



## Welcome Back!



I would like to take this opportunity to welcome **Dr. Bob DiFlorio** back into the district. He has worked diligently with the STA to resolve many of the underlying issues that have affected our members' salaries. Other issues have also been dealt with in a forthright manner. Expect new printed contracts delivered to your buildings

shortly. We're grateful to Dr. DiFlorio remaining with us after Dr. Begina was unable to come to our district. We wish Dr. Begina the best and, once again, thank Bob for his steady leadership.

--McKenna

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Len Fonte (Nottingham) and his student prepare to film Dr. DiFlorio's welcome back address to district staff.

## From the President's Desk... Kate McKenna



### The Syracuse Plan Peer Assistance and Review

STA has negotiated a great opportunity to demonstrate our continuing commitment to excellence in teaching. This fall the STA and the SCSD will add a *Peer Assistance and Review* (PAR) program to support our newest members. The STA and the district were able to secure \$75,000 Member Item through **Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli**. Matching funds were added to this amount by **Sen. John DeFrancisco**. The program will be implemented in October of 2005 with support from the Board of Education.

**What is PAR?** PAR is a program designed to provide first year teachers with intensive support throughout their entry year in the district. Full-time teacher (peer) consultants will provide sustained support, feedback and guidance to new members. They will also *evaluate* our newest colleagues.

**Why are we doing this?** Fifty percent of new teachers leave our field in 5 years. Many attribute this to the "sink or swim" nature of our profession. Our mentors have done a great job with new teachers, however, state mentoring funding allows only limited opportunities to support new teachers and few administrators can devote sufficient time to support new teachers. Our consultants will have responsibility for meeting regularly with their cadre of 10-12 new teachers. They will report their findings and recommendations to the PAR Panel three times each year.

There are three key components to a profession:

- entry level standards
- an agreed upon body of knowledge and
- peer review. Examples of this are found in medicine, law, higher education and architecture.

#### Consultant Teachers

Consultant teachers will be tenured members of Unit 1 who have a minimum of 5 years of experience in the Syracuse City School District and who meet all additional requirements of the position. They shall serve a three (3) year term. At the end of this term consultants will return to the school where they last taught unless they choose a new assignment. Consultants will not enter an administrative bargaining unit for a period of one (1) year following their terms.

Consultants shall be required to participate in professional development programs as proscribed by the PAR panel.

Consultants shall observe and provide feedback to 1<sup>st</sup> year practitioners regarding their professional practice. Consultants will make ongoing recommendations to the PAR Panel regarding employment status based on whether the intern meets the professional standards of the district as stated in the Model for Practitioner Evaluation document. Compensation will be equivalent to 10% of base salary (20 days) paid between September 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>.

#### Peer Assistance and Review Panel

The *Peer Assistance and Review Panel* will be comprised of nine (9) members: five (5) Unit 1 members and four (4) administrators. A consensus model will be used to determine this membership with each party reserving the right to appoint its members.

Among the panel's duties are to:

- interview and make recommendations for consultant candidates to the superintendent for hiring
- set an annual meeting calendar including a minimum of three times per year to review the recommendations of the consultants. A fourth meeting shall be convened to hear appeals if necessary;
- convene training and planning meetings as needed;
- be responsible for program evaluation and identifying the annual budget requirements to the superintendent;
- develop forms and procedures for approval by joint negotiating teams;
- coordinate programming with the Mentor-Teacher Intern Program Steering Committee.

Panel review meetings will be scheduled during the school day.  
Compensation for panel service will be \$2000 per school year.

## sta Open Line

The Open Line is published quarterly 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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Jeanette Pietrantonio (retired STA President)  
Heather Sponenburg - LRS (STA)

## KEVIN'S NOTES...



### A Summer to Remember: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

As the school year begins, I hope you all had a restful and fun summer vacation. For me, this past summer was an interesting one to be sure. While there was a little time for golf, the SCSD continued to take most of my time, effort and attention. Some of which was good, some of which was bad and some of which was ... well ... ugly. I'd like to take some time here to review some of the events that made this a summer to remember. Always a teacher, I'll start things off on a few positive notes.

#### The Good

With the help of the steady and decisive hand of Interim Superintendent Dr. Bob DiFlorio, the STA and the SCSD resolved most of the outstanding salary related issues that have plagued this contract since its implementation in February, 2004. The "anniversary date" group issue was resolved and sixty or so members

were paid over \$180,000 collectively in back salary on June 30th. This, we believe, puts to rest a very trying episode for many of our most senior and valued educators.

In August, several grievances were settled with agreements being reached with regard to data used in calculating years of credited service, anniversary dates, and stipends earned under the previous contract. A method for calculating salaries for part-time employees and a procedure for dealing with salary disputes were also agreed to. As most of you are aware, the struggle to resolve these matters has been a long and painful one for the members involved as well as the STA leadership. Again, our thanks to Dr. DiFlorio for stepping into the fray and not leaving these issues for the next superintendent.

On an educational note, I had the pleasure of participating in AVID training for a week in July along with over eighty members and administrators. Aside from being a great program targeting some of our least served students, AVID is an excellent example of how utilizing best classroom practices can be a powerful change element in building-wide culture for the benefit of students and teachers. For more information about AVID, be sure to attend the STA Leadership Conference in October where we'll have two sessions dedicated to the program.

#### The Bad

Obviously the Governor's veto of the SCSD building renovation project was a horrible blow to the district as well as the city itself. As always, it's the students who will suffer most when politics becomes

more important than education. We hope that our local elected leaders (specifically: Magnarelli, DeFrancisco, Christensen, Velesky and Driscoll) who've always stood by the SCSD will be able to get the bill passed in the next legislative cycle. The STA will support their efforts in any way possible.

The withdrawal of Dr. Begina as our next superintendent was another setback for the district and community. We were looking forward to working with her and wish her well. The STA, however, is confident that the Board of Education will deliver another excellent person for the job. Lead by Dr. Cynthia Kirby, they face a difficult task at a critical juncture for the SCSD. We believe they have consistently demonstrated that their decisions are based on what's best for the SCSD and the community it serves and we continue to stand by them.

As all of you can attest to, the SCSD is nothing if not resilient. Succeeding in the face of adversity is the way most of us have operated in our classrooms for our entire careers. Doing more with less, ever increasing class sizes, contracts that never get settled — all part of the day-to-day reality of an STA member. We'll survive. We always do.

#### The Ugly

Despite the successes mentioned earlier, there are still too many problems regarding salary and credited service that can only be resolved on a case-by-case basis. Fortunately we now have a procedure in place to facilitate that. I'll be working closely with the SCSD to make sure our members get everything this contract entitles them to.

The district continues to balk at the idea of giving in-service credit to members who've spent a week of their summer vacation in Atlanta participating in AVID training. The SCSD contends that, because they pay for the airfare and hotel rooms, they shouldn't have to grant professional development credit. This is a bizarre position to say the least. If teachers are willing to give up a week of their time to improve teaching and learning in our schools, the district should be doing everything they can to encourage more of it, including salary credits. Stay tuned for more on this issue.

Finally, as we head into another frantic school year, I'd like to thank all of you for your continued patience and support throughout all of these good, bad, and sometimes ugly times. I'm proud to serve each and every one of you and will continue to work tirelessly on your behalf. As I've said all along, "Every member, every penny."

In Solidarity,  
Kevin



Contact the STA office if you plan to take a leave of absence so that you can sign up for an Associate membership. By not doing so, any member benefits that you have through NYSUT, will be cancelled.

## STA Members Vision Plan



*STA administers the Negotiated Vision Plan in cooperation with NYSUT Member Benefits.*

**Who is eligible?** All members in Units 1, 7, 8, and 10 hired to work 25 hours per week or more are eligible. Every eligible member is enrolled in the plan, even if they have never used the plan previously.

**How often may I use the benefit?** The benefit for eye exams, frames and lenses is available once in a **24 month period**. As an example, a member receiving service on July 24, 2005 is eligible again July 24, 2007.

**How can I check my eligibility?** Members may check eligibility by phoning 800-999-5431 or by visiting the Davis Vision website at [www.davisvision.com](http://www.davisvision.com). You will log on with your social security number and the first 5 letters of your last name. Follow the "check eligibility" prompts.

### Change of Status

If any of your information (name, marital status, dependents) changes, you must notify the Vision Plan. Stop in or call and request a change of status form.

### Dependent Coverage

Dependents age 19 to 24 are eligible for STA Vision Benefits if the following criteria are met. The dependent must:

- Be enrolled in and attending as a full time student at an accredited institution.
- Be supported by the employee at least 50%
- Be employed less than full time
- Be single

OR

- Be permanently disabled

Members will receive a Vision Plan Dependent Verification Form prior to the dependent's birth month. **Please note that this form is different from the one used for Health and Dental Benefits.** This form must be returned to STA to continue Vision Plan coverage.

Ineligible dependents may continue the Vision Plan for 36 months under COBRA.

### Questions?

Questions regarding the plan, including changes or corrections of member information may be directed to **Ed O'Rourke**, STA Benefit Fund administrator at [eorourke@syrteach.org](mailto:eorourke@syrteach.org) or by leaving a message at the STA office, 472-6374 or x4526.

### Vision Care Not Covered by Our Plan.

Vision care other than that offered by the Davis Vision Plan (see the Vision Care Plan Benefit Description) may still be covered by the District Health Plan if there is a medical disease. Questions regarding vision services outside our plan should be made to the Employee Benefits Office and/or POMCO.

### Flex Plan

Members who require service more frequently than every 24 months should consider putting funds into the STA negotiated **Flex Plan** (the so-called **125 Plan**). Enrollment forms for this plan generally are available in late November or early December. Details are available from the Employee Benefits office at 725 Harrison St.

Information and forms for the STA negotiated Flexible Benefit Plan was given to Building Reps at the November Rep Assembly. These forms should be available in the buildings as well. This plan can be used for contact lenses and glasses beyond the coverage of the Vision Plan. Those who require contact lenses every 6 months or frequent changes in eyeglass prescriptions, need prescription sunglasses, or other eyeglasses should consider setting aside an amount in the Flex plan to cover these needs. Also, be aware that Contact Lens supplies are covered under this account. Also covered under the Flex Plan are copays for office visits and prescriptions, child care costs, certain OTC medications, and other items detailed in the plan documents. Watch for plan information in November. Sign up must be completed in December and **may not** be changed during the year. Call the SCSD Benefits Office at x4180 for sign up information. If you need more information speak to your Building Representative or call Ed O'Rourke at the STA office.

## FLU CLINIC

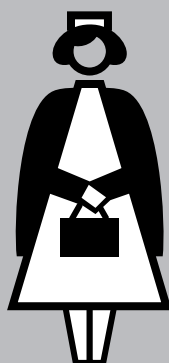
**WHEN:** Wednesday, Sept. 28 and  
Friday, Nov. 4  
from 3:30-5:00 pm

**TIME:** 3:30-5:00 PM

**WHERE:** STA (909 Butternut St.)

**COST:** \$35 -

The Pneumox (booster every 5 years) will be available for \$45



As in the past, **Seniors must** present their cards at the time of service to be covered under Medicare. Both flu and pneumonia vaccines will be available and are covered by Medicare.

## CNY Chapter: Alliance for Retired Americans Minutes of the Meeting of August 12, 2005

**I. Chair Gerald Lotierzo** called the meeting to order with a roll call.

**II. Minutes** of the July 8, 2005 Meeting were approved as submitted.

**III. Trip to Hyde Park:** Jerry explained that the bus will leave the NYSUT Office tomorrow morning at 5:30 a.m.; will return around 8:30 p.m. Members attending will have a full day with debates, exhibits.

**IV. Report of the Elections Committee:** The committee will meet at the close of today's meeting to review a nomination form, a sample ballot, and set dates for the upcoming election. Jeanette suggested that the self-nomination forms would be available at the September meeting. Deadline for submission would be the October meeting, and the election would be held at our November meeting.

**V. Membership** – follow up to the unions will be necessary to get more representatives at our meetings. We held a brief discussion on both this follow-up and on fund-raising possibilities.

**VI. AFL-CIO Convention: Mark Spadafore** gave us a brief review of the convention; pointed to a lot of bad feelings this time because of the disaffiliation. Mark is concerned that local labor stay as united as possible, but is not sure what the impact of the national's move will have on the local federation or the Greater Syracuse Labor Council.

**VII. Petitions, press conferences, etc.:** Carole Gehrig took materials, petitions to the Boonville/Oneida County Fair. Day was very rainy, but she managed to contact and inform some 200 people.

**VIII. State Fair.** UAW table will carry ARA materials; anyone needing tickets to the Fair for Labor Day should see Mark Spadafore. A number of events are planned to honor Labor's Day, including an interfaith service, a parade, luncheon, and a labor pavilion. Members were encouraged to come early and march behind the various organizational banners, including CNY ARA's.

**IX. Social Security.** Despite the growing opposition of Americans, there are still plans to introduce some legislation for privatization. There is some concern over the "ads" being broadcast over the "on hold" time when a call is made to Social Security. The information is wrong and very misleading.

**X. Medicare:** Several members expressed real concern about the upcoming implementation of the new Medicare Prescription Drug Law; the advertising being done all over the state; the misleading information being given to seniors. We also discussed the letters being sent out by our former employers. These letters are required by the law. They will tell beneficiaries if their current coverage is superior to the new federal plan. It was suggested that all members keep this letter as proof – down the line – of the status of your coverage (just in case the system should impose penalties for joining later).

**XI. Clinton visit** (Cortland). This was a small but pleasant and informative gathering. The Senator handled questions very well; was warm and personal with all of those in attendance. Our reps agreed that there was indeed a lot of connection between the Senator and people.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanette Pietrantonio

## What's Cookin'?

Bernard Washington, President

Hello Fellow Union Brothers and Sisters,

I greet you with sad news. Our president and my friend, **LuAnn Coleman** went to be with the Lord on August 12, 2005. LuAnn fought her illness with courage and dignity for two years even though she knew her time was limited. She kept abreast of Unit 7 business. She was a lady I will always love and respect.

I am now president of Unit 7 and **Eileen Kitts** is 1st Vice President. I will announce at our General Membership meeting on October 19th the name of the person who will finish out Eileen's term as 2nd Vice President (according to Unit 7 By-laws). The Unit 7 contract expires on June 30, 2006. I'll be getting a negotiating team together sometime this coming October. If you're interested in being a part of this team, please call STA and leave your name, school and home phone number.

### FYI:

Executive Board - Thursday, October 6, 2005

Thursday, December 1, 2005

General Membership - Wednesday, October 19, 2005

Wednesday, December 7, 2005

*Our president is gone but not forgotten. In Solidarity,  
Bernard Washington*

*We hope you had a restful summer!*

# Understanding Your Paycheck

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

Pay Stub Sample

Deductions			Gross Pay		
Deduction Type	Amount	Y.T.D.	Job Code	P Days/ T Hours	Amount
A - ING Financial Svc.	200.00 -	7200.00	190000	10.0 D	2,706.48
B - Medicare	38.90 -	506.54			
C - Social Security	109.03 -	2165.78			
D - New York State Tax	204.19 -	1462.34			
E - Federal Withhold	298.35 -	5368.78			
F - STA Dues - Biweekly	29.01 -	609.21			
G - Pomco (Sept. double)	2.00 -	14.00			
H - Pomco (Sept. double)	28.00 -	52.50			
I - Non-Reimb Med (1...	14.29 -	185.77			
J - NYSUT Insurances -	60.29 -	723.48			
K - Vote-Cope	1.00 -	120.00			
L - TRS Loans (10 &...	116.59 -	1518.00			
M - United Way of CNY	5.00 -	65.00			
N - Combined Health ...	5.00 -	65.00			
O - Sch Employees of CNY	862.91 -	15432.46			
<b>Total</b>					

Totals		Time	Amount
Gross-DY	10.0	2,706.48	R
Gross-HR			
Deduct.		1,557.15	Q
Direct Deposit		1,139.33	P
Sick Days		248.5	V
Personal Days		4.0	

School	Date	Fed	St	Chks	Contr. Sal.	YTD Gross
03	9/9/05	S-0	S-0	21	37,291.12	28,224.32

**Key**

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



Welcome back to a new school year! The Syracuse Teacher Center Staff and Policy Board hope that each of you spent time over the summer relaxing, reflecting, and recharging for the 2005-2006 school year.

There are some exciting items that we'd like to share with all of you. First, this summer we said "Happy Retirement" to **Vince Sgambati**. Vince has been with the Teacher Center/SETRC for the past 12 years, coming from many years of classroom teaching at H. W. Smith Elementary School. While at H. W. Smith, he served as a faculty representative and NYSUT/AFT

Delegate. He plans on spending his retirement writing everyday and spending time with his family.

Also this summer, we welcomed **Ellen Thornton** as a member of the Teacher Center staff. Ellen spent the last 10 years as a teacher at Solace Elementary School. Ellen brings a wealth of experience and expertise on a variety of topics and is very excited about getting into classrooms and working with teachers of all levels.

In addition to the many courses we will be offering this school year, one of particular interest to our newest members is a collaborative venture with the Central New York Teaching Center, the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust, and five local Teacher Associations, including the STA. The following workshops will be held over the course

of the school year and are open to the first 40 first, second or third year teachers who register. The workshops will be held from **4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.** and are **free** of charge. To register for individual workshops, call the **Teacher Center at x4217**. If you would like to **register** for all 8 workshops, you may be eligible for **inservice credit**. For credit, you must pre-register before the first workshop by calling the Teacher Center.

The course titles and dates are: ("Just for You" publication has course descriptions.)

Workshop	Date	Place
Student Success	September 21, 2005	Teacher Ctr.
Parent Teacher Conference	October 12, 2005	F-M HS Rm1209
Classroom Management	November 29, 2005	NSEA Office
Effective Discipline Strategies	January 30, 2006	NSEA Office
Strategies for Incorporating the Standards	February 6, 2006	Park Hill School
Motivating Student Thinking	March 15, 2006	FM HS Rm 1209
Study Skills	April 19, 2006	Solvay Middle
Creating a Positive Environment	May 3, 2006	Teacher Ctr.

We hope that all of our members have had a chance to use the services of the Syracuse Teacher Center or will let us know this year if there is something that is needed with which we can help. Feel free to contact us by phone at 435-4217 or on the web at [www.syracusetc.org](http://www.syracusetc.org). Have a great new year.

--AnneMarie Voutsinas

**To register call 315-435-4217**

# Labor Relations Summary

by STA Labor Relations Specialist

**Heather Sponenburg**

It has been a very busy and productive summer. The STA Staff worked diligently this summer to resolve issues outstanding from last school year and we continued to work on pending issues and continue work on ongoing matters.

We have settled many outstanding grievances: thanks to the hard work of STA officers and the decisive leadership of Dr. DiFlorio, we are able to begin the new school year with positive resolutions of our outstanding salary grievances.

Rather than proceed to an arbitration the District chose to give a Unit 7 member her job back. That very happy Unit 7 member will be returning to her position in the fall.

All unit contracts are done (or nearly done) they are being printed and will be in buildings very soon.

We continue to meet with Personnel to try to resolve matters without proceeding to the grievance procedure. These bi-weekly *Collaboration* meetings continued throughout the summer. Though some progress was made on those outstanding issues, there are remaining issues we would have like resolved prior to the new school year. We continue to work diligently to solve all of these matters. To date 5 new grievances have been filed.

Members of the *Health Benefits Committee* continued to meet during the summer to review the master health plan document. The Benefits Committee has been reviewing the document page by page in order to update the document. A revised plan document should be available soon.

We have been working on an agreement with the District regarding the *School Sentry* position that will be added to Unit 8. Negotiations over this position are nearly done and a comprehensive review of our agreement will be forthcoming. Qualified Unit 8 members will be given the first opportunity to fill these positions.

In addition to ongoing matters, we hope to work on new issues with the District this year. We plan to initiate a discussion with the District regarding its long-standing policy of not interviewing members on workers compensation or other leaves who apply for open positions. Obviously this is a policy we would like the district to change. In the interim however, if you find yourself in this position, please call the STA office to discuss your options.

Please remember, any employee injured on the job is eligible to file for **Workers Compensation** benefits. You must report your injury to the District immediately then you can file for compensation benefits (medical bills and lost wages). This can often be a difficult and confusing process. You should contact STA immediately with any questions you may have.

Mark your calendars for this year's *Leadership Conference* scheduled for October 20, 2005. I will be presenting a seminar/workshop on civil service law including discipline and discharge, layoff and recall, returning from various leaves of absence. This workshop is important for all unit leaders as each unit has members whose terms and conditions of employment are affected by the Civil Service Law.

## Naef Recycling Announces Recycling Scholarships

Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded in the fall of 2005 to the winners of an essay contest.

The essay will focus on the importance of the role of the consumer in setting out clean, separated recyclables and how this contributes to the overall health of recycling. What is the impact on recycling plants which process the materials received from the blue bins and end users such as paper mills which receive bales of recycled paper and turn it back into news print, cardboard boxes and other paper products.

**Mark Naef**, President of Naef Recycling LLC and a long term recycling activist says, "Consumers play a key role in the recycling process. It is important for the public to understand that what they do on a daily basis at home, which might seem inconsequential, can significantly impact massive industrial plants."

One scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior from the city of Syracuse school system. The other scholarship will be awarded to any high school senior who resides in Onondaga, Oswego, Delaware or Schoharie county.

The essay contest will be judged by a five person committee:

- **Carmen Harlow** - Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, City of Syracuse
- **Don Hughes** - Board member, Recycling Committee, Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency
- **Mark Naef** - President, Naef Recycling LLC
- **T. Brendan Whelan** - Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee, Onondaga County Legislature
- **Martha Loew** - President, Iroquois Chapter of the Sierra Club and long time environmental activist.

**Maximum word length:** 1,000

**Deadline for submission:** October 31, 2005

Winner to be announced at a ceremony Monday, November 14. Date and time to be announced. For more information call 315-463-7266.



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

### 25-paycheck option

We finally successfully negotiated the 25-paycheck option for Unit 8 members! Unfortunately we had a very small window of time to get the word out. Many members were able to enroll by the August 31<sup>st</sup> deadline. To those who wanted to enroll but were not able to, I apologize. You will be able to enroll for the '06-'07 school year in June '06.

### Teaching Assistant Orientation

Yes, there actually was an orientation for TA's who were hired during the past two years! Through the collaborative efforts of several people, about 80 newly and recently hired TA's spent 3 information-packed hours at the Teacher Center on Wednesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>. We hope to have a repeat performance for those who are hired during the school year. One of the exciting things for me that came from our collaboration is an actual TA manual. I am investigating the possibility of getting enough printed for each TA. It was great to work with **Joanne Downes, JoAnne Grandinetti, Sarah Long, Stephanie Pelcher, Shannon Karazuba, Beth Kramer, Chris Vogelsang and Dave Zawadzki**. A special thanks goes to Sarah Long for coordinating this endeavor and keeping us focused.

### New Teacher Orientation

When I attend the New Teacher Orientation I always feel like a proud mother! This year 22 of the new teachers are from the TA Substitute ranks and 8 new teachers were TA's who took advantage of the Career Ladder to become teachers! Kudos to all of you! I want to specifically recognize **Kathy Wentworth** as a new teacher. Kathy became a Teaching Assistant in 1989 and is now a teacher! Talk about perseverance and focus! *Congratulations, Kathy!*

### Contract status

Speaking of printing---we are in the final stages of revising the contract language to reflect the changes made during negotiations. Hopefully, new contracts will be printed this fall.

### School Sentry

We have had productive discussions regarding this position. As with many proposed changes in the District it seems to come down to the issue of funding. Once we have firm agreements and are ready to proceed, we will share the details with our members.

### July 1, 2005 salary adjustments

Bus Attendants--4% raise

Hall Monitors--4% raise

TA's---3.3% raise and the addition of a \$250 7-year stipend

### Salary concerns

I am continuing to address individual salary issues with Fiscal Services. If you have previously contacted the District or me, your concern will be addressed. This process is time-consuming. I will work on it until all questions have been resolved.

### Tentative TA Workshop Schedule for 2005-06

Tues. October 4	Common Sense Communication Part 1
Tues. November 8	Frameworks That Help Meet Basic Needs
Tues. December 6	Common Sense Communication Part 2
Tues. January 10	Reading Strategies That Work
Thurs. January 19	Managing Student Behavior
Tues. February 7	Common Sense Communication Part 3
Tues. March 7	Assistive Technology
Tues. March 14	Math
Tues. April 4	Test Accommodations and Modifications
Tues. June 6	Sizzling Summer Strategies

### TA Certification

The New York State regulations governing teaching assistant certification changed significantly effective February 2, 2004. In addition to requirements of fingerprinting and proof of completion of two workshops--"Identification and Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse or Maltreatment" and "School Violence Prevention and Intervention" **anyone applying for TA certification must achieve a qualifying score on the New York State Assessment of Teaching Assistant Skills test (ATAS)**. Go to: [www.nystce.nesinc.com](http://www.nystce.nesinc.com) for more information. Through NYSUT and the Teacher Center we will offer a test prep course. Information regarding the course will be announced when plans have been finalized. It is important to note that the regulations pertain to date of **application for TA certification-not the date of hire**. Go to: [www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert](http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert) for additional information regarding TA certification. If you are working now as a teaching assistant and have not yet applied for certification the February 4, 2005 regulations apply to you. Please call me at ext.4526 if you need further clarification.

Future ATAS test dates: 10-15-05 (9-9-05 registration deadline)  
12-10-05 (11-4-05 registration deadline)

I hope that the year has started well for each of you. I know that it is often stressful because there aren't enough of us to go around. Just remember that we are here for the children. Our first Unit 8 General Membership meeting is on Wednesday, October 5, 2005. The schedule for the rest of the school year: Wednesday, November 30, Thursday January 26, Wednesday, March 22 and Wednesday, May 24. Please try to attend.

## In Memoriam - Lucia (LouAnn) Coleman



Lucia (LouAnn) Coleman  
- Unit 7 President

Lucia (LuAnn) Coleman, President of Unit 7 and Unit 7 Director on the STA Executive Board, died on August 12<sup>th</sup>. LuAnn was 52 years old. She is survived by her husband **Bob**, sons **Jason (Patricia)** and **Kenneth** in addition to legions of friends and admirers and the students and staff of Henninger High School.

LuAnn and I became friends in 1997 when I was running for president of STA. She was determined that Unit 7 members' concerns should get the same attention that other unit's issues did. She worked hard to represent her members and demanded that the union leadership work for that, too.

With teamwork, but with LuAnn setting the course, we worked to make the district act respectfully towards food service workers, beginning with LuAnn. She won the right

to visit other kitchens during the work day to trouble shoot and make sure things were set right. She became a full partner in the union. She joined the picket line when the other units were out of contracts, even when Unit 7 still had one. She rounded up (an offer you couldn't refuse) a team of dedicated negotiators who put together two great contracts. She was also chosen as the SRP of the year in 2000 by NYSUT.

How many of us knew that before 2001 Unit 7 workers didn't get paid over school year vacations? LuAnn set out to change that and she did. She and the negotiating team won the unwinnable- paid vacations for Unit 7 and improved salaries and working conditions. Split shifts were abolished on her watch. LuAnn also helped establish regular Unit 7 labor/management meetings.

LuAnn had a memory like a steel trap. If you asked her what was going on in any kitchen in the district, she could tell you. She knew which members worked where and how the managers and school staff treated them. She knew if management was cutting hours or skimping on staffing. She took that information to the labor/management meetings to make things at work better for the members and the students. She held people to tough standards- even the superintendent. She was relentless in her mission to call attention to "select privilege" and to get everyone treated fairly. And while LuAnn was not a saint, when she was in your corner, you felt like she was!

She was nominated for and won NYSUT's SRP of the Year in 2000. Accompanied by her son Kenny, she went to the NYSUT convention in New York City to accept her award. She looked gorgeous and her fantastic speech won the delegates' hearts! They laughed and applauded her words and her work. What an honor for LuAnn and for STA, that one of our own had made the big time at the NYSUT convention! She'd left her mark on the Big Apple.

And isn't that what life is all about? Leaving your mark, making the world a better place for those around you? Ask Bobby and Jason and Kenny and the rest of her family. Ask Unit 7 members and those who knew her. And then, when LuAnn was dying, she helped us learn how to accept that. She told us that she would miss us and let us share our sadness that she was going. She sought out her friends who didn't know what to say and helped them cope with her dying. She was helping us right to the end.

LuAnn was a force of nature- pure and simple. We will miss her.

--Mckenna

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### Open Letter to All STA Members:

#### **WANTED: Your views on working in Syracuse Public Schools, your opinions about the Syracuse Teachers Association**

The new year is a perfect time to take stock, make resolutions and then get on with making the future better than the past. So it is, too, with the Syracuse Teachers Association.

STA is looking for a representative sampling of teachers and school employees to participate in 90-minute, informal discussion groups to help sharpen your union's understanding of the issues you face on the job and how STA can better represent your interests through contract negotiations, lobbying and our interactions with school administration, parents and taxpayers.

STA is looking for a total of 135 STA members; Teachers, SRPs, nurses, and food service to participate in this research. Using a random selection process, members will be called and asked to participate in this research. Through a generous grant from our local and our state affiliate, those who participate will be provided dinner and compensated \$35 for their time.

This is not a membership/volunteer recruitment activity. Although participants will be asked their opinions on becoming involved in STA, they are in no way obligated, and will not be pressured, in any way to do so. Primary topics for the discussion groups are job-related issues, sources of job satisfaction/dissatisfaction, and your suggested priorities for STA.

The information provided will help STA make important decisions about its priorities and how we can make the union more effective by uniting more teachers and school employees beneath its banner.

The information gained from this research will be especially important as we:

- ⊙ **Continue negotiation of the contract that defines our salaries, benefits and working conditions:** Currently, our ability to improve upon this contract is largely contingent on the district's perception of how strongly STA is supported by teachers and school employees.
- ⊙ **Provide representation to individual teachers and school employees:** Whether it is through the grievance procedure, through the legal process or through other, more informal forms of assistance to resolve work-related issues, STA will strive constantly to be the best and most loyal friend that we teachers and school employees have throughout our careers.
- ⊙ **Advocate for teachers and school interests externally:** In addition to working on behalf of teachers and school employees within Syracuse Teachers Association, STA will be working to spread the word externally about the conditions we and students face in our schools and the support we need to ensure quality and high achievement.
- ⊙ **Expand union-sponsored programs and activities:** STA is hoping to provide more opportunities for teachers and school employees to get together socially, to receive quality training and professional development, and to make more of an impact in our community through involvement in various public-focused causes and activities.

Once again, I encourage you to support these efforts and I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kevin Ahern  
STA 1st Vice President

David Kirby  
STA 2nd Vice President

# Our Union - The Benefits of Belonging



STA's vigor is derived from the collective energy of our 3400 members who make up 80% of the district's workforce. In turn, STA members are among the 500,000 members of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the 1.3 million American Federation of Teachers members. Each entity uses our "strength in numbers" to improve the working and learning conditions of the various professions represented and our students.

A 15 member Executive Board, which is representative of our 4 bargaining units, governs the STA. The board makes policy recommendations that are then brought to the monthly meeting of building representatives called the Representative Assembly. Here these and other recommendations are discussed and acted upon.

So, what have been the benefits of union membership in the STA? This year every union member is working with a current contract, a copy of which will be in the schools in September. The Unit 1 contract is online at [syracuseteachers.org](http://syracuseteachers.org). Other unit contracts will be added this year. All of our contracts were completed with the combined forces of the negotiating teams and 1200 members marching on the Board of Education to urge completion. These hard won contracts contain benefits and improvements gained through negotiations.

## We all benefit from:

### Salary and Benefits

*A competitive salary schedule for Unit 1 members that brought our salaries from the bottom third of the county to the middle third*

Higher salaries for members in all units with increased longevities to reward service  
Health, dental and vision care benefits at reasonable cost  
More generous uniform allowance and vacation pay for Unit 7  
*More equitable contracts that provide the same bereavement benefits for all members*

Foul weather gear for Unit 8 bus monitors  
Payroll deductions for NYSUT insurance (at reduced group rates) and other benefits  
Twenty-five paycheck option for Units 1, 8 and 10  
Payroll deductions for VOTE-COPE, TSA's, 125 Plan, NYSUT insurance and other benefits

### Your Work Day and Year

A standardized work year with paid holidays and school recesses  
A 30-minute duty free lunch

Unit 1 work day: a 6 hour elementary work day (exclusive of lunch)  
a 6 hour and 25 minute secondary work day (exclusive of lunch)  
a 5 period maximum class load with 1 duty period for secondary unencumbered planning time  
**one faculty/staff meeting per/month**  
**one mandatory night meeting per year**  
Unit 8 and 10 work day: 6 hours and 30 minutes (exclusive of lunch)  
Unit 7 work day determined by hours worked

### Professional Development and Professional Working Conditions

Compensation for Professional Development (19 columns)- Unit 1  
Inservice benefits for Unit 8 Teaching Assistants  
Career Ladder in Units 8 and 10  
Professional Evaluation model for Unit 1 including Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)

Curriculum Implementation and Support Task Force  
Curriculum Writing and Textbook Selection Committees  
Elementary, Middle and High School Task Forces  
Discipline Task Force  
STA, NYSUT and AFT professional conferences on a range of leadership and professional issues  
Syracuse Teacher Center (majority)  
NYSUT Education Trust courses  
AFT Education, Research and Dissemination (ER&D) courses

### Direct Member Services

Three STA officers work full time out of the union offices at 909 Butternut Street. Our Labor Relations Specialist and support staff assists us. Together we advise building representatives who provide many services at the building level. We provide:  
Standardized grievance processes for all units including a Stage 3 step that takes matters to the Board of Education prior to arbitration  
Representation for members at grievance and discipline hearings  
Negotiated contracts and other agreements to improve working and learning conditions  
Advice to members of changes in current law or regulation that affect practice  
In selected circumstances, we call on the NYSUT regional office staff for advice and assistance as well as NYSUT's legal staff in special cases.

### Representing Our Interests

A major responsibility of the STA president is to represent our union's interests before the public. This includes attending and speaking at local and state level public hearings and meetings, conferring with elected officials and district administrators.

NYSUT, our state affiliate, works with the State Education Department and lobbies state elected officials on our behalf. NYSUT also produces briefs for local leaders, produces public service announcements and represents members' interests at public hearings. AFT provides similar representation at the federal level.

### Online Information and Support

To stay informed, log on to:  
[syracuseteachers.org](http://syracuseteachers.org) for local union news and job postings in the district  
[nysut.org](http://nysut.org) for information about developments at the state level  
[aft.org](http://aft.org) for national union information  
--McKenna

**To learn more about your union go to:  
[www.syracuseteachers.org](http://www.syracuseteachers.org)**

## Discounts @ Barnes&Noble.com

NYSUT Member Benefits has a new discount program available to members and agency fee payers - an online bookstore offered through a partnership with Barnes & Noble.com Using the link of the Member Benefits Web site, [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), members receive an additional 5% off the already discounted prices featured by the online bookstore. In addition, members receive free shipping on orders of \$25 or more. Orders with eligible products - books, college textbooks, music, videos, prints and posters - will be delivered within three business days of leaving the B&N warehouse.



Watch for VOTE COPE information which will be arriving in your buildings soon.

## From the Treasurer...



In May of each year, the STA Representative Assembly adopts the budget for the coming school year. Included in that document are the dues you pay to help fund our organization. This year, full time equivalent dues are \$609.21 per year. \$250.00 of that amount goes to NYSUT, \$153.00 goes to AFT, and \$185.00 comes to STA.

### STA has set it dues level for the 2005 -06 School Year as follows:

Employees earning \$36,366 and more	\$609.21	\$29.01/ 21 paychecks
Employees earning \$28,000 to \$36,365	\$530.04	\$25.24/ 21 paychecks
Employees earning \$21,000 to \$27,999	\$417.27	\$19.87/ 21 paychecks
Employees earning \$14,000 to \$20,999	\$304.50	\$14.50/ 21 paychecks
Employees earning \$7,000 to \$13,999	\$152.25	\$7.25/ 21 paychecks
Employees earning less than \$7,000	\$ 95.97	\$4.57/ 21 paychecks

**Please check your paycheck closely and call STA if there are any irregularities.**

Ed O'Rourke



## SYRACUSE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

### More Than 2500 Brave the Forecasts

Shakespeare-in-the-Park has just concluded a successful third season with its presentation of *As You Like It* in the beautiful Thornden Park Amphitheatre. Co-produced

by the Syracuse Shakespeare Festival and the Syracuse Parks, Recreation and Youth Programs Dept., more than 2,500 theatre goers braved the dire predictions of weather prognosticators to enjoy the eight performances played over two weekends in August. The only show affected by the weather was the special show for SU students, faculty and staff, scheduled for 8/31, which was washed out by the remnants of Katrina.

Audience members were treated to outstanding, starring performances by **Brian Hensley** as Orlando, **Kellie Ellis** as Rosalind and **Heather Roach** as Celia. Brilliant supporting roles were created by **Jack Wilkinson** as Adam, **Roy van Norstrand** as Duke Senior, **Ian Heitzman** as Oliver and **Anne Fitzgerald** as Audrey. Key actors in the playful ensemble included **Jamie Bruno** as Touchstone, **Bob Brophy** as Duke Frederick, **Tony Bersani** as Jaques, **Nora O'Dea** as Phoebe, **David Hitchcock** as Silvius, **Robert Reid** as Corin and **Dustin Czarny** as Charles.

Returning show sponsors this year were the Syracuse Teachers Association, Geddes Federal Savings and Loan Association, Syracuse Fire Department Employees Federal Credit Union and The Funding Source as well as returning media sponsor, Sunny 102 Radio. New sponsors this year were the Cultural Resources Council and Syracuse University.

**More info? Contact Ronald Bell (Dr. Weeks), SSF Artistic Director,  
315-476-1835; bell444@twcny.rr.com**

--Ronnie Bell

## Unit 10's Health Beat

by  
**Ann O'Hara, RN, BSN**  
President



Hi everyone!! Welcome back! What a wonderful summer. I hope everyone is refreshed and ready to start a new school year.

The STA Leadership conference is coming up on Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> at the OnCenter. There will be some great topics, a delectable meal, a terrific keynote speaker and free parking!! What more could one ask! I highly encourage everyone to attend this energizing and unifying event. It really is a fun evening and a great way to pick up some continuing-ed credits.

Over the summer Health Services has been looking at the issue of head lice. The committee is recommending the establishment of a district wide policy that does not automatically exclude the child with head lice from returning to class. This may make some staff members squeamish. But, a pause to realize the impact on the lives of the affected child both educationally and socially needs to take precedence. Some facts to keep in mind are; head lice do not jump or fly, they do not carry disease, and students have had lice for at least 2 weeks before they develop symptoms. Many educational days are lost to the child whose family has persistent head lice. In the past, more than a few children have had to repeat grades due to absenteeism. They become socially ostracized. There are many negative consequences to this. The child's self esteem plummets, they can become shy and withdrawn. There can also be anger and behavioral issues. Usually persistent lice are found in families that are too stressed to nurture the child properly. Let us be part of a "Community of Caring" to support the children and educate the families until they can take better care of themselves.

*Remember ....no one ever died of head lice!*

*School nurses will continue to screen students with both head lice and "pink eye" to see if they may attend class.*



**Save the Date!!!**  
**Thursday, October 20, 2005**  
**at the OnCenter**

### Our sessions for this event are as follows:

- A Unit 10 Continuing Ed Workshop
  - Unit 8 Workshop
- An air quality workshop for Unit 7
- Components of Positive Labor Relations
  - Your Financial Security - ING
- ER&D - an overview of courses offered by ER&D trainers
- Natur-Tyme Wellness Sessions - Healthy Eating Guidelines and Discovering the Fountain of Youth
  - Peer Assistance Review, Leadership & Reform Issues
  - Demonstration of Alternative Models for Evaluation
    - AVID - learn more, share ideas, what works...

***Watch for registration forms in your building!***