THE UNITED NEWSLETTER



From The Desk of the President:

Hello Members:

I hope this letter finds you well. Today, as I drove to work, something happened that reminded me how people can forget about their own safety. I was driving on Vassar Road in Red Oaks Mills. It was dark, extremely cold, and the roads were icy. Ahead of me was a garbage truck stopping at every driveway picking up the trash receptacles. I slowed down and stopped at least twice; it was not possible to see around the truck and the conditions to pass were very poor. Eventually, a vehicle came up behind me. To my amazement, the driver sounded the horn trying to force me to pass the truck. Can you imagine anyone would risk a head on collision to get "wherever" a few minutes sooner? Eventually, two vehicles pulled around me and passed my vehicle and the garbage truck; fortunately, there was not any traffic coming the opposite way.

This got me thinking about workplace safety and the role your union leadership plays in keeping you as safe as possible. Understand, we are never completely safe. Hazards are everywhere; our response is to manage risk: we make assessments, and we use our judgment. Sometimes we allow complete strangers to become responsible for our safety, such as in airplanes, trains, and taxies etc. When it comes to the workplace, BOCES administration is responsible for our safety. Your union is here to remind administration of this responsibility and to also point out areas where improvements are needed. Although the locking of doors and badge access was in the planning stages for years, your union leadership brought this issue to administration and added a sense of urgency to the problem as one example of our involvement.

ATE UNIT

UNITED STAFF ASSOCIATION PUTNAM / NORTHERN

Westchester BOCES

It is ultimately up to you to report unsafe conditions to your building principal, preferably by email, so that the unsafe situation is resolved. In a case where nothing is done to correct the situation, contact your program representative for a resolution.

This has been a hazardous winter! Repeated snow and extreme low temperatures make for unsafe conditions, which is why schools close or delay opening. As we use snow days, I always hear questions surrounding making up those snow days. There are many parameters for determining whether we need to make-up a snow day. Administration has not made any decisions on this topic as I write this letter. I would expect more information will be provided as it becomes available. I would caution you against making binding commitments for the following days: MARCH 30 & 31, APRIL 1 & 2.

Let us get through this winter as safely as possible and look forward to spring.

In Solidarity, Doug Andreotti



NYSUT Press Release on Test Obsession

The release below was sent out Jan. 28, 2015 to statewide print and broadcast media outlets.

NYSUT says Cuomo plan wrongly pushes test obsession

ALBANY, N.Y. Jan. 28, 2015 – New York State United Teachers says the "test-and-punish" emphasis in Gov. Andrew Cuomo's budget – including a push to more than double the weight of state tests – is not research-based, would increase stress on students and rob parents, teachers and school boards of their voice in local education decisions.

NYSUT said its analysis of Cuomo's proposal shows it flies in the face of a growing body of research challenging the use of standardized tests for high-stakes decisions about teaching and learning. "The governor's irresponsible plan would hurt students by intensifying the state's fixation on standardized testing — in direct contradiction to what kids need and what parents have asked for," said NYSUT President Karen E. Magee. "His 'billionaires' agenda' ignores the real needs of students. To improve upon our already strong public education system and its quality teaching force, the governor should be supporting teachers, not scapegoating them."

Magee added, "What's crystal clear is that the governor has not been listening to parents and teachers. We don't need a greater emphasis on high-stakes testing. There's no outcry to create greater incentives to 'teach to the test.' I haven't heard any parents say, 'I want my child to focus *less* on real learning and *more* on 'fill in the bubble' state tests." It seems only the governor and his hedge-fund friends want to subject the state's most precious resource — its children — to even more pressure from high-stakes tests."

Meanwhile, Magee said, the governor "is holding school aid runs hostage to his attack on public education and the teaching profession." She reiterated her call for a sustained commitment to what all students need: "Our public schools need a state budget that corrects years of neglect and inequality and which invests much more in those communities serving the most vulnerable in our society."

NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino, who oversees NYSUT's Department of Research and Educational Services, said a growing body of research challenges reliance on state standardized tests in high-stakes decisions.

An April 2014 study, for example, by the American Statistical Association found that value-added measures based on standardized tests "do not directly measure potential teacher contributions toward other student outcomes." The ASA report said, "most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1 percent to 14 percent of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the systemlevel conditions. Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality." The ASA pointed out: "This is not saying that teachers have little effect on students, but that variation among teachers accounts for a small part of the variation in scores. The majority of the variation in test scores is attributable to factors outside of the teacher's control such as student and family background, poverty, curriculum and unmeasured influences."

"The governor wants to silence the voices of parents and educators," Fortino said. "He is ignoring the research and what educators and democratically elected school boards know is best for their children in their own local communities — less testing and more learning. It cannot be clearer: The governor's approach is wrong for students and public schools." A resolution passed Saturday by the NYSUT Board of Directors emphasizes that point, saying: "We affirm NYSUT's commitment to teaching — not testing — as school's primary activity."



New York State United Teachers is a statewide union with more than 600,000 members in education, human services and health care. NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and the AFL-CIO.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Sign up at NYSUT ACTION MEMBER CENTER https://mac.nysut.org/



Committee 100 Update :

It's a "battle" in Albany between NYSUT & Gov. Cuomo ...

Cuomo says:

- Teacher evaluations SHOULD consist of 50% state testing, 50% evaluation
 One evaluation should be done by an administrator outside the school
- More charter schools should be opened
- \$1.1bil in school aid will only be released when the new agenda gets passed

NYSUT says:

- Governor is influenced by hedge-fund managers and other private "Wall St." investors who want to privatize education for their own monetary gains.
- Cuomo is trying to get back at the teacher's union for not backing his re-election.

The FACTS:

- NYSUT did not endorse the Governor in his re-election
- Cuomo <u>recently vetoed his own bill</u> that would have temporarily protected Developing & Ineffective teachers by recalculating their scores (to not include Common Core test results in their evaluations this affects Grades 3-8 teachers who give Common Core tests in Math & English).
- NYS has the most racially and economically segregated schools in the nation (according to a 2014 study done by the Civil Rights Project at the University of California).
- There <u>is a nationwide push to weaken unions</u>, starting with passing Right to Work laws on local levels. Right to Work simply means that if the company is union, an employee does NOT have to pay union dues, thus not join the union. This weakens union membership numbers.

What your Union is doing:

- Attending the BOCES Lobby Day in Albany on Feb. 24th
- Attending the Committee of 100 day in Albany on March 2nd & 3rd.

What you can do:

- Download the NYSUT MAC (Member Action Center) App for your Smartphone. This easily allows you to get involved. You can easily fax your legislators and other government & business leaders on important issues that matter to you.
- On Facebook, follow NYSUT Action Center. This will keep you up to date on important educational issues.

Other News in Albany:

NYS Board of Regents officially approved the 4+1 Pathway for Graduation

- Students can substitute one of the Social Students Regents for a CTE approved exam
- Begins w/this spring's graduating class
- Students are still encouraged to take both SS exams before choosing a Pathway

Welfare Fund Important Information:

United Staff Association Welfare Fund Benefits Summary

Members of the United Staff Association are eligible for Welfare Fund benefits at no cost. Limited benefits are available to your spouse, domestic partner, and dependents. Select legal fund benefits are available to parents and parent-in-laws. If you work over 15 hours per week, you are eligible for full benefits. If you work 15 hours or less per week, you are eligible for half of the self-insured benefits and are not covered for life and long term disability insurance. All members are eligible for Legal Services benefit.

DENTAL BENEFIT: (member only): \$2500 maximal benefit per calendar year **preauthorization is required for expenses greater than \$600** **Family Dental Coverage is offered for an annual premium of \$950/year with restrictions on enrollment and utilization of benefits if you do not enroll for Family Coverage upon hire or within 30 days of a status change SPOUSAL/Domestic Partner DENTAL BENEFIT: Limited to routine cleanings, office visits and x-rays up to \$200 maximal per calendar year OPTICAL BENEFIT: \$350 for member per calendar year \$250 for dependents (spouse, children) per calendar year MEDICAL BENEFITS Major Medical Deductible Reimbursement: \$135 per person up to \$405 maximum per family for members that have family health insurance coverage, thereafter 1% of deductible cost Physical Exam Benefit: (member only) 1 in a 2 year period up to \$200 for portion not covered by BOCES medical plan/other health insurance plan, therafter\$10 per physical exam Psychiatric Benefit: (member only) \$30 per visit up to 55 visits per calendar year, thereafter, \$1.00/visit Mammography Benefit: (member and/or spouse or domestic partner) 1 per calendar year up to \$100 for portion not covered by BOCES medical plan/other health insurance plan, thereafter, \$10 per mammogram Hearing Aid (HA) Benefit: (member only) 1 in a 2 year period up to \$200, thereafter, \$10 for each additional HA Medicare Part "B" Deductible Benefit: \$75 per calendar year, thereafter, 1% of all deductible costs Orthotic Benefit: (member only) 1 in a 2 year period up to \$100; thereafter, 1% of the cost per orthotic Variable Benefit: (member only) \$400 per calendar year to supplement the following benefits: Dental, Optical, Psychiatric, Orthotic, Hearing Aid, Catastrophic Premium Shingles Vaccination Benefit: (member only) \$150 per injection within a calendar year Claim forms can be obtained via the secured website - www.dhcook.com, in the main office of your building, from building representatives, or by calling (914) 250-0700

LIFE INSURANCE: Benefit is 100% of your salary rounded to the next higher \$1,000 with minimum coverage of \$5,000 and maximum coverage of \$150,000. First Unum Life Insurance Company, 99 Park Avenue, 6th floor, New York, NY 10016. To update or review your beneficiaries contact the FUND Office at (914) 250-0700 or email at support@dhcook.com.

LONG TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE: Maximum per week (60% of salary). First Unum Life Insurance Company.

LEGAL SERVICES BENEFIT includes representation in civil matters as well as general legal matters. Benefits include but are not limited to legal defense, matrimonial proceedings, adoption, personal bankruptcy, change of name, homeowner's rights (real estate transactions), general consultation, document review, will, living will, health care proxy, power of attorney, planning for elderly, probate and estate administration, personal injury, arraignment assistance via telephone, consumer protection, identify theft protection, estate planning, and prenuptial agreements.

Certain legal service benefits are also extended to parents and/or parent-in-laws of covered members. Consultations and select legal services are at no cost with very low fees for other covered benefits. The lawyer comes to BOCES to meet with members on the first Monday of each month during the school year. Call (914) 997-1576 to schedule an appointment. Legal fund website:<u>www.teacherslegalfund.com</u>

Refer to your USA Welfare Fund Benefit Booklet for more specific information.

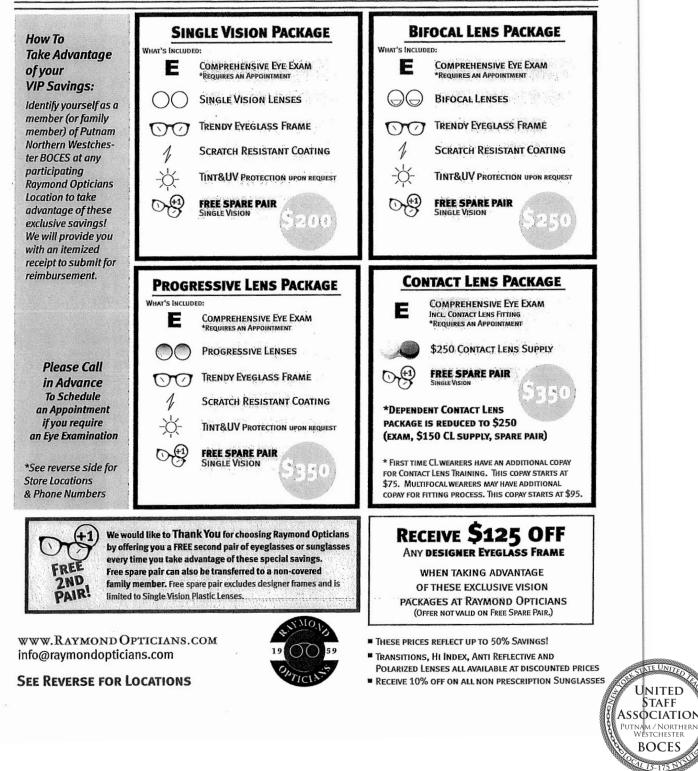
Actively employed members may decline coverage of Welfare Fund Benefits (dental and optical) for themselves and/or any enrolled dependents at any time by completing a Declination of Coverage form, which can be obtained by writing to the United Staff Association Welfare Fund at P.O. Box 403, Amawalk, NY 10501 7/1/2014

Welfare Fund Important Information:

RAYMOND OPTICIANS

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Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES



RAYMOND OPTICIANS

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SOUTHERN WESTCHESTER COUNTY:

YONKERS 652 TUCKAHOE ROAD (914) 337-3322 NORTH YONKERS 984 N BROADWAY (914) 375-0608 LARCHMONT 1923 PALMER AVE (914) 834-5576 MAMARONECK 307 MAMARONECK AVE (914) 698-2022 DOBBS FERRY 18 ASHFORD AVE (914) 693-4244 NEW ROCHELLE 521 MAIN ST (914) 738-4500 WHITE PLAINS 195 MAMARONECK AVE (914) 328-2020

PUTNAM COUNTY:

CARMEL 1880 ROUTE 6-PUTNAM PLAZA (845) 228-5800 BREWSTER ROUTE 22 (845) 279-2411

DUTCHESS COUNTY:

HOPEWELL JUNCTION 827 ROUTE 82 (845) 223-2010 PAWLING 63 E MAIN ST (845) 855-8200 POUGHKEEPSIE 252 HOOKER AVE (845) 471-3260



NYSUT Leadership Conference Report:

New York State Teacher's Retirement System

94th Annual Meeting of NYSTRS Delegates

November 9-10, 2014

Attending the delegates meeting was informative and educational as has been the case in many previous years. As you may be aware we have seen additional tiers added in recent years. Tiers 5&6 contain significant changes from Tiers 1-4 and have increased contribution terms and rates for members. Also changes in retirement service and age has increased in the new tiers. Being aware of what tier you are in is very important and is listed on the retirement statement you will receive shortly. Carefully reviewing the information on the annual retirement statement for accuracy was stressed throughout the presentation offered at the meeting. You can also create an account on the NYSTRS web site which gives you access to personal information any time you have a need to check. The website can be found by using a search engine using New York State Retirement System or you can use the web site : <u>www.nystrs.org</u>. Although some may not think retirement is a consideration until they approach retirement age, this is a false assumption. The resources available for planning early can give goals to set so that retirement is what you hope it will be. The professionals at the NSTRS are available to answer specific questions for individual cases. Be aware of staff lounge conversations and advice from well meaning colleagues; each individual has specific circumstances unique to themselves and therefore it is wise to seek correct and accurate information from a NYSTS specialist. Devoting time to set goals early, midterm, and shortly before retirement can pay large benefits down the road. I wish all our members a safe and healthy year.

Respectfully,

Alfonse J. Cotoia



Know Your Contract:

SECTION X - LEAVE FOR DEATH IN FAMILY

Salaried employees shall be allowed five days leave with pay because of death in the immediate family. Granting leave beyond the five days shall be at the discretion of the District Superintendent, or his designee.

Immediate family shall mean:

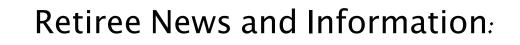
- 1. Spouse or Domestic Partner
- 2. Children
- 3. Sibling
- 4. Parent or Grandparent, Parent-in-law
- 5. Other members of the employee's household
- 6. Others who by reason of circumstances may have served in loco parentis.



What this means;

Leaves for bereavement for anyone on the list above is 5 days total including traveling to and from any place you may need to travel. If additional days are needed, you must request these days from the superintendent who has the discretion to allow or reject the additional days being requested. Any days past the 5 that are not granted by the superintendent may result in having the days docked from your pay.







Ron and Pam Lunge :sent holiday greetings. Ron has had his knees replaced and is on the mend. Sounds like he is ready to roll.

<u>Ronnie Bamiel</u>: has moved to the east coast of Florida in September and since has been north twice and on three cruises. She expects family visitors this February and hopes to reconnect with other BOCES folks on the west coast of Florida come spring.

<u>Barbara Burnap</u>: Our trip to Italy in Northern Italy: tour of 4 Lakes in the Lake District, then took train to Cinque Terre where we spent 3 nights in the fishing village of Riomaggiore and hiked on the trails, Padua, and a trip to visit the American Cemetery outside of Florence where Art's cousin, Arthur Burnap, was buried after being shot down during the war.

John Hallihan: Pat and I took a 5,389 mile road trip this past October. We headed south to the Florida Panhandle, then across the Gulf Coast to Texas, and then back through the Smokey Mountains and Blue Ridge Mountains to home. 12 states, 4 breweries, and lots of fun! John continues to volunteer at a catholic school in NYC.

<u>Adrienne Forbes:</u> Adrienne and Howard Forbes have been spending the winter in Puerto Rico. San Juan, with some historical exceptions, is very accessible. The weather is about 82 every day with cooler evenings. I am working harder on learning Spanish, and have begun speaking simple sentences...Challenging but fun!...Reading lots of books, and trying to relax more...Lots of friends and relatives down here to enjoy the scenery on the ocean. Howard has not won much at the casino but maybe the machines will improve!!

<u>Challis Thompson:</u>Heard from George O'brien we're having lunch Tuesday.Also heard from Robin Fillhart - she'll be down with family in Melbourne and Pompano so I'll be seeing her next weekend. Challis and her husband Peter moved in May bought a house in Atlantis, FL. In November we traveled with some friends to Denmark and Italy, so I celebrated my birthday in Florence, Italy. That was fun. Chilly for ME, but fun!

Lucille Miazga retired teacher aide and Diane Roach retired teacher aide. They were friends from Mahopac. Diane and her husband moved to the Syracuse area; Lucille to Florida. Diane rents in Florida near Lucille during the winter. Lucille and Tommy take many cruises and love to dance Just sharing a photo from New Year's Eve at the



Elks with Diane and Tom Roach and Marie (Coppola) Cramer and her husband Charlie. Diane and Tom are renting again in our community so we are having lots of fun.

We are leaving 2/9 for a Rock N Roll cruise with 22 friends and have a family cruise planned for June. We are hoping to fly back to Hawaii in April to celebrate my 70th birthday also our 50th anniversary in November. The years have gone by way too fast but all is good in sunny Florida and we are very lucky.



Retiree News and Information: continued from page 9

<u>Pete Smith:</u> Arlene and I made 2 trips in the last 4 months. We spent 10 days in San Francisco and Napa Valley wine country in early Sept. My personal highlight was our tour of Alcatraz although several wine tasting's hit the spot. From Oct.29th - Nov.19th we spent 3 weeks touring Australia and and New Zealand. We spent 4 days in the Outback and saw the worlds largest rock (6 miles long). The Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbor Bridge were also highlights. New Zealand is a beautiful country with more sheep than people.

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Our Sympathy to...

We extend our sympathy to Eileen Fahey on the death of her husband , Tommy.

To <u>Marty DeMurio</u> on the death of his wife, Kathy. He has a new great grandchild this fall also.

We extend our condolences to <u>Cathy Prior</u> on the sudden passing of her young grandson, Daniel, and we pray for his twin, Clare 's , continued health.

Retiree Day Trips:

If any retirees are interested in day trips log on to <u>www.westputretirees.com</u>

Trips are planned to the Westchester Dinner Theater. *Camelot. Godspell. West Side Story. Backwards in High Heels* and *Showboat.*

Trips are also planned to the Queens Museum and Tour of Woodlawn Cemetery, Tour of the Chanticleer Museum and Gardens, 9/11 Museum and High Line Tour and Tea at the Pierre

All bus trips out of town leave from NYSUT on Tarrytown Road.

If you have news to share, please send it:

Wynnie McCarthy, <u>wam48@aol.com</u> or 36 Cheshire Lane Yorktown, NY 10598.



Union Representatives

Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES Yorktown Heights, NY 10598 914-607-6736

Executive Board:

President **1st Vice President** 2nd Vice President Secretary Treasurer Membership Chairperson Grievance Chairperson Negotiations Chairperson Al Cotoia Program Rep Chairperson Magaly Almonte

Doug Andreotti **Catherine Armisto** Stephanie Buckhout Judy Gillet Sharlene Bass Stacey Chiarella **Carolyn Schneider**

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Jim Bellucci Michael Sowul Steve Lowery Fred Santoli Bob Kelderhouse/Sowul Bob Kelderhouse/Pinesbridge Bob Kelderhouse/Pinesbridge Alisha Williams-McCorvey

Representative

Lisa Tobin Lynn Ammann Marie Russo Nate Ball Elisa Longo (CLASS Transitions) Lisa Giocomini-Essell Deirdre Toolan Margo Schepart

United Staff Association Welfare Fund

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

Chairperson:	Dawn Wargula
Secretary:	Nancy Finsmith
Treasurer:	Doreen Trani
Trustees:	Cindy Flynn Jenn Guiffre Doug Andreotti
Retiree Liaison:	Janine deGrouchy-Hraska Janine is available by phone/email: (845) 735-4683 pnwboceswelfarefund@gmail.com
Consultant:	Flo Laicher
Administrator:	Daniel Cook Associates (914) 250-0700 FAX (212) 714-1455 www.dhcook.com

Upcoming Meetings:

Upcoming Executive Board **Upcoming General** Membership Meeting: Meeting To Be Determined Tuesday, March 10, 2015 3:00 P.M. 3:00 P.M. Walden Adult Dining Pinesbridge Conference Room UNITED STAFF SOCIATION NAM / NORTHEI VESTCHESTE BOCE

A Bouquet from Us:



Our Sympathy to...

<u>Doug Geer</u> for the loss of his mother. <u>RoseAnne Korsak</u> for the loss of her father.

In Our Thoughts...

Ada DiCecco for a speedy recovery from surgery.

Lorraine Petriello for a speedy recovery from surgery.

Congratulations to...

Dawn Wargula on her recent marriage.

Send items for A Bouquet from Us to Karen Carey at <u>kcarey@pnwboces.org</u>

To schedule an appointment with the lawyers at Mirkin & Gordon, members should call (914)997-1576.

IMPORTANT:

Carolyn Schneider is the Grievance Chairperson. She can be reached at <u>cschneider@pnwboces.org</u> or (914) 248-2764 (ext. 764).

We are on the Web! Visit us at:http://ny.aft.org/pnwb/



Thank you to everyone who contributes to this newsletter by submitting articles, important information, bouquets, or helping with the printing and/or distribution throughout the school year.

Thanks to a

Please send retiree news for the newsletter to Wynnie McCarthy, <u>wam48@aol.com</u> or 36 Cheshire Lane Yorktown, NY 10598. We want to reach out to more retirees.

Please send newsletter worthy information to Meredith Markolovic (Tech) at <u>mmarkolovic@pnwboces.org</u>.

