Buffalo School Board Election Is a Priority

May 7th.

It may not sound like a notable date to you, but to Buffalo Teacher Federation members, this date is incredibly important.

On May 7, all nine seats on the Buffalo school board will be decided at the polls. The new Board of Education will be seated July 1 and will be the board that makes many decisions that will affect every employee and family in Buffalo Public Schools.

The Board’s nine members consist of six district seats (North, East, West, Park, Central, and Ferry) and three at-large seats for which no incumbents are running. Only registered voters who live in the designated district may vote in that district, but every registered city voter may cast a vote for each of the at-large seats. With more than 2,000 teachers residing in the city, our votes can help elect the best candidates, those who support public education.

Who are the best candidates? The BTF’s Political Action Committee has a vetting process to help determine which candidates are supportive of public education and will work to ensure the success of our schools.

Without question, some candidates in the race will be backed by Reform Ed and other pro-charter groups looking to undermine our contract and create more charter schools. The BTF has long been critical of the way charter schools are funded as they siphon millions of dollars from BPS and often do not serve the area’s highest needs students.

Throughout the month of March, the PAC interviewed every candidate who requested BTF endorsement. A panel of three to six teachers asked each potential Board member his/her position on several issues. Those issues included student discipline, prohibiting more charter schools in the city and helping to ensure that a contract is in place for teachers.

The results were tabulated and discussed by the full Political Action Committee, which then made recommendations.

Those recommendations were presented before the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates on April 4 and the Council voted to make endorsements on behalf of the BTF. You will soon receive a letter from the BTF announcing our endorsements. It is critical that every Buffalo teacher who is a registered voter cast a ballot on May 7.

If you have friends and family who live in the city, please pass along the endorsement letter. Your future depends on it!

$1,000 Project Grant Available to Teachers

A $1,000 grant to fund an innovative project or program is being offered through the Western Zone of the New York State Retired Teachers’ Association (NYSRTA).

The Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant is available to teachers in all Western New York public schools, which includes Cattaraugus, Erie, Genesee, and Niagara counties.

To compete for the grant, an educator must be a full-time teacher. The grant may be used for any number of educational programs/projects in the 2019-20 school year. This could include (but is not limited to) improving student achievement, self-esteem or behavior, or addressing current issues such as teen pregnancy, drug use, health concerns, bullying, etc.

Grant applications must be submitted by May 15, 2019. Entries will be judged by a team of Western Zone members with the winner announced on May 31, 2019.

To obtain an application, contact Ron Czapla at ronancza@gmail.com or Stan Nowak at stanjn79@hotmail.com.

Did You Know…?

That temporary teachers who have been employed a minimum of 100 days between September 1 and June 30, and who are still on the payroll at the end of the school year, shall be provided with continued medical and hospitalization coverage throughout the summer recess?

This provision does not apply to any temporary teacher who cannot return because of evaluation.

This information can be found in Article XXVI (2) A (9) of the contract.

For the 2018-19 school year, your first day of employment must be January 29, 2019 or earlier.

Save the Date

May 6-20
Electronic Voting for BTF Officers

May 7
Board of Education Election

May 30
BTF Retirement Dinner

Salvatore’s Italian Gardens

June 9
Miss Buffalo Boat Ride

June 27
Buffalo Bisons Baseball Game

Sahlen’s Field
IS IT JUST A COINCIDENCE THAT: More and more meaningless directives are coming from City Hall?

IS IT JUST A COINCIDENCE THAT: The leaders at City Hall are attempting to blame the teachers for the unsafe conditions at the schools?

IS IT JUST A COINCIDENCE THAT: The District has refused to schedule more than one negotiating session?

Yes, there are many similar actions that are taking place with greater frequency.

Are these and the many similar actions an attempt to divide and conquer us as we seek to negotiate a new contract? You tell me.

As negotiations proceed, we will see whether these apparent attempts to set teacher against teacher and teachers against the BTF will continue.

Regardless, as always, Buffalo teachers’ solidarity is second to none.

Divide and conquer, not here - not ever
Letters to the Editor

Restorative Justice Coalition Visits BTF

On behalf of Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition, we would like to express our deepest appreciation for letting us join your meeting. We celebrate the good work you are doing on behalf of all the staff and students in Buffalo Public Schools.

Andy and I listened and heard many of your concerns; thank you for sharing them with us. It is part of our mission to partner with you and make these concerns known to the district and develop ways in which we can address them. It is true “students are more than test scores,” but so are our teachers!

It was a pleasure meeting all of you and we hope this is the beginning steps of our working more together.

Kind Regards,
Dina Thompson & Andy Prinzini
EC Restorative Justice Coalition

BTF Helps Put Cancer on Ice with Donation

Thank you for your generous donation of $500 to the 2018 11 Day Power Play Community Shift!

Your support of this inaugural event and the more than 1,500 people who took the ice between July 5-15 to make it happen is incredibly appreciated.

With your support, we surpassed our goal by 25%, raising more than $1,275 million. This year, your investment supports cutting-edge research and wellness programming at Roswell Park Comprehensive Care Center, Make-A-Wish WNY, and Camp Good Days, with all dollars staying in Buffalo.

Again, we can’t thank you enough for your support, and for believing in us as our team took on the new challenge of putting more than 1,500 players on the ice over nearly 240 hours of continuous hockey, all to put cancer on ice once and for all. You helped us bring the community together, for a common goal, through the love of great game, and we can’t wait to make it happen again in 2019!

Sincerely,
Mike Lesakowski
Co-founder & Board Chair
Amy Lesakowski
Co-founder & Exec. Director
The 11 Day Power Play, Inc.

BPO Thanks BTF

I just wanted to thank you for your support of our WNY Symposium on Music in Schools that took place on Feb. 4. I am pleased to let you know that we had in attendance 47 participants from all levels of school building leadership as well as many music educators from the region.

In addition, we had 42 participants at our evening event, WNY Music Advocacy Night for school board members and parent leaders. In all, 89 people were impacted by these two events, and many expressed a desire to share their inspiration and learning with others, which extends the impact beyond these events!

The feedback we received from participants afterwards really brought home the impact something like this can have on creating a new culture of understanding. I have included a summary of that feedback, so you can see the impact for yourself.

We hope to continue this kind of advocacy work on behalf of the hard working teachers in our schools, and we thank you for supporting our efforts!

Most Sincerely,
Robin Parkinson, director
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra
Education & Community Engagement

BTF Donates to Reading Week and Book Expo

Thank you so much for your generous sponsorship of $500 in support of KidsLit Week and the WNY Children’s Book Expo!

As you know at the start of KidsLit Week, we had a staggering 60 schools participating with author/illustrator visits. Twenty-one of those visits were to Buffalo Public Schools thanks to the generous support of donors like BlueCross/BlueShield and others like Rich Products, The Buffalo Bills, Cold Spring Construction, Wegmans, Medaille College, the Buffalo Public Schools and the BTF.

We were thrilled at the response to Expo Saturday in November and expected the largest attendance ever. Buffalo Public Schools have jumped aboard 100% and supported the event with bus transportation for students and their caregivers from the nine Community Schools throughout the district supporting an author visit.

Thank you again for your generous support of KidsLit Week and the WNY Children’s Book Expo. Read to Succeed Buffalo is thrilled to be the not-for-profit partner in such an amazing effort designed to help build a community priority on literacy for children from birth through third grade.

Yours,
Anne Ryan, Executive Director
Read to Succeed, Buffalo

Children’s Hospital Thankful for BTF’s Generosity

Thank you for your faithful support of Oishei Children’s Hospital. We want to recognize and extend our appreciation to you for your very generous donation for the kids at the hospital.

We are pleased to let you know that our move to our new home on the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus is helping more acute and critical patients as we had planned in our new state-of-the-art facility. And it’s because of the support from people like you that Oishei Children’s Hospital was recognized nationally as a Top Children's Hospital by the Leapfrog Group, widely known as one of the most competitive honors American hospitals can achieve.

Your gifts help Oishei Children’s Hospital sustain life-saving programs and services by providing the best technology and equipment and all the special little touches that combine to heal our children. Because of your support, all children in Western New York will continue to receive compassionate, expert care in a state-of-the-art facility.

Sincerely,
Andrew Bennett, Vice President
McKenzie Mattison, Manager,
Volunteer & Family Services

WBFO Receives BTF Gift

Thank you for your recent $200 gift to WBFO.

With your renewal you are reaffirming your partnership in one of North America’s most influential entertainment and educational media. You are once again supporting WBFO’s mission to provide the finest public radio in Western New York and Southern Ontario.

Again, many thanks for your interest.
Your support is very much appreciated.
Sincerely,
Bree Bove’, senior director
WNED/WBFO Membership
Annual ‘Cats in Hats’ Event Promotes Good Reading Habits for Children

They were here, there and everywhere. Tall cats. Short cats. Cats with Big striped hats. Male cats. Female cats. Cats, cats, cats!

Thanks to the BTF, cats were once again prowling from school to school March 1 to celebrate Read Across America Day and acknowledge the birthday of Dr. Seuss, who wrote the famous Cat in The Hat.

“Reading is entertaining and educates at the same time. It's a basic life skill that can also transport a child to many different places when they read. That's why the BTF and its membership are extremely happy to involve ourselves in Read Across America Day. This helps promote an interest in reading, which really should be a lifelong enjoyment for each and every one of us,” BTF President Philip Rumore said.

The “cats,” or readers for the day, included President Rumore, who read to students at School #72, and nine retired teachers. Some of the “cats” dressed like the Cat In The Hat character to enhance the experience for the students.

The volunteers who participated and the schools where they read to the children were:

Ann Egner #6
Linda Drajem #18
Donna Dobson #18 AND 48@39
Patricia Prokes #50
Linda Coppock #61
Marilyn Murak #65
Phil Rumore #72
Bonnie Kirisits #81
Angie Piraino #94
Symbee Thompson #95

The BTF supplied the schools with Cat in the Hat stickers and certificates for the students.

In addition to the classroom activities, retired teacher Stan Nowak, visited three hospitals to give gift bags to the mothers of newborn babies.

He distributed the bags at Buffalo Mercy Hospital, Oishei Children’s Hospital and Sisters of Charity Hospital. Each bag contained a Dr. Seuss book and a Read Across America Brochure detailing the event and its importance. Included in the bag was a note to the mothers “from” their newborn.

The note read:

Dear Mom,
Today is the biggest day of my life. It is the day I was born!

A whole world of living awaits me, and the Buffalo Teachers Federation, hoping to help me prepare for the joys of learning, has provided me with my first book.

This activity is part of Read Across America, a celebration of the birth of Dr. Seuss.

Please, please, please Mom, read this book to me as often as you like. I have so much to learn! Feel free to read more and more often from a variety of books because, as you know, children will do better in their schoolwork when the family reads to them.

Someday, you will be so surprised to hear me read to you. I can't wait to make you proud of my accomplishment.

Thank you Mom. You had better rest now for you will have to save your energy for a lifetime of shared reading experiences.

Love, Your New Baby

Read Across America Day is a nationwide event sponsored by the National Education Association (NEA). It is aimed at spreading the message that reading is important, fun, opens the door to achievement and is a crucial building block towards making the joys of reading an integral part of every child's life.

The annual Read Across America Day always coincides with the late Dr. Seuss's birthday. This year would have been his 115th birthday.

The BTF's involvement in Read Across America Day continues the long and proud tradition of BTF programs aimed at the city's public school children and local community.

Tips for Encouraging Young Readers

As part of Read Across America Day, the BTF/NEA offers the following tips for parents of young children as a means for encouraging reading:

• Start early. Try to read books with your child every day.
• Show how the printed word works. Move your finger from word to word.
• Check your child’s understanding. When you read to your child, explain to them what is happening. As your child gets older, ask them to predict what may happen, whether they liked the story at the end and why.
• Surround your child with things to read and having writing materials in your home. Let children see that reading is an important part of your life, too.

Bowling Event Is a Rolling Success

More than 30 teachers and their families attended the first-ever family bowling event on February 16 at Voelker’s Lanes, Buffalo.

The event was the result of the BTF Social Committee’s efforts to offer more family events at reduced costs to teachers. The annual BTF family Bisons baseball game is being planned for June.

Also being planned for June is an end-of-the-year Solidarity event on the Miss Buffalo. Details will be announced when plans are finalized.

The Social Committee events are conducted several times throughout the year to encourage BTF members and their families to get together with other members throughout the District. BTF members are urged join your colleagues for these events.
To say this event was well received would be an understatement. More than 300 teachers, and another 100 guests, attended the annual BTF Retirement Workshop, March 26 at Salvatore’s Italian Gardens in Depew.

Sue Raichilson, chair of the Retirement Workshop and BTF President Phil Rumore, welcomed the attendees before turning the program over to Christine Wade of the NYS Teachers’ Retirement System (NYSTRS) for her presentation.

The presentation included how pension is calculated, prior service, various options for benefit distribution, and death benefits the system pays out. The presenter was well-prepared with various handouts and spoke with teachers individually after the presentation.

Next up was David Walker, SBF director, who explained that teachers have just two months of dental and optical coverage after retirement unless they sign up for COBRA insurance. Purchase of COBRA insurance allows the retiree to maintain supplemental benefit insurance coverage for a period of three years after retirement.

The last part of the program was a presentation by LRS staff members Deana Fox and Anna Geronimo about the benefits to which BTF members are entitled under the contract. When a teacher retires, he/she may be able to receive termination compensation including the negotiated Early Retirement Incentive, a $500 bonus for early notification of retirement, and a payment for unused sick days. Health care in retirement is a negotiated benefit that teachers with 15 years of service with the District can take advantage of as a retiree.

The BTF sponsors this workshop every March. If you missed this year’s seminar, you may still call the BTF for guidance with contractual issues regarding retirement.
Committee of 100
Lobbies State Representatives

More than 700 NYSUT members, including six from the BTF, went to Albany March 3-5 to lobby legislators for money for education as part of the annual Committee of 100 Advocacy Days.

The Committee of 100 is the largest of NYSUT’s grassroots lobbying efforts. Each member local is expected to send at least one representative to the event.

Participants from the BTF included President Phillip Rumore, Vice President Rebecca Pordum, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Secretary and Director of the Teacher Center, Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, and Executive Committee members Thomas Gattie, and Ruyvette Townsend.

The BTF representatives met with Western New York lawmakers to urge more funding for Buffalo Schools, continued funding for Teacher Centers and changes in legislation affecting teachers.

The BTF urges the Legislature to:

• Provide separate and additional funding for school districts to employ at least one school resource officer in each school who is a trained law enforcement officer who will work with students, school personnel and the community.
• Provide separate and additional funds for school counselors (guidance counselors), school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers and similar student support personnel to help diagnose, treat and refer students identified as having possible serious emotional problems.
• Initiate a statewide crisis tapeline/app that provides students with access to crisis counselors and a confidential means of reporting bullying, violence and threats.
• Provide funding for school districts to provide a system for training school personnel and parents to detect the early warning signs that a student may become violent.
• Enact statutory changes to the education law to return teacher evaluations back to local control with no state mandates.
• Repeal the Receivership Law
• Restore funding for Teacher Centers to its 2008-2009 level.

Once again the BTF and Buffalo teachers opened their hearts and donated more than $2,000 to the Annual Variety Club Telethon.

The Telethon, which benefits the Oishei Children’s Hospital, was held March 3 at the Seneca Niagara Casino in Niagara Falls, NY. The fundraising effort was organized by the BTF Public Relations Committee, co-chaired by Ruyvette Townsend and Rachel Binda-Lis.

The BTF urges the Legislature to:

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• Provide separate and additional funds for school counselors (guidance counselors), school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers and similar student support personnel to help diagnose, treat and refer students identified as having possible serious emotional problems.

Executive Committee Member Honored

Christine Salamone, a Social Studies teacher and member of the BTF Executive Committee, was honored at the annual scholarship dinner for Unlimited Possibilities Overcoming Poverty Ministry, Inc. The theme for the event was “Celebrating Women Touching the World” and coincided with National Women’s History Month.
Hutch Tech Band Director is Among Five Selected to Attend Orchestra Clinic

Amy J. Steiner, band director for Hutchinson Central Technical High School, was one of five band leaders selected to attend the International Band and Orchestra Midwest Clinic, held in December in Chicago, Ill.

Steiner, an educator for 23 years, has been teaching in the Buffalo School District for 20 years. She and the other four winners were selected from a pool of more than 800 instrumental music teachers from around the world.

“This gift/prize and recognition means so much to me. Music Professional Development on a larger scale does not happen very often. Attending this International Instrumental Music Clinic (the largest in the world) allowed me to learn new strategies in the band classroom, network with band directors from around the world, meet and have professional conversations with world-renowned composers and conductors, and also bring back all that I have learned and share it with the Music Department in the Buffalo Public Schools. This trip is costly and I have always wanted to attend, so I am very grateful for this opportunity. Being able to represent our City makes me so proud!”

In addition to the all-expense paid trip to Chicago, Steiner won the opportunity to send one student to a music camp in the Albany area this summer on scholarship. This is an expensive, state-of-the-art, once-in-a-lifetime experience for one special student, she explained.

“It will be so incredibly difficult for me to choose one student,” Ms. Steiner said. “Currently, our large roster boasts 133 students. Since I started at Hutch Tech, in addition to the Jazz Ensemble, I have initiated a Concert Band and-- new this year--a select Wind Ensemble, comprising my top 30 students.

She added that the students at Hutch Tech are incredibly gifted in many ways, and their passion for the arts is admirable.

Amy Steiner stands out in pool of over 800 worldwide music educators

Hutch Tech Band

Proudly Helping Buffalo School Employees Since 1972

You Can Retire Financially Independent

Account Benefits:

- Professional local guidance
- Wide fund selection available
- Simple quarterly statements
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Plan...Protect...Invest...
It's your TSA/403b...We can help.

Greg Mucha
Optician
Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

Joe Frandina
Optician
Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!
And the Beat Goes On: The Poor People’s Campaign Still Active 51 Years Later

A transformative night of song, political education, and story sharing, to promote the Poor People’s Campaign, was held January 16 in Buffalo.

The event, “And the Beat Goes On: The Poor People’s Campaign 51 years later,” was hosted by Eve Shippens-Nieves, co-chair of the BTF Community Engagement Committee. It was held in Raq’s Solidarity, 322 Amherst Street. The theme for the evening was “To Change the World, We Must Change Ourselves.”

The event included a presentation on why and how to combat being poor, how this connects us to each other, and how stories and songs light the journey forward. Entertainment included the WNY Woman’s Resistance Choir, DJ Wrong Era Lbj, and the WNY Poor People’s Committee singers. A potluck dinner was also served.

The Poor People’s Campaign is a recommitment to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s last campaign, which focuses on ending poverty, systematic racism and the war economy. According to Shippens-Nieves, the Poor People’s Campaign has made tremendous progress in the struggle to end poverty.

“We have taken the fight from our home in Buffalo to Albany and Washington D.C. to demand justice. Now that a strong foundation has been made for the struggle forward, the next step is to get more people involved and each become the change that we want to see!” she said.

To learn more, or get involved in the Poor People’s Campaign, please contact Eve Shippens-Nieves or Sophia Howard Johnson, co-chair of the BTF Ethnic and Minority Engagement Committee. Both committees represent the BTF on the Poor People’s Campaign steering committee.

BTF Sponsors Girls World Expo

Students from Buffalo Public Schools were among scores of Western New Yorkers who took part in the Girls World Expo March 31 at Salvatore’s Italian Gardens, Depew. The Expo, sponsored in part by the Buffalo Teachers Federation, was attended by students from City Honors, Schools #6, #19, #45 and Olmsted #156.

Elizabeth Spiro Carman, co-chair of the BTF Community Engagement Committee facilitated the event for the Buffalo students. She was instrumental in obtaining two buses to transport the students to the event. The buses were provided through the efforts of Terrance and Nina Heard who were able to obtain sponsorship for the buses from West Herr Automotive.

Spiro-Carman, who escorted the students on the buses, said more than 300 students participated in activities at the Expo. The activities included jewelry design, acrobatic fitness, gym fitness, hair and make-up salons, face painting and henna painting.

The Expo also included a photo booth, college representatives and career planning. A teenage author was there with her published books and there were presentations from business women.

Erie County Legislator April Baskin gave a presentation on women in government. She was so impressed by Jaylanique Singleton, a School #6 student leader considering a career in law, that she told her she could do her internship with her when she is old enough.

The Expo was open to girls 11-18 years old.

Tell Us What’s Happening at Your School

Are you running a special performance at your building? Taking students on an overnight field trip? Was there a lesson that went exceptionally well you would like to share with your colleagues? We want to hear about it and may feature it in a future edition of The Provocator. Photos of such events are especially welcome.

Please send the following information and any related photos via email to salamone426@aol.com.

Name____________________________
School/position____________________
Personal email______________________
Phone____________________________
Description of event________________

(All submissions become the property of The Provocator.)