



From the Lighthouse in the West to the Lighthouse in the East

# THE BEACON

BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk, Union Local 3037



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

THELMA SHAW

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With a tough financial forecast nationwide for the next several years, we are watching and waiting to see what changes will take place in the coming new year for everyone at Eastern Suffolk BOCES. We are at a critical juncture in our states' history. Resources are dwindling and we are faced with unprecedented reductions in state aid.

Long Island is especially vulnerable to aid reductions because it depends heavily on a form of state assistance called High-Tax Aid. This assistance is tailored for districts of low or average wealth that tax themselves heavily.

State leaders are already gearing up to confront the largest budget deficit ever over a four year period. Partly to blame is the turmoil on Wall Street and the boost in Island School aid last April when a record \$236 million was approved. The projected unemployment rate is that it will climb to 6.5 percent in 2009. This past October saw the lowest retail sales income since 1969.

**Unfortunately it appears that this economic downturn will be around for a considerable time.**

We have seen our enrollment decline over the past few years in both Special Education and now in the Career and Technical Programs. I remember the last major economic recession in state education aid which occurred in 1990-1991. There was a loss of about 3,000 school jobs across Long Island and we saw over 30 members excessed. We are entering uncharted waters and are faced with the "Perfect Storm" of crises that can badly shake education and jobs.

I can assure you that the one thing that will not change during these distressing times is your Executive Boards' deep commitment to doing whatever is necessary to keep our members' jobs. Our continued and combined energies on this level are more important now than ever. I have already spoken with upper administration about our concerns for the future of our programs, our students, and of course, our membership. As we get more news on how this national economic crisis will impact our membership for the 2009-2010 school year we will get it out to you through your building representatives, our website and of course the BEACON.

Enhancing communication at every level of the BEES is one of my top priorities. Regular and effective communication is a key component of this union. This executive board is determined to continue our efforts to make these communications useful, timely and informative. This was proven to our membership when we handed out the information packets before our contract ratification meeting. I received numerous e mails, phone calls and handwritten notes thanking me for the incredible job we did giving out accurate and valuable information so that the members could make their decisions based on concrete facts, not just "because we said so." Remember, we are all in this together. Our union has become significantly stronger as a result of our membership becoming more involved and better informed.

Working on creating a better informed membership is another high priority of the current Executive Board. With this in mind, we have tentatively scheduled a Building Representative Workshop for Saturday, January 10, 2009. We will be discussing many different subjects in order to build a better union representation for our membership. I will provide you with the highlights of this training in the next BEACON and your newly trained building representatives will explain the training in detail at the meetings that they schedule with you. In the past, our representatives have found this training to be highly informative and very interesting. It is another way the union provides your building representatives with tools that enables them to keep you, our members, better informed.

As of this time we still do not have either a teacher representative or a para educator Representative for the Miliken Technical Center. This is our only program without representation. I cannot stress the importance of having the membership in each of our programs represented. I am asking that each and every member from MTC think about running for one of the vacant representative positions. Without building representatives it becomes impossible to keep everyone informed of the different issues that are constantly occurring within our large organization. If you have any questions about the duties and meetings associated with this position, please feel free to call me. Speaking from over 30 years of unionism, it is challenging, educational, rewarding and a great opportunity to help out your co workers.

We are in the process of Middle States Re-Accreditation. In October some of our programs were visited. The staff at those buildings did their usual tremendous job, and impressed Dr. Van Hoven. The team from Middle States will be coming during the week of December 2-5 and I am sure that they will continue to be overwhelmed by the dedication and commitment our membership has for the students that we service. As we have proven time and time again, our staff is "one of a kind" and deserve all of the praise given.

In closing, I want to wish all of our membership, UPSEU, the Administrative and Supervisory unit, CSEA DP middle management, CSEA unit 8768-01, CSEA #3, our BOCES Board members and Administrative Council members a healthy and happy holiday season. Let us not forget the men and women who are serving our country in the Armed Forces this holiday season and keep them in our thoughts as well. Enjoy the vacation. I have learned from past experience that it will go quickly and we will all wonder where it went. As we enter another new year, take a moment to reflect on everything that we have as a union, employees, co workers, friends, family and as a country. Make the present so beautiful, that it will be worth remembering.

See you in 2009!

## EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT Pat Copertino

There has been an incredible amount of desire and discussion revolving around the concept of "change". Our new president-elect, Barack Obama and America made history on election day embracing that very theme. It has been said in these very pages in past articles, we recognize change is not so easy for some and, conversely, preferred by others. No matter what the comfort level, if we choose to be in the professions of working in schools and educating children we must ALL participate in preparing our students and communities for the challenges our country faces. With that participation we can not ignore opportunities to reverse intolerance or "call out" acts and words of bias. In addition, we absolutely should sponsor and encourage *social justice* at all levels.

In a recent website article, NYSUT President, Dick Iannuzzi said, "As a union we understand our responsibility in advocating for social justice". This comment was associated with the praise and promotion of the social justice curriculum found at [www.nysut.org/rfk](http://www.nysut.org/rfk)

***"Speak up, Speak out: Robert F. Kennedy Champion of Social Justice"***

Click on the website. It is well worth your time.

Iannuzzi reflected on the inspiration he felt by Kennedy's example that one individual can make a difference in the world. I believe that is true. Helen Keller, on the other hand, said "Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with a sense of responsibility for each others welfare, social justice can never be attained". That statement bears truth as well. Helen spoke those words well over 40 years ago and although we have seen change, recent local events radiate painful illustrations of injustice and failure.

Here in Suffolk County teenagers allegedly perpetrated a senseless hate crime resulting in the death of an undeserving innocent man and unbearable grief and destruction to all the families involved as well as the community at large. Over the years I watched some of those young men on the soccer and little league fields, playing with your children and having promising futures. Throughout my past 27 years as an educator I have always believed it was our job to educate the *Whole Child*. I will forever question what could have been done to prevent those events and what do we need to do as promoters of social justice so our children embody Keller's and Kennedy's messages. What I am absolutely sure of is the 2700 employees of Eastern Suffolk BOCES, whether they are in school buildings or not, cannot stand idle if any act or phase of hate is witnessed, no matter how small. We need to speak up and speak out.

For those of you who have not yet taken advantage of the Agency sponsored 2-day workshop, "Unraveling Racism", I encourage you to sign-up for this extremely valuable experience. It is an excellent step to helping us all do our part in promoting social justice.

If you wish to comment on this article or any other union concern, please contact me at [patcop@optonline.net](mailto:patcop@optonline.net) . I wish you all peace and time for reflection in the new year.



## FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT Ray Stenberg

The election of the century is over and we have seen true democracy in action. The NEA/AFT/NYSUT endorsed candidate Barack Obama is now the President-Elect of the United States. He has publically declared that he is pro-union, pro-public education and anti No Child Left Behind. He has promised to reform this legislation which has harmed an immeasurable number of children in public schools throughout America. He is for providing more funds to strengthen our public schools and for increasing the salaries of the professionals in the classroom. Sounds good to me! We shall see!

I attended the New York State Teacher's Retirement System (NYSTRS) annual meeting in Saratoga Springs on November 9th and 10th. We elected the NYSUT endorsed candidate as a teacher representative to the board of the NYSTRS. Last year at this time I reported to you that our retirement system had 105 billion dollars in it.

No need to worry though- **our retirement pensions are 100% guaranteed under the laws of the New York State constitution.** I'll report back to you in my next article as to the financial status of our pension fund. As you know things are not looking good in Albany right now. The Governor is proposing unprecedented cutbacks. Hopefully he will continue to support education as he has done in the past.

On October 20th I worked at the phone banks with two BEES members Pat Wagor and Terry Kalb at the Middle Country Teacher's Association office. We made hundreds of calls in support of Long Island politicians who are pro-public education. It's important that we continue to remain politically active even after this election is over. The vehicle for this always revolves around Vote-Cope.

Our annual Vote-Cope drive is now in progress and it would mean so much to our local union if we continue to increase the number of participating members. If you are not yet involved, please consider signing up. Your building reps will be approaching you with the form needed to sign up. It's only a one time per year payroll deduction of \$25 for teachers and teacher assistants and \$12 for aides. Vote-Cope is where we get our "juice" with NYSUT. Please contribute to this non-partisan political action fund. It's your future!

Happy Holidays to You and Yours!!



## PARA EDUCATORS REPORT

Gail Reissman

### Para Dues

I have received several questions about the “**Para level dues 1**” and “**Para level dues 2**” entries on some pay checks. Para dues levels are decided by salary. As your salary increases you could fall into a new salary range. The section of your check that says “Year to Date” will reflect the old level from the previous year and the new para dues level will be noted for the current year. That is why you could see two different dues levels on one check. Currently there are six para dues levels.

For information on your exact dues (based on your salary), see the dues schedule that was passed out at our Opening Day meeting or see your building rep. You may also be interested to know in response to a resolution passed by delegates at this year’s Representative Assembly, NYSUT has established a committee to examine its dues structure. The goal is to ensure fair and equitable distribution of dues for all members.

### Para Pro-Practice

In each issue of the Beacon I try to include a Pro Practice agreement for your information.

#### HALF DAY ABSENCES

Half days are taken by the clock. In other words, if an employee’s lunchtime falls during the period when he/she is out on approved time, he/she is not compensated/given an extra lunch period during the portion of the day he/she is at work. If lunchtime occurs during the half day that the para is scheduled to be at work, then he/she *does* take lunchtime.

#### RETURN FROM LEAVE OF ABSENCE

When a para educator returns from a leave-of-absence, he/she is guaranteed assignment back in the same program.

### SRP DAY

This issue of the Beacon will be published after SRP Day, but I thought it important to relate some excerpts of what is stated in the State of NY Legislative Resolution that memorialized SRP Day in 2003. You will find the text on the next page.

In closing I would like to say no matter how the day was recognized at your building we are a valuable part of the classroom team, and as in all successful teams, it takes everyone working together to achieve the common goal. Be proud of what we do.

In Solidarity, Gail

## SRP Day Resolution

*Schools have evolved into institutions that serve to not only instill information into the minds of our youth, but to protect and enhance their physical, mental and emotional well being. Their needs include, but are not limited to: the transportation of students to and from school; the feeding of students as necessary; the maintenance and cleanliness of facilities; the maintenance of libraries; physical health of students the counsel of students and parents in times of personal distress; the security of premises; the planning of field trips and other special events; the organization of documents and items necessary to the orderly running of affairs and all other non-educational needs that may present themselves to be of importance to the school community;*

*These needs are so indispensable that the education system of the state of NY has been required to hire people who specialize in the fulfillment of these needs. These employees have developed a high level of expertise in the enhancement of the educational environment in relation to their respective fields.*

*It is fitting and proper to acknowledge the labors of a working body whose contribution has had such a silent, but significant, impact on the enhancement of our society. NY state recognizes and honors the presence of School Related Personnel as an invaluable asset to our education system and the children whom it educates.*



## **ITINERANTS REPORT Rachele Alwais**

This school year is well underway and it's already time for Holiday Wishes----  
Happy, healthy and safe holidays to you and your families!

Over the summer we hired a physical education teacher, a technology teacher and two vision teachers. Currently we are looking to fill positions in ESL, Hearing, Speech and Vision.

Teachers of Speech and Hearing Handicapped (TSHH) holding an SLP license that is valid through June 2009 will be eligible to receive a stipend of \$250.00. This stipend will appear in the first paycheck in June 2009. It is the teacher's responsibility to maintain and forward an updated license as it becomes necessary. Please send your valid and current license to Anna Bilka (Human Resources) located at the James Hines building 201 Sunrise Highway Patchogue by May 1, 2009.

Itinerant teachers' schedules are checked twice yearly to be sure that lunch and prep requirements are being followed. All teacher's schedules are required to reflect a minimum of five lunches and four preps weekly.

Mileage reimbursement guidelines was revisited at the November 19<sup>th</sup> BOCES Board Meeting. Check our website for an update on this process.



## IT BENEFITS YOU TO KNOW!

BOB LOVE

Hello again. I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving. Before you start reading the few things you might need to take care of, I would like to wish you all HAPPY HOLIDAYS and a very relaxing winter recess.

### Member Benefits Change

In both contracts BOCES provides the opportunity for us to participate in the NYSUT Benefits Trust program through payroll deduction. There are many programs / services that are available through the Member Benefits Trust. To find out more about them visit the NYSUT website and click on Member Benefits Trust.

BOCES currently provides each Blue Contract member with membership in the NYSUT Legal Service Plan. There were several changes to the benefits and operation of the plan. A few of the changes are:

- Certificate number replaced with NYSUT member ID number
- *Free Simple Will* replaced with *Free Legal Security Package* (health care proxy, living will, durable power of attorney, and simple will)
- Free advice on identity theft prevention and for identity theft victims
- Free assistance with debt consolidation
- Free assistance with mortgage foreclosure

For more info read the Sept 2008 [Preventive Law Guide](#), visit [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org) and look under legal, or call 1 800 626-8101

### Dependent College Student

Do not forget to submit the dependent college student affidavits for the spring semester. To continue the health and dental insurance of your college dependent you must submit both forms every semester.

### Your Retirement

Everyone should visit their retirement system website. Both websites have loads of information on: how the retirement system operates, membership, pre-retirement, publications, and contacts.

The New York State Teachers' Retirement System is at [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org) and the New York State Employees' Retirement System is at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/>. Last year the NYSERS created a new seven part series on preparing for retirement which can be found on their website at: [http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/preparing\\_for\\_retirement/index.htm](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/preparing_for_retirement/index.htm)

If you do not have internet access the phone numbers are:  
NYSTRS 1-800-348-7298 NYSERS 1-866-805-0990

Remember, as in everything that's important – **KEEP COPIES OF EVERYTHING**  
I can be reached at Milliken Technical Center, 244-5858 or at [beesvpcb@optonline.net](mailto:beesvpcb@optonline.net)

# BEES



## THE BEACON

NYSUT- New York Teacher  
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## NYSUT WEBSITE of the YEAR

[www.BEESBeacon.org](http://www.BEESBeacon.org)

The BEACON is the award winning publication of  
the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk,  
First Supervisory District.

### **Union Local 3037**

Proud members of NYSUT, AFT and the AFL-CIO.

The BEACON is published 5 times a year.  
The local is responsible for all its contents and articles.

Articles must be submitted electronically and have your  
name and BOCES site.

Notes, comments and suggestions can be sent  
by email to [BeesBeacon@aol.com](mailto:BeesBeacon@aol.com),  
or interoffice to  
[TomRosati@Premm Learning Center](mailto:TomRosati@PremmLearningCenter.com)

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