

The **sta** *Open Line*

Affiliated with the AFL-CIO, AFT Local #2999, NYSUT Local #115

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www.syracuseteachers.org

September 2006

Your Vote Makes A Difference Vote on November 7th

Each election cycle, the AFT, NYSUT and the STA offer you information about endorsed candidates and their opponents including voting records on education and labor issues at the federal and state levels where available. It is hoped that this will help you decide who are the most qualified candidates for those of us working in education. You are encouraged to vote for the following endorsed candidates:

Endorsed Candidates*

New York State Assembly

United States Senate



Hillary Rodham Clinton (D)
Incumbent -
100% favorable voting
record

John Spencer (R)
No record
available



John DeFrancisco (R)
97% voting record
State Assembly
50th District

Unopposed

US House of Representatives - 12 bills rated



Dan Maffei (D)
No record available

James Walsh (R)
Incumbent 8%
favorable voting
record



Joan Christensen (D/I)
100% favorable voting
record
119th District

Jaques Zenner (C)
no voting record

Governor - open seat

Neither has served in this position.



Elliot Spitzer (D)
At a September 26th
debate, Spitzer said
he would settle the
multibillion-dollar
school funding law-
suit, and provide
public school stu-
dents in NYC and
other disadvantaged
districts the kind of
support they need.

John Faso
Faso said throwing
additional money
at public schools
- wouldn't solve
anything unless
school spending
was capped as an
incentive to make
districts more ac-
countable.



William Magnarelli (D/I)
100% favorable voting
record
120th District

Unopposed

121st District Open seat - no endorsement



William Barclay (R/C/I)
100% favorable voting
record
124th District

J. Edward Putnam (D/W)
no voting record

State Senate - 49th District

32 NYSUT Bills rated



Dave Valesky (D)
Incumbent
100% voting record

Jeff Brown (R)
2006 NYS Assembly record
93% voting record - voted
against more funding for
CNY school districts in 2004
and 2005.

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*Records available upon request

From the President's Desk... Kate McKenna



R-E-S-P-E-C-T *Find out what it means to me...*

Just before the new school year began, actually right after the superintendent's *State of the City Schools* presentation, a reporter asked me what teachers really need. Without hesitation I answered, "Respect." It's an intangible yet very real element of our professional drive. We want the public, parents, students and our peers and colleagues in administration to think, "Wow, this teacher- this staff- really lifts the aspirations of our students and guides them through their school years to success." This was evident in the video shown at the presentation that day. Teachers and students were the focus because what happens between us is the most important element of our profession. I remember thinking, "Maybe the time has come again for us. Just maybe, the respect for what takes place everyday is coming back."

Professional respect also means shifting from a limited, one-way flow of information, command and control environment. We need to work to establish a culture that promotes thoughtful collaboration leading to participation in program and policy decision-making before the plan is presented as a done deal.

Respect does include tangible things like the tools to do our jobs well- sufficient supplies and materials, textbooks, technology and access to assessment data. And our long-term school renovation will show respect for the working and learning conditions we share with our students. Respect encompasses professional development opportunities that will stretch adult potential.

It seems so simple to say, "Respect what we do. Celebrate our strengths and let us work together to develop better working relationships." Let's keep our focus and make it happen.

Unit 1 Evaluation

There are four alternative evaluation options for tenured unit members (who are not on assistance or corrective action plans). They are portfolio, National Board Certification candidacy process, action research and peer coaching. All are a voluntary way for members to take the initiative for goal setting and growth. Peer coaching is the only option that requires a specific course to be taken. Each school was represented at a refresher meeting this past August and there should be a set of materials available to assist you with your questions.

Leadership Conference

Members are reminded to get their reservations in early for the October 25th STA Leadership Conference at the OnCenter!

Flu Shots

November 1 - 3:00-5:00 PM

\$30 Flu - \$43 Pneumonia
STA Office - x4526

We Are Counting On You to Vote!

The Election Committee was very busy the next to last day of school, June 22, 2006. We counted over 2,400 ballots for the ratification of 4 contracts. Still not everyone voted. We want everyone to have a say. We need an educated membership to participate in a very important aspect of their Union. (*Become involved, run for office, become an active participating member at the Representative Assemblies that meet monthly, have your voice be heard.*)

This will be a very busy year for the Election Committee. We are looking at changes that will enhance the number of people voting in the election. In October the Rep Assembly will vote on a bylaws proposal to move STA elections to the buildings. This will promote 100% participation by STA's 3400 members. Three years ago less than 1000 people voted.

We are going to try to simplify the process yet maintain accountability. This spring we will be calling on all of you to vote. Your participation will help direct the Union. We are counting on you!

--J. Guss
 Election Chair person

Out and About...



PAC Coordinator Dave Kirby, Kate McKenna, Sen. Dave Valesky and Julie Valesky (an Oneida teacher!) met to discuss education funding strategies earlier this year.



Ned Deuel, Kate McKenna, Gwen Maturo, Dan Lowengard

Partners for Education and Business recognized some local students, businesses and educators in May during its annual meeting at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo at Burnet Park.

Tom Mushow, PEB board president, said the awards seeks to increase the quality and effectiveness of school/business partnership activity in Centrl New York. The goal is to help prepare students for careers.

Naef Recycling Announces Recycling Scholarships

Syracuse, NY - Two \$500 scholarships will be awarded in the fall of 2006 to the winners of an essay contest.

One scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior and one scholarship to a high school junior from any high school in Onondaga or Oswego County.

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

Mark Naef, President of Naef Recycling, board member of the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling and a long term recycling activist says, "Consumers play a key role in the recycling process. It's important for the public to understand that what they do on a daily basis at home or school, which might seem inconsequential, can impact massive industrial plants."

Naef Recycling is a promoter of the national "Go Green Initiative" a comprehensive, environmental education program which has been endorsed and is being implemented in 25 schools in the Syracuse city school system. For more information on what these schools are doing go to www.naefrecycling.com

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
- James A. Corbett - 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: Nov. 1, 2006

For more information call 315-463-7266.

Save 10% on Your Auto Insurance

Tuesday, October 17, 2006 and
 Wednesday, October 18, 2006
 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm

Saturday, October 21, 2006
 8:00 am - 2:30 pm

Tuesday, May 15, 2007 and
 Thursday, May 17, 2007
 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Saturday, May 19, 2007
 8:00 am - 2:30 pm

All classes at STA. Watch for more info on
 STA bulletin board in your building.



Member Benefits

Ed O'Rourke, Vision Trust Administrator



STA administers the Negotiated Vision Plan in cooperation with NYSUT Member Benefits. Every member will receive a copy of the Vision Plan Benefit Description brochure in the school mailbox in September.

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. You will log on with your social security number and the first 5 letters of your last name. Follow the "check eligibility" prompts.

I prefer to use my own optometrist/ophthalmologist. How do I claim credit for an out of network claim? Members using an out-of-network provider must pay the claim and submit receipts along with an Out-of-Network Claim Form. Forms may be downloaded following the procedure for checking eligibility above. Click on [Information and Forms](#). Note that maximum benefit is obtained by staying in the network.

Members on Leave of Absence

Members going on an unpaid leave of absence will have their coverage end on the last day of the month in which the leave begins. Coverage will be reinstated when they return from leave. Members have the option of continuing the plan under COBRA, and will receive a notice from STA Benefit Fund detailing COBRA coverage.

Members returning from Leave of Absence should notify the Benefit Fund as soon as they return to work in order to insure timely reinstatement of the Vision Benefit.

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. Questions regarding vision services outside our plan should be made to the Employee Benefits Office and/or POMCO.

Retiree Coverage

STA Benefit Fund covers June 30 retirees until August 31, 2006. Following that period, retirees may opt to continue the plan under COBRA for up to 18 months. Retirees will receive a letter detailing this coverage in late August or early September.

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.

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.

Flex Plan

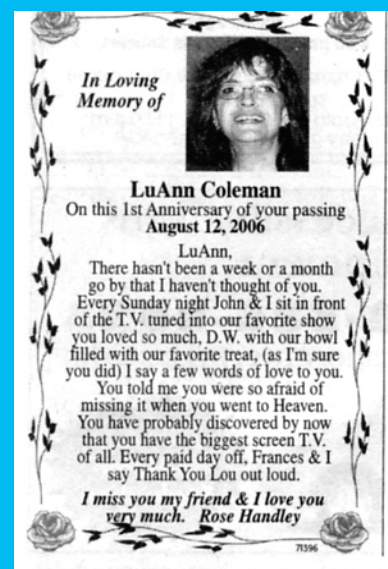
Members who require service more frequently than every 24 months should consider putting funds into the STA negotiated **Flex Plan** (the so-called **125 Plan**). Enrollment forms for this plan generally are available in late November or early December. Details are available from the Employee Benefits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

Questions?

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

In Memoriam...



This loving memorial to LuAnn appeared in the August 12th edition of the Post Standard. Our sincere gratitude goes to Rose Handley (Huntington) for writing such a warm and thoughtful tribute to LuAnn.

--Nancy Peluso
Unit 8 President

Christine Whitford Clyne
Occupational Therapist
Hughes

Ann Heins
Physical Education
H.W. Smith

Florence Blake
Rec Aide
Dr. Weeks

Anna Hunt
Bus Monitor

In loving memory of our friends and colleagues.

Your Financial Documents - Which Ones to Keep, and For How Long

Bank statements	6 years
Birth certificates	Forever
Canceled checks	6 years
Contracts	Until updated
Credit card account numbers	Until updated
Divorce papers	Forever
Home purchase and improvement records	As long as you own the property or are rolling over profits from it into new property
Household inventory	Until updated
Insurance, life	Forever
Insurance, car, home, etc.	Until updated
Investment records	6 years after tax deadline for year of sale
Investment certificates	Until cashed or sold
Loan agreements	Until updated
Military service records	Forever
Real estate deeds	As long as you own the property
Receipts for larger purchases	Until sale or discard
Service contracts and warranties	Until sale or discard
Social Security card	Forever
Tax returns	6 years from filing date
Vehicle titles	Until sale or disposal
Will	Until updated

--June 2006/TIAA-CREF



KEVIN'S NOTES...

Collaboration: Meeting the Needs of the STA and the SCSD

Faced with all the challenges of a large urban school district, the notion that we are all in this together is something that STA President **Kate McKenna** has understood for years and her efforts to engage the SCSD in joint problem solving have met with limited success over the course of several past administrations. Contentious

negotiations, district committees formed and forgotten and a sense that nothing ever changes have been the unproductive reality of the STA's relationship with the SCSD for far too long. But that seems to be changing. Under the leadership of Superintendent **Dan Lowengard**, the SCSD has been demonstrating its willingness to pursue a more collaborative relationship with the STA. Significant steps forward have been taken in contract negotiations, practitioner evaluation and discipline. After too many years of mistrust and false starts with previous administrations, these are welcome developments.

The one-year extension of our last collective bargaining agreement was an example of both parties understanding that our mutual interests can be served when we look at what's best for the district as a whole. The STA's desire to continue our progress toward professional compensation for our members and the SCSD's need for increased health care contributions, while certainly at odds, were not insurmountable obstacles. The need to avoid retroactivity and allow time for more specific and productive ongoing negotiations were the common interests that led to the successful agreement. The willingness of all involved to stay engaged and focused on the larger picture bodes well for the next contract.

The PAR (Peer Assistance and Review) Program's continued progress is another encouraging collaborative effort. Despite a few bumps in the road during the start up phase, the first year went remarkably well. As we expand the venture this year, even more new teachers will be the recipients of the kinds of guidance and resources that mark true professional induction. Teacher quality is the driving force behind this initiative and, clearly, the most important work a school district can do. Recognizing that fact, along with the tireless efforts of the STA led by Kate and the SCSD led by Mr. Lowengard, allowed for the realization of a project that will profoundly improve the professional culture of the SCSD. Better teachers are good for all of us.

The District-Wide Behavior Committee worked throughout the winter and spring to present ten recommendations (listed below) to the Board of Education with regard to the evaluation, development and implementation of a comprehensive discipline plan for the SCSD. The committee was made up of STA members, administrators, parents, students and community stakeholders. The Board approved the committee's recommendations in May and the real work is beginning now. Several sub-committees have been formed (if you're interested in serving on one, call the office) and are being co-chaired by the STA and the SCSD. I'm co-chairing the "rules" committee along with Steve Gramet, Director of Pupil Services. These inclusive groups will determine the behavior policies and procedures that affect us all. By partnering in this work with the STA and other stakeholders, the SCSD has shown that we are indeed all in this together.

There are many important issues remaining that will require much work. The payroll problems that have plagued us for years, although improving, need, at long last, to be finally resolved. Professional development throughout the district remains unfocused and inconsistent. Too many schools are in need of improvement and graduation rates are far too low. Our Building Committees in many schools are ineffective or not functioning at all. These problems will require the kind of cooperation and effort shown in the above examples to solve — the STA and the SCSD working together because we really are in this together.

Welcome back!

--Kevin Ahern

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY-WIDE BEHAVIOR COMMITTEE

1. Research, identify, implement and evaluate methods to **enhance adult commitment** to behavior and discipline, and to increase **parent presence** in school through innovative means, such as social events.
2. Collaborate with community-based partners, businesses and institutions of higher learning to offer high-quality, intensive and sustained **professional development**.
3. Review, reevaluate, revise and **consistently enforce the Code of Conduct** and SAVE policy.
4. Develop and implement strategies and procedures to hold administration, staff, parents and students **accountable** for behavior and discipline.
5. Establish a **concise list of understandable, non-negotiable rules** of behavior, translated into as many languages as necessary, and use a variety of media to disseminate the rules.
6. Research, identify, consistently implement and evaluate effective **alternative programs** and strategies at all grade levels.
7. Establish **early intervention programs** for families and students who are experiencing behavior and/or attendance issues in grades preK-5.
8. Educate the 'whole' child, **teaching life and social skills** through consistent and comprehensive implementation of research-based, effective programs.
9. Explore the feasibility of establishing and scheduling time for enhanced collegial interaction among teachers and other **professional staff**.
10. Provide adequate **resources** to support all behavior-related programs and initiatives.



RETIREE NEWS

Have you visited the NYSUT website and checked out the Retiree Services link? You can download the Health and Wellness Directory which includes a lot of valuable information. The following is an introduction to the document:

On behalf of the NYSUT Board of Directors, we are pleased to offer this Health and Wellness Directory. In this age of advanced medical technology, increased life expectancy and the evolving face of retirement as a period of great growth, activity, and vitality, our union remains committed to enhancing the lives of our retired members. The collaborative effort of the NYSUT Retiree Services and Social Services units in researching, writing, and publishing the Health and Wellness Directory is yet another example of that ongoing commitment. This Health and Wellness Directory is designed to offer you resources to help plan, enhance and enrich your retirement experience and as a quick resource to find needed health-related information and services. The publication is organized into two main parts: an annotated bibliography of health and wellness resources and a resource directory containing contact information where members can find further information on selected health and wellness topics.

The annotated bibliography has been well-researched, carefully screened, and reviewed by a group of fellow NYSUT retirees. These retirees volunteered their time and expertise to review selected resources and offer feedback. Their assistance in evaluating the usefulness and readability of these materials was invaluable.

In addition, this booklet has a fairly comprehensive resource directory containing contact information for selected topics organized into categories: Health and Quality of Life Issues. Though this edition contains a fairly comprehensive listing of health and wellness resources, it is far from a complete listing; NYSUT hopes to update and expand these offerings in future editions. A tear-off page has been provided for readers to suggest topics/resources or to give feedback to be considered in future editions. In solidarity, we offer our continued best wishes for an engaging, healthy, and most enjoyable retirement.

--NYSUT Retiree (NYSUT website)

Labor Relations Summary

by *STA Labor Relations Specialist*

Heather Sponenburg



A Note to all Non-Tenured Teachers

Did you know that you are required to teach at least 40% of your time in your tenure content area to accrue time toward tenure? This fact is very important to consider if you have accepted a non-traditional teaching assignment, i.e. *AVID* or any other Special Assignment, including *AIS* positions. If you find yourself in this position, please give us a call. If you are asked to spend more than 40% of your time teaching in a non-tenure area, please think about the consequences before you accept the position.

Testing

With the plethora of testing around the district please remember that it is never acceptable to give answers to students. We often hear complaints of poorly written exams; content the students are not aware of, etc... Content problems need to be brought to the attention of the administration before, during or after an examination. Faculty may discuss exams after the fact and ask the administering agency to curve the exam or exclude poor questions. Giving answers to students is not acceptable. This is a timely topic for building committees to discuss early in the year and disseminate procedures to the building staff.

Health Benefits Committee/POMCO

All STA units have negotiated a seat on the Health Benefits Committee. The HBC hears second step appeals regarding claim denials from both the Health and Prescription drug plans. The HBC as a whole decides whether appeals should be upheld or reversed. One thing we often see as part of an appeal is the members' indication that a doctor said the procedure was covered or the doctor got approval. **You, the member, must take responsibility for your own health coverage.** It is not enough that your doctor said it was covered. You must gather all the pertinent information regarding your procedure and you need to check with POMCO and see if it's covered. Your health care provider does not know the specifics of your plan, POMCO does. Even if your procedure does not require pre-authorization, it would behoove you to call POMCO and discuss the procedure. Find out what you need to know, what questions you have to ask and what other information you need. Do not rely on someone else to determine whether the procedure is covered. Make notes of your conversations with POMCO representatives, document all your phone calls and retain all of your paperwork until the procedure is paid for.

STA Leadership Conference

We are very pleased with the number of programs we are working on for this year's leadership conference. Of note to the Social Workers, we have invited the Honorable **Michael Hanuszczak**, Family Court Judge, to discuss the family court system in Onondaga County and changes regarding PINS petitions. We have also invited the Central New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (CNYCOSH) to discuss health and safety issues in the work place including proper lifting techniques. With regard to either of these programs, if you have a specific question or topic you would like addressed, please contact me at STA and let me know.

On a personal note, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that I am leaving STA to accept a new and challenging position within NYSUT. Though this change is effective immediately, I will remain in the STA office for the next few months to help with this transition. It has been a pleasure working with all of you.

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.

Editor In Chief: Kate McKenna: mckenna@syrteach.org
Managing Editor: Cathleen A. Danboise: cdan@syrteach.org

Contributing Writers:

Nancy Peluso - Unit 8 President & STA 4th Vice President (STA)
Kevin Ahern - Unit 1- STA 1st Vice President (STA)
Bernard Washington - Unit 7 President (Fowler)
Ed O'Rourke - Unit 1 - STA Treasurer & Vision Admin.(STA)
Heather Sponenburg - LRS (STA)
Kenzie Miller - Unit 1 (Lincoln)
Ann O'Hara - Unit 10 (Dr. Weeks)
Joanne Heisler - STA Retiree

Expanding Horizons Grants Available

The Expanding Horizons Grants Committee (EHG) is pleased to announce to all Syracuse City School District teachers that funds are still available for the '06 – '07 school year. The Grants committee has awarded over \$22,000 since April, 2005, and congratulates the staff members who have taken the time to submit applications for exciting and creative field trips.

The committee has been meeting with other funding agencies to augment the state funds from **Assemblyman Magnarelli**. Additional requirements to the application process must be in place this year in order to generate more funds. By adhering to the following guidelines, the committee will be able to expedite your proposal:

- Be sure to use an updated form dated '06 – '07 on the STA website (www.syrteach.org), and send 4 copies to STA offices with 4 copies of the SCSD Field trip packet at least three weeks before your event.
- Maximum award is 50% of the overall cost of the trip; the maximum grant is \$500 and trips must be limited to the Central New York area. (In-building trips which could involve guest authors, artists, performers, etc. are a good opportunity to eliminate the spiraling cost of bussing.)
- The follow-up materials for evaluation have been included with your application on the website. Having this form ahead of time lets you know what information the committee needs for its follow-up reports.
- Check "school funds" in the appropriate spot on the SCSD Field Trip form

--Karen Magnarelli, Chairperson of EHG



National Down Syndrome Society Buddy Walk

Sunday, October 1, 2006

Long Branch Park in Onondaga Lake Park, Liverpool

Festivities and free picnic lunch to follow the walk!

Registration begins at 10:30 a.m.

Walk begins at 11:30 a.m.

For more Information call Shari Bottego at 6824289 or Patti McKeon at 452-1209. On the Web contact dsaofcny@aol.com

This walk does not seek pledging sponsors. It is a walk to simply raise awareness of Down syndrome.

2007 Disney Teacher Awards Nominate an Innovative Teacher

Each year Disney presents innovative teachers with the Disney Teacher Awards in celebration of their creativity, innovative teaching methods, and ability to inspire students while actively engaging them in learning. Winners of the awards are chosen from more than 50,000 nominations nationwide.

Each honoree receives \$10,000 from The Walt Disney Company and a trip to Disneyland in Anaheim, California, for a week of festivities that includes an awards gala, professional development, and fun in the theme park. In addition, each honoree's school will receive \$5,000 from Disney.

Nominations will be accepted **August 15-October 15, 2006.**

To learn more about the awards or to nominate someone, see the Disney Web site.

<http://disney.go.com/disneyhand/learning/teacherawards/>

--Information taken from NEA website (www.nea.org)

A New United NYSUT Looks to the Future

After more than a decade of deliberations, it all came down to a pair of signatures on a document as the presidents of NYSUT and NEA/NY signed the historic agreement unifying the two statewide unions as of Sept. 1.

“Unification fulfills our vision of one unified and powerful statewide advocacy organization for all teachers, higher education personnel, school-related professionals and health care professionals in New York state,” said NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi.

Former NEA/NY President Robin Rapaport, now a NYSUT vice president, said he was proud to be part of an agreement that makes labor history not only in New York state, but also nationwide.

Now representing more than 575,000 professionals in education and health care, NYSUT becomes the largest union in New York state.

Rapaport and Iannuzzi received a standing ovation from representatives of their respective unions who attended the ceremony Aug. 9 at NYSUT headquarters, just prior to a meeting of the union’s Board of Directors.



NYSUT officers, from left, Alan Lubin, Robin Rapaport, Maria Neira, Dick Iannuzzi, Kathleen Donahue and Ivan Tiger.

Under the agreement, NYSUT will be affiliated at the national level with both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. NYSUT members will receive publications from both organizations.

If NYSUT were an international union, Iannuzzi noted, the unification agreement would place it as one of the largest such bodies in the world.

Begun under NYSUT President Emeritus Tom Hobart, the lengthy unification negotiations culminated over the past year, with the boards of both unions recommending approval.

Delegates for both unions overwhelmingly endorsed that recommendation at their respective statewide conventions in Rochester in the spring.

“We welcome our 35,000 sisters and brothers coming on board from former NEA/NY locals,” Iannuzzi said. “I know they will be pleased at the breadth and scope of services NYSUT has prepared to offer them.”

Even before the unification papers were signed, Iannuzzi was in the field on a mission of unity, bringing moral - and financial - support to NEA/NY and NYSUT members hard hit by June flooding ([see related stories](#)).

--NYSUT website

New Year’s Resolutions: Pay Yourself First

By Dan Kuehn

The new academic year is a good time to make a few “new year’s resolutions” about how you handle your money and how you can become a better saver and investor. This column is about money—your money: how to keep more of what you make and how to make more from what you keep. The focus will be on investing strategies and pitfalls, as well as ways to save for long-range goals. Most people need encouragement to be confident that they can meet the universal goal of a comfortable retirement, no matter how much or little they earn.

You don’t have to look very hard to find research showing that Americans don’t save enough and lack basic financial knowledge. Many don’t know how much they need to save to reach their goal of buying a first house, sending their kids off to college or retiring at an early age. Getting over that first hurdle—taking charge of their financial future and kick-starting their plan—eludes many Americans.

It seems like there is always something more pressing than reading how-to books or articles about money management. The kids need braces; the brakes go out on the car; a home repair puts you behind the eight ball in saving and investing; or credit card debt has you swamped.

Well, let’s start with a couple of basics.

Resolution No. 1: Where can you get your hands on a little extra cash to start a savings plan? Many, if not most, education employees are fortunate to receive annual raises. Whether you call it an increment, a step adjustment, COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) or a longevity raise, follow this rule: You lived without it last year, so resolve to put it aside this year. Save it before you can spend it. Pay yourself first. Sign up for automatic deductions through your payroll department. If you can, cut back on a few “extras” and add that amount to your plan.

Where should you put the money you save this way? Someplace you won’t be tempted to tap into. Open a money market account with one of the big discount brokerage firms, start an IRA, buy shares at the credit union, open a 403(b) plan through the payroll department, even order U.S. Savings Bonds—anything to get you started. Your first goal should be to have an emergency stash equal to six months of take-home pay.

Resolution No. 2: Pay off your debt. The greatest threat to your long-range financial health is accumulation of debt—particularly credit card debt. The added cost of late-payment penalties, interest accumulation and new debt taken on to replace the old, has led to a stunning statistic: About 43 percent of American families spend more than they earn each year.

The average household carries almost \$8,000 in credit card debt. At 17 percent interest and a minimum payment of \$115 per month on that balance—and assuming the card is never used again—the balance would be paid in full in March 2030!

Saving for short-term goals and investing in the stock market (either directly or through no-load mutual funds) is the only way you will be able to prepare for your

own retirement. Many people are skittish about investing. They think the stock market is a foreign land where inhabitants speak a kind of dialect that only the initiated can understand. Perhaps they have been raised by parents or grandparents who have handed down a fear of stocks based on Depression-era fears and experiences. Too bad.

The history of the market is one of ups- and downs, for sure. But even through corrections and bear markets (when the market valuations drop more than 10 percent), stocks of U.S. companies have been the most predictable vehicle to grow savings and beat inflation.

So, if you want your money to grow, you simply have to resolve to get over your fear of the stock market. Today, more Americans—upward of 78 million people—invest in the stock market than own pets or have college degrees. The popularity of the market has reached almost half of all U.S. households (more than have children at home). It can’t be that hard.

If you think that your state retirement pension plan is going to keep you in the lifestyle you expect to enjoy after years in the classroom, think again. At best, it will provide only a subsistence living, and you will be looking for ways to augment your income after you retire. Can you say, “Want fries with that, mister?”

Don Kuehn is a retired AFT Senior National Representative. This column is intended to increase knowledge and awareness of issues of importance to members and retirees. For specific advice relative to your personal situation, consult competent legal, tax or financial counsel. Comments and questions can be sent to dkuehn60@yahoo.com.

--AFT American Teacher Sept. 2006 Vol. 91 No. 1

Label

Dues and Agency Fee Deductions September 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007

STA has agreed to a biweekly pay schedule in each of the units represented by the Association. The biweekly schedule will produce 21 paychecks over the period from September 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

The District has agreed that deductions for Union dues/agency fees will be taken in equal amounts from each of the 21 paychecks.

The table below shows the various dues/agency fee deductions to be made from each of the 21 paychecks of STA members during the 2006-07 school year. Note that the amount deducted varies according to the **TOTAL** annual school-year earnings of individual STA members in each Unit represented by the Association. **In no case should a member have more dues deducted than the amount indicated for the member's TOTAL Contract salary, even if the member holds positions in more than one Unit.** An example would be a Unit 7 Food Service worker who also holds a position as a Unit 8 Bus Monitor. If you need to discuss any concerns regarding this dues schedule, please contact me at the STA office (472-6374 or x4526.

STA full time equivalent dues amount \$635.46

The FTE dues amount was adopted by the STA Representative Assembly in May 2006. Base teacher salary is \$36,366.00. Dues categories are based on **Total** annual school-year **Contract** earnings.

Fee	Total	Dues /Agency
	<u>Annual dues</u>	<u>per 21</u>
<u>paychecks</u>		
Unit 1, 7, 8, 10		
Employees earning \$36,366 or more	\$635.46	\$30.26
Employees earning \$28,000 to \$36,365 inclusive	\$551.67	\$26.27
Employees earning \$21,000 to \$27,999 inclusive	\$434.70	\$20.70
Employees earning \$14,000 to \$20,999 inclusive	\$317.73	\$15.13
Employees earning \$7,000 to \$13,999 inclusive	\$158.76	\$7.56
Employees earning less than \$7,000	\$100.38	\$4.78



Get Involved With Onondaga Lake

World Water Monitoring Day - October 4th

The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) sponsors the participation of Syracuse-area school groups in this annual event. Junior high and high school students can gain hands-on experience sampling for temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, and turbidity in Onondaga Creek. The data collected can be entered into an international water quality database. Staff from the U.S. Geological survey and Upstate Freshwater Institute will instruct students in the importance of water quality protection and the science behind water monitoring. Students will also have the opportunity to view the creek's inhabitants, such as fish and macro invertebrates.

Bus transportation to and from your school and Onondaga Creek will be provided. For teachers who classes would be interested in participating, please contact me at (315)472-2150 x25 or by email: onon1@verizon.net. Sign-up is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Onondaga Lake Partnership Environmental Education Fund

The OLP is accepting applications from teachers for small grants (up to \$500) for classroom and field projects to educate students about the environment of Onondaga Lake, its tributaries, and watershed. Please see the enclosed announcement and application for more information.

--Lindsay Speer, Outreach Specialist
Onondaga Lake Partnership

Note: You may access the OLP site at: www.onlakepartners.org/p2101.html or visit the STA website: www.syracuseteachers.org and click on the link to OLP.

What's Cookin'?

Bernard Washington - President (Henninger)



Welcome Back! I hope everyone had a nice summer.

I would like to thank the members who gave up some of their sick days for the Sick Bank. As of this writing we have 40 days in the bank. If any of our other members would like to donate days, please contact Personnel at x4525. Just a reminder, you are only allowed to give up 5 days per calendar year.

As you know, the Fowler cafeteria has been closed due to renovations and the Unit 7 staff has been moved to various buildings in the area. Let's try to make the best out of a bad situation. Remember, *"together we stand, divided we fall"*.

Reminder: Uniform allowances will be given on your anniversary date.

Mark Your Calendar!

Unit 7 (meetings are at 2:30 p.m. at the STA Office)

Executive Board Meetings

- Thursday, October 5, 2006
- Thursday, December 7, 2006
- Thursday, February 1, 2007
- Thursday, March 29, 2007
- Thursday, June 7, 2007

General Assembly Meetings

- Wednesday, October 18, 2006
- Wednesday, December 20, 2006
- Wednesday, February 7, 2007
- Wednesday, April 4, 2007
- Thursday, May 10, 2007 (Nominations)
- Thursday, May 31, 2007 (Elections)



Unit 10's Health Beat

by
Ann O'Hara, RN, BSN
President

Welcome back everyone!

These first few weeks are hectic but I hope everyone is happy and healthy and as glad to be back as I am. You should have noticed that our raise went through. Please

check your gross salary on your pay stub. Remember that our net pay may be a little less because of the extra in union dues and health care fees that we pay in June and September to cover the summer months.

Continuing Ed is starting up September 14th. We have a great slate of health care topics to choose from. Thank you **Sue Zych**. Members please, even if you are normally unable to attend the weekly CE classes, try to attend the STA Leadership Conference on Wednesday, October 25 at the OnCenter. We are eligible for 5 hrs. of Continuing Ed and there is a nice meal and good company. All of it is free---including the parking!! Our Keynote Speaker this year will be **Brenda Mitchell**. She is the president of the New Orleans Teachers Association. She is a dynamic speaker who lived through the devastation of Katrina. When Ms. Mitchell addressed the NYSUT delegates in Rochester this past May, she especially singled out **Kate Mckenna** and the members of STA who were the first to show their solidarity by being the first in the country to send a check for disaster relief. We have a lot to be proud of. Please come and show your solidarity locally. It will be a great evening.

As always if you have any questions or needs please contact me at Dr. Weeks -4091; or Anne Beck at Lincoln-4457

Ann O'Hara RN
President Unit 10



Borders

Educator Savings 25% off
Special Reception Friday, October 13 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM

All Borders stores are participating

October 12 - 17



Report From Unit 8 President & STA 4th Vice President

Nancy Peluso, President

Can it possibly be that summer is actually over? Seems to me the older I get, the faster time flies! Welcome back! I know that you are ready to do your absolute best for the students in the SCSD.

Fowler High School

It is my understanding that breakfast and lunch will be served in the gymnasium and that the custodial staff is responsible for the setting up and taking down of the various kitchen equipment, tables, chairs, etc. Unit 8 members are not expected to perform the duties of a member of another bargaining unit. I realize that we are, by nature, people who want to help others; however, I am advising that you refrain from doing the work of another bargaining unit.

POMCO

During the summer, I was made aware of a situation regarding pre-authorization of surgical procedures that really opened my eyes. You know the drill: your doctor says, "We need to do this procedure." or "We need to schedule that test." You ask if it is covered by your insurance; you are told, "yes" or "Our office will contact POMCO for approval." You are told by the doctor's office that the procedure, test or whatever is covered; you proceed as advised by your doctor.

Then you receive a letter from POMCO saying the procedure or test is not covered; the claim will not be paid. You follow the appeals process and ultimately are told that your insurance does not cover that procedure or test. End of story; even though your doctor wrote a statement indicating he spoke with POMCO and was advised that the procedure was covered.

The lesson to be learned is that we need to be more involved with the pre-authorization aspect of our insurance. We need to understand exactly what medical procedure or test the doctor is prescribing. We need to verify coverage with POMCO ourselves.

Barbara Downs...

Physical Education Teacher of the Year

Barbara Downes (LeMoyne) has been selected as the 2006 New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Inc. (AHPERD) Central North Zone Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year. In a letter from AHPERD to Superintendent Dan Lowengard, AHPERD stated that they are very proud of the teachers in their zone and Barbara represents the kind of individual that makes their subject areas a success.

Barbara was honored at a small reception on September 27 at Rome City School District Office.

Congratulations Barbara!

Worth Noting...

New Orleans Trip Meeting

There will be a meeting for anyone interested in traveling to New Orleans in February to aid on the rebuilding effort. The first meeting will be on Tuesday, October 10 at 3:30 p.m. at the STA office on Butternut St. We will have monthly meetings during October, November and December.

We look forward to seeing you.

--Jerry McCrea, Central Tech



Give Yourself A Tax Break Today!

You have until **December 20, 2006** to sign-up for the *Preferred Group Flex Plan* through the SCSD Payroll Dept. You get 100% value from every dollar you make.

No FICA

No State Tax

No Federal Tax

taken out of your money in this plan! You save 30%-40% of every hard earned dollar. You decide how much money to put in your FLEX Unreimbursed Medical Account, Dependent Day Care Account and/or Premium Expense Account. You use the money during your school's plan year to pay for expenses for yourself, your spouse and your dependents. You pay for health expenses and your money is available from day ONE of the Plan Year. You are required to use all your money in your accounts by the end of the Plan Year. See your Chief Rep for details.

Bus Attendants

In June a couple of bus attendants received awards for perfect attendance for the 2005-2006 school year: **Jean Jones** and **Stephen Kuss**. Kudos to both of you! Perfect attendance is not easy to achieve and certainly demonstrates your dedication to the children with whom you work. **Chris Musial** was the recipient of a special award-**Bus Attendant of the Year**. Voting for this award is done by the bus attendants, making this award a real honor. Congratulations, Chris!

Cafeteria Duty

In recent years Recreational Aide (lunch aide) positions have been reduced due to budget constraints-not because they are not needed. As a result, more and more Teaching Assistants have been asked to supervise students during breakfast and/or lunch. We know that such duty takes us away from our instructional duties, however supervising some students (special needs for example) in the cafeteria is within the scope of our job as TA's. Other duties that are those of a Rec. Aide- wiping tables, etc.-are not within our job description. **Teaching Assistants should not be doing the work of another bargaining unit.** Please realize that there used to be a Rec. Aide whose job was to do what you are now asked to do.

Unit 8 (meetings are at 3: 30 p.m. at the STA Office)

Executive Board Meetings - (Conference Room)

Wednesday, October 4, 2006

Thursday, January 18, 2007

Tuesday, April 17, 2007

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

General Assembly Meetings - (Large Group Room)

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

Thursday, January 25, 2007

Tuesday, April 24, 2007 (Nominations)

Tuesday, May 22, 2007 (Elections)

School Bus Safety

Food (yes, that includes candy) cannot be consumed on the school bus. Distractions-such as balloons-can present a safety hazard. Please bear this in mind when sending students home.

"Making Strides Against Breast Cancer"

A heartfelt *thank you* goes to everyone who "walked the walk" on October 1st to help raise money and awareness!

TA Workshop Schedule

November 8	Instructional Sequencing That Supports Learning
December 5	Study Skills
January 10	Assistive Technology
January 17	Differentiated Instruction
February 7	Frameworks That Address Basic Needs
March 6	Transitions and the IEP
April 25	Small Learning Communities

VOTE/COPE

This year's campaign will be kicking off soon. The theme, *Don't Be a Weak Link*, emphasizes that any organization is only as strong as its weakest link. Contributions to VOTE/COPE strengthen our union. Please keep in mind the importance of a strong union and the differences VOTE/COPE has made in your life.

