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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*

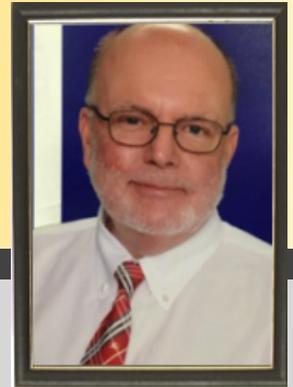


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Union Strong

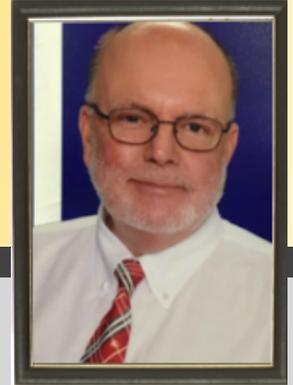


Hello my sisters and brothers. Happy New Year to everyone. I know this sounds incongruous to many of you as we are deep into the worst time of the COVID-19 crisis with over 430,000 of our fellow Americans dead. I mean it as a wish for all of you to stay safe and hope for a return to a somewhat normal life by this summer. I am encouraging all of you to get the vaccine, although I know it is quite a mess trying to get an appointment. My appointment at Stonybrook has been made, cancelled, made again and cancelled again. I know the frustration of it, but stick with it. I believe that additional supplies of the vaccine will soon be available and appointments will open up.

So, where do I begin? Since my last article we have elected a new President and survived an insurrection with an armed attack on our nation's Capitol building. Who ever would have thought that it would come to this? I can only hope that we pray for the success of our new President as that would keep our students and ourselves safe. It also bodes well for education that the ineffective, spiteful and misguided Betsey DeVos is gone and a professional educator and former public-school principal has replaced her. It is also our good fortune to have Dr. Jill Biden, a practicing teacher, in the White House. We know our concerns will have a sympathetic ear and a fair hearing. I do believe that help is on the way in terms of funding, equipment and good Federal guidance. Hang in there.

We have been providing in school instruction since July and we have been dealing with this COVID-19 mess for almost a year now. People are exhausted. Many of us, myself included, have not been with our loved ones for quite a while. Zoom meetings and Apple FaceTime are poor substitutes for real hugs, smiles and kisses. Yet, you my friends, continue to put one foot in front of the other and move on. My father was a Master Sergeant in the Marine Corps, and when I balked at doing a chore he would often say "Jim, sometimes you have to just shut up and soldier

Union Strong



Not only is that what you have done my sisters and brothers, but you have soldiered on with creativity, dedication and love. I can only express my admiration and pride for all of you and your hard work. I am very proud to be the president of our local and to represent all of you. Talk about adapting and overcoming obstacles, wow.

So, what has your union been doing? We are moving our union office to a new location. Still on Waverly Ave. but further down by the LIE. It is a slightly smaller space but it will be built out to our requirements and will save us quite a bit of money each year. Needless to say the union office has been underutilized this past year and has led us to reevaluate our requirements and to cut expenses.

We continue to represent you in other areas as well. APPR waivers, limits on many educational issues and trying to redress what we think are injuries to our members. We do this virtually and in person. We don't always win but we are always in the fight.

As many of you are aware the condition of the NY State budget is not good. We are anticipating an 8–11 billion-dollar shortfall state wide. Without additional aid from the Federal government this means drastic budget cuts and increased state taxes. I will know more about how the Agency stands when I attend the Budget Plan meeting on January 28th. Things are different from previous years and it is good that we have a seat at the table. I will keep you posted.

Please continue to stay vigilant against COVID-19. Do not let your guard down. I know you are tired but we are in the home stretch. The cavalry is on the way. We just have to hang on till they get here.

As always, my friends, I close with unity and strength.

Jim Beck

Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



Greetings BEES members,

Happy New Year! I hope this year brings with it a renewal of strength, hope, health, compassion and resilience for all of us. I hope that you were all able to find some joy this holiday season, as different and challenging as these months have been. As we continue our journey through this time of pandemic teaching, I would like to say how incredibly inspiring each and every one of you are. I don't have the chance to speak with all of you, as there are over sixteen hundred BEES members, but the members I do have the pleasure of talking to are truly encouraging. I thank you for your support as we do our best to navigate these difficult times and for recognizing that we are struggling alongside you. We will come through these challenging times together.

I would like to provide you with some updates regarding the COVID sick leave. At the end of the calendar year the leave we had been accessing, the FFCRA/EPSLA, expired. It was a federal leave and it was not renewed. Luckily for us, New York has their own legislation regarding COVID Sick Leave. The NYS COVID Sick leave is something we have been discussing with the agency since November in preparation for the expiration of the FFCRA. To start, the agency had been advised by their attorneys that the NYS COVID sick leave was a one time use, much like the FFCRA. The BEES had been advised by our NYSUT LRS (labor relations specialist) that the NYS sick leave could be used more than once. We needed to have the NYSUT attorneys contact the agency's attorneys to discuss the language of the legislation. Since the language is new, there are no previous cases to go by, no precedents set. After meeting with the agency's attorneys and then the agency administration, the agency did agree that the language of the legislation did mean that the NYS COVID sick leave could indeed be used more than once. This is a prime example of how our union dues work for us when we need them most. Thank you to NYSUT and our LRS William for their help.

Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



Now that we know we have the NYS COVID sick leave available, what can we do with it?

The NYS leave is different from the FFCRA/EPFLA in that it only covers the individual. If you have a positive test result or have to quarantine as the result of close contact with a person who has tested positive, you can use the NYS COVID sick leave time. You cannot use this time if your child has to stay home because their school is closed or is quarantined as a close contact themselves. You cannot use this time to stay home to care for someone who has tested positive for COVID. This time is only for the individual, if you test positive or are a close contact and told to quarantine and cannot work remotely. In the event that either of these two things happen and you need to access this time, you will need a letter from the local Department of Health verifying your quarantine status. Please see the links provided below to obtain letters from the SCDOH. At which time you can email HR and request paperwork for the NYS COVID leave. The time you are out will be deducted as sick time and then reimbursed once the paperwork has been processed. The Department of Labor has also very recently put forth further guidance on the use of the COVID Sick Leave. It may be used up to three times; Once as a result of a close contact, and twice as a result of a positive test. The offer of remote work from the agency for those who are able to do so is important to ensure members do not needlessly use their COVID Sick Leave and/or sick bank time.

If you are able to work remotely (this may not apply in every situation) the agency is offering the opportunity for members to do so. In the event that you are quarantined as a close contact and are offered remote work, you must work remotely so you are not charged any time out. In this case if you refuse to work remotely, you will be charged sick time and it will not be reimbursed. In the event that you are quarantined due to a positive COVID test, if you feel well enough, you may accept the offer of remote work. If you do not feel well enough to work remotely, please let your building administration know and then follow the steps to access the NYS COVID sick leave. If you are working remotely, please do not enter sick days into the absence management system, you should not be charged for any days you complete remote work. Speak with your building administration if you find yourself in either of these scenarios to work out the details specific to you and your programmatic needs.

Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



Whether or not you have chosen to receive the new COVID vaccine is totally up to you. If you have tried to sign up for a time slot to be vaccinated, then you know that the roll out has been anything but smooth. The governor continues to reference unions making plans for their members to be vaccinated, but much like his plans for color zoning and percentage based closings, these statements are empty and unfounded. He has not provided any guidance for unions, small or large, on how to organize or receive vaccine allotments for our memberships. We have been exploring all options alongside the agency. Thus far, we have not been successful in finding a viable partner to work with in setting up vaccination sessions for our members. We will continue to do our research. The largest issue we continue to encounter in this process is that there are simply not enough vaccines. At this point, I hope you are one of the lucky few who were able to secure an appointment.

As I thank each of you for bringing everything you have to the table everyday, I want to also thank the executive board and our building representatives for doing the same. They have worked tremendously hard this past year during these unprecedented times. I would like to remind you about our website at www.beesbeacon.org where you can find our contact information and updates, our text messaging system which you can sign up for by texting the word BEES to the number 33222 and our facebook page and closed facebook group just for BEES members which you can find by visiting our website and clicking on the link. Here's to a happy and healthy new year! Thank you for sticking with the BEES!

In solidarity,
Asha

click here for letters related to COVID tests, quarantine and release from quarantine.

<https://health.suffolkcountyny.gov/CovidReleaseLetters/LetterSelect.aspx>

Executive Vice President - Al Rios



Better Together

Happy New Year to all our members and their families. My wish to you all is that this New Year brings us all better health, safety and happiness than the past year.

Since given the mandate to retreat from the social norms we once knew, we've undoubtedly exacerbated the symptoms that generally accompany loneliness, depression, anxiety, and all that stuff we hope will go away with enough distraction or avoidance. We are faced with not knowing what the next days may bring to ourselves and our loved ones and try as we may to keep uncertainty and anxiety at bay, it's ultimately an impossible mission.

I thought I was the only one with these feelings, I kept thinking to myself "Why am I feeling this way?" I mean, the whole world is going through this upheaval, could it be that I am the only one who feels so lousy? So, I did a little soul searching as well as internet browsing and magazine article reading and I want everyone to know you are not alone. Article after article, I learned that individuals across the country are feeling exactly the same.

We are living in unprecedented times and that is why we are ALL feeling unprecedented, overwhelming feelings of loneliness, despair, uncertainty, and anxiety, just to name a few. I don't mean to sound all gloom and doom but it did make me feel better to realize I was not alone and my feelings were validated.

I wanted to share some of the things I found helpful and interesting on how to manage and understand these feelings and maybe, just maybe we can all take a collective big sigh of relief, realize that we are all in this together and feel better about ourselves.

One of the articles I read was written by the writers of *the Tony Award-winning musical Dear Evan Hansen*. Benj Pasek and Justin Paul reflected on how COVID-19 forced Americans into a new world of "self-isolation," leaving so many of us feeling disconnected and alone. They reminded us that despite all the peaks and valleys we are going to encounter we can't lose sight that whatever we are going through on any particular day isn't permanent and we will emerge stronger.

Executive Vice President - Al Rios



Better Together

We can't forget that there are always those who love us unconditionally and those you love as well, that are eager to connect again on the other side of this.

They also reflected on how we are naturally social beings and the limitations on how we can interact with those we most love can have a negative impact. Instead we should lean into gratitude for the times we do have, and find ways to channel it into a practice of appreciating and making the most of every moment we do have together.

Finally, I would like to share with you an article in The National Educators Magazine written by Wendy Turner; 2017 Teacher of the year. She goes on to remind us 3 important strategies that we owe to ourselves to help us get through this..



Show yourself grace and compassion - Forgive yourself for anything that didn't go well, and move on. We are constantly teaching our students coping strategies for handling difficult emotions. Now it's time we embrace them ourselves.

Stay connected to others - When circumstances are tough, it's critical to stay connected with family and friends in your life. A video chat, a phone conversation or a marathon texting session with a loved one or favorite friend always makes us feel good.

Remember, you are not alone - We are a community of caring, compassionate, thoughtful and emotional educators. We are in unprecedented times but we will get through this together.

As I said at the very start of this article, my wish for each and everyone of you is for a far better year than we have experienced. I hope something in this article touched a nerve or validated your feelings and please know that we are in this together and we will come out of this stronger.

Al

Come to us for the savings...



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LEGAL LETTERS
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To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.



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

Jan./Feb.'21

First Vice President - Ray Stenberg

So Long 2020



Happy New Year BEES members! I'm sure that we will all agree that we can wholeheartedly say good riddance to 2020. It has been a horrific year for everybody in America and we mourn the losses of over 400,000 men, women, and children from across the USA. Millions are unemployed and homeless as we continue to be blessed with a paycheck from BOCES every other week. Our union leadership has been working tirelessly to keep our members whole while getting additional benefits during these difficult times. The pandemic day that each of our members have received this school year is unheard of in the numerous other bargaining units across the state. Recently, we have been able to change the procedures for paid quarantine leave which was originally limited to one event. Our TA's and teachers have been afforded an opportunity to earn extra compensation for providing remote learning for those students whose parents have chosen to keep them home during the pandemic. Our union continues to remain strong as we all struggle to deal with whatever comes our way on any given day. Rest assured that we have your back as you come to work to deliver high quality educational services to our students across the agency.

As we begin the new year, we look forward to a new administration in Washington DC. Despite all of the political divisiveness, it is hoped that President Biden will work to create unity in this country so that we can all work together for the common good of all Americans. What we have seen at the Capital earlier in the month was disturbing and very concerning. To see mobs of American citizens storming the Capital with the intent to capture and possibly kill members of Congress and the Vice President was something out of a horror movie. This should not be happening in America, but unfortunately it did. Casting blame is pointless. It happened and it should never happen again. We have to move forward with a renewed sense of spirit and optimism. As someone who truly loves his country, I am hopeful that we will prevail.

Speaking of "good riddance", those are the two words that the President of the American Federation of Teachers said about the recent resignation of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, a woman who I believe was the most destructive educational leader that we have ever seen. Her policies harmed public education while strengthening the power of for profit charter schools across the country.

First Vice President - Ray Stenberg

So Long 2020

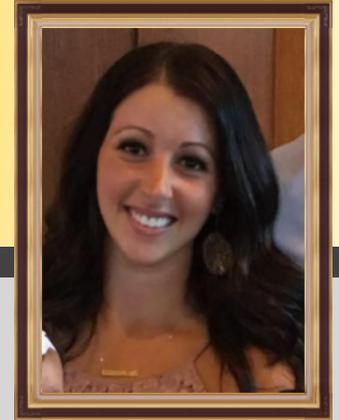


Another four years of her would have put the nail in the coffin. Instead, we will now have an educator in that role. Assuming confirmation, a former AFT member, Miguel Cardona, will be in the position to undo the damage done to the education system over the last four years. Mr. Cardona is a staunch advocate of public education and has done great things to help improve public education during his time running the education system in Connecticut. We look forward to seeing all of the good things that he will do over the next four years. Another individual who we assume will be confirmed is Marty Walsh, the current Mayor of Boston. Mr. Walsh is an avid supporter of unions who spent many years of his life as a union member. He rose through the ranks to become President of his trade union and has been very successful in negotiating lucrative contracts for his members. President Biden has nominated Marty Walsh to be Secretary of Labor. If they are both confirmed, we will have an educator as the Secretary of Education and a life-long unionist as the Secretary of Labor. This is definitely something to look forward to. Speaking of things to look forward to, for quite a few of our members who are in the NYSTRS, it is the R word - RETIREMENT. After working for what seems like a lifetime, many of us made the decision to pack it in and move onto the next chapter in their lives. In November, I attended the NYSTRS annual conference. For the first time in its almost 100 year history, it was virtual. As different as it was, the information that I gathered was glowingly positive. Despite all that is going on in the economy, the system has a 99% funding ratio and, as of 6/30/20, the system has combined assets of 120.5 billion dollars. In the 2019-2020 school year, members received 7.5 billion dollars in pension benefits in full and on time. This system continues to remain in the top 5 pension systems in the entire country. There is nothing like the feeling of financial security!

As we continue throughout the year, let's try to be positive and hopeful. Always remember that the person next to you may be struggling in some way. Listen to them and try to help them in any way you can. We all can be part of the solution and not part of the problem. It's not that difficult to be nice to one another.

Ray

Area VP for Para Educators - Amanda Pica



Amazing SRPs

I would like to start off by saying Farewell to 2020. Happy New Year to all of you! After such a challenging year I look forward to what the future will bring. Although not much has changed yet I am hopeful we are heading in the right direction. As we continue to navigate through these difficult times I encourage each one of you to communicate, stay informed, and most importantly make your health a priority. Despite the challenges and daily changes our E-board has stayed consistent with making our members a number one priority. As virtual teaching has become widespread within the agency more and more paraeducators have the opportunity to utilize this. This has helped in many ways, not only has it helped staff save sick time but the continuity and consistency for our students is crucial during these difficult times.

Not only am I proud to be a BEES member, but the amount of patience and effort that has been put forth from our E-board and building reps has been remarkable. Each day we face new challenges and struggles but together we are strong and can overcome any obstacle that comes our way.

“Remember to take care of yourself. You can’t pour from an empty cup”

~ unknown

Amanda



Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards



The New Normal

Welcome to teaching in 2021. The definition of a teacher is - a person who helps students to acquire knowledge, competence, or virtue. However, this definition is inadequate and does not capture what it means to teach during a pandemic, as our roles have dramatically changed and will continue to change in the years to come as they look at what worked or didn't.

During these past nine months teachers continue to work harder than ever. We know that most children learn better when they are in the classroom, where they can do more exploring, but some are not able to be with us in class. We know the benefits of them socially interacting and learning with their peers, but for their safety we stay 6 feet apart. We know we are each one person doing the best we can for the children out there who need to be educated.

Many of us are each teaching a different classroom scenario. We can have all students present or we can be live streaming our lessons to our remote students, while teaching in person. We can be placed on quarantine and have an entire class go remote at a moment's notice. We can also be teaching remotely from home while on quarantine and having our class present within the school. Never in my entire career would I have thought that to be a possibility. But because your union never stops fighting for you, it is not only possible, but it is our new reality.

Throughout the day, we must be diligent and spray down the students' desks with disinfectant and sterilize all supplies. We must ensure we are meeting the needs of our in-person students. We must ensure that we provide enough support for our remote learners. And we know our day is never over at the last bell, as we attend meetings, plan lessons, grade assignments, make copies, clean the desks again, and prepare to do it all again tomorrow.



Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards



The New Normal

The great news is that we are making progress with this horrific pandemic and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. What our new normal will look like is unknown, but right now I can honestly say, **we will be able to handle whatever it is because as educators we will not settle for anything other than excellence.**

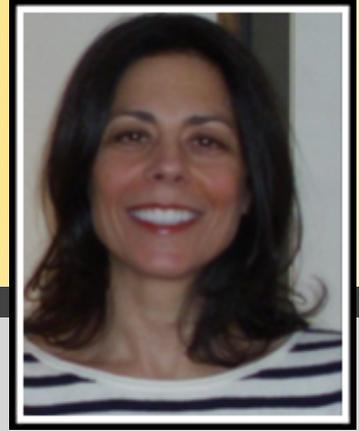
In special education, they are projecting a decreased enrollment. As parents continue to want remote instruction, districts become the least restrictive environment for these students and have been pulling them back. It is essential that we continue to work with parents to help them understand the benefits of in-person learning. We want to continue to fill the gap so our students will be successful in all their endeavors.

If at any time you have questions or concerns, please remember to follow the chain of command. First, reach out to your building representative, they will then reach out to a union board member if needed. We will always do our best to give you an answer promptly. A great resource is our Closed Facebook group, many members post questions that we do our best to answer quickly. Please know your union is working every day for you, while doing our regular jobs, just like you. We are aware of the monumental responsibilities placed upon you each day especially because things are forever changing, and we thank you for your continued support and membership, because together we can all move forward for a better tomorrow.

I wish you all a happy and healthy 2021. Please stay safe.

Patti

Area VP for Itinerants/SAS - Kristin Ericson Abbruzzese



Keeping it Together

I want to wish you and your loved ones a happy and healthy New Year. I know this year has been nothing like any other year we have all experienced but we are getting through it together. We need to support one another, help one another and understand that each of us may be dealing with personal issues beyond what a coworker may want to share. I know it has not been easy with the continued and ongoing changes that each day brings to us. I know just when I think I'm in a routine or have something all planned out a new curve ball is thrown my way. I know some days are easier to get out of bed and get my day going and others may not be as easy but what I do think I know is that our students at ESBOCES appreciate, in their own way, what we are trying to do for them. What we are doing for most of our students is giving them a place they feel safe to go to everyday, a place where people care about their health and well-being, a place they can socialize with others, a place that may be the only place they go to outside of their homes, a place they get a meal and a place where they are learning and accepted. I think many of us have seen that look in our student's eyes at the end of the school year or when they are aging out of programs or graduating like, "what will I do without you." We really do matter to our students. I urge you to not only be there for them but to take care of yourself and refuel with things you enjoy doing.

Onto some housekeeping; please remember to keep all your required licensing up to date and when you do renew your licensing, send a copy to Human Resources. Second, you are required to complete 15 hours of professional development every school year, that includes completing the required paperwork and submitting it to HR by the end of each year. I know last year we ended our year virtually out of the buildings however, we are still required to meet our contractual requirements and get those forms into HR. I urge you if you have not already started a folder to start a hard copy and/or an electronic folder of all your paperwork received from ESBOCES specifically addressed to you. The folder should include your tenure letter, any correspondence with HR, letters stating you completed the 15 hours, etc. since it is YOUR responsibility to keep YOUR records. Do not expect others to do this for you, you need to be responsible for yourself. Lastly, please reach out to your building reps. when you have a question do not just ask a friend without putting research into important questions. I cannot stress enough how important this is since even good friends may not have the correct answer to your important questions. Since being in this position on this EBOARD, I cannot tell you how many people have not been diligent in knowing their contract and not reaching out and have lost out on receiving payment for their accrued sick days, medical benefits into retirement, etc. due to not asking the questions and taking responsibility for themselves. Our benefits officer, Nick Deblanco, is another great resource for benefits questions, his email is Beescbo@gmail.com

I urge you to reach out to EAP if you find yourself needing extra support to get through these times. I want to also end by sending well wishes to our members who have battled COVID, know someone dealing with COVID or have experienced a loss due to COVID.

Thank You for Sticking with the UNION. I can be reached at beesvpitin@gmail.com and SHS 631-622-1227. My next Related Service/Itinerant meeting will be April 21, 2021 @ 3:30 via Zoom.

Kristin



Lessons From My Dad

Greetings to all my CTE Colleagues. I continue to be amazed at the accomplishments you are making in spite of the pandemic and all the obstacles connected to it. I have witnessed extraordinary adaptations to your “connections with kids” and how you continue to serve our CTE students with 100% of YOU. You continue to instill great work ethic on a daily basis as an important component to your program curriculum. This is reflected in your students’ performances at the job site and I receive amazing feedback from employers. You serve as excellent role models in your professional conduct and your students will always remember that about you. Speaking of work ethic, I wrote an article a few years ago when my Dad passed away. As it’s the three year anniversary of his passing, I decided to share it again as I feel the topic can never be emphasized to our students enough.

“Lessons from my Dad”

My Dad was 87 when he passed away. Joe Catania left a legacy of hard work and strong character. He loved fishing and gardening, was a successful businessman and was totally devoted to his loving family. A young boy growing up in war-torn Sicily, he was the oldest of five children. He carried all the responsibility of his dad, who was away serving with the Merchant Marine. His stories of struggle and poverty were worthy of a documentary for that time period. At fourteen, he left home to join the Merchant Marine and was completely on his own. Arriving in America, my Dad made his way into adulthood working on farms in upstate New York, where he discovered his love for the earth and farming. Dad started out as a painter’s helper and eventually started his own painting business, which grew to be successful and would support his family for many years to come.

When you lose someone you love, you reflect on the memories they leave behind and the things they taught you. What stands out the most for me is the work ethic my Dad taught me, simply by example. He was dedicated to his customers, often putting in long hours, never leaving a job until it was finished to perfection. My Dad was self-disciplined, honest, trustworthy, very respected and loved by his customers. He rose with the sun six days a week, and on Sundays worked at our house keeping it sparkling and beautiful. We all had our chores and learned to be reliable and accountable, traits that stayed with us throughout our lives.



Lessons From My Dad

As CTE Educators, we carry the responsibility of instilling in our students not only technical knowledge but work ethic; otherwise known as “soft skills” or work readiness. Not every student has a positive role model in their lives, and they look to us for examples of the behavioral competencies that they need to become successful employees, business owners and entrepreneurs. Great educators inspire and lead by example. As we are committed to serving our students, we have an obligation to carry out our own professional code of ethics. So much of what our students turn out to be is a reflection not of what we pour into them, but of what they see in us. It’s not the vocabulary lesson our students will remember most, but the everyday things that revealed what we were really made of--how we handled frustration, whether we were on time to class and kept our promises, how we treated each student with respect and whether we did our work with a smile or a frown. Our students come away with their own memories of us and how we reacted to them seeking our approval, how we insisted on quality work and gave them sincere praise for a job well done. Students will remember how enthusiastic we were about our job, if we were professional in the ways we acted and looked and if we provided selfless service to them. Whether we realize it or not, we are very powerful influencers of behavior. Teaching a student technical skills is simple compared to teaching work ethic and building character simultaneously. We are instilling in them a set of behaviors that are the foundations to their employability and ultimately to their success. I am thankful to have had a great role model in my life and am proud of the educator I have become. My memories of my Dad may fade but my work ethic is set in stone, thanks to the Dad who showed me what hard work and the rewards that came from it meant. Thanks to my Dad, I will always work hard for a day’s pay and pray that my students remember me as a truly dedicated professional who always went the extra mile just like my Dad.

Please see your building rep. with any concerns you may have regarding contractual issues or workplace safety. The building rep. should be your FIRST line of contact. Be ready to submit all concerns in writing and refer to the contract area it pertains to. If you do NOT have a copy of the current contract y our rep. will let me know and I will get one out to you. It is important that you keep yours in a safe place so you can refer to it when needed. **KNOW YOUR CONTRACT!!!** Attend your building union meetings as there are always important updates and information. I look forward to seeing you all again, hopefully at the end of the school year, mask-less and healthy!

Contractual Benefits Officer - Nick DeBlanco



It Benefits You to Know

Greetings and Happy New year fellow union members. As we start a new year, we all should take stock. We have much to be thankful for. As we reflect on the difficult year of 2020 many of you may want to make some changes. Resolutions are whimsical and rarely succeed, but behavioral changes are long lasting. Begin with health changes. Your medical insurance carrier has resources available for free. Diet suggestions and relaxation techniques also ways to become more active. Make small changes on a routine basis and they become a habit. Visit their website for many resources.

Set aside some time for your finances. Can you contribute more towards retirement, college savings account, or other investments? Make time to review your flex spending account activity and record it. NYSUT has a financial planning service available to all active members. Log into the NYSUT website and explore the possibilities. For a small fee you can get commission free advice that could greatly impact your financial future.

Medical appointments are difficult to make during the pandemic so prepare for 3 weeks or more of wait time to be seen; schedule accordingly.

As you can imagine the union receives lots of requests for information. One thing that could make the process a little faster is to supply some basic information when you have a question. Many times, we may need the date that you started working, your official title, how many years of service you have and of course what building you're in. This information allows me to begin the process of researching your particular question.

I wish you all a healthy and happier New Year.

In solidarity,

Nick

**UNION
STRONG
UNION
PROUD**

Spotlight on Our BEES Community



Welcome to a brand new article called “Spotlight on our B.E.E.S. community.”

Yes! We are truly a community here at the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk. Our places of work span from Riverhead and Westhampton Beach in the east out to West Islip with many of us in between. We have some amazing professionals providing outstanding services throughout Long Island and in an attempt to get to know a little more about our BEES community we are bringing you stories about the interesting people and activities that our members are involved in.

Let’s begin with one of our itinerant teachers, Tina. Tina is a teacher of the blind and visually impaired who services students mostly in the Riverhead School District. Tina also manages to squeeze in time as a volunteer for Canine Companions for Independence in Medford. As a volunteer puppy raiser, she raises these puppies for 18 months, takes them to special obedience classes, provides lots of socialization opportunities and most importantly, helps each puppy develop the needed skills to be a future assistance dog. Tina teaches the puppies manners and basic commands along with exposing them to as many socialization opportunities as she can. Tina said, “The hardest part of volunteering as a puppy raiser is saying goodbye to these wonderful four legged friends after becoming very attached to them.” It is all worth it because she knows that eventually all the hard work and dedication she put in, will pay off when the puppies go on to help someone with a disability lead a more social and independent lifestyle. Tina has raised 3 CCI puppies and is currently raising and training her 4th puppy named Charlene. She has an Instagram account named Eastern_LI_Puppyraiser where you can follow Charlene’s journey and look back at the journeys of her CCI brothers, Oberon, Nasa, and Loomis. Congratulations and thank you Tina for doing some amazing work.

Do you know of any one of our BEES members who may be doing something special for others, or have an interesting second job or they work in a unique environment? Let’s put a spotlight on them and share it with the rest of our BEES community. Send me an email at alrbeeunion@gmail.com and I would be glad to spotlight them in our next issue!





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BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk

AFT Local 3037

NYSUT Local 22-220

440 Waverly Ave.

Bldg. 4, Suite 12

Patchogue, NY 11772

(631)475-4704

BOCESBEES@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/bees3037

www.beesbeacon.org

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