

# NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

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### NYSUT UNITED [ September/October 2018, Vol. 9, No. 1 ]

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**Photo Editor:** J. El-Wise Noisette  
**Lead Designer:** Nicole Clayton  
**Art and Production:** Dana Fournier  
**Advertising:** Lori DiVeglia  
**Online Communications Coordinator:** Bryan Thomas  
**Editorial Support:** Julie Malec  
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*Her future looks bright!*

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 46% increase in attentiveness  
 87% participating principals recommend the program  
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 20% increase in graduation rates  
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 33% reduction in tardiness

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## Ads, videos highlight union value

By Kara Smith

ksmith@nysutmail.org

**A** new series of NYSUT ads and videos aim to highlight the value of union membership and to counteract anti-union special interests who are encouraging members to abandon their unions. The “Our Union” campaign focuses on the power of collective strength and the many benefits union membership provides, including a voice and advocacy in the workplace, higher salaries, stronger pensions and better health care.

Scheduled to run on digital and social media platforms through the fall, the first two ads in the campaign were unveiled this spring at the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

The “Our Union” ads complement



the “Our Voices,” video series that features NYSUT members discussing why union membership is important to them. Profiled members include teachers, School-Related Professionals, retirees, adjunct professors and health care professionals.

“As wealthy special interests fight to destroy our unions and the things we value, NYSUT continues to protect the collective bargaining rights that help secure higher wages, quality health care and a secure retirement for our members and their families,”

said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “NYSUT members know that strong unions provide us with a voice in the workplace and in the halls of power. We’re committed to working like never before to encourage every member to stick with our union.”

View the ads at [nysut.org/ourunion](http://nysut.org/ourunion).



**A recent poll by Pew Research shows 55 percent of Americans view unions favorably, compared to 33 percent who hold an unfavorable view. That overwhelming majority knows what I firmly believe:**

**Unions will continue to be the collective voice for working families. Despite the *Janus* decision, Americans and American workers will continue to support unions as the best chance for working families to stand up to inequality, get ahead economically and to have a meaningful voice in what happens to them in the workplace.**



[nysut.org](http://nysut.org)

Check out our new look! The NYSUT website and *NYSUT United* have been refreshed. Visit [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) and tell us what you think.

## COMING UP

**Sept. 13**

NYS Primary elections\* (Voting this year takes place on a Thursday)



**Sept. 14-15**

NYSUT Board of Directors meets, Albany

**Sept. 17-18**

NYS Board of Regents meets, Albany

**Sept. 28-29**

NYSUT Higher Education Policy Council, Latham

**Oct. 12**

Deadline to register to vote for Nov. 6 general elections

**Oct. 12-14**

SRP Leadership Conference, Albany

**Oct. 13-28**

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks take place at locations across the state. See page 19 for details.



**Oct. 19-21**

Community College Conference, Cooperstown

**Oct. 26-27**

NYSUT Benefits Conference, Albany

## ON THE COVER

Albany Public School TA's Carmen Militello (left) and student Aliahna West are ready for the school year to begin. Photo by El-Wise Noisette.

# Youthful activists offer hope for the future

## Students who are too young to vote are inspiring those who can

By Ned Hoskin  
nhoskin@nysutmail.org

**S**anari Ismail is 13 years old. She is changing the world. This past spring, she convinced the administration at her Farnsworth Middle School in Guilderland to allow students to participate in the National School Walkout in the wake of the Parkland, Fla., school shooting tragedy that took 17 lives and injured 17 others. She didn't do it alone. "I did not have the support of the administration, or of the other students," she said, "but what helped me were the teachers, who were not supposed to do it, but who helped me behind the scenes."

Speaking to several hundred educators and union activists at the NYSUT Presidents Conference on Endorsements this summer in Colonie, Ismail urged educators to

help their students who are motivated to take action.

"Give your students a voice," she said. She was one of seven students who presented a panel discussion, "Too Young to Vote, Old Enough to Take Action." They said educators do a lot to help develop young citizens and offered suggestions on even more that educators could do.

"School should be a place where you can develop a political consciousness," said Brooklyn's Genesis Logan, 16, by infusing civics and citizenship into creative curriculum, particularly art, music and writing.

"There's something empowering about being in a roomful of young people who want to change the world," she said.

Jordyn Bucci-Mooney, 18, a senior at Shaker High in Latham and a GLSEN activist, said in addition



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Genesis Logan, a high school student from Brooklyn, talks about the role educators can play in helping students develop a political consciousness.

to inclusive curriculum, inclusive school policies, and safe places for students who are often harassed for their sexual orientation or gender expression, students need supportive teachers.

"You don't have to come into class on the first day and say, 'I am a liberal teacher and I will support you.' That's not what we're looking for.

"To have open discussions in a classroom setting over controversial topics is very difficult, but needs to happen," she said.

Mallory Sunday, 17, from Massena High School near the Canadian border, has gotten involved with the regional "People Project," backed by NYSUT and the Massena Federation of Teachers, led by President Erin Covell.

The project started when area labor unions — including teachers and steel workers — came together to

save valuable jobs for the community at the local aluminum plant.

"I was so inspired to learn that the unions ... had banded together" to help save the community from economic despair, Sunday said.

Also on the panel were O'Shunn Gibson-Henry, of Rochester; Acadia Gilcrest, Jamesville-Dewitt; and Nupal Kiazolu, Brooklyn.

### #WeAreAll18



Students are the driving force behind #WeAreAll18, [weareall18.com](http://weareall18.com), a youth-led, multi-platform effort to mobilize Americans, especially the 7 million teens who have become eligible to vote since 2016, so they get out and vote in the 2018 elections. NYSUT is developing resources and a toolkit to help local unions support #WeAreAll18 voter registration drives in schools before the Oct. 12 voter registration deadline.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

From left, seated, students Jordyn Bucci-Mooney, O'Shunn Gibson-Henry, Acadia Gilcrest, Genesis Logan, and Sanari Ismail; standing, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, NYSUT Executive VP Jolene DiBrango, student Mallory Sunday, NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, and Jonathan Pillot.

# Endorsements hold senators accountable for APPR votes

By Ned Hoskin

nhoskin@nysutmail.org

**N**YSUT is withholding support from every state senator who voted for more charter schools and against reforms to the state's broken testing and evaluation system in the waning hours of the legislative session, but backing dozens of other candidates for state and federal office.

At its three-day Presidents Conference on Endorsements in August, hundreds of local union leaders and political activists endorsed Comptroller Tom DiNapoli for re-election and New York City Public Advocate Letitia James for state attorney general (see below).

NYSUT endorsed 37 state Senate candidates; supported 136 candidates for state Assembly; and recommended to its national affiliates the endorsement of U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand and some two dozen members of Congress.

"In endorsing for state Senate, we stand with those who have stood consistently with us," said NYSUT



Meghan Glieco, Williamsville Teachers Association, shows her union pride.

EL-WISE NOISETTE

President Andy Pallotta. "We made clear to the entire Senate and its leaders that Senate Bill 8992 carried serious consequences. Those senators who turned their backs on teachers and public education — and held students and educators hostage in hopes of dealing for more charter schools — are now being held accountable for their vote."

S.8992 was the senate leadership's "poison pill" version of S.8301,

the union-backed bill — cosponsored by 87 percent of the Senate membership, including most Republicans — that would have fixed the broken APPR program in New York State with no strings attached.

Majority Leader John Flanagan's bill, S.8992, which passed, would give hundreds of millions to charter schools. It will never pass the Assembly.

Those who broke their promise to support the clean bill are paying the price.

Pallotta said candidates who earned NYSUT's endorsement all "showed through their advocacy, their accessibility and their strong pro-education, pro-labor voting records that they are true friends of public education, organized labor and working people. They have demonstrated a willingness to stand shoulder to shoulder with educators to fight for better public schools, colleges and hospitals. We are proud to support them and will work hard to

get them elected."

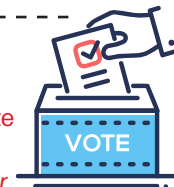
Pallotta noted that NYSUT's endorsement means "an army of members will be knocking on doors, handing out campaign literature and making tens of thousands of personal phone calls on behalf of favored candidates."

See the entire list at **NYSUT.org.**

Watch your mail in late October for NYSUT's invaluable 2018 Voter

Guide, your guide to union-endorsed candidates in the Nov. 6 general election.

**REGISTER NOW!**  
Oct. 12 is the deadline to REGISTER to VOTE on Election Day.



"Candidates know that a NYSUT endorsement means 'feet on the street,'" he said, "the energy of passionate and enthusiastic volunteers who know the issues, vote in every election and get their friends and colleagues out to vote as well."

# Support already making a difference in Sept. 13 primaries

**N**YSUT endorsed New York City Public Advocate Letitia A. "Tish" James in the wide-open Sept. 13 Democratic primary for state attorney general.

James is a lawyer and activist and the first African-American woman to hold city-wide office. She would also be the first woman



Letitia James

elected to the office of state attorney general in New York.

"We are already out there making a difference," said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, on the heels of the statewide union's Presidents Conference on Endorsements in August.

NYSUT volunteers are on the street and

on the phones already, he said, providing the union's most valuable political asset, people power!

James is the only statewide primary candidate NYSUT has endorsed. The hundreds of union presidents and political activists at the conference voted unanimously to support state Comptroller Tom DiNapoli in the Nov. 6 general election.

For a full list of endorsed candidates, including those endorsed in the Sept. 13 state primaries, visit **www.nysut.org.**



# NYSUT women's committee — full steam ahead



PROVIDED

The Rush-Henrietta Employees Association helped feed more than 200 families this summer. Above, Sheila Sullivan Buck, teachers' chapter president.

By Kara Smith

ksmith@nysutmail.org

The NYSUT Women's Committee made its mark in the Rush-Henrietta community this August. Committee members Sheila Buck, Karen Arthmann and NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango helped "kick hunger" by distributing dry goods, produce and school supplies to 124 needy families as part of the Rush-Henrietta Employees Association's Kicking Hunger Food Drive. The trio joined scores of volunteers to pack, sort and distribute food and supplies at the event, underscoring the impact union women make in communities statewide.

"Historically, women have always taken care of those who are important to them," said Arthmann, a NYSUT Board member and president of the RHEA paraprofessional chapter. "Our community is important to us, so we're happy to give back."

"Members from all positions and buildings donated countless hours ... it was an amazing effort," said Buck, RHEA teachers' chapter president. She thanked members Sylvene Goggin and Janice Hargrave for

organizing the event.

Just a year after its launch, the NYSUT Women's Committee already has a lot to show. With 70 standing members, scores of women walked under its banner at women's marches statewide in

January, and plans are in the works for an even greater turnout next year. The group raised nearly \$1,000 for disaster relief in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands through committee merchandise sales, and a mentoring toolkit for younger members is in development.

"We hosted a committee booth at the 2018 NYSUT RA and highlighted stories of inspiring NYSUT women using our 'herstory' article template," said DiBrango, who chairs the committee. Plans for the group's second committee meeting, Nov. 2-3, are underway. Since NYSUT's membership is 76 percent female and includes 924 female local presidents, the meeting will include a Representative Assembly resolution-writing workshop focused on women's issues.

Committee goals include encouraging locals to develop in-house women's committees;

educating female members about the work of the union; highlighting women-specific issues, including inequities in pay, health care and education; and involving more union women in leadership roles.

Follow the committee on twitter, @NYSUTWomensComm and at #nysutwomen. A Facebook group will launch in September.

For more information, and to access posters, handouts and photo galleries, visit [www.nysut.org/women](http://www.nysut.org/women).



Jolene DiBrango

@nysutEVP • Aug 18

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on this date in 1920 giving women the right to vote. We've come a long way, but there is still so much work to be done. #NYSUTwomen are you with me? #NYSUTWomensComm



## NYSUT women making 'herstory'

Women comprise 76 percent of NYSUT membership, making our union sisters a key part of the statewide union's strength and mission. The NYSUT Women's Committee launched the "Herstory" project in celebration of the contributions of NYSUT women.

Get to know your strong union sisters!

### Sophia Howard-Johnson

Sophia is committed to fighting for the rights of union members. After the Buffalo Teachers Federation went more than 12 years without a contract, she was instrumental in helping the local reach an agreement in 2016 as part of the negotiation team. She is also a BTF Executive Committee member, co-chair of the BTF Ethnic Minority Involvement Committee, a sick leave bank trustee and active in Buffalo Believe, an initiative to



Sophia Howard-Johnson

PROVIDED

forge stronger ties between the community and Buffalo schools.

Sophia was one of several Buffalo teachers named in a legal appeal to remove Carl Paladino from the Buffalo Board of Education after he made racially charged statements. Paladino was removed from the board last year.

Is someone making "Herstory" in your local? Visit [nysut.org/herstory](http://nysut.org/herstory) to nominate an honoree.





ANDREW WATSON

NYSUT Board member and Saranac Lake TA Co-president Don Carlisto picks up backpacks donated by NYSUT and WAMC, to be distributed in the North Country.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

NYSUT 2018 Leadership Institute grad Lesli Deninno, Rockville Centre TA, heads to a solidarity walk with NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Over the course of one week, members of the 2018 NYSUT Leadership Institute class got a crash course in labor history, team building and the power of collective action.



FRANK MAURIZIO

From left, NYSUT Board member Mike Emmi and Collin Thompson, both of the Solway TA, prepare to greet attendees at the NYS Fair.

# What we did over the summer



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Local president Bob Ladouceur, Ogdensburg EA, is sticking with our union — and catching up on updates for local leaders.



REBECCA MILLER

Karen Garner, Kingston TF, and Tamara Belcher, Hempstead CTA, learn to use a statapult at a summer STEM institute.



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Members of the Utica Teachers Association team take a break at the Local Action Project summer planning conference.



LIZA FRENETTE

NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, left, talks with first year LAP participants from Erie 1 Professional Education Association.



# Union grant raises awareness on education justice

By Sylvia Saunders

ssaunder@nysutmail.org

Labor and management leaders from Amsterdam, Schenectady and Kingston are working together to help mentors and early career teachers better recognize and proactively address racial and social injustice in their schools.

Using a three-year grant from the National Education Association's Great Public Schools Fund, NYSUT and the three local unions are piloting the program with specialized professional development and mentoring for teachers just beginning their careers.

The program kicked off this year at NYSUT headquarters as district teams heard each other's perspectives on



ANDREW WATSON

In a warm-up activity, Kingston TF President Lauri Naccarato explains a favorite quote.

racial and social justice issues in their schools and brainstormed what strategies would work best in their communities. The overall goals are to help mentors and new teachers connect better with their students; facilitate conversations among educators

about the district's current culture and possible bias; and to embed racial/ethnic justice in schools.

SUNY Albany faculty members Alex Pieterse, a professor in educational and counseling psychology, and Kathryn Schiller of the Educational Policy and Leadership Department, provided a taste of what their professional development sessions could look like during the 2018-19 school year, as well as surveys and other assessments that could be used to measure the initiative's impact. Pieterse and Schiller are members of United University Professions, the union representing academic faculty and staff at SUNY.

In addition, experienced trainers from NYSUT's Education and Learning Trust and programs such as the New York City-based Border

Crossers will assist in presenting professional development sessions.

Local union leaders said they liked what they heard so far.

"It's a very non-threatening way to go about opening up hard conversations," said Kingston Teachers Federation President Lauri Naccarato.

"I like how the approach is not about blaming teachers," said Juliet Benaquisto, president of the Schenectady Federation of Teachers, where the district has been working on restorative practices and to ensure disciplinary measures are not disproportionately aimed at students of color. "Instead it encourages you to reflect on your interactions in a thoughtful way and with a historical perspective."

## This is a story about good karma

In an extraordinary act of gratitude, a retired Pearl River teacher has left a very generous donation in her will to NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund — showing just how much she appreciated how the union was there

for her when she needed it herself.

Joan Gallagher, who died in 2017 after battling three major cancers in 15

years, was a social studies teacher at Pearl River High School for 32 years. She was a union leader for many years, actively involved in NYSTA (NYSUT's predecessor organization) and serving as vice president and head negotiator for the Pearl River Teachers Association.



When she retired in 1990, Gallagher returned to her childhood home in Middleburgh to care for her ailing mother. During her many years in Schoharie County, Gallagher faced and overcame several floods in her family's River Street home.

"She always came back stronger and thankful to be in her own home where she could admire her flower gardens," said Nancy Liddle, her cousin and executor of her estate.

When Gallagher died at age 81 of pancreatic cancer, she left donations to several charitable causes, Liddle said. One was NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund, which helps members in need of assistance due to a natural or man-made disaster.

Gallagher knew personally about the union's helping hand when times are tough.

On Aug. 28, 2011, Tropical Storm

Irene devastated much of her town. Gallagher was amazed a couple of weeks later when union volunteers came to her home to help her dig out and clean up.

"So many of us still need so much help," Gallagher said at the time. "I'm so proud to be in NYSUT."

One of the volunteers at her home was Mark Sharer, a staffer in NYSUT's Communications Department.

"I'll never forget it," Sharer said. "Tons and tons of items. People's entire lives, put out on the street."

Sharer recalled how one of the last items he cleaned out of the muddy home was a NYSUT Solidarity Day pin from Sept. 19, 1981 — discovered nearly 30 years after Gallagher wore it. Grateful for the union crew's help, Gallagher let Sharer take the pin as a heartfelt thank you. To this day, he keeps the weathered pin on his office

bulletin board.

"Our generosity as NYSUT members knows no bounds," said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham as he honored Gallagher's donation at NYSUT's Representative Assembly earlier this year. "After living through some natural disasters of her own, she wanted those funds to be used to alleviate the suffering of others faced with similar circumstances."

### HOW TO HELP



NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund depends entirely on voluntary contributions. Donate online at [www.nysut.org/disasterrelief](http://www.nysut.org/disasterrelief). Or, mail your check payable to NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund to: NYSUT Headquarters, Attn: Disaster Relief, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110.

# NYSUT Legal works to protect students, educators with DACA status

By **Wendy M. Star** and  
**Oriana Vigliotti**  
NYSUT's Office of General  
Counsel

Since its inception in 2012, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program has yielded immeasurable benefits for our nation's students and educators. By removing the threat of deportation, and allowing people who entered the U.S. illegally as children to work and attend college, DACA created new hope and a reason to strive for academic excellence in young DACA recipients.

Many DACA recipients have completed high school and entered four-year colleges and universities, and almost 9,000 DACA recipients have joined the education profession. DACA teachers have helped alleviate the shortage of qualified educators, particularly in high-needs schools and communities, and serve as role models for the next generation of students.

Despite the program's overwhelming success, the Trump administration announced in September 2017 that it planned on repealing DACA, thus allowing for the deportation of hundreds of thousands of young people brought to the U.S. as children. In response, several states, including New York, filed a federal lawsuit in New York seeking to maintain DACA and requesting

## Undocumented and unafraid

Lee-Ann Graham, a member of the United Federation of Teachers, shared her story through the AFT Voices series.



Let me tell you something about undocumented people and people who have DACA status.

We are strong.

This country depends upon undocumented immigrants like me. We are woven into the fabric of the nation.

As a paraprofessional, I serve students in public schools—they count on me not only to teach them, but to counsel them, support them and give them strength. Undocumented and DACA-holding immigrants work in hospitals, nursing patients back to health. We teach the children in our public schools, prepare and serve food in restaurants, maintain our public spaces, run small shops and work in big ones, and help grow and transport the food our farmers grow.

an injunction preventing the Trump administration from ending it.

NYSUT Legal collaborated with the NEA and AFT and filed an amicus brief (friend of the court brief) in support of the litigation seeking to preserve DACA. The amicus brief, which highlighted the extensive harm the repeal of DACA would have to the educational community, included

In short, we are essential workers in a vast system that is the American economy and the American social network. And that doesn't even count the money we pour in as we purchase everything from iPhones to eyeglasses ...

I was 14 years old when I moved to this country from Trinidad and Tobago, making me eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals as an adult—had I been 16 or older, I would have missed that opportunity.

I understand what it's like growing up feeling that you are "illegal," persona non grata. DACA turned that around. It gave me opportunities I would not otherwise have had, and opened up my horizons.

Visit <https://aftvoices.org/> to read the rest of Lee-Ann's story.

anecdotes from numerous DACA recipients who, because of DACA, were able to graduate high school, attend college, and become teachers themselves.

NYSUT Legal also reached out to many educational institutions and asked them to show their support for students and educators by signing the amicus brief. This resulted in a

partnership among many unions and state and national school board associations.

In February 2018, the federal court issued an injunction preventing the end of the DACA program and ordered the Trump administration to maintain DACA and continue processing DACA renewal applications. The Trump administration appealed that decision and the appeal is currently pending. NYSUT Legal again collaborated with NEA and the AFT and filed an amicus brief at the appellate court urging the court to maintain DACA.

On Aug. 3, a federal judge in Washington, D.C., also ordered the Trump administration to restart the program and process DACA applications.

These cases will ultimately most likely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. NYSUT Legal will continue to advocate for the many students and educators with DACA status and for expanding protections for all.

## FOR MORE INFO

NYSUT's national affiliates, American Federation of Teachers and National Education Association, have more information and resources on DACA and the DREAM Act. Visit [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org) and [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org).



## NYSUT poster celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month



NYSUT celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15–Oct. 15, with a new poster honoring Lin-Manuel Miranda, an American composer, writer, actor, former teacher and singer best known for creating and starring in the Broadway musicals *Hamilton* and *In the Heights*.

Miranda penned the music, lyrics and originated the title role for both productions. *Hamilton* opened on Broadway in 2015, winning the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the 2016 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album and a record-breaking 16 Tony nominations and 11 Tony awards, including best musical.

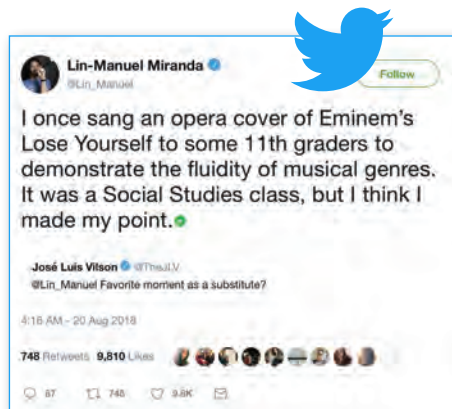
*In the Heights* premiered on Broadway in 2008, receiving 13 Tony

Award nominations and four wins, including best musical. The show also received a 2009 Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album.

Before he rose to international fame, Miranda worked as a substitute English teacher at his alma mater, Hunter College High School in New York City.

Miranda received an Oscar nomination and won a Grammy Award for “How Far I’ll Go,” an original song he wrote for the Disney animated film “Moana.”

In September 2017, Miranda wrote “Almost Like Praying,” a song he recorded collaboratively under the name Artists for Puerto Rico to support relief and recovery efforts in the country following Hurricane Maria.



The poster is available for download in English-language and Spanish-language versions; limited quantities are free for NYSUT members and leaders at the state-wide union’s online Publications Ordering Catalog, [www.nysut.org/publications](http://www.nysut.org/publications).

## Teaching tolerance

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance was founded in 1991 to prevent the growth of hate. The organization provides free resources to educators who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Resources include lesson plans, customizable

learning plans, film kits and printable posters.

Teaching Tolerance also offers professional development resources: learning modules, presentations, webinars and workshops. For more info, visit [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org).



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Take a blissful 7-day trip to paradise and breathe in the warm island air as you unwind on 2 of Hawaii’s most popular islands. Pay your respects at Pearl Harbor and explore Honolulu on Oahu, then hop on the short flight to Maui, the “Valley Isle” to stay beachside and visit the Iao Valley, Lahaina, and the towering Courthouse Square. You will have plenty of time to relax and experience the islands at your own pace, with tours and activities escorted throughout by our friendly local Tour Directors. Price includes inter-island flight to Maui.



[ymtvacations.com](http://ymtvacations.com) Promo code **M6017**

**CALL 1-877-211-1082**

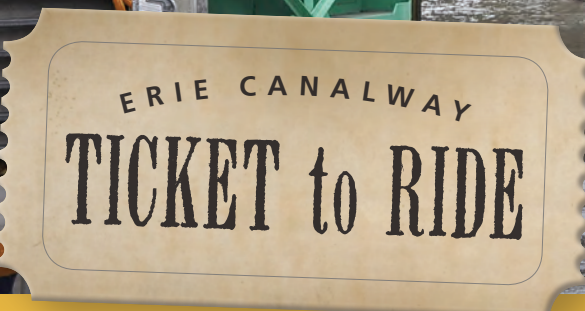
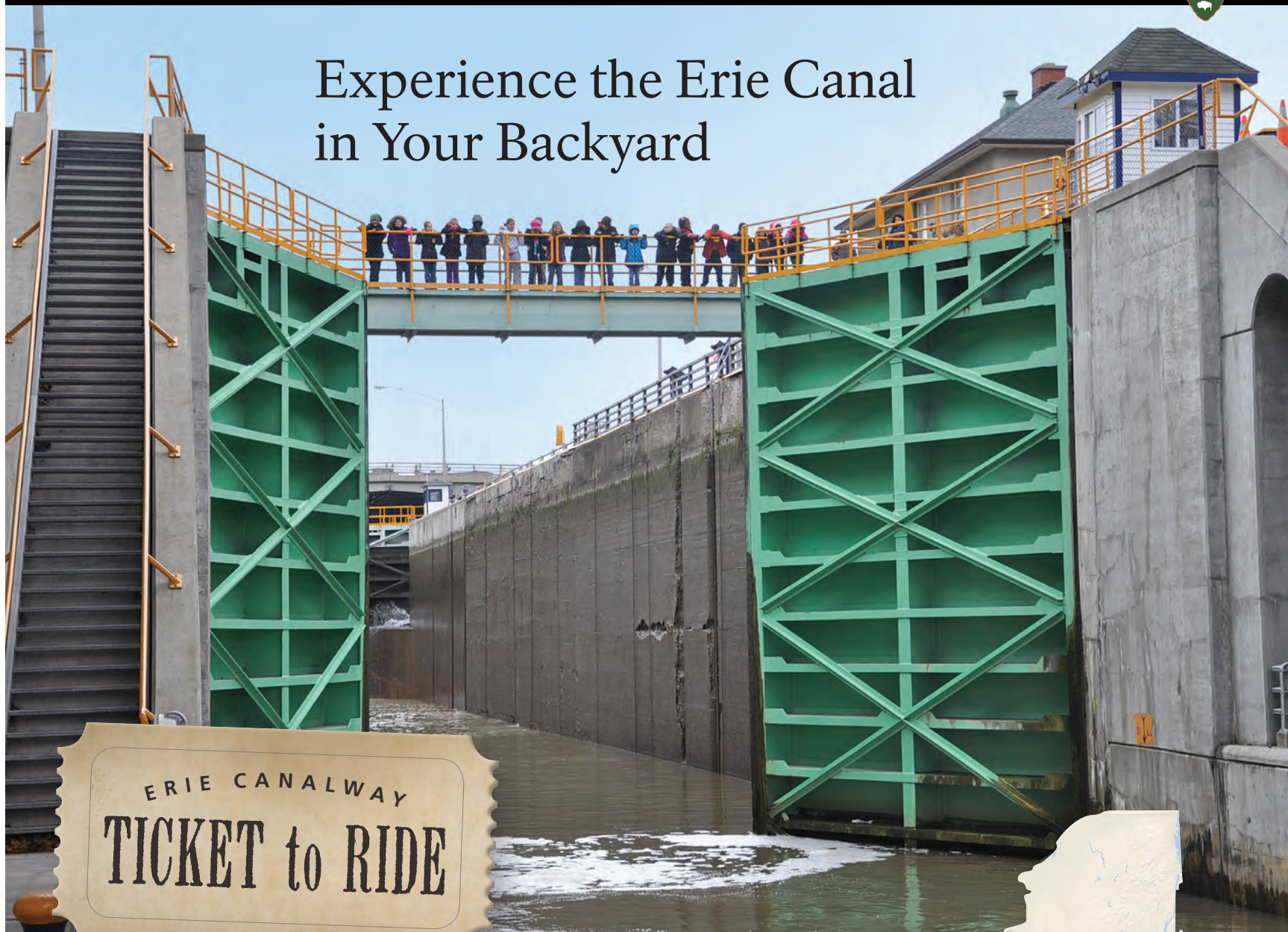
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# Experience the Erie Canal in Your Backyard



Take your class on a first rate educational field trip to the Erie Canal for free. Choose from designated museums and historic canal sites. The program covers both bus and tour fees.

Find free online curriculum materials and register for field trips:  
[www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)  
Or contact Andy Kitzmann:  
[andy\\_kitzmann@partner.nps.gov](mailto:andy_kitzmann@partner.nps.gov), 518-237-7000, ext. 201

Teachers in the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, visit Teaching the Hudson Valley to find educational resources about your region:  
[www.teachingthehudsonvalley.org](http://www.teachingthehudsonvalley.org)



Generous Financial Support Provided by National Park Foundation, Central New York Community Foundation and NYSUT



NYSUT is launching a new initiative this fall to strengthen teacher recruitment efforts and elevate the profession as a whole.

The “Take a Look at Teaching” campaign will target college, middle and high school students; adult career changers; and individuals already working in the education field and encourage them to consider a career in teaching.

The campaign is an effort to counteract a “perfect storm” of factors contributing to the teacher shortage, including plummeting enrollment in teacher education programs and an aging population of veteran educators, according to NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango.

In addition, NYSUT is working hard to change the state’s disastrous APPR teacher evaluation system, which has further discouraged people from entering or staying in the profession, DiBrango noted.

“NYSUT sounded the alarm last year about the looming teacher shortage, and many districts have already begun experiencing recruitment problems in certain subject and geographic areas,” DiBrango said. “We have to act now.”

Starting this fall, the campaign will feature campus conversations, a series of regional summits for students and educators hosted by P-12 and higher education locals across the state.

A new section on the NYSUT website will help candidates navigate the process of becoming a teacher, and provide inspiration for those entering the profession. Information will range from facts about teacher education programs, teacher certification and student loan forgiveness, to educator testimonials about what teaching means to them.

The campaign will also place a special focus on increasing racial and ethnic diversity within the teaching field.

According to the U.S. Department of Education’s annual report, *The Condition of Education 2018*, although nationally 51 percent of students in grades K-12 are children of color, 80 percent of all public school teachers are white. And student diversity is only expected to grow as the percentage of white students enrolled in public schools is projected to decline through at least 2025.

“Having diverse teachers benefits all students,” said DiBrango.

## ELT a tremendous union value for members

**N**YSUT’s Education & Learning Trust courses are not just a bargain — they’re a bonanza providing members with crucial professional development and often a bump in their paychecks.

Ask East Meadow third-grade teacher Alison Gallina, a new ELT instructor.

“I like learning from other colleagues,” said Gallina, who under her contract earns thousands more each year with her 60+ credits earned through ELT. “It’s been such a great experience that I wanted to become an instructor myself.”



PHOTOS: EL-WISE NOISSETTE

East Meadow TA’s Alison Gallina has earned 60+ credits through ELT courses.

Gallina was one of about 60 ELT instructors who attended summer training. Participants also celebrated the 40th anniversary for NYSUT’s professional development arm, complete with birthday cake and goodie bags.

“You are a part of one of the most powerful services

we provide to educators,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “Access to meaningful, quality professional development ranks highly among our members as a key reason to stick with their union. You are on the front lines of this important work.”

ELT’s mission is to offer innovative programs that are affordable, flexible, and research based. Available for all teachers and school-related professionals, ELT programs are modeled on best practices, current research-based strategies and classroom application.

DiBrango noted the union has more than quadrupled its offerings for SRPs, with popular seminars such as “Addressing Aggressive Student Behavior in Schools” and “ADHD Strategies.” DiBrango said too many districts are not providing educators with the



From left, Rockland BOCES Staff Association’s Chris Conti and Hempstead CTA’s Carol Davis are veteran ELT instructors learning about a new course.

professional development they need, so the union is filling in the gap.

In addition, ELT is constantly adding new courses and seminars to meet educators’ changing needs. This year’s new offerings include coursework revolving around the state’s Next Generation Learning Standards, trauma awareness and instructional recommendations for English language learners.

“It’s such a good way to get to know other teachers and all the good things that are happening in classrooms,” said Jacqueline Nett, a global studies teacher and William Floyd United Teachers member.

“It’s teachers teaching teachers,” said Hempstead Classroom TA’s Carol Davis. “We all piggyback off each other — that’s the heart of what we do.”



### DID YOU KNOW?

In most cases, members taking advantage of the discount on ELT courses save more than the NYSUT portion of their dues. ELT offers:

- Courses and seminars that can be used toward the state’s Continuing Teacher & Leader Education professional development requirements;
- Courses for undergraduate, graduate and in-service credit; and
- Offerings to help you meet certification requirements and obtain new certificate titles and extensions. For more, go to [elt.nysut.org](http://elt.nysut.org).

# Partnership is a lifeline for teachers from Puerto Rico

By **Sylvia Saunders**

ssaunder@nysutmail.org

**T**hough he's an accomplished educator with eight years of experience in Puerto Rico, Emil Rivera was a little nervous when he came to Buffalo to be a high school bilingual special education teacher.

"I had my doubts," said Rivera. "I was prepared to be all on my own."

Instead, just five days after arriving from Puerto Rico in late August, Rivera was pleasantly surprised — and immensely grateful — for the immediate support from Gliset Colón from the Buffalo State College bilingual education program and Judith Harris, a faculty member and director of the Tonawanda-Grand Island Teacher Center. It was exactly the kind of welcome wagon he needed.

"I feel like a little boy starting school," said Rivera, as he picked up an Acer tablet and teacher education textbook provided through a regional teacher center grant. He also listened intently as teachers from last

year's program described how the emotional, instructional and technical supports they received were nothing short of "lifelines" for their success.

Rivera is one of 20 teachers from Puerto Rico who were recruited by Buffalo City Schools to fill much-needed bilingual educator positions. While Buffalo has historically had a large Spanish-speaking population, the numbers have grown dramatically since last year's Hurricane Maria. In 2017–18, more than 500 students from Puerto Rico enrolled in Buffalo schools, with many more arriving

over the summer. Statewide, as of the end of last school year, more than 2,500 students from Puerto Rico relocated to New York schools. As a result, districts around the state are struggling with a severe shortage of bilingual educators.

While the New York Board of Regents approved one-year emergency certification for teachers from Puerto Rico and the state had allowed in-state tuition for SUNY and CUNY students from Puerto Rico, these newcomers face a number of challenges to becoming permanently certified teachers.


"It's a very complicated process, with varying individual circumstances," said Colón, who coordinates the college's bilingual graduate certification program. Educators with less than three years of teaching in Puerto Rico public schools (or those from higher education or private schools) must

pass all of New York's certification exams, including the edTPA portfolio assessment — all while settling into a new home and teaching full time. Educators with more experience are exempted from those requirements but need to complete a bilingual extension certificate and, in many cases, earn a master's degree.

"While many of these teachers are highly qualified educators, they are English language learners themselves and the challenges are great," said Harris, who worked with Colón to provide a crash course on edTPA requirements for the newcomers. "They have to work even harder."

Stefany Arce, who is starting her second year as a bilingual kindergarten teacher, said the tablet the program provides is like a lifeline. She uses it to translate her college textbook readings, discussions at faculty meetings and for classroom learning center activities.

... continued on page 17



Gliset Colón, who coordinates the bilingual graduate certification program at Buffalo State College, works closely with a group of teachers from Puerto Rico who are working in Buffalo Public Schools.

# They're coming after us

**T**hat's no surprise. We knew they would. And though they don't stand a chance, that won't stop them from trying. Since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June that public sector unions cannot collect fair share fees, a slew of anti-labor organizations, supported by wealthy special interests, have been working to dismantle union membership nationwide.

Right here in the Empire State, a group calling itself New Choice NY is targeting public employees via multiple communication platforms in an effort to convince them to bolt from their unions.

Meanwhile, the Mackinac Center for Public Policy — a Michigan-based conservative think tank long funded by the family of U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos — has launched a whopping \$10 million campaign aimed at persuading public sector union members to disaffiliate.

And, the so-called Freedom Foundation — a hard-right group bankrolled by the billionaire right-wing activist Koch brothers — have deployed their foot soldiers to labor-friendly states like California and Oregon to persuade workers to drop their unions.

**Beware.** They will call themselves non-partisan and impartial, and claim they just want to provide "accurate information" about your rights. The truth is, they want to further fatten

their wallets by diminishing your rights on the job.

Strong unions mean higher pay, better benefits and improved working conditions. Of course, you already know that — and that's exactly why they are trying to destroy us.

At right are just some of the players aiming to weaken your employment rights, dismantle your benefits and diminish your retirement security.

Don't let them.

**Refuse** to be hoodwinked. In fact, just ignore them. Delete their emails. Hang up if they call. Inform your local president. And tell those union-busters they aren't welcome here.

**Recommit.** Take a stand by joining or re-enrolling in our union.

**Re-engage** with your local. Union membership is an active proposition. Get involved. Attend union events. Take action.

And, perhaps most importantly, make your voice heard: Vote in everything from your local school board race to state, local and federal elections.

Strong unions ensure higher compensation for their members than non-union employees, as well as collective bargaining rights, legal representation when needed, good health coverage and a secure retirement.

**This is our moment.**

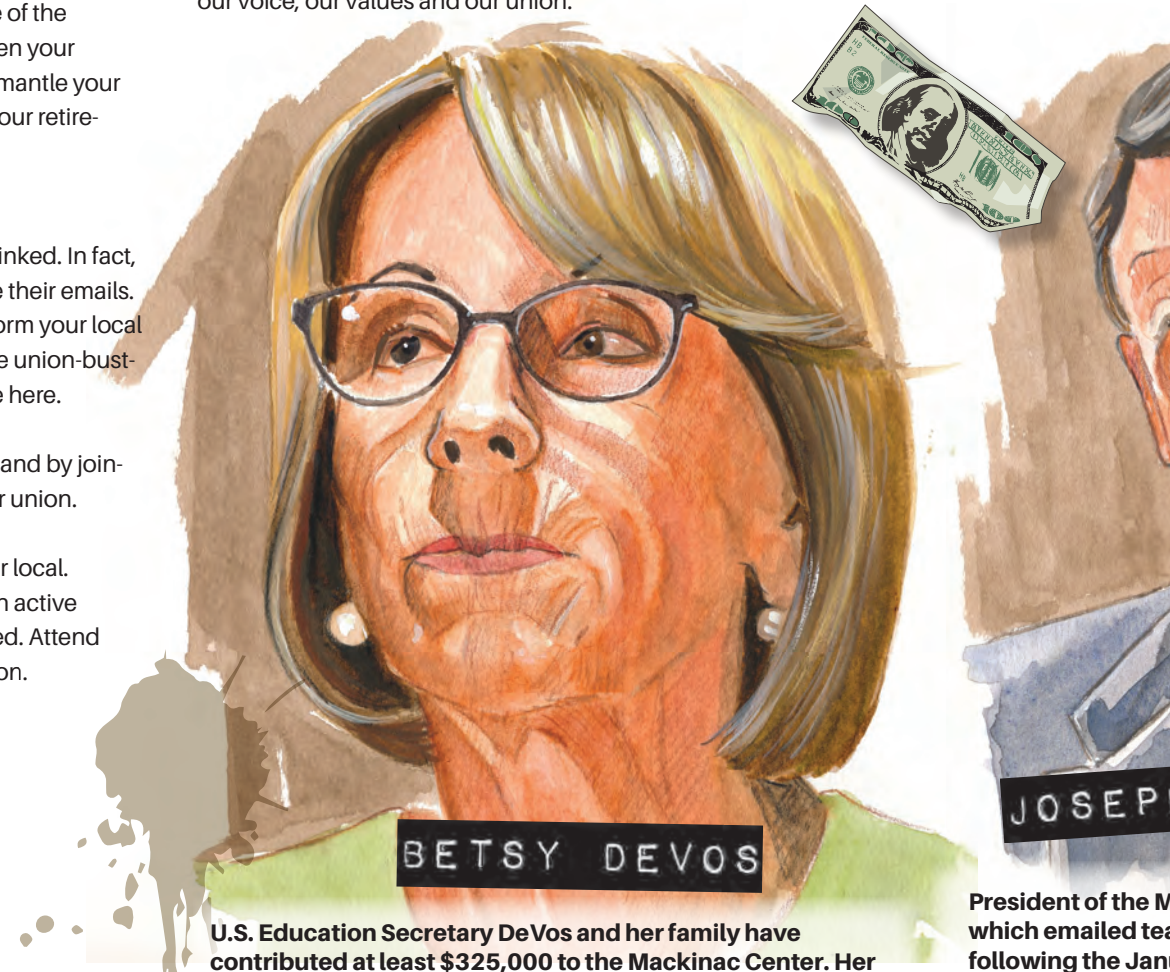
We must stand together to protect our voice, our values and our union.



REBEKAH

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The Mercers are the moneyed inter... Reclaim New York, founded by Tru... Steve Bannon and Kellyanne Conw... NY has attacked education spendi... sued a number of school districts.



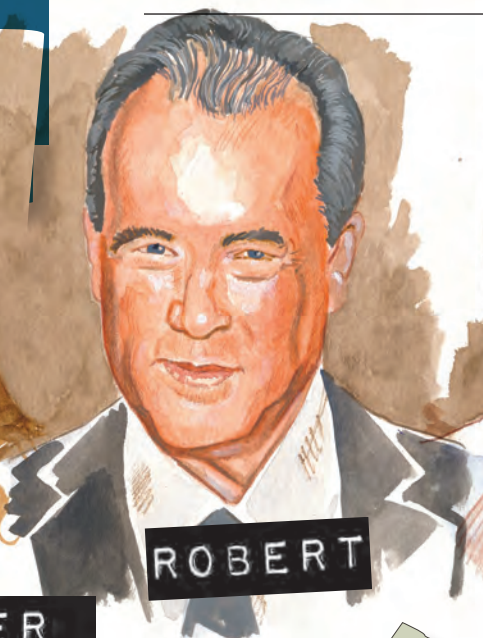
BETSY DEVOS

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U.S. Education Secretary DeVos and her family have contributed at least \$325,000 to the Mackinac Center. Her husband, Dick DeVos, sat on its board.

President of the M... which emailed tea... following the Jan... drop their union n...

ILLUSTRATIONS: MARK JOSEPH SHARER

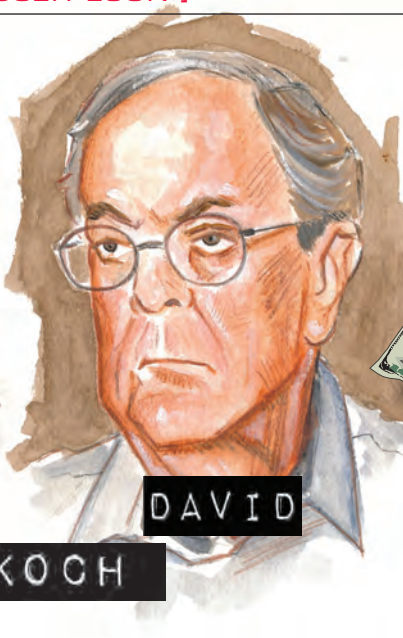


ROBERT  
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CHARLES



DAVID

KOCH

The Koch brothers are a major funder of the Freedom Foundation, which deployed 80 paid canvassers to visit union members in their homes and get them to turn against their unions. Their Americans for Prosperity Foundation is paying for anti-union ads and promoting the Mackinac Center's efforts. They also gave \$250,000 to the anti-union Center for Union Facts.



Anonymous  
dark money  
billionaire  
donors

A roster of billionaires have created or donated to secret, shadowy front groups and non-profits — all with the common goal of weakening unions and taking away workers' rights. Many of these groups fail to disclose their donors.



JOSEPH G. LEHMAN

t of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy,  
mailed teachers nationwide immediately  
the Janus decision, urging workers to  
r union membership.



ROBERT BELLAFIORE

A former Pataki aide and chair of the SUNY Charter School Institute, Bellafiore was the public face of a failed effort to bring voucher-like education tax credits to New York. His New Choice NY group is using Mackinac's professional call center but refuses to disclose the donors behind its operations.



E. J. MCMAHON

Leads New York's Empire Center for Public Policy, with Tim Hofer as executive director. The center has been seeking teachers' email addresses from districts using FOIL requests. Hofer reportedly sits on the New Choice NY board.



## Long Way Down

Written by  
Jason Reynolds

**Recommended  
by:** Nicole

Weimer, library media specialist,  
North Colonie Teachers Association

**Recommended for:** Grades 8–12

**Why I chose it:** This award-winning book uses powerful, beautiful free verse to highlight the tragedy of gun violence and its devastating impact on the lives of young people. Will Holloman's brother was shot while walking home from the store. Driven by his grief, Will takes his brother's gun and heads down eight floors in an elevator with a major decision to make: Should he kill the person responsible for ending his brother's life? That person is on the first floor — the final stop of Will's journey. This book actively engages the reader and keeps you on the edge of your seat waiting to see what choice Will makes.

**What I like best about it:** This book is fast paced and can incite any reluctant reader into reading. *Long Way Down* is one of the best YA books of 2017. I love how the book provides an ending that is open for interpretation. Readers can discuss/debate what choice they believe Will made. Did Will get the revenge he sought, or did he choose to let the cycle of violence end with him?

### How teachers can use this book:

Teachers can use this work of fiction as a tool to start a dialog/discussion about gun violence; gun policy; or how gun violence is all too common today.

**About the Author:** Jason Reynolds is a *New York Times* bestselling author who lives in Washington, D.C. He is a Newbery Award honoree, a National Book Award honoree, an NAACP Image Award Winner, and the recipient of multiple Coretta Scott King honors. For more information, visit [www.jasonwritesbooks.com](http://www.jasonwritesbooks.com).

"Check it Out" features books recommended to teachers and parents by school librarians and other educators. Have a recommendation? Send suggestions, along with your name and local union, to [lfrenett@nysutmail.org](mailto:lfrenett@nysutmail.org).



## Teens face human rights concerns with compassion, determination

By Liza Frenette

[lfrenett@nysutmail.org](mailto:lfrenett@nysutmail.org)

**F**ew people realize that Rosa Parks had attended social justice training on non-violent civil disobedience before she refused to give up her seat on the bus. She was prepared.

Many teens are seeking similar social justice direction in a new era of civil rights unrest.

New York students broke enrollment records at both the Summer Institute for Human Rights and Genocide Studies in Buffalo and the Capital Region Institute for Human Rights Teen Summer Symposium, attending workshops, making art and meeting world-renowned activists.

The institutes are supported by NYSUT, teacher volunteers and donations from local unions and organizations.

Attendance at the Capital Region symposium was up 60 percent, fueled by word of mouth and increased school administration involvement.

"I also think at least part of the growth this year can be attributed to the activism from the Parkland, Fla., students ... and their ability to mobilize," said Kelly Wetherbee, North

Colonie Teachers Association, who organizes the institute each year with colleague Thea MacFawn.

At the Buffalo institute, founded by Springville Faculty Association's Andrew Beiter, attendance peaked this year at 75 students for the five-day program.

"We want students to be concerned citizens, activists and educators," Beiter said. Speakers discussed the Holocaust, war in the Congo, school violence, racial equality and women's rights. Afternoons were devoted to skill building.

"We want to dig deep. We try not to admire the problem — 'Oh, I can't believe it's this bad' — but give them tools to do something," Beiter said.

Those tools include education on issues close to home and across the globe.

"More people are living in poverty today than 50 years ago, by every metric," said Joseph Paparone, a leader in the Poor People's Campaign of the Capital Region.

Nang Attal spoke of poverty and the obstacles he faced starting a school for girls in Afghanistan, his home country. His project, he said, is not a struggle *against* anyone, but *for* a cause. "Education is a sacred

responsibility," he said.

Participants of previous symposiums have taken that responsibility to heart. They learned that, if you walk firmly enough on a path, you will make a vibration. One graduate continues a program she began four years ago, distributing new books to students from struggling families. Another former student spent the summer in Uganda bringing programs into schools created by a nonprofit based out of Saratoga. And yet another student organized a community event to raise money to help a refugee organization.

"What you're doing matters," NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham, who oversees social justice efforts for the union, told attendees at the Capital Region event. "I know this country will be in good hands."

### FOR MORE INFO



Each year the Buffalo institute offers workshops for educators on human rights. One-day events are held in the spring and the fall. The next training is scheduled for Nov. 27. Visit <http://summerinstituteofbuffalo.org>. Info on the Albany-area institute is at <http://capitalregionhumanrights.org/>.

# Getting to know ... Timothy J. Conkey

Timothy J. Conkey is a teaching assistant in the Syracuse City School District. He was interviewed by Mark Warner, president of the teaching assistant unit of the Syracuse Teachers Association and NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee member.

## Tell us about your job and why you love what you do.

When I began my job as a teaching assistant more than 20 years ago, I thought of it as a job only. It was

my first real job out of college, and I didn't know if I'd work a few years, or if it would turn into a career. Over the years, I've worked in many different classrooms, such as English as a Second Language (which is called English as a New Language now), community based, inclusion, regular education and with emotionally disturbed students.

I love that I've had the chance to work with students from different backgrounds and with different challenges. Each student is unique, and it's great to see students learn and grow over the course of the year or several years. As a teaching assistant, I love that I'm directly involved in the day-to-day process of the classroom, and work side by side with the classroom teacher to help students to become successful.

The best part of my job is when a student says, "Thank you for helping me," or when they come back to visit after they have moved on to another classroom.

## How are you involved with your union?

I first became involved in the union when I inquired about being a building representative about four years ago. During that time, I wasn't sure what being a building rep entailed, but I was willing to see what it was about because I like helping other members when they have difficult situations at work.

I now serve as Unit 8 vice president (representing many different school-related professionals titles), Unit 8 director, chief building representative and I am on the negotiation team.

## How do you make a difference?

I make a personal connection with members daily. Whether it's a member I've worked with previously, or a new member to our union, I treat them equally. I encourage members to seek me, or other union members, out when an issue occurs they don't know how to handle by themselves. I listen to their issue, brainstorm the



best possible solutions and give them advice on how to handle the issue. If I'm not sure, I direct their question to someone with more experience.

## Tell us about your community engagement, hobbies.

I try to be involved in the community by attending local sporting events; events that our union is involved with, such as the Labor Day Parade at the New York State Fair; and places where I can spread the union message of solidarity.

### SAVE THE DATES



#### School-Related Professionals Leadership Conference

Watch your mailbox for information on NYSUT's School-Related Professionals Leadership Conference to be held Oct. 12-14, 2018 at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. The conference provides SRP members with professional development and networking opportunities. First time registrants receive a 10% discount. Visit [www.nysut.org/srpconference](http://www.nysut.org/srpconference) for more information.

## Partnership is a lifeline ... continued from page 13



Judith Harris

Then there are the emotional supports. "The trauma-informed care we provide to our students is to some extent what we need to provide for these teachers," Harris said. "Just like the students, these teachers are displaced, too." Colón, whose own family emigrated from Puerto Rico, said many of these teachers

faced difficult decisions to leave their homeland and they are separated from their family. That's why she tries to create a family-like support system and connect the newcomers with essential community-based groups.

Colón and Harris, who are both members of United University Professions at Buffalo State, said the retention rate for the program has so far been promising, with all eight of last year's cohort returning to teach in Buffalo and taking courses at the college this fall. Under School of Education Dean Wendy Paterson, Buffalo State works closely with area

teacher centers, building bridges between higher ed and P-12 educators.

"The support system is working, but continued funding is uncertain," Colón said, noting tuition assistance and state Teachers for Tomorrow grants are in question. While the \$2,200 teacher center grant provided books and tablets for this group, the state cut teacher center funding for this school year.

"These teachers need our help," Harris said. "If we don't support these teachers, we will never be able to meet the needs of these children who are growing in numbers daily."

## School's in session!

Welcome to a new school year. For educators, this time of year signals new beginnings; a clean slate.

Many of you spent the summer learning new strategies, planning exciting learning units and researching texts to introduce to a new crop of eager learners.

Are you a first-year teacher? Bus driver? Adjunct professor? New local president? Entering your last year before retirement?

We want to hear your funny stories — and even the inspirational ones. What are your goals for the year? Share your tips for first-timers, too. Write [united@nysutmail.org](mailto:united@nysutmail.org).



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# Real Men Wear Pink — and raise thousands

By Liza Frenette

lfrenett@nysutmail.org

**W**hen West Seneca teacher Joe Cantafio supports a cause, he goes all the way. His first-ever #RealMenWearPink fundraising campaign last October netted nearly \$25,000 and the title of No. 1 American Cancer Society fundraiser for New York. His pink ties — with a sprinkling of pink socks, pink hats and pink shirts — also helped him place in the top 10 nationwide.

“We had the most people donate,” Cantafio, president of the West Seneca Teachers Association, said beaming with pride. The other nationwide finalists were primarily CEOs and high-powered executives who drew big donors. The money Cantafio raised came from checks in small amounts.

“I’d go to the union office every day after work and see all these checks for \$10, \$5,” he said,

marveling.

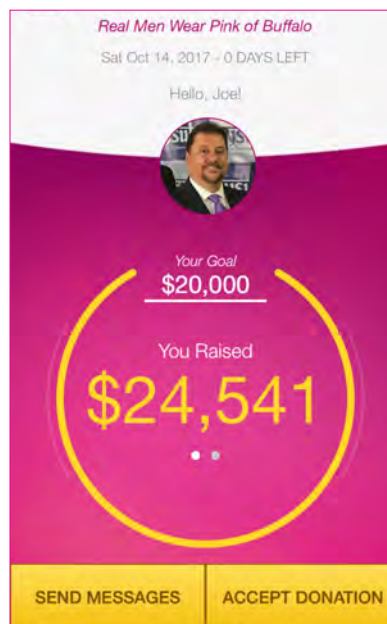
The goal of the fundraising for Real Men Wear Pink was \$2,500 — but it didn’t faze him to add on another zero. The end game was close to the heart for this social studies teacher and wrestling, lacrosse and football coach.

“I did the fundraiser in honor of Sonia Basko,” Cantafio said. A former teacher, NYSUT Board member and NYSUT staff member, Basko died of cancer at age 43.

“She started us on Real Men Wear Pink. She had a vision of finding people to do it for each region; she knew how to pick people out of the chorus. Her greatest trait was bringing people together,” he said. “We were TEAM SONIA. I did it in her memory and her honor.”

Cantafio wore pink every day for the month of October, took a picture of what he was wearing, and posted it on social media.

His efforts were noticed. Sheila M. Meegan, the West Seneca town



supervisor, declared Oct. 14, 2017, Joe Cantafio Day in the town.

“Every year from now on I will do a fundraiser for something on that day,” he said. He has agreed to participate one more year for Real Men Wear Pink.

“Joe did an amazing job of organizing and raising awareness,” said NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham. “His compassion and spirit are both inspiring and infectious. We are delighted he once again chose to be our face and leader, and we expect great things from him.”

There is hope for more men in pink to come forward — and maybe challenge Cantafio for his title.

“We know there is someone out there whose local and community can possibly raise more than Joe in our fight against cancer,” said Paul Webster, NYSUT community liaison.

Do you have what it takes? Visit [www.nysut.org/makingstrides](http://www.nysut.org/makingstrides) to join Team NYSUT.



Karen Cantafio, Joe Cantafio, and Jim Henry from the American Cancer Society

PROVIDED

## NYS Making Strides walks

### Join Team NYSUT

#### Oct. 13

Buffalo, Canalside, 8:30 a.m.

Watertown, Alex Duffy Fairgrounds, 10 a.m.

#### Oct. 14

Central Valley, Woodbury Common Premium Outlets, 7:30 a.m.

Jamestown, Jamestown Community College, 8:30 a.m.

Manhattan, Central Park, 72nd Street Bandshell, 9 a.m.

Rochester, Frontier Field, 10 a.m.

Syracuse, SRC Arena, Onondaga Community College, 10 a.m.

#### Oct. 21

Albany, Washington Park Parade Grounds, 10 a.m.

Binghamton, Recreation Park, 8:30 a.m.

Bronx, Orchard Beach, 10 a.m.

Brooklyn, Coney Island Boardwalk MCU Park, 10 a.m.

Corona, Flushing Meadows Corona Park, 10 a.m.

Plattsburgh, Melissa Penfield Park, 10 a.m.

Purchase, Manhattanville College, 9:30 a.m.

Staten Island, Midland Beach, 10 a.m.

Utica, Masonic Campus, 10 a.m.

Wantagh, Jones Beach State Park Field 5, 7:30 a.m.

#### Oct. 28

Glens Falls, Cool Insuring Arena, 12 p.m.

Riverhead, Suffolk County Community College Eastern Campus, 7:30 a.m.

# You can help students in violent homes, relationships

By Liza Frenette  
lfrenett@nysutmail.org

Look down a row of students. In any row, it is likely that at least one boy or girl is living with violence at home, or is in a violent dating relationship.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, one in three women and one in four men are affected by domestic violence.

"It doesn't matter what you call it; these are dangerous relationships," said Pamela Graham, of the Willow Domestic Violence Center of Rochester. "It's happening all around us, in colleges, high schools and neighborhoods."

A red flag is when one person feels he or she has the right and privilege to control the relationship. Telltale signs include jealousy, isolation from friends, threats, belittling, degrading, mind games and controlling money.

Teach students about their personal right to make their own decisions, Graham said. Speak with them when they show up in the nurse's office, stay after school, or come to a counseling session.

"Get them at 'Hello.' Listen, respect, be in this together," she said. "Not everyone feels like they're worthy. That's our job." Her mantra? "You've got the personal right to a healthy relationship, and anything less than that is not okay."

"Mental and physical assault happens to students in middle school," said Sandie Carner-Shafran, a teaching assistant at Warren Saratoga Washington Hamilton Essex BOCES. Working one-to-one with students promotes open conversation, she said, as they feel they can talk.

"They'll tell an adult they're not



EL-WISE NOISETTE

Pamela Graham, prevention, education and training coordinator at Willow Domestic Violence Center of Rochester.

safe where they are," she said, noting that dating abuse also happens in same sex relationships. Carner-Shafran serves on the NYSUT Women's Committee, the LGBTQ Committee and the NYSUT Board, and spoke out at a NYSUT Women's Conference last year about her own experience as a survivor.

Graham, in a talk at NYSUT's annual Health Care Professional Issues Forum, suggested that educators remind students that school is a safe and confidential place.

Offer personal support, she said. If they are ready to get help, ask: "Would you like to make the call with me?"

## DID YOU KNOW?



The New York State Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is 800-942-6906; in New York City it is 800-621-HOPE. For deaf or hard of hearing, dial 711. Resources for information on local services are provided at this number. For a list of domestic violence hotlines and services by county, check out the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence Directory at [www.nyscadv.org/find-help/program-directory.html](http://www.nyscadv.org/find-help/program-directory.html).



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**Ken Deedy**

Ken Deedy, an ardent trade unionist, longtime president of the Farmingdale Federation of Teachers and a principal in negotiating the historic merger that created NYSUT, died Aug. 8. He was 81.

Ken fought for equal wages and working conditions for women, equal access for female students to sports, and for lower class sizes, higher pay and better working conditions. He was elected first vice president of NYSUT in 1978, a position he held until 1985. In retirement, he focused on conservation and founded the Thousand Islands Land Trust.

**Eugenia (Genie) Kemble**

Eugenia Kemble, the founding executive director of the Albert Shanker Institute, died Aug. 14. Genie helped develop and launch the institute in 1998.

She began her career in 1967 as a reporter for the newspaper of the United Federation of Teachers and became a top aide to then UFT President Albert Shanker. She moved to Washington, D.C., to work as a special assistant to Shanker when he was first elected AFT president.

**James (Jim) Wood**

A well-respected force who helped forge NYSUT in its beginnings and brought "infectious happiness" to the workplace, family and friends, Jim died June 28. He was 72.

Jim, a former sixth-grade teacher, was a founding member of the NYSUT Board in 1973. He joined the NYSUT staff in 1974 as an intern.

He was co-founder of the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition and also served as president of the New York State Alliance for Retired Americans.

Full obituaries, if provided, are available at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org). Submissions must include decedent's full name, union affiliation, date of death, and contact information for the person submitting the notice. Fax notices to 518-213-6415; send to Julie Malec, NYSUT United, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-2455; or email [jmalec@nysutmail.org](mailto:jmalec@nysutmail.org).

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[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) September/October 2018

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## QUESTIONS for ...

# Kim Spiller

Teacher Aides and Student Behavioral Assistants of Monroe 2 Orleans BOCES



### 1. Since 2001, you have worked as a teacher aide for students with physical and mental disabilities — and then in 2016 you suffered a rare illness that resulted in the loss of your leg. How has that changed things?

I fit right in! Last year, I worked in an elementary school. The boys would ask a lot of questions. One boy would feel my leg every day and make sure it was still there. Another would say, "Oh, cool, you have a robotic leg!" After wearing pants all winter, I showed up in a skirt in the spring and he said, "Oh, cool, you still have it!"

### 2. Why was it important for you to be able to go back to work after your life-altering illness?

I love my job. I enjoy working with students with disabilities, who have issues ranging from autism, Down Syndrome or limited mobility. The last five years I've been in a classroom working one-on-one. I had a 12-year-old (with a developmental disorder) who couldn't write. He knew words, but he couldn't form letters. It took years to get him to write. Once you get him there, you feel wonderful!

### 3. Why did you recommit to the union and re-sign your membership card?

Two years ago, in March, I had a horrific sore throat that felt like I was

swallowing glass. I stepped on the hem of my sweatpants and sprained my ankle. A visit to an urgent care medical clinic, then my regular doctor, showed very low blood pressure and my husband was told to get me to the ER immediately. When staff took off my new walking boot, both sides of my leg had blisters, which later burst and you could see down to the bone. I had a flesh-eating disease called necrotizing fasciitis. I was put in an induced coma for about a month and had an emergency amputation to keep me alive. My overall bill was \$350,000. I was responsible only for \$1,000. Thank God for the health insurance negotiated by the union. I'd never be able to pay that bill! Ever!

### 4. How has your traumatic illness affected your family?

My position was kept when I was out ill for nine months. A lot of places won't do that. My husband worked 17 years as a technician for a food service company. After he went back, they told him he wasn't the same since I got sick. He got fired. Maybe if there was a union where he worked, he wouldn't be looking for a job.

### 5. What do you say to those people who say School-Related Professionals do not earn a lot of money and could use union dues in their own pocket?

We need the union! Without

health insurance, I could have become homeless from hospital bills. Without swift medical care, I would have died. You never know.



## Quotable

### Clint Smith

I've said this before, but one of the only reasons I'm a writer is because I had a teacher in 3rd grade who looked at my poem about clouds & said, "you can be a writer when you grow up." It stayed with me forever. Teachers, don't underestimate what your words can do for your students. (@ClintSmithIII)

### APSTA

Talking with the cleaner for the house we're renting in S.C. She's a 6th grade teacher and has a waitressing job as well. "Three jobs?!?" I asked. "No union," she replied. #RighttoWorkforLess #StickingwithMyUnion #UnionStrong @nysut. (@apsta\_Albany)

### Randi Weingarten

Among adults under 30, a decisive 76 percent approve of unions. They understand that when we work together in unions, we can achieve what is impossible alone. (via Medium.com)

### Brian Gibbons

THIS is what being #PublicSchoolProud is all about — dozens of volunteers coming out on a rainy summer Saturday to help get books into the hands of @UFT members & their students to begin the school year. #UnionProud @AFTunion @nysut @NYCSchools. (@BrianUFT)

## Canton Central Teachers Association



LIZA FRENETTE

Members of the Canton CTA, led by Kristen Ames, center, are building a tiny house to raise scholarship money. NYSUT Second Vice President Paul Pecorale, right, visited the site.

The house may be small, but the movement behind it is mammoth.

Members of the Canton Central TA, led by Kristen Ames, have spent months building a tiny house to be auctioned off, with all proceeds going to scholarships for students heading to college for the building trades.

The trailer for the house was purchased with a grant from The People's Project, a NYSUT solidarity fund which requires that a project must help members build coalition within the community. Educators and students have volunteered for months to help build it.

Art teacher Greg Kiah has been

toolmaster, helping to build the home structure, which is 12 feet high with a cathedral ceiling and a loft for a queen bed. Community businesses donated lumber and appliances; other items were foraged from salvage businesses. Electricians from International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local 1249 wired the structure. Members of the Canton Central School Custodial Association will be installing the plumbing, said Kiah.

## Rush-Henrietta Employees Association

Educators in the Rush-Henrietta school district know all too well the statistics about students — and their families — going hungry when school is not in session. The local, aided by a coalition of school and community volunteers, were able to feed more than 70 families in July and more than 120 families in August.

The Rush-Henrietta EA, led by Sheila Sullivan Buck and Karen Arthmann, hosted "Kicking Hunger" grocery giveaway days in July and August. The events were organized

by Sylvene Goggin and Janice Hargrave, co-chairs of the local's Human Rights and Social Justice committees. Securing the food and stuffing the bags was the result of members' hard work and the support of other staffers from the district, and several community organizations.

## Uniondale Teachers Association

The Uniondale TA in Nassau County raised \$10,000 to help the people of Haiti after hurricanes wiped out homes, schools and businesses there. Local President Paul Marconi, a science teacher, said 20 percent of the student population in the district is Haitian. Six Uniondale teachers traveled to Haiti, bringing \$2,500 to each of four schools to help pay for desks and rebuild classrooms.



PROVIDED

Rush-Henrietta EA members distributed more than 200 bags of groceries to families in need during the summer months.

## [ KUDOS! ]

### It's an honor

**Martin Haber**, United Federation of Teachers retiree, was a featured speaker at The Conference on Black History in the Hudson Valley. He presented a lecture on "Paul Robeson and the Peekskill Riots of 1949: Perspectives Then and Now."

**John Serafin**, Syracuse Teachers Association retiree, launched a website of his original artwork, including landscapes, abstracts and still lifes. To view his artwork, visit [johnserafinart.com/](http://johnserafinart.com/).

### In print

**Frederick Adcock**, North Tonawanda United Teachers retiree, and his wife, Cynthia, wrote *The Ganson Street Tigers go to War: A Western New York Community's Commitment to Winning World War II*. The book shares the stories of 41 individuals from an Italian-American neighborhood in North Tonawanda and the effects of war on the homefront. Visit [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com) for details.

**Alexander Kheyfits**, Professional Staff

Congress — Bronx Community College chapter, has published *Arithmetic through Precalculus: A Primer and Study Guide*, Vols. 1 and 2. The texts are designed for high school students preparing for college, and for college students who have to take a remedial mathematics courses. Available at [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

"Kudos!" recognizes the accomplishments of NYSUT members. Have good news you'd like to share? Email [united@nysutmail.org](mailto:united@nysutmail.org); include "Kudos!" in the subject line.

## All in! Sticking with Our Union!

The following locals recently reported 100 percent membership cards signed.

**Ausable Valley Teachers Association**, led by Mario Lafranca and Sarah Brown

**Belleville-Henderson TA**, led by Matthew Soluri

**Bolton Support Personnel Association**, led by Craig Hannon

**Byron Bergen Faculty Association**, led by Kenneth Gropp

**Cohoes TA**, led by Scott Ciarlone

**Dansville Transportation Union**, led by Peter Ames

**Duanesburg TA**, led by Chris Danapilis

**East Williston TA**, led by Meryl Fordin

**Eastchester Monitors**, led by Donna Quintessenza

**Elba CS FA**, led by Jamie Pratt and Rachel Krajna

**Fort Edward TA**, led by Marianne Stark

**Friendship TA**, led by Nicole Brandes

**Glens Falls Secretary Association**, led by Zoe Stevens

**Gloversville Office Personnel Association**, led by Debra Maryanopolis

**Greenburgh Federation #11**, led by Jennifer Cole

**Groton FA**, led by Beth O'Brien

**Hammondspoint Association of Teaching Assistants**, led by Beth King

**Hartford FA**, led by Amy Thomas

**Hornell Educators Association**, led by Kris Kansco-Browne

**Hudson Falls SRP Association**, led by Joseph Manney

**Lackawanna CE Secretaries**, led by Laura J. Kowalczyk

**Mattituck-Cutchogue TA**, led by Thomas Farrell

**Mineola TA**, led by Teresa Perrotta Hafner

**Northport-East Northport Teacher Aides**, led by Christine Bandrowski

**Phoenix CS Clerical Association**, led by Michelle Goodfellow

**Plainedge FT**, led by Perry Fuchs

**Remsenburg-Speonk TA**, led by Laureen Andria and Suzann Henninger

**Unatego TA**, led by Ruth Modinger

**Walkill TA**, led by Richard Shands

**Watertown EA**, led by Richard Morris

**West Genesee Paraprofessionals**, led by Susan Gifford



**DID YOU KNOW?**



NYSUT Retiree Services consultants are resources for retired members, retiree councils and in-service locals on NYSUT retiree matters.

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**Louise Ortman**, RC 4, 46  
716-664-7425

**Peter Randazzo**, RC 5, 6  
585-454-5550

**Anne Marie Voutsinas**, RC 7, 8  
315-431-4040

**Jeanette Stapley**, RC 9, 10  
518-783-7977

**Mark Padgett**, RC 11, 45  
607-786-5742

**Jennifer Shaad-Derby**, RC 12, 13  
518-783-7977

**Ellen Pincus**, RC 14, 15-16  
914-592-4411

**TBD**, RC 17, 18, 19  
516-496-2035

**Joan Perrini**, RC 20, 21, 22, 23  
631-273-8822

**Judy D. Kalb**, RC 43  
561-994-4929, ext. 129



EL-WISE NOISETTE

NYSUT Board Member Kathy Taylor, right, RC 13, and union ally Kurt Fuxjager, rally for passage of the teacher evaluation bill outside the Kingston office of Sen. George Amedore.



PROVIDED

From left, NYSUT RC 43 President Deb Peterson, NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, and NYSUT At-large ED 51-53 Director Florence McCue at the 2018 AFT convention in Pittsburgh.



PROVIDED

From left, newly minted retirees Jacqueline Baker and Colleen LaBianco, RC 16, stand union strong at the Yonkers Federation of Teachers' annual retirement dinner.

**REGIONAL CONFERENCES**

**RC 5 & 6, Oct. 2, Burgundy Basin.**

RSC: Peter Randazzo

**RC 13, Oct. 11, Chateau, Kingston.**

RSC: Jennifer Shaad-Derby

**RC 9, Oct. 17, TBA.**

RSC: Jeanette Stapley

**RC 17-23, Oct. 17, Woodbury Country Club.**

RSC: Joan Perrini

**RC 14-16, Oct. 25, Crowne Plaza, Suffern.**

RSC: Ellen Pincus

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# Tap into your UNION benefits

**N**YSUT created its Member Benefits Trust in 1983 to be able to leverage the united buying power of its membership and offer quality benefit programs to NYSUT members. Over the past 35 years, NYSUT Member Benefits has grown to include a Member Benefits Corporation and Catastrophe Major Medical Insurance Trust, allowing it to greatly expand the programs and services offered to NYSUT members.

The MB Trust, MB Corporation and CMMI Trust are each overseen by trustees appointed to ensure the best interests of NYSUT members are being met. The following is an update offered by the Chairperson of the MB Trust and Director of Member Benefits.



NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer  
J. Philippe Abraham

**Why should NYSUT members participate in Member Benefits programs?**

**Chairperson J. Philippe Abraham:**

NYSUT members have the power of the union behind them when purchasing our endorsed programs. Whether it's one of our life, homeowners or

auto insurance plans, our financial or legal service plans, or any of our many other programs, Member Benefits acts as your advocate and will do our best to help resolve any concerns you may have with a program. You don't need to go it alone here ... we have your back!

**Why are some of your programs more expensive than I could get on my own?**

**Director Lynette A. Metz:** While our endorsed programs may not always be the lowest-cost products, all of us at Member Benefits work tirelessly to obtain and maintain quality programs at competitive prices for NYSUT members and their loved ones.

Your NYSUT membership allows you to participate in more than 40 such programs endorsed by Member Benefits — offering you trusted products, potential savings opportunities, convenient payment methods and an advocate standing by your side. We also always encourage NYSUT members to shop and compare before utilizing any of our programs.

**Are my NYSUT dues dollars used to support Member Benefits?**

**Abraham:** No. Member Benefits receives funds to cover expenses from negotiated endorsement arrangements (including, in some cases, a percentage of premium paid) with many of the providers of our endorsed programs. These funds are used solely to defray the costs of operating Member Benefits, including compensation; rent; office expenses; and the cost of retaining consultants, auditors and attorneys to advise the trustees, directors and their staff.

Where appropriate, Member Benefits revenue is also used to enhance the benefit programs for participants and develop new programs and services. No monies are paid to NYSUT except reimbursement for use of facilities and for services and personnel provided by NYSUT to Member Benefits (the reasonableness of those amounts are certified annually to the trustees and directors by the Trust's and Corporation's independent auditors).

**What is the latest news on Member Benefits-endorsed programs?**

**Metz:** Member Benefits conducts reviews of each of our endorsed programs to ensure they are meeting our members' needs. In light of that, we named the MetLife organization as the new Plan Underwriter for our endorsed Voluntary Disability, Term Life and Level Term Life Insurance programs earlier this year. We believe this change will greatly enhance the service offered to participants in these programs.

Our newly endorsed Cambridge Credit Counseling program can assist NYSUT members with better understanding their student loan repayment options and/or debt consolidation. NYSUT members are eligible to receive free, no-obligation debt and student loan consultations with one of Cambridge's certified counselors.

**Abraham:** Member Benefits also recently teamed up with Kiplinger's Personal Finance to create a new publication, *15 Things NYSUT Members Need to Know About the New Tax Law*. This publication is available on the Member Benefits website for members to view.

With the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Janus* and other actions coming out of Washington, we encourage all NYSUT members to take advantage of the benefits that come not only from their union membership, but also from participating in Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

Visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) to learn more. Call us at 800-626-8101 to speak with one of our knowledgeable staff members and request copies of any of our print materials.

Please note that although some NYSUT Members Benefits-endorsed programs may provide legal or financial advice, Member Benefits itself does not offer investment, legal or tax advice. Participants should consult their own investment, financial, tax and legal advisers to help them with an evaluation of the benefit programs.

## IT'S WHAT WE DO

**Tony Agnello,  
Orchard Park TA retiree**

During 40 years teaching biology, anatomy and life science at Orchard Park, Tony Agnello was also busy experimenting with helping others. In retirement, he continues volunteering near and far, with the Peace Corps Alliance for Intercultural Understanding as his core.

"My personal intention is to spark the interest of teachers and community members to work with local Peace Corps and volunteer agencies, in stark contrast to the fear-mongering now happening in this country," he said.

Agnello is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) who served in Afghanistan in the mid 1970s. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, he became a leader of Orchard Park Educational Outreach, a service organization that raised money with dozens of high schools in Western New York. In 2004, he made his first return visit to Afghanistan, overseeing the outcome of four schools for girls that the fundraising enabled.

He is working to build an outreach alliance to recruit partners in high school service organizations and Model United Nations clubs to work through federally recognized refugee and immigrant volunteer agencies.

Agnello says the foundation of his Peace Corps work parallels his union work as past president of the Orchard Park Teachers Association. "The American Labor movement has been the most civilizing force for economic and social justice in the history of the world," he said.

For more information on Peace Corps volunteer work, contact Agnello at [tony@afghanconnections.org](mailto:tony@afghanconnections.org).

To read more about Agnello's story, and other NYSUT members, visit [www.nysut.org/itswhatwedo](http://www.nysut.org/itswhatwedo).

**On the job and in the community, NYSUT members make a difference.**



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- 3. Verify your identity.** Answer questions based on public records.
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- **View benefit information.** You can review up-to-date information about your account when it's convenient for you.
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In every issue, state Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, administrative head of the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS) and trustee of the Common Retirement Fund, provides information on the System, which delivers retirement benefits to many NYSUT School-Related Professionals and other support staff. If you are an ERS member with a question of general interest, email [united@nysutmail.org](mailto:united@nysutmail.org).

For immediate assistance, call the ERS Contact Center toll-free at 866-805-0990 or 518-474-7736 in the Capital District.



- **Apply for a loan.** You may be eligible to take out a loan against your ERS contributions. Borrow safely and conveniently and set up repayment through payroll deduction.
- **View or update beneficiaries.** It's a good idea to keep your beneficiary designations up to date. View your selections and submit any needed changes.

We will be rolling out more features in the future. In time, members will be able to estimate their projected pension benefit, purchase service credit and more.

Get more information at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement\\_online/customers.php](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/customers.php).

If you need help accessing your account, call 866-805-0990 (518-474-7736 in the Albany, New York area); email us at [www.emailnyslrs.com](mailto:www.emailnyslrs.com). Also, visit our troubleshooting guide at [www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement\\_online/word\\_and\\_pdf\\_documents/troubleshooting-guide.pdf](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/retirement_online/word_and_pdf_documents/troubleshooting-guide.pdf).

Retirement Online is available weekdays, 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. and weekends, 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

### NYSUT ERS consultants

Most NYSUT School-Related Professionals\* belong to the New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (ERS). NYSUT ERS consultants are available to help SRP members navigate the retirement system. Consultants can answer questions, provide forms and help members contact the ERS. Contact any one of our consultants for assistance.

Trudi Davis • 914-592-4411  
[troers@nysutmail.org](mailto:troers@nysutmail.org)

Kathy Hine • 585-454-5550, ext. 144  
[rochers@nysutmail.org](mailto:rochers@nysutmail.org)

Patti Lennon • 516-496-2035, ext. 324  
[nroers@nysutmail.org](mailto:nroers@nysutmail.org)

\*Note: Certified teaching assistants belong to the state Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).

## COLA increase slated for September

**Q:** Do you know what the Cost-of-Living Adjustment is for 2018?

**A:** The annual COLA for September 2018 through August 2019 will be 1.2 percent for eligible members who receive monthly benefits through the New York State Teachers' Retirement System. That means the maximum COLA increase retired members will see is \$18 a month. And remember, that increase applies only to the first \$18,000 in retirement benefits. If your entire retirement benefit totals less than \$18,000 annually, you'll receive a smaller COLA increase; those who don't qualify for the COLA in September will receive the increase once they become eligible.

COLAs help offset the impact of inflation by providing annual increases to NYSTRS retirement benefits based on the cost-of-living index. To be eligible, you must meet one of the following criteria: at least 62 and retired for at least five years; 55 and over and retired 10+ years; receive a NYSTRS disability benefit

for at least five years, regardless of age; or be a surviving spouse of an eligible retiree, receiving a lifetime benefit. Note: spousal COLAs are half that of retiree COLAs. For more COLA information, contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6150.

**Q:** Retirement is still several years down the road, but I'd like to start planning ahead. Is it too early to attend a PREP seminar or a benefit consultation?

**A:** Absolutely not — in fact, the earlier you attend, the better. You can attend as many benefit consultations and PREP seminars as you want over the course of your career.

Contacting NYSTRS is the first step. Although free, both consultations must be scheduled in advance. PREP seminars explain critical, benefit-related decisions and review financial and legal considerations. You can stay for an entire seminar, or select modules that address your concerns. A PREP video, poster and brochure are available at [www.nyslrs.org](http://www.nyslrs.org). Contact NYSTRS at 800-348-7298, ext. 6180, or use your MyNYSTRS account, to reserve a PREP seminar seat.

Personalized retirement benefit consultations, including a printed estimate of your retirement benefit, are available either in person or via videoconference at NYSTRS offices statewide. Call 800-348-7298, ext. 6100, or use your MyNYSTRS account, to make an appointment.

### NYSUT TRS consultants

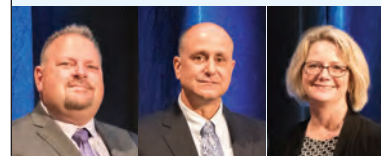
TRS members with questions may call your teacher-members on the New York State Teachers' Retirement System Board of Directors:

David Keefe • 516-741-1241  
(Retiree Representative)

Paul Farfaglia • 315-431-4040  
[pfarfagl@nysutmail.org](mailto:pfarfagl@nysutmail.org)

Sheila Sullivan Buck  
585-454-5550  
[sbuck@nysutmail.org](mailto:sbuck@nysutmail.org)

Ronald Gross • 631-273-8822  
[rgross@nysutmail.org](mailto:rgross@nysutmail.org)



### DID YOU KNOW?

When the new Cost-of-Living Adjustment begins, the cumulative maximum monthly increase since New York State COLA legislation was enacted in 2001 will be \$346, or nearly \$4,200 annually.



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