

Mark Your Calendars

January

27 - Social Security mtg. @ STA
3:30-4:30 p.m.
31 - STA Ex. Bd. 4:00 p.m.

February

7 - Unit 8 Ex. Bd. 3:45 p.m.
9 - Rep Assembly 3:45 p.m.
15 - Unit 8 GM mtg. 3:45 p.m.
17 - Unit 7 Ex. Bd. 2:30 p.m.
28 - STA Ex. Bd. 4:00 p.m.

Hobart Brings Union Help to Tsunami Victims

NYSUT President Tom **Hobart** will bring a message of solidarity and support to the tsunami-ravaged areas of Southeast Asia as he embarks on a six-day mission there under the auspices of Education International.

Hobart, who leaves Jan. 16 with a select EI contingent of education union leaders, hopes to personally deliver a check "representing the many heart-felt contributions that are pouring in from NYSUT leaders, members and staff," he said. NYSUT headquarters staff set up a special dress-down day as a fundraiser for tsunami relief, and many locals and members are raising funds to help.

Hobart will be representing NYSUT's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, on the Southeast Asia mission.

NYSUT is working with the AFT in collecting funds to assist our sisters and brothers who have suffered such tremendous loss. Checks from local unions, individuals or school groups should be made out to NYSUT with "Tsunami Relief" written in the memo section and mailed c/o the President's Office, NYSUT, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, N.Y. 12110-2455.

In Memoriam

Mark Lance

Teacher, Friend and
Colleague
Salem Hyde

Add to Favorites

[http://www.](http://www.SummerOncampus.com)

SummerOncampus.com

is an online-only database-driven summer program directory, especially geared for New York middle and high students. It provides descriptions, contact information and active e-mail and website links for hundreds of (day & residential) ARTS, SPORTS, and ACADEMIC summer camp programs for kids 8-18 on college campuses throughout NEW YORK STATE. **Also check out:**

www.syracuseteachers.com

Situation Normal; All Fouled Up

or

Just when you thought it couldn't get worse... the 2005 version

T'was the night after new years and all through the district not a card was appearing, no info was nearing...

So begins the saga of 2005 and the failure of central office administrators to provide a smooth transition from the old pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) to Medco, the new PBM. And it didn't have to be this way.

On November 8th unit presidents met with the district's chief financial officer **Jim Petrie**, employee benefits department staff, a Medco representative and representatives from the Benefit Consulting Group (BCG) hired by the district to assist with health care matters. At that time we discussed the information that employees would need to fully understand the provider change.

Unit presidents gave feedback and advice to those charged with making this transition seamless. This was viewed as a positive event. It was recommended at this meeting that notice be given and meetings be scheduled in *early* December so that all questions could be asked and answered well before the January 1st changeover.

Unfortunately, this advice was not acted on and the transition has been a mess. Most of this chaos was avoidable, from the failure to provide *timely* information, to the unsorted cards to the busy phone lines in the employee benefits department.

District office staff is charged with one essential mission: *to support the work of those in schools and classrooms*. This support takes many hands doing discreet tasks: policy implementation, educational programming, special education compliance, budget, payroll, benefits, etc. Yet at every turn, we find that tasks that used to be completed smoothly are routinely mismanaged. Does anyone need to be reminded of the many errors in contract salary calculations and interpretations?

The district failed to provide benefits in the manner negotiated, so STA filed yet another grievance to push for a remedy. That's all well and good, but what accountability systems are in place to track and examine the efficiency of the district service delivery systems? School based practitioners have accountability measures to spare. We're ready to send a few over to central office.

STA supports the proposal made by school board president **Dr. Cynthia Kirby** and Commissioner **Ned Deuel** for an efficiency audit of the district- beginning with central office.

--Kate McKenna

An Adventure Diamond in the Rough

One of our district's finest resources is nestled among the trees at Meachem Park. The

Meachem McCarty Ropes Challenge Course (MMRCC) is a cooperative program between the district and the Syr. Parks and Rec., conceived and built through the vision and hard work of **Gary Crawford** (retired athletic director) in the mid 1990's. It has served as the cornerstone for many adventure programs.

MMRCC was built on a three-island concept: two include low ropes elements, and one with high ropes. The course is inspected and certified annually. Due to public use of the park and to insure safety while not in use, elements are set up and taken down each time the course is used.

Both low ropes islands are centered on



Low Ropes Initiative

3 - 5 initiatives. By design they are unable to be completed alone, but rather require the participants to work cooperatively in completing the objectives of the element. Typically, initiatives are performed on 1/4" steel cables strung 18" above the ground. Before attempting any activity, hands-on training is provided on spotting techniques, communications, and safety.

The high ropes island is a series of challenges on cables suspended approximately 25' in the air. Wearing safety equipment and secured to trained facilitators participants are challenged to climb a pole and attempt to conquer the element, as well as their own fears and

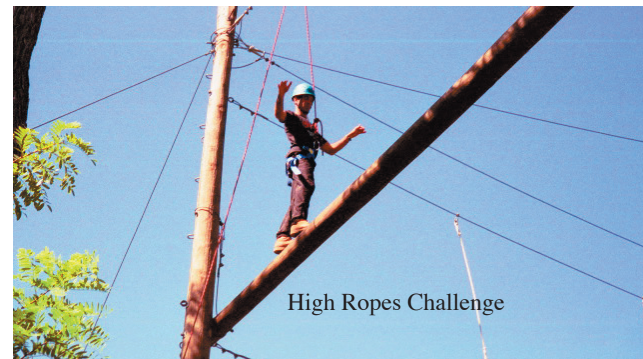
uncertainties. On the ground cheers of support calm shaking knees.

The concept behind a ropes course is to challenge participants beyond their comfort zone in a safe and controlled environment assisted by trained facilitators. Participants are instructed in problem solving, communication, and group dynamic skills. After completion of a task that at first seemed impossible, a debriefing session is held. The task is analyzed on how it was completed, issues that arose, skills utilized, and how to transfer the learning from the initiative to real life at school, home, or work.

MMRCC has a highly trained staff of volunteer directors and facilitators. Many with 15+ years of experience in adventure education and ropes course training programs. Many of us facilitate at other CNY and Adirondack region ropes courses and adventure programs.

MMRCC operates from April - October and is available to students during the school day at no cost. Transportation and

food is additional. Local youth agencies and programs, as well as other groups, are welcomed to contract with course directors to incorporate a ropes course experience



High Ropes Challenge

into their programming on weekends and during the summer.

Besides MMRCC we operate two indoor climbing walls at Corcoran and Fowler HS's, both are available for student/group use depending on HS athletic scheduling. We also provide a variety of staff In-service programs in classroom adventure training, MMRCC facilitator training, and adventure based team building. See the latest In-service catalog for details.

--Kenzie Miller

Lincoln Middle School

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From the President's Desk... Kate McKenna



*That Was the Year That Was:
December 2003-December 2004*

Looking Back

In December 2003 members ratified an exceptional Unit 1 contract. This contract was followed in January by Unit 8 and 10 contracts and a year later Unit 7 settled. In each case the members supported the work of the respective negotiating teams, recognizing the breakthroughs in salary gains based on our mantra of "attracting and retaining qualified staff." The teams were able to contain health care increases to levels below the county districts and institute a ground-breaking differentiated premium scale to protect health care coverage for all members.

And dollar gains were only part of the story. The Unit 1 contract contains agreements establishing task forces to select, examine and propose recommendations on issues of concern. That contract also details the timeline for the establishment of a peer assistance and review (PAR) process for first year teachers, a discipline task force and study of curriculum implementation and support.

Cross contract talks, a first, brought uniform grievance procedures for all units along with membership opportunities on each site's building committee. Leave sections of the contracts have been brought into alignment and bus attendants were awarded an outdoor clothing allowance.

So, why the retrospection? It is easy to lose sight of our collective accomplishments in the face of the district's improper implementation of our salary agreements. District administrators refused to meet with STA negotiators prior to implementing the transition to the new salary grid for Unit 1 and the settlements for Units 8 and 10. And this hard-headed action set the stage for the year-long disruptions that followed. The combination of conversion assumptions and calculation errors caused hundreds of hours to be spent untangling a mess that never should have been.

Looking Forward

With most issues resolved, union members will be given the opportunity to verify their salaries. It is believed that many have already been able to get errors corrected. In order to insure that all are correct STA negotiating teams will hold quadrant meetings with members to assist in this verification. Information will be sent to all members with time and location for each meeting.

Professional compensation is important as are the other professional issues supported in our contracts. So, as we are completing this task it is time to push for implementation of the other key provisions of our contracts: a new evaluation system for Unit 8, PAR for Unit 1 next fall, discipline committee and task force work.

It's time to look forward but rest assured that we will continue to work on all issues until they are satisfactorily concluded.

In Unity,
Kate

New ER&D Courses to Be Offered This Summer!

Folks, there will be two new Professional Development Opportunities offered this summer for Inservice Credit. **Megan Benjamin** and **Tom Little** will soon complete their training and be certified to teach Instructional Strategies that Work. **Juanita Stokelin** and **Michelle Abdul-Saber** will complete their training and be ready to offer *The School-Home Connection, Partnerships Supporting Student Learning*.

Instructional Strategies that Work offers cognitive strategies that have been proven through level three research to foster critical thinking and transferability of skills. Course participants will learn how to evaluate curriculum materials for any content area, organize content for learning, and develop or evaluate scoring guides for student tasks. These strategies can be applied in K-12 classrooms. Tom will concentrate on the secondary classroom, and Megan will focus mainly on elementary in their respective courses.

The primary function of *The School-Home Connection* is to help school staff understand how they can assist parents to better support their children as learners. Topics include: (1) using effective communication strategies to develop learning partnerships with families, (2) designing more productive homework assignments to involve families, and (3) explaining classroom work and grading systems to parents.

Look for these classes to be offered for credit this summer. Remember, ER & D Courses are created and delivered by classroom teachers and school personnel, provides solid, research-based content, and builds in opportunities for self-reflection, application, and implementation of instructional strategies, resulting in real change in practice.

--Joan Brown, ER & D Coordinator

KEVIN'S NOTES...

Your Building Committee and the Reluctant Administrator



The STA staff handles hundreds of member calls each week dealing with everything from health benefits to broken copy machines. Some issues can be handled easily over the phone, and others require more attention. A question staff will often ask a member is "Have you taken this to your Building Committee?" In other words: Have you tried to solve the problem at the building level? An important question considering the fact that our collective bargaining agreement requires a grievance procedure that will "secure, at the *lowest possible administrative level*, equitable solutions to alleged grievances of employees through procedures under which they may be presented free from coercion, interference, restraint, discrimination or reprisal..."

A Building Committee that works is not just a monthly meeting, but also an ongoing communication between STA members and administrators in an effort to solve problems in the interest of creating a better environment for teaching and learning. As we all know, problems and misunderstandings arise virtually every day that can't wait until the entire group is brought together. In a successful BC structure, a representative from the committee can approach the administration and solve problems at any time. Sounds like a dream, right? Unfortunately, in far too many buildings that's all it is. And this dream becomes a nightmare when administrators are, shall we say, *reluctant* to solve problems.

The Reluctant Administrator is easy to spot. Her door is always closed and her secretary guards the appointment calendar with a fierce vigilance. A moment with the Reluctant Administrator is as difficult to obtain as an audience with a head of state. If you are granted this precious meeting, the Reluctant Administrator will smile condescendingly, pretend to listen to your issue, and forget the whole conversation before the secretary drags you out of the office. Oh yes, we all know the Reluctant Administrator, but how do we deal with her? Let the grievance procedure be your guide.

The contract describes a Stage I grievance as follows:

- a. An employee and/or his/her representative shall informally discuss the grievance with the supervisor within the thirty (30) day time limit. The Supervisor shall propose a resolution or deny the grievance within five (5) days.
- b. If the grievance is not resolved informally, it shall be reduced to writing and sent to the Supervisor within ten (10) days. Within five (5) school days after the written grievance is received, the Supervisor shall render a written decision to the employee and Association representative.
- c. If the grievance involves a claim to which the supervisor has been informed and which the supervisor lacks the authority to resolve, it may be brought directly to Stage II.

The Reluctant Administrator can make the first step a virtual impossibility — if you can't see her, you can't discuss anything with her. Move directly to the *b* step. If you are lucky enough to actually be able to air your grievance, move quickly before she's called away to yet another conference call with a few dozen of her supervisors on Harrison Street. Describe your issue clearly and wait patiently for the inevitable "I'll get back to you." When you hear this response, simply ask her, When? That's right, When will you get back to me? Congratulations, you've now begun to move the Reluctant Administrator toward actually solving a problem whether she knows it or not. The clock is ticking and she now has five days to either fix or refuse to fix the problem. If the solution doesn't arrive within five days, reduce the issue to writing as described in *b* and send us a copy. When that fails, as it usually does with the Reluctant Administrator, we can move to a Stage II Grievance because your Building Committee members have tried to solve the problem at the *lowest possible* (frequently reluctant) *administrative level*.

--Kevin Ahern, STA 1st VP

Mentors Needed...

Our New Teachers Could Use Your Help

The Mentor-Intern Program is in full swing for the 2004-2005 school year. There are over 60 mentor-intern pairs and our numbers are growing as new people are hired.

Being a mentor is an exciting opportunity for a veteran teacher to pass on the knowledge gained through years of experience. We have a grant that supports the mentor and intern by providing substitutes so that they can meet together on a regular basis. Pairs work together on a variety of activities including writing curriculum maps, planning units, co-teaching, going on field trips. The possibilities are endless.

Training is provided to the mentors through an In-Service and quarterly mentor workshops.

The need for mentors is great. If you are interested, please call **Mary Taylor**, Mentor Facilitator at 439-8311 or mtaylo30@scsd.us

--Mary Taylor

—Member Moments—



• Condolences to Alza Birden, a teacher for many years. Alza lost her adopted daughter recently. Her name was Iesha Birden. She was 22.

- Kevin Casavant (Fowler) wed Debra Sitnik in August.
- Pam Kinston (Lincoln) wed Dave Janack in November.



• In July Michelle (Lincoln) and Eric (Henninger) Saroney became proud parents of a baby girl, Emma.

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.

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Labor Relations Summary

by STA Labor Relations Specialist

Heather Sponenburg

Update on Unit 1 Payroll Issues:

1. Anniversary Dates: despite having a signed Memorandum of Understanding on the issue of anniversary dates, the District has rebuffed all of our attempts to settle the matter. We have revived our grievance at Step 3 and are awaiting a hearing in front of the Board of Education.

2. Other Issues: many other Unit 1 members have other payroll issues that are not related to anniversary dates. Please review your checks- if the District is either underpaying or overpaying you, please contact the STA office. We have been patiently working with Payroll on these issues but we are not making enough progress. We will file an individual grievance for each member who is not being paid correctly after contacting Payroll about the problem.

Before you call STA, please have the dates that you have contacted payroll (at least 2 times) and the response you received from Payroll. Please find copies any correspondence you may have sent to Payroll (even if you already sent copies to us) and provide us with a summary of the pay issue, i.e. what you are being paid vs. what you should be paid and why. This information will allow us to file an accurate grievance on your behalf. Pay issues for units 7, 8, and 10 should be handled in the same manner.

Update on the Status of Units 7, 8, and 10 Contracts:

We are still waiting for the District to present us with final versions of the Unit 7, 8, and 10 Contracts. We filed a grievance with Dr. Jones and the Staff Attorney seeking final contractual versions that we can approve then have printed. I hope that this will be resolved soon.

Update on Salem Hyde:

Unit 1 Grievances have been resolved as follows:

"Items to be reflected in Plan Books", "Salem Hyde School Improvement Plan-Team/ Individual Outline", "Information Return" and "Parent Log" are not mandatory and are not required to be followed, filled out, or returned to the Administrator.

Unit 8 Grievances have been resolved as follows:

Teaching Assistants are not required to sign or follow "Expectations for Teacher Assistants" in order to achieve an excellent evaluation. Teaching Assistants are not required to read the book "I Read it But I Don't Get It" or present chapters from the book at staff meetings.

Mrs. Wilcox is aware that staff follows a contractually set work schedule and hours of work are not to be changed. Therefore, if any meeting you attend is extending beyond your contractual work day, you may leave the meeting; however, you should notify Ms. Wilcox before you leave.

Other Updates

Unit 8 Bus Monitors are currently being provided with cold weather gear. Bus Monitors should know that they are responsible for the gear and have to sign an agreement recognizing this. STA and the District negotiated this agreement so there would not be any misunderstandings about the use of this gear. If you have any questions, feel free to call the STA office.



*Caring for Children...
We Make A Difference*

Report From Unit 8 President & STA 4th Vice President,

Hall Monitor/School Sentry:

First, I want to thank the following members for their participation in the focus group discussions: **Denise Freeman** (Nottingham), **Mike Melton** (Shea), **Wilson Price** (Carnegie), **Natalie Reeves** (Corcoran) and **Joe Touranjoe** (Levy). I truly appreciate their perceptions, ideas, comments and suggestions. I also appreciate the fact that they willingly participated on their own time. We had lively, candid discussions that enabled us to develop a mutually agreeable job description for a "School Sentry" position. **Heather Sponenburg**, STA Labor Relations Specialist, and I are continuing those discussions with **Mark Waelder**. We have made significant progress. As we get closer to finalizing the details we will provide you with more information.

TA Math In-service:

You should have received the information pertaining to **Diane Dwyer's** plan to develop a math in-service specifically for teaching assistants. Please send your response to me as soon as possible. We are not paid for in-services however, upon completion of 6 in-service credits, we are eligible for a salary credit of \$240.00. Dianne is looking for input from us-please respond.

Teaching Assistant Certification:

In June 2000 many teaching assistants were sent letters regarding the status of their certification as a teaching assistant. This is a very serious matter for those who have not complied with the required procedures. If you received the letter and have not followed through do so now! If you need to take the "Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse" or "Violence Prevention and Intervention" course contact **Anne Marie Voutsinas** at the Teacher Center ext 4217. These courses are available on-line; you can arrange to use a computer at the Teacher Center.

Salary (Mis) Calculations:

Many of you provided me with copies of your correspondence to the District regarding what you felt were miscalculations in your salary or retro amounts. I need to know if according to your calculations your salary is correct now or still incorrect. Please contact me if you feel your salary needs to be recalculated. If you have already sent me copies of your correspondence, just send me a note indicating that your salary concerns have not been addressed. If you have not sent me a copy of your e-mail or letter to the District please do so now. I will do my best to resolve your issues. We are in the process of revising the salary worksheet to be more user-friendly; we will send them to you as soon as we work out the details.

Bus Attendants:

As you read this you should be comfy and warm in your new Carhart jacket! Our success in negotiating language that requires the provision of weather gear was a big step for us. We had tried in the past, without success. Be sure to thank **Marilyn Black** when you see her. As a member of the Unit 8 Negotiating Team, she was instrumental in obtaining this new contract benefit.

Summer School hourly rate:

To determine your hourly rate for summer school divide your contract salary by 1365. Raises are effective July 1 each year. Also effective July 1, 2004, the new longevity stipends for teaching assistants (12-year and 17-year) were to be added to the salaries of those who were eligible for them. If you worked summer school last summer take a minute to check your salary and hourly rate. If you have any questions, please call me.

Health Beat from Unit 10



Ann O'Hara (RN BSN), President
HCPC member

Fran Zirilli is a quiet leader. A NYSUT member for 17 yrs, she regularly attends and supports union sponsored events. Because of her expansive knowledge base Fran was chosen as a key member of the committee which produced the first ever Policy and Procedure Manual for health and nursing services for the Syracuse City School District (SCSD). It is an invaluable tool in our health offices.

Fran was a recipient of a 2002 NYS Dept. of Health Certificate of Achievement for promoting the Eat Well Play Hard campaign which is a core strategy to encourage children to develop healthy lifestyle patterns while they are young. Fran has written and obtained numerous grants to fund wellness and health and safety programs for both students and staff such as: Walk your Child to School Day, Dental Health -supplies and demonstrations, and an annual Wellness Day with health screenings, nutrition consultations, stress relief strategies including samplers of yoga and neck massage. Parents are invited too. Many of the families are refugees from Vietnam and the Congo. Programs such as these encourage parent and child to become more fully integrated with the school and with the larger community.

Each week, Fran also works with the technology teacher to produce an amusing in-house television spot on Health and Safety (a lesson and a laugh!). Fran chairs both the Social committee and the Wellness committee at her school. The former organizes activities to boost staff morale and the latter offers programs and materials to motivate and assist the staff to achieve healthy life-styles. OCM BOCES invited Fran to participate in a forum to study the School Nurses' effect on Students' and Performance and to study related issues including the nursing shortage and ways to address it.

When a nurse must be out of her building for illness or personal day, Fran is the person to call. In addition to her full time position as a school nurse, she coordinates the substitute nurse program for the SCSD. Between the acuity of some of our students, the staff cuts and the low sub pay, it has been a real challenge to schedule safe coverage for the schools. Fran responded to the needs of the school children and the union by carrying her concerns to the Board of Education and the Superintendent. Her compelling testimony about how the low sub pay and the cut-backs in nursing staff made for perilous situations in some of our schools led to the reinstatement of a full-time nursing position and raise in substitute nurse pay to a level greater than that of a substitute teacher!

Fran has been a role model and mentor. She has the respect and admiration of her peers. She was chosen by her peers as the School Nurse of the year 2003 for the SCSD. Fran would make a wonderful and well deserved *NYSUT Health Care Professional Employee of the Year*.

Unit 7...

What's Cookin'?

LouAnn Coleman, President

The STA has challenged the addition of the job title Cook Manager to Unit 11 (supervisors' unit). This job title was several years ago in the Unit 7 contract prior to its being abolished by the district. A hearing date is scheduled for January 11th before the Public Employees Relations Board (PERB). Unit president, **LouAnn Coleman** has worked closely with **James Matthews**, NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist, and **Heather Sponenburg**, STA's LRS, to prepare for this challenge.

We also object to the addition of more managerial positions in the food service division. The top-heavy salary structure is causing financial problems within the "C" budget.

Reminder:

The Unit 7 Executive Board meeting will be held at the STA office on February 7, 2005 at 2:30 p.m.

Please try to attend the Unit 7 General Membership meeting on February 17, 2005. Bring any concerns with you.

Special Education Forums - We Need YOU!

On December 14th a few brave and holiday weary souls ventured to STA for the first in a series of Special Education Forums. The session came about due to the concerns raised at Rep Assemblies over the course of the last several months. This session focused on getting the concerns of each building out in a laundry list-type fashion.

Our next step is to hold grade level (elementary, middle & high) forums to focus the discussion on the specifics which need to occur at each level. While compliance issues will be handled at the STA and district office levels, many of the issues are quality of service and support issues. These are things that together we can address from a grassroots effort. Some buildings are just feeling their way through new programs, while others can share a wealth of experience to help them along. We will also continue meeting with Joanne Downes and the Liaisons to address issues raised. It is through this sharing of the minds that we hope to improve our Special Ed programming and make us all a little more sane.

Look for a flyer coming soon to your building with the date and location of our next Special Education Forums. Let me please note that these forums are for ALL staff who provide programming and instruction for students with special needs - general ed teachers, special ed teachers, therapists, TAs, etc. We will gladly accept the input of anyone who desires to improve the current programming to better serve the needs of our students.

For more information please contact Kelly Abt (Lincoln) via e-mail kelleenabt@yahoo.com or phone 4450.

--Kelly Abt

SBIT Teams Host North Carolina Visitors

The SBIT Program had two visitors from the Wake County Public School District (Raleigh, NC) visit for three days.

During that time they were able to observe 5 of our SBIT teams, as well as meet with **Donna DeSiato, Joanne Downes, Ed Erwin and Jim Wright.**

They were both very impressed with what they saw from all the teams. They currently have problem-solving teams in their 87 elementary schools, but say what is missing from their teams is monitoring data. They were awed with all of the information that teams and teaching assistants collect, as well as impressed that teams used that information to make good decisions about interventions and student progress.



--Stephanie Pelcher

Need life insurance? Look to your union.

The basic premise of life insurance is simple – your beneficiary receives a death benefit when you die. Then why are there so many kinds of life insurance? The reason is because people use it differently for various circumstances. Some use it for their family's financial security, some use it to "insure" their mortgage as required by their lending institution, and some use it as an investment vehicle.

New York State United Teachers Member Benefits offers three distinct life insurance policies to meet members' various needs.

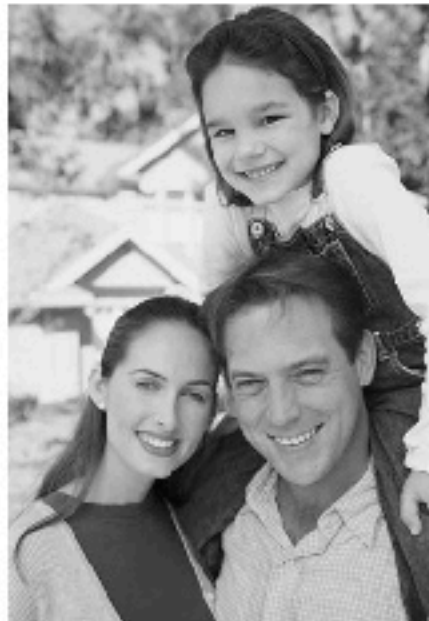
Term Life Insurance is purchased for a specific period of time, or a "term." Benefits are paid to a beneficiary only when the insured dies within the specified period. If the insured is under age 70 and diagnosed as terminally ill, 60 percent of the life insurance benefit may be payable before death. Coverage is guaranteed renewable to age 70. The coverage amount reduces by 50 percent at age 65. Applicants must be under age 65 and can apply for up to \$1 million in coverage.

Financial experts consider Term to be the most economical type of life insurance because it is "pure" insurance. In addition to providing a death benefit to beneficiaries, term life may be your best value as a means of insuring your mortgage.

Senior Term Life Insurance is designed for people between the ages of 65 and 84. Coverage amounts are lower than the Term Life Insurance plan, as financial obligations are generally lower in later years. Depending on age at issue, applicants may choose up to \$30,000 in coverage. Coverage decreases with age and ends at age 85.

If you are looking for a cash value plan, NYSUT offers an option based on universal life insurance. The NYSUT WrapPlan® Term Life Coordination Program "wraps" around existing term life insurance coverage to restore full coverage when term life insurance decreases or terminates. While there are no investment options, guaranteed interest rates provide cash accumulation. At age 95, the life insurance coverage ends and you receive the account value. Applicants must be age 65 or under and can apply for up to \$300,000. Loans are available.

For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at 1-800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or visit the Web site www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.



Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (H.R. 1350)

On Friday, November 19, Congress passed legislation to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (this legislation may be cited as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004). The legislation was approved by a 397-3 vote in the House. The Senate approved the bill by voice vote. The President is expected to sign the bill. All changes are effective July 1, 2005, except the definition of "highly qualified" as aligned to the No Child Left Behind Act. This section of the bill will be effective on the date of its enactment, as will certain provisions of Part D. This legislation includes significant changes affecting our members:

- IDEA 2004 clarifies what it means to be a highly qualified special education teacher. It defines a "highly qualified" special education teacher as one who holds full state certification or licensure as a special education teacher. This legislation also includes specific provisions affecting special education teachers teaching multiple core academic subjects and those teaching to alternate achievement standards.

- A student with a disability will be disciplined in the same manner as a non-disabled student, unless the disciplinary infraction of the student code of conduct is caused by a direct result of a student's disability or the failure of the school district to implement the student's

- Individualized Education Program (IEP).
 - Parents and school districts can agree to change the IEP after an annual review without a formal IEP meeting and agree to excuse an IEP team member from attending all or part of the meeting if the member submits written input to the IEP team prior to the meeting. Research and Educational Services is working with AFT in preparing an Information Bulletin on this new legislation which will include an analysis of the new changes and their impact on our members. While we were supportive of the first two points, we are very concerned about the exclusion of teachers from the IEP team.

FYI...

STA does not maintain a relationship with any local law firms. We are not able to recommend legal representation for workers compensation, disability or other matters. However, the Onondaga County Bar Association maintains a referral service that County residents may call to obtain names of attorneys who practice in any given area of law. The Lawyer Referral Service can be reached at 471-2690.