

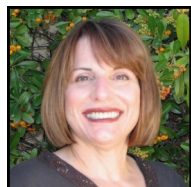


# SPEAK OUT

ISSUE 3

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2011

## From the President: Barbara Shapiro



### How to answer the myths and distortions? Underscore your professionalism!

Don't let others get so focused on what's "wrong" with education - and the teaching profession - that they lose sight of all that's "right." There is no epidemic of bad teaching. Nor are tenure and seniority protecting thousands of incompetents. That's nonsense.

Yet, there are those that continue to whip up the "blame the teacher" crowd, despite the reality. After all, we know - and parents know - the vast majority of educators are highly educated, highly skilled and dedicated professionals who perform miracles, small and large, every single day. Teachers - and, of course, SRPs - make up the foundation of excellence found in public schools throughout the region.

Our challenge is to answer the media's perpetuation of myths and dis-

tortions, while reinforcing to parents that our members are the bedrock of their districts and worthy of continuing, strong support. The best strategy for locals, such as PDTA, and individual teachers, is to demonstrate that commitment through community re-

**If you have engaged in an activity or event that has strengthened the ties with our Pittsford community, please contact me, so that we can publicize it.**

lations. We should all look to reconnect with parents and the community in ways that showcase educators as the caring, dedicated professionals we are.

PDTA, as an organization, is already

highly committed to positive community relations projects. From participating in the Making Strides walk, our donations to the Pittsford Food Cupboard, our scholarships to graduating seniors and our fundraisers to support the Pittsford Ambulance, Fire Department and Youth Services, we have worked hard to strengthen our ties with the Pittsford community. Now is the time for each of us to "reach out" to the community through positive parent contact, invitations to community members to visit our schools and building coalitions through sports and extracurricular clubs.

Strengthening the links with our Pittsford community is the best strategy for underscoring the professionalism found in public education. Silencing the naysayers is sometimes as easy as reinforcing the message of excellence by showcasing the commitment and dedication of our members.

**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR PDTA PRESIDENT, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2011**

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### ATTENTION

**This is your *Speak Out* election issue. Please be sure to "Meet the Candidates" for PDTA President by reading their articles which can be found on pages 4 -5.**

**Email the Editor : [lawrence\\_wirth@pittsford.monroe.edu](mailto:lawrence_wirth@pittsford.monroe.edu)**

## Know Your Contract: Susan Gager



The second half of the school year can be a busy time, and we must remember to keep in mind our contractual agreements pertaining to evaluations (section 8-Professional, and section 44-SRP).

The intent of the evaluation process is to provide a means to assess job performance, to improve the quality of instruction, to support professional development, to provide opportunities for discussion of interests and concerns, and to provide a written record of feedback and follow-up.

We will soon be engaged in discussions with our supervisors pertaining to Target Appraisals and Summative Evaluations. According to our contract, non-tenured teachers must receive a target appraisal and summative evaluation, with their building principals, each year. Written forms

### Target Appraisals and Evaluations

should be received at or prior to the conference, and conferences should occur by May 1st. Tenured teachers must have a target appraisal with their principal each year, and a summative evaluation every three years. Again, written forms are to be provided at or prior to the conference. These conferences should occur between May 1st and October 15th. A common Teacher Target form is used for all professional staff members at all levels. The Summative Evaluation forms mirror our Professional Standards. Most professionals will receive the Summative Evaluation for Teachers. It is important to note that the form is slightly different for some Standards Areas. For instance, psychologists, school nurse teachers, speech language pathologists, librarians and counselors all have different summative forms which are tailored to their unique areas. Principals have updated copies of all summative

evaluation forms.

School Related professionals must receive a written evaluation from their principal or supervisor one time per year. This should occur by June 1st. A common district form has been developed for this evaluation. Additionally, each SRP will have an evaluation conference with his/her supervisor no less than once every three years.

All written evaluations are signed by both parties and filed in the employee's evaluation file.

#### Reminder of Important Contractual Deadline:

Deadline to submit applications for Job Sharing: February 15th

### Upcoming Seminar

#### NYSTRS Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)

Wednesday, Feb. 23

8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Radisson Hotel Airport, 175 Jefferson Rd., Henrietta

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 prepare for retirement. PREP is structured to allow you to tailor the program to fit your needs. Stay for the entire seminar or just the modules below that would be of greatest significance to you.

Make reservations at [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org) using the 'My Tools' tab or by calling (800) 348-7298, Ext 6180 weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m.

## Public Relations: Jill Drake

Allen Creek is finishing up their Pittsford Food Cupboard collection this month and Mendon Center is gearing up for February! Remind any graduating seniors that are interested in a career in education to apply for the PDTA scholarship. Applications will be available in February!

## Health and Safety: Linda Khalil



Dear PCSD Colleagues

I wanted to share with all of you that I have accepted a position as Executive Director for Statewide School Health Services with BOCES 2 in Spencerport. This position will allow me to share all that I have learned with School Nurses throughout New York State. It is a bittersweet opportunity in that to do the job properly, I will have to leave all of you. I have been so fortunate to work with such a caring group of colleagues who have also become friends. After 15 years it feels less like work and more like family, and I feel like the graduate leaving home

and going off to college. My last day in Pittsford will be February 18th.

I have truly enjoyed my time as District PDTA Health and Safety Chair. It has given me the opportunity to network with colleagues across the district in advocating for issues and policies concerning indoor air quality, green cleaning/recycling, student and staff wellness, nutrition, emergency preparedness, security and safety issues.

The networking opportunities in this position allowed me to participate at the state level with NYSUT and AFT leadership, as well as collaborate with PCSD staff, parents, and community members. Those

experiences reinforced the valuable contributions that unions make in creating professional and safe work environments. I want to thank current and past PDTA Health and Safety Committee members for their time and valuable contributions.

I would encourage anyone who has an interest in any of the issues above to consider completing a nomination form for this position when announced. I wish you all the best as you continue to care, teach and empower children to see what is possible and then give them all they need achieve it.

Linda

## Professional Growth: Donna Nichols

### Study Grants for Professional Development

Our current contract agreement has a provision for a \$5000 study grant to be used by staff members for professional development activities taking place during recess periods.

The purpose of study grants is to provide staff members interested in professional development an opportunity for reimbursement of expenses that would not be covered by other methods, such as tuition reimbursement or conference allocations.

The Study Grants Committee, comprised of teachers and administra-

tors, will determine the distribution of the funds. Distribution of the funds will be determined by the relevance and anticipated value of the proposed studies. The Committee will give preference to those applicants who have not previously received funding. Preference will be given to Professional Staff over Paraprofessional Staff.

Applications for study grants for the summer recess must be completed and submitted to the PDTA Office by April 15. Please send any additional

information such as pamphlets or workshop descriptions with your application. A breakdown of anticipated costs is appreciated.

Remember that study grants can only be awarded for professional development activities that take place during recess periods.

Study Grant applications are available on the PDTA website, [www.PDTA.org](http://www.PDTA.org) or by contacting Donna Nichols, PDTA Professional Growth Chair at x3461 or via email.



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## Meet The Candidates



### Jolene DiBrango

I believe in our union. I believe in public education, and I believe in collaboration. And that's why I believe I should

be the next president of PDTA. Our school system is an exceptional place, and one of the main reasons Pittsford is so highly regarded locally and nationally is because of the environment we have here. This culture of professionalism, collaboration, and academic achievement did not occur magically. It has occurred because of the dedicated leadership our union has provided. Since 2003, I have worked alongside Barb Shapiro, and this work has readied me for the role of PDTA President.

I have been an educator for seventeen years—nine here in Pittsford. Throughout my career I taught elementary, middle, high school and

collegiate students and am certified in elementary, reading, and business education. For six years, I have actively served our membership in many different roles: MCE Assistant and Building Representative, BRMS Building Representative, District Planning Team, ILT, Budget Advisory Committee, Grievance Committee, PDTA Auditing Team, several interview committees and the Negotiating Team. To remain current on union matters, I have participated in various NYSUT trainings on negotiations, benefits, and health care reform. These experiences have given me a breadth of insight and knowledge of PDTA functions and responsibilities.

As President, I will preside over all Executive Committee and Representative Assembly meetings, appoint people to individual posts within the union, and fill building and PDTA standing committee positions. Communicating with our membership through personal contact, meet-

ings and written correspondence will be paramount, just as it has been at the building level. Most important, as your President, I will meet regularly with our members and Central Office Administrators to discuss vital issues, negotiate, listen, and problem solve. Having served as building leader, organizer, and grievance representative has provided me with excellent preparation for the job of President.

As your President, I vow to continue to work on your behalf to face the challenges that lie ahead. My philosophy, like NYSUT President Richard Iannuzzi's, is simple. I will "educate, advocate and if needed, agitate" to make our voices heard. Do you believe in the power and professionalism of our union? I certainly do, and I am asking for your vote on February 15th. It will be my honor to serve you.

**DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR PDTA PRESIDENT, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2011**

*Don't erase our progress*

*Invest in public education!*

## Meet The Candidates



### Len Chaput

After working in the Pittsford Schools for 14 years as a special educator my qualifications for PDTA President are extensive. As an assistant building representative at Sutherland, I was chosen to be a part of the negotiating team which I have held ever since and was on the budget advisory board for the district as well. As Vice President I have been responsible for attending all Board of Education meetings, District Planning Team meetings, Executive Board meetings, Representative Assembly meetings, budget review meetings and assisting in negotiating PDTA's contracts. I have also been a Delegate to the NYSUT Representative Assembly for the past three years. In 2006, I had the opportunity to attend Cornell Univer-

sity for a Leadership Institute that was run by Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Not only was the information valuable, but I was able to make contacts with individuals who are now union presidents across the state and who have become a valuable resource to me in keeping abreast of current and upcoming issues.

PDTA has a long and proud history of maintaining a collaborative relationship with all stake holders and engaging in shared decision making on all topics related to the education of our students. Much of this success is owed to Barb Shapiro's strong and dedicated leadership. As PDTA moves forth under new leadership these ideals must be maintained under ever increasing scrutiny of the public on many fronts. As educators we are facing an ever increasing amount of pressure in multiple areas

such as: teacher evaluation, negative publicity towards teachers and unions, possible tax caps that could cripple school budgets and our negotiating power, a possible State Constitutional Convention which would negatively impact our pensions, the high cost and reform of health care, Tier V status for our incoming teachers and discussions of Tier VI which would bring even further deterioration of benefits to future educators, high taxes and a poor economy to name a few. These and other issues must all be contended with in the upcoming years. I do not possess answers to these problems, but with the skill set I possess after years of experience I am willing to advocate for teachers on a local, state and national level to bring fair and equitable solutions to these problems and others that arise that benefit teachers, students, administrators, board members, congress and tax payers alike.

### **NYSUT Press Release**

ALBANY, N.Y. February 1, 2011 - New York State United Teachers today said the proposed executive budget is a "recipe for a devastating impact on public schools and higher education" and is especially troubling in light of the irresponsible tax cap proposed by the governor and passed by the Senate.

"These proposed cuts are significant and, if enacted, would impact the classroom both directly and indirectly," said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "I can't say that we share the executive's belief that a cut in state aid this significant - coming on top of a nearly \$1.9 billion decrease over the previous two years - can be absorbed without teacher layoffs and the loss of other important education professionals."

"Couple all this with a devastating tax cap bill passed by the Senate and we have a potential recipe for a devastating impact in many districts - especially low-wealth districts," he said.

"Clearly, we agree that greater administrative and management efficiencies, the use of district reserve funds, and redirecting federal dollars should be looked at very carefully and implemented before layoffs are considered," Iannuzzi said. "But, many of these decisions must be local decisions, and determined district by district."

The NYSUT president also expressed great concern about the proposed impact on the State University, City University and the state's vital network of community colleges. "The systemic dismantling of state support for higher education leaves almost no room to absorb these cuts," Iannuzzi added.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta noted that NYSUT is committed to working with legislative leaders and the governor toward a responsible compromise that looks at spending and resources. "This is not the way to start. Our role now is to work with the Legislature to ensure the state budget it adopts meets the governor's vision of turning around the state's economy, while still protecting education, our SUNY hospitals, libraries and other vital services that students and working New Yorkers count on," Pallotta said.

## Are you up to the challenge?

If you're like most people, you make New Year's resolutions only to break them soon after. NYSUT Member Benefits challenges all NYSUT members to make and keep this one resolution: I resolve to draw up (or update) my will.

The importance of having a will to protect your loved ones and your wishes cannot be stressed enough. This is especially true if you have children under the age of 18. A will allows you to name a legal guardian(s) for your children. It also ensures that your estate will be distributed according to your desires. Without a valid will, these very important, personal decisions are made by the state.

The Legal Service Plan endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is a convenient vehicle to help you meet this challenge. It provides one simple will or update, free. A simple will provides for the proceeds of one's estate to be distributed to specifically named beneficiary(ies), with an alternate distribution plan in the event the primary beneficiary predeceases the writer of the will. With a simple will, proceeds are to be distributed outright with no conditions attached. Placing a condition on a bequest requires a trust, which can be obtained from the Legal Plan for a fee.

In addition to the simple will, you'll receive a durable power of attorney, living will and health care proxy, all important documents to have in place *before* the need for them arises.

The plan also gives you access to unlimited, toll-free legal advice from plan attorneys. These attorneys will make phone calls and write

third-party correspondence, at no charge, to resolve personal legal situations on your behalf before they become major problems. In addition, when you enroll in this plan, you receive two coupons for free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney.

Is there a real estate transaction coming up in your near future? Do you have any traffic violations? You can receive legal assistance on a variety of personal legal matters when you enroll in the Legal Service Plan. If the matter can't be resolved over the phone or with a letter, you will be referred to a

plan attorney in your area, who will charge you \$200 an hour or 40 percent off the usual hourly rate, whichever is lower. Optional riders for Elder Law services and for business protection can be added to your legal plan coverage.

Don't put it off any longer! Draw up your will. Enroll in the Legal Service Plan and use its service to help you, or do it

another way, but just do it! The peace of mind you'll have once you know you have taken care of your loved ones far outweighs any unpleasantness associated with making up your will.

If you happen to belong to a local association that provides a group legal service plan to you through the local or its benefit fund, remember to take advantage of the plan's benefits.

If not, you can enroll in the voluntary plan online at [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), or view and print a descriptive brochure and enrollment form online. You can also call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101.



*The Legal Service Plan provided through Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 33.33% of annual participation fees received for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.*