

**Volume 37 Issue 2  
January  
2024**

**AFT Local 3037/ NYSUT Local 22-220**

# *The BEES Beacon*

**BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk**



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



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# President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

## Union Strong



Greetings BEES Members. Happy New Year! I hope you all had an enjoyable holiday season and had a chance to rest during the break. As the president of our BEES union, I am proud to represent the dedicated educators who work tirelessly to ensure our students have the best experience possible during their time at ESBOCES. I am aware that things have been very challenging these past few months with space issues, staff shortages, absences due to illness, lack of substitutes and not having enough time for training--these are just some of the concerns that myself and the Executive Board discuss regularly. I want to assure you that when you voice your concerns to your building representatives or to the Executive Board, we are listening, and we are bringing them forward to the agency. We are working diligently to solve these issues with agency leadership. Please continue to attend your building-level union meetings so you can hear how we are addressing your concerns.

Staffing continues to be a statewide issue. In early December, I was able to attend a NYSUT/BOCES leadership conference with all the other BOCES union presidents from around the state. The sentiments they shared concerning having difficulty staffing their programs were the same as ours. In fact, many upstate areas were worse in regards to staffing. We spoke about recruitment tools and ways to attract qualified candidates. The other presidents were also impressed by our recently negotiated paraprofessional contract and asked if they could use it as a model when entering their own negotiations. We also spoke about the reality in our field right now of facing an educator shortage. There has been a steep decline in students enrolled in college-level education courses and those seeking degrees in education. We talked about the possible reasons why, and most importantly, how we can address it going forward. The agency has partnered with Empire College for a teacher pipeline program; NYSUT is also going to be starting up an apprenticeship program to encourage people to enter the field and help remove potential barriers. Moreover, CTE pathways will be expanded as the career and technical education field continues to gain recognition for how valuable it is as a pathway for students. We are at a point in the world of education where things are shifting, and we are here for it; we are going to be part of the movement.

The BEES leadership and agency leadership will continue to work collaboratively on ways to make ESBOCES a workplace that attracts and retains its employees. The agency continues to hire staff through job fairs, postings, advertisements, lawn signs, etc. Many of the actual vacancies in programs have decreased to the teens and/or single digits.

When working with the agency leadership on the school calendar for next year, I asked for an additional conference day when returning to school. One day is not enough time for teachers and classroom teams to get back into their rooms to set up, enough time to conduct any new trainings and hold/attend the necessary meetings. Thanks to our positive relationship with the agency's leadership, they agreed and scheduled an additional conference day at the start of the school year. Will this fix all of our concerns? No, but we are heading in the right direction, one foot at a time.

# President - Asha Mazza-Shaw



## Union Strong

I would like to extend a special thank you to the Blue contract members who participated in the focus groups for our contract negotiations. The feedback from these groups was invaluable, and the negotiation committee was able to develop some excellent proposals based on their input. We are truly appreciative of their time and efforts in making our new contract better for everyone. We have begun the process with the agency's negotiating team, and we will be providing updates to the building representatives, so be sure to attend your building-level union meetings for updated information regarding the process.

Our new BEES Buddies program is also up and running! If you are not sure who your building's BEES Buddies are, please ask your building rep, and they can let you know. The BEES Buddies program is a grant-funded program through AFT (our national union affiliate). It is a union-led mentorship program aimed at assisting with retention of new staff. Our BEES Buddies are there for anyone who needs help with questions that fall outside the realm of the contract - questions about paperwork, assistance with lesson planning, just in need of a chat or a confidential vent session. Be sure to reach out to your Bees Buddy if you need some additional support! Importantly, they do not report to administration, only to an E-Board member if they need additional resources. We would like to continue this program in the future if our BEES members find it useful, so please let your union rep know, or email me, if you have had a positive experience with the BEES Buddies program!

The other grant that we received this year is the AFT Innovation Fund Grant. This grant, totaling \$50,000, is to assist CTE students with full access to their programming. Thus far, the grant has paid out over half the money for students Skills USA memberships, barbering kits, uniforms, cosmetology kits, and other course related materials. It has been an incredible experience to help provide equity and access to students who may not have been able to achieve it otherwise. We have received some amazing thank you notes from our SCE students, many of whom participated in Skills USA for the first time due to this grant funding. You can see a few of their letters on the following pages. There is still money left for students to access! If you are a CTE teacher and your students need assistance with any type of course related materials, please fill out the grant request form and submit it to your administration.



# President - Asha Mazza-Shaw



## Union Strong

Our BEES union and our state (NYSUT) and national (AFT) affiliates will continue to advocate for policies that support educators, promote safe and healthy learning environments, and ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for all students. We will also continue our focus on fostering a positive and collaborative relationship with agency leadership, families and community members to create a supportive ecosystem for our schools.

As we continue to navigate the challenges we currently face as well as the new ones that may arise, I know one thing for certain--we are steadfast in our commitment to providing a quality education to all students at an agency that values its employees, with a strong union leading the way for our members. These are trying times for educators, but we are not alone. By leveraging the strength of our local union, NYSUT and AFT, we can build a strong future for New York's educators and students. By working together as a united force, we can achieve our goals, one step at a time.

In Solidarity,

*Asha*



BEES President Asha Mazza-Shaw and the BEES Buddies



A Union of Professionals

### Congratulations to the **BOCES EDUCATORS OF EASTERN SUFFOLK**

The **BOCES EDUCATORS OF EASTERN SUFFOLK** will support students who attend their CTE academies with out-of-pocket expenses for materials and equipment to complete their courses.



Dear Sponsor,

My name is [redacted] I am in the Retail class at the Islip Career Center. Thank you for sponsoring me for SKILLS USA. I really enjoying the socialization and I am very grateful for this experience. Thank you again for sponsoring me.

Sincerely, [redacted]

November 29, 2023

Dear Boces union

Thank you very much for helping me join SKILLS I am looking forward to being a part of this great organization

Thanks again

November 30th, 2023

To whom it may concern,

**First, a big thank you!**

I wanted to thank everyone for sponsoring me. I am very glad to be a member of SkillsUSA, and I really hope we could do fun activities this year, I really look forward to it!

Once again, a big thank you to those who sponsored me! I really appreciate it.

Yours truly, [redacted]



A Union of Professionals

### Congratulations to the BOCES EDUCATORS OF EASTERN SUFFOLK

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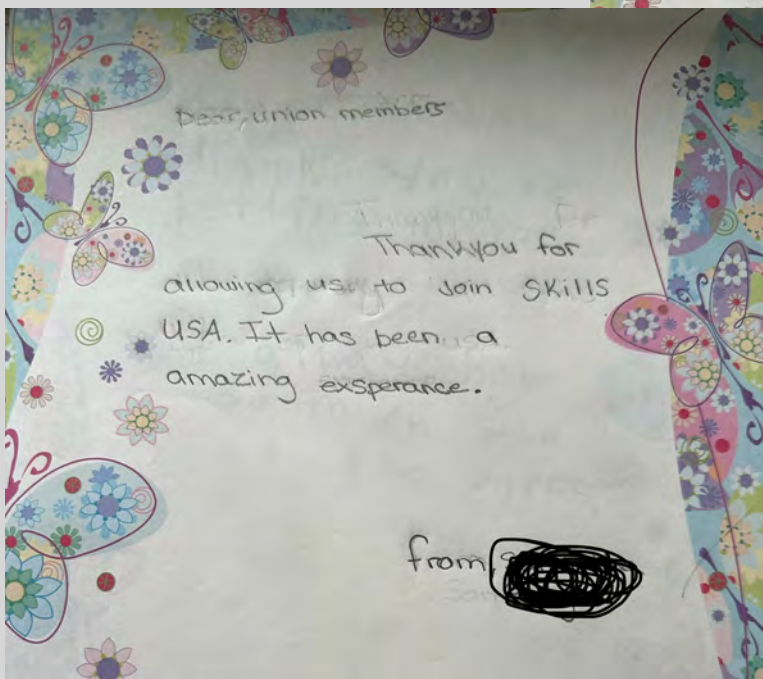
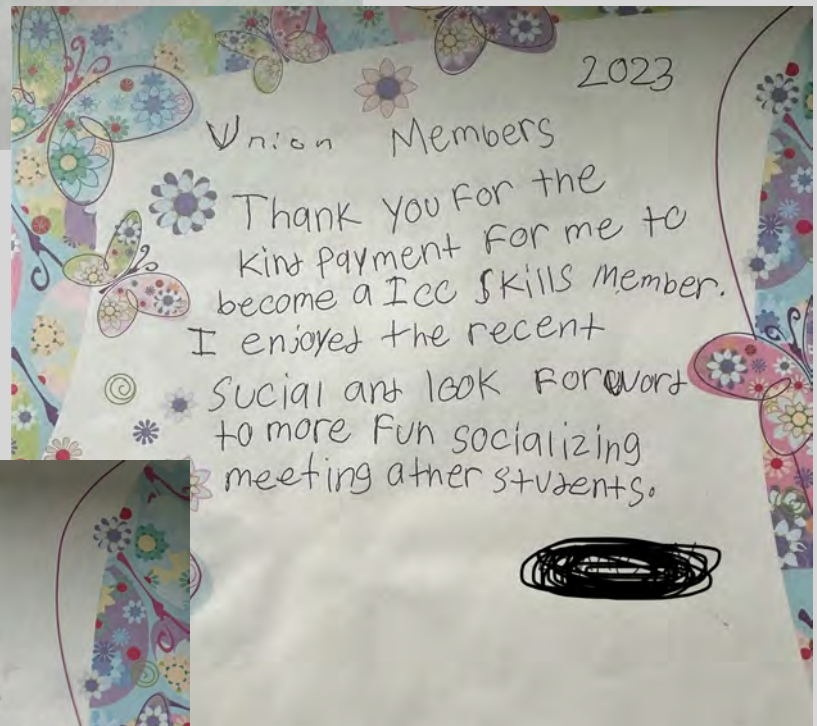
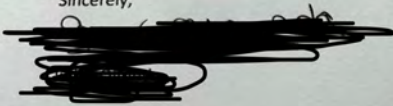


To the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk Union,

I would like to extend my gratitude for paying for my Skills USA fee. I am taking full advantage this opportunity provided to me and am currently on the Executive Board for Skills USA. I have attended Fall Leadership and look forward to participating further in Skills USA.

Once again, thanks again for this wonderful opportunity.

Sincerely,





A Union of Professionals

### Congratulations to the **BOCES EDUCATORS OF EASTERN SUFFOLK**

The **BOCES EDUCATORS OF EASTERN SUFFOLK** will support students who attend their CTE academies with out-of-pocket expenses for materials and equipment to complete their courses.



To all The Union members,  
 Thank You for helping US become USA Skills members from the money you give. With Love From The students of ICC

Thank you so much for SPONSORING ME. I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN SKILLS USA. I AM GLAD TO BE A PART OF THIS GROUP. I AM HAVING SO MUCH FUN BEING ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE EVENTS. THE EVENTS ARE HELPING ME WITH MY SOCIAL SKILLS. I'M SO HAPPY TO HAVE MEET PEOPLE IN SKILLS USA. THE PEOPLE THERE ARE SO WELCOMING AND NICE.



Dear Union Members,  
 Thank you for all hard work that you have done for us. We all as a class appreciate everything you all do, especially for Skills USA. It really means so much to everyone at ICC!  
 \* Every single one of you out there has done so well and we as a class truly appreciate it a lot! ♡ ♡ ♡

Sincerely: [Redacted Name] ♡

# Politics in Education



We share the governor's ambitious vision for public schools that invests in addressing student mental health, expanding professional opportunities for educators, and enhancing our approach to teaching reading.

... We're concerned that the executive budget proposal includes modifications to the formula to reduce School Aid costs. The critical need to consistently support our students and educators should not vary with the fluctuations in our state tax revenue."

Melinda Person  
NYSUT President

This week Gov. Kathy Hochul released her [2024-2025 executive budget](#), including school aid funding proposals and more details about her legislative priorities.

## THE GOOD

**Literacy** -The executive budget provides \$10 million to [train educators on evidence- and science-based instructional practices](#) regarding teaching reading. The funds will support professional learning for roughly 20,000 teachers in the Science of Reading while preserving districts' autonomy to update their individual curriculums. It specifies that the State Education Department will provide school districts with updated best practices for Pre-K to grade three before July 1, 2024.

**This means:** Access for educators to a broad scope of the most recent, research-backed literacy methods and professional tools and training developed with NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust (ELT).

**Children's mental health programs** The executive budget expands mental health services for children and families by investing an additional \$12 million in the HealthySteps program and Home Based Crisis Intervention teams, \$5 million for High Fidelity wrap-around supports and \$10 million to develop school-based clinics.

**This means:** Increased supports for the whole child and better resources to address the mental health crises that affect every individual in our public schools and facilities.

**Social media and children** The executive budget includes two initiatives [that are supported by NYSUT](#) – The Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids Act and the New York Child Data Protection Act – that would enhance parental controls as well as ensure that companies are not targeting algorithms to children.

**This means:** Creating conditions that allow students to navigate emerging technologies and



# Politics in Education



**The governor's State of the State message is a welcome affirmation of her commitment to invest in our public schools, students and educators. NYSUT shares her powerful goals of addressing barriers to authentic learning, including increasing access to vital student mental health support, protecting kids from harmful impacts of social media and fighting to end childhood poverty."**

**Melinda Person**  
NYSUT President

## CONCERNS

### Foundation Aid cuts

The executive budget proposes a \$507 million increase in Foundation Aid, compared to the \$926 million it was scheduled to increase under current law. The cuts come from two elements:

1. Lower consumer price index (CPI) figure: Under current law, Foundation Aid is annually adjusted by CPI from the prior calendar year. The governor's proposal does not make that adjustment – which is scheduled to be about 4 percent. Instead, the proposal uses a 10-year CPI average of 2.1 percent, which lowers the amount of calculated Foundation Aid for all school districts.
2. Hold Harmless: The executive budget ends the state's guarantee that school districts get at least as much school aid as the previous year, a policy dating back to the 1970s called "hold harmless" or "save harmless." This provision has allowed school districts a baseline to calculate future budgets and helped preserve programs and staff during times of uncertainty. Ending the policy would reduce budgets in 337 school districts by about \$167 million total. **This means:** Underfunding Foundation Aid by more than \$400 million, negatively impacting all districts in the state, and not fulfilling the state's promise to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula.

## WHAT'S NEXT:

The executive budget proposal is just the start of the lengthy budget process which includes input from stakeholders during public hearings and counter proposals from both the Senate and the Assembly. NYSUT is committed to ensuring that our schools, staff and educators are supported and that last year's historic victory of fully funding our schools will continue long into the future. We will be engaged, fighting for our members, every step of the way.

### Learn more

- [NYSUT President Melinda Person's statement](#)
- [Check your district's school aid totals under the proposed executive budget](#)
- [Read more about the rest of NYSUT's legislative priorities:](#)

Source: NYSUT Communications

# Executive Vice President - Al Rios

## The Union Way



A very Happy New Year to all our members. I don't know about you but it seems to me that each year after a few days off from school it gets more and more difficult to get back into the swing of things, but I hope your transition from the holiday break was smooth and you are getting back into your normal routine.

I also want to take this opportunity to applaud every single one of our teachers, related staff, para educators and aides that work tirelessly to provide our students the best possible education, support and opportunities to succeed. Prior to the holiday break I stopped and took a moment to look around and see what was happening at ICC and around the agency and what I saw was our members selflessly giving donations, time and energy to make sure our students had the best possible send off before and during the holidays. It was a heartwarming vision and it symbolizes what an integral part each and everyone of you are and the difference you make to our students.

As we round the corner to the mid year I know many of our members of the Blue Collective Bargaining Agreement are anxious because our contract ends this June, but I can assure you that myself and the rest of the members on the Negotiation Committee have welcomed any and all members to take part in focus groups to hear your thoughts, concerns and voice. The information we have received from the focus groups has been invaluable and many of our members have stepped up and provided insight of what is important and needed by our Blue contract members. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed and we pledge to make sure your voice is heard when we sit down to discuss and go over each and every detail. I recognize the extra time you have put into this and I want to thank each and everyone of you who volunteered to research topics, shared data and took the time to come to the meetings. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. We will continue to meet and we welcome any and all suggestions.

# Executive Vice President - Al Rios

## The Union Way



Finally, another topic that members have asked me over and over again is about the shortage of staff. I want to assure everyone of our members that we are very aware of the shortage of positions in the educational field throughout N.Y. State as well as in many other states throughout the country. This has had a profound effect on us as well. Our union, NYSUT is also aware and have noted that State officials estimate New York will need more than 180,000 new teachers in the next decade, the teacher shortage is already hitting selected subject specialties and geographic areas. Like many states, New York reports persistent shortages in teachers for special education, bilingual education, English as a Second Language, science, mathematics, English Language Arts, social studies, world languages, career and technical education, health education, literacy and library science.

NYSUT has just published the following statistics:

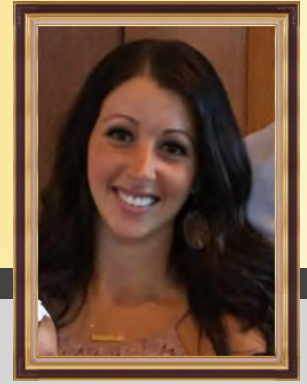
- Enrollment in New York State's teacher education programs has declined by 53 percent since 2009.
- NYS Teacher Retirement System projects that 1/3 of New York teachers could retire in the next five years.
- U.S. Department of Education has identified 18 teacher shortage areas throughout New York State. A decade ago there were only two.

These are challenging statistics that are occurring nationally and we are feeling it right here in our own backyard. We will continue to advocate for recruitment and do what we can to continue to provide some of the best educators in the field because our students deserve it. As we look to the future, it's clear that education will continue to play a pivotal role in our society and I believe that together we can overcome any challenges that come our way. Thank you for your continued support of your union and I wish you all the very best in 2024.

All the best,

Al Rios

# Executive Vice President - Amanda Pica

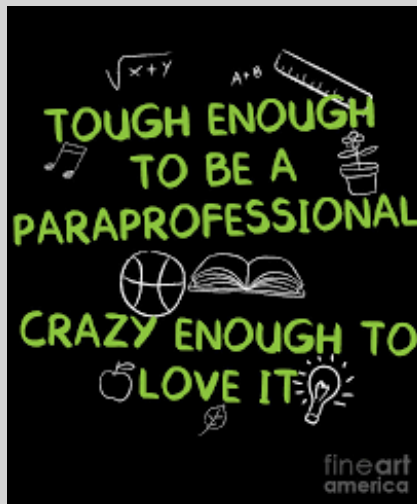


## Better Together

Happy 2024!!! It's hard to believe another year has passed. I hope you all enjoyed this holiday season and were able to spend some much needed time with loved ones. A new year is usually the starting point of new goals and resolutions, I always take this time to reflect back on the all the challenges yet appreciate all the success personally and professionally that has been made within the last year. As a union, we have made great progress but there is always room for more growth.

Just a few reminders... It is so important to attend your building level meetings, this is where the most important information is provided and questions are answered. Familiarize yourself with your union building representative as well as your building mentor and our new BEES Buddies. They are there to help you navigate any issues within your building. If at any point these issues cannot be resolve please reach out to one of our members on the E-board, we are always here to help.

I hope 2024 has been kind to all of you this far and look forward to these next few months!



# Check out all your union membership has to offer!

## Free Premium Calm App for All NYSUT In-Service AND Retiree Members!



- **The #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation**
- **Unlimited access to the full library of content**
- **Add up to five dependents (age 16 or older) to receive their own premium Calm subscription**

The Calm app -- recognized as Apple's Best of 2018 award winner, Apple's App of the Year 2017, and Google Play Editor's Choice 2018 -- is the #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation with over 100 million downloads. Whether members have 30 seconds or 30 minutes of time available, the diverse content library offered by Calm includes numerous resources for their schedule and needs.

Members can explore guided meditations and specialized music playlists to help with stress and focus, mindful movement video and audio, relaxing sleep stories, nature scenes and sounds, specific content tailored for children, masterclasses led by experts, and more.

To learn more about how to create your Calm account and access the premium content for free, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org/free-member-benefits](https://www.nysut.org/memberbenefits) and then click on "Premium Calm Service." From there, you will find detailed instructions on how to create your Calm account along with a helpful Frequently Asked Questions document about the service. You will need your NYSUT ID number to create an account with your email address and password. Your NYSUT ID number can be found on your NYSUT Membership Card or by visiting <https://www.nysut.org/memberid>.

Once you create your free Calm account on your computer, it is recommended that you download the Calm app for your iOS or Android device. After downloading the Calm app for your preferred mobile device, you can then log in with your email address and password to unlock the premium Calm content.



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,  
visiting [memberbenefits.nysut.org](https://www.nysut.org/memberbenefits),  
or calling 800-626-8101.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

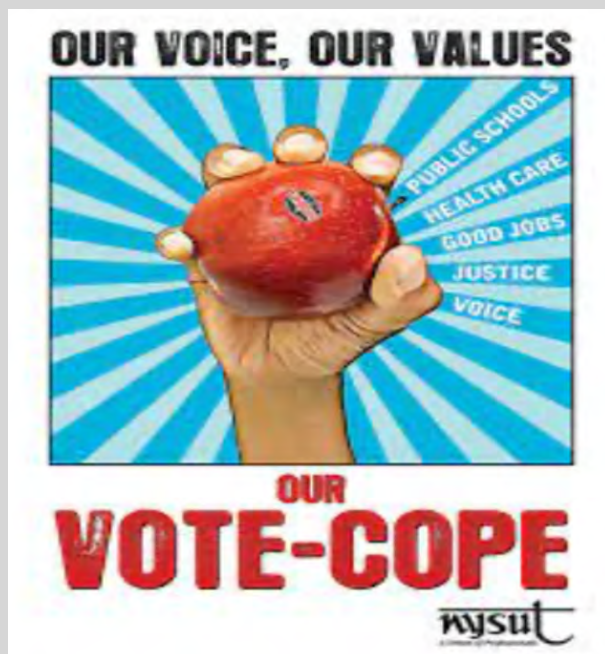
Jan/Feb. 2024

# First Vice President - Keith Flynn



## Your Voice, Your Union

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break! The beginning of January is always tough returning from the festive holiday season, but we will gain a little more daylight as we move into the 2nd half of the school year. A little more sunshine can brighten up those cold winter days. Advocacy Day- Unfortunately, the traditional Advocacy Day format has been changed this year. In the past, we would partner with our Western Suffolk BOCES friends to send a group to advocate for our educational interest and our students. It was truly a great experience for our students who would meet with state lawmakers at the state capitol. I don't think anything can replace the in-person experience at the state capitol for our students, but I am waiting to hear more information on the new format and how we can continue our advocacy for everything BOCES! Update on VOTE-COPE- VOTE-COPE contributions remain strong in N.Y.S. Your statewide union has a political fund-raising arm called VOTE-COPE. VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan action fund that coordinates the voluntary contributions of members and supports NYSUT-endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public-education and pro-labor. Up to 40% of the contributions come back to our local, and the money is used for many reasons. Not only is it used to secure the great member benefits we receive (pension, vacation & sick days, pay scale, job security, etc), take a look at the following initiative below that NYSUT is advocating for.



# First Vice President - Keith Flynn



## Your Voice, Your Union



FIX TIER 6- NYSUT is rallying to show how your union can advocate and fight to Fix Tier 6. Since 2010, newly created pension tiers (Tier 5 and Tier 6) have been enacted that reduce the retirement benefits for newly hired public employees, including public school teachers and School Related Professionals. The Fix Tier 6 campaign started in the late winter of 2021 and now is in full operation. NYSUT has already advocated and had the vesting period (minimum years of service) changed from 10 to 5 years with Tier 6. This is only the start of a multi-year campaign to fix the retirement benefits in Tier 6. How can you help to Fix Tier 6? Become a VOTECOPE member. Go to the NYSUT page and get involved. Let's show our new members how unionism works with strength through numbers. Check the link out below for more information. There are great examples on the website that show the inequities with Tier 6. <https://fixtier6.org>

Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)-I had sent out this information in our October addition plus it has been sent out through the Remind App. There are newly scheduled sessions coming up this spring and they fill up fast. Please check out the link below for more information: If you are a teacher or teacher assistant and thinking about retiring under your current contract, I would highly recommend signing up and attending a New York State Teacher Retirement System Prep seminar. These free seminars are invaluable as they provide you with a wealth of good information to help you transition from employee to retiree. All workshops are scheduled from 8:30-1pm, with registration beginning at 8am. You can make reservations at [NYSTRS.org](https://nystrs.org) or call them at 1-800-348-7298 (ext 6180) or [communit@nystrs.org](mailto:communit@nystrs.org) These seminars fill up quickly, so if you get closed out, you can sign up for the spring. Below is the link to NYSUT's PREP page.

<https://nystrs.org/Retirement-Planning/Pension-Retirement-Education-Program>

Keith



# Area VP for Para Educators - Angela Ritchie



## Amazing SRPs

Dear fellow BEES members,

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday and enjoyed their time off. The new contract has finally been signed by the negotiating team and has been printed. We will be distributing it to the building representatives shortly. Listed below are some of the new contract additions and changes. When you receive your new contract, please review it and speak with your building rep about any questions.

2023-24 New Contract Additions:

1. Immediately following a birth or adoption, the non-birthing employee may use up to 15 days sick leave.
2. Educational leave- up to 20 weeks and does not have to coincide with semesters.
3. Family sick leave- can be for spouse, child, or domestic partner.
4. Change “will” to “may”-article 4 section E (3) if you take more than 2 sick days H.R. “MAY” ask you for a Dr. note. - absence history will be taken into account.
5. Sick and personal leave bonus-if you have taken no more than 7 days that includes sick and personal, you will receive a stipend of \$300. by August 1.
6. Personal Leave- you can now take with a holiday or long weekend but you must inform your administrator 7 days prior.
7. Bereavement- has been expanded to include step-parents, stepbrother, and step-sister.
8. Bereavement-you can now have 3 sick days converted to bereavement for someone other than family if you would like to attend their services.
9. Critical Illness is not used against your sick days. The agency provides 3 days.
10. Health Insurance for employees-will not change for the length of the contract-20% employees-80%.
11. Health Insurance waiver-ONLY for employees who are receiving it at this time. You cannot apply for it unless you were already getting it.
12. Probationary aides- if you do not show up for work for 10 days without contacting either the building or H.R, you can be asked to resign (there is a 30-day safety net).



# Area VP for Para Educators - Angela Ritchie



## Amazing SRPs

### Salaries:

As of July 1, 2023

Aides - received a \$1,600.00 increase

TAs with 60 credits- received a \$ 3,000.00 increase

### New Hire Salaries for 2023 - 2024

\$25,657.00 IA

\$26,535.00 Sign Language Interpreters

\$28,000.00 TA Salaries

\$29,368.00 TA with 60 credits

### Salaries Increases on base salary:

2024- 4%, 2025- 3%, 2026-3%, 2027-3%, 2028-3%, 2029-3%

### Changes to Longevity:

July 1, 2024- \$1,000.00 after 5 years, anyone with 5,6,7,8,9 years will receive the \$1,000.00

\$3,050.00 after 10 years (\$1,000.00 increase from previous)

\$4,550.00 after 15 years (\$1,500.00 increase from previous)

\$6,150.00 after 20 years (\$1,500.00 increase from previous)

\$8,150.00 after 25 years (\$ 2,000.00 increase from previous)

\$9,700.00 after 30 years i (\$2,000.00 increase from previous)

### Bump ups:

Para to teacher - \$85.00 was \$72.00

IA to TA -\$30.00- was \$22.00

I want to thank the negotiations team for a successful contract and the membership for sharing their thoughts and ideas. Please be sure to read your contract and be familiar with all the benefits! Any questions or concerns, please contact your Building Rep. Wishing all of you a happy and healthy rest of the school year. Thank you for supporting our union!

Regards,

Angela Ritchie

Area V.P. for Para Educators

# Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

## Union Strong, All Day Long



Happy New Year Bees members! I hope you and your families enjoyed the holidays and found time to rest and relax. As you are aware, this year our blue contract is being negotiated. To ensure that all members' voices are heard prior to negotiations, the E-Board has created focus groups. Over the past few months, each certificated group worked with their area vice president and have dissected our current contract. They have identified and addressed areas that need to be changed. These concerns were then presented to the E-Board and will provide the negotiating committee with the areas to target. Although negotiations will begin later this month, our focus group will continue to meet, as our work is not done. I believe the focus group opportunity our president gave us to have been a valuable experience, and I thank all who participated for their time, efforts, and professionalism. As we return from break, many of us are already starting to write IEP's and planning for next year. Over the past year there have been many new teachers hired, please offer your assistance. When writing an IEP, if you have questions reach out to your building lead teachers or your colleagues for answers. We have all been new once and understand the difficulty of navigating IEP direct. Our goal is to try and help make this a smooth process. Over the past many years, I have learned some tips to make this process easier: I have found the key to any successful IEP, is ensuring that all team members openly communicate concerns, progress, and strategies at your team meetings. When planning for next year, if you have concerns about class placement or the need for an aide, invite your administrator to your team meeting and present the concerns as a united front. We know the agency has made many changes to class sizes and the use of individual aides over the past several years. One reason this was done is due to staff shortages. It is essential to acquaint yourself with the class sizes available in your specific building. If an individual aide is not available, perhaps a 2:1 shared aide is. If you are requesting a more restrictive environment, be sure to have the data to support your request and share it with administration at your team meeting.

# Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

## Union Strong, All Day Long



For teachers in academic programs, when writing your PLEP statements, remember it must address the student's present level of academic achievement as well as their functional performance. Your PLEP is the foundation for building goals and objectives for the coming year. Think of your annual goals like a road map; they are written with reasonably high, attainable expectations that includes age-appropriate content. These goals should address specific areas of need, while moving the student toward independence. For teachers in the developmental programs, The Unique Learning System is an ideal platform to support the collaboration required for a successful IEP process. Through its goals, preferences, and skills feature- skill tracking assessments, data monitoring, and reporting all work together to create a profile that takes your student from potential progress to completion of goals. The data management and reporting feature positions students for success.

I wish you all the best during this time and remember we only have a few weeks to go until winter

break.

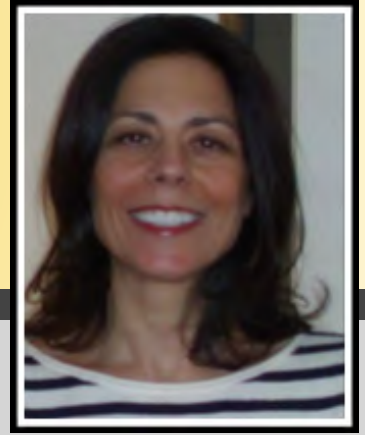
Stay safe and good luck, you've got this.

In Solidarity,

*Patti*



# Area VP for Itinerants/SAS - Kristin Ericson Abbruzzese



## Things to Remember

I want to wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year to you and your loved ones. I hope you were all able to enjoy some quality time with your family and friends. I also hope you were all able to get some rest and relaxation to recharge for the remainder of the school year. I know for many of us this becomes crunch time with meetings and writing IEPs for our students. For those of you who it may be the first experience with this process, take one step at a time and ask your coworkers for their tricks on how to make it a smooth process and for those of us who have been around for a while, reach out to your new coworkers to see if they need a hand.

I want to take a minute to thank all the members who have been attending the focus groups meetings. They have really provided a lot of information and feedback which is priceless for the negotiating team to have. When combining all the focus groups, I do believe we have representation from all the buildings and positions within the Blue contract. As an Executive Board, we always try to be inclusive of all of our members but it truly helped to have the focus groups share what is most important to their specific areas. We will try our best to keep all the members in the Blue contract abreast of how the negotiating is progressing however, we will not be able to share specific details since nothing will be finalized without ratifying an MOU from all of you. Please try to avoid listening to the rumors that may spread throughout the process because people like to talk. Should you have concerns or questions, we always welcome you to reach out, the E-board is just an email away. I encourage members to reach out to their building reps. I usually hear from members who have a sense that maybe a new process in a building or a new way to handle an issue seems a little off and once it gets to the E-board we can address it. One issue we always encourage you to reach out about is if you are only getting four (4) preps in a week. We are aware that in our contract it does state that is what we are entitled to but we would like to know if you drop to four (4) so maybe we can explore how we can help you to get back that fifth prep in your week. I'm hoping, because I have not heard from related service providers thus far you have been able to keep that fifth prep, all has been good.



# Area VP for CTE/SCE - Deirdre Pettit

## Skills USA and Unionism



Greetings BEES members,

I wanted to give an update on how CTE/SCE have been making use of the \$50,000 AFT grant. To say that this grant “changed students lives” would be an understatement. Due to receiving this grant this school year SKILLS USA has had the highest membership numbers they have ever seen. Students who were unable to afford the membership dues all were given the opportunity join SKILLS and participate in the events within the school. These include social gatherings, Holiday giveaways, old school “field day”, spirit week events, the ability to volunteer, hold cabinet positions i.e. President, Treasurer etc. These students also may participate in competitions on the local and state level. Each competition falls under the area of study they are training for. Carpentry, Cosmetology, Public Speaking, Health Knowledge Bowl are just a few examples. Once a student places on the local level they advance to the State competition which includes a 3-night stay in a hotel in Syracuse. The student’s network with kids from all over NYS. If they place at states they advance to Nationals which is approximately 5 nights away in Georgia.

SKILLS USA Mission Statement: Our mission is to empower students to become skilled professionals, career-ready leaders and responsible community members.

SkillsUSA’s vision is to produce the most highly skilled workforce in the world, providing every member the opportunity for career success.

What the most beautiful part of this grant from my eyes was the response from the students at ICC. The students wrote letters to that the board and let them know that they are “so happy that they get to socialize with other kids in the school, “it’s the first time I have ever been a part of a club”, and “I feel so special that I am a member of SKILLS USA”. This is what it is all about.

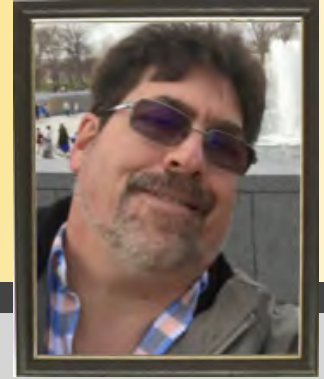
I found this excerpt on the SKILLS USA website and it gives further insight into how SKILLS USA changes lives, I hope you enjoy it.

A student who once hid quietly in the back of the class finds a confidence he never knew he had ... and now will never lose. Another, once unsure of her future goals, discovers a passion for a specific skill that will lead to a fulfilling, in-demand career. A teacher, struggling to provide students with real-world connections to their classroom, transforms his curriculum into an engaging model of a high-functioning workplace. An industry representative, desperate for entry-level employees to meet her company’s growing needs, taps into a talent pipeline of career-ready applicants ready to bridge that skills gap. These moments — and so many more — happen every day across our nation thanks to SkillsUSA involvement.

SkillsUSA changes classrooms. SkillsUSA changes workplaces. SkillsUSA changes lives.

Deirdre

# Contractual Benefits Officer - Nick DeBlanco



## It Benefits You to Know

Good morning fellow members. I would like to wish you and your families a very happy and healthy new year.

As the calendar changes and the new year takes hold, there are some changes that we all should pay attention to. Your contributions to retirement accounts have increased as they do each year. This means that if you have the ability to put more money away in your account, this is a good time to contact your financial advisor and discuss changes that will benefit your retirement.

I would also urge you to view your Social Security account. Many of you have possibly received a transcript or an email saying that your transcript is ready to view from the Social Security administration. I recommend you do so. By reviewing your Social Security account, you can make sure that any donations and contributions are accurate. There is also some useful information on how to use the program efficiently when you do retire.

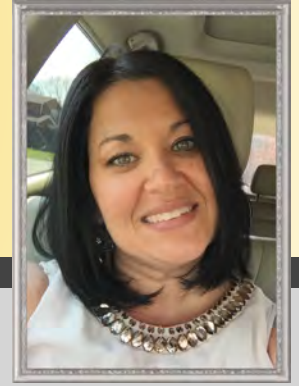
If you're planning on retiring in the next five years, I would highly suggest you make contact with the retirement system that you are in and have a five-year review. These reviews help you align the last few years of employment and help to maximize your retirement benefit. N.Y.S.U.T. also hosts P.R.E.P. seminars for retirement a few times a year. The seminars fill up fast. Visit the N.Y.S.U.T. website and find out when the next prep seminars are and join early.

The new year restarts many optical and dental plans. Many Member's yearly allowances begin with the new year, plan your treatments accordingly. If you take insurance through the agency, you will notice your premium went up a little bit starting this month. This is due to collecting money for to cover for the summer months. Instead of being slammed for two whole payments in May and June from every check, our union worked out a much more manageable payment breakdown starting in January. Just another great benefit of being a union member!

Thank you for sticking with the BEES !

Nick

# Social Chair - Danielle Ibba-Morabito



## Let's BEE Social

BEES T-shirts are coming soon! You must be a BEES member to order one (no cost for members) Please follow the link to complete the order form!

<https://forms.gle/SLcPPuWVCrAweitU8>



A poster for a school event. At the top left is a red apple with a yellow bee on it. To the right, the text "School is Out FOREVER" is written in red and multi-colored letters. Below that is a green pencil. The background is dark grey with colorful pencil erasers at the top and bottom. The text on the poster reads: "Join your fellow BEES members in celebrating this year's retirees at the **BEES HONORARIUM** DINNER • MUSIC • DANCING. Save the Date! Wednesday, June 7, 2023. Land's End 8 Brown's River Road Sayville, NY 11782".

Join your fellow BEES members in celebrating this year's retirees at the **BEES HONORARIUM** DINNER • MUSIC • DANCING

**Save the Date!**  
**Wednesday, June 7, 2023**

Land's End  
8 Brown's River Road  
Sayville, NY 11782



# Retiree Chapter Chairperson - Terry Kalb

## Radiant Retirees



Dear BEES Retirees

Happy New Year everyone! I hope it's off to a good start. For those of us on Medicare and Social Security, January is the month that your most important SSA- 1099 document from the Social Security office. It usually arrives in the postal mail sometime during the last 2 weeks in January. This year, ESBOCES HR is requiring ONLY this SSA-1099 document in order to send you your 2023 Medicare reimbursement. The annual reimbursement is deposited directly into the bank account that you provided them when you first signed up for Medicare. The deposit will include both your basis premiums paid, and the IRMAA surcharge for higher income earners too. It does not include the much smaller amount paid under Part D prescription drug plan which is not yet reimbursable. As soon as you receive your SSA-1099, send a copy of it to Lisa Annunziato or Pat Sauber at ESB HR, either by email, postal mail, or bring it directly to 201 Sunrise Highway- your choice. I emailed mine already, and received a confirmation back also via email. The sooner you get your document to that office, the sooner your reimbursement will be processed. It seems pretty random when your SSA-1099 will get to you- but like W-2 forms, and your 1099-R (your annual IRS Pension document), it is supposed to arrive by January 31st. Your Medicare reimbursements will be rolled out on payday Fridays during February and early March. They will NOT all be processed at the same date. You should have received a letter in the mail from ESBOCES last fall outlining this process.

Please be kind and patient with Lisa and Pat- the processing of many hundreds of retiree documents is very time-consuming, and not their only responsibility this time of the year. We are among the very, very fortunate few in NYS, and in the nation, who get our premiums reimbursed due to NYS law. It is because of strong public employee unions like our NYSUT that we were guaranteed this amazing benefit. In fact the IRMAA part must be re-certified annually in the NYS budget. Through effective union lobbying, that has happened every year. That is a prime example of our VOTE-COPE dollars at work. Sadly not many of us still contribute to VOTE COPE in retirement. The Social Security Cost of Living (COLA) increases we have received the past 2 years are also in part due to effective lobbying to protect Social Security from budget cuts. Make sure your congressperson knows you don't want cuts to these essential programs, which actually are paid for by employee payroll contributions and not income taxes. If you would like to send VOTE-COPE a small direct donation from your pension monthly, please sign up for pension deduction! It's easy, and so important. You can find the form on the [nysut.org](https://nysut.org) website. Any questions? Just email me or call me at 631-929-4295 and leave me a message.

There is a special election scheduled for February 13th for Congressional District 3 for the remainder of disgraced member George Santos' term. Our union has endorsed the Democrat candidate former Congressman Tom Suozzi because of his support for public education and union/retiree benefits. There will be a phone bank at our NYSUT SUFFOLK office all day on Feb 13th to get out the vote. I will be there, and I hope some of you will join me for an hour or two. The address is 100 Vanderbilt-Motor Parkway Suite 320. There will be another election in November for all congressional seats for the next two year term. Email me or call me if you have questions or want to volunteer.

**Terry Kalb**

**BEES Retiree Chapter President**

## Spotlight on Our BEES Community

# Deirdre Pettit - A BEES Hero!

We shine the first spotlight for 2024 on none other than one of our own BEES E-Board members Ms. Deirdre Pettit.

This spotlight shines very bright as this is truly a life saving moment.

As reported by the Northport Patch, A man collapsed at an all-county concert at Northport High School and it was the heroic efforts of Northport-East Northport School district staff along with our very own nurse educator Deirdre Pettit that saved the life of Smithtown parent Robert Strzelczyk. It was during a NYSSMA- All County concert at Northport High School that Mr. Strzelczyk suddenly collapsed and stopped breathing. It was at this moment that the quick thinking and teamwork of several school staff members along with Ms. Pettit played an important role in saving Strzelczyk's life. Ms. Pettit administered guidance and aid while asst. Coach Greenblatt administered CPR and chest compressions. An AED device was then used at which point Mr. Strzelczyk began breathing just as police and paramedics arrived. Head coach of the varsity basketball team recognized that it was the teamwork of all those in attendance that played a role in saving Strzelczyk's life. Coach Greenblatt shared that the combination of Coach Andrew D'Eloia's "calm demeanor," and nurse Pettit's guidance and expertise, and the rapid arrival and response of the paramedics and police were crucial to preventing a tragedy. The School district recognized Ms. Pettit along with all those involved and their heroic efforts in saving a parent's life.

Strzelczyk's wife Debra expressed deep appreciation for those who stepped up to save her husband's life. She said her husband "is doing miraculously well."

The presence of AEDs in schools cannot be discussed without emphasizing the work of the Acompora family, whose son Louis tragically died during a Northport High School lacrosse game because of cardiac arrest. The family started the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation and in 2002, Louis's Law was passed, mandating that AEDs are available in all New York State schools.

Is there a BEES member you think should deserve the "spotlight"? Email me at

# Spotlight on Our BEES Community

## Deirdre Pettit - A BEES Hero!



Photo credit to Michael DeSantis - Northport Patch



# **BEES**

## **BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk**

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