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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. Hard to believe we are into April. A rebirth of the end of winter and new life with all growing things. Along with new life comes the first glimpses of what a new normal might look like. Restrictions are being loosened, indoor capacity is being increased and travel restrictions are being lifted to those who are vaccinated. But, we are not there yet. As a result, there will be no end of the year union party to honor the retirees. We just can't risk it and we cannot plan for June with guidelines that do not exist yet. With good fortune and continued government progress, things will return to normal next year.



There is much going on. With the relief bill passed, money is flowing into our schools and local and state governments as well as the release of tens of millions of vaccines per month. The cavalry has arrived. The state budget is not yet set and Governor Cuomo finds himself in a weakened position due to his ongoing sexual harassment investigation. NYSUT is very involved at the state level and continues to advocate for us all. One of the issues not resolved is a state incentive for early retirement. NYSUT is in favor as is the Assembly and Senate. It is not known if it will pass. If it does ES BOCES would have to buy into the incentive in order for it to be available to our members. It is not known what will happen, but don't hold your breath.

Union Strong



We continue to represent our members in all things from remote observations to disciplinary actions. At this stage we do not anticipate any layoffs in September. Retirements and normal attrition should balance the scales.

At this time we have been teaching in person since last July. That is quite a tribute to you, my friends. You continue to bring your best every day when few have been able to manage it. It is you, my friends, who enable this agency to function. The direct instruction staff delivers everything to our students. Without you this agency would not exist. You are the frontline of pandemic teaching and you keep going. What a tremendous professional group of educators you are; wow.

Keep hanging in there. We are in sight of the finish line. I don't know what the new normal will look like but I hope it's a lot like the old normal. Stay vigilant, continue to support each other and take care of yourselves. Stay positive and test negative.

Unity and strength

Jim Beck



Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



Happy spring to you all! During much of this school year, spring seemed so far away. Yet, here it is already: the birds are singing; flowers are blooming and the sun feels warm again. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for helping us get through this extremely challenging school year. As union leaders, we could not do what we do without all of you. Without your voices, we would not be heard. Without your work, we would not be as valued. Without your membership, we would not be united. We have continued to advocate for you and are working on every level within the agency on a daily basis to solve issues that arise at the building level as well as agency wide. If you feel that you have something that should be addressed, please reach out to your building representative who can assist you. If they are unable to assist you, they will reach out to their area vice president who will hopefully be able to help. If need be, any issues that require further intervention are moved up the chain of command to the executive vice presidents and/or the president. Please always know that you can also reach out to those of us who are elected to represent you on the executive board. You can find our emails on our webpage at www.beesbeacon.org. Our page is full of useful information, and I would urge you to stop by once in a while just to see what's new.

The end of the school year is a time for celebration for those who are approaching retirement! While it may be bittersweet, you have certainly earned it! If you are not quite there yet, please consider joining us for one of our retirement workshops hosted by our contractual benefits officer, Nick DeBlanco. The retirement workshops are very informative. You can check our web page or group Facebook page for dates. It is also very important to check your retirement system information. This is not something that occurs to us to do. We complete the general information when we are hired and tend not to look at it again for a long time. Please, make an account with NYSTRS or NYSLRS online, log on and take a look at what information is listed there. Is your information listed correctly? Are the beneficiaries listed correctly? Take a look even if you're years away from retirement--it is good practice to make sure everything is correct within the system. Unfortunately, we are unable to hold our annual Retiree Honorarium again this year due to COVID restrictions. However, we do have special plans to honor all of our amazing retirees! Please take a look at the article from our social chair, Danielle, for more details.

Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



Governor Cuomo recently signed legislation allowing for “up to four hours” to be taken within the work day when an employee has a scheduled COVID vaccination. This applies to BEES members and can be used for both vaccination appointments if you cannot get an appointment outside of the school day. If you need to access this time, please speak with your building administrator about whether or not you will require substitute coverage and be prepared to show proof of your appointment. If you do not need a substitute, then you should not be entering any time into Aesop/Frontline; if you do need a substitute, you should be entering time as professional time. Again, please speak with your building administrators prior to being absent for a scheduled vaccination. This legislation does not currently cover retro-active time taken by anyone who already received a vaccination during work hours and used their banked time. However, the union leadership is advocating for members who were in that position to be given that time back up to four hours. Stay tuned...

The quarantine rules continue to change: maybe you are in favor and maybe not, either way, they change more often than my four year old changes his mind about which superhero is his favorite. The most up-to-date guidelines can be found here: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>. Scroll down to the purple boxes and then click on the one you are interested in for the guidelines. If you have any questions about guidelines or personal situations regarding quarantines, please reach out to your building representatives or feel free to send me an email.

You may have heard by now that the NYS tests have been restored by the Federal Government. This was not originally anticipated, and as a result, NYSUT is spreading the word on opt-out rights for parents and educators. “We have grave concerns that standardized tests at any level can be administered in any sort of equitable way,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango. “While high-stakes tests have never been the best way to measure what students know and are able to do, they are especially unreliable this year when the schools have been offering such a wide variety of in-person, hybrid and remote instruction.”

Executive Vice President - Asha Mazza-Shaw

In Gratitude



You can take a look at NYSUT's opt-out guidance here - for parents: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-opting-out-parents>

for educators: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-opting-out-educators>

SED has continued to push for a waiver, but it is unlikely it will be granted. In the meantime, the

Board of Regents has done what they can to minimize the consequences for opt-outs:

- There are no consequences for students who do not take the grades 3–8 state tests in ELA and math; or grades 4 and 8 science.

- Students receiving remote-only instruction do not need to come to school just to take tests. If parents want their remote-only students to take the tests, they can schedule it with the school.

- The tests will be shorter: There will be no field questions and students will take only one session with multiple choice questions.

- The grades 3–8 testing window will be expanded to provide more flexibility for districts. ELA exams will be administered between April 19–29, and math assessments are slated May 3–14. Students receiving hybrid instruction can take tests on the days they ordinarily attend. Schools will not be required to test the entire grade on the same school day.

- Unlike previous years, there is no threatening funding fallout for districts with high opt-OUT rates this year. The U.S. Department of Education is waiving the 95 percent participation rate requirement, and the state's accountability system is placed on hold.

- SED has canceled all high school Regents exams not required by the federal government. The only Regents exams that will be administered are English Language Arts; Algebra I; Living Environment and Physical Setting/Earth Science.

- Regents exams will not be required for high school graduation. Students must only pass their courses to get credit toward Regents diplomas.

I wish you all a healthy and happy spring, and I thank each and every one of you for your support and your membership.

In solidarity,

Asha

Executive Vice President - Al Rios



Better Together

Here we are seven months into one of the most unique, challenging school years we have all ever encountered. We are all doing an amazing job staying safe, healthy and doing our very best to provide our students with an exceptional education under one of the most stressful and unpredictable times in our career with only three months to go.

Congratulations to everyone, because we are doing it. We stayed the course, we overcame obstacles, we faced uncertainty and disappointment and we supported each other, and because of that we will get through this year.

Our success is due to our positivity and support for each other. As our year slowly comes to an end we need to continue to help and support each other, we need to remain positive and look forward to better times.

If there is one thing I have learned throughout my many experiences in the various careers I have embarked on is that there is nothing more important than staying positive, being supportive of your colleagues and learning how to find a balance in life between the stresses and pressures of work and life outside of work.

Your work environment impacts your mood, drive, mental health and performance; this is why I encourage everyone to help create a positive environment. Feel encouraged to get to know your coworkers, foster an environment that is fun and inspires collaboration. You will be amazed at the benefits that this state of mind creates. When everyone is working together to solve problems and be more efficient, you are able to get things done faster with less stress. Collaboration and communication ensures that everything moves smoothly and in the right direction.

Executive Vice President - Al Rios



Better Together

I would like to leave you a few facts that I have learned about in the articles I have read that pertain to the power of positivity.

- Positivity improves your skill set - The power of positive thinking makes you better at your job.
- Positivity helps you live longer - The participants of this study were aging nuns, some of whom were positive and upbeat and others less so. The scientists found that the nuns who expressed more positive sentiments lived longer lives than those who expressed negativity.
- Positive work environments encourage increased productivity - A work environment that employees are excited to be a part of has shown to foster employees that are happier with their jobs which translated to exceeded expectations. Research shows that a happy workplace results in a 12 % spike in employee productivity. Conversely, the same study revealed that unhappy workers are 10% less productive.

So, continue to do the amazing work you all do, spread positivity, support each other and lend a hand when you are able to. Together we will come out of this stronger, wiser and healthier. I wish you all the very best and thank goodness that we can finally see a light at the end of this tunnel.

AI



Legal or financial concerns?

NYSUT Member Benefits can help

Whether it's assisting NYSUT members with everyday essentials, important choices about insurance needs, or making prudent decisions about financial and legal concerns, NYSUT Member Benefits can help.



Scan the QR codes below to learn more about the following endorsed programs and services.

Legal Service Plan: For a low annual price, our Legal Service Plan provides unlimited toll-free legal advice; a simple will, health care proxy, living will and power of attorney; and guaranteed maximum fees for many legal matters. If a NYSUT member who is a current participant in the Legal Service Plan passes away due to COVID-19, the law firm of Feldman, Kramer & Monaco has offered to extend a number of services at no cost to the member's family.



SCAN ME

Financial Learning Center: We recently contracted with popular financial publisher Kiplinger's Personal Finance for our new Financial Learning Center. This interactive microsite offers numerous articles on a wide variety of financial topics, including selecting the best value in tax planning software and more. No matter your point in life or financial situation, you are sure to find something of interest.



SCAN ME

Mid-Island Mortgage: With our UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program presented by Mid-Island Mortgage, NYSUT members receive special purchase and refinancing mortgage discounts for a variety of home-related needs. Whether you're looking to buy a home, lower your mortgage payment or planning a home improvement project, Mid-Island Mortgage can help you save up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs.



SCAN ME

Cambridge Credit Counseling: Our program with Cambridge Credit Counseling can assist NYSUT members with better understanding their student loan re-payment and debt consolidation options. NYSUT members can receive a no-cost, no-obligation, consultation with a Cambridge certified counselor. Cambridge is also the provider of NYSUT's Student Loan Debt Webinars.



SCAN ME

NYSUT Member Benefits offers dozens of programs and services that are available to NYSUT members and their families, including the following options:



DINING & SHOPPING DISCOUNTS



TRAVEL & TOURS



CAR & TRUCK RENTALS



LIFE INSURANCE



AUTO & HOME



LONG-TERM CARE & DISABILITY

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org, call 800-626-8101 or scan the QR codes above.

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

First Vice President - Ray Stenberg

Happy Spring



After a long, snowy winter, we can finally say that spring has arrived. As the sounds of buzzing landscaping equipment, loud car mufflers and chirping birds are heard, we can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. Some of us will be retiring at the end of the year and others will be celebrating the completion of yet another year at Eastern Suffolk BOCES. Either way, the chill of winter has subsided and the snow shovels can be packed away. However, that does not take away the fact that we are still struggling with the impacts of COVID-19 which have caused widespread pain and distress to so many of us. During these harrowing times, our members have come to work each and every day to provide our students with high quality education and the related services that they require to attain success. I am in awe of the work that I see happening throughout this agency.

This past week, I attended a NYSUT meeting in which the President, Andy Pallotta addressed the audience with candidness and honesty. He talked a lot about us and how we are the union and that we chose to be in the union. We made a conscious decision to realize that our union is strong and that each and every one of us is the union. He was proud of the fact that we didn't let the Janus case destroy us and that last year only 15 members out of 675,000 members opted out of the union. That is an incredibly low number! Remember, your dues provide you with a rich contract that contains benefits that easily exceed the cost of the annual dues. If we commit to being members of our union, we will succeed. If we don't, we will be defeated.

It was also pointed out that NYSUT is extremely pleased with the budget that the two houses have agreed upon. Foundation aid to our districts is finally happening. This is something that we have been lobbying for this for many years. Under this plan, \$4 billion dollars will be provided to districts across the state over a period of three years. This will be extremely helpful to the school districts throughout the state. As you know, sending students to BOCES costs money and when districts have money, our enrollments rise.

First Vice President - Ray Stenberg

Happy Spring



Vaccines are becoming more and more available, and as a result, many of our members have become fully vaccinated. Administrators have been flexible in accommodating those who have been given appointments during their working hours. Issues pertaining to quarantines and use of accrued time are being handled as quickly as possible. Please be patient with Human Resources as they work through this challenging issue that we are all facing. These are fellow employees who are working very hard.

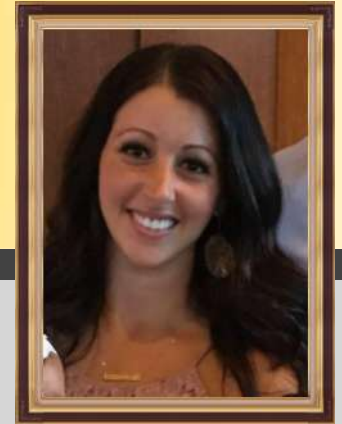
Thanks to all of our members who stepped up to the plate and participated in the virtual BOCES Advocacy Day. As different as it normally is, it was nice to not have to get up at 4:00AM in the middle of the winter for the trek up to Albany. Once again, our students shined. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine from Western Suffolk BOCES texted me at the end of a meeting and said, "YOUR STUDENTS ARE AWESOME" It made me realize how proud I am of the work that we do on behalf of kids. Your union thanks you and we appreciate your willingness to help support BOCES initiatives. I also want to thank all of our members who supported VOTE-COPE this year. State-wide, VOTE-COPE took in \$12 million dollars in voluntary contributions. This money is used to support candidates who are on our side and who have a proven track record of voting pro-education and pro-labor bills. The one time a year payroll deduction is money well spent. Job well done.

On that note, I wish you all a very happy spring. Summer is quickly approaching.

Ray

Area VP for Para Educators - Amanda Pica

Here Comes the Sun



As we peek around the corner to the onset of warmer weather I encourage all of you to take some time for yourself and enjoy a little fresh air. These last few months have been extremely challenging. One can only hope that we are rounding the corner of this pandemic. I hope some of you have been able to see loved ones that you have been separated from for quite some time. There is no better feeling than the presence of those we love. This is the time of year where some of us are preparing to end our career at Eastern Suffolk BOCES and begin a new chapter in life. Now is the time to look ahead and make sure you have taken the necessary steps towards finalizing your retirement with BOCES. Here are some important numbers and/or websites.

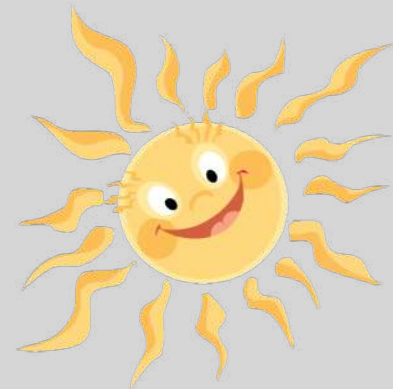
<http://www.nystrs.org>

NYS Teachers Retirement System: 1-(800) 348-7298

<http://www.web.osc.state.ny.us>

NYSLRS: 1-(866) 805-0990

Our E-Board has continued to work tirelessly to ensure the best for all of our members. Please feel free to always reach out for guidance, encouragement, or just a friendly hello. We are in this together and will come out stronger in the end. Stay Well



Amanda



Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

Because of You



What a year it has been! Last March this country faced a global pandemic of epic proportions. As educators, it seemed as if each day a new challenge was placed upon us. But being the dedicated staff we are, we rose to the occasion. We navigated Zoom, synchronous teaching, virtual teaching, and having to immediately quarantine and begin teaching virtually. Although the pandemic seems to be improving, one year later, we are still dealing with challenges.

Over the past months, the union has worked closely with the agency to help its members be able to work from home while on quarantine. This is especially valuable for members who have had to quarantine multiple times.

For many, the most current challenge is finding available vaccine sites. Our union has worked diligently on the Closed Facebook Group to keep you informed with the most current agency information. And many of our members have helped with providing information about where to find an appointment.

This week, Governor Cuomo passed legislation allowing staff to receive up to 4 hours of time to get vaccinated during the work day. We encourage all members, if possible, please plan your appointment later in the day, as to not disrupt the classroom. For members who have already been vaccinated, there are questions about whether or not you will be reimbursed for your time. Please refer to the email that was sent out by Dr. Gergis and send in the information requested. We are working with the agency and we will provide updates as we

Area VP for Special Education - Patti Richards

Because of You



Across this nation teachers and the teacher's unions are under intense pressure for not wanting to return to unsafe classrooms. As educators, we know the best place for a student to learn is in the classroom. This past week the New York State United Teachers launched a \$1 million television and digital advertising campaign drawing attention to the critical safety guidelines that schools need to follow as they reopen more classrooms for in-person learning.

We are fortunate that our union fought to ensure we had proper PPE and ventilation in our buildings. So that when we returned to in-person learning we were guaranteed that both staff and students were in the safest environments possible.

As always, I stand as a proud educator of ESBOCES, because of all of you. Your support for education was evident with how many of you "Wore Red for Education." It is a privilege to represent you on the executive board. Should you ever have a question or issue, reach out to your building representative who will in turn reach out to the correct board member who can help.

I hope you all have a wonderful spring.

Patti



Area VP for Itinerants/SAS - Kristin Ericson Abbruzzese



Reaching Out

HAPPY SPRING TO ALL. What an accomplishment to all of us. It is March and we have weathered some tough days, we are moving into the fourth quarter of a year filled with many unknowns. I imagine every day brings its own challenges and many of us go home exhausted, but it is an accomplishment that has been priceless for our students and their families. I do encourage everyone to take some time to recharge your batteries. Do something that you enjoy and that lowers your heart rate. Enjoy the warmer weather with a long walk, a jog or some outdoor spring cleaning. Please continue to read the emails sent from Human Resources and Dr. Lutz regarding the ongoing updates with COVID, the Department of Health and the CDC. As the rate of infection goes down, more people get vaccinated and the spring weather rolls in these updates seem to happen more often. Please remember as employees of ESBOCES we must follow all of the guidelines put forth. As we enter the fourth quarter just a few things to remember, first please make sure you complete your 15 hours of professional development and complete the required paperwork on time. It is not HR's responsibility to reach out to you to remind you of this. Second, send in a copy of your license when you renew it. You are required to keep your license up to date in your professional area. Third, for related services and itinerants it is your responsibility to make sure you send in your schedule every quarter or when you have made a change to it. And finally, know your contract. What is in your contract are the benefits we have earned and some of our responsibilities to ESBOCES as employees.

I am including in this article the contact information to our benefits officer, Nick Deblanco, since he is versed in our contractual benefits; should you have any questions or concerns his email is Beesebo@gmail.com I urge you to reach out for yourself and not just gather information from coworkers who may have had a similar situation as each person's situation could be very different. I encourage 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 beesypitin@gmail.com and at SHS, 631-622-1227. I will be holding a meeting on April 21, 2021 @3:30 via Zoom link to follow. Be Safe....

Kristin

Union Roots



As our country copes with the most severe worldwide public health crisis of our lifetimes, complete with dramatic economic consequences, BEES CTE teachers have needed to abruptly transition their lessons from physical classrooms to distance learning platforms, sometimes at a moment's notice.

Know that your BEES Executive Board has been on the frontlines fighting for its members and has not missed a beat. There is no issue too small to be considered. As the crisis has unfolded, your Executive Board has played a key role in negotiating additional protections for our members.

As human beings we seem to be more vulnerable than ever before. Physical distancing cannot and should not mean professional isolation. Just the opposite: We need to start by supporting each other, our students, and their families. As we work together, we not only need to focus on student learning, but also on the overall well-being of our colleagues through empathy, honesty, and generosity.

In a time when unions are often under verbal attack, spread the word about how unions have protected older people through pension and health care, how unions have done a lot of good in communities and done it very quietly and, how without a lot of glamour and a lot of attention, they are taking care of people in your own community.

I am proud to be a member of this BEES Executive Board and take pride in all we do to protect the contract and our members. You too, should be proud of your union roots, your union work and your union.

Rosaria



Contractual Benefits Officer - Nick DeBlanco



It Benefits You to Know

Happy spring fellow B.E.E.S. members. With all the renewal that comes with spring and the good news that seems to be happening on the virus front, I would like to share a few things unrelated to viruses and pandemics with you.

Let us begin with your retirement. During the next few months, take some time to reorganize and reallocate your retirement savings plan. One of the great tools at your disposal is the financial planning program at NYSUT. A reasonable yearly fee puts you in touch with a live person for a set amount of sessions that will give you specific insight into how, when and why you should be making changes to or sticking with your current plan. The NYSUT plan and the administrator of that plan sell no investment devices nor work on commission. They are strictly a financial plan that you can bring to any commercial trading platform or retirement account and implement that plan with confidence. Stacey Braun and Associates are the financial counseling program facilitators and can provide a great start towards getting you financially straight and on the path to a great retirement. If you haven't done so already go to nysut.org and login or sign up. The financial counseling program is just one of many opportunities available.

When you visit the NYSUT website you will see tabs on the top for insurance, learning, shopping, travel, personal, legal, financial etc. There is a ton of information and some of it is exactly tailored to your lifestyle.

Did you know that your union membership comes with so many perks? Try signing up for the member alert program (MAP); this will send relevant emails or other alerts about the benefits that matter most to you.

**UNION
STRONG
UNION
PROUD**

Contractual Benefits Officer - Nick DeBlanco



It Benefits You to Know

Some of you may be struggling with financial woes, and other financial pressures because of the recent events. You may want to investigate the debt counseling program or also the student loan counseling program or maybe one of the banking programs associated with your union membership. If you're not sure about how your 403B is apportioned there's even assistance for that. You will also find many retailers under the shopping tab that offer discounts with proof of your union membership!

Your membership in the union connects you with colleagues and peers that have similar interests and lifestyles. The New York State United Teachers has more than 600,000 members and the American federation of Teachers has 1.7 million members; we are a force to contend with. Some call it a crowd or maybe even a mob, but certainly we are not ignored or pushed aside.

If you find a great resource and would like to share, let me know, I will put in other newsletters and on our home page for others to view.

Please Remember, it benefits you to know and it benefits us all when we share.

Happy Spring,

Nick



Membership Secretary - Lisa Mongiello



A Happy Hive

Hey fellow BEES members! As I write this, I can't believe we are preparing to enter the 4th quarter of this school year. It is great to see the sun's return, the flowers, and the green in the trees and on the ground. I know this year has been a tough one for many of our members as we navigated our way through a whole new way of working with our students and adjusted to many new routines and procedures. This past year I have been so proud to have the opportunity to serve on the executive board alongside an incredible team. As a union member, I hope you have felt the impact of our efforts and found the information you have needed easy to locate when you have needed it. I'd also like to remind you to use your PPD (Personal Pandemic Day) if you have not done so already since it will expire at the end of this school year and will not rollover.

For newly hired staff, they must recognize that they are not entitled to union benefits until they become members. Our building union representatives have been an incredible help in assisting new hires in navigating this process. I would encourage all our members to share the benefits of being in the union with newly hired staff because together, we are stronger. Newly hired staff will receive an email invite to join the union, which is sent to the personal email they used during their application process with Human Resources.

Once accessing the email and using the link provided, enrollment is immediately processed once a few pieces of information are completed. If a staff member is enrolling using paper applications provided by their building union representative, the enrollment process usually takes up to 2 months. I am always available by email to assist with enrollment questions and procedures.

I am placing a guide to access your NYSUT member benefits below. There are many great savings and opportunities available to you as a union member. I personally have used discounts on auto and homeowner's insurance, and the MetLife dental plan. There are also discounts for travel, shopping, pet insurance, legal and financial needs, and so much more. I highly encourage you to explore the benefits available to you as a union member!

Membership Secretary - Lisa Mongiello



A Happy Hive

As we enter warmer weather and the last quarter of our school year, I hope everyone stays safe and healthy. Don't forget to take care of yourself and enjoy time with your loved ones. In addition to our Employee Assistance Program, union members can access NYSUT Social Services at 518-732-6239 or email socialservices@nysut.org. All calls are confidential.

Thank you for your membership and for sticking with our union!

In Solidarity,
Lisa



1. Go to www.nysut.org

2. Click on "For Members"

3. Click on "NYSUT Member Benefits"

Member Login

Member Guide

ELT: Education & Learning Trust

NYSUT Member Benefits

Fact Sheets

Retirement Planning

Social Services

Publications Ordering

Career Center

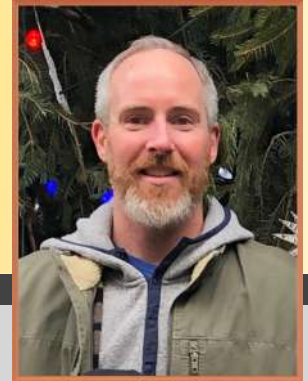
Next Generation NYSUT

Our voice
Justice
Public Schools

We fight for your profession, your rights and your benefits.
These are our union's core values.

OUR VOICE
OUR
UNION
OUR VALUES

Grievance Officer - Keith Flynn



Your Voice, Your Union

I would like to start off by wishing you a happy spring. I know we are looking forward to some sunshine, a relaxing spring recess and a more positive 2021. The rollercoaster ride of 2020 continued right into the start of the New Year; with the siege of the US Capitol, vaccine supply issues, cancellation of scheduled vaccine appointments and new strains of the virus in the UK and South Africa being identified in the U.S. But, with spring arriving and more vaccination sites available to inoculate the population, there is hope we can one day return to pre-pandemic lifestyles.

At times, it's challenging to have happy thoughts with heavy hearts. Many of us are fatigued, frustrated, have experienced loss, overwhelmed, and flat out done with the virtual learning model. Every position within the school is working harder to help educate the students and to maintain a healthy and safe environment. The pandemic has taught us all one thing that we as educators already know, you cannot replace the school experience with a computer. Students need to attend school to not only learn academic skills, but to learn about structure, conflict resolution, peer mediation, soft skills and the list goes on and on. There may be some success stories with virtual learning, but ultimately most would agree that students need to be in-person learners. And, it's especially true for the special education population.

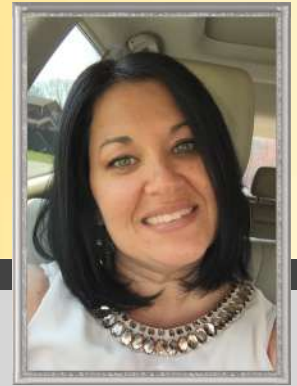
The union is your voice and support system to help during challenging times. The Executive Board and the building representatives have been tirelessly working to get the information out to the members as the information has frequently changed. From the FFCRA Leave, to N.Y.S. COVID Leave, to DOH quarantine changes, to changes in quarantine when travelling out of state, and the list goes on and on. The communication between the E-Board and the building reps. is an intricate part of making sure our members feel supported. Whether the information has come from NYSUT or negotiations between the BEES and Hines, your voices have been heard. During the challenges that we have all faced and seen, the support of working together is paramount.

Lastly, as people become vaccinated and with improvement in treatment options for COVID-19 patients, there is hope for optimism in 2021. But, we will continue to fight COVID-19 and fight to support our union members.

I wish you and your family a wonderful spring.

Keith

Social Chair - Danielle Ibba-Morabito



Let's be Social(ly Distanced)

Hi everyone,

Due to the pandemic this year we had to cancel again the 2021 BEES Retiree Honorarium. Although this is sad news, we do not want you to think we forgot about our amazing retirees. The union would still like to honor all the years of dedication you have shown Eastern Suffolk BOCES and the BEES throughout your years of service by sending a gift to your home by mail. You will also be gifted your first year of dues to the BEES Retiree Chapter run by Retiree Chapter Chair, Terry Kalb. To those members of the BEES that are retiring, we wish you a happy and healthy retirement. We, of course, welcome your membership under your new hard earned title of "retiree". Keep a look out for the retiree gift that will come in the mail!

We also hope that many of you got to enjoy some give aways each building was sent to distribute. We just wanted to make you smile and I hope it worked. Please free feel to always email with new ideas.

**If you purchased Ducks ticket last year and did not get you refund you will get a voucher. That means for folks who purchased tickets last year, will receive a voucher that will allow them to select any game they want on the schedule in exchange for the tickets they purchased for last year. The Ducks Stadium will be opening with limited seating hopeful by May 28th. Feel free to reach out to the Ducks Group Sales Manager Sean Smith 631-940-3825 ex. 108

Welfare:

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 should contact me via email at daniellesocialchairbees@gmail.com with the member's name, address as well as the name and relation to the deceased. In the event it is a member that has passed, I still need their name, address and 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 information, see your building rep, check out our BEES website or feel free to send me an email. My email address is: daniellesocialchairbees@gmail.com

Have a great, healthy, and safe spring,

Danielle

Retiree Chapter Chairperson - Terry Kalb



Retiree Chapter News

Hello Retirees and those expecting to retire this school year! In this pandemic year, most of us have been focused on when and how to get scheduled for COVID vaccinations, and talking about which ones, and any side effects, and the joy of being able to plan safer visits with our families and fully vaccinated friends.

For those of us approaching Medicare eligibility or already on Medicare, we were startled by the letter from BOCES HR explaining a new change in Medicare premium reimbursements. Beginning in 2022, instead of quarterly reimbursements for the premiums, the agency planned a switch to annual reimbursements, with the first one to be scheduled for May of 2023 for calendar year's 2022 premiums. That would have been a very long wait. NYS civil service law mandates that NYS reimburse NYSHIP enrollees for those premiums every year, but the schedule allowed gives the managing agency (Eastern Suffolk BOCES in our case) up to a year afterward to pay the reimbursement. Those on the East End Medicare Advantage plan also get these reimbursements. While there are school districts paying quarterly like ESB, many have switched or are planning to switch to an annual schedule. Fortunately for us, our BEES union was able to negotiate a somewhat faster turnaround and an expedited paperwork process. It is our understanding that our first annual reimbursement will now come in late January or early February of 2023 for the 2022 year of premiums, and that IRMAA (the income related annually adjusted surcharge for higher income seniors) reimbursement will now come with the premium reimbursement instead of separately in May as it does now. We await the details in a new letter from ESB this month that will outline the new negotiated schedule and paperwork process. Any questions? Send me an email. It's complicated, I know! We hope to hear soon that the NYS Legislature's budget which as of now DOES include funding for IRMAA reimbursement (not included in the Civil Service Law that covers Medicare premiums) and the full Medicare premium reimbursements will be approved by the governor, and that our Vote Cope dollars did the job they are intended to do!

I do have some sad news to share with you. Mary Harris, a former ESB Social Worker, BEES building rep, and Former Retiree Chapter President, passed away peacefully on March 27th, surrounded by her family. Mary was an inspiration to so many of us who worked beside her. May her kind and giving spirit be a treasured memory to her family and friends.

Terry Kalb

BEES Retiree Chapter President
terrykalb@yahoo.com

Spotlight on Our BEES Community



Melissa's Vineyard

Welcome back to our Spotlight on our Bees Community member segment.

I was excited about this member of the BEES Community because it has to do with one of my favorite past times, spending time at the north fork Vineyards and drinking wine! I have the pleasure to introduce one of our hardworking social workers Melissa Ryan. Melissa has been a member of our BEES community since 2002 and I love the story Melissa tells us about how she ended up in the beautiful North Fork of Long Island. Melissa started by telling me that when she and her husband Jim, first married, they were working and living in Brooklyn. However, they knew that was not the place they wanted to live for very long. They wanted wide open space for the children they may have and definitely had the American dream of owning a home. They weren't sure where it would be, but she knew she couldn't live far from her family on Staten Island and her husband knew he couldn't live too close. Melissa, her husband Jim and their four month old son Joseph eventually settled on the North Fork of Long Island in a little hamlet called Aquebogue. Four years later they welcomed their second child James and four years after that Jim planted his first garden: a half-acre of French Merlot vines. Yes, they were starting their own Vineyards! It sounds like a breeze but Melissa and her husband learned that starting a vineyard is very tedious.. You need patience, research and lots of painstaking hard work. There were times of heartache and disappointment but after eight years of dedication their young vineyard finally produced a grape that could be made into wine. All the pruning and research about what pesticide to use so the grapes wouldn't cause their children to grow a third eye was worth it. Their vineyard was actually becoming a reality. Melissa went on to say how wonderful it was to meet local vineyard owners and to meet and discuss grape growing and wine making with the local vendors. She said, looking back at it all, I wouldn't change a thing, it has been a fabulous and welcoming experience that she is so glad she had the opportunity to share with her family. We love the community we have found and look forward to living many more years on the North Fork.

Their 2020 crop was a banner crop, probably because of all the time spent at home nurturing the vines. It was a family affair this year as well, as the boys who are now much older help out maintaining the vineyard by pruning and straightening out the vines. It was a good way to get the kids out of the house during quarantine. Her younger son James says he experienced a Zen-like feeling in the garden; while Joseph, not so much. They haven't tasted the fruits of their labor yet because it will take a few more months to ferment, but the grape juice was superb. It was so good that Jim wants to make the whole 2021 crop Merlot grape juice, but Melissa is not so sure about that.

Spotlight on Our BEES Community

Melissa's Vineyard



Spotlight on Our BEES Community



Ms. Kitty's Pigeon and Dove Rescue

Compassion is a quality we see in many members of our BEES community and this next member is no different. Social Worker Kitty Lebens is a true animal lover; interestingly enough it was one of her former students from the 90's who knew of Ms. Kitty's love of animals and asked her for her help in aiding back to health a young pigeon he found wandering aimlessly in a supermarket parking lot, that was the beginning of a pigeon rescue that Ms. Kitty dedicates countless hours and effort to up to this day. The small selfless act of compassion and love of animals from that student encouraged Ms. Kitty to study and learn more about helping our feathered friends. She established her own loft where she would hone her skills in rehabilitating and helping injured or sick pigeons in distress. Later, local animal rescue organizations such as Strong Island Rescue and Sweetbriar Nature Center learned by word of mouth that Ms. Kitty was a valuable resource which they could count on when they came across one of these interesting birds in distress. Ms. Kitty has been known to hand feed and nurture baby birds to adulthood and bring sick or injured birds back to health. She shared with me that a majority of the outcomes are positive but of course there are times when the birds are too sick or injured that she cannot save them, but she always makes sure they are comfortable and cared for in the best possible way. She also remarked that she has even had the good fortune to be able to return banded pigeons, from local pigeon fancier clubs back to their homes and fellow feathered friends. Needless to say, Ms. Kitty's small scale pigeon rescue efforts which started with her helping a student, continue to this day. Ms. Kitty shared with me that the pigeons bring plenty of joy and novelty to her and those who encounter them and it feels good to help her winged friends in some small way!

Fun facts: Pigeons are unique because they are "resident birds". which means they tend to stick with their home and return to it, like a cat or dog, when let out. When tame, they interact socially with humans, also like other household pets. The terms "Pigeon" and "Dove" are synonymous.

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





BEES

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