

THE UNITED NEWSLETTER

LOCAL 15-175 NYSUT LOCAL 3072 AFT

December 2017

The importance of Teachers Supporting their Unions <i>Page 2-3</i>	USA Welfare Fund Legal Services <i>Page 4-5</i>	USA Welfare Fund Adult Children <i>Page 6</i>	USA Welfare Fund Information <i>Page 7</i>	New York State Teacher Retirement Annual Meeting <i>Page 8</i>	General Membership Meeting Photos <i>Page 9-10</i>	Retiree information and News <i>Page 11-13</i>	Contact Information/ Upcoming Meetings <i>Page 14</i>	Bouquet from Us/ Important Information <i>Page 15</i>
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From The Desk of the President

Good Day Members,

I'm sure you will agree, as we approach this time of the year, our patience, as well as our tolerance, kicks into overdrive, which can make a recipe for undue stress.

I'd like to share my theory to help make you feel that "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!"

Holidays are opportunities for friends and relatives to get together and celebrate life. Our lives have become so hectic and stressful that we spend

way too little time with the people we love. This can cause all sorts of potential health problems, both emotional and physical.

As human beings we need to realize that we function in a community and we need each other's support.

This is why it is imperative that we use the holidays that we are given to spend precious time with our loved ones. It's about gifts that come from the heart.

Greeting you warmly with a wish that's sincere, for a Healthy & Happy New Year.

IT'S THE
MOST
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YEAR

Doug Andreotti



The Importance of Teachers Supporting Their Unions

Why it's becoming more critical for teachers to support their unions.

From winning the fight against gender inequality to spearheading negotiations to avoid strikes, teachers unions have a long history of gaining power and achieving varying levels of success for their members. With national and state unions also supporting local affiliates throughout the United States, teachers unions are needed more than ever. The educational climate in the U.S. is drastically changing, as legislative powers and the public seek someone to blame for increasing failures occurring throughout the nation's education systems.

The importance of teachers joining and supporting their union is seen in the need to continue strengthening the organizations which possess the ability and influence to improve the workplace conditions, pay, benefits and job security of those employed in today's public school system.

WHAT DOES A TEACHERS UNION DO?

The primary objectives and benefits associated with teachers unions have shifted since the inception of the first organization in 1857. However, the goals and agendas associated with today's education-related unions generally include the following obligations:

Protect the Rights and Jobs of Teachers: In the past, it was not uncommon for the First Amendment rights of teachers to be grossly denied. Because of unionization - educators are now able to voice their opinions and champion causes without fear of retaliation. Unions have fought against restrictive school district requirements (such as teachers in the 1930s expected to take an anti-communist loyalty oath), and represented members treated differently when they disagree with new policies or the viewpoints of their administrators.

At one time, teachers in New York City could be punished for the arrangement of classroom furniture, the exact duration of lesson units and the format of bulletin boards, until the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) successfully pushed for adding language to contracts that granted leniency and increased protection for educators.

Collective Bargaining: Teachers unions are behind the differences in pay between private school and public school educators. Private school teachers (such as those who work in Catholic schools) are not unionized, and according to a piece titled 3 Important Functions of Teachers Unions, the author remarked that when school funding comes "from collection plates," teachers tend to make 80 percent of what public school teachers earn.

Indirectly Aid in Student Achievement: Several studies have been conducted, including highly-regarded findings from Arizona State University, which suggest that schools with unionized teachers often lead to higher achieving students. The former head of the National Education Association (NEA), John Wilson, noted a difference in the test scores and graduation rates of unionized schools versus non-unionized schools.

Additionally, a correlation has been made between countries leading in student performance and having some of the strongest teachers unions in the world.



Provide Career and Professional Development Resources: Teachers unions offer several state-specific and nationwide opportunities for educators to develop as a professional. The NEA provides support staff assistance, mentorship training, leadership training, and hosts national conferences. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has an Educational Research and Development Program which connects teachers and researchers together to promote better education and teaching approaches using research, studies and other analysis. Teachers unions also offer workshops, online sessions, teaching strategy tools and resources, as well as scholarship opportunities for teachers seeking an advanced degree or national board certification.

Keep Teachers and Students Safe: When failure to meet the minimal requirements for cleanliness and sanitation practices occurs within the public school system, unions work on behalf of teachers and students to uphold their safety. This may include addressing asbestos problems, advocating for improved indoor air quality, and supporting local and state campaigns for healthier and environmentally safer schools.

Promote and Influence Education Reform: Teachers unions become involved in politics and support candidates which can positively affect educators and the quality of education. Issues that both the AFT and NEA have taken interest in include merit pay, charter schools, and teacher evaluations. As demonstrated in Chicago, teachers unions continue to make an impact on education reform in some of the largest cities in the U.S.

Provide Liability Insurance and Legal Advice: Teachers are not exempt from being sued by a parent or needing legal representation for a school employment issue, and as a member of a union, they receive advice and counsel, when necessary. Teachers unions, such as the AFT and NEA, also provide liability insurance to members as a safeguard against unforeseen accidents, injury, and/or other incidents that can occur in a classroom. Without this assistance, teachers would have to pay out-of-pocket for lawyers and legal counsel.

Aid Advocacy Efforts: Teachers often serve as advocates for individual students, their place of employment, and their school district. Unions encourage and assist in a teacher's desire to improve the quality of education for their students. For example, the NEA's Priority Schools Campaign and their grievance process are set up to help disadvantaged schools obtain an adequate supply of books and course materials. In the past, AFT affiliates in Ohio and Michigan have organized book drives to gather tens of thousands of books for low-income families with children.

Educate and Inform: In addition to providing reading materials and online references, teachers unions also educate members in other ways. For example, although school board meetings are open to teachers, scheduling conflicts can prevent their attendance and participation. Some union leaders proactively keep teachers in the loop by providing an outline of the board's topics of discussion, decisions made, and current issues affecting the school district.

Fight Against Privatization of Public Schools: Teachers unions play a significant role in preventing legislation which essentially places corporations in the control of public school education. These entities are typically viewed as being more concerned with turning a profit rather than operating in the best interest of education and the children.

To Read the entire article, latest news, and resources, please follow the link:
<http://tobecomeateacher.org/the-importance-of-teachers-supporting-their-unions/>



USA Welfare Fund Legal Service Benefit

USA Welfare Fund: Legal Services Benefit



The Westchester Putnam Teachers Legal Services Fund provides a Legal Services Plan Benefit to all members of the United Staff Association Welfare Fund. The attorneys are available for consultation on the first Monday of each month during the school year and by appointment during the summer months. The plan includes, but is not limited to, preparation of Wills, Health Care Proxies, Living Wills, Powers of Attorney, and representation in Real Estate Transactions. Certain legal benefits are extended to parents and/or parent-in-laws of covered members.

If you need to update/create a Will, if your parents need to update/create a Will, if you are buying/selling a home, etc.....please take advantage of this benefit by calling the attorney today to schedule an appointment. Consultations and select legal services (e.g. Simple Wills, Document Review, Identify Theft Protection Benefit, Living Will/Health Care Proxy) are at no charge to members with very low fees for other services (e.g. Simple Personal Bankruptcy - \$75.00, Change of Name - \$45.00, representation in Real Estate Transactions for primary residence - \$60.00, Uncontested Divorce - \$60.00, Uncontested Legal Separation - \$45.00-\$75.00) .

The Legal Fund Booklet is available on-line at www.teacherslegalfund.com

To schedule an appointment with a legal service plan lawyer, call (914) 997-1576.



USA Welfare Fund Legal Annual Plan Utilization Report

The Trustees of the Westchester Putnam Legal Services Plan met on Wednesday October 25, 2017. The Westchester Putnam Legal Services Plan (WPTLSP) is the vehicle through which prepared legal services are provided to the members of the USA bargaining unit and to those retirees who have elected to continue the benefit through the USA Welfare Fund. The WPTLSP is a consortium of nine local benefit funds and is overseen by a Board of Trustees, who are representatives of each fund.

- An attorney from the law firm comes to BOCES on a monthly basis, the first Monday of each month based on appointments. Appointments can be made for other times and a lawyer is available for use in Connecticut.
- Call **914-997-1576** to schedule an appointment.
- Please consult your legal booklet or visit www.teacherslegalfund.com for a complete description of all the benefits provided by the legal fund. These benefits are provided by the law firm of Mirkin & Gordon, PC.

Utilization Benefit Review:

On an annual basis the panel attorneys provide a report on the utilization of the benefit to the trustees. There has historically been an ebb and flow to the utilization rates from year to year. Below lists some of the many benefits available through the plan and the number of members who utilized that particular benefit during 2016-2017:

2016-2017 utilization for USA members was 125 contacts:

- General Consultations (in person and by telephone) - 105 members
- Health Care Proxy and Living Will - 24 members
- Last Will and Testament - 14 members
- Power of Attorney - 10 members
- Other legal benefits utilized include:
 - o Homeowner's Rights (Real Estate Transactions) - 7 members
 - o Matrimonial Proceedings - 3 members
 - o Consumer Rights - 1 member
 - o Legal Defense - 1 member

Other topics discussed ("Free Riders" - upcoming law cases directly affecting union membership, dues and agency fees; Constitutional Convention vote; and Surprise Billing Law)



Healthcare Proxies for Adult/College Students:

- If you have a child eighteen years of age or older and a college student, you can now have a healthcare proxy, HIPAA authorization prepared for them under the comprehensive legal service program of Westchester Putnam Teachers Legal Services Fund. Additionally, power of attorney can be included if the USA member is the 'agent' for the adult child.
- See attached memo regarding memo regarding adult college students.

Equifax Data Breach:

- The trustees of the legal fund will investigate insurance policy for Cyber security for the legal fund records and information gathered.
- **Identity Theft Protection Benefit:** The legal fund has a benefit that entitles the covered member to a consultation with an attorney if the member believes he/she has been the victim of identity theft.
- See attached memo regarding Equifax Data Breach



USA Welfare Fund Adult Children (18 years or older)

HEALTHCARE PROXIES, HIPAA AUTHORIZATIONS AND POWERS OF ATTORNEY FOR ADULT CHILDREN

If you have a child who is eighteen years of age or older you can now have a healthcare proxy, HIPAA authorization and power of attorney prepared for them under the comprehensive legal services program of the Westchester Putnam Teachers Legal Services Fund.

Children who are eighteen years of age or older are legally adults under the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (“HIPAA”), and therefore, medical officials at college health centers and other facilities may not speak with the child’s parents about his/her medical condition.

This can be addressed by the adult child executing a healthcare proxy designating the parent/member as an agent or proxy entitled to receive information about the child’s medical condition and discuss treatment options and a supplemental HIPAA authorization. The parent/member can also gain access to the child’s medical records, and most importantly, make treatment decisions on behalf of the adult child.

If the adult child is a college student, copies of these documents should be provided to the college health center to keep on file.

In addition, if your adult child becomes incapacitated due to a catastrophic event, you will not be able to conduct their legal and financial affairs. This can be addressed by the adult child executing a durable general power of attorney form designating the parent/member his/her “attorney-in-fact”.

If you wish to have a healthcare proxy, HIPAA authorization and power of attorney prepared for your adult child designating you, the member, his/her proxy and/or attorney in fact, please contact your local organization to make an appointment with an attorney from the panel law firm.



Welfare Fund Information:

FROM THE WEBSITE OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Equifax: What Happened and What You Can Do

If you have a credit report, there's a good chance that you're one of the 143 million American consumers whose sensitive personal information was exposed in a data breach at Equifax, one of the nation's three major credit reporting agencies.

Here are the facts, according to Equifax:

- The breach lasted from mid-May through July.
- The hackers accessed people's names, Social Security numbers, birth dates, addresses and, in some instances, driver's license numbers.
- They also stole credit card numbers for about 209,000 people and dispute documents with personal identifying information for about 182,000 people.

Equifax has set up a special website www.equifaxsecurity2017.com which provides steps consumers can take to help protect their information from being misused, including:

- Find out if your information was exposed. Click on the "**Potential Impact**" tab and enter your last name and **the last six digits of your Social Security number**. Your Social Security number is sensitive information, so make sure you're on a secure computer and an encrypted network connection any time you enter it. The site will tell you if you've been affected by this breach.
- Whether or not your information was exposed, U.S. consumers can get a year of free credit monitoring and other services. The site will give you a date when you can come back to enroll. Write down the date and come back to the site and click "Enroll" on that date. You have until **November 21, 2017** to enroll.
- You also can access **frequently asked questions** at the site.

Here are some other steps to take to help protect yourself after a data breach:

- **Check your credit reports** from Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion — for free — by visiting annualcreditreport.com. Accounts or activity that you don't recognize could indicate identity theft. Visit IdentityTheft.gov to find out what to do.
- **Consider placing a credit freeze on your files**. A credit freeze makes it harder for someone to open a new account in your name. Keep in mind that a credit freeze won't prevent a thief from making charges to your existing accounts.
- **Monitor your existing credit card and bank accounts closely** for charges you don't recognize.
- If you decide against a credit freeze, **consider placing a fraud alert on your files**. A fraud alert warns creditors that you may be an identity theft victim and that they should verify that anyone seeking credit in your name really is you.
- **File your taxes early** — as soon as you have the tax information you need, before a scammer can. Tax identity theft happens when someone uses your Social Security number to get a tax refund or a job. Respond right away to letters from the IRS.

Should you need further assistance, it is recommended that you contact the Fund to schedule a consultation with an attorney from the legal services plan.



New York State Teachers Retirement System (NYSTRS) Annual Meeting

I attended the 2017 Annual Meeting of New York State Teacher Retirement System (NYSTRS) Delegates in November. More than 700 delegates, alternates and visitors were on hand at the conference at the Saratoga Springs City Center. I found it to be very educational. Below are some highlights from the conference.

I found it somewhat alarming that under a 2014 law, the Treasury Department approved a 29% pension cut this year to 16,000 retired NYS Teamsters, and an 18% cut for 21,000 active workers. Cleveland Iron Workers also had a 20% average cut, and some United Furniture Workers had a 12% cut to their pensions. Cuts to four more funds are now under review: Alaska ironworkers, Detroit machinists, Ohio carpenters, and Long Island City teamsters.

Many current pensions are Direct Benefit plans (DB Plan) which means that the employer contributes for the employees throughout their employment and promises a specified monthly benefit at retirement for the employee.

Some States are now offering for new hires a Defined Contribution plans (DC Plan) which has the employer and employee both contributing on a regular basis throughout the employees employment which leads to the retirement benefits being determined by the contribution amounts.

There are many changes on the local, state, and federal levels where there is a continued shift from traditional Defined Benefit (DB) plans to alternatives listed below.

- No DB or DC plans for new hires; only a 401(k) and benefits reduced for active members in Dallas and Houston
- Plans to suspend for two years the Cost-Of-Living Adjustment (COLA) in many states
- Ohio TRS will stop paying a COLA for five years, and will reduce the COLA retirees receive.
- Kentucky: May end the DB plan for new hires and suspend current retirees' COLA for five years.
- Pennsylvania: Ended DB plans for new hires, who now only have a choice between two hybrid plans and a Defined Contribution plan (DC). That Right to the DB Plan We Were Promised Is Guaranteed by the NYS Constitution. Article 5, Section 7 says, "membership in any state retirement system shall be contractual, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired."

That is why it was so important in November to vote "NO" to the NYS Constitution Convention. Thank you for all who voted!

The strength of the NYSTRS is what keeps us all secure in our retirement planning. It is currently fully funded and cannot be reduced due to laws that are in place. It also cannot be raided as it has been by NJ. Go to NYSTRS.org to become better aware of what the rules governing each specific Tier, especially if you are in Tiers 5 or 6.

Be thankful for your NYSTRS because 29% of U.S. households 55 or older do not have either a pension or any retirement savings!

For additional information on the Pension Education Toolkit, check out NYSTRS.org.

Larry Marino
NYSTRS Delegate

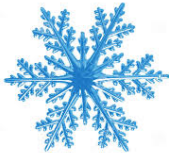
Retirement Planning

No matter how far along you are in your career, careful financial, and retirement planning are critical. NYSTRS' Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP) is designed to help members of all ages accomplish that.

PREP seminars are free, and sessions are held throughout the year across the state. NYSTRS winter-spring 2018 PREP schedule is now available on the [Retirement Planning > Pension & Retirement Education Program](#) page of their website at NYSTRS.org.



General Membership Meeting at Travelers Rest September 2017



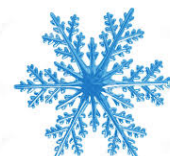
Great company!



Informative Union Information!

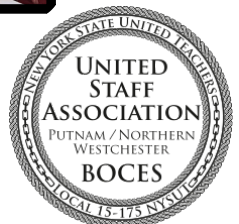


Delicious food!





A great time was had by all!



Welfare Fund Retiree Information

Retirees have two options for questions/concerns related to the Welfare Fund.

Janine deGrouchy-Hraska is the Retiree Liaison for the Welfare Fund. She can be reached at pnwboceswelfarefund@gmail.com or by calling [\(845\) 735-4683](tel:8457354683).

Nicole Werner at Daniel H. Cook Associates is the client representative specific to the United Staff Association Welfare Fund. She is the point of contact for active, retired, and COBRA members. Should any issues arise pertaining to your claims, eligibility and/or COBRA/Retiree payments, please send an email to Nicole at nwerner@dhcook.com or you can reach her at [\(914\) 250-0700](tel:9142500700) extension 231.



Retiree News

Retirees Ed, Phil and Bill playing golf in November at West Point



Vito Rinaldo has been busy in retirement one week. I was at Suwannee Hulaween Festival in Florida then Atlanta then home on Wednesday. I'll be in Buffalo for the Bills game next weekend with both my kids and going to see CRB Friday night at the Bears Den.


John Hallihan receives the Chester Smith Award from the Peekskill Library. www.peekskill.org



BOCES retirees support John Hallihan:
Phil, Maryann, Annette , Susan, John, and Lynn

Rich Devir and his singing group the Mill hill singers out of Ossining have done many local Holiday concerts.

Grace Snowden and Jack , Kitty Desimone and Jim, Mary Ann Alvord and Phil all took a great river boat trip through the wine country in the Bordeaux area of France. Cheers to wine tasting.

Reunions continue. Ed Fowler celebrated with his classmates from the University of Dayton this spring and recently was in south Carolina for a basketball  tournament. He follows Dayton in the winter until his Yankees return to the Bronx.

Challis Thompson and Peter had a great trip out west this summer and stayed in a town called Challis. they seem to really love living in Fl. Judy Gillespie was in Ohio for the rath of Hurricane Irma.

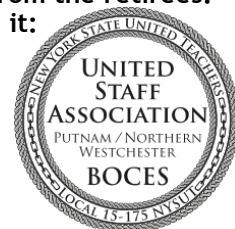
Heard from Carol Lockwood- she is deep into some household renovations. It is always difficult before the finished kitchen.

Gay Obrien and Cathy Prior had a great trip to Scotland followed by a trip to Budapest and Vienna. Cathy has just retuned from a trip to the Azores. Her son got married this summer and her daughter, Kerry, had another baby girl.

Marion Connelly had a great land and cruise to Alaska this summer.

Linda Bonavist had a great trip and cruise this fall to Japan, Korea ,the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Linda shares a great travel log with her friends as she travels and so many of her friends love traveling via her emails.

We try to include as much as possible from the retirees. If you have news to share, please send it:
Wynnie McCarthy
36 Cheshire Lane Yorktown, NY 10598.
wam48@aol.com



Retiree Sympathy

We extend our Sympathy to the family members and friends of these deceased USA members:

Dale Cassone, retired January 2017, teacher aide in Walden.

Pat Walsh. Pat was a teacher aide for Walden school for over 20 years.

Frank Sink, Retired Speech Therapist, who passed in October 2017 in Washington DC.

Lynn Uchetel, Retired Social Worker June 2016; wife of retired Special Education teacher, Joe Cotumaccio.

Reverend Rudolph P.F. Ressemeyer, DD of Oviedo, Florida, husband of Lenore Wittrock, passed away October 2017 of natural causes at 93.

Retired Special Education teacher, Susan Bednar and her husband, Frank Molinaro, on the sudden passing of their only child, Michael Joseph Molinaro.

Bob Distasio, Retired Special Education teacher at Alternative High School, Fox Meadow. On Sunday, October 15th, BOCES colleagues got together to remember Bob Distasio, who passed away in August at Regina McCabes house. We had a potluck luncheon at Regina's house, where former principal of RAHS, Bob Kelderhouse, Barbara Slater, Even Stern, Dan Gotfriend, Annette Not, Christine Kelderhouse, Mary and Ed Fowler, and a former student, Kristy Partelow Nickerson and her niece. Bob was one of the Founding Fathers of the Alternative High School (RAHS) at Fox Meadow Campus. Kristy said it best, "Bob set a standard of teaching which saved and changed her life and that of many fellow students. Bob was her bridge to a successful future. She told me all the teachers when she was at RAHS were the best. I was glad to see Kristy and for me it is always sad to hear of a friend and fellow teacher's passing, but his legacy of changing lives will live on...God Speed to Bob Distasio!

*With our
greatest
sympathy.*



Union Representatives

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

Executive Board:

President	Doug Andreotti
1st Vice President (Special Education)	Elisa Longo
2nd Vice President (CTE)	Stephanie Buckhout
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Treasurer	Sharlene Orlowsky
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Grievance Co-Chairperson (Special Education)	Lisa Giacomini-Essell
Grievance Co-Chairperson (CTE)	Larry Marino
Negotiations Chairperson	Al Cotoia
Program Rep Chairperson	Magaly Almonte

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Michael Sowul
Steve Lowery
Nicole Murphy
Csilla Mate/Michael Sowul
Csilla Mate/Pinesbridge
Csilla Mate/Pinesbridge
Lisa Hammel
RSE/TASC/Patti Slobogin

Representative

Lisa Tobin

Marie Russo
Nate Ball
Danielle Iammatteo (CLASS Transitions)

Deirdre Toolan
Margo Schepart
John Boniello

United Staff Association Welfare Fund

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

Chairperson:	Dawn Galvin
Secretary:	Nancy Finsmith
Treasurer:	Doreen Trani
Trustees:	Jenn Guiffre Doug Andreotti
Alternate Trustee:	Deirdre Toolan Maria Pontbriand
Retiree Liaison:	Janine deGrouchy-Hraska Janine is available by phone/email: (845) 735-4683 pnwboCESwelfarefund@gmail.com
Consultant:	Flo Laicher
Administrator:	Daniel Cook Associates www.dhcook.com
Contact for USA members:	Nicole Werner nwerner@dhcook.com (914) 250-0700, EXT 231 (914) 997-1576
Legal Fund:	www.teacherslegalfund.com

Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming Executive Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 2, 2018

3:00 P.M.
Pinesbridge Conference Room

Upcoming General Membership Meeting

Thursday, January 25, 2018

3:00 P.M.
Walden Dining Room
Refreshments will be available.



A Bouquet from Us

In Our Thoughts ...

Marie Russo- speedy recovery for her Granddaughter
Paul Purpura- speedy recovery

Congratulations to...

Stanley Rupinski on the birth of his Grandson.
Jenn and Matt Garrity on the birth of their Grandson.



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



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

IMPORTANT:

Grievance Co-Chairpersons are:

Larry Marino (CTE)

lmario@pnwboces.org (914) 248-2480 (ext.480).

Lisa Giacomini-Essell (Special Education)

ligiacomini-essell@pnwboces.org (914)248-2264 (ext. 264)

We are on the Web!



pnwb.ny.aft.org



Thanks to All:

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.

Please send Retiree News for the Newsletter to Wynnie McCarthy, wam48@aol.com 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 mmarkolovic@pnwboces.org.

