

Nominate a co-worker for this award

Do you work with a member of unit 7,8 or 10 who always does "above and beyond?" Someone who promotes a positive image? Someone who is an involved and committed union member?

If so, please consider nominating her/him for NYSUT's "SRP of the Year." **Louann Coleman**, President of Unit 7, Food Services, was honored with this award in 1999. The award for 2001 was shared by two Paraprofessionals in New York City, **Margaret Espinosa** and **Julia Martinez** who were honored for their courage and dedication to their students on 9-11-01.

See your Chief Rep or Unit 8 Building Contact for the nomination form and criteria. Nominations should be received at the STA office **no later than December 12, 2002.**

Board of Ed Dates To Save

December 18, 2002
January 15, 2003
February 12, 2003
March 19, 2003
April 9, 2003
May 13, 2003 (4:00 p.m.)

All other meetings are scheduled for 7:00 p.m. at the Board of Education, 725 Harrison Street.

If you plan on attending, it might be a good idea to call ex 4691 @the D.O. the day a meeting is scheduled to make sure it hasn't been changed.



Kudos and thank you to each member of Units 7, 8 and 10 who contributed to our VOTE COPE campaign this year. We were awarded a beautiful plaque at the NYSUT SRP Leadership Conference in Lake Placid in October in recognition of the highest number of SRP contributors to VOTE COPE in 2002!!!! Our contributions are absolutely necessary to effect education-friendly legislation now more than ever before! Every single contribution helps us in this endeavor. THANK YOU!

--Nancy Peluso

Inconclusive Contract Talks Frustrate Bargaining Teams/Members

Five months- that's how long the STA members of Units 1, 4, 8 and 10 have been working without a new contract. What this means for vast majority of STA members is that none has received an increase in pay since July of 2001. That was **19 months or 518 days** ago. Members in all units have fallen farther behind their counterparts in surrounding districts. Members report their frustration to negotiating teams and union leaders on a regular basis. Many interpret this slow pace as a measure of how the district values their services.

The STA prepared for negotiations by surveying all members in units 1, 4, 8 and 10 in the fall of 2001. The large volume of responses helped the teams to determine your concerns and priorities. We took this data and developed goal statements and proposals.

In *late winter* prepared teams requested that the district begin negotiations on these four contracts and submitted a list of dates to schedule a number of meetings prior to the expiration of the contracts. The district, however, stalled and delayed the first meeting until June 26th,

four days prior to the expiration of the contracts.

At that meeting union and district teams expressed a mutual desire to avoid the acrimony of the last round of negotiations. The union teams suggested that an interest based bargaining (IBB) model be tried this time around. That means that both

As of mid-November it is unclear if negotiations will be concluded prior to December or even January. Members have been waiting to hear about progress in negotiations from their STA teams. But so far, there's not much good news to share according to negotiators and at this pace there might not be for a while.

parties are expressing their willingness to try to find common interests in a given issue and develop agreements that meet both parties' interests when possible.

The first session was held with all members of the Unit 1, 4, 8 and 10 teams and district teams. After discussion it was determined that there were many issues that the four contracts had in common but the procedures in each contract were different. Labor and management agreed to work on developing common language across these four contracts. That was a positive ele-

ment of the interest based bargaining we were attempting.

The November of 2001 request for member salary data did not arrive until the **spring of 2002!** It is unclear if this delay in providing information is a management tactic to slow down negotiations or if the budget and finance department officials are really unable to provide the information to the district teams either. What is clear, though, is that it difficult for either side to make informed proposals on salary and benefit costs *without data to drive the proposals.*

STA teams still lack a full breakdown of last year's "F" budget (federal, state and other grant funds). The district has also not provided the STA teams with projections of what positions this year's grants are to be used to support. This information is important to the STA teams because so many instructional positions are paid through the "F" budget. The district teams also need this information to further discussions towards settlement.

Continued reliance on the "F" budget to fund classroom positions is becoming more common as administrative positions created in that budget are moved to the "A" budget. That leaves less for salary increases for STA members.

It is unlikely that members will be receiving a retro check in time for this holiday season. This does have members asking if the district is really serious when it talks about recruiting and retaining qualified staff to work with the community's children.

What does it mean to you to not have a new contract? Do you think that the commissioners of education and the superintendent need to know? Join your colleagues at the next board of education meeting on December 18th. Tell them personally.

(See President's column for related information.)

Inside...

- Discipline • Unit 10 • Lilli Who?
- TA Advocate • Unit 7 • Whoops
- Stay Tuned • Unit 8 • LRS Update
- Paycheck • Get Fit • Board Watch
- RA Highlights • Kudos • Picture Show

RA Gets Facelift

The STA Executive Board has taken several steps to make monthly Rep Assembly meetings shorter, more relevant, and more efficient. The following steps have been taken:

- 1) The Executive Board will decide at their monthly meeting what "action" items will be discussed at the meeting and which will be sent out in advance with the Rep Assembly notices. This will take these items off the main agenda unless clarifications are requested.
- 2) The sign-in and name tag area will be moved to the entrance of the room where the meeting is held.
- 3) Open forum issues will go into a "Parking Lot" (chartpak) where they can be grouped together for the purpose of discussion.
- 4) The agendas will be timed so that extended time will be spent on a single issue only if the Rep Assembly votes to do so.
- 5) For issues brought into the Rep Assembly which demand immediate action or affect a single school, Lin Golash and David Reed, along with two Executive Board members, will be available in the conference room from 3 - 5 PM on meeting days to give consultations and begin the process of finding a solution to these issues.
- 6) STA Officers will be seated at the head table where they can be easily identified and available to help meeting participants.
- 7) Meeting rules established in the past will be reviewed. If further modifications are desired by the Rep Assembly, the By-Laws Committee will convene to address possible changes.
- 8) The STA leadership will attempt, when possible, to have all issues addressed and meetings adjourned by 5:00 p.m.

The STA Executive Board members hope that this will help to make attendance at Rep Assembly meetings consistently more relevant and able to be conducted in a time frame which will make it easier for our reps.

--Jim Shults

Educators - Save Those Receipts!

Remember all those back-to-school expenses for your classroom? Be sure to save those out-of-pocket receipts because they could mean a new federal tax deduction.

A federal law signed earlier this year allows K-12 education employees who use their own money to buy books and supplies for their classroom to deduct as much as \$250 from their 2002 taxes.

The new law is available to eligible educators in both private and public schools. To be eligible employees must work at least 900 hours during a school year as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide, ac-

cording to the Internal Revenue Service.

Taxpapers may subtract up to \$250 of qualified expenses from their adjusted gross income. They will not need to itemize deductions to get this benefit.

The IRS suggests educators keep records of qualifying expenses, including the date, amount and purpose of each purchase.

This federal deduction is in place for two years only. Unless Congress and the president extend the law, it will not apply to expenses incurred after Dec. 31, 2003.

Before this change in the law, educators could get a tax break only as miscellaneous itemized deductions if they exceeded 2 percent of their adjusted gross income.

For details, visit the IRS Web site, www.irs.gov or call (800) 829-3576.

The STA Executive Board members and staff wish you a restful and safe Holiday Season!

Discipline Issues Are Still #1 Concern of Members- Know the Contract (Unit 1)

Student behavior was the topic most frequently tallied (after salary) in last year's pre-negotiation surveys of Unit 1 members. The issue, however, cuts across all units and it's clearly still first in people's minds. The lack of civility and safety in schools is the subject of many calls from members seeking the advice and assistance of the STA leadership and staff.

The choice to attend or teach in schools is greatly influenced by safety concerns. Fights, threats stated directly against the personal safety of staff and students, gang related activities, intimidation of staff and students and disruption of classes are commonplace in many of our schools. These are issues cited frequently by parents, too, when talking about the schools. Sometimes the breakdown of civility spills over into the papers but often the daily erosion of safe and civil school communities proceeds much like waves that carry out the grains of sands on a beach- steadily, relentlessly- until the shoreline is dangerously altered.

The new behavior referral contributes to the problem for staff referring students who defy the district's behavior code. This form, developed without input from STA representatives, is both cumbersome and incomplete. The demographic information section of the referral requiring extensive information can be a barrier to speedy removal of a disruptive student. It places clerical responsibilities on the referring staff member but no longer leaves space for staff recommendations. The administrator's form, however, calls only for the student ID # and ethnic code. This second form is not always shared with staff members. What's wrong with this picture? Fill in what you can before sending students to the office. Ask that administration complete the rest.

Consequences for defying the behavior code are inconsistently applied. When you disagree with a consequence use the provisions of the Unit 1 contract noted below. Send copies of appeals to the STA office and to school board commissioners. Who else is going to tell them with accuracy what's happening our schools?

Lilli Who?

Confucius said, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." How right he was so many eons ago. My journey began when I received a bachelor's degree and became a classroom teacher 26 years ago. The first time I stood before a group of smiling wide-eyed kindergartners I realized the daunting task I had undertaken. For the next two years the learning arena changed to fourth graders. By now I had a masters degree and was looking for new challenges. For the next eight years I worked as a speech therapist for the Maternal and Child Health Department of the Onondaga County Health Department. At that time they were the agency that provided school health services to the city parochial schools.

My journey then brought me to Lincoln Middle School for the next sixteen years. Yes, I am living proof that you can survive middle school just in case you're wondering. Don't ever let anyone tell you that public schools don't offer a great education. I learned a lifetime's worth in the first year. The only thing that saved my sanity was that I already had eleven years teaching experience under my belt. Somewhere along the decades I managed to find my life's partner and raise three children. My oldest son is completing his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. I am also the proud parent of a Corcoran High Schooler and a second grader at Roberts.

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Article VI(h): Should a teacher believe that a particular disciplinary situation, as it has been processed and resolved within the framework of the building procedures, is detrimental to the academic environment of the district (as set forth in subsection 5 above), he or she shall have the right to petition the Building committee of the school in question with the teacher or administrator involved, to be part of the meeting procedure as provided in article XXII.A and the Association/District Operational Guidelines for Building Committees. Notice of such referral to the Building committee shall be provided to the administrator at least one (1) week in advance of the Building committee meeting at which the matter is to be discussed. If the issue is not resolved at the Building Committee level, the Building committee shall make a recommendation to the Superintendent, or designee, who shall render a final and binding decision within (10) school days.

All members are able to place appeals with the Building Committee. Use what's been negotiated to help restore order to our schools!

Unit 10's "Health Beat"

Ann O'Hara, President
VanDuyn

A E D's in Schools

Unit 10 has been involved in the planning and policy making for the use of Automated External Defibrillators in schools. All public schools in the Syracuse area are on track to have a defibrillator in each building and at least 4 staff members trained in it's use. Access to this important piece of medical equipment is most exciting because it successfully saves lives! In the immediate event of a life-threatening arrhythmia such as ventricular fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia immediate access to defibrillation is paramount. For each minute without the heart being defibrillated, the odds of survival decrease by 7-10% - even while CPR is being performed! Some members of Unit 10 are also certified CPR/AED instructors and are helping to train school district personnel.

Attention... All STA Members!

NYSUT attorneys have examined the issue of school staff members using the defibrillators that all school districts must have in place by December 1st. They say our members are covered under 3023 and/or 3811 of Education law which holds employees harmless for legal action arising out of the performance of their job duties/within the scope of their employment. Acting as one of the district's AED users fits this definition.

There will be opportunities to receive training should you desire to learn. Our members who must train are our nurses and coaches (as part of the first aid/CPR requirement).

Let us know if you have questions. We expect a full bulletin from NYSUT outlining the many issue surrounding the use of these medical devices.

--McKenna

An Assertive Advocate for Syracuse Teaching Assistants

Teaching assistants and other school staff in Syracuse, N.Y., have a strong advocate in the union office this year. Nancy Peluso, a longtime paraprofessional and head of the Syracuse Teachers Association's (STA) teaching assistants unit, is working as one of three full-time release officers. It's the first time a PSRP has worked in that capacity for the AFT-affiliated union.

"For a job that didn't exist before, it seems like I don't have a lot of time to do anything," says Peluso, who has devoted much of her time this fall to helping the union's teaching assistants deal with the new Title I job requirements. "With 950 teaching assistants, it would have a tremendous impact on the district if they lost a portion of the work force" because of new education requirements that many current staff don't meet, says Peluso. She has been working closely with the district on the issue and discussing such options as a competency test for experienced staff.

"My heart right now is in trying to make sure that our vet-

eran, seasoned teaching assistants don't have to go back to school to keep their jobs," she comments.

General issues of paraprofessionals' jobs, training and working conditions are close to Peluso's heart, since she has spent 15 years herself in that position. "We are very poorly paid, so it takes a dedicated person to do the job," she says. "I have great admiration for the job and for the people who do it, and I would like to increase the level of respect they get."

Peluso says it was STA president Kate McKenna's idea to propose a full-time release PSRP officer to the district. In the past, the union had three officers on release, but only two recently. The superintendent initially said no to the idea, but once the union proposed that they and the district share the cost of Peluso's salary, because of her extensive experience as a trainer, the district bought in.

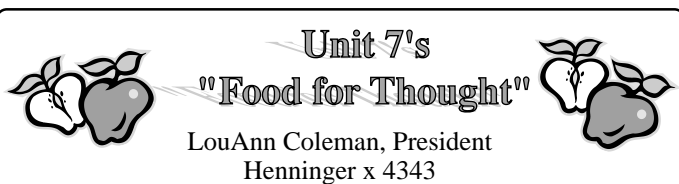
"Lots of what I do satisfies both the union and the district," Peluso says, noting that she has had extensive training through

New York State United Teachers' programs for PSRP trainers. This year, for example, she is helping organize monthly training for Syracuse assistants who work in special education, ranging from basic issues for new hires to discipline strategies and reading instruction.

Peluso says she has gotten tremendous support and encouragement from her fellow teaching assistants in the district. They, like PSRP's everywhere, appreciate working with someone who knows exactly what their jobs are like. Peluso says she does miss being around small children-her most recent position found her working with kindergartners-but she looks forward to the challenge and opportunity of helping the adults who do the important work with kids.

"I have thought a lot about the things that should be and could be, and I have a lot of ideas," she says. "It's a terrific opportunity to be able to raise the level of professionalism for the teaching assistant position."

--PSRP Reporter



LouAnn Coleman, President
Henninger x 4343

Hi Everyone,

We hope you received your letter. We'd like you to save the letter and make that extra effort to make sure your appearance is presentable. If needed buy new uniforms...proper color is essential.

It is also suggested that all food service and lunch aides join the retirement system. By joining the system, when you retire you will get a percentage of your sick days. If you are older and may not stay much longer it is still a good idea to join because you get everything you put into it back (like a bank account) plus a percentage of sick days. In five years you are vested in retirement, in ten years you don't have to pay into it, but you receive credit.

Please try to attend the General Membership meeting on December 18th at 2:30 p.m. at the STA office. Some of the topics that will be covered are: • Uniforms • Holiday Pay • Personal Days • Assigning Board Members

See you on the 18th!

Whoops!

In the October *Open Line* we printed a list of all the Chief Reps and Reps for each school. We had hoped that people would save the information for future reference. However, we inadvertently left off Delaware's name. Please write in Delaware across from Pat Shult and all those names up until James Shults (C) are at Delaware.

sta Open Line

The *Open Line* is published monthly September to June at STA, 909 Butternut St., Syracuse, New York 13208. Tel. (315) 472-6374. STA is affiliated with NYSUT, AFT and AFL-CIO.

Editor: Kelly Abt: kellenabt@yahoo.com

Managing Editor: Cathleen A. Danboise
cdan@syrteach.org

Contributing Writers:

Nancy Peluso - Unit 8 (STA)

Ann O'Hara - Unit 10 (VanDuyn)

Lin Ramsey Golash - LRS (STA)

LouAnn Coleman - Unit 7 (Henninger)

STA Web Site: www.syracuseteachers.org

Stay Tuned... Coming Soon...

- Teacher Center Corner
- Pros and Cons: Assessments
- Letters to the Editor
- Meet Dave

Are You Board Certified?

We will be starting a support group for those interested in pursuing National Board Certification. If you have gone through the process, are currently pursuing board certification or would like to become a NBCT, please contact Lilli Rastegar at the STA office or **Kelly Abt** at kelleenabt@yahoo.com. More to come on this topic.

Enjoy Writing?

We need feature journalists. Do you have a topic which would be of interest to the general membership? Please contact Kelly Abt at Lincoln or via e-mail at kelleenabt@yahoo.com.

--Abt

Interested?  Call STA!

STA Shirt Order

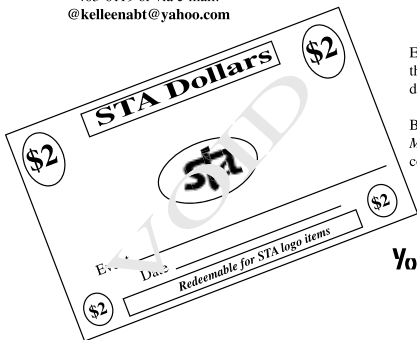
	Size	Color	Quantity
Golf Shirt			\$26
Women's Denim Shirt <small>(runs one size smaller)</small>			\$26
Men's Cut Denim Shirt			\$26

Sizes above XL add \$2

Name _____
 Building _____
 e-mail _____

Questions, comments, concerns may be directed to Kelly Abt. Please call at home 463-6119 or via e-mail: kelleenabt@yahoo.com

Total Enclosed \$ _____



Your Union At Work For You!!!

What a deal!

Earn STA Dollars and you can reduce the price of the items listed above. For example: 13 STA dollars will buy a shirt!

Be sure and read the STA Open Line and Monday Memos. You'll be hearing more about this new concept.

Labor Relations Update

by Lin Ramsey Golash and David Reed

Negotiations

The STA Negotiating Teams from Units 1, 4, 8 and 10 are still meeting with the SCSD. We have no immediate progress to report for individual contracts. We have made some progress on a uniform grievance procedure for all contracts, as possible.

B(uilding)A(ction)T(eams) will be key for these contracts. You should receive a request from your Chief Rep to participate in some way on these teams. We need everyone involved.

Grievances

-We settled a grievance on a FSHI (Unit 7) who had called in on a workshop day and was docked pay. The FSHI will receive the docked pay.

-We settled a grievance on Masters Degree Credit - teacher will receive some backdating of credit.

-We settled a grievance on lesson plans - please see below.

-We are awaiting Stage 2 Hearings on CT Unit Planning, Planning Time, Health and Safety, and Math In-Service.

-We are awaiting Stage 2 Decisions on Reading Recovery and Professional Development.

-We are awaiting scheduling of arbitrations on summer bereavement days and vandalism on cars in parking lots.

PERB

-We are still awaiting hearing on Unit 7 Cook Managers

Lesson Plans

The STA settled a grievance with the SCSD regarding "grading" lesson plans - lesson plans are not to be graded, nor are they to be in any particular "format."

However, there was general agreement that good planning makes good instruction, and that lesson plans must flow from the NYS Standards and SCSD curriculum. The Model for Teacher Evaluation Committee co-chaired by Yvonne Young, Assistant Superintendent and Kate McKenna, STA President, is going to meet to discuss elements of good planning that align with the new teacher evaluation. If a teacher is having difficulty with planning, more detailed lesson plans might be useful, but requiring all teachers to write detailed lesson plans is excessive paperwork. Send us your thoughts.

Grants

Outstanding Young Educator Award - Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Eligibility: Education professionals no older than 40 who have demonstrated "exemplary commitment and exceptional contribution to the profession."

Deadline: December 16, 2002

Funds: \$10,000, receive Educational Leadership magazine, receive and ASCD Institutional Membership for his/her school, and be honored at the ASCD Annual Conference & Exhibit Show in San Francisco

Contact: Nomination materials & info at <http://www.ascd.org/oyea.html>.

Nominees should be no older than 40 years of age, be an education professional, and demonstrate commitment and exceptional contribution to his or her field. The nominee should inspire colleagues, significantly impact student performance, and "provide an ongoing model of excellence in encouraging all learners to succeed."

Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Fellowships - American Association of University Women

Eligibility: Female public school teachers who have taught for at least three consecutive years.

Deadline: January 10, 2003

Funds: Up to \$5,000 for professional development grants; up to \$10,000 for project implementation grants.

Contact: AAUW Education Foundation, Fellowship and Grants, 2201 N Dodge St, PO 4030, Iowa City, IA 52243-4030; 319-337-1716; or <http://www.aauw.org/3000/fdnfelgra/erfbd.html>.

Professional Development Fellowships are for female K-12 public school teachers to participate in workshops or conferences. May also be used for planning a gender-equity school-based program or toward expenses related to attending the Eleanor Roosevelt Teacher Institute in Washington, DC (7/03).

Project Implementation Grants will enable a teacher to implement a classroom or school program promoting gender equity. Preference will go to 2002 professional development fellowship recipients. Applicants must have taught for a minimum of three years and be committed to teaching beyond the fellowship period. Preference will go to proposals from women of color and other underrepresented groups, as well as from teachers working with underserved students.

Know Your Union Contest

November Question:

When was the Safe Schools Against violence Act (Project Save) signed into law?

Send your answer along with the page number from the "What Every Member Should Know" book to STA in care of **Mary Lou Balcom** no later than **December 18th**. Be sure to include your name and school. This month's prize is a \$25 gift certificate to Shoppingtown Mall.

*The winner of October's \$25 gift certificate to Riley's was **Diane Berman** (Ed Smith). *Congratulations Diane!*

Unit 8



Caring for Children
We Make A Difference

Nancy Peluso, President
STA x4526

Unit 8 news

Workshops for Teaching Assistants have been scheduled as follows:

Collaborating With Related Services	Dec 11, '02
Supporting Reading Instruction	Jan 09, '03
Orientation/Disability Awareness (repeat)	Jan 16, '03
Collaborating With the Classroom Team	Feb 14, '03
Collaborating With Related Services(repeat)	Mar 12, '03
Understanding What Motivates Behavior	Apr 23, '03
Motivating the Unmotivated with Humor	June 03, '03

These sessions are not mandatory. When specific information is received in your building, ask to meet with your administrator if you are interested in attending the session. Participants are limited for each workshop. On each workshop day there is an a.m. and a p.m. session, you will not be absent from your school for the entire day-only half of the day. Information regarding the next workshop will be sent following Thanksgiving break.

Title One Update

To determine if your business school credits and/or degree will satisfy the new requirements under "No Child Left Behind", log on to: <http://www.nysed.gov/heds/RPSL1.html>. The Inventory of Registered Programs can be checked to determine if your school is/was registered by NYS. If you have any questions regarding this please call Mark Warner at Ed Smith School ext. 4650.

Attention ALL Teaching Assistants: If you have access to the internet, please log on to "www.aft.org/psrp/surveys/leftbehind.html"

Take a couple of minutes to respond to the survey regarding you and the new regulations.

Selected Action Items...

Board of Ed Watch- November

Budget and Finance Committee- Kirby (chair), Strong, Corriders

- The school district audit is still not completed. It is expected to be done and available by mid-December. The district staff was unable to provide information to the auditing firm in a timely manner despite a budget that has tripled in the last 5 years.
- The district has missed the December 1st QZAB bonding deadline for funding for technology upgrading. (There had been no project manager assigned to this important endeavor.) This is the second year in a row that the district failed to meet deadlines associated with this borrowing. Our students and staff will lose out again.
- The district contracted with an advertising committee for services far in excess of what the school board had approved (\$38,000). This is the firm hired to produce the new district logo, glossy brochures and the website (\$110,000). No district official was able to say whose responsibility it was to coordinate this spending. STA requested that the district not make a "gift of public funds" to the agency. Our members are asked to refund any payroll overpayments made in error. The same standard should apply to others.

- Com. Kirby requested information on the cost of items in the PR overspending. Com. Menkin criticized her for micro-management of the district. Com. Kirby stated that the district was in a financial crisis and every expenditure needed to be examined carefully.

Board of Ed meeting 11/20

The Commissioners of Education voted to approve (5-1-1) a new Workers' Compensation administrator for the district. STA opposed the move due the lack of information presented to the board at the budget and finance committee meeting and the fact that the district's comp history is more successful than the government agencies using the proposed firm. Commissioners Kirby and Strong requested that the board table the vote for one month in light of concerns brought to the board's attention after the budget and finance committee meeting. Com. Johnson criticized Com. Kirby for her motion which was subsequently defeated 5-2.

No substantive discussions of the budget or the district audit took place, leaving questions of accountability to be answered at another time.

--McKenna

STA Rep Highlights - November

STA Representatives who attended the November Representative Assembly discussed the following:

- The STA received a plaque in honor of our having the highest number of SRP contributors to VOTE/COPE in 2002.
- **Commissioner Mills**, meeting with union officials, praised the NYSUT leadership for their insistence on high standards and expressed the opinion that the SCSD School Board needs to be prioritizing and asking the hard fiscal questions. District officials have changed the manner into which cash flow information is reported to the board. This lack of information makes it difficult to make informed decisions.
- If you have a salary adjustment coming to you for inservice courses, be sure to call payroll to make sure they have all the information they need to facilitate the adjustment. If there is any dispute, contact **Joanne DiNapoli** at the STA (x4526).
- The STA will work with the Teacher Center Advisory Board to make sure that course acceptances come in a timely manner. Some aren't arriving until the course has already started. Be sure to call yourself if you haven't heard by the start date.
- Sensitive information is being sent to district employees folded and stapled rather than in envelopes. The STA staff will ask that envelopes be used.
- People interested in National Board Certification should contact Lilli Rasteg at the STA.
- Weekly Memos will continue to be used to inform members of district spending.
- The district has agreed to a test called the ETS, a local assessment test, to make it possible for teaching assistants to fulfill the new certification requirements of Title I needed in order to keep their positions. Work with local colleges is continuing.
- Teachers have five FULL days at the end of the marking period to turn grades into administration.
- STA is requesting that the SCSD School Board recover the money spent in an illegal contract with Alternatives Unlimited.

Representatives are encouraged to attend the new, streamlined December RA meeting. You'll be out by 5 PM and get \$2 in STA Bucks.

- **Discipline**- The revised SAVE policy adopted by the board is not being enforced/interpreted consistently. For example, serious verbal threats against a teacher are not being dealt with as level three offenses.

Additionally, the new behavior referral form is cumbersome and was not piloted. Members should concentrate on filling in the child's name and description of incident. Completing the other time-consuming information at the top may cause delays in removing disruptive students from the classroom.

Oratorical Kudos

Congratulations to the following students and their parents who participated in the Oratorical contest on November 16, 2002. Their hard work and efforts have certainly paid off in a big way! Congratulations on a job well done!

The kindergarten winners were **Ayla Yagan** (Webster) and **Alexander Huerd** (Meachem). In grades 1-2 **Julius Wilson** and **Coleman Littles** both hail from Webster and **Justine Marshall** is a student at Ed Smith. Grades 3-5, **My-Kellia McShane** (Delaware), **Shawn Weatherly** (Webster) and **Aidan Caiello** (Salem Hyde). **Mercedes Johnson** (Frazer), **Diamond Breland** and **Seamis Kirst** are students at Roberts. For grades 9-12 the winners were **Jessica Fredette** (Nottingham), **Kelly Cobb** (Henninger), and **Gabrielle Bell** (Nottingham).

Lilli Who?

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Now my journey has brought me to an office on Butternut Street and I'm the first vice president of our union. I'm beginning to believe it because my duties have changed and I continue to do the work I love and I even get paid for it. My training as a communication facilitator has proved to be invaluable time after time. So call me and we'll talk...

A heartfelt thanks to the staff and administrators of Lincoln Middle School who made my last day a memorable one. The last sixteen years were an incredible learning experience. Mega thanks to the wonderful support staff at STA who made a difficult transition a comfortable one.

--Lillie Rastegar

Tax law changes include good news for your retirement plan.

Tax laws have changed.

The Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 includes an important provision for people making retirement plans. The amounts eligible for pre-tax contributions to tax-deferred supplemental retirement plans, such as Opportunity Plus and Opportunity Independence, offered through NYSUT Benefit Trust and ING, will increase every year over the next decade. The contributions will continue to be pre-tax dollars, meaning they will reduce your current taxable income. These regulations also "free up" additional money to help you build a more secure retirement. And there are new "catch-up" deferrals allowed for people closer to retirement age (50 or above) who choose to increase contributions to their retirement plan.

The perception about investing has changed.

A stock market in turmoil may not be the best endorsement for investing. Keep in mind, however, that many of the losses described in the media represent investments in single specific stocks, or investments in failed companies. A diversified portfolio – a mix of investment options balanced to

reflect an investor's personal risk tolerance – can still be an attractive alternative. Diversification helps reduce but does not eliminate investment risk. Participants in Opportunity Plus, a tax-deferred variable annuity, or Opportunity Independence, a series of retail mutual funds offered through a custodial account, can choose from more than 40 investment options, ranging from conservative to aggressive.

Retirement planning has changed.

Twenty, thirty, or more years of retirement living? Not unusual in today's more health-conscious culture. The only wrinkle is affording it. The best way to prepare for long-range needs is to make long-range plans. The new tax laws make it even more attractive to shift income from peak earning years into a time when you could be in a lower tax bracket. Remember, Opportunity Plus and Opportunity Independence are both tax-deferred entities: contribution amounts are not taxed until withdrawn, nor are any earnings as they accumulate.

Some things haven't changed.

NYSUT's only endorsed provider of 403(b) plans is ING. NYSUT and ING continually enhance

these plans. For example, Opportunity Plus and Opportunity Independence include some unique features that help protect your contributions if something happens to you, including a \$500 annual disability benefit in the event of a disability and a life insurance benefit in the event of your death. They also include an objective financial counseling service, offered at no cost to terminally ill participants or to beneficiaries of deceased participants.

A successful retirement strategy is fueled by time, and procrastination has bottom-line consequences. Since there are a lot of people available to help you with information about retirement plans available to NYSUT members and agency fee payers – there's really no need to avoid the issue. For more information on making one of the most important changes in your life, call:

Helen Chambers, CFS
315-682-2872

Thomas DiNapoli, Jr.
315-682-2514

Stephane Lasher
315-682-0092



Variable annuities and mutual funds are long-term investments designed for retirement purposes. Early withdrawals may be subject to a 10% federal penalty if taken prior to age 59½. Money distributed will be taxed as ordinary income in the year the money is received. Account values fluctuate with market conditions, and when surrendered, the principal may be worth more or less than the original amount invested.

Opportunity Plus is a tax-deferred variable annuity issued by ING Life Insurance and Annuity Company (ILIAC), while Opportunity Independence is a series of mutual funds offered through a custodial account with ING National Trust. All fees and expenses associated with these programs, including those of the Trust, are detailed in current prospectuses, which should be read carefully prior to investing. Securities offered through ING Financial Advisers, LLC (member SIPC). Insurance products offered through ING Life Insurance and Annuity Company. Custodial services offered by ING National Trust.

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What's My Paycheck Saying?

The purpose of this article is to quickly outline the basic deduction lines you will find on your pay receipts. The explanations given for the line item deductions is general and further issues or inquiries are welcomed from each member if needed.

Deductions				Gross Pay		
Deduction Type	Amount	Y.T.D.	Job Code	P Days/ T Hours	Amount	
A - Aetna Life and Casualty	200.00 -	7200.00	190000	10.0 D	2,706.48	
B - Medicare	38.90 -	506.54				
C - Social Security	109.03 -	2165.78				
D - New York State Tax	204.19 -	1462.34				
E - Federal Withhold	298.35 -	5368.78				
F - STA Dues - Biweekly	23.43 -	304.59				
G - Pomco (June double)	7.50 -	14.00				
H - Pomco (June double)	7.50 -	52.50				
I - Non-Reimb Med (1...	14.29 -	185.77				
J - NYSUT Insurances -	60.29 -	723.48				
K - Vote-Cope	1.00 -	120.00				
L - TRS Loans (10 &...	116.59 -	1518.00				
M - United Way of CNY	5.00 -	65.00				
N - Combined Health ...	5.00 -	65.00				
O - Sch Employees of CNY	862.91 -	15432.46				
Total						

Totals	
Time	Amount
Gross-DY 10.0	2,706.48
Gross-HR	
Deduct.	1,557.15
Direct Deposit	1,139.33

School	Date	Fed	St	Chks	Contr. Sal.	YTD Gross
03	6/21/01	S-0	S-0	21	37,291.12	28,224.32

- A - This is your life insurance deduction. This deduction should now be represented by ING
- B = This deduction is your mandatory contribution to the general Medicare fund balance.
- C = This is the Social Security mandatory contribution – the amount of this deduction is based on income level.
- D = Mandatory NY Income Tax withholding – the amount is based on income level.
- E = Mandatory Federal Income Tax withholding – the amount is based on income level.
- F = This deduction is one of two items; if you are a STA member this is your dues deduction; if you are not a member this is the deduction which represents the administrative fee allowed by law.
- G & H - This is an individual contribution for Pomco. During June a double payment is deducted to pay for the summer months where a check is not issued.
- I - This is a 125 Flex plan contribution. This plan is a government authorized non-taxable deduction that may be utilized for specified health or other related services. The amount represented under the YTD column is lost at the end of the year when not utilized.
- J - Various insurances, ranging from auto, life, health etc. are available through NYSUT. This is a direct payroll deduction for this insurance.
- K - This is a political action committee donation which has been authorized by the employee.
- L - This is a Teacher's Retirement System loan payment.
- M - This is an authorized donation deduction.
- N - This is an authorized donation deduction.
- O - This is an authorized deposit into the employee's federal credit union account.
- P - This represents the amount of your paycheck directly deposited into your designated bank account, after deductions.
- Q - This is the amount of all authorized and mandatory deductions.
- R - This is the total, pre-tax, amount of the current paycheck.
- S - This is the contract base salary for the employee, this amount does not include any service credits.
- T - This is your year to date before tax earnings minus the year to date total deductions.
- U - This is the amount of hours, or days, the paycheck is representative of, the designation of days or hours is based on your pay schedule.

We have EVERYTHING you want!

Steam Room Pool Sauna Personal Trainers

Onondaga Hill Health & Fitness Center
 4651 Nixon Park Dr. - (.5 miles west of OCC)
 378-0617

Wellness Pays...
 Call (x4526) or e-mail the STA office (e-mail: cdan@syrteach.org) for details. E-mail requests qualify for entrance in a drawing for a free 3 month pass (\$150 value)!

The first 10 members to join must meet with Gary Crawford (SCSD administrator, retired) at a predetermined time for thorough introduction to facility and completion of registration.

**Open to the public - Great parking
 Handicap Accessibility**

Facilities	Equipment	Features
Steam Room Sauna Rooms Showers Juice Bars 50' Indoor Heated Pool	Nautilus CYBEX Treadmills Precors/Elipticals Hammer Strength Steppers Strive/Free Weights Hoist	Personal Trainers Massage Therapists Nutritional Counseling Chiropractic Aquatic therapy

Discounts for:
 Senior Citizens Families
 Students Corporations

Hours
 Mon-Fri 5:30 am - 9:00 pm
 Saturday 7:00 am - 2:00 pm
 Sunday 8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Annual - Paid in Full	Pool Rates and Membership
Single \$431 Couples \$780 Family 18 yrs. & under @ home \$795 Senior Citizen (60 yrs. +) \$275	Massage therapy Pool Parties and... much more

Call (315) 685-7627 for more information and to save on the initiation fee!

Members at Work Keeping the Union Strong Your Union Has Been Busy!

July/August Were Busy Training Months at STA



NYSUT Leadership Conference At Lake Placid in September



October 2002 STA Leadership Conference Was A Hit!

