

# PROVOCATOR

June 2022

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 52/NUMBER 5

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## Unity Rally Brings Unions, School Officials and Community Together to Fight Racism, Bigotry, and Hate

Hundreds of professional employees of the Buffalo Public Schools attended the BTF Unity Rally June 2 in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park to “fight and overcome racism, bigotry and hatred together.”

The rally, organized by BTF President Phil Rumore, brought together members of the BTF, Buffalo Council of Supervisors & Administrators (BCSA), Buffalo Educational Support Team (BEST), the Professional Clerical Technical Employees Association (PCTEA), Substitutes United of Buffalo (SU/B), Transportation Aides of Buffalo (TAB), Engineers-Local 409 as well as District administrators, Board of Education members, Officers of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), and the president of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten.

Speaker after speaker talked about the need to join forces to end the hatred and racism that led to the May 14 murders of 10 innocent people shopping at the Tops Market on Jefferson Avenue. The murderer, who also injured three others, specifically targeted the store to kill people of African-American descent.

The most poignant speaker of the event, Brooklyn Bullock, a student at Olmsted School 156, broke down in tears as she described the trauma the murders have caused.

“I don’t feel safe at school”, she told the crowd. “I don’t feel safe leaving the house. I constantly have to be aware of my surroundings and the people who have the power aren’t doing anything”, she said.

“It seems like my life doesn’t mean anything to those people”, she continued, as her mother, Ebony Bullock, assistant superintendent, made it to the stage to comfort her.

The Rev. Mark E. Blue, president of the Buffalo NAACP, urged the crowd not to let racist murders occur and fail to do something to stop them.

“We did not respond like other cities”, he said. “There was not one window broken. We responded to tragedy with love and togetherness. Let’s make this a moment for change”.

JoAnn Sweat, president of BEST, said in order to stop racism, “we have to have those conversations no one wants to have”.

Sharon Belton-Cottman, Ferry District Board member, said her 10-year-old grandson was traumatized when he heard the gunshots during the Tops massacre and saw the bodies of those killed in the parking lot.

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, accompanied by other NYSUT officers, told the crowd a scholarship fund is being established to honor those lost. He said he and the officers stopped at Tops and watched as a girl wrote on the sidewalk in chalk, “Do Something America.”

He promised the crowd that NYSUT “will never give up” its fight against racism.

Randi Weingarten, president of AFT, spoke passionately on behalf of her union’s 1.7 million members. She urged the crowd to speak up against racism.

“There’s no rock big enough for you to hide under. Decent people need to have a voice and speak up”, she said. “Love can prevail if we join together.”

We are the ones who make a difference in the lives of other people”, Weingarten said. “It’s a race we are running and we must win this race.”

President Rumore, who described Weingarten as a “fearless leader and wonderful teacher”, said she spent the day with the students at the Stanley Makowski school.

Other speakers at the rally included Pastor James Giles, founder of Back To Basics Outreach Ministries, Inc.; Freddie Smith, president of TAB, who lost member Margus Morrison in the Tops massacre; Shirley Sapp-Burgess, president of SU/B, who said Aaron Salter and Pearl Young, killed at Tops, were substitutes in Buffalo Schools; Aaron Armstrong, president of PCTEA; Jody Covington, president of BCSA; Jeff Lathrop, Engineers, 409; Louis Petrucci, president of the Board of Education; Interim Superintendent, Dr. Tonja M. Williams and Jasmine Cameron,

International Preparatory School, student member of the Buffalo Board of Education, whose audio recording from the May Board meeting was played.



1. Making a special trip to Buffalo for the event, AFT Randi Weingarten delivers a passionate speech. Also pictured, L-R: NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, and Executive Director Melinda Person.

2. A cadre of important speakers await their turn at the lectern. Pictured L-R: BPS Interim Superintendent Dr. Tonja Williams, Board President Lou Petrucci, PCTEA President Aaron Armstrong, AFT President Randi Weingarten, BEST President JoAnn Sweat, and NYSUT President Andy Pallotta.

3. Fighting back tears, student speaker Brooklyn Bullock is assisted by her mother, Ebony Bullock, and BTF President Phil Rumore.



# THE Murders Must End – NOW

Our Unity Rally was unprecedented. We had our AFT National President, Randi Weingarten, NYSUT State President Andy Pallotta, Executive Director Melinda Person, Second Vice President Ron Gross, Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, Presidents of all the Board unions, Interim Superintendent Tonja Williams, Board President Louis Petrucci, Board member Sharon Belton-Cottman, President of Buffalo NAACP Reverend Mark Blue, and Leader of the Buffalo Peace Keepers, Reverend Giles.

We all agreed that we are united and will work together to ensure that these MURDERS and actions of the MURDERERS end... NOW.

If no action is taken, we will remember in November.

However, in my opinion the most important speaker at our rally was our student, Brooklyn Bullock.

Please take the time to read her statement.

## Unity Rally

*I do not feel safe. I do not feel safe at school, at grocery stores, at the mall, or even at home. Why? First, because of the color of my skin. I have to constantly be aware of my surroundings and make sure not to draw too much attention to myself as a Black girl. Second, just because I'm a Black person, it frightens me that I can be literally anywhere and someone may decide to take my life just because they feel like it. It worries me even more that there are people who have the power to change things in this country, yet, they've done nothing. In fact, many politicians and political leaders seem to be too busy regulating people's bodies that they're forgetting about the people who are already here on earth living and breathing. It really seems like my life doesn't matter to those people, which makes me equally as scared of them.*

*Right now, I'm in a constant state of anxiety, but I'm dealing with it. I try to gather as much valid information about topics before panicking. I make sure I'm with a trusted adult or friend at all times. I check in on my friends and family periodically to make sure that they are doing well mentally, physically and emotionally. I also take breaks from social media to avoid being overwhelmed by everything that's going on. Despite all my efforts, I'm still extremely worried. I believe that there should be more community resources available for the affected communities, and not just in times of crisis. Making sure that every person feels loved and understood all throughout their lifetime can possibly prevent some people from making these terrible decisions.*

*I'm sure many people can relate to how I'm feeling; therefore, something must be done. We need to come together as communities and show our local, state, and federal officials that things will not change without new and improved laws. We can also host fundraisers, informational meetings, and provide therapists to aid people who are living through this time. While it would be ideal to have these things available on a national level, we have to make those steps starting right here in Buffalo.*

Statement made at Buffalo Teachers Federation Unity Rally at Martin Luther King, Jr. Park – June 2, 2022 by Brooklyn Bullock – Student at Olmsted School – Grade 11

**THIS MUST AND WILL END... NOW.**

- Phil

## BTF at a Glance

### BTF President

Philip Rumore

### BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

### BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

### BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



### BTF Executive Committee Members

#### Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis, April Hall,  
Sophia Howard-Johnson,  
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster,  
Ruyvette Townsend

#### 7-12

Dennis Brancato, Lynn Garcia,  
Mike Jeffers, Melissa Kenney,  
Rich Nigro, M. Sue Raichilson,  
Eve Shippens

#### K-12

Susan Baker,  
Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, Amy Flynn,  
Nicole Herkey, Ellen Malone,  
Mark Mecca, Gregory Sawicki

#### At Large

Tom Anthony, Mike Mecca, Brian Meyer

### BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*

Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*

Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*

Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*

Jenna Burke, *NYSUT Labor Relations  
Specialist*

Matthew Kibler, *NYSUT*

*Labor Relations Specialist*

Robert Mueller, *NYSUT*

*Labor Relations Specialist*

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[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)

## PROVOCATOR

### BTF Provocator Staff

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Chris Salamone, *editor*

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# Letters to the Editor

## BTF Donates to Tops' 5/14 Survivors Fund

I wanted to thank you for the incredibly generous donation to the Buffalo 5/14 Survivors Fund.

This has been a very difficult week for Buffalo, and these initial acts of compassion and kindness are the first steps in the journey to healing our community.

The Tops family genuinely appreciates your organization stepping up with us to push this endeavor forward.

Respectfully,  
John Persons, president  
Tops Markets

## BTF Helps Feed Those in Need with Donation

Thank you for your gift of \$300 to the FeedMore WNY Foundation. Because you chose to give, thousands of Western New Yorkers of all ages can put nutritious meals on their tables.

Through home-delivered meals, meals served at community dining sites and our network of partner hunger-relief agencies and programs throughout our four-county service area, FeedMore WNY provided nearly 16 million meals for our neighbors facing hunger in 2020 – almost four million more meals than what was provided in 2019!

Thank you again for helping us distribute “more food” and do “more good” in WNY!

Sincerely,  
Lisa Woodring  
Chief Development Officer

## Community Heroes Award Donation

On behalf of the 2022 Community Heroes Awards chairpersons, the Board of the National Federation for Just Communities of WNY, Inc. (NFJC) and myself, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Buffalo Teachers Federation for supporting the event shown on WGRZ-TV March 27 and 28. We look forward to recognizing our Community Heroes for their outstanding contributions to Western New York.

Again, I thank you for honoring our community leaders and for your support.

Sincerely,  
Rene Petties-Jones, president

## Explore & More Thanks BTF for \$250 donation

On behalf of Explore & More – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Children's Museum, thank you for your generous \$250 gift.

Since Explore & More opened at Canalside in 2019, no child has been turned away from the museum's doors due to an inability to pay. Your support this season allows us to continue helping every child dream, imagine, invent, and do.

In 2021, Explore & More provided children and their families a safe and immersive space to grow, learn and meet new friends. Children with autism spectrum disorder and sensory processing disorder participated in no cost Au-Some evening events, and Western New York families engaged in free, weekly waterfront activities. Explore & More transportation programs and reduced museum admission rates afforded our community the ability to leverage the healing power of play – in a time when it remains so desperately needed.

Your contribution ensures that we may continue providing accessible, play-based learning for all children in an affordable, safe, and fun environment. Thank you for joining us as we play into 2022.

With appreciation,  
JoAnna Jacob, director  
Institutional Advancement

## Teacher Grant Contest Sponsored by RENY

A unique school grant competition, for teachers in the five counties of WNY, is being sponsored by the New York State Retired Teachers' Association, Western Zone.

Teachers can compete for a \$500 grant to create a teacher-generated classroom learning activity or cultural presentation by students. One grant will be awarded in each category.

For the learning activity, a teacher or team of teachers must submit a detailed proposal summarizing an activity designed to enhance and support student learning in a particular subject, or two or more related subjects.

For the cultural presentation, the teacher(s) must describe a planned activity involving student participation/performance before an audience.

More than one grant application can be submitted from one school. However, grants from both categories will not be awarded to the same school. The grant in each category will be awarded to the entry judged to be most creative and/or most likely to achieve a high degree of positive student involvement.

Applications guidelines are available at the RENY Western Zone website, [www.wzretiredteachers.org](http://www.wzretiredteachers.org).

All applications must be postmarked by July 1, 2022 and announcement of winners will take place in early September.

## Welcome New Members

The following 54 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last printing of the *Provocator*. Welcome to the union!

Allison Adams  
Nicole Ball  
Nicholas Barbara  
Austin Baumann  
Callie Bridge  
Amanda Brownschidle  
Maura Bull  
Gina Campanella  
Abigail Carpenter  
Gabriela Castillo  
Katherine Collins  
MaryKate Delia  
Shauna Denecke  
Gabriella Didio  
Kersten Eaton  
Alyssa Fini  
Kevin Fitzgerald  
Stephanie Foreman

Nicole George  
Jennifer Giambelluca  
Jessica Hageman  
Victoria Hector  
James Heffron  
Tiniqueka Jackson  
Dominique Johnson  
Abigail Klos  
Julia Kohler  
Nathan Longbine  
Tralina Middlebrooks  
Linda Morgan  
Vanessa Mullins  
Jennifer Norton  
Anne Pegg  
Carlis Pope  
Caroline Ragusa  
Joel Russell

Abigail Salamone  
Chandra Shaver  
Monty Shields  
Amir Shropshire  
Natasha Silva  
Aliyah Sims  
Kelly Smith  
Lillian Stensland  
Lori Urbanczyk  
Michelle Vandriel  
Ronald Wagar  
Logan Warren  
Andrea Whitney  
Delores Witt  
Lyubov Yelinson  
Shannon Zaranek  
Martha Zimmerman  
Maura Zubieta-Manka

# Seeking New Contract, Teachers Picket April Board of Education Meeting

After nearly three years of delays by the District, Buffalo teachers sent a clear message when they gathered before the April Board of Education meeting at BAVPA. It's time for a new contract and we want it now!

About 150 teachers picketed the school prior to the meeting, then entered the building to hear BTF President Phil Rumore address the Board.

The current contract expired in June 2019. Since then, the District has used delay tactics and has not offered an acceptable agreement.

Prior to the picket, a resolution was passed unanimously on March 24 by the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates outlining the meager offerings from the school board.

The resolution concluded with the following:

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that Buffalo teachers call upon the Superintendent and Board of Education to, at our next negotiations session, rescind and withdraw its March 17, 2022 contract proposal and present a new contract proposal that they believe and assert truly reflects and affirms their appreciation for the commitment and dedication Buffalo teachers have shown for our students, staff and parents during these unprecedented and horrendous times; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the BTF take all appropriate and necessary actions to ensure that Buffalo teachers are provided with a new contract that reflects their continued commitment and dedication to students, parents and community, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Superintendent, Board of Education and Buffalo teachers.

In response, the District withdrew its March 17, 2022 offer and made a new offer to the BTF on April 28. While it was not an offer to which we could agree, it was an improvement.

"There was enough improvement in the District's offer to agree to continue negotiations. While the offer was not acceptable, it provided enough movement for us to schedule additional sessions", stated Phil Rumore, BTF President.

Additional negotiating sessions have taken place and more are scheduled through the month of June.



1.

1. Using a bullhorn, BTF President Phil Rumore addresses the crowd and demands a new contract.

2. Before the start of the Board meeting, teachers gather in front of the school entrance to hear Phil Rumore speak.

3 & 4. Marching with signs, about 150 teachers picket in front of BAVPA school.

5. Speaking before the Board of Education, Phil Rumore details why the insulting March 17 offer must be rescinded.



2.



3.



4.



5.

## Did You Know...?

That eligible retired teachers will continue to be entitled to receive the same healthcare benefits as those they were entitled to upon retirement?

This important provision can be found in Article XXVI (2) A (10) of the collective bargaining agreement, page 73.

## Teachers Answer the Call for Donations

After the horrific murders at Tops on May 14, the BTF put out a call for food donations to help those affected by the tragedy. Many teachers dropped off food donations at the BTF office and the BTF, in turn, had the donations sent to FeedMore WNY.

Several bags and boxes of food were collected and delivered, again showing that Buffalo teachers pull together in times of crisis.

Hutch Tech, known for going above and beyond the call of duty, collected dozens of boxes of food. Over 3600 items were picked up from the school on Elmwood Avenue by FeedMore WNY to be distributed to the Jefferson Avenue community.



1.



2.

1. Surrounded by a room full of food donations, Lori Decarolo and Lynn Garcia helped organize the effort.

2. Assisting in the organizing the food drive, Mary Laura Manley is proud of the amount collected.

# BTF Pushes for Safe Schools Resolution for Funding Passes Unanimously

Even before the latest school shooting that left two teachers and 19 elementary school students dead in Uvalde, TX, the BTF was working towards a solution to make schools safe.

A resolution calling for state and federal funding to provide safe schools was proposed April 1 by the BTF at the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

It was passed unanimously by the more than 1,000 delegates attending.

The resolution, moved by BTF President Phil Rumore and seconded by Vice President Rebecca Pordum, was approved by the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates prior to being submitted to the governing body of the BTF's state affiliate.

The resolution will now move to the BTF's two national affiliates, the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which hold their conventions in July.

The resolution, in its entirety is below:

**WHEREAS:** Violence, anger and disruptive behaviors are harmfully infecting our students/children, and

**WHEREAS:** It is critical that we realize that the resulting and too-often fatal incidents in our schools and on our school



*BTF President Phil Rumore presents our resolution to NYSUT delegates*

grounds are occurring across the United States, and

**WHEREAS:** This is a National Crisis involving the well-being of our children that must immediately be addressed by the President and Congress of the United States as well as other relevant agencies.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:** That NEA & AFT will take the following action(s):

- Seek, through correspondence, email, petitioning and other appropriate methods, the support of our State and

Federal legislators, and all other critical people and organizations, to ensure safety in our schools (which extends into the communities) for the following:

- o Earmarked Federal funding for school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, school attendance teachers, etc. with a defined caseload, e.g. 120/1.

- o Earmarked Federal funding to provide sufficient security personnel who will also be trained to gain the confidence of students to relate any concerns.

- o Earmarked Federal funding for community organizations that have experience working with students to prevent acts of violence and disruption.

- o Earmarked Federal funding to provide metal detectors for any District /School that wants them, without taking away from students' other educational needs/ programs.

- o De-escalating techniques for all staff and parents.

- o Other critical school security needs identified by a school district.

**MOVED** that the BTF seek passage of the BTF resolution relating to safe schools at the NEA and AFT National Conventions.

## BTF Gets Two Awards at NYSUT RA

Every year, the BTF goes above and beyond what is expected when giving back to the community and fighting for what's right.

For these extraordinary contributions, the BTF received two awards during the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly, held April 1-2 in Albany.

The BTF earned the Ken Kurzweil Social Justice Recognition Award because it "consistently evidences a belief in social justice."

Named for Union Activist Ken Kurzweil, who spent years educating fellow NYSUT members and the local community on civil rights, social justice and human rights issues, the BTF was awarded for:

- Advocating for educational justice, including resources that schools need
- Supporting initiatives to combat hunger and poverty
- Educating the public about the rights of undocumented children to public education
- Demonstrating labor solidarity and wage equity
- Championing racial justice
- Championing women's issues, history and rights

- Providing information on health care for members and the community
- Advocating for environmental justice via a lead abatement law in Buffalo

The BTF also received the Community Service Award because it "consistently evidences a belief in community service." In 2021, the BTF demonstrated this by:

- Participating in the Variety Club Telethon, Read Across America, and a Thanksgiving food drive
- Contributing over \$50,000 to local charities

- Awarding \$3,000 in scholarships, to the Peter Tycz II Memorial Scholarship Foundation and the University at Buffalo Foundation, Inc.

- Sponsoring virtual graduation ceremonies, the Bennett HS football team, and a toy drive

## APPR Suspended for 2021-2022

A bill suspending the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process for another year has been signed by Gov. Kathy Hochul after it passed in both the State Senate and Assembly.

Suspension of the APPR comes after BTF and other NYSUT members advocated and lobbied for the change. It eliminates APPR requirements for the 2021-22 school year.

Besides the fact that some observations had been completed by the time the bill was signed, this is good news and will prevent teachers from being adversely affected by APPR as a result of the pandemic. We will continue working with the legislature and the governor to address the APPR process.

# One Hundred Twenty-Seven Teachers Honored by the BTF

For the first time since Covid shut down schools in 2020, the Annual BTF Retirement Dinner was held on May 18 at Salvatore's Italian Gardens in Depew. One hundred twenty-seven retirees, with a total of 3,340.4 years of teaching in the Buffalo Public Schools, attended the event. Each retiree received dinner, a framed certificate and gratitude from the BTF for their years of service. All teachers who retired between 2020 and 2022 were invited.

The retirees who attended the dinner and their years of service are:

Denise E. Barkley	40	Maureen B. Schubert	28
Deborah L. Green	39	Anthony Ciminelli	27
Susan N. Olmstead	39	Valerie J. Frier	27
Anna M. Klapakis	36	Joyce A. Gallagher	27
Sheila A. Scanlon	36	Lisa D. Queener-Johnson	27
Amanda M. Sperrazza	36	Mark Angrisano	26
Mary Cardona	35	Sharon A. Bertucci	26
Deborah A. Dinnocenzo	35	Stephen J. LiTwin	26
Deborah J. Grine	35	Karen M. Long	26
William Breen	34	Susan B. White	26
Robyn A. Kuchta	34	Michele A. Humpartzoomian	25.6
Bernadette M. Sam	34	Albert "Al" Bruno	25
Douglas A. Alderdice	33	Joyce G. Guercio	25
Leza M. Crocker	33	Laurie Ann Mertens	25
Casey M. Enright	33	Susan Trifiletti	25
Mary J. Jaworski	33	Lynn Durusky	24.8
Scott A. Nourse	33	Rona A. Goldberger-Hecker	24
Kenneth R. Punnett	33	Jacqueline Natal-Ferguson	24
Debra A. Bajak	32	Sandra L. Price-Allen	24
Nancy H. Gallagher	32	Jeanne M. Pustumucans	23.5
Linda L. Gruber	32	Michelle A. Redino	23.4
Dhana E. Lavere	32	Christine P. Salamone	23.4
Shammy Perry-Dunnigan	32	Susan M. Granger	23
Karolina Roman-Qureshi	32	Christopher Kary	23
Phyllis A. Piazza	31.5	Leila A. Laspisa	23
Donna M. DeLano-Kerr	31	Jacalyn M. Price	23
Sandra Gradolph	31	Allayne M. Yeostros	23
Stephanie Hall	31	Roger S. Aumick	22
Willie D. Jones, Jr. Ph.D	31	Delores E. Coleman	22
Cheryl A. McGuire	31	Pamela A. Davenport	22
Daniel H. Mink	31	Angela Gayles	22
Wanda Aviles	30.7	Beverly A. Glor	22
Kim M. Kulakowski	30.7	Christine H. Koch	22
Joyce M. Marracino	30.7	Susan Lawence-Dederich	22
Amy E. Gorney	30.6	James T. Malley	22
Carmen G. Buono	30.5	Harry K. Ondell	22
Darlynn E. Harms	30.5	Carol A. Cureo	21
Donna L. Ladowski-Seier	30.5	Susan E. Faulkner	21
Junko McGee	30.2	Deborah Glieco	21
Nancy J. Badach	30	Sharlene N. Kasza	21
Cathy Burgin	30	Sandra A. Klute	21
Jeanne Cheney	30	Ann Marie Lamm	21
Lynn M. Garcia	30	Karla J. Levi	21
Janet M. Liebel	30	Melissa M. Stewart	21
Nancy R. McAuley	30	Sandy M. Ackerman	20
Kathleen A. Mulcaire	30	Ann Carpenter-Handy	20
Maureen O'Hara	30	Mauri Coover	20
Lew D. Reczek	30	Donna E. McKellar	20
Sandra M. Redmond	30	Elizabeth Spiro-Carman	20
Patrice Rosenberry	30	Pamela L. Stillwell	20
Susan C. Schwartz	30	Ann Curthoys	19
Maria T. Valenti Barone	30	Kevin R. Swarts	19
Barbara Fitzgerald	29	Dianne C. Brach	18
Cecilia A. Fronczak	29	Joyce S. Jackson	18
Mirta M. Gentile	29	Elizabeth Largeman-Kalnitz	18
Sheila L. Mahone	29	Carol Peszko	18
Eric Simonsen	29	Margaret M. Barnes Mack	17
Esther S. Guess	28	Robin J. Yates	17
Michele A. Kaiser	28		
Melissa Grace Marsch	28		
Mary Clare Perez de Leon	28		

Kathryn J. Frank	16.2
Joyce B. Jones	16
Carol Shanahan	16
Lorraine Archdeacon	15
Molly Fellingner	15
Adam Mack	15
Lisa Vanderbrook	7
Barbara Coogan	5



# The Retirees:



*(Information for new retirees can be found on page 9.)*

# BPS Social Studies Coordinator Presented the 'Distinguished Social Studies Educator' Award

Richard S. Pyszcek, Jr., a Social Studies coordinator for Buffalo Public Schools, has been awarded the Distinguished Social Studies Educator Award.

The award is given annually by the New York State Council for the Social Studies to an "individual who exemplifies the best in professional Social Studies education" and has had "significant positive impact" on Social Studies education.

The award was presented to Pyszcek during the April Board of Education meeting, Pyszcek, who has been teaching since 1999, was nominated for the award by Rich Newberg, a former television anchor and journalist. The two joined forces when they realized the educational value of news stories produced during Newberg's career and created "Teachable Moments in Time", a program for students in grades K-12.

"I am overwhelmed with gratitude to have been selected to receive the 2022 Distinguished Educator award from the New York State Council



*BTF president Phil Rumore, left, and Richard Pyszcek*

for the Social Studies", Pyszcek said. "I am so honored to have my work recognized in this way by the NYSCSS. This award is the pinnacle of my career as a Social Studies Educator."

Among his achievements, Pyszcek organized Western New York History Day, an annual competition, and

encouraged participation from schools across Erie County. He has also made major contributions to the social studies curriculum through his work with the Buffalo Black History Project and his partnerships with local museums and cultural institutions.

Through his work, he has created resources and support for Social Studies teachers both in Buffalo and across Western New York. For his efforts, Pyszcek has received the NYS Excellence in Teaching Award (2018), the Daniel Niederlander Award from The Buffalo History Museum (2018), the NYS History Day Teacher of the Year (2018 & 2013), and the SUNY ECC Distinguished Alumni Award (2015).

In addition, Pyszcek is president of The Niagara Frontier Council for the Social Studies, NYSCSS Special Projects Chairman of NYSCSS, Buffalo Presidential Center Board of Directors, Buffalo Teacher Center Policy Board, Erie County Police and Judges Board member and NFL Alumni Professional member.

## Union Activists Honored at NYSUT's 32nd WNY Annual Awards Dinner

Two long-time BTF activists were honored May 26 by the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), during the Western New York 32nd Annual Awards Dinner at the Buffalo/Niagara Convention Center.

David Walker and Thomas Gattie, both retired teachers, received WNY Regional Leadership Awards, Election District 44, for their service to the BTF and teachers of the Buffalo Public School District.

Walker, who served as director of the Supplemental Benefit Fund (SBF) until 2020, retired from teaching in 2000. He began his teaching career as an elementary school teacher in 1966.

He was an early advocate in the years when teachers in New York State first earned the right to collective bargaining. Along with other pioneers, Walker worked hard to improve conditions that benefited both children and teachers.

After returning from service in Vietnam, Dave Walker continued his teaching career and BTF union activity. In 1973, he assisted in the creation of the Sick Leave Bank, which provided



*L-R: Dave Walker, BTF President Phil Rumore, Lynn Diagostino and Tom Gattie*

pay for teachers who had run out of sick days. He continued to serve as a trustee for the Sick Leave Bank for another 5 years. Walker served as a Building Delegate for 5 years before being elected to the Executive Committee in 1975. He also served as co-chair of the Action Committee during the 13-day teacher strike in 1976.

In 1979, Walker was appointed director of the Supplemental Benefit Fund (SBF). He continued in that role while teaching and serving on various committees.

Walker not only worked tirelessly on behalf of Buffalo teachers, he worked on behalf of all teachers as a delegate to our state and national organizations.

Tom Gattie became a vocational education teacher in 1989 after working for several years in industry. With unionism in his blood, Gattie leapt into leadership roles within the BTF by becoming a building delegate and, in 2002, a member of the Executive Committee.

During his years as a BTF member, Gattie served as a trustee on the Sick Leave Bank and helped rewrite the guidelines.

In addition, he served as chairman of the Teacher Center Policy Board and served on the BTF negotiating team.

Tom and his wife Debbie, a BTF retired teacher, have three children and seven grandchildren.

Lynn Diagostino, another retired longtime BTF activist, was also honored during the event. She received the Local Leadership Award for NYSUT Retiree Council #44.



**1.** Addressing the crowd at the lectern, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta promises that the state union will work to find solutions to gun violence. Also pictured, L-R: Executive Director Melinda Person, Secretary-Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham, Second Vice President Ron Gross, and BTF President Phil Rumore.

**2.** Standing beside Phil Rumore, Rev. Mark Blue, president of the Buffalo NAACP, gets ready to deliver his poignant words.

**3.** Having lost two of her members, SU/B president Shirley Sapp-Burgess describes the pain the entire community is feeling with Phil Rumore by her side.

**4.** In a show of unity, Interim Superintendent Dr. Tonja Williams approaches the microphone alongside BTF President Phil Rumore.



## Welcome to NYSUT Retiree Council #44

Congratulations to our new retirees! As you conclude your time as an active teacher and BTF member, be assured that you are still a union member in NYSUT and AFT.

NYSUT Retiree Councils, established in 1991, are a powerful voice for retirees, who continue to support the values and work of our union.

BTF members, upon retirement, become members of NYSUT Retiree Council #44 and join more than 250,000 NYSUT retirees. As a retiree, you can still take advantage of the many benefits that NYSUT offers its members.

Retired members serve as delegates to the NYSUT, NEA, and AFT conventions, where they represent the interests of their retired colleagues as well as support the issues important to active teachers.

RC #44 partners with retirees from Western New York (Retiree Councils #1, #2, and #3) to plan activities for its members.

Traditionally there is fall luncheon to welcome new retirees as well as a holiday luncheon and a retiree conference in the spring. These events provide members the opportunity to network with retirees as well as to keep up to date on member benefits,

legislation, and any other issues pertinent to retirees.

There are a variety of activities that retirees can engage in. RC #44 members volunteer at The Teacher's Desk, participate in the Making Strides Walk, and make phone calls to support NYSUT-endorsed candidates, to name a few.

Despite the pandemic, our retiree council has stayed active and involved.

Members can also participate in workshops and trips. You can keep informed of all of our events through our RC #44 newsletter that you will receive during the year and by following us on our Facebook page (NYSUT Retiree Council #44).

Retirees do not pay dues to belong to NYSUT. RC #44 has a voluntary participation fee that is collected each year.

Upon retirement, you are no longer an NEA member unless you join as a lifetime member. This will enable you to continue to enjoy all the benefits of membership.

We look forward to welcoming you into our organization and encourage you to become an active member!

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Rodland, president of RC #44, at 716-689-9561 or by email at [sarasarasara2008@live.com](mailto:sarasarasara2008@live.com).

## Retirees Can Remain Active After Leaving Service

You don't have to say goodbye to your friends and colleagues when you retire. The Buffalo Retired Teachers Association (BRTA) will keep you busy and in touch.

The BRTA is open to all Buffalo teachers and administrators who are retiring. The BRTA hosts four luncheons during the school year, including the Fall Luncheon on the first day of school in September, Holiday Luncheon in December, Winter Luncheon in February, and the Spring Luncheon, held in May.

During June, BRTA men and women participate in the Annual Golf Tournament. Travel excursions are sponsored by the BRTA throughout the year, including international vacations, day trips to various

locations within a 100-mile radius, overnight trips outside New York State, and theater trips to Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

The BRTA newsletter keeps members informed of all important issues.

And, although retired, members of the BRTA don't forget the students. Each year, three \$1,500 scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors of the Buffalo Public Schools.

Life membership in the BRTA is \$150 and must be paid in full. Annual membership is \$12 per year.

For more information contact Linda Parada, membership secretary, at 875-3392 or online at [www.BRTA.biz](http://www.BRTA.biz).

# BTF Releases Auditor's Report

# 2020-2021



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## INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

The Executive Officers  
Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc.

We have audited the accompanying balance sheets of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2021 and 2020, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

### Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditors' Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits. We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. Accordingly, we express no such opinion. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Opinion

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. as of August 31, 2021 and 2020, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

March 9, 2022

## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Balance Sheets

August 31,	2021	2020
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets:</b>		
Cash	\$ 841,064	\$ 600,262
Receivables, net (Note 2)	100,509	164,353
Prepaid expenses	26,208	24,890
Investments (Note 3)	4,890,617	4,310,578
	<u>5,858,398</u>	<u>5,100,083</u>
Property and equipment, net (Note 4)	78,275	85,579
	<u>\$ 5,936,673</u>	<u>\$ 5,185,662</u>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>		
<b>Current liabilities:</b>		
Current portion of accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	\$ 21,500	\$ 21,800
Accounts payable	-	15,304
Accrued expenses	135,070	104,230
	<u>156,570</u>	<u>141,334</u>
Accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	2,262,123	2,337,631
<b>Net assets without donor restrictions</b>	<u>3,517,980</u>	<u>2,706,697</u>
	<u>\$ 5,936,673</u>	<u>\$ 5,185,662</u>

See accompanying notes.

2

## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Statements of Activities

For the years ended August 31,	2021	2020
<b>Revenue:</b>		
Member dues	\$ 3,427,881	\$ 3,508,030
Investment income (Note 3)	662,377	704,428
Rent	129,696	128,470
Advertising and other	24,518	5,090
<b>Total revenue</b>	<u>4,244,472</u>	<u>4,346,018</u>
<b>Expenses:</b>		
Program	3,201,495	3,236,667
Management and general	451,382	489,127
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>3,652,877</u>	<u>3,725,794</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	591,595	620,224
Post-retirement health care benefit obligation (Note 7)	219,688	(497,506)
Change in net assets	811,283	122,718
Net assets - beginning	2,706,697	2,583,979
<b>Net assets - ending</b>	<u>\$ 3,517,980</u>	<u>\$ 2,706,697</u>

See accompanying notes.

3

## BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

### Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended August 31,	2021	2020
<b>Operating activities:</b>		
Change in net assets	\$ 811,283	\$ 122,718
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash flows from operating activities:		
Depreciation	25,435	23,243
Net loss on disposal of property and equipment	1,660	-
Net gain on investments	(531,891)	(564,942)
Changes in other operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	63,844	15,374
Prepaid expenses	(1,318)	(341)
Accounts payable	(15,304)	4,469
Accrued expenses	30,840	9,093
Accrued postretirement health care benefits	(75,808)	613,589
<b>Net operating activities</b>	<u>308,741</u>	<u>223,203</u>
<b>Investing activities:</b>		
Purchase of property and equipment	(19,791)	(5,293)
Purchase of investments	(9,027,875)	(6,908,929)
Proceeds from sale of investments	8,979,727	6,772,479
<b>Net investing activities</b>	<u>(67,939)</u>	<u>(141,743)</u>
Net change in cash	240,802	81,460
Cash - beginning	600,262	518,802
<b>Cash - ending</b>	<u>\$ 841,064</u>	<u>\$ 600,262</u>

See accompanying notes.

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**Notes to Financial Statements**

**1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies:**

**Organization:**

Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. (the Federation) is the bargaining unit for teachers employed by the City of Buffalo Board of Education (the Board of Education).

**New Accounting Standard Adopted:**

In 2021, the Federation adopted Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) Accounting Standards Update (ASU) 2014-09, Revenue from Contracts with Customers (topic 606), using the full retrospective method, and the Federation's accounting policies related to revenues were revised accordingly effective September 1, 2019. ASU 2014-09 is a comprehensive new revenue recognition model that requires an entity to recognize revenue to depict the transfer of goods or services to a customer at an amount that reflects the consideration it expects to receive in exchange for those goods or services. ASU 2014-09 also requires additional disclosure about the nature, amount, timing, and uncertainty of revenue and cash flows arising from customer contracts, including significant judgments and changes in judgments and assets recognized from costs incurred to obtain or fulfill a contract. The adoption of the new standard did not impact the Federation's recognition of revenue and related accounts.

**Cash:**

At various times, cash in financial institutions may exceed federally insured limits and subject the Federation to concentrations of credit risk.

**Receivables:**

Receivables from member loans and the Federation's affiliate and national and state organizations are stated at the amount management expects to collect from outstanding balances. An allowance for doubtful accounts is recorded based on management's assessment of the collectability of individual account balances and historical trends. Amounts outstanding after management has used reasonable collection efforts are written off through a charge to allowance for doubtful accounts and a credit to receivables.

**Investments:**

Investments are stated at fair value based on quoted prices in active markets.

**Property and Equipment:**

Property and equipment is stated at cost, net of accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided over estimated useful lives using the straight-line method.

**Income Taxes:**

The Federation is a 501(c)(5) organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**Functional Expense Allocation:**

The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to program and supporting functions. Some expenses require allocation on a reasonable basis that is consistently applied. The allocated expenses include personnel and related benefits, occupancy and office, public relations, and professional fees, which are allocated based on employee responsibilities and occupancy.

**Use of Estimates:**

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

**Revenue Recognition:**

The Federation represents contract, probationary, and temporary teachers of the Buffalo Public Schools and provides a variety of benefits to its members including legal representation and financial assistance. The Federation's main source of receipts is dues collected from its members by their employer, the Board of Education, on a bi-weekly basis from the end of September through July. Dues revenue is generally recognized and collected during the service period.

**Subsequent Events:**

Management has evaluated events and transactions for potential recognition or disclosure in the financial statements through March 9, 2022, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

**2. Receivables:**

	2021	2020
Affiliate (Note 6)	\$ 26,921	\$ 110,206
National and State Organizations	34,879	43,649
Member loans	80,590	80,790
Interest and other	38,119	9,708
	<u>180,509</u>	<u>244,353</u>
Less allowances for doubtful member loans	80,000	80,000
	<u>\$ 100,509</u>	<u>\$ 164,353</u>

**3. Investments:**

	2021	2020
U.S. Government securities	\$ 189,143	\$ 800
Common stock	1,419,490	1,175,939
Mutual funds	1,961,672	1,763,453
Corporate bonds	414,858	35,996
Certificates of deposit	284,250	481,924
Money market	621,204	852,466
	<u>\$ 4,890,617</u>	<u>\$ 4,310,578</u>

Investment income is as follows:

	2021	2020
Interest and dividends	\$ 130,486	\$ 139,486
Net gains	531,891	564,942
	<u>\$ 662,377</u>	<u>\$ 704,428</u>

**4. Property and Equipment:**

	2021	2020
Land	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Buildings and improvements	463,417	463,417
Office furniture and equipment	157,857	182,386
Computer equipment	155,847	140,543
	<u>802,121</u>	<u>811,346</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	723,846	725,767
	<u>\$ 78,275</u>	<u>\$ 85,579</u>

**5. Short-Term Borrowings:**

The Federation has available a \$100,000 bank demand line of credit with interest payable at prime plus 3.5%, secured by substantially all assets of the Federation. The line is subject to the usual terms and conditions applied by the bank for working capital financing, and is subject to review annually. There were no amounts outstanding under the line at August 31, 2021 and 2020.

**6. Transactions with Affiliate:**

The Federation receives rent (for the use of a portion of its building) from Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. Supplemental Benefit Fund (SBF), a tax-exempt, health and welfare organization. This rent totaled \$17,000 for each of the years ended August 31, 2021 and 2020.

The Federation also remits payment of certain SBF personnel and other expenses for which it is reimbursed. Amounts owed to the Federation from SBF at August 31, 2021 and 2020 included in receivables were \$26,921 and \$110,206.

**7. Post-Retirement Health Care Benefits:**

The Federation provides postretirement health care benefits to all retirees who attain age 55 with fifteen years of service. Employees who retire after September 1, 2016 contribute annual amounts ranging from \$360 to \$900 depending on insurance coverage. It is the Federation's practice to fund these benefits as incurred. The measurement date used to determine the benefit obligation is August 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

The status of the postretirement health benefit plan at and for the years ended August 31, 2021 and 2020 is as follows:

	2021	2020
Accumulated postretirement benefit obligation (APBO)	\$ 2,283,623	\$ 2,359,431
Accrued postretirement benefit obligation (benefit liability)	2,283,623	2,359,431
Accumulated adjustment change in net assets available for benefits	169,463	(50,225)
Benefit cost	153,283	125,571
Benefits paid	9,403	9,488

At August 31, 2021 and 2020, the following items included as adjustments to net assets available for benefits had not yet been recognized as components to benefit cost:

	2021	2020
Net gain (loss)	\$ 169,463	\$ (50,225)

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Lisa is a BPS teacher and proud member of the BTF.

# Extended Pay Plan Questions & Answers for the 2022-23 School Year

Periodically, the BTF receives inquiries about the Extended Pay Plan.

Essentially, the Extended Pay Plan is a form of a savings plan for teachers who want to be assured they have budgeted monies for the summer following the school year. Interest monies are used to help defray the BTF's operational expenses and thereby keep dues costs down.

The program is optional for any Buffalo teacher who wishes to participate. Any teacher who wishes to participate in the Extended Pay Plan for the summer of 2023 should be aware of all the information that follows.

**Q.** How much money do I receive during the summer?

**A.** You decide how much you want to receive during the summer of 2023. Assuming there are no difficulties, payroll deductions occur from 20 paychecks during the 2022-23 school year. The amount you receive will depend on how much you have deducted from each check.

**Q.** How do I receive my summer payments?

**A.** You may receive your summer payments as paper checks mailed directly to the address that is on file with the BTF. There is also a direct deposit option. (Please see the Direct Deposit Section.)

**Q.** How much money will come out of each check?

**A.** The exact amount of deduction is determined by you and will be withheld from 20 of your 22 paychecks. The minimum deduction per paycheck allowable is \$40. You may increase this amount in \$5 units (i.e. \$45, \$50, \$55, \$60, etc.).

**Option 1:** One check or direct deposit issued during the summer recess. Formula: to determine the exact amount of the summer check or direct deposit under Option 1, multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times 20. **Example:** \$100 withheld per paycheck times 20 equals \$2,000. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected Option 1, your one summer check or direct deposit would total exactly \$2,000. **Option 2:** Two checks or direct deposits issued during the summer recess. Formula: to determine the amount per check or deposit under Option 2, multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times 20 and divide by 2. Example: \$100 withheld each paycheck times 20 equals \$2,000 divided by 2 equals \$1,000. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected Option 2, your two summer checks or direct deposits would each total exactly \$1,000.

**Option 3:** Four checks or direct deposits are issued at two-week intervals during the summer recess. **Formula:** To determine the amount per check or direct deposit under Option 3 multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times

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20 and divide by 4. **Example:** \$100 deducted per paycheck times 20 is \$2,000 divided by 4 equals \$500. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected Option 3, your four summer checks or direct deposits would each total exactly \$500.

**Q.** Are there other teachers participating in the BTF Extended Pay Plan?

**A.** Currently more than 1,900 teachers are participating.

**Q.** How do I sign up?

**A.** You must complete an Extended Pay Plan card. The Extended Pay Plan card is divided into 3 cards. Be sure to complete the top two cards as instructed. Be sure the amount that you would like to have deducted from each paycheck is listed. The third card is for direct deposit (please see the direct deposit section below). Cards are not available online. Contact your building delegate for an application form or call Joseph Montante or his secretary, Jackie Newton, at the BTF Office (881-5400). **ALL CARDS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE BTF OFFICE.**

**Q.** When should I sign up for the Extended Pay Plan?

**A.** Submit your form during the months of May, June, and July for the following September. New teachers may enroll when they receive their New Membership Packet.

**Q.** What is an advance withdrawal?

**A.** An advance withdrawal is available to you should you need funds before the summer. One withdrawal per school year is allowed. Call the BTF and ask to speak with either Joseph Montante or Jackie Newton and they will take the necessary information over the telephone. Please be advised that it may take three to five days to process a check.

**Q.** Am I allowed a second withdrawal?

**A.** Yes, however, if a second withdrawal is taken, you will be asked to discontinue your paycheck deduction for the remainder of the school year.

**Q.** Will I be able to have my summer check before the scheduled payments?

**A.** No. To keep our records accurate, up to date and provide sufficient time for our accountants to review the accounts, there will be no withdrawals after June 1st (of each school year) Extended Pay Plan Questions & Answers for the 2022-23 School Year unless there is an

extraordinary circumstance, which we will ask be accompanied by appropriate documentation.

## DIRECT DEPOSIT

The BTF/Extended Pay Plan Program reached an agreement with Northwest Savings Bank for **DIRECT DEPOSIT** of your Extended Pay Plan checks. Listed below are ways that Direct Deposit can make your summer checks efficient and safe:

- 100% of the funds are available when the funds are deposited to your account.
- Funds are in your account when you are sick or on vacation.
- No worries if the mail is late or lost. Please consider this benefit. You will need to complete the third card of the Extended Pay Plan card. The best way to ensure the accuracy of your banking information is to include a voided check for the account that you would like to have the funds deposited into.
- Northwest Bank will have your Extended Pay Plan funds electronically deposited during summer into the bank of your choice. You **DO NOT** need to have an account at Northwest Bank.
- Please remember that if you make any changes to the account that your Extended Pay Plan funds are deposited in, **YOU MUST** notify the BTF before June 1st to be sure that your summer payments are deposited into the correct account.

**\*Special Note:** If you receive paper checks, please be aware that they are only payable for 60 days after the date of issue, as stated on the front of the check. Also be sure to update your address to be sure that your payments arrive on time.

## Extended Pay Plan Dates Set

Extended Pay Plan disbursement date for the summer are:

- July 15
- July 29
- August 12
- August 26

The number of disbursements you will receive has been pre-selected by you. If you have questions, please call the BTF.