mclean@nysut.org](mailto:karen.mclean@nysut.org)

North Country/Potsdam Region:

Cheryl Rockhill | 518-240-8890  
[cheryl.rockhill@nysut.org](mailto:cheryl.rockhill@nysut.org)

Syracuse Region:

Virginline Woodall | 518-617-0268  
[virginline.woodall@nysut.org](mailto:virginline.woodall@nysut.org)

\* Certified teaching assistants belong to the state TRS.

## State budget begins to fix flawed Tier 5 and 6

**Q:** Will Tier 5 and 6 members still need 10 years of service credit to become vested in the system?

**A:** No, they won't. Thanks to new state budget legislation, Tier 5 and 6 members can now vest with five years of service credit. The law, which took effect April 9, applies to current Tier 5 and 6 members and is not retroactive. However, although members can generally retire as early as age 55, deferred vested Tier 6 members cannot retire until age 63. Check out the New York State Teachers' Retirement System's Active Members' Handbook for other age factors that might apply, [nysut.org/NYSUTRS/media/PDF/Library/Publications/Active%20Members/handbook.pdf](http://nysut.org/NYSUTRS/media/PDF/Library/Publications/Active%20Members/handbook.pdf).

**Q:** Has the employee contribution rate changed for Tier 6 members?

**A:** Yes, it has. For the fiscal years ending June 30, 2023 and June 30, 2024, only the base wages earned by Tier 6 members will be used to determine their employee contribution rate. Compensation they earn for extracurricular programs, or any other pensionable earnings, will be excluded from the calculation. This may help to lower the amount of money Tier 6 members must contribute to the system.

However, although the contribution percentage rate for Tier 6 members will only be calculated on their annual base wages, they must still pay the applicable contribution rate on all pensionable earnings for those years.

### Did you know?

NYSUT retirees who return to work in a public school district or a BOCES won't be subject to the \$35,000 earnings after retirement cap, from April 9, 2022 through June 30, 2023. Private-sector earnings are never capped.

### NYSUT TRS consultants

TRS members with questions may call their teacher-members on the New York State Teachers' Retirement System Board of Directors:

David Keefe • 516-741-1241  
(Retiree Representative)

Juliet Benaquisto • 518-807-7085  
[juliet.benaquisto@nysut.org](mailto:juliet.benaquisto@nysut.org)

Beth Chetney • 315-431-4040  
[beth.chetney@nysut.org](mailto:beth.chetney@nysut.org)

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## Carthage Teachers Association

The Carthage TA planted hundreds of flags in front of Carthage High School in May to mark Memorial Day. The annual display, put up in conjunction with the Carthage VFW Auxiliary, has grown in the past nine years from 400 flags to 1,800.

“This truly has become a community event,” CTA President Patricia Sheehan said. “We have more positive feedback from our military families, veterans and community members on this event than any other.” The CTA also sells flags for the event, with profits going to the local’s scholarship fund.

## White Plains Teachers Association

The White Plains TA, led by Kara McCormick-Lyons, partnered with the White Plains Parent Teacher Association to distribute 40,000 books as part of a May literacy fair to promote reading and family wellness. Books were available for all age groups.

The event was part of the AFT’s Reading Opens the World initiative, focused on family and community engagement, literacy and providing professional development for educators. The books were secured through NYSUT’s First Book initiative, which works with the non-profit organization First Book Inc., and the American Federation of Teachers, to distribute books at low to no cost to children in need.

## Red Hook School Support Staff Association

Red Hook School Support Staff Association members, below, picketed in late May to protest a salary impasse. The local’s contract covers some 160 teacher aides, clerical staff, library workers, bus drivers, food service workers, groundskeepers and custodians. The RHSSSA is led by Kimberly Hall.



Emily Sachar, Red Hook Daily Catch

## Half Hollow Hills Teachers Association

Half Hollow Hills TA members organized in-person and virtual phone bank events at the NYSUT Suffolk Regional Office in May to rally community support for the school budget. Their hard work paid off. Community voters approved the HHH budget by a margin of 1792 to 524. The HHHTA is led by Richard Haase.

## Croton Teachers Association



Croton Teachers Association members are planting seeds for the future — literally. The Hudson Valley educators sponsored a booth at the community’s popular Summerfest in early June, giving away pumpkin seedlings ready for planting. CTA, led by president Jennifer Moore, urged students to keep track of how their pumpkins grow and submit photos.

Share news about your local’s union or community events at [united@nysut.org](mailto:united@nysut.org); include LIA in the subject line.



### In print

**Thomas Altman**, Oswego Classroom Teachers Association retiree, has published *Bubble Construction Kit: Build Amazing Bubble Structures*. The step-by-step instructions explain how to build the most popular bubble structures used by professional bubble artists.

**Paul E. Collins**, a Yonkers Federation of Teachers retiree, has published *Enoch Crosby the Shoemaker Spy: An Historical Biography of a Truly Heroic American*.

**Laura L. Dell**, Mahopac TA retiree, has published *Jayce Recovered?* The book may be read as a stand-alone novel or as part of the *Tara’s Family* series, which explores several issues around substance use disorder.

**Gabriel Feldmar**, Professional Staff Congress, has published *Understanding Our Children’s Behavior: A Manual for Parents and Teachers* with Louis Puglisi. The

manual covers the philosophical, historical and psychiatric aspects of childhood mental illnesses.

**Jade Greene-Grant** and **Barbara Magnotta**, both pre-K teachers and members of the United Federation of Teachers, have written *Animals Eating the Alphabet*. The colorful children’s book uses food and alliteration to help children learn the alphabet and how to read.

**Donald Hartman**, United University Professions – University at Buffalo retiree, published *Edward Oliver Tilburn: Profile of a Con-Artist*.

**Melissa Pyrch**, Somers Faculty Association, has written *Beyond the Bell: 12 Lessons for Navigating Your Life After High School*. Visit [melissapyrch.com](http://melissapyrch.com) for more information.

**Penina Steinberg**, UFT retiree, has published *Cauliflower Soup*. The picture book for ages 3 and up involves a carefree young girl who sets her idea into action, propelling her into an exciting future. To order, email [peninaauthor@gmail.com](mailto:peninaauthor@gmail.com).

Kudos recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you’d like to share? Email [united@nysut.org](mailto:united@nysut.org); include Kudos in the subject line.

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