



SPEAK OUT

ISSUE 1

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

From the President: Barbara Shapiro



There is a constant drumbeat heard these days in board rooms, legislative chambers, break rooms at work, even in the checkout line at the grocery store. Many voices want to cut away at valuable public assets, like health care, education and libraries, and assault the rights and benefits of the skilled professionals who provide those services.

Many of you have asked me for responses to counter these negative voices that are attacking us on a daily basis. Listed below are a few suggestions. Do you have any ideas to add to the list? Larry Wirth, our new editor, would love to hear from you and print them in our next issue.

THEY SAY: Union professionals' salaries are too high for these tough times.

WE SAY: Our members are all dedicated and highly trained. The professionalism and expertise we bring to our jobs benefits the people we serve

Dispelling Myths About Unions

in the schools, colleges and hospitals of New York.

WE SAY: Private-sector professionals in our communities, such as bankers, architects, engineers and lawyers, generally make much more than union members. A large majority of NYSUT practitioners in education and health care must have professional degrees, are certified, and pursue ongoing professional development and training to improve their practice and maintain their licensure.

THEY SAY: Employees do not deserve a defined benefit pension in these uncertain times. Public employees should have self-funded retirement plans.

Social Security.

WE SAY: The average teacher's pension is just over \$35,000 a year. While some regions are slightly higher, reflecting a higher cost of living, pensions remain modest. Pensions of more veteran retirees are much lower than the average. Many retirees are having a hard time paying their bills and meeting the costs of their prescriptions.

THEY SAY: Unions put their members' interests ahead of the needs of the community (or the state, the district, students, the taxpayers, or the hospital ...).

WE SAY: Practitioners work closely with key stakeholders in an effort to preserve the important services we provide. Our local collaborates with the PTSA, administrators, advisory groups and local officials to reach consensus on what is best for the schools and community we serve.

WE SAY: We advocate tirelessly for causes that matter to us because the quality of life in our community depends heavily on the quality work we do.

How can we make New York a center for learning if our schools and colleges have their funding cut?

How can we keep our generation and the next generation healthy and able to learn if the funding for the programs they need is cut?

WE SAY: We are proud of the union's voice in this debate. We advocate for a smarter, healthier state where people want to live, work and learn.

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WE SAY: It strengthens communities when all workers - public and private - have the security of a defined benefit pension plan that enables them to have a decent quality of life after decades of contributing to society. Imagine the fiasco that would have occurred in this market had we not defeated the proposed privatization of

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Know Your Contract: Susan Gager



Tuition Reimbursement and Course Work Compensation

As we begin a new school year, I am reminded that many of our members are also students themselves, and in the process of completing course work and degrees of higher education. Our contract includes provisions for tuition reimbursement and compensation for coursework and degree attainment.

Professional staff members can receive ½ tuition reimbursement for unlimited hours of graduate study or university sponsored clinical training, each year, until attaining a Master's Degree. After earning a Master's, they are eligible for ½ tuition reimbursement for up to 6 hours per year. This benefit is pro-rated for part time professional staff.

Reimbursement for undergraduate courses is determined case by case, based on the course's applicability to new programs and availability at the graduate level.

Paraprofessionals and auxiliary staff with a minimum of three full years of employment in Pittsford are eligible for ½ tuition reimbursement for 6 hours of undergraduate study each year, up to a maximum of 60 hours or the attainment of a Bachelor's degree. Graduate hours towards teacher certification, or relating to an

auxiliary employee's area of assignment, will also be reimbursed at the same rate. This benefit is pro-rated for part time paraprofessional and auxiliary staff as well.

Student Teacher Vouchers must be used whenever possible. The contract delineates guidelines for the transfer of vouchers within our district. The sponsoring teacher earning the voucher may elect to give it to any employee within the district, or submit it to the building Principal who will then distribute it within the building. All unused vouchers will be forwarded to the Human Resources office and allocated to interested staff members.

Professional staff members can receive compensation for graduate courses at the rate of \$45 per credit hour. Graduate work and university sponsored training is compensated in blocks of six credit hours, up to a maximum of 90 hours. Graduate degrees are compensated at the rate of \$1,120 per degree. Salary adjustments are only made on September 1st and February 1st.

All course work taken for credit must have approval by the district designee (Human Resources Director) prior to the start of the course. Upon completion, employees must also submit proof of payment and suc-

cessful completion of the course or degree.

The Graduate Tuition Reimbursement form needed for this process can be downloaded from the district website: Click on Departments, For Staff Only, Graduate Tuition Reimbursement Form; or the form can be obtained through the Human Resources Office.

It is important to remember that you, the employee, are responsible for providing the necessary information and documentation, within the outlined time frame, in order to qualify for these benefits.

On another special note, it is important for you to know that new legislation will impact how you can use your Flexible Benefits Fund and your Health Care Fund. This legislation will take effect on January 1, 2011.

For more details, check out the benefits website at www.benefitresource.com, or go to the Employee Center on the PCSD website, click on Payroll and Benefits, then Benefit Resources for Employees.



About Our Members



Congratulations to Stacey Holliday (MHS) on the birth of her daughter Olivia in May. Teresa Henrichs (MCE) and Paul Levan (SHS) are also celebrating new baby girls in their families.



Brandon Mauks (MHS), Ashley Pulver (MCE), and Brett Lasser (SHS) are recently married (but not to each other). John Nally (SHS) is recently engaged.



We send our heartfelt condolences to Mary-ellen Fraser (MHS), Jed Williams (MHS), Michele Cieslica (AC), and Mark Lucci (JR) on the loss of their mothers, and Nancy Trabold (BRMS) who lost her father. Denise Rizzo (JR) suffered the loss of her father-in-law and Holly Nathan-Colon (BRMS) lost her precious grandson in an accident.

Health and Safety: Linda Khalil



As chair of the PDTA Health and Safety Committee I would like to welcome our returning and new members for the 2010-11 school year.

They are:

- AC: Kathleen Roser
- JR: Kim Minchella, Beth Kramer*
- MC: Kirsten Weeks*
- PR: Spencer Jones
- TR: Laura Schemancik*
- BRMS: Penny Tezak*
- CRMS: Kathy Harriff
- MHS: Larry Wirth
- SHS: Cheryl Piccirillo / Jennifer Lonardo / Ben Winter

* indicates new member of this committee

The role of our members is to act as liaisons for health, safety, and wellness issues within your building. They receive monthly updates from the District Health and Safety/Wellness Councils, but more importantly, they serve as a resource in conjunction with the Building PDTA Representative to promote positive working and learning environments.

It should be an exciting year as we continue to look at improving safety and security, green cleaning/recycling, emergency preparedness, flu planning, and student and staff wellness. Our goal will be to

find the best practices among each of the buildings, and share those ideas so that we all may benefit.

An example of best practices occurred at the start of this school year with the introduction of Green Cleaning Guidelines. Last June all staff were requested to take home all cleaning products, air fresheners etc. In addition, any district supplied cleaners were to be returned to the building custodians. PDTA was a strong advocate for the creation of the guidelines and the availability of a District supplied cleaner.

The guidelines outline products approved for use in schools. These approved products include:

- Plain unscented baby wipes
- Softsoap with Aloe
- Purelle for hand cleaning where soap and water are not available

Please note Air Fresheners, Glade, and Plug-ins are not included on the approved list.

Staff now have access to Suprox, a school provided "green" cleaner which is available for those who would like to use it for cleaning. (It is not required that staff clean desks or tables.)

Bottles specifically labeled for Suprox were distributed to all schools in May, and each school Health and Safety Committee was charged with

setting up a location for a refill dispensing station for staff use. The dispenser automatically dilutes the product to the correct concentration for immediate use. The Health and Safety Committee will be responsible for monitoring that only the products on the approved list are brought in or used in school. Students may not use Suprox, but may use other items as described in the guidelines.

The guidelines and approved product list are both positive steps in maintaining healthy working and learning environment for both staff and students, and highlight the success which can be achieved by working collaboratively at the District level to effect change. I would like to recognize the support provided by Jeff Beardsley, Director of Operations, Maintenance and Security in facilitating the purchase and placement of products for staff use, which made implementation of this initiative possible.



Employee Info Goes High Tech

PDTA members will now have the opportunity to access important information online through the WinCap Self Service Module. You can check attendance, paycheck information, personal demographics and year to date payroll information all the way back to 2002. Now, when you need to know how much you paid in union dues or to the United Way you can just check it on your own. At this point, professional development information is not available but the District does hope to see that in the future.

Please contact your Building Rep with any questions or concerns.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

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For more information about these and other savings, go to:
aft.org/members



* The interest rate a member receives is based on the member's credit history.

AFT + is your advocate. For information on all **AFT +** programs, call 800/238-1133, ext. 8643, or e-mail aftplus@aft.org. The AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to disclosureinfo@aft.org; or visit www.aft.org/benefits/disclosure.

Mott's Strike Settled: Workers Returning to Apple Sauce Factory

Dr. Pepper Snapple Group and the union (RWDSU) representing 300 workers at the Mott's apple juice plant in Williamson announced a settlement on September 13 that ends a 16-week strike and includes a wage freeze, but not the pay cuts the company had demanded. Management at the Mott's factory had imposed a wage cut, despite the profitability of the plant and parent company. Most believe that this was caused by the reservoir of unemployed workers, allowing firms to pressure workers to toil longer and harder for the same or lower wages. In the three-year deal, the union also persuaded the company to drop its demand to freeze pensions for current workers, although newly hired workers will not have pensions, but 401(k) plans.

Stuart Appelbaum, president of the local, shared the thanks of all the striking workers who appreciated the support they received from the community and other unions. He said, "The RWDSU members at Mott's have a message for working people everywhere: Stand up for what you believe in, and stay united."



Barb Shapiro and Len Chaput support the striking Mott's workers

SRP Newslink: Karen Shield

Upcoming Dates To Remember



October 27 SRP General Meeting, October 27, BRMS Meeting Rm. #2

November 16 SRP Recognition Day

“Waiting for Superman”

I can't turn on the television or read the newspaper without hearing about the new documentary *Waiting for Superman*, which chronicles troubled public schools and paints unions in an unflattering light. I have not yet seen this film but will when it is released in Rochester. Undoubtedly it is going to fuel a national debate on public education. To read AFT's official response to the documentary please go to www.aft.org/NotWaiting.

The networks of NBC are running parallel programming all month called Education Nation. In one special Tom Brokaw asks Bill Gates this question, "What makes a great teacher?" Mr. Gates is spending a half of a billion dollars and is taking several years to collect data to find out the answer. He's calling this study MET or Measures of Effective Teaching. Mr. Gates responded that perhaps a great teacher works longer hours or breaks the class down more. (I think he was referring

to differentiation.) Mr. Gates goes on to say that if you want something to be excellent it cannot go unmeasured.

The piece also points out that great teachers become great after years of experience, by working with other teachers, and by sharing best practices. One young teacher in the program states that great teachers know their students on many levels not just academically. In closing, Tom Brokaw states that great teachers don't approach the classroom as a one size fits all model and that students do their best work when they know teachers care about them. I sat back and thought...how sad. NBC News presented this information as if it was a novel approach to education and maybe it is to viewers outside of education.

We in Pittsford have known what makes a great teacher for a long, long time. How sad it is that Mr. Gates is going to spend a half of a

billion dollars researching what makes great teachers instead of using the measurable data that is already available in high performing schools such as Pittsford. I am proud to be a part of a public school district that is filled with great teachers who use best practices each day. A district that focuses not just on academics but on the whole child. A district that provides meaningful staff development to its members and a district with a strong union. In the coming weeks and months we are going to be hearing an awful lot of negative things said about teachers. As Pittsford teachers, we must combat the noise we are hearing by continually striving for excellence, being professional and showing our community and our nation that we are a district full of great teachers!

-Jolene DiBrango (BRMS Building Representative)

Need Help Deciding What To Wear To School?

Buy a PDTA polo shirt and wear it often to show pride and unity!

Profits help to support the Pittsford Food Cupboard, the PDTA scholarship fund as well as other organizations in our community.

Stylish deep green short sleeved polo with embroidered PDTA logo.



Order Form

PDTA Short-Sleeved Classic Knit Polo Shirt

Shirt sizes XS – XL are \$18 each. *Please add additional \$2 for each size beyond XL.*

Make checks payable to PDTA.

Questions? Call the PDTA office at x1035

Name _____ Building _____

Circle your size: (Sizes are generous.)

Ladies:

XS S M L XL XXL* 1X* 2X*

Mens:

XS S M L XL XXL* XXXL* XXXXL*

Return this form the PDTA Office, Administrative Annex, Lomb Bldg.



What's all the buzz about?



You might have heard your colleagues talking about MAP, the Member Assistance Program available from NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Or maybe you've already joined. But if you haven't, you may want to once you read about MAP's benefits.

By joining MAP, an e-mail based program, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers from Member Benefits or from providers of its endorsed programs. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration for endorsement. When possible, you'll help Member Benefits test potential new programs and provide feedback.



Frequently, MAPers are entered into drawings for prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs and Member Benefits. Since MAP's introduction last spring,

MAPers have entered drawings for Bose® Quiet Comfort 3 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones, free admissions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, a summer fun pack filled with a variety of items, and an OfficeMax gift card worth \$100. In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly raffles; to date, prizes included digital cameras and an iPod nano.

MAPers receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from

its providers of endorsed programs. Member Benefits oversees the frequency of e-mail communications to ensure you will not be bombarded. On average, a MAP e-mail alert is sent once every three weeks.

Rest assured, Member Benefits does not share your e-mail address with outside interests other than endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.



This exciting, new program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member. Enroll on our secure page by logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and see the feature on our home page.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

