

**Volume 37 Issue 1  
Sept./Oct.  
2023**

**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 and happy fall, BEES members! I hope the start of the new school year has been a good one thus far. I want to give a warm welcome to all of our new members this year: thank you for joining our local union. Of course, we would also like to thank our returning BEES members for continuing to stick with the BEES--we are happy to have you back, and we look forward to continuing to work with you.

Last school year, although there were several variables we did not foresee, we were able to negotiate an unprecedented Yellow contract. This contract provides more flexibility with contractual language, more paid opportunities, much needed increases to salaries and longevity across the board and other benefits. This new contract is a true testament to union leaders and union membership collaborating, which is what it's all about. Thank you for working with us, sharing your thoughts and supporting the process. The finalized Yellow contract will soon be printed and distributed so you have a personal copy to refer to. Please familiarize yourself with your contract once you receive it, and if you have questions, please speak with your building representatives.

This year, we will be negotiating the Blue contract. We have formed contract focus groups in order to increase communication with the general membership and hear your thoughts and needs. Importantly, there are focus groups for each area covered by the Blue contract in order to ensure we have a deeper understanding of how the contract language affects each area specifically. The focus groups have already begun meeting and are having robust conversations that will be very beneficial to the negotiations process. To those members who are part of our focus groups, we thank you for your input and time.

## Union Strong All Day Long

# President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

## Union Strong



While one of the most important things that teachers unions do is collective bargaining, we also strive to improve the quality of education in other capacities. We advocate for our members in a myriad of ways, many of which fall outside of the CBAs. We recognize that there is a retention issue with new staff members and understand the need for support. For these reasons, we applied for and were awarded with a grant from AFT's Real Solutions Back to School Fund. With this grant, we have created and implemented a new program called the "BEES Buddies". This program is specifically designed to support BEES members with any concerns or questions they might have that fall outside the contract. This is a union backed program, so there is no need to worry that your question could be brought back to the administrator or used in an evaluative manner. Our appointed BEES Buddies are just friendly faces who are there to support and help you. Stay tuned, as your building representatives will soon be introducing the BEES Buddies appointed in your program!

Teachers unions are essential to a strong educational system, and while we fight for the rights of our members, we also work to ensure that all students have equitable access to quality education. Last year, we also applied for and were awarded another AFT Innovation Fund Grant in the amount of \$50,000 to assist our CTE/SCE students with full access to their programs. Thus far, we have helped students purchase barbering kits, cosmetology kits, uniforms, course tuition, course materials, many Skills USA memberships and much more. It is truly an honor to have been awarded this grant and to be able to pass the money onto our students. If you have not yet joined the BEES and you happen to be reading this article, supporting your BEES union means supporting not only yourself, but also your colleagues as well as our students. Together, we can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

# President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

## Union Strong



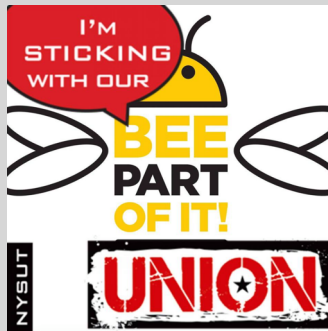
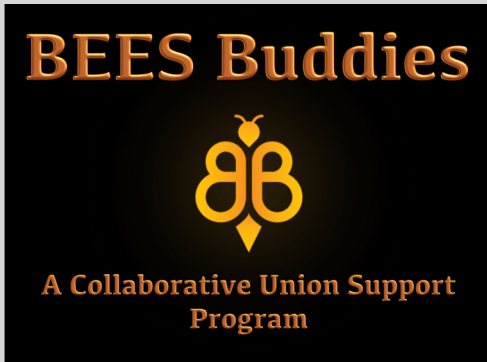
I want to also take a moment to speak to the strength of our Executive Board and our building representatives. We are thankful that each of you has put your trust in us to be leaders in the union. These positions are not easy; they are time consuming and require skill sets and knowledge beyond the classroom. Our building representatives give their time after school and some weekends to receive extra training to ensure that when you need them, they are prepared and ready to help you. Our Executive Board works closely together to make sure we are all aware of situations that need our attention. We meet regularly after school and communicate daily. We are committed and dedicated to doing the best job we can for all of you. Developing the skills takes time, learning the information takes time. At times, members' jobs hang in the balance, where our representation makes the difference. Next year will be an election year for our building reps and E-Board. I am honored and privileged to be your union president, and I intend to continue as long as I have the support of the members. I also recognize that we have building reps and E-Board members who will begin to retire in the coming years. We need younger members who have a selfless interest in union leadership to get involved. The voice of younger members needs to be represented on our leadership teams, and we want to hear you and see you there. I know there is still time until next year, but if you think you might be interested, now is the time to go to your building meetings, watch your building representatives, ask questions and see if it might be something you want to pursue.

Please check the following pages for terrific information from the rest of the Executive Board, all of whom I am grateful to work with. We will also be using a new communications system with Remind. Please make sure you sign up to receive texts from us! The old system is no longer active, so even if you were signed up, you will not get any messaging from us unless you sign up for the new Remind system. Thank you for sticking with the BEES! I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season.

In Solidarity,

*Asha*

# BEE Connected



<https://www.facebook.com/BEES3037>



Instagram - @bocesbees22220

Check our website for updates at [WWW.beesbeacon.org](http://WWW.beesbeacon.org)

**Remind**

Join our new Remind messaging! If you prefer to use the app, search by keyword for your groups. Or you can join for texts only. We have multiple groups set up for more efficient messaging. Please join any groups that pertain to you; you can be in multiple groups.

To join for texting only please text the keyword for your group to the number 81010

#### Keywords

Blue (Teachers, Itinerants, Certificated staff) contract members - @beesblue

Yellow (aides, TAs) contract members - @beesparas

Special Ed. members - @beessped

CTE/SCE members - @beesctesce

Itinerant members - @beesitin

# Politics in Education



## Vote Yes on Proposition 1 Nov. 7!

Voting YES for Proposition 1 corrects a decades-old unjust flaw in our laws. It will ensure that finally, students in New York state's smaller cities receive the same opportunities as those in other districts. Proposition 1 is about correcting a mistake. It's about fairness.

Learn more about [how Proposition 1 supports and strengthens small city school districts](#).

### How Proposition 1 Helps:

- **RIGHTS A WRONG.** No longer treats our state's small cities like second-class citizens.
- **PROMOTES FAIRNESS.** Will finally allow small city districts across the state to operate under the same rules as suburban and rural districts.
- **SUPPORTS STUDENTS & FAMILIES.** Provides PROPER FUNDING LEVELS to 200,000 students across the state.
- **LIFTS UP COMMUNITIES.** Properly funding these schools means entire communities will benefit – not just the small cities themselves, but surrounding towns and suburbs.

# Executive Vice President - Al Rios

## You put the "U" in Union



Welcome to the 2023-2024 School year.

A huge welcome back to all of our seasoned members. I hope you were able to take advantage of your time off and got to spend it with friends and family. I am sure summer break feels like a lifetime ago but just think, Thanksgiving recess is right around the corner.

I would also like to give a warm welcome to all the new BEES Members. Welcome to The BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk and thank you for being a part of the union. Please make sure you reach out to and get to know your building representative if they have not introduced themselves to you yet. They are an integral part of your building and your union. If you have not yet signed up to be a union member, let your building rep. know and they can easily sign you up in minutes.

It's unbelievable that we are almost 2 months into the new school year. My hope is that your year started smoothly and with little to no complications. I know, you are probably rolling your eyes at me right this minute, but please realize that what you do in the classroom will have a profound effect on every student you encounter. Your professionalism, patience and perseverance makes the difference in your students' lives. Yes, you are that important. I am no stranger to the start of a new school year. After 20 years of teaching I have learned that no two years are ever the same. I've come to the realization that there will be highs and lows and challenges around every corner and that every experience I encounter is an opportunity to grow and become better. The greatest lesson I have learned is that with patience and unity we can overcome any challenge that we are faced with. I wish every single member a productive and successful year.

Last year was an important year for all Yellow Collective Bargaining Agreement members. The Yellow contract negotiations team held several ZOOM meetings to discuss and hear our members' concerns and questions. Voting on the contract was even postponed to take into consideration everything our yellow contract members asked for. The negotiations team heard you loud and clear and they worked diligently to try their best to satisfy each member's concerns to negotiate the best C.B.A. they could. The end result was a record seven year C.B.A. with longevity increases as well as contract language changes that were all in favor of our Yellow contract members. This is your E-board listening to you and working hard to get the best CBA they could for you.

# Executive Vice President - Al Rios

## You put the “U” in Union



This year will be an important year for all our Blue contract members as the blue Collective Bargaining Agreement expires at the end of this school year. Members have been invited to partake in several focus groups, over the next couple months. These groups have already begun to meet in person. These meetings will ensure that our members' voices are heard again and their concerns addressed. Our hope is that after the data is collected and the negotiations committee meets and does their due diligence our blue contract members will repeat what our fellow brothers and sisters in the yellow contract encountered. A successful blue C.B.A. negotiation.

Along with being an Executive Vice President, I am proud to be one of your NYSTRS (New York State Teachers Retirement System) delegates. Since becoming a delegate, I have learned The Teachers Retirement system is among the best funded retirement systems in the United States. I have also learned that it is never too soon to make informed decisions about your future at each stage of your teaching career.

I thought I would share some information regarding NYSTRS and the benefits that working and vested NYSTRS members will benefit from belonging to this retirement system.

Our Members must join NYSTRS if they are employed under all of the following conditions:

- As a teacher, teaching assistant, guidance counselor, educational administrator, or any other title covered by this System, and
- By a New York State (excluding New York City) public school district or BOCES and
- Full-time every workday for the full day, as defined in the appropriate contract or job description, through the end of the school year.



# Executive Vice President - Al Rios

## You put the “U” in Union



### New York State Teachers Retirement System (NYSTRS):

**Vision:** To be the model for pension fund excellence and exceptional customer service.

**Mission:** To provide our members with a secure pension.

· Its purpose is to manage the fund from which NYS public school teachers and administrators (excluding those in New York City) receive retirement benefits. Benefits are statutory and paid in accordance with the laws enacted by the Legislature

### Funds to provide benefits are derived from:

**Investments** — Funds are invested in equities, fixed income, real estate and other programs according to an asset allocation policy designed to maximize returns through diversification while limiting risks to the portfolio.

**Employer contributions** — Each participating employer contributes a percentage of its members payroll.

**Member contributions** — Each members contribution is based on the individual tier levels.

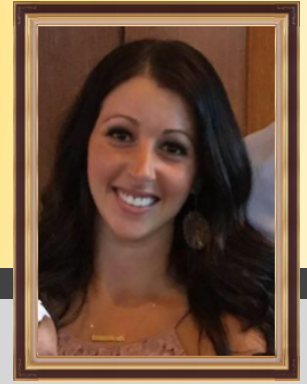
I hope introducing you to NYSTRS informed you and helped you learn a little more about YOUR retirement system. I also encourage you to register for a NYSTRS account and learn more about the benefits by visiting [NYSTRS.org](http://NYSTRS.org)

All the best,

Al Rios



# Executive Vice President - Amanda Pica



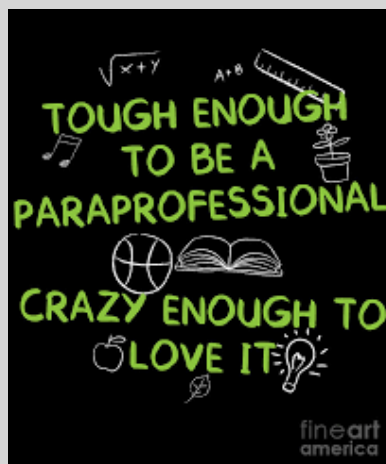
## Better Together

“Coming together is beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is SUCCESS!” -Henry Ford

Success is something I believe our union has achieved this past year. I am proud of the amount of growth and wins our para unit will receive not only this year but over the next few years. It was a long time coming and this is just the beginning!

I would like to Welcome back all of our BEES members, as well as any new members who are joining us this year. I hope you all had a restful summer and enjoyed some much needed time with loved ones. For those of you who don't know me I am Amanda Pica your Executive Vice President. I have been with the agency for over 14 years, a building representative for 6 years and a member of the executive board for the past 6 years. I want to provide you with some resources that you could utilize throughout the year. Please visit [BEESBEACON.ORG](http://BEESBEACON.ORG) to keep up with current information, [NYSUT.ORG](http://NYSUT.ORG) and [AFT.ORG](http://AFT.ORG) will help provide union benefit information. Please remember to familiarize yourself with your building representative and attend monthly meetings as they will be providing each building with the most current and important information. If at any time you need to contact me please email me at [picaparavp@gmail.com](mailto:picaparavp@gmail.com) . I wish each and every one of you a great year!

-Amanda



# Back to school can mean a lot of different things:

- Starting a new career
- Planning for the future
- Balancing work and home life
- Making difficult decisions
- Enjoying your final year before retirement
- Recalling memories of a proud career

Regardless of what you might be doing this fall, **NYSUT Member Benefits** offers a variety of endorsed programs and services that could help make you as prepared as possible for whatever the new school year may throw at you.



Whether you are looking to save money, protect your family, or plan for the future, **NYSUT Member Benefits** is a great place to start. With dozens of endorsed insurance, legal, financial, shopping, travel, and discount programs, you are certain to find something of interest that could benefit you or your loved ones.

And speaking of savings, the **Member Benefits Discounts & Deals** program utilizes the nation's largest private discount network to offer all NYSUT members (both in-service and retiree) exclusive access to savings of up to 50% at 850,000 locations -- including more than 21,200 New York State deals. If you have not already done so, head over to [mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com](http://mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com) to create your account with your NYSUT ID number, preferred email address, and password.

You'll then be eligible to save on restaurant dine-in or take-out, flowers and gift baskets, Bose electronics, clothing and shoes, oil changes and vehicle maintenance, sporting events, hotels and flights, car rentals, theme parks, movie tickets, and much more. Members are encouraged to download the MB Discounts & Deals mobile app for the best user experience with this program.

Check out all your union membership has to offer!

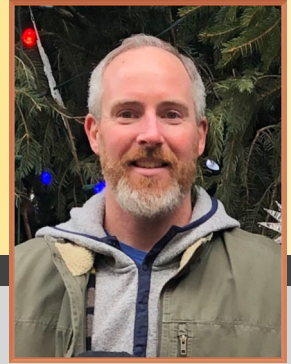


Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left, visiting [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org), or calling 800-626-8101.

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

Sept/Oct. 2023

# First Vice President - Keith Flynn



## Your Voice, Your Union

Hello..... BEES Membership! This year is really moving along. It's hard to believe that Halloween is only a week away and the holiday season is right around the corner. I hope all you families are well and that your school year is off to a great start.

This past September, we had our Opening Day General Membership meeting for the BEES. It was another successful kick off to the school year, followed by the VOTECOPE Raffle. Through the VOTECOPE raffle, 49 VOTECOPE members were able to win a gift certificate. Like in previous years, we were able to stretch that money out by 23% so more members were able to win a gift card. VOTECOPE 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. Please contact your BEES Building Rep. or me if you are interested in becoming a member of VOTECOPE. Congratulations to our winners!

FIX TIER 6-NYSUT is rallying to should 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.

<https://fixtier6.org/>

# First Vice President - Keith Flynn



## Your Voice, Your Union

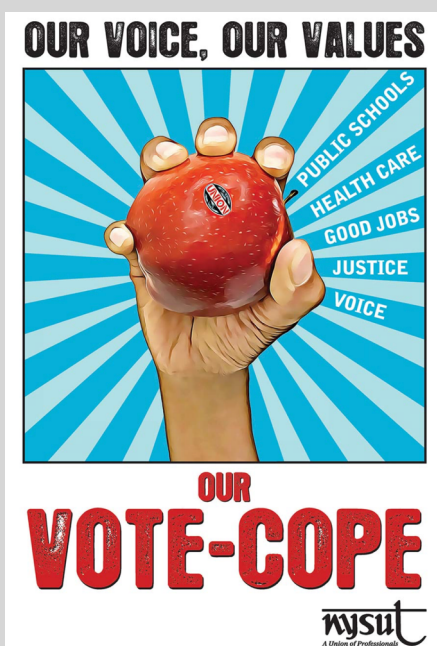
Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)-If you are a teacher or teacher assistant and thinking about retiring under your current contract, I would highly recommend signing up and attending a New York State Teacher Retirement System Prep seminar. These free seminars are invaluable as they provide 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](http://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>

Election Day- November 7th is Election Day this year. Please go out and vote for your voice to be heard. National elections get all the buzz, but our local leaders represent your interests in Albany and Washington!

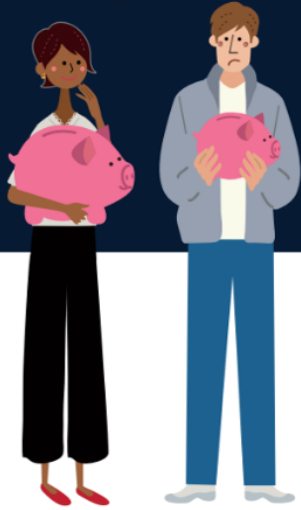
I wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season!

Keith Flynn



Help NYSUT

# FIX tier six



## WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

It's been over a decade since Tier 6 was added to the New York state pension system. Since then, over 100,000 NYSUT members earn a significantly reduced pension as compared to earlier tiers. Consider this:

<b>Tier 6</b> members pay 3 to 6 percent into the pension system their entire career — their contributions grow with pay raises.	<b>Tier 4</b> member contributions are capped at 3 percent and end after 10 years.
<b>Tier 6</b> members must work to age 63, up to 40 years of service, or face heavy penalties.	<b>Tier 4</b> members can retire at 55 with 30 years of service.

## 30 YEARS IS A CAREER!

**Fixing Tier 6 is about keeping talented educators in the classroom and recruiting new educators into the profession.**

Forcing younger members into a lesser pension system undervalues our profession. Our work is important. Our pensions should reflect that.

**Fixing Tier 6 is about unity and power.**

When we stand together in solidarity, we have power. We've made big changes before. We can do it again.

**THANKS TO OUR ADVOCACY, WE'VE ALREADY WON SOME PENSION IMPROVEMENTS.**



In 2022, member vesting dropped from ten to five years, guaranteeing a pension benefit for 85,000 Tier 6 members.

## HOW BAD IS IT?



**Tier 4 member**, retiring at 55 with 30 years, would receive 60 percent of her Final Average Salary.



**Tier 6 member**, retiring at 55 with 30 years, would only receive 26.4 percent of his Final Average Salary — after paying tens of thousands more into the system.

## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

**Fixing Tier 6 is about solidarity and fairness.**

It's unfair that some NYSUT members must work longer, and contribute more, to earn a significantly reduced pension. This should anger ALL union members.

**Fixing Tier 6 is about dignity.**

The hallmark of a public-service career is the promise of a dignified retirement. With Tier 6, the state abandons its commitment to that guarantee.

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

We know how to fix this ... but we can't do it without you. Whether you're a retiree or a Tier 4, 5 or 6 member, you can help NYSUT Fix Tier 6.

- ➔ Join NYSUT's **Fix Tier 6 Team** to help with direct outreach.
- ➔ Share the Fix Tier 6 message with other NYSUT members.
- ➔ Donate to VOTE-COPE, NYSUT's voluntary, non-partisan political action fund. Your donations help us get our message out to lawmakers so we can make change!

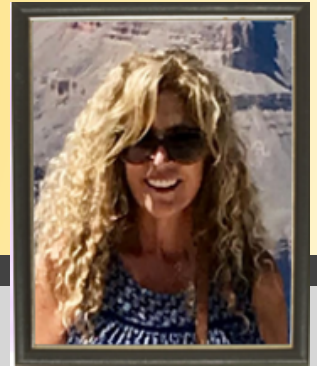


HELP NYSUT FIX TIER 6!



FixTier6.org

# Area VP for Para Educators - Angela Ritchie



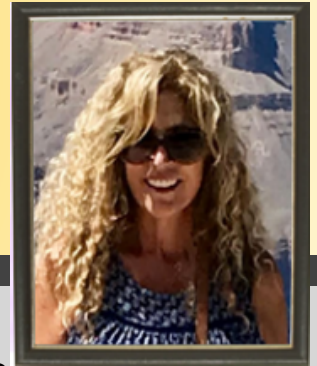
## Amazing SRPs

Dear Fellow BEES members,

Welcome back! I hope everyone is enjoying the fall weather and has acclimated to their buildings and classrooms. We are still waiting for the new contract to be dispersed and unfortunately it is taking longer than we expected. Any questions or concerns you have please reach out to your building rep. The agency has been hiring non-stop and we are hoping that staffing in the buildings picks up. I want to list the NY State guidelines for new Teaching Assistants because they have changed with the new contract. A staff member does not have to have 60 credits to be hired as a Teaching Assistant, however, you must take the TA certification test-ATAS, and the three workshops listed below. If you have never held a New York State Teaching Assistant Certification, you must set up a TEACH account and apply and meet the requirements for a Level I Teaching Assistant certification. Contact NYSED.



# Area VP for Para Educators - Angela Ritchie



## Amazing SRPs

### Teaching Assistant- Level I

- Submit a copy of your high school diploma, high school transcript, or High School Equivalency or
- An official college transcript that includes a degree conferral (Associate's Bachelor's, etc.)
- All documentation must include acceptable identifying information.
- *New York State Teacher Certification Exam-ATAS*
- *Workshop-Child Abuse Identification*
- *Workshop-School Violence Intervention and Prevention*
- *Workshop-Training in Harassment, Bully, Cyberbullying, and Discrimination in Schools: Prevention and Intervention*
- Fingerprint Clearance

### Teaching Assistant-Level II

- In addition to the requirements for the Level I, you must have:
- College coursework-9 semester hours
- *Verified Experience as a Teaching assistant-1 Year*
- A Level II certification can only be issued one time

### Teaching Assistant- Level III

- College coursework-18 semester hours
- *Verified Experience as a Teaching Assistant, or Classroom teacher 1 Year*
- *Citizenship Status-INS Permanent Residence or U.S Citizenship*
- *You must Register on TEACH and complete CTLE hours to maintain your Level III certification within 5 years*

Please be sure to follow the guidelines and if you any questions, again, reach out to your building Rep.

Thank you for being a union member and I hope everyone has a happy, healthy, and successful school year!

Regards,

Angela Ritchie





# Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

## Union Strong All Day Long



Welcome back Bees members. I hope your summer was filled with fun times and you all made fantastic memories. As we begin our new school year, I have been looking back as I am planning to retire in June. When I began my career within this agency, I honestly did not know how much I would love it. After high school graduation I attended Suffolk Community College with the intention of entering the business world. At that time, my mom worked in the data processing department and suggested I start subbing as an aide to make extra cash. In September '87, I began working as a sub at the North Country Learning Center and at Saint Charles. My experience proved invaluable as I was able to see all the parts that make a classroom work. This experience changed the trajectory of my life, and I knew that I wanted to become a teacher. Throughout college I continued to sub, and upon graduation was offered a full-time position at Forest Brook Learning Center. The agency then, is much like the agency today, it is always evolving

and changing. The three programs I began with and loved no longer exist in their original form. The changes made were designed to better meet the needs of the students. Programs branched out and divided and others absorbed into each other becoming one.

When I first began, I automatically joined the union. In 2018, the Janus case changed all that. Individuals now must opt into the union. As of today, 99% of all blue contract members have opted in. In 2011, educators in Wisconsin were not so lucky. Governor Walker dismantled their labor relations system and stripped members of the right to collective bargaining, resulting in losing their contract and its benefits. Currently Wisconsin educators have a two-page contract. Unionization is on the rise. In 2022, more than 16 million workers were represented by a union, this is an increase from 200,000 in 2021. We know that unions fight to raise the wages of their members,

improve members benefits, and workplace procedures. We know that when we stand together as a union member, we are strong.

In June of 2024, our contract ends. We know many members have concerns about the rising cost of living, health care benefits, and how the contract will change. This year, the executive board is spearheading focus groups to allow members to share their concerns and what parts of the contract need revamping. This is difficult work and to be honest not everyone will get what they want. But all

ideas are welcome, and we will do our best to be transparent in the process.

# Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

## Union Strong All Day Long



As we are all optimistic for what the school year will bring, we must recognize that there are challenges many of our classroom face. Currently our biggest challenges are the vacancies throughout the programs and lack of substitutes. On October 12 th , the agency held a job fair in which they hired 75 para educators to be placed within programs of great need. Our union is working with the agency to not only hire new members but retain them. The agency realizes they have a retention issue, and last year they began piloting a co-teaching model within the Premm and Sayville developmental programs. In this model there are two teachers, one assistant and two para educators. This has been a great opportunity, and we are seeing the positive results in Premm and Sayville. This model is now being brought out to Westhampton. This does not solve all the vacancy issues, but it is a step in the right direction. I stated at the beginning of my article that in the past 30+ years in this agency there have been many changes. New ideas brought forwards, program changes and population changes. The one constant is the dedication of the employees. I thank you for your dedication to the union and to the students you serve. We are all better of because of your great work.

Have a wonderful year and thank you.

PS: On Election Day there is a proposition on the ballet. We encourage you to educate yourself on the issues and vote YES for Proposition 1 as it corrects a decades-old unjust flaw in our laws. It will ensure that finally, students in New York state's smaller cities receive the same opportunities as those in other districts. Proposition 1 is about correcting a mistake. It's about fairness.

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*Patti*

# Area VP for Itinerants/SAS - Kristin Ericson Abbruzzese

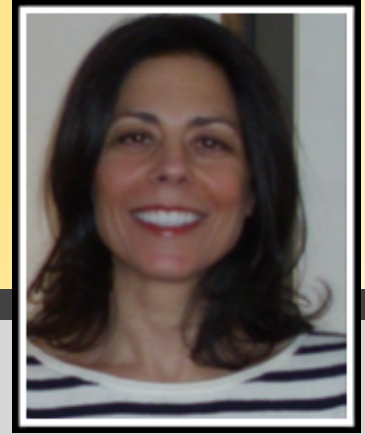


## Incredible Itinerants

Welcome back. I hope everyone has had a great start to the school year and I welcome all the many new social workers, psychologist, speech teachers, itinerants, and special subject members. I know the need to move members due to program changes and needs this school year was at a minimum and some people who have been looking for a fresh start in a different location were able to finally get their wishes this year. Over the last several weeks I have been sitting in on interviews to hopefully fill the growing needs of our programs with new hires which seems to continue throughout the school year. Please keep the union posted should your program need more staff to meet the needs of our students. With that said, please keep your Google schedules up to date so that if there is a need, schedules can be easily referenced to move forward to fill those positions. Also, it is part of our daily responsibilities to keep the schedules up to date and completed. I do hear rumors of the Google schedules being discontinued which is completely false since the audit is still in place. Don't always believe everything you hear.

Some housekeeping issues that I would like to address since many members are concerned about our contract expiring the end of this school year with negotiations starting in the upcoming months. Please note that we have not started any negotiating and we have not "lost" any benefits from our contract. Rumors seem to swirl quickly about benefits being "lost" however benefits are not lost any changes that may possibly happen to our contract moving forward would be voted on by all of you. Please attend your building meetings and keep yourself involved in the upcoming months for any meetings associated with our contract. We have started the focus groups for all parts of the blue contract including the itinerants. We had (16) members attend our first focus group with most buildings being represented. The group looked at specific areas pertaining to their job roles and responsibilities and what they would like on their wish list moving forward towards negotiations. I feel like it was a very productive meeting and we will be holding (2) more meetings in November to streamline the gathered information and data to back up some possible changes to benefit our members. I would like to add that I am very honored to have been selected to serve on the negotiating team with Human Resources for our next contract. I do not believe that this VP position has ever been involved in negotiations so it truly is a testament to having all members heard during negotiations. I strongly encourage all members to get involved on some level with their union.

# Area VP for Itinerants/SAS - Kristin Ericson Abbruzzese



## Incredible Itinerants

I know itinerants often feel they cannot get involved because they may be split between buildings or have moved to a new location however attend the building meetings and run to be the rep. you may be surprised reps may be ready to hand over the responsibility or be close to retirement. I hope you all heard of the new BEES-Buddies program. The Union was able to retain a grant which will be used as another level of support for our members. It is not an elected position and is not a position which has to report to Administration but a role as support for questions members may have and they do not feel comfortable going to a mentor and/or an Administrator. It is a person who has shown an interest in helping others, keeping those members concerns private and also receiving a small stipend. This is not a union position but it is a way for people to get more involved in assisting others and maybe then moving into possibly an elected position. Lastly, when you have to update your license please send a copy of the new license to Jean Christensen by April 1 st or you will not receive the stipend. Last year HR seemed to pay some people on time and others into July please make sure that if you are entitled to this stipend you did receive it. HR does not have to pay out the stipend if they do not have an updated license on file. I want to thank you all for sticking with the UNION. My contact information is [beesvptin@gmail.com](mailto:beesvptin@gmail.com) I am located at Sequoya HS 631-622-1240.



# Area VP for CTE/SCE - Deirdre Pettit

## It's all Personal for Personnel



It's all Personal for the Personnel

It has been about 10 years since I became a building rep over at ICC and this is my second year on the EBOARD. The one theme that has been very clear to me is that I need to see my role through the eyes of all the blue contract members and what is best for all. What is also clear to me is that each member has personal feelings about their position, building, administration, students and contract. I would say the majority do not think about the blue contract on a daily basis-but once it becomes personal they will read every single line of the contract trying to decipher the wording and how it affects them. I am happy to be a part of the negotiating team for the blue contract. I will take on this challenge with my eyes wide open and will seek out feedback and concerns from the focus group that I will be a part of. As I plan on keeping my eye on the prize I will also remember that in order to negotiate what is best for the membership we need to hear from the membership. I urge you all to join the BEES closed Facebook Group and to complete all surveys sent out over the course of these negotiations.

Please speak to your building rep if you have any questions. My email is [dkroupa222@gmail.com](mailto:dkroupa222@gmail.com) please reach out with your concerns. Hope you are all having a great start to your year and before you know it the Holiday break will be here.

Deirdre



# Contractual Benefits Officer - Nick DeBlanco



## It Benefits You to Know

Greetings, BEES Members. The fall weather is upon us, and the leaves are starting to turn. As we move into the holiday seasons it is very easy to forget that we need to take care of some things for the new year.

For instance, it's almost open enrollment, time for you to adjust your medical benefits in terms of who you choose to be your provider and some other adjustments related to medical benefits, including but not limited to adding members to your plan, changing your plan all together, etc. Any adjustments you make during this open enrollment Period will not take effect until the first of the year. There's been some name and branding changes associated with NYSHIP. No affect to your coverage is expected, carry on as you have previously with a new look on your new card. If you have a flex spending account, take a few minutes to review how the last year worked out for you. If you had a lot of money left in your account at the end of the year, you would forfeit that amount, so adjusting down would be in your best interest. If you ran your account dry, you may notice a savings if you increase the amount you withhold for your flex spending account — remember it's your money.

Consider putting a portion of your salary increase towards your retirement account. Even small changes have a big impact overtime. If we were to look back, would we say I should have put that extra fifty or hundred dollars into the account. Here's the chance for you to do that now. Of course, do what makes sense for your family and your finances, but something is better than nothing.

Best wishes for the upcoming holiday season.

Thank you for being a member, our large numbers benefit all of us.

-Nick



# Membership Coordinator - Adrian Grube



## A Happy Hive

Welcome back! I am very excited for the year ahead, I hope you are too. If you have not done so already I want to encourage you to take a look at the NYSUT and AFT websites. Many discounts and helpful resources are available on these websites that most unfortunately do not know about or take advantage of. I would like to take a moment to ask you to learn about the Fix Tier 6 movement. There are many differences between the retirement tiers, this is our opportunity to try and change some of these differences to better retirement for those in Tier 6. I wish all of you a wonderful year and hope to see you!

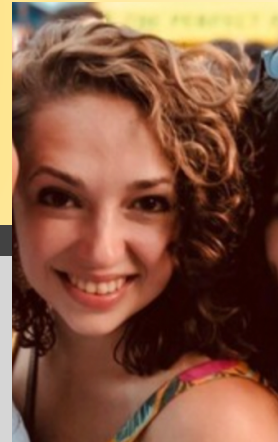
All the best,

Adrian



# Treasurer - Rachael Klahn

## Budgeting the BEES



Hello everyone! I hope you all are enjoying this new school year and are settling in. This year there are some adjustments to the dues schedule in all categories for NYSUT, AFT, and local dues. For any payroll deduction questions, please reference your dues schedule. As a reminder, the dues deductions are withdrawn on the third pay period, which took place in October. The deductions will continue for 18 consecutive pay periods ending in June. A copy of the dues schedule is available on the BEESBEACON.org webpage and is shown below for reference.

I look forward to this year and wish you all a safe, healthy and joyous holiday season!

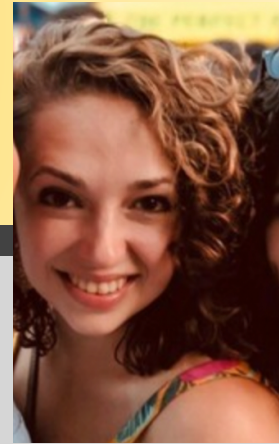
Sincerely,

*Rachael*





# Treasurer - Rachael Klahn



## Budgeting the BEES

### NYSUT/AFT/LOCAL Dues Schedule for 2023-2024 Membership Year

NYSUT (Codes)	Membership Category By Salary Range	NYSUT Annual Per Capital	AFT Annual Per Capital	LOCAL DUES	TOTAL NYSUT/AFT/LOCAL DUES	AMOUNT Deducted per Pay Period (18 Pay Periods)	INCREASE Per Pay Period
(1) Full	\$34,000 and higher	\$386.00	\$242.16	\$366.44	\$994.60	\$55.26	\$0.71
(7) $\frac{3}{4}$	\$25,500 to 33,999	\$289.50	\$121.08	\$224.52	\$635.10	\$35.28	\$0.52
(2) $\frac{1}{2}$	\$17,000 to \$25,499	\$193.00	\$121.08	\$172.32	\$486.40	\$27.02	\$0.41
(5) $\frac{1}{4}$	\$8,500 to \$16,999	\$96.50	\$60.54	\$119.76	\$276.80	\$15.38	\$0.27
(8) 1/8	Under \$8,499	\$48.25	\$30.27	\$38.03	\$116.55	\$6.48	\$0.20
(6)	Unpaid leave Laid-off	\$10.00	\$12.00		\$22.00	\$1.22	-0-
(9) **	Per-Diem Substitute	---	---	---	---	\$.70/day	-0-
(3)	Retirees (pre-funded)	---	---	\$35.00	---	---	-0-
*	Full/Split	\$386.00	\$121.08	\$276.20	\$783.28	\$43.52	\$0.64

**Note:\*** A special split NYSUT/AFT category within Code 1 (Full Dues) exists only if members are earning more than \$34,000 but less than the basic teacher's salary.

\*\*Per- Diem Substitutes dues are \$.70 per day for NYSUT/AFT up to a maximum of  $\frac{1}{2}$  dues. Refer to Membership Reporting & Dues Transmittal Handbook for additional information.

Full Dues Paying Member	2022-2023	2023-2024	Increase
NYSUT	\$378.00	\$386.00	\$8.00
AFT	\$239.76	\$242.16	\$2.40
LOCAL	\$364.24	\$366.44	\$2.20
TOTAL	\$982.00	\$994.60	\$12.60

Proposed income for the 2023-2024 budget is based on an estimated (full)637, (Split)70, (3/4) 614, (1/2)117, (1/4) 3 dues contributions and interest from savings. Active Members + Leave = 1,482 Total Members.

Submitted by the **BEES Budget Committee:**

Asha Mazza Shaw - President, Rachael Klahn - Treasurer, Adrian Grube - Chairperson, Dana Sayers & Victoria Schwartz, Active Members

Dues deductions begin the 3<sup>rd</sup> pay period for (18) consecutive pay periods.

**VOTE/COPE**  
So much to gain, so little to give!  
If you are not a vote cope member, please fill out a card this morning for automatic payroll deduction one time a year of \$12.00(aide) \$25.00(TA) \$50.00(Teacher) donation.

**\*Reminder\*** All up & coming retirees must join the B.E.E.S retiree Chapter in order to retain any insurance you may have through NYSUT.

# Grievance Officer - Dana Sayers

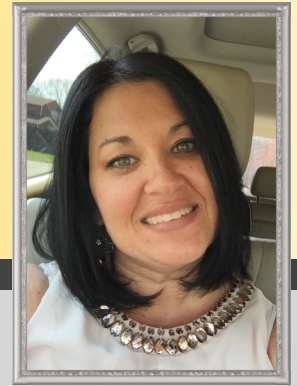
## Starting Fresh



Hope everyone is having a great start to the school year. As the Grievance Officer I encourage all members to read their contract and become familiar with the language. If you feel you have a grievance, please reach out as soon as possible as there are time limits in filing a grievance. Be prepared to share where in the contract you think there is a breach as some concerns are not grievable since they may not relate to the contract language. I can be reached at Sayville Elementary School or by email [danasaybees@gmail.com](mailto:danasaybees@gmail.com). Please reach out if you need anything. Have a great school year!

# Social Chair - Danielle Ibba-Morabito

## Let's BEE Social



HAPPY NEW SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024

I hope everyone is in the swing of things right now. I can't help but think how quickly the first two months of school have passed. For some of us, this school year means new beginnings, whether in a new building or new position or maybe it's your first year with Eastern Suffolk BOCES. Welcome back to all. We have started planning for this new school year please always check out BEES union Website to stay undated with all the great thing your union has to offer. Right now you can find for ticket discounts for Gateway theater and Patchogue theater. Nysut website has so many benefits for you to unitize too.

<http://www.beesbeacon.org>

<https://memberbenefits.nysut.org>

We are very excited to announce that we have a new Venue for our 2024 Honorarium so please save the date for June 13, 2024 at East Wind Catering, Wading River Ny.

\* The loss of a loved one is an emotional time, and one of the worst things we may go through in life. It is with that thought that we would like to reach out to our families in need in a timely manner. There are guidelines for sending out cards or a small token to the family of a member. In the past, I have gotten several requests that I was not able to send out in a timely manner because the guidelines below were not adhered to. Please make sure that you include all of the information listed below so that we may pay our respects to the families in their time of need. Thank you.

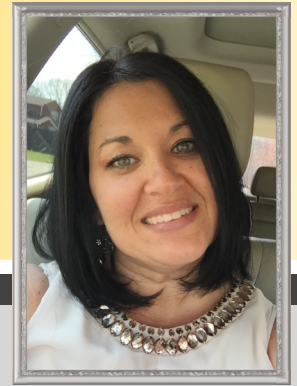
Guidelines for Welfare: A bereavement card will be sent in the event of a member's spouse, parent, child, or sibling's death. In the case of a member passing, special circumstances will then apply. The procedure for a sympathy card to be sent is as follows: Members should contact their building representative as soon as they believe a member meets the above guidelines and a bereavement card should be sent. The building representative then should contact me via email: [daniellesocialchairbees@gmail.com](mailto:daniellesocialchairbees@gmail.com) with the member's name and address and the name and relation to the deceased. In the event it is a member who has passed, I still need their name, and address and also a home or cell number of a member of their family so that we can acknowledge their service with us in a special way. If you need more info, please see your building rep. check out our Bees website or feel free to send an email.

Looking forward to seeing everyone this school year.

*Danielle*

# Social Chair - Danielle Ibba-Morabito

## Let's BEE Social



# Celebrate!



*Save The Date!*

## *BEES Retiree Honorarium*

Honoring all our BEES retirees and their years of  
dedicated service to Eastern Suffolk BOCES

**Thursday, June 13, 2024**

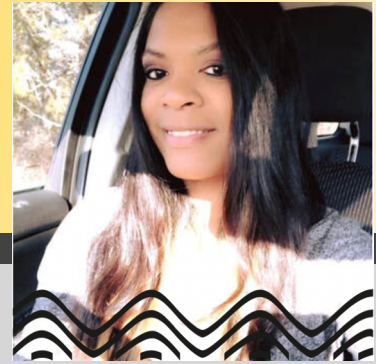
4:30pm - 8:30pm

*East Wind Catering*

5720 Route 25A

Wading River, NY 11792

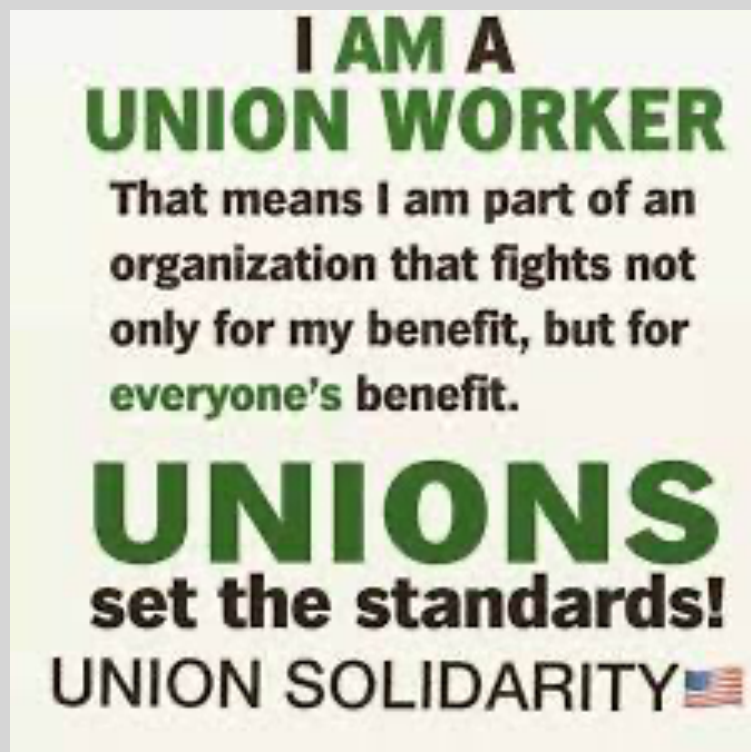
# Recording Secretary - Tiffany Robinson



## Nice Notes

Hello everyone! And welcome to a new school year! I'm hoping that everyone had a happy, healthy summer! It is so nice to walk through the buildings and see everyone's smiling faces now, especially as covid restrictions have eased up. These past couple of school years we have met and been faced with many challenges, but it is nice to now enter the school year on a positive note. I have had the pleasure of working with such an amazing, and hard working E-Board again this year who are always dedicated to their members. Members, remember to always take advantage of available resources and don't forget about all the useful information that is available on the BEES Beacon website. Thank you for standing by your union!!

Tiffany



# Retiree Chapter Chairperson - Terry Kalb

## Radiant Retirees



Hello BEES Retirees and Retirees in Training!

We are so grateful that our BEES Retiree Chapter has a welcome and ongoing connection to our in-service local. My role as your chair and E-Board representative is to bring retiree issues and concerns to our union's decision making processes.

The programs that are so essential to our lives as retirees- Medicare and Social Security, are always in need of protection from those who would love to diminish, privatize or even eliminate them. Please be very careful about supporting politicians who see these programs as budget busters. In fact, they stand alone as self funded through payroll deductions and do not add a penny to any national debt or budget deficit. If the inequitable cap on those payroll deductions for the very wealthiest earners were removed, Medicare would have full funding well into the next century. We could even afford to enhance it with vision, hearing and dental coverage if the cap benefiting only the very rich was removed.

A message for our Florida Retirees and Snowbirds:

RC 43 - the only NYSUT-sanctioned out-of-state retiree council is waiting to welcome you to the Sunshine State. We have an active, dedicated group of New York State retirees who would love for you to join a local Florida unit without losing your membership in your local NY chapters or Retiree Councils.

All units sponsor social activities, meetings with guest speakers, community projects that benefit children, and engagement in non-partisan politics in conjunction with Florida unions.

If you are interested in becoming involved with retired colleagues, even on a seasonal basis, please contact Miriam Hanan, NYSUT Retirees Services Consultant at 516-236-0276 or [miriam.hanan@nysut.org](mailto:miriam.hanan@nysut.org) who will connect you with your local unit representative.

Stay well, and stay connected!  
Terry Kalb  
BEES Retiree Chapter President

# Spotlight on Our BEES Community

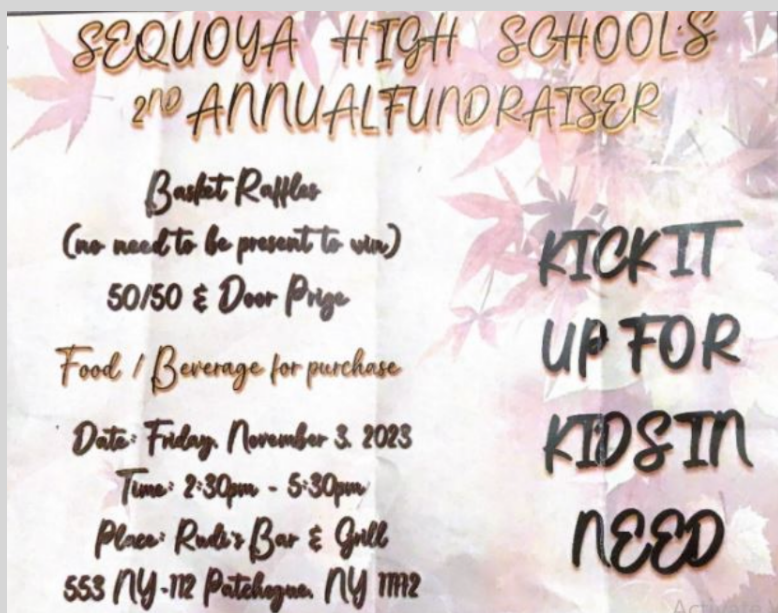
## Fun(ds) and Fur!

### Donna Morey and Lisa Konnerth

Our first two Spotlight candidates for the start of this issue of The BEES Beacon is about giving back and supporting our students, In two completely different ways.

Our first spotlight shines on the Sequoia High School Speech Pathologist Donna Morey. Ms. Morey is organizing the 2nd Annual “Kick It Up For Kids In Need” event. Ms. Morey explained that this is an outside of school event designed to raise money. The money raised from this event is used to support our students with things such as scholarships, school store items, gifts for the holidays and other items that the students earn or need throughout the year..

“Sequoia High School tried this out last year and it was an overwhelming success,” said Ms. Morey. “The staff came together and volunteered their time, energy and money to help out our kids.” Not to mention it gave everyone a chance to socialize, meet some of their colleagues, laugh and just have a great time all while doing something good for “our kids.” It was a win, win for all involved. The money was raised by raffling off some really creative individual gift baskets that were made by groups of staff members and donated to the cause. There was also a 50/50 raffle that also brought in some extra funds for the kids. It was so well received by the staff and such a wonderful way to give back to our students. It was so well received by all parties involved that we decided to do it again this year. The event is open to anyone and everyone, especially our fellow ESBOCES colleagues. So come on down and have some fun and raise some funds for a good cause.



# Spotlight on Our BEES Community

## Fun(ds) and Fur!

### Donna Morey and Lisa Konnerth

Our second spotlight shines on The Islip Career Centers, Canine Careers teacher Ms. Lisa Konnerth. Ms. Konnerth shared that she has a menagerie of animals including sheep, goats, rabbits and a dog ( that will be featured in a later issue of spotlight.) Ms. Konnerth brought in her 5 month old Angora Bunny “Harry Styles” to demonstrate the benefits of an emotional support pet to the students of The Sayville Elementary School. She explained to the students all the responsibilities that come with animals, including providing a clean environment, proper grooming and providing water and food. Ms. Konnerth demonstrated how Mr. Styles loves laying on his back and getting a nice belly rub. She also demonstrated how she takes the fur that came off of Mr. Styles and how she spins it into Angora thread, which mesmerized both the students and staff. The biggest treat was when students sat in a circle on the class carpet and Ms. Konnerth allowed Mr. Styles to hop around in the center of the circle and greet all the students. The students laughed, petted the rabbit and even gave Mr. Styles a big hug.

Studies have shown that Emotional support pets offer a variety of ways to help children, including teaching them empathy, increasing student engagement, improving attendance and reducing anxiety. This was so evident when students were asked, “how did Mr. Styles make you feel?” and some of the responses were; “ It made me feel happy.” “I loved hugging Mr. Styles.” and “I loved feeding and taking care of Mr. Styles.” Sayville Elementary School Special education teacher Laurin Manning says “a fluffy, gentle rabbit really triggers the senses.” Multi-sensory lessons (incorporating touch, sight, smell) can help children learn and is “ideal for students with autism,” she added. A great time was had by staff and students and Ms. Konnerth brought a smile to so many students' faces by sharing her animals.







# **BEES**

## **BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk**

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**Asha Mazza-Shaw - President**  
**Amanda Pica - Executive Vice President**  
**Al Rios - Executive Vice President**  
**Keith Flynn - First Vice President**  
**Angela Ritchie - Area Vice President Para Educators**  
**Patti Richards - Area Vice President Special Education**  
**Kristin Ericson-Abbruzzese - Area Vice President Itinerants/SAS**  
**Deirdre Pettit - Area Vice President CTE/SCE**  
**Rachael Klahn - Treasurer**  
**Nick DeBlanco - Contractual Benefits Officer**  
**Adrian Grube - Membership Coordinator**  
**Dana Sayers - Grievance Officer**  
**Danielle Ibba-Morabito - Social Chair**  
**Tiffany Robinson - Recording Secretary**  
**Dennis Charaton - Webmaster**  
**Terry Kalb - Retiree Chapter Chairperson**  
**Mary Longo - BEES Office Secretary**  
**Asha Mazza-Shaw - BEES Beacon Publisher**

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*NYSUT Local 22-220*  
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*PO Box 434*  
*Farmingville, NY 11738*  
*(631)475-4704*  
*BOCESBEES@gmail.com*  
*www.facebook.com/bees3037*  
*www.beesbeacon.org*

*Proud members of AFT, NYSUT and AFL-CIO*

*The BEES Beacon is the official publication of the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk First Supervisory District*

