

sta

Open Line

Affiliated with the AFL-CIO, AFT and NYSUT Local #115

Vol. 8 No. 8/9

April/May 2005

Mark Your Calendars

May

26 - Unit 7 GM meeting and retirement info for NYSERS members
31 - STA Ex. Bd. meeting

June

7 - Unit 8 Run-off Election 8-4:30 pm at STA
8 - Rep Assembly - 3:30 pm
9 - Unit 7 GM election
14 - Nurses

FORE...

The 12th Annual Counselor Open/Captain and Crew format golf tournament will be held Saturday, June 4th - shot gun start at 1:30 p.m. The event will take place at the Links at Sunset Ridge, Marcellus. A fee of \$65/person includes 18 holes of golf, golf cart, hotdog lunch, beer and soda on the course, buffet dinner and prizes at completion of golf.

Remember, no golfing experience necessary - the tournament is open to anyone.

Contact **Stacey Levin** at Fowler at 435-4686, **Chris Pelligra** at Fowler at 435-4243, or **Mike Filipski** at Blodgett at 435-6386. Please pay early, only the first 124 paid golfers play! All money is due by May 27th.



Special Education Forum

Thursday, June 2nd
3:30-5:00 PM

STA Office - 909 Butternut

- Positives and negatives of this school year
- Assess where we are currently
- Plan for how to proceed

In Memoriam

Patricia Pawlewicz

Central Office
Unit 7/8 Food Service

Stephen Windheim

Nottingham
Unit 1 Retired Music Teacher

Good Salary News for Some



Left to right: *Kate McKenna (President), Kevin Ahern (1st VP), Heather Sponenberg (LRS) and Mike Riposo (negotiator emeritus).*

The salary news hasn't been all bad. In April the STA recovered over \$186,000 in stipend payments improperly taken away from members. Over a year after the issue was first raised, and countless negotiations later, the SCSD restored the following stipends:

- 149 tenure stipends for a total of \$133,524
- 59 eight-year stipends for a total of \$35,106
- 58 fifteen-year stipends for \$17,635

The STA sees this as a significant step forward in the pay correction process and hopes the SCSD will continue to work with us toward resolving all outstanding salary issues.

--Ahern

Agency Fee Refund Procedures for the 2005-06 Fiscal Year

New York State Civil Service Law, Chapter 606, L. 1992, was amended to provide for mandatory agency shop fee deductions. In accordance with the amendment, the Syracuse Teachers Association, Inc. will be making agency fee deductions in an amount equivalent to union dues as follows.

Pursuant to Chapter 677, Laws of 1977, as amended by Chapter 678, Laws of 1977 and Chapter 122, Laws of 1978, you have the right to object to the expenditure of any part of the fee which represents expenditures by the Syracuse Teachers Association or its affiliates (hereinafter "union") in aid of activities or causes of a political or ideological nature only incidentally related to terms and conditions of employment.

For the 2005-06 fiscal year, your objections should be made, if at all, by individually notifying STA President Katherine A. McKenna, at the Syracuse Teachers Association, 909 Butternut Street, Syracuse, New York 13208, by mail, during the period May 15th through June 15th, 2005. No deduction will be made until after the objection period has closed.

Should you object, your fee will be reduced for the 2004-05 fiscal year by the approximate proportion of the agency fees spent by the Union for such political and ideological purposes, based on the latest fiscal year for which there is a completed and available audited financial statement. You will be provided at the beginning of the new school year with an advance payment equal to the amount of the reduction, together with an explanation as to how such advance reduction was calculated.

If you are dissatisfied with the amount or appropriateness of the reduced fee, you may appeal that determination in writing and send it to the Union President (Kate McKenna) by mail within thirty - five (35) days following the Union's transmittal of the advance reduction. At such time, you must indicate to the Union President (Kate McKenna) the percent of agency fees, which you believe, are reasonably in dispute. The question of appropriateness of the advance reduction will thereafter be submitted by the Union to a neutral party appointed by the American Arbitration Association for expeditious hearing and resolution in accordance with its rules for agency fee determinations. The cost for any appeal to a neutral party shall be borne by the Union.

The Syracuse Teachers Association, at its option, may consolidate all appeals and have them resolved at one hearing held for such purpose. You may present your appeal in person.

At the close of the Union's fiscal year, as soon as available, the Union will provide you with a copy of the audited financial statements, including the final refund determination covering the fiscal year for which your objection was made.

On-Time Budget Leaves Time for Reform of Workers' Comp

Sen. David Valesky
(49th State Senate District)

While an important accomplishment in its own right, the first on-time budget in 20 years also offers immediate benefits for this year's legislative agenda. First, we have a blueprint for cooperation and compromise that can be used to enact other reforms. Second, the legislature has time to address important issues that have been left unresolved for years as past budgets monopolized the legislative session.

One of the most pressing issues is workers' compensation reform. The last major reforms of our system were enacted in 1996, and the economic benefit from those changes have long since worked their way through the system.

For the last decade, New York state has all but ignored its workers' compensation system. Inaction has translated into a system that places New York at a competitive disadvantage. Today, our state has the dubious distinction of providing the lowest weekly workers' compensation benefits in the Northeast while ranking among the highest in the nation in costs to employers. This broken system costs us jobs and investment here in Central New York and across the state.

The rate-making process for workers' compensation has come to resemble the dysfunctional budget process of the past 20 years. We proved, however, that we could change the budget process. Now it is time to fix workers' compensation.

To fix the broken system, we must bring labor and business to the table so that we can achieve a consensus solution that will help businesses reduce their costs and also provide workers with real economic protections if injured on the job. We must expand fraud prevention efforts. Eliminating fraud will better protect the benefits for employees who are truly injured.

We also should examine why the 1996 "safety investment legislation" has not been implemented. This legislation would provide a credit against an employer's workers' compensation insurance premiums for investments resulting in a safer work environment. And finally, we must examine the skyrocketing cost of health care and the impact on workers' compensation costs.

Historically, New York has been a leader in workers' compensation, though not always as a result of positive events. In fact, the passage of this year's budget came a few days after the 94th anniversary

continued on page 2

NYSUT Social Services is here for you - because life doesn't come with roadside assistance!

These services are available to all STA members.

Send an e-mail at socsvcs@nysutmail.org

or call, (800) 342-9810, ext. 6206.

Everything is totally confidential!

Inside

- From the President's Desk • Kevin's Notes
- LRS Summary • What's Cookin'?
- Member Moments • Committee of 100
- Unit 8 • Teacher Next Door • Mentoring
- Life Insurance • Credit Teachers

From the President's Desk... Kate McKenna



Union Recovers \$186,265.36 in Back Retro for Unit 1 Members

Time and Tenacity Pay Off for STA Members

Retro Madness

In December 2003 STA members and Board of Education commissioners ratified a new contract for Unit 1. District finance staff not engaged in the negotiations dreamed up some astoundingly incorrect ways of implementing the salary portions of this excellent contract. A case in point is the deduction from the 2002-03 retro payments of the amount of tenure, 8 year and 15 year stipends* paid to members during negotiations that stretched 18 months beyond expiration.

The STA filed grievances to correct salary problems when it became clear that the district was not following contract language or public employment law. The STA was successful in making its case to reinstate these deductions in November. Members finally received their refunds in April.

Anniversary Dates

Members with anniversary dates other than September have also experienced problems especially if they are off-grid. The parties have reached agreement over the formula for paying members correctly in these instances, too.

Calculation Errors

A calculation formula for adjusting calculation errors in Unit 8 salaries has also been approved recently by unit president Nancy Peluso. Inconsistencies with Unit 10 salary implementations are being handled on an individual basis.

Retiree Settlement

Members who retired in June 2003 under the 5-year incentive were denied a corresponding retro in their Final Average Salaries (FAS). Accepting the district's interpretation would have short-changed members' pensions by the value of the 32.25%. The STA secured an agreement recently for members to receive the proper increases. The amounts will be reported to the retirement systems and corrections in pension amounts will be processed by the TRS and ERS in time.

Whose Fund Balance Is It?

These district interpretations of our settlements have delayed members' pay increases and tried our collective patience. The district's obstructive tactics have contributed, in part, to a large fund balance amassed by the district this year. While efficiencies are a legitimate way to save, withholding members' pay is illegal, counter-productive and mean spirited.

STA's members and our students have dealt with the impact of fewer teaching assistants, hall monitors and food service along with fewer supplies and materials. **The district needs to stop messing with our pay.** Until that happens, STA will continue to work to get every member every penny owed.

Retirement Planning

Members nearing retirement have expressed their concerns about what salary amounts will be used to calculate their FAS. Here are some things to keep in mind.

- Your retro amounts will be credited to the year they would have been received if the contracts were settled in a timely manner.
- Your 2002-03 gross income, inflated by retros, will be redistributed to reflect the year the salaries should have been earned.
- According to the district, each retro amount earned, to date, has been reported to the retirement systems.
- The new annual earnings for pension purposes will be different from what you received this winter in your annual statement.
- Use the Unit 1 salary profile as a guide and then contact the ERS and TRS for your specific calculations.

* Remember that Unit 1 longevity stipends are now part of the salary grid, not separate. The exception is the off-grid 30-year stipend.

KEVIN'S NOTES...



It's A Matter of Trust: The SCSD and Broken Promises

The STA sees this as a significant step forward in the pay correction process and hopes the SCSD will continue to work with us toward resolving all outstanding salary issues.

Trust. A simple concept, defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary* as a "Firm reliance on the integrity, ability, or character of a person or thing." As it applies to workers and their employers, the transaction is very simple: Employers **trust** that workers will do their jobs in exchange for compensation. Workers **trust** that employers will compensate them for doing their job. As this school year winds down, this simple article of faith seems to be eroding in the SCSD.

As of May 13, 2005, scores of STA members are being underpaid by the school district. The SCSD is fully aware that they are underpaid, but refuses to make the corrections in a timely manner. Our employer has told us for nearly a year and a half to be patient and everything will be fine. In other words, "Trust us." As the following examples point out, that which was once taken for granted — we would be paid our negotiated salaries in exchange for our services — has become a painful lesson in the deterioration of faith.

One of our members has been underpaid since the implementation of the new salary agreement in February 2004. Her salary is one step below what it should be (being paid at 7 years instead of 8 years.) To add insult to injury, her tenure stipend, earned under the previous contract, was subtracted from her 2002-2003 retro check. The retro was restored, but the stipend was then deducted from her base pay! Since notifying the

SCSD of her problems in February 2004, they have "researched" her credited years of service and "calculated" her pay four times, with each result being different and, we believe, incorrect. Months pass between each round of research and calculations and, after 15 months, she has yet to see a correct paycheck.

Over sixty of our members have been affected by the so-called "Anniversary Date" issue, a condition based on a credited years of service date other than September 1st, which leaves them a year or more behind in their salary. Most of these members have more than 25 years of service to the SCSD and are close to, or eligible for, retirement. Unfortunately, they can't make an informed decision about retirement without knowing their Final Average Salary The SCSD's

The SCSD's reluctance to make salary corrections is now penalizing these members who have given their professional lives to the children of this district at a time when they should be honored and rewarded with a hard earned retirement.

reluctance to make salary corrections is now penalizing these members who have given their professional lives to the children of this district at a time when they should be honored and rewarded with a hard earned retirement.

As I write this, both of these cases have reactivated as Stage III grievances. Reactivated because the SCSD had assured us they would make the proper corrections without having to go through a grievance hearing. In other words, "Trust us." We did. We were wrong. The sad truth is that we are left with no choice but to go forward with grievances (scores, if necessary) for all our members with incorrect salaries. The good faith and patience we've shown for well over a year has been met with broken promises and inaction, a budget surplus built on picking the pockets of the working men and women of this district. We must now **trust** the grievance process to compel the SCSD to pay its employees correctly... every member, every penny.

In Solidarity, Kevin

Reminder: All district employees, including administrators, who are members of NYSTRS....there's still room for the:

**NYS Teachers Retirement System
Overview & Information Workshop - June 1, 2005
Call STA x4526**

On Time Budget...

continued from page 1

of the horrific event that led to calls, and eventually enactment, of the nation's first workers' compensation system. On a tragic March day in 1911, fire swept through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City, killing 145 young women workers. The workers' compensation system enacted in 1914 would serve as a model for the nation.

Yet today, that model system has become dysfunctional. Benefits have not been increased in over a decade and workers' compensation costs continue to rise.

No matter what reforms we eventually pursue, there is no doubt that the workers' compensation system needs to be fixed. It will not be easy. But three months ago we all knew passing the first on-time budget in two decades would not be easy. We made it happen with cooperation and compromise. By channeling the same bipartisan spirit that drove the budget process, I believe we can enact workers' compensation reforms that benefit all New Yorkers.

Sen. David Valesky, D-Oneida, represents the 49th State Senate District, including Madison County and parts of Oneida, Cayuga and Onondaga counties.

Copyright, 2005, The Herald Company

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 In Chief: Kate McKenna: mckenna@syrteach.org
Editor: Kelly Abt: kelleenabt@yahoo.com
Managing Editor: Cathleen A. Danboise: cdan@syrteach.org

Contributing Writers:

Nancy Peluso - Unit 8 President - (STA 4th Vice President)
Kevin Ahern - 1st Vice President (STA)
Ann O'Hara - Unit 10 President - VanDuyn
LouAnn Coleman - Unit 7 President - Henninger
Lilli Rastegar - Unit 1 - Blodgett
David Kirby - Unit 1 - Fowler

Labor Relations Summary

by STA Labor Relations Specialist

Heather Sponenburg

Things You Should Know About New York State Workers' Compensation (Part 1)

What is Workers' Compensation? Workers Compensation is a no-fault based system of compensation for workers who are injured on or because of their job. It is a statutory benefit paid for by your employer either through an insurance carrier or through self-insurance. This benefit provides full coverage of all related medical care and hospital treatment for job-related illnesses and injuries; partial wage replacement for loss of earnings; and special compensation for loss or partial loss of the use of a limb.

Am I eligible for this Benefit? Yes, public employees (outside of New York City) are eligible for this benefit.

What do I do if I am hurt at work? The first thing you should do is seek immediate medical attention, if needed. You must then report the incident to your supervisor, including how and where it occurred. You should report it to your supervisor as soon as possible, but in any event *within 30 days*. **Failure to report an incident to a supervisor within 30 days could lead to a denial of benefits.** You should also fill out an Employee Injury and Illness Report and keep a copy as proof that you reported your injury within the required period of time. (*Note* this notification does not start your Workers Compensation claim)

What other forms do I fill out? To apply for workers compensation benefits, a form C3 must be completed and filed with the Workers Compensation Board. You have 2 years to file a C3, but the sooner it is filed the quicker you will receive benefits. **This is in addition to reporting your accident to your supervisor.** You must also ensure that your doctor files a C4 form with the Workers Compensation Board. Though the District is required to file a C2 with the Board and its Carrier within 10 days, it is not your responsibility to see that it does. You need only be concerned that your C3 and the doctor's C4 are filed.

Why should I file a Claim? It does not cost anything to file a claim, your health insurance company will not pay for work-related injuries, your wages will be supplemented, and Workers Compensation is generally your only remedy for a work-related injury.

Can I be fired for filing a Workers' Compensation Claim? No, the Workers' Compensation law protects you from discrimination or other retaliatory action.

Do I have to pay any doctor's bills? No, an injured worker should never pay any medical expenses. However, if your claim is disputed, the doctor may require you to sign a form A9 which guarantees payment if your injury is not determined compensable by the Compensation Board. If required to sign an A9- you should send it to your regular health insurance company immediately.

How long do I have to be out of work before I receive wages? If your illness or injury lasts longer than 1 week, you are entitled to compensation for lost earnings. If your illness or injury keeps you out of work for longer than 2 weeks, you will receive compensation starting from the date of your injury.

Am I entitled to my full salary? No, the law provides that you receive 2/3 of your average salary for the preceding year, up to a maximum of \$400.00 per week. However, each Unit's collective bargaining agreement supplements this statutory amount allowing employees to collect their full salary.



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

Great News for Teaching Assistants...

Watch for the *Inservice Bulletin for Spring 2005 - Spring 2006*. The following courses for Teaching Assistants will be offered for inservice credit:

- Understanding Math Investigation: A Course for Teaching Assistants
- Beginning Reading Instruction for Teaching Assistants
- Teaching Assistant Key Concepts: Behavior Management
- Teaching Assistant Key Concepts: Communication and Disability awareness
- Teaching Assistants Key Concepts: Behavior Management
- Teaching Assistant Key Concepts: Using the IEP/ Helping Students Succeed

Pay particular attention as to when you'll be able to register for the courses.

Unit 8 Election Results...

Uncontested - Nancy Peluso (STA), President - **Kathy Hartman** (Salem Hyde), 1st Vice President - **Joyce Farrell** (Grant), Secretary

2nd Vice President - Sue Webb was elected.

Directors - Elected - **Pat Shults** (Delaware), **Mark Warner** (Ed Smith), **Deb Krupa** (Porter), **Marilyn Black** (Transportation), and **Jeremy Bullock** (Corcoran). There needs to be a run-off for the 6th spot between **Wilson Price** (Carnegie) and **Loredana Stone** (Roberts). We will notify Unit 8 members as soon as a date is set.

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

Unit 7...

What's Cookin'?

LouAnn Coleman, President

STA Honors Unit 7 Food Service Workers

Nancy Peluso, STA 4th Vice President, presented **Bernard Washington**, Unit 7 1st Vice President, a plaque recognizing him as STA's *SRP of the Year 2004*.



To express appreciation to the Food Service Workers, STA fed them! Each member was given an apron imprinted with "Child Nutrition Employees Appreciation Week" - Syracuse Teachers Association"



Who? Me?



Members spoke with President **LouAnn Coleman** who is currently on sick leave. Cards may be sent in c/o STA.

Member Moments

Kudos to Mary Juman and Barbara Warren



Mary Juman

The **2005 Syracuse Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Award for Outstanding Music Educators** was awarded to **Mary Juman**, a general music teacher at Dr. Weeks Elementary School. She has taught for the past 8 years. Mary has developed a comprehensive music program that focuses on music literacy, appreciation and performance. Her choral groups have performed throughout the community. Mary's main goal for her students is that they respect the role music plays in their lives and are able to use it as an outlet for self-expression.

Congratulations to **Barbara Warren**, teaching assistant at Roberts, who received the "Parents for Public Schools Excellence Award" for the 2004-2005 school year.

Congratulations to **Chris** (Henninger) and **Tina Krupa** on the birth of their son Ethan. **Debbie Krupa** (Porter) shares congratulations as grandma on this one!



Teacher Next Door Program

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has implemented the Teacher Next Door Program. This program provides full-time, K-12 teachers who are employed by a public or private school or federal, state, county or municipal educational agency an opportunity to purchase a HUD home at a 50% discount of the appraised value. Properties eligible for purchase under the TND are located within a HUD-designated revitalization area.

The purpose of the Teacher Next Door Program is to offer unique homeownership opportunities to teachers. You may access their website at www.nhmsi.com for a complete listing of properties in the TND Program in our area and for additional information regarding how to place a bid on a property. New properties are made available for sale under this program every Wednesday on a weekly basis. You may also visit HUD's website at <http://www.hud.gov> for further information.

If you have any questions, please call **Norka Arias** (NHMS) at 305-854-1711 or toll free 866-695-3748 ext. 409.

Professional Development... Mentoring Does Matter



Mentors and interns have been very active during the last month! MTIP, in partnership with SETRC and the Field Coordinators, presented fifteen workshops which were attended by over 80 of our colleagues. Topics included instructional strategies and lesson planning.

Professional development for mentors continues to be a focus. A workshop titled Mentoring: Connecting Practice to Research was offered by **Dr. Donna Zeolla** on May 11. Also, Mentoring Matters, a BOCES workshop was offered on May 17 and 19 at the Teacher Center. These were exciting opportunities to sharpen our skills while networking with others.

Mentors and interns will gather to celebrate our year on May 25!

We are actively recruiting mentors for next year. To apply, send a letter of interest including experience and certification to **Dr. Donna DeSiato**.
--Mary

Locals Urged to Plan Through Budget Process

As local presidents, treasurers and other leaders plan for the coming year, it's important to include your local budget in the planning process. Preparation of a local budget is a must for all locals.

Effective Sept. 1, 2005, NYSUT dues will be \$261 and the AFT proposed dues are \$158.40 for full dues-paying members. Constitutionally, both increases are a direct

pass through to your members and do not require a membership vote. It is important, however, to factor these increases into your local budget and to notify your employer of payroll deduction changes.

Budget planning should involve more than just "crunching" numbers. It should be driven by the members reflecting the scope and direction of programs and services.

* What is on the horizon?

* Are there new programs and services your local should offer members?

* Do you want to expand existing programs such as the newsletter, public relations efforts, conference participation or new member initiatives?

The budget process begins by the local's executive board setting the priorities and

deciding what programs and services will be added or expanded. The treasurer can then quantify the costs and build a budget.

Only then can your local answer the question, "Are local dues adequate to meet anticipated expenditures?"

Look at the budget process as an opportunity to plan for the future, improve member services and gather broad-based support for new initiatives.

Call **Helen Vickery** in the NYSUT Accounting Office - (800) 342-9810 or (518) 213-6000, ext. 6213 - if you have any questions or require additional information.

--NYSUT Leader -May 13, 2005

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.

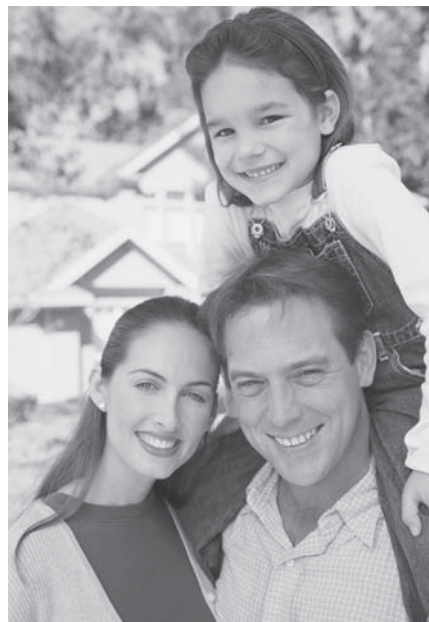
Term Life Insurance is purchased for a specific period of time, or a "term." Benefits are paid to a beneficiary only when the insured dies within the specified period. If the insured is under age 70 and diagnosed as terminally ill, 60 percent of the life insurance benefit may be payable before death. 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.



In the News...

Credit Teachers, Not Jones for Improvements

To the Editor:

I had to chuckle when I read that **Laurie Menkin** and **Cindy Kirby** attribute the increase in student achievement in the city schools to Superintendent Jones' tenure with the district. Did he increase it the two times he visited our school? I am positive that the hard work of the teachers in the Syracuse School District created that increase in student achievement.

Patricia Barth

Teacher in Syracuse for 34 years

"The Ultimate Drive" August 23, 2005

Drive a luxury car for a cure!!

Ever wanted to drive a "Beemer"? Save the date and join the Susan G. Komen Foundation and Burdick BMW in North Syracuse on Tuesday, August 23rd from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and drive a BMW for free! For each mile driven, BMW will donate \$1.00 to the CNY affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Last year the event raised over \$4600.00 from 4150 event miles and donations that stayed right here in Central New York. Stephanie Pelcher, a Syracuse City School District employee and the 2002 Local Hero will be volunteering again at this year's event. Please join us for a FREE ride, food and fun! For more information call Burdick BMW or log on: www.komencny.org. You can sign up ahead of time for a specific time slot at www.bmwusa.com or just come on the 23rd and drive as many times as you wish. A valid driver's license is needed to participate.