

Mark Your Calendars**March**

25 - Good Friday (No School)

April

4 - STA Ex. Bd. - 3:45 pm
 5 - TA Training - Teacher Ctr.
 12 - Unit 8 GM (nominations) 3:30 pm
 13 - Rep Assembly 3:45 pm
 18-22 - April Break - no school
 28 - Unit 7 Ex. Bd. 2:30 pm - STA
 28 - CNY Education Conference

Vision Benefit Information

Ed O'Rourke, Vision Plan Administrator and STA Treasurer is available in the STA Office at 472-6374 or SCSD ext. 4526 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 1:00 PM until 3:30 PM. Ed is also available via email <eorourke@syrteach.org>.

CNY Ed Conference

The annual **Central New York Educational Conference** will be held on Thursday, April 28, 2005, at the New York State Fairgrounds Art and Home Center. *Why do you need to know this now?* So you can reserve the date in your calendar! This conference is held for the benefit of all NYSUT members and friends of NYSUT, so make plans now to attend an evening of fun and informative exhibits, workshops, and dinner with your colleagues from across central New York.

Auditions*As You Like It*

Shakespeare-in-the-Park
 Sat., 4/2/05 from 1-3 pm
 Mon., 4/4/05 from 7-9 pm
 City Hall Commons Atrium
 E. Washington St.

Prepare a 1-minute Shakespearean piece. All parts are open - nothing is precast. Call 476-1835 for more info.



Have you stopped receiving STA e-mail? If so, that means the mail we tried to send you came back. If you wish to continue participating in the STA listserve, it's important that you adjust your spam filters and keep your mailboxes open by emptying them frequently.

If your address has changed, please

e-mail:

cdan@syrteach.org

with the new one.

If you are not on our listserve and wish to be kept informed of the latest breaking news, please call STA at x4526 or e-mail cdan@syrteach.org.

On Time or On Target? State Budget Woes

Ned Deuel, Kate McKenna and Bill Magnarelli at the Education Summit in Albany

April 1st- that's the deadline for the passage of the New York State budget. For many years this deadline has been missed. It has become a tradition for the governor to propose a budget that includes minor increases for education. Next, the Assembly and the Senate add varying amounts of money to all education programs- pre-K through higher ed. In some years the three parties- governor, Assembly Speaker and Senate Majority leader come together and agree on a dollar figure. In others it takes months beyond the deadline to achieve an agreement. In 2004, the legislators took matters in hand and overrode the governor's budget and passed increases that helped to keep districts afloat.

These annual delays cause problems. It was difficult for districts to plan programming from one late budget to the next. However, in most years the legislature's actions resulted in greater funding for our schools- increases in pre-k programming, capital improvement budgets and other areas. So what is the better alternative- on time

budgets that don't address our needs or late budgets that result in increased support to school districts?

It is a fact that the legislature has generated the increases in education spending and both houses have often acted in a bipartisan manner. But this year is different. Due to a Court of Appeals ruling late last year, the legislature's role in amending the budget has been severely curtailed. Budget making has gone from "three men in a room" to one man in a room to media events of 5 men at the table. School districts and higher education along with health care and other service sector agencies must now rely on how effectively their respective constituents protest underfunding and cuts or how much influence each has with the governor in order to get sufficient state aid.

A great gaping fault- shared by all parties- in the budget making process is the continued absence of a statewide school funding formula that address the state's

constitutional (and now, judicial) mandate to provide a "sound basic education" for all of the state's children.

Who will lead this conversation about the state's obligation to provide an educational opportunity for all children? Will the governor join the legislators to brave the political storms and make a sound basic education funding formula available for pre-K through 12th grades? And will that bring about a change for higher education funding, too?

An on-time budget cannot guarantee that this issue will be settled. So what should it be- on time or on target? Why not both?

So what is the better alternative- on time budgets that don't address our needs or late budgets that result in increased support to school districts?

--McKenna

Leave Social Security Alone Unless You Want To Strengthen it!

The Bush administration has begun an enormous multimedia blitz funded in part by the financial services and securities industries and other Fortune 500 companies to convince us that Social Security is in crisis when it is not. As Co-Chairs of the Central New York Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans we want to make it clear that Social Security has enough money now to pay full retirement benefits until 2042 if you accept the Social Security trustees figures or 2052 if you accept the Congressional Budget Office's estimate and if you further project 75 years after either one of these dates, Social Security can pay 70 to 80% of benefits owed to retirees. This is when the problem with Social Security arises and it can and should be fixed.

Private accounts will not fix that problem but in fact make the problem even worse because money will be removed from the system and who is to say the stock market will yield much greater returns to savings than the treasury notes currently held by the Social Security trust fund. Many people lost enormous sums of money when the market lost an unprecedented 23% of its value in 1987 and no one saw it coming and neither can anyone explain it. The market again declined in 2002 and many who planned to retire on the earnings they made

in the market in the 90's had to postpone retirement. Who wants to trust the market with your guaranteed monthly Social Security check? The 20% who rely on Social Security as their only income cannot and neither can the 40 to 60% who rely on their monthly Social Security checks for their primary income. Neither can the 750,000 who have been disabled since childhood. Nor can the 3.1 million children of deceased parents who rely totally on their Social Security income.

There are better solutions to the mid-century problem facing the Social Security system. Employers and employees each contribute 6.2% to Social Security. These contributions from employers and employ-

ees stop after an individual earns more than \$89,700. Removing that cap entirely or increasing significantly the cap would go a long way towards resolving the mid-century problem faced by Social Security. Increasing the Social Security tax by a small percentage will fix the system well into the 22nd century.

Please join us in our fight to preserve Social Security as it is for all retirees now and for young people who will be retiring in the future. As Bill Moyers so eloquently states, "... a Social Security card is not a private portfolio statement but a membership ticket in a society where we all contribute to a common treasury so that none need face the indignities of poverty in old age without that help."

--Gerald R. Lotierzo/Douglas Matousek
 CNY Alliance for Retired Americans

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Young People Beware of Privatization

- What's the plan? You would be allowed to divert a portion of your payroll taxes into individual accounts. The most recent administration suggestion is 4% or up to \$1,000. 2% each from employer and employee.
- Upon retirement you would get significantly lower Social Security benefits supplemented by whatever accumulated in your portfolio.
- But since the diverted money is not available to pay those who are already retired, the government would have to borrow significantly. Some say 2 trillion the first decade and trillions more in the following two decades adding to an already enormous deficit.
- You would have a limited option for your investment. Some say not more than four choices and this money earned would be invested into an annuity upon retirement. In other words, you have to cash out when you retire
- It is important not to be deceived by proponents of privatization who will tell you the market has always done better than the 3% per annum that the Social Security trust fund gets. Actually, the market has done worse than 3% per annum in nine different 20-year periods. In a system of private accounts, someone who retired after the market crashed would be out of luck.
- In 1987 the stock market lost 23% of its value and no economist or financial analyst could explain it. We all know what happen to the market during the dot.com bust and in 2001-2002. One high flier, Microstrategy, slid from \$3500 per share to \$4! Numerous accounting scandals came to light, showing how many companies artificially inflated earnings. Shareholders were crippled. In 2001, the economy entered a recession as the Fed repeatedly cut rates, trying to stop the bleeding. Millions of workers were now jobless and had lost their life savings.
- Remember that Social Security is not and never was intended to be a retirement plan. It was meant as a safety net so that no one in American, you included, need face old age without some sort of sustainable income. Everyone should be planning for their retirement by investing in their own pension plan if your employee does not have one for you, saving money and putting it into secure investments, and counting on Social Security to supplement what you have and be your safety net.
- 25 years ago Chile embarked on a privatization plan whereby the workers paid 10% of their salaries into private investment accounts that they controlled. What retirees have discovered is that their retirement income is woefully inadequate and the government has had to step in to give them a minimum pension of \$140.00 a month. Even middle class workers are finding that they would have been better off in the old system.
- England has experienced the same problems, and in fact they are looking for a better system to guarantee a reasonable income for their pensioners and what system are they looking at with great envy? Our present Social Security system.



SCSD Mentor Teacher Intern Program

Mary Taylor - Facilitator
Teacher Center - 435-6527
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Mentoring Does Matter

Whether or not a teacher remains in our profession often depends on experiences during the beginning year of teaching. Was the new person left to "sink or swim" or did a veteran step up to help out?

An increasing body of research shows that effective mentoring is critical to the success of the first-year teacher. The mentor becomes the go-to person the new teacher can rely on for support and advice in matters of instruction and classroom management. Pairs participate in a variety of activities including observation, field trips, attending conferences, etc.

The Mentor Teacher Intern Program currently supports 80 teacher pairs. Our goal for next year is to be sure that every new teacher has an appropriate match that takes both building and certification area into consideration. In order to accomplish this, I need your help! If you are interested in becoming a mentor for next year, please send a letter of interest including your experience and area of certification to **Dr. Donna DeSiato**, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Services.

Feel free to call me at the Teacher Center 435-6527 if you have any questions.

sta Open Line

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KEVIN'S NOTES...



Easy Does It

I recently finished teaching a site-based in-service at Clary MST Magnet titled **Improving Planning and Instruction with Technology**. Aside from having a great time working with my friends and colleagues at Clary, the course provided me with the opportunity to focus on what teachers really need and want in terms of technology. Beginning with the planning stages and throughout the course itself, I was constantly reminded that most teachers don't want to have to become computer experts in order to utilize technology in their planning and instruction. If technology can help them meet their goals in these areas in simple, efficient ways, they will embrace it. If it's too complicated or time consuming, they'll reject it. It's that simple. Teachers are too busy for it to be any other way.

This "keep it simple" philosophy, I believe, would serve the SCSD well as it begins its technological journey into the 21st century. The hardware and infrastructure (read that computers and high speed network availability) that it has so anxiously acquired, are only as good as they are useful. If our members and the administrators in the buildings can't or won't use them to improve teaching and learning, those dollars are better in other ways that will more tangibly affect kids in classrooms. Certainly any technology initiative that is not user friendly or accompanied by meaningful staff development is doomed to failure. On the other hand, if it's done simply with the end users in mind, potentially transformational technology will be embraced and supported.

Although they are all excellent, two of the web sites we looked at during the course seem to capture this "easy does it" philosophy perfectly. Before I describe them, though, I'd like to share the web page I used in the course containing links to all the teacher resources we utilized throughout the course: <http://www.syracuseteachers.org/clary.html> (don't forget the ".html" at the end). If you take some time and browse through these links, I'm sure you'll find some *easy* and useful ways to let technology improve your professional life. Below are two of the best we've seen:

4Teachers.org — One of its most attractive features is the fact that it's free. Teachers like free. More importantly, though, are the services it offers. A couple that are very useful are **TrackStar** and **RubyStar**. TrackStar allows teachers to easily create and publish links to web sites that can be accessed on the Internet. This is a great tool for that trip to the computer lab. No more bookmarks or handouts with inevitably mistyped web addresses all over them. Just bring the students in, direct them to the "track" you've published, and away you go. RubyStar is a great to find or create rubrics. There are hundreds of downloadable ready-made rubrics available for virtually every subject and project. You can also create your own customized rubrics tailored specifically for your needs. Although these services are free, you'll have to provide 4Teachers.org with your email address in order to register. Hey, what are Hotmail accounts for?

The Educator's Reference Desk (<http://www.eduref.org/>) — This is one of the most well organized and comprehensive teachers sites on the net. The interface is very user friendly and finding the resources you need is a breeze. The content is expansive and covers everything from the practical (lesson plans, classroom management tips) to the theoretical (learning theory, education philosophy). The reference section includes links to government resources, education and special education law sites, employment sites and many more. The lesson plans are well developed and standards-based, so integrating them into your current practice is relatively seamless. Finally, the Educator's Reference Desk offers sections for school counselors as well as library media specialists — colleagues often forgotten on most teacher-centric education sites. If you need a one-stop education resource, this site's for you.

--Kevin Ahern, STA 1st VP

NYSUT Committee of 100

The halls of the State Legislative offices were invaded on March 15, 2005 by the NYSUT Committee of 100 members to lobby for funding of public education. STA was represented by **Kate McKenna**, president of STA and **Dave Kirby**, 2nd VP of STA and political action coordinator for the 49th NYS Senatorial District. The members of the delegation were charged with presenting a series of issues that are needed to ensure that public education is fully funded. Kate and I met with the following members of the legislature: Senator **John DeFrancisco**, Senator **Dave Valesky**, and Assemblypersons **Bill Magnarelli**, **Joan Christensen**, and **Jeff Brown**.

Some of the issues highlighted by the NYSUT Committee of 100 were: 1. Provide a substantial down payment and state-wide school reform initiatives to comply with the CFE decision. 2. Focus on equity and distribution of school aid based on student need-factors. 3. Reject the continued New York State funding of the charter school system that has failed to produce significant educational gains with its students. 4. Restore and increase funding to public education and at the same time ensure every child's access to a sound basic education.

NYSUT also urged us to address the 55/25 issue for our senior teachers other school-related professionals. We asked the legislators to make permanent the right for members who are 55 years of age or older and have 25 years of service retire with no penalty. There is no bill presently before the legislature and we are asking a member of the legislature to put the bill forward. There was quite a bit of interest in this issue especially by Assemblywoman Joan Christensen.

The time spent with our legislatures helps us to promote public education especially as it pertains to our situation in the Syracuse Public Schools. We are fortunate to have Syracuse senators and assemblypersons who support our mission and goals. If you should have an opportunity to meet on our legislatures thank them for their support. They make our jobs easier.

--Dave Kirby

Borders Books & Music Host Special Educator Appreciation Weekend April 15-17

Borders (Carousel Center) will honor local educators for their hard work and dedication during "Educators Appreciation Weekend." Each store will offer educators 25% discount on most regularly priced items. You must bring a school ID or paycheck stub for eligibility.

Labor Relations Summary

by STA Labor Relations Specialist

Heather Sponenburg

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Leave Under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

- Who is entitled to take FMLA leave?** Any employee who has worked for the District for at least 12 months or 52 weeks and has worked at least 1,250 hours during that preceding 12-month period.
- How much time am I entitled to take?** 12 weeks (84 calendar days), which the District calculates on a rolling 12-month basis (measured backward from the date an employee uses any leave under this policy).
- Is FMLA leave paid?** FMLA leave is generally unpaid; however, an employee taking leave due to the employee's own serious health condition *must* use all accrued paid vacation, personal and sick leave, then take the remainder as unpaid leave.
- How much leave am I entitled to take for the birth of a child?** The District allows 6 weeks of leave for the birth of a child, which may be paid if you have accrued sufficient sick time. You may continue that leave for an additional 6 weeks for the care of a child for a total of 12 weeks of leave. However, the last 6 weeks of leave are considered unpaid therefore, the District will require the employee to use any accrued vacation or personal leave.
- Do I keep my health benefits while on FMLA leave?** Yes. You are required to pay any premiums you would normally pay if not on leave.
- Does the District have to return me to the same position after FMLA leave?** The District is required to return you to the same or a similar position (one with equivalent status, pay, and benefits).
- Do I have to tell the District how long my leave will last?** Generally yes, but only to the extent possible. If your leave is foreseeable, you must give the District 30 days notice (if possible).
- What if my situation changes, can I change the length of my leave?** Yes. If you need a longer period of time than originally thought, you must notify the District as soon as possible. The District may require proof of the need for a longer leave, i.e. a doctor's note. If your leave will end earlier than originally anticipated, you are required to give the District 2 business days' notice of your intent to return to your position early. The District cannot make you stay on leave until they are ready for you to come back. There are some exceptions for instructional employees- the District may require instructional employees to remain on leave if your leave began more than five weeks before the end of the term, the leave will last longer than three weeks and you would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term.
- If my leave runs into the summer does it count against me?** No. Periods of time when you would not normally be required to work, like break weeks and summers, do not count as leave taken.
- If my leave runs into the summer, can I continue my leave at the beginning of the next term?** Yes, if you still meet the criteria of FMLA leave (care for your own serious injury or that of a family member, care for the birth of child, etc...).

If you have questions regarding FMLA, you may call the STA office at any time.



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

For those who are not yet certified as Teaching Assistants:

The Teacher Center has scheduled a six-hour test prep course for members who need to take the New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills test as a requirement for TA certification. **If you are not yet certified you must pass this test.** The dates for the classes are April 27 and May 4, 4:00 to 7:00 pm **both nights.** Call ext 4217 to register. **There is no charge for the course.** The next date for the NYSATAS is May 21, 2005. Go to: www.nysatlas.nesinc.com for more info and registration.

Do you start your day at one school and end the day at another?

Teaching assistants and TA/subs who work more than six and one-half (6 1/2) hours, not including lunch, in a day where they go from an early school to a late school are to be paid their hourly rate for such time worked beyond their normal workday. This extra time is to be indicated on your timecard. Additionally members who travel from one school to another **during the same day** are to be compensated for mileage for the distance between the schools.

Nominations and election

Nominations for officer and director positions on the Unit 8 Executive Board will be accepted at the unit's general membership meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2005 at the STA. Voting for these positions will take place at the general membership meeting at STA on Tuesday, May 17, 2005. You must be present to submit a nomination and/or to vote.

NYSUT Educational Conference, Thursday April 28, 2005

Brochures with conference information are in your building. **Kathy Hartman**, Salem Hyde, and I are co-facilitating a workshop session- "Disability Awareness" for Teaching Assistants. There are other informative workshop sessions- I'm, sure something will suit your needs. I hope that you will seriously consider joining us for a great evening of socializing and learning! Registration details are included in the brochure. As in the past, STA will help cover the cost by reimbursing each TA \$10.00 with proof of attendance.

TA Workshops at the Teacher Center

After you complete an "Excused Absence" form call **Ellie Contos** at SETRC, ext. 4685 to register. The only way we know that you intend to participate is your call to Ellie to register.

Beware of Unsolicited Offers for NYSTRS Benefit Projections

FYI!!! An aware member sent a copy of Complimentary Pension Report, Syracuse. After checking with the pension system it was confirmed that the original e-mail was a scam or "phishing."

(March 1, 2005) It has come to our attention that some third-party firms not affiliated with this Retirement System have been "phishing" for information about your employment history and retirement plans, with the promise of providing you with projections of your retirement benefit. ("Phishing" is one of the latest incarnations of unwanted spam e-mail.)

These solicitations are neither coming from, nor are they sanctioned by, NYSTRS. Therefore, we strongly urge you to refrain from providing personal, retirement-related information via the Internet. Providing such information in this fashion could lead to identity theft.

The Retirement System does not ask for or send personal information by way of the Internet (e.g., through e-mail). While NYSTRS does offer eligible, registered members the ability to view their personal Retirement System information in the Secure Area of its Web site, secure e-mail is not a function currently available or offered.

Likewise, NYSTRS does not provide personal information about its members to other entities for the purposes of providing benefit projections. The Retirement System provides benefit estimates as a service to members and it is strongly recommended that projections come directly from NYSTRS. For a ballpark estimate of your retirement benefit, you can use the calculator <http://nystrs.org/main/pension_calc_main.html> available on this Web site or submit a benefit estimate request <<http://nystrs.org/main/retire.html>> .

Questions on your retirement benefits can be answered by a System representative by calling 800-348-7298, Ext. 6250. To simply request an estimate of your benefits, use Ext. 6020, or refer to the Benefit Profile recently mailed to you.

Health Beat from Unit 10



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

Did you know about the...

Family Life Program Services for pregnant and parenting students in the SCSD

- The SCSD is actively involved in a partnership with the Onondaga County Health Department and the Salvation Army. All partners work together to provide services to pregnant and parenting adolescence, as well as those at-risk for unexpected pregnancy.
- Services provided include Maternal and Child Health Nursing, Case Management and supports located in individual buildings.
- The Family Life Program strives to build strong, responsible students who achieve academically, maintain healthy lifestyles and become successful and productive adults.
- Program goals are: To provide a safe and welcome environment to all students. To encourage classroom attendance so that students can benefit from their academic program, thereby increasing graduation rates. To promote health, including prenatal care, prevention of future pregnancies and STD's. To provide resources and knowledge for healthy outcomes of pregnancy and support of parenting practices.
- SCSD responsibilities include administrative support, district representation on Family Life teams operate in all 4 high schools. These teams consist of district personnel and community agencies who deliver services to this population.
- The Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative gives the Family Life Program the added opportunity to enhance services to our students by providing prevention programming in our targeted schools.
- Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative provides Public Health Nursing and Case Management services at targeted middle and alternative schools (Shea, Lincoln, Grant, Carnegie and Beard).
- Public Health Nurses are assigned 1 high school each and cover all feeder schools within area. Case Managers are school based and are assigned cases outside of their home school, as needed. ALL identified students within the district are entitled to services.
- If you suspect that a student may be pregnant you may contact your school nurse

Member Moments

Bobbie Jean Davis - Kindergarten Teacher at Webster Elementary School, wed William "Al" Jackson on July 31, 2004.

Elizabeth Shank - Reading Specialist at Webster Elementary School, wed Arthur Biclass on November 6, 2004.



Professional Development is Union Work!

As we continue to raise the standards in our nation's schools, research has defined professional communities as the most effective unit of powerful reform. McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) found that teachers who made effective adaptations for today's increasingly diverse students were members of encouraging and enabling professional communities. Collegial interaction is often cited as a key to effective professional development.

A number of experts and organizations (Corcoran, 1995; Hodges, 1994; Joyce and Showers, 1998; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1987; NSDC, 1994; NCREL, 1987, USDE, 1995, Little, 1992) agree that good professional development allows teachers to explore, question, and debate in order to integrate new ideas instead of passively accepting them. In addition, this research suggests that professionals should be intellectually engaged, have opportunities to share and practice, be provided time to learn and implement new strategies, and have follow up support.

This research supports the format of the ER&D courses offered to you through the American Federation of Teachers and your local union, STA, via in-service courses throughout the district. For all participants, the ER&D dissemination process stands on a bedrock foundation of being non-threatening, non-judgmental, and voluntary. Professionals are free to examine research findings, reflect on their own practice, and reach their own conclusions about the usefulness of the findings. Participants in Syracuse who have taken ER&D courses indicate repeatedly that the process results in the significant change in practice.

This summer and throughout the coming school year, we hope to offer several ER&D courses to our members. *Instructional Strategies that Work* and *School-Home Connection* are two new courses to be offered in the coming year. Watch for them in the *In-service Bulletin* from the Teacher Center and join us to increase your knowledge and your salary through in-service credits.

--Joan Brown
ER & D Local Site Coordinator

Privatization Will Endanger Social Security, Warns AFT

The Bush administration's proposals to make significant changes to the nation's Social Security system, including privatization, will do nothing to enhance the program's solvency and will simply add to the already runaway federal deficit, says the AFT. In a statement approved by the union's executive council at its Jan. 31-Feb. 2 meeting in Orlando, Fla., the AFT warned that the financial strain of creating private retirement accounts will impose "serious and long-lasting perils to the stability of this tremendously successful program." Although President Bush has not unveiled a detailed proposal, a central piece of the administration's discussion about reforming Social Security is to allow workers under age 55 to divert a portion of payroll taxes to individual private retirement accounts. This diversion of payroll taxes could result in a \$2 trillion increase to the federal debt in the first decade alone, say Social Security Administration analysts. In fact, to restore solvency to a privatized Social Security program, says the AFT, younger workers' benefits would have to be cut by 26 percent to 45 percent--"a prospect that is totally unacceptable." While modest steps should be taken to maintain the integrity of the program, says the union, Social Security is "not headed for disaster." Also see The Basic Facts about Social Security Privatization and its Impact prepared by the Economic Policy Institute.

Unit 7...

What's Cookin'?

LouAnn Coleman, President

...And I Get By With a Little Help From My Friends!

Things were hopping at the northside Pastimes Club on Saturday, February 19th. A **Celebration of Life** was held for **LouAnn Coleman**, president of Unit 7. LouAnn's friends got together to let her know how much they care about her and to show their support. Friends reminisced and shared their LouAnn stories freely. LouAnn was there to give hugs and smiles to all who came. It was amazing to see how one life has touched so many over the years.

There were retirees, tradesmen, food service workers, teaching assistants and Unit 8 president, **Nancy Peluso**, teachers, Unit 7 vice president, **Bernard Washington**, **Cindy Bonura**, Director of Food Service, **Annette Marchbanks**, Assistant Director of Food Service, food service administrators, and yes, even former students came to see the guest of honor. **Ken Warner**, Assistant Director of Food Service, was emcee for the evening announcing raffle winners and other events as they came up. Local businesses donated everything from auto services to zipper repairs that were raffled off. A 50-50 raffle was held and the lucky winner pocketed \$1,000.

The committee, led by **Chris Bruns**, did an outstanding job of organizing food, raffles, and music. Other committee members were: **Pam Omilanowicz**, **Carrie Fletcher**, **Rose Hanley**, **Colleen Heindrich**, **Lorie May**, **Jim Payne**, **Ali Podewik**, **Francis Roach**, **Jerry Shier**, **Marilyn Sutliff**, **Donna Week**, **Kim Widger** and **Bernard Washington**.

A former Henninger student, **Jessica Peluso**, performed a stand up comedy routine and roasted Lou Ann. The tireless efforts of the many volunteers made the evening an enjoyable one for all who came.

Well, Lou Ann, wonder no more. You have seen for yourself how many lives you have touched over the years.

Livestrong! 'cos you know, you'll get by with a little help from your friends!

--roving reporter Lilli Rastegar

a-1...a-2... a-3...

...And the BEAT Goes On



March is *Music In Our Schools Month*. The Regents and State Education Department are currently debating the future of music in our Middle Schools, along with the future of Technology, Home and Careers and Art. The New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) and MENC, the National Organization for Music Education, are increasingly concerned that pending legislation will decrease the already inadequate amount of time devoted to the Arts in our Middle Schools.

David Circle, MENC President, wrote the following in the February 2005 issue of "Teaching Music":

"**No Child Left Behind**. ... a title like NCLB can create meaning and even emotions in the mind of the reader. How can anyone be opposed to being considerate of children?

"The real result of this innocuous title is to mask the consequences of its implementation. The intent was probably very defensible. I did not hear the arguments in Congress when this law was being debated, but I can imagine anyone who was opposed to it was probably portrayed as if they were opposed to motherhood and apple pie, also.

"So what are the consequences of NCLB? No conscientious dedicated quality educator, regardless of curricular area, want any child to 'fall through the cracks.'" Even though our country's Declaration of Independence says 'all men are created equal,' it did not intend to imply that all men are the same. Neither are all children the same. This is one of the major flaws of NCLB... the testing expectations put all students in the same 'box.'

"There are other consequences. So much pressure is being put on school districts to make the required 'adequate yearly progress' (AYP) in reading and math, that some programs, viewed as peripheral by many administrators, are either being greatly curtailed or cut. Even though programs, such as the arts, are included in the law as 'core academic subjects,' they are being targeted for reduced instructional time or eliminated altogether.

"The arts are probably not the only curricula suffering because of NCLB. It is unfortunate that teachers who teach in elective areas within our schools must continually struggle for credibility. Even though what they teach has been/ proven to be valuable and beneficial to students, they must fight for instructional time, classes, and money. Changes in NCLB must be made so that... no subject is left behind."

In a guest editorial in the same issue, **Jim Moran**, President of American Association of Family and Consumer Studies (Home and Careers) had this to say on the same subject:

"Teachers in so-called 'non-core' areas tell us they have consistently included the core requirements of science, mathematics, and reading in their daily classroom activities and... give increased attention to developing these competencies. However, they emphasize the importance of providing context for the application of 'core' skills. *Content without context builds the foundation but does not offer the necessary protection against the inevitable storms of life.*

"The debate over 'core' content cannot be seen as an either/or issue-it is not music or science; it is not critical life skills or reading.

"Research-based assessment, as called for by NCLB, should include a variety of tools for students to demonstrate learning in multiple ways."

Those of us in Music, Art, Home and Careers, and Technology education already know the inadequate amount of time allowed for our teaching in Middle School. We must work with our elected officials to insure there are no cuts in these areas, so that *No Child is Left Behind*.

--Ed O'Rourke

CFE Seeks a Statewide Funding Solution

Samira Ahmed, deputy director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, assured the NYSUT Board of Directors in January that even though the CFE sued the state over funding for New York City schools, it seeks a solution that will address school districts statewide.

"We know there are children everywhere who have needs that need to be met," she said. "We strongly believe in a statewide solution."

NYSUT has long held that the solution must result in statewide school aid reform.

Since the state Court of Appeals upheld Judge **Leland DeGrasse's** original finding in the case that New York must provide adequate funding for New York City schoolchildren to get a sound, basic education, the state has yet to find a way to do that.

CFE has asked Judge DeGrasse to impose sanctions on the state of \$4.2 million per day - CFE's calculation of the per-diem cost of the first year phase-in - until the state complies. Ahmed said a decision on the sanctions is expected within a week or two.

Judge DeGrasse appointed a three-person panel to draft a solution after the state missed its July 30 deadline last summer. The panel also recognized the need for statewide action, she said.

Although the court's jurisdiction is technically limited to New York City, the referees wrote that they "strongly support" the idea that the state must reform its funding formulas to ensure "the opportunity for a sound, basic education is provided to all children."

Because the court's jurisdiction is limited, CFE plans to draft the panel's recommendations into a statewide reform bill, Ahmed said.

"We are not going to support any solution that is New York City only," she said. CFE also will not support a "Robin Hood" approach that takes money from wealthier districts to aid more needy districts, she said.

FYI...

STA will reimburse the registration fee to the CNY Educational Conference for Building Reps with at least an 80% attendance rate at this year's Rep Assemblies. Kindly submit your proof of attendance to the conference to STA for reimbursement.