

SPEAK OUT



Issue #2 November 2004

From the President

By Barbara Shapiro

Union's Voice Keeps Teachers in the Loop



Public Agenda, a non-partisan research group, reported in a document entitled "Just Waiting to be Asked," a study that used a series of national polls to offer a fascinating yet frustrating look at public engagement in schools. Many of its conclusions challenged conventional wisdom about community support for schools, particularly the feelings of senior citizens about taxes and spending. One set of the results, however, really caught my attention.

In their responses to a series of questions, superintendents and school board members demonstrated an aloofness contrasting what they

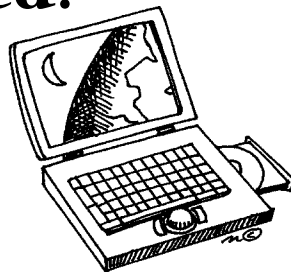
want to accomplish and the needs and concerns of the people in the classroom who must make it happen. For example, 70% of the rank-and-file teachers polled said they are often left out of the loop in their school district's decision-making process. The study also turned up a tremendous amount of distrust. When district leaders do make the effort to reach out to teachers for feedback or hear concerns, just 23% of teachers believed that they were motivated by an honest effort to gain a better understanding of teachers' concerns. About 70% said the leaders' motive is usually to "win support for what the district leadership wants to accomplish." These findings ring true and parallel the disenchantment some of you have *continued on page 2*

Enclosed For You...

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Help Wanted!

PDTA is looking for someone to set up our website. A stipend is available. If you're interested, please call the PDTA office, ex. 1781.



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News From The President Cont...

expressed to me about shared decision-making, and the “top-down” approach some school leaders use to implement new policies.

Fortunately, here in Pittsford, we have worked very hard to make sure we do have a meaningful voice in the decision-making process. Our success is in large part due to the strength of our union. Through collective bargaining and local activism on a number of fronts—such as lobbying for more education funding, working to pass school budgets and developing a strong, collaborative relationship with district leaders—PDTA works hard to ensure that teachers and SRPs have a say in what happens in their classrooms. Although we have been able to carve out trust-

ing, working relationships with our Superintendent and Board of Education, we can never take that relationship for granted. PDTA is constantly working to keep our voice heard! Be sure to contact your Building Rep with your issues and concerns. They meet regularly

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with the building administrators and with the PDTA officers to make sure problems are resolved. By making PDTA part of the team, many problems are worked out in a collegial atmosphere. When this happens, everyone wins—especially our students!

Some of you have also wondered about phone calls you have received from the NYSUT Polling Center. Of course, the intent is not to bother you like some of those annoying telemarketers and they certainly do not want to sell you anything. NYSUT does want to provide us with better services by finding out what we think. The polling center has been used extensively to conduct statewide polls on our political opinions, to track our support for various candidates, to get out the vote, to survey us on the impact of the state tests, to find out ergonomic concerns of SRPs, to collect information about the concerns of new members, to gather feedback from local Presidents and delegates. Individual locals can also use the center. The polling center has been a wonderful vehicle for making sure that our opinions count!

Meet Your New Professional Standards Review Board Member Suzanne Ange



Suzanne Ange, the newest member of the Professional Standards Review Board, has a long history in

Pittsford, having attended Thornell Road, Barker Road Junior High and Mendon High School. She then received her Bachelor’s degree from SUNY Fredonia and her Master’s degree from Nazareth College.

Suzanne has worked in the district for nine years and is currently teaching 7th grade math at Pittsford Middle School. She serves as PDTA Membership Chair at PMS, is a mentor, helps run the school food store as the Citibank/Junior Achievement Club advisor, is a Ski Club chaperone and has been a cooperating teacher to many student teachers..

Suzanne lives in Pittsford with her husband Tony and their two children, seven-year-old Alyssa and

five-year-old Austin (“AJ”). She is a Sunday school teacher and youth group advisor at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. Being a mother, teacher, and volunteer keeps her quite busy, but when she has free time, she enjoys walking, downhill skiing, traveling, being outdoors, and spending time with her family and friends. Her hobbies include piano lessons and scrapbooking.

SRP Newslink

By Karen Shield

Mark Your Calendars:

Nov. 18 SRP Recognition Day
 March 17 GVSBI Annual Para professional Conference
 April 14 Spring SRP General Meeting
 3:45 p.m. SHS Student Cafeteria.

About Our Members

We send our best wishes to Kim Dewhirst (JR) as she recovers from knee surgery.

We send our condolences to Barbara Servé (PR) on the loss of

her father and to Jeanne McElhinney (PMS-East) on the loss of her mother and her brother. We sadly announce the passing of three of our retirees: Judy Anzalone, Lolita Crowther, and Florence Hayner.

Health and Safety

By Tom Indiano

The PDTA Health and Safety Committee is here to assist you with your wellbeing in the Pittsford Central School District. When a concern arises, the proper procedure to begin the process that involves the Health and Safety Committee is to fill out a Health and Safety Concern form. Return this form to your building principal. At that time your building principal will forward the concern to Central Office and the District committee will review the document.

Examples of items that should be reported are: classroom temperatures below 65 degrees during the heating season, unsafe electrical usage (numerous extension cords or splitters), concerns regarding air

or water quality in buildings, excessive noise through the school day due to construction equipment. Many of these items may be dealt with by conducting testing samples and results will be documented and forwarded to concerned individuals. Other concerns may be forwarded to our district project manager Bill Burleigh.

In recent weeks I have personally learned that not all renovation projects are part of the renovation project but is our Central Maintenance department doing capital improvement items. Please be sure which project is being conducted by Christa Construction and which will be done by our district workers. This is significant information in regards to which the concern gets funneled.

Student Loan Consolidation

AFT members can take advantage of the lowest interest rates on student loans in history and cut their monthly student loan payments up to 54 percent. Learn more about the program today by calling an AFT-dedicated loan counselor at **800/936-4976** or visiting **www.aft.org/aftplus/consolidation**.



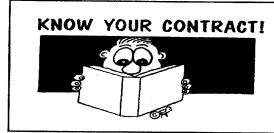
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The New York State Education Department has a series of regulations which must be followed by contractors and school districts during renovation and construction projects. The Commissioner's 155.5 Regulations for Safety During Construction is an informative document which is available on-line. It addresses all aspects of construction during the school year and what needs to be prepared in order to keep our students and staff in a safe environment during any construction project.

If anyone has any further questions feel free to contact me at ext. 1113 or e-mail me at thomas_indiano@pittsford.monroe.edu.

Know Your Contract

By Brenda Gibson



DON'T RISK A LETTER IN YOUR FILE: BE SURE TO FULFILL YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBLIGATIONS!

Recently some of our staff were notified that they have not met their contractual obligation for last year's in-service requirement. The surrounding confusion has made us aware that we need to clarify the obligation and the calendar year for in-service credits, while stressing the importance for each of us to keep careful records of our in-service participation.

- Professional staff members have a contractual obligation for six hours of in-service workshops each year (Contract 2-2, pg. 12).

- Teachers are required to attend one Professional Development Day scheduled in the summer. This day is included in our 187 workdays (Contract 14-2, pg. 23).
- Hours taken after the last day of school in June are credited towards the next school year (the current school year runs from June 28, 2004 through June 24, 2005).

Each Professional Development day is 5 hours long. Teachers may take a second P.D. day to count towards the 6-hour in-service

requirement, but it is important to realize that one hour will still be due the district.

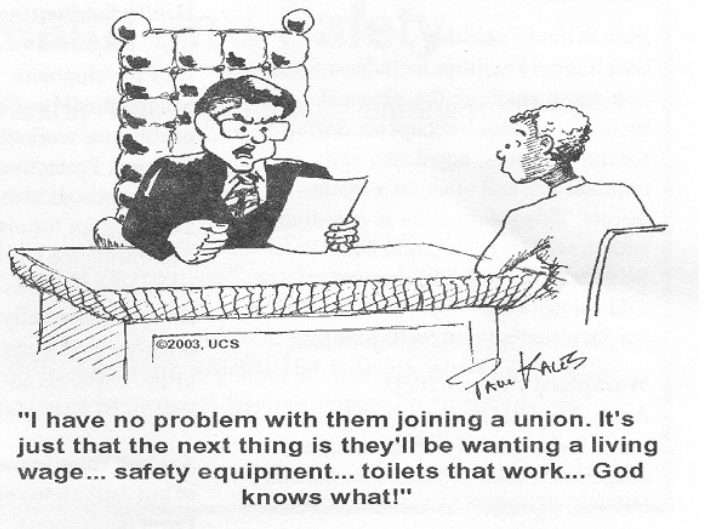
Occasionally mistakes happen; that is why it is so important to carefully track your credits. We can all check our accumulated credits for this year on-line or by calling the Teacher Center directly, ext. 1070.

Although this year PDTA was able to negotiate an arrangement with the district whereby staff members were able to make up missing hours, we are not optimistic about this continuing into the future.



Check Your Paychecks

If you pay your PDTA dues by payroll deduction, the deductions will begin with the November 12 paycheck. It is important for everyone to check your payroll envelope for information on a regular basis, even if you have direct deposit. Not only should you check to make sure everything is correct, but Payroll often puts important notes in the envelope or on the pay stub itself.



Especially For New Members

By Caren Glassman

Are you on the path to Teacher Certification? Got Any Questions?

- Do you know that if you let your certification lapse you could lose your job?
- What do you need if you are pursuing permanent, initial or professional certification?
- What if you have a certificate of qualification or perhaps a conditional provisional or conditional initial certification or even a modified temporary license?
- Are you eligible for an extension of time on your certification?
- Are you familiar with the NYS Teacher Certification Examination process?
- Do you know what examinations you have to take...if any?
- Have you begun a Master's degree program?
- How about fingerprinting and the school violence prevention workshop requirement?
- Do you know how much time you have to complete these requirements?
- Do the 2004 certification requirement changes affect you?
- Are you confused?

Video Conference on Teacher Certification Requirements

WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT? Through presentation, question-and-answer, and the use of the NYSUT and the State Education Department Office of Teaching Initiatives web sites, this videoconference details the NYS certification process and provides participants with information and resources as well as recommendations on how to work toward permanent or professional certification...the ultimate goal!

CONDUCTED BY... This videoconference is conducted by NYSUT Research and Educational Services and NYSUT's New Member Program in cooperation with your NYSUT Regional Office and your local union. As a service to our members, NYSUT provides information and technical assistance on the NYS teacher certification process for groups through local presentations and videoconferences.

NYSUT Conference Center • 30 N. Union Street, 1st Floor

Wednesday, December 1 5:30 & 6:45 p.m.

Contact Mary Denise Schneider at NYSUT, 454-5550 for more information.

NYSUT members enjoy higher interest rates

Since last March, when New York State United Teachers Member Benefits introduced **Preferred Savings PlusSM from MetLife Bank**, members have been opening savings accounts and enjoying higher interest rates. MetLife Bank offers NYSUT members and agency fee payers some of the highest interest rates in the country on certificates of deposit, money market accounts and savings accounts.



How is this possible? It is a direct bank that focuses on personal savings and mortgage solutions rather than transaction (checking) accounts. The overhead incurred by traditional bricks-and-mortar banks is eliminated, which allows MetLife Bank to pass savings to its customers through higher yielding interest rates.

These interest rates are consistently high they are not teaser rates. This puts more money in consumers' pockets. This program also offers convenience you can bank online, by ATM, by phone or by mail. Accounts are accessible at any ATM across the nation. MetLife Bank does not charge account holders for use of ATMs, and it actually rebates you for other institutions' ATM fees charged for using their ATMs up to a \$5 monthly reimbursement.

The bank offers high-yield savings products as well as a mortgage program.

Money market accounts offering rates more than double the national average with the benefits of liquidity and safety; also providing easy access to funds via check, ATM, phone or online. No minimum deposit required. First order of 30 standard checks is free.

High-yield savings earning some of the highest rates without sacrificing security, ideal for those who may not want or need check access. A minimum deposit of \$50 is required.

Certificates of deposit helping consumers build solid, disciplined savings by setting aside surplus funds for the long term. Minimum amount of \$1,000 is required.

Mortgages providing residential mortgages with a best-price guarantee; call or go online to receive a fast, free decision and a guaranteed closing date.

All savings products are FDIC-insured up to \$100,000 per depositor. FDIC regulations provide for separate insurance on joint accounts, which means FDIC would insure \$200,000, assuming each party owns half of the funds in the joint account.