

U S A INFORMATION

LOCAL 15-175 NYSUT; LOCAL 3072 AFT

DECEMBER 2008

Next General Membership Meeting:
January 13, 2009
3:15 p.m.
Adult Dining Room

2009 General Membership Meeting:
May 12, 2009
3:15 p.m.
TBA



Calendars for 2008-2009

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From the Desk of the President

As you know, on November 11, 2008, we elected a new executive board, program representatives and delegates and an alternate to NYSUT's Representative Assembly. Here are the results:

Delegates to the NYSUT RA

**Lisa Giacomini
Athena Swikata**

Alternate to the NYSUT RA

Kevin Berge

Thank You for a job well done!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank **Vito Rinaldo**, chair of the Elections Committee. Additional thanks to **Sharlene Bass** and **Elizabeth Bowler** who assisted him.

Program Representatives

Supervisor

Bellucci

Rick O'Keefe

Sowul

Darci Esposito

Lowery

Monika Biscoglio

Hardesty

Robert Angiello

Kelderhouse

Elisa Longo

Louis Jeune

Michael Tomaseski

Spaulding

Judy Gillet

Special Thank You for service to the United Staff Association!

I would like to extend special thanks to **Sharlene Bass**, former Secretary, **Kathryn Goslee** (aka **Tinka**) former treasurer, and **Bob Taps** former 1st Vice President for their service on the Executive Board. In addition, thanks to **Marion Connelly** and **Josephine Scala** - both served many years as program reps.

*In Solidarity,
Irene Snow*

President and 1st RA Delegate	Irene Snow
1st Vice President	Larry Marino
2nd Vice President	Al Cotoia
Treasurer	Dan Gottfried
Secretary	Jenn Guiffre
Membership Chairperson	Joan Irvine

NYSUT
30th Annual SRP
Leadership Conference
September 26-28, 2008

As a "first timer" attending the 30th Annual NYSUT SRP Leadership Conference, I was greeted by the lavish accommodations of the Desmond Hotel. Throughout the weekend there were many guest speakers and representatives from the union. It was apparent how important it is for members to have an active role in their union.

I also had the opportunity to attend *The Autism Spectrum Disorders: Treating Children with ASD* workshops. Martha M. Frank, PhD., lead the workshops which were geared to assist the school related professionals with ideas and strategies in dealing with these special needs children on a day to day basis. The workshop defined the wide spectrums of autism and covered several screening instruments used for early detection. Many different techniques were discussed including Sensory Integration, TEACCH, social stories and medication. There were several discussions regarding some of the controversial beliefs people have regarding the onset of autism. It was also apparent how vital it is for all school related professionals to remain diligent in their efforts to break through some of the barriers these children have in order to help them strive to reach their fullest potential.

At the end of our weekend, we had the opportunity to enjoy Brett Leake, the HUMOR Project, Inc. We were reminded of how important it is to take advantage of an opportunity and to see humor in our lives everyday.

Candice Percopo

The conference was held at the Desmond Hotel in Albany, NY. The conference gave me the opportunity to attend informative workshops, participate in role playing groups and regional meetings. The name of the workshop I attended was *Treating Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) I and II*.

We examined some of the diagnostic tools for early identification and learned how to build appropriate strategies for the child's success and effective programming. The most informative part was learning how to deal with the challenge that SRPs face in working with the diagnosed students in a school setting. I would like to thank NYSUT and the United Staff Association for this invaluable opportunity.

Elizabeth Gilmore

U S A I N F O R M A T I O N	
<p>IS AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED STAFF ASSOCIATION of PUTNAM/NORTHERN WESTCHESTER BOCES LOCAL 15-175 NYSUT; LOCAL 3072 AFT YORKTOWN HEIGHTS, NEW YORK 10598 (914) 962-9579</p>	
<p>Editor: Athena Swikata Circulation: Athena Swikata / Joan Irvine</p>	
EXECUTIVE BOARD	
President.....	Irene Snow
1st Vice President.....	Larry Marino
2nd Vice President.....	Al CotoJa
Secretary.....	Jenn Guiffre
Treasurer.....	Dan Gottfried
Membership Chairperson.....	Joan Irvine
Grievance Chairperson.....	Mary Ann Alvord
Negotiations Chairperson.....	Vito Rinaldo
Building Rep Chairperson.....	

*36th Annual
Conference for
BOCES Leadership
October 3-4, 2008*

The conference convened at The Gideon Putnam Resort and Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York with Attendees from BOCES across the state. Workshops were provided through NYSUT and covered many important topics, including *Legal Issues for BOCES, Bargaining Strategies in Health Care, Gang Affiliation and Identification, Contract Exchange and Legislative Update*. Personally, I found the *Legal Issues* workshop the most informative and found the presenter, a NYSUT legal counsel, to be knowledgeable and current with legal cases relevant to civil service and teaching professionals. The discussion was open and stimulating, and it is helpful for members to remember that NYSUT does have legal counsel available for members who have questions regarding the legal statutes and how they may affect their concerns. You may access these services through the NYSUT regional office in Tarrytown phone 914-592-4411.

This conference along with others are supported and encouraged by our United Staff Assoc. Things like mileage, accommodations, and some related fees are all paid by our union. The accommodations at The Gideon Putnam Resort and Hotel were quaint, with a nineteenth century atmosphere fitting to Saratoga's scenic and historic setting. The food was plentiful and very good, including the dessert reception hosted on Friday night.

One of the many valuable aspects of this conference was the opportunity to network with many colleagues from other BOCES throughout the state and learn about the diversity that affects our work. Having an opportunity to discuss and have a dialogue with our many peers was not only enlightening, but also energizing. The fact that BOCES is a diverse service-oriented agency that is usually the first target for educational cuts dictates that we all not only teach to the highest standard, but also promote and lobby for our great organization. To accomplish this, we need to raise the highest level of political and public awareness to the vital services we deliver and role we play in the community.

This may take some commitment by us all to allocate some time from our very busy schedules. It is critical to support our agency for the continued benefit of the New York State Public School System and more specifically the New York State public school student. The political arena has found it convenient to bash teachers in the media while cutting funding which ultimately hurts our students--our future leaders. The economic trials as of late only reinforce the need to invest in education, as the future lies with our students. Students with the most solid education will be in the best make decisions that work for our great country as society moves forward. Teachers already instill in our youth the wisdom, moral, and ethical values required to make our future strong--now is the time for teachers to continue this work in the political arenas nationally and in our local communities.

*Al J.Cotoia
2nd Vice President
United Staff Association*

Keeping Your Benefit Fund Enrollment Status Up to Date is Your Legal Obligation

Too often we do not realize how events in our personal lives affect so many other aspects of our life. One such example is the United Staff Association Welfare Fund and its coverage of you and your eligible dependents.

As you know, the United Staff Association Welfare Fund and its Board of Trustees, are charged, generally, with the proper administration of the plan of benefits, consistent with its Trust document and the law, and limited, specifically, as to whom benefits may be given.

As a beneficiary of the Fund, you also have certain responsibilities, including the legal responsibility to keep the Fund informed of changes in your status, or in your family members'

For example, if you are divorced, fail to notify the Fund that your ex-spouse is no longer eligible as your dependent, and your ex-spouse receives benefits from the Fund, you may be held financially liable to the Fund for the benefits paid on behalf of your ex-spouse.

Furthermore, if you do not assure that your Fund records are accurate, you may also lose certain rights. For example, if you fail to notify the Fund of a qualifying event under the Federal law commonly known as COBRA within 60 days of the event, such as your dependent child losing coverage because they are no longer a dependent as defined by the Fund (e.g., 19 and not attending college), the Fund can deny your dependent the right to continue coverage with the Fund, even though you are willing

to pay for it. Once you miss this deadline, your dependent child will never be offered the opportunity to continue coverage again.

So, on behalf of the Board of Trustees of United Staff Association Welfare Fund, we urge you to keep your enrollment with the Fund up to date. It could preserve your rights and save you a lot of money!

Any changes in status in family status, e.g. death, divorce, marriage or birth of a child, should be communicated immediately to the United Staff Association Welfare Fund through its Third-Party Administrator, Daniel H. Cook Associates, Inc. at the following address:

**United Staff Association Welfare Fund
C/O Daniel H. Cook Associates, Inc.
253 West 35th Street, 12th Floor
New York, New York 1001-1970
914-250-0700**

36th Annual Conference for BOCES Leadership

This year's conference included workshops about critical issues to BOCES. We had the opportunity to discuss the future of BOCES and plan events for networking with fellow BOCES union leaders. The workshop I attended was *Managing Student Behavior*. The learning objectives included: strategies for reinforcing appropriate student behavior, techniques for preventing problem behaviors from occurring and/or escalating. Most importantly, positive school environment requires the establishment of rules so that the students can be guided to develop positive behaviors. This workshop is valuable for teachers and SRPs to provide effective strategies for communication for behavior management.

Elizabeth Gilmore

*New York State Teachers'
Retirement System
2008 Annual Delegates
Meeting
Saratoga Springs, NY*

The annual meeting of the NYSTRS was held on Sunday, November 9 and Monday, November 10 at the Saratoga Springs City Center in Saratoga Springs, New York. As your delegate, I attended this conference to vote on behalf of our membership for a Teacher Representative to the executive board. The board oversees the adherence to retirement system rules and regulations, as well as overseeing of the integrity of the system. There was 634 delegates from across our state present at the conference and Paul Fafalia was elected as the teacher representative to the board. Paul has had a long service history and has been attending board meetings prior to his election. Paul should be a valuable addition to the board. His work and contribution to the retirement system is needed more than ever with the economic crisis we are experiencing today.

It was good to hear that through the hard work and effort of our board and trustees over the past 5 years, the retirement fund has been able to achieve a 9.9% return on investments. However with the current economic down turn, the next few years remain unpredictable.

The NYSTRS has vast amounts of resources and information that is available to all members. One of the important things identified at the conference was that all members carefully read their annual benefit

statement which should be arriving in early December. Checking the information listed for accuracy is one of the most important things a member can do. Additionally, making sure that you keep your beneficiary designation up to date is also very important. Life is very busy and gaining or losing a spouse without updating your information could result in a benefit going to someone who you would not choose.

I would recommend that if you have any questions about your NYSTRS benefits, contact a system representative at 1-800-348-7298, ext. 6250 or visit them on the web at www.nystrs.org to access forms and current information. The message from the experts was that each individual has special circumstances and although colleagues may try and be helpful with advice, they may not be aware of an individual's special needs. So again, go to the experts at the NYSTRS; they will be able to give you the best information.

*Al J.Cotoia
Putnam/Northern Westchester United Staff Association
NYSTRS Delegate*

SAVE THE DATE!!

**The next general membership meeting is:
January 13, 2009.**

Agenda:

Introduction of new executive board members

Welfare Fund benefit changes

**Introduction to our new United Staff Association
website**

EXECUTIVE BOARD & GENERAL MEETING

DATES 2008-2009

- 12/2 Executive Board
(Installation of New Officers)**
- 1/6/09 Executive Board**
- 1/13 General Membership Meeting**
- 2/3 Executive Board**
- 3/3 Executive Board**
- 4/14 Executive Board**
- 5/5 Executive Board**
- 5/12 General Membership Meeting**
- 6/2 Executive Board**



To schedule an appointment with the lawyer members should call (914) 997-1576.

IMPORTANT!

Please Note:

Mary Ann Alvord is the Grievance Chairperson. She can be reached at extension **764**, or from the outside at **(914) 248-2764**.

Welfare Fund Calendar

The Welfare Fund meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The dates for 2009 are:

January 20, 2009

February 24

March 17

April 21

May 19

June 16

**United Staff Association
Welfare Fund**

**c/o Daniel H. Cook Associates
253 West 35th Street, 12th Floor
New York, New York 10001**

Chairperson: Monika Biscoglio

Secretary: Nancy Finsmith

Treasurer: Janine deGrouchy Hraska

Trustees: Jennifer Guiffre
Steve Simpson
Lola Smerdon
Irene Snow

Administrator: Daniel Cook Associates
253 West 35th Street, 12th Floor
New York, New York 10001
(914) 250-0700
(212) 505-5050
1-800-DHCOOK1
(1-800-342-6651)
FAX # (212) 714-1454

Legal Fund: (914) 997-1576

IMPORTANT!!!

PLEASE NOTE:

The telephone number for

DANIEL H. COOK

has changed from (914) 381-2399 to:

(914) 250-0700

USA PHONE NUMBER: (914) 962-9579

Keep this page for future reference!!

36th Annual Conference for BOCES Leadership

My experience at the NYSUT 36th Annual Conference for BOCES Leadership was a wonderful learning event. I had the opportunity to network with officers from many other districts. Making these contacts gave me good insight into how to work around issues and concerns that may occur within our district. I also learned that the union is not just its officers, it is all of us as a whole.

Many of us take for granted that the union will always be there. However, we all need to step up and help out where and when we can; taking part at union meetings and helping our newest membership become aware of the importance of the union. Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can influence a community of union members. Indeed, it is the only thing that can.

It was great to see that we had many first time attendees at the conference this year. It means that the message of getting more involved in your union is getting through. I would encourage more members to attend next year's annual conference.

The conference was very well organized and offered essential information on many different topics that many locals have issue with. One workshop that I participated in was about organizing and finding new and better ways to engage existing and new members to get involved in the union and how NYSUT helps accomplish this. I had a chance to collaborate and brainstorm with other union officials. I also

learned that when it comes to getting things done, unions need fewer architects and more bricklayers.

Get involved, you can make a difference.

Larry Marino
2nd Vice President
United Staff Association

*Thanks to everyone that
contributed articles.*

**Please remember, when you attend a
conference we ask that you submit an
article to the newsletter.**

Send your articles to:

Athena Swikata

aswikata@pnwboces.org

GET INVOLVED!!!



A Bouquet from Us

Congratulations to Steve Zombo and his wife Laura, who were married on October 4th.

Our sympathy to John Madden on the loss of his father.

Our sympathy to Dorothy Pascale on the loss of her father.

Send items for *A Bouquet from Us* to Elizabeth Bowler at:
ebowler@pnwboces.org

200 BOCES Drive
Yorktown Heights, New York 10598