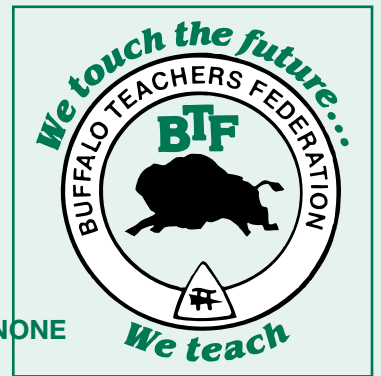


PROVOCATOR

December 2017

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 48/NUMBER 2

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



BTF's 21st Annual Thanksgiving Dinner Feeds More than 200 Needy Families

For the 21st consecutive year, the Buffalo Teachers Federation has made Thanksgiving “a day of thanks” for needy families in the Buffalo School District.

Thousands of dollars in food and gift certificates were donated by BTF members and distributed through several charitable and non-profit groups.

The annual event is held in an effort to “make sure those families enjoy a ‘meal of thanks’ on Thanksgiving Day”, BTF President Phil Rumore explained.

“As we do each year, this bounty of food before us was donated by Buffalo Teachers and students who want to do their part to make sure families, who might otherwise go without, would enjoy their Thanksgiving Day meal,” Phil said.

“This is our 21st Annual Thanksgiving food drive where canned and packaged goods and monetary donations were made by Buffalo teachers. This is a wonderful way for all of us to give thanks for what we have. After all, isn’t that what Thanksgiving is all about?”, Phil continued.

He said more than 3,000 families have benefited from the BTF Thanksgiving Food Drive throughout the years.

After the food was collected, volunteers met at the BTF office where they stuffed shopping bags with all the traditional foods for a Thanksgiving feast: corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, stuffing mix, and a \$10 gift card for Tops Supermarkets to purchase a turkey.

The bags, and boxes of additional food items, were picked up and distributed to the needy by several non-profit organizations. JROTC cadets in Senior Army Instructor Jeffery Cipolla’s class at Hutch Tech helped pack the bags and carried the food bags to the cars of the agencies that distributed the food. Other volunteers included President Phil Rumore, Vice President Rebecca Pordum and Treasurer Joseph



Montante. Executive Committee members Sophia Howard-Johnson, Ruyvette Townsend, and Elizabeth Spiro-Carman also helped.

The organizations distributing the food were: The Community Action Organization, The Gloria Parks Community Center, Native American Community Services, Project JOY/ Fulgham Family Foundation, the City Mission, Hispanic Heritage Council of WNY, Inc. and Women for Human Rights and Dignity.

Each received 17 of the prepared bags to distribute to their members. The agencies also took the copious food donations that teachers generously dropped off to BTF.

Chanel 2 News was on hand and reported on the food distribution during its newscasts.



1. Before the loading of the food into vans, the volunteers pose for a photo with President Phil Rumore and VP Rebecca Pordum.

2. Always eager to assist, Executive Committee member Ruyvette Townsend helps as a student volunteer from Hutch Tech packs a bag.

3. With loading underway, JROTC Instructor Jeffrey Cipolla helps carry bags as volunteers from the charitable agencies fill their vehicles.



Three Gifts

by PHIL RUMORE

The snow swirling outside the classroom window seemed to be affirming the children's belief that the winter holiday season is the time for anything but school work.

"Talk about conspiracies," thought Terry Hastings, the first-year third grade teacher, "even the weather's against me. The last day of school before the winter holiday vacation is tough enough without that constant reminder brushing against the windows."

"Thomas, please pay attention up here. There are no math facts written in the snow."

Terry had to admit that there was more action outside, but she was troubled. Tommy had been a problem all year. He was in class, but his thoughts weren't. Today he was more distracted than ever.

After a home visit with Mrs. Casey, Tommy's mother, Terry understood the meaning of "impoverished". She had seen a house that was certainly clean, but one that had only the barest of furnishings.

She remembered that there was a color television, or rather color on the television. The colors on the set in no way represented the real world. The half green faces and flesh colored grass had given a surrealistic appearance to the "ring around the collar" commercial blaring on the television.

"What kind of Christmas will Tommy have?" thought Terry. "I wonder if he's upset because he knows he won't be getting many of the things he wants for Christmas."

The morning passed (as did Tommy's attention). Now back from lunch, the children were barely able to contain their excitement. Not so for Tommy. As the children readied their presents and snacks, Terry had a private talk with Tommy which proved useless.

After the snacks were passed out, the children decided to exchange holiday gifts. They had written notes home asking if they could either make a gift or spend a dollar for one. Each parent had been agreeable. They had

drawn names, and now the big moment had arrived.

Terry sat down and proceeded to let groups exchange their gifts. By the time Charles, the boy who was to exchange gifts with Tommy, reached Tommy's desk, tears were streaming down Tommy's cheeks.

"My mother didn't come home last night..." he cried, almost unable to speak. "...and she forgot to leave any money." Poor Charles was almost crying himself.

"And my brother wouldn't give me any. I'm sorry Charles. I don't have anything for you."

By this time Tommy was almost hysterical. He could say no more even if he wanted to.

Charles finally spoke up. "Tommy don't be sad, you don't have to give me anything." There was what seemed like a suspension of time for a few seconds. "Remember when you gave me some of your lunch when mine got knocked down," Charles blurted. "And how Miss Hastings tells us stories about sharing... and about how we're friends?" Tommy looked up from his desk. His face was steaming with the paths left by his tears.

Charles, apprehensively, handed Tommy a red construction paper card which he had obviously spent much time making. It was beautifully colored, with sparkles, evergreen needles and tinsel pasted on the front.

"Please take my present", Charles implored.

Just how tears of sadness could at once be transformed to tears of joy was a mystery that only a child's understanding could have solved.

Terry cleaned up her room that Christmas. She knew the warmth and feeling of togetherness felt by the class as Tommy's eyes lit up, overjoyed with his gift, would be remembered by them all. Nor would she forget the radiance of his face as he left for home.

Finally, just a few pieces of wrapping paper remained on her desk before she could call it a day. And one last gift...wrapped in school writing paper no less.

"To Miss Hastings." She opened the paper... "From Tommy." In her hand Terry held the red card that meant so much to him. She just couldn't believe it. Now in the warmth of a June day, 30 years later, Mrs. Teresa Powell removed the red construction paper card from her desk drawer. It was her last day before retirement. She thought about how the everyday realities of teaching sometimes displaced her belief in the rewards of teaching. Tommy, Charles, and the card had been a reminder of that belief for the last 30 years. She was happy. She had been right.

As she walked to the office to turn in her keys for the last time, she thought to herself.

Thank you Charles.

Thank you Tommy.

I'll never forget.

And she never did.



BTF at a Glance

BTF President

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BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis,
Sophia Howard-Johnson,
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster
Christopher Stephens,
Ruyvette Townsend

7-12

Dennis Brancato, Patrick Foster,
Lynn Garcia, Melissa Kenney,
M. Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone,
Eve Shippens

K-12

Susan Marie Baker, Nicole Herkey,
Isabella Keegan, Catherine Lipsitz,
Mark Mecca, Gregory Sawicki,
Elizabeth Spiro-Carman

At Large

Marc Bruno, Tom Gattie, Mike Mecca

BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*
Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*
Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*
Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*
Deana Fox, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*
Dennis Licherelli, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*
Nick Whitman, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*

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www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*
Chris Salamone, *editor*

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Letters to the Editor

Red Cross Thanks BTF for Hurricane Donations

Thank you and Buffalo teachers for your generous gift to the American Red Cross for Hurricane Harvey. This season has been one of the most active on record for the Atlantic basin, as record storms ravaged communities and destroyed homes across multiple states and U.S. territories. In the face of such tremendous devastation, we are grateful for your support, which helps fuel our wide-ranging relief efforts for thousands of people in their darkest hours.

Selfless Red Cross volunteers and employees worked around the clock to provide safe shelters, food, emotional support and relief supplies for people forced from their homes by Hurricane Harvey. After skies cleared and families began returning to ravaged neighborhoods, your donation delivers ongoing support, enabling workers to distribute food, water, cleanup supplies

and other relief items to people cleaning out their homes. Thanks to generous donations like yours, we're also able to provide emergency financial assistance to households severely impacted by the storm. This vital relief-made possible with your commitment-makes a real difference for individuals and families who have lost so much.

It will take time for people to rebuild their lives after losing so much to this destructive hurricane season. With your generosity, we will remain by their sides with our partners, helping survivors to get back on their feet and become more resilient against future crises. Thank you again for your support, which makes a meaningful difference when it's needed most.

Sincerely,
Malisa Kurtz
Regional Philanthropy Officer

BTF Supports UAW

We would like to thank you for purchasing an ad in this year's UAW Awards Dinner program. With your help we have been able to provide two annual scholarships to deserving children of UAW Region 9 members for 4 years.

In solidarity,
Terry Dittes, Region 9 Director



BTF Buys Fire Dept. Ad

On behalf of the Buffalo Fire Department and Local 282, I would like to thank the Buffalo Teachers Federation for supporting our 127th Annual Awards Ball. Your ad sponsorship couldn't be more appreciated. You helped make this evening a success.

We look forward to working with you again next year.

Kevin Sikorski
Committee Chairman

FDCA Thanks BTF

Thank you for again buying an ad in the award dinner program! We had 200 plus folks at the event. We appreciate your support over many years!

Jim Lee
Forest Dist. Civic Association

Hispanic Women's League Appreciates Support

Thank you so much for your support of our 38th Annual Hispanic Women's League Scholarship Dinner. We are humbled by the generous support of our sponsors and were able to raise over \$6,000 for our scholarships. The overwhelming success of our 2017 dinner proceeds will ensure our ability to continue to award college scholarships to deserving Latina women in the WNY region.

We are in the planning stages for our 39th Anniversary Dinner & Scholarship Celebration. We encourage your continued support of the mission of the Hispanic Women's League. We are proud of our past accomplishments and look forward to future endeavors with our generous supporters and friends.

Sincerely,
Natalia Land & Maggie Orta
Co-Chairs HWL Dinner

BTF Generosity Is Appreciated

We would like to thank you for your support of the West Side Ponytail Softball and Boys Baseball Leagues for all these years. The leagues have been in existence since 1976.

It's people like yourself who have consistently patronized our programs that makes it possible for us to offer the West Side youth programs to participate in.

I believe in giving our youth the opportunity to participate in wholesome

supervised recreation such as softball and baseball. It is one way we can keep them from hanging out idle and learning the wrong things from the wrong people. The leagues are purely recreational; 100% of the sponsors are small businesses from the community. We are forever grateful.

Be assured that your generosity is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Tovie Asarese, League Director

Have You Invested
in Your Future?
Please donate to



See your delegate chair
or call the BTF at 881-5400

Devastation of Hurricane Maria Eased by BTF

Thank you for your assistance with our efforts to collect emergency supplies and much-needed funds to aid the relief effort in Puerto Rico following the devastation of Hurricane Maria. Your time, talents, and treasure helped us greatly in this monumental task.

Your generous donation to the Puerto Rico Hurricane Maria Relief Fund Telethon (c/o the Belle Center, a 501C3) will go directly towards providing the people of Puerto Rico with essential materials and supplies and to helping them rebuild their beautiful island.

Sincerely,
The PR Hurricane Maria Relief Fund
Committee, c/o the Belle Center



Delegate Leadership Workshop Informative & Fun for Building Reps

About 60 building representatives, some of them serving their colleagues for the first time, gave up a good portion of their weekend October 27 and 28 to attend the annual BTF Delegate/ Leadership Workshop.

The Workshop got underway Friday with comments and review of the contract by President Philip Rumore.

"I want to sincerely thank you for taking part of your weekend to help fellow teachers", he told those in attendance.

The intensive training sessions for Delegates, Alternates, and Building Committee members, was held at the Millennium Hotel in Cheektowaga. Every aspect of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, including its constitution, contract, committees, and benefits were reviewed. Obligations, rights, and duties of building representatives were covered. Grievance procedures and contract violations included real-life situations and resolution.

The sessions were conducted by BTF President Phil Rumore, NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists Dennis Licherelli, Deana Fox, and Nick Whitman.

Some who came were attending the workshop for the first time. Others, seasoned

delegates with years of experience, came to refresh themselves on BTF rights and regulations.

Regardless of why they came, everyone left with a newfound respect for the BTF, a feeling of camaraderie, and a strong desire to defend our contract and colleagues against violations.

Some information shared during the workshop included:

- grievance procedures
- Building Committee rights and responsibilities
- member apathy
- getting more teachers involved in BTF activities
- School computers should not be used for personal matters because school officials can access everything
- Information on social media can be used against you, so be careful what you post!
- Any time a teacher is called into a meeting with an administrator present, a BTF representative should also be present.

Teachers who attended the workshop said it was very informative and well worth their time.



1. President Phil Rumore gives an overview of the handbook used at the training weekend.

2. With new delegates Bill Merriman and Belinda Clifford listening to the presentation, Susan Trifiletti tries to learn as much about the Contract as possible.

3. Executive Committee member Sophia Howard-Johnson shares information with Kim Nixon-Williams as Kristine Nixon-Douglas leafs through other important information.

4. Looking through the pages of the Delegates handbook, Ruyvette Townsend and Shawn King search for information about an arbitration decision.

5. As members of the Executive Committee, Trish Rosokoff and Tom Gattie were asked to stand and be recognized.



Social Media – The Third Rail

by **Claire Sellers**, Associate NYSUT Counsel

Social Media is a tool. Like any tool, when misused, it can cause more harm than good. During my time at NYSUT, I have seen many members in trouble for their inappropriate use of social media. Here are a few tips to help you avoid landing in a similar situation.

- If you text, call, e-mail, chat, tweet or Skype (or even have your dog deliver a letter) with/to student(s), someone is going to find out about it.

- **DO NOT** become “friends” with students on social media.

- Even though you may appropriately be away from school or using paid time off, just remember your posts show where you are, when you were there, and what you were doing.

- The internet is forever. What you post, email, or tweet, leaves a footprint that can be recreated long after you delete the original message.

- If you are trying to illicit a reaction, you will and it may not be the one you wanted.

As you are reading this article, you are probably thinking, “Okay, but what about my First Amendment right to free speech?” Public employees do NOT have an unfettered right to free speech. While all First Amendment cases are intensely fact-specific, in general, if the speech is considered non-duty speech, the First Amendment will protect the speech as long as the speech is a matter of public concern and will not disrupt the provision of services. BUT, if the speech is 1) made pursuant to official duties (no matter where it occurs); 2) is not a matter of public concern (i.e. saying mean things about a student on social media); or 3) disrupts the District’s ability to provide services (i.e. speech that leads parents to complain about you as a teacher), the First Amendment does not protect the speech.

The message I want you to take away is that educators are held to a higher standard and viewed as role models in the community.

Therefore, your freedom of speech does not mean freedom from consequences. So, use Facebook to share about your life with your friends and family. Do not use Facebook to attack your students or parents. Use Instagram to share pictures of your kids with your friends and family. Do not use Instagram to share your political views with your students. Use group email or texting apps to coordinate student activities or sporting events. Do not have private email conversations or text message with students.

And most importantly, think twice before you post – if you think it may be a bad idea, or someone tells you it is a bad idea, it is a bad idea!!!

This article is for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it establish an attorney-client relationship.



ABOVE: At the Delegate workshop, NYSUT attorney Claire Sellers educates building leaders about the hazards of social media.

Did You Know...

That according to the contract, teachers shall be informed whenever feasible of a student’s psychological, emotional, and medical conditions as well as other information including legal guardianship which might affect the student’s achievement or behavior or the safety of that student or others? If not, it’s in our collective bargaining agreement. Check out Article XI, Paragraph O.

Scholarships Available

The Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo will be awarding scholarships for the 2018-19 academic year in the spring. Students who currently are high school seniors or are already enrolled in an accredited program are encouraged to apply.

Applications are accepted from students all over Western New York and some money is allocated specifically for the children of Buffalo Teachers. Awards range from \$1000-\$6000. The application process opens on January 1st and closes April 1st. To apply, visit www.cfgb.org and click on the For Scholarships tab. You also may call the CFGB at 852-2857.

Mini Grants for Teachers

Mini grants for teachers to develop classroom projects that benefit students are available through the NYSUT Retirees of WNY.

Applications for the grants must be received before the first week in February. The grants, up to \$500, are for the upcoming school year.

To apply, contact:
NYSUT Retirees of WNY
Scholarship Committee
270 Essjay Road
Williamsville, NY 14221

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19 Delegates Attend NYSTRS Annual Meeting

Nineteen delegates from Buffalo attended the 97th Annual Meeting of the New York State Teachers' Retirement System November 5 and 6 in Saratoga Springs, NY.

The good news is that your pension is safe! With the overwhelming defeat of the Constitutional Convention Referendum, no changes can be made to the promised benefits you will eventually receive. And with over \$110 billion in assets, the NYS Teachers' Retirement System is an exceptionally well-managed system.

The Annual Meeting consisted of a number of seminars for delegates to attend. Information and power points from these seminars can be seen at nystrs.org/Delegates/Annual-Delegates-Meeting.

The delegates who attended the convention were: Roger Aumick, Maria Baker, Rachel Binda-Lis, Dennis Brancato, Lynn Garcia, Thomas Gattie, Nicole Herkey, Sophia Howard-Johnson, Melissa Kenney, Mark Mecca, Mike Mecca, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Emily Ostroff, Sue Raichilson, Claire Rosart, Trisha Rosokoff, Christine Salamone, Gregory Sawicki, and Ruyvette Townsend.



Mural Created to Honor Labor Movement

During the summer, the Buffalo Public Schools Art Department collaborated on a major project called "The Art of Labor."

The collaboration resulted in a mural painting which combined the designs of two local artists, Patrick Foran and Tricia Butski, three BPS Art teachers and student artists.

The students, from a number of our schools, participated in Mural Mania/Radio Arts summer camp and worked on the design for several weeks. In addition, they were able to attend several mural arts field trips around the city of Buffalo.

The supplies to create this mural were generously funded through the BPS Art Education Department as well as community groups including the WNY Area Labor Federation, Buffalo Arts Studio, the Coalition for Economic Justice, Open Buffalo, and IUPAT.

This beautiful artwork is located at 333 Clinton Street, on the side of School #187. The images represent the hard work that happens every day throughout the city of Buffalo.

By all means, check it out!



Rumore Holds Press Conference on Lack of Charter School Diversity



BTF President Phil Rumore held a press conference on November 22nd at the BTF office. Several media outlets listened as Rumore spoke about the lack of diversity among the teaching and administrative staff at local charter schools.

For example, while 25% of the students in charter schools in Erie County are white, 81% of the principals and assistant principals are white (57% of BPS building administrators are white).

Even more disturbing is that some of the charter schools have little to no diversity among the student population. Westminster and Aloma Johnson have no white students at all and Buffalo United and King Charter have only 2% white students.

In contrast, Global Concepts and South Buffalo Charter Schools have a disproportionate percentage of white students at 66% and 51%, respectively.

Furthermore, while 68% of the charter school students in Erie County are African American or Hispanic, only 20% of their building administrators are (38% of BPS building administrators are African American or Hispanic).

A similar imbalance exists among the instructional staff in charter schools as 89% of the teachers are white. Some individual schools, namely South Buffalo Charter and Maritime

Charter, have a 100% white teaching staff. All of these results were reported by the charter schools themselves and reflect the 2015-16 school year.

"This analysis provides very troubling and serious statistics that must be addressed by the Charter Schools, the courts, the legislature, or all of the above", said President Rumore. "There is no excuse for not seeking out and hiring a diverse administrative staff. The Charter Schools control that completely."

Diversity will in and of itself not ensure greater scores on what many consider invalid tests. Smaller class sizes, increased student support services and administrative support services will improve the education of students. However, seeing someone who looks like you gives students the knowledge that they can succeed.

Tech Band Teacher Named Semi-Finalist

Amy Steiner, a Buffalo Public School music teacher, has been named a semi-finalist for the Music Educator Award.

The winner of the award, presented by the Recording Academy and the Grammy Museum, will be announced in January during the 60th Annual Grammy Awards in New York City.

Steiner, the band teacher at Hutch Tech, is passionate about music and that passion is evident to students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. She is one of 25 semi-finalists for the award.

The Music Educator Award was established to recognize current educators from kindergarten through college who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of music education and who demonstrate a commitment to maintaining music education in the schools. The 25 semi-finalists were selected from hundreds of nominees from all 50 states.

The list will be pared down to 10 finalists this month and the winner will be flown to New York to attend the 60th Annual Grammy Awards and a range of Grammy week events.

The remaining nine finalists will each receive a \$1,000 honorarium. In addition, the schools of all 10 finalists will receive matching grants. The other 15 semifinalists will receive a \$500 honorarium with matching school grants.

Steiner started a campaign called FORGOT MUSIC? in Buffalo after music programs were eliminated in budget cuts. She is a founder and conductor of the Buffalo Niagara Concert Band and plays the bassoon.



ABOVE: Band Teacher Amy Steiner practices with students before a concert.

A mother of three, Steiner also subs for wind ensembles or symphony concerts and is the band director for Tech's well-known jazz ensemble.

The BTF is proud to have Amy Steiner as a member and wishes her the best.

Provocator To Highlight Teacher Accomplishments

Are you involved in a community project, publishing a book or traveling to an exotic location? Have you won an award, been honored, or elected to a post?

If so, share your good news and accomplishments with your colleagues.

The Provocator will highlight Buffalo Public School teachers in each of its editions. If you would like share your news, send the following information via e-mail to salamone426@aol.com.

Name _____

School/position: _____

Personal Email _____

Phone _____

Announcement _____

All submissions become the property of the Provocator.

Six BPS Teachers Recognized For Outstanding Work With Students

Six Buffalo teachers were honored by the Buffalo Board of Education recently for their contributions in Math, Science, Technology, and Engineering.

Five of the teachers were named Master Teachers by New York State and were recognized during the November 15 Board of Education meeting. They are: Mary Dileas, Math teacher at Emerson; Kathy Ellis, Math teacher at DaVinci; Kelly Hyla, Science teacher at City Honors; Jennifer Koscielski, Science teacher at Herman Badillo, and Kelly Przybyla, Math teacher at City Honors.

The Master Teachers were among 214 teachers statewide chosen for the honor from a pool of several thousand applicants.

Each of the teachers will receive a \$15,000 stipend for each of four years to engage in peer mentoring and teacher training.

All of the teachers chosen are active beyond their classrooms, serving as curriculum department leaders, sponsors of STEM clubs, mentors for Science Olympiad competitions, robotics teams, and school community service organizations.



PICTURED: Andrew Franz, Kelly Hyla, Jennifer Koscielski and Mary Dileas. Photo courtesy of BPS.

In addition to these five teachers, Andrew Franz from Hamlin Park School was recognized for having mentored three students who sent potato spuds into space from Cape Canaveral to the International Space Station through NASA.

Franz, who formerly taught science, is currently an 8th grade 6:1:1 teacher.

Last month he was presented with a Milken Educator Award, as one of 45 recipients across the country. The award comes with a \$25,000 prize, but more importantly, national recognition as an innovator in the classroom.

Nadia Shahram, Esq.
An Attorney With Purpose

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- Suzanna C.G.



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Imagine Working Without Union Protection

by Joseph Montante

Have you ever called the BTF? Have you had questions about your benefits? Have you ever been harassed by an administrator? Were you ever assaulted by a student?

While the staff at the BTF is happy to answer teachers' questions about benefits, it's a sad reality that more often, the calls are from teachers who have had problems with unreasonable administrators or have faced severe student behavior problems while trying to do the best job possible.

For many years, the BTF has been there to stand by and help its teachers in times of need. The BTF has negotiated salaries and benefits like healthcare so that all of us can have a better standard of living.

Imagine what it would be like to be an employee of Buffalo Public Schools and not have union representation. What if a vindictive principal wanted to get rid of you so badly that 3020a charges were unjustly brought against you? If you are not familiar with 3020a, it's the section of education law that allows a school district to dismiss a tenured teacher but also provides for due process and union representation.

In our contract, Article XL states that the Board and Federation recognize that the administration of collective bargaining agreements and related activities entail expenses which are appropriately shared by all employees covered by such agreements. They further recognize that the Federation, by reason of its status as the "exclusive representative" of all employees in the negotiating unit, is obliged to represent all such employees without regard to their membership in the Federation. For this reason, teachers who choose

not to join the union are assessed an "agency fee" equal to the amount of the dues and this fee is taken from payroll deduction just as dues would be.

However, a case before the Supreme Court called *Janus vs AFSCME* could prevent states like New York from assessing all who benefit from union representation their fair share of the costs of that representation. In October, the Supreme Court of the United States decided to take the case and a decision should be made before the end of this school year.

Unfortunately, with Neil Gorsuch now a seated justice, AFSCME will likely lose and agency fee will almost certainly end. Because unions like the BTF are obliged to represent all employees, there will be some teachers who choose not to pay dues but want to reap the benefits of union membership. Such people are sometimes called "free riders" but we prefer to call them "freeloaders".

Running an organization like the BTF has costs associated with it. There are office supplies, salaries of staff members, and a host of other expenses in our budget. NYSUT, to be fiscally prudent, is estimating a 10% loss of membership after the *Janus* decision is rendered and has made cuts in some areas, including program and staffing. In fact, NYSUT, for a time, had instituted a hiring freeze and has eliminated 80 positions due to attrition statewide resulting in heavier workloads for those remaining employees.

At the BTF, we can ill afford cuts in staffing. Teachers deserve to receive the excellent representation and benefits they are receiving. The *Janus* case is all about trying to destroy

unions by cutting off their finances and forcing cuts in services. They hope employees then become disillusioned, causing a further downward spiral.

We will not let that happen to the Buffalo Teachers Federation! Our members know that we have led the way on many causes and will continue to do so. In the coming weeks and months, you will hear much more about the *Janus* case, the impact its decision could have on NYSUT, the BTF, and you.

Staying a member of the BTF in a post-*Janus* America may cost you a small amount in dues now, but will bring you much better salary, benefits, and representation throughout your career.

Time for Prostate, Breast Cancer Screening

Every year, tens of thousands of men and women die from prostate cancer and breast cancer. There's no excuse to skip your annual PSA test or mammogram check for these cancers.

Buffalo Public School employees are entitled to four hours' leave per year to have these important screening tests done. To take advantage of this health care opportunity, enter your absence into AESOP as a Mammogram or Prostate Cancer Screening.

A verification form, available from your building clerk or representative must also be completed by the health care provider. This form is turned into the clerk for payroll purposes.

South Park Teacher Receives Art Award

Veronica Kruger, a South Park High School Art teacher, has been named New York State Art Educator of the Year for Region One.

The award is given by the New York State Art Teachers Association for excellence in Art education over an extended period of years. The winner also must demonstrate exemplary teaching, strong advocacy, and must have made an impact in their school, region, state, and within the association.

Kruger received her award at the

annual November NYSATA Conference Awards breakfast in Binghamton, NY.

Kruger is an artist who has had her work displayed and sold throughout WNY. She also established a Fashion Art & Design Academy program in the visual art department at South Park. Through this program, her students have competed and won awards in various fashion venues.

Kruger is also active in community issues and conducts the annual Bald for Bucks event at South Park.



ABOVE: With her husband Benjamin at her side, Veronica Kruger proudly displays her award.

Traveling Owls Blow into Windy City

The mascot of the Frederick Law Olmsted School is the owl. Recently, 42 Owls from Olmsted High School traveled to Chicago on a four-day, three-night trip. Departing on September 29, the group made its way into the Windy City by motor coach, accompanied by seven adult chaperones.

While there, the students explored the Navy Pier and experienced the architecture of Chicago on a 75-minute river cruise.

Other highlights of the trip included the Field Museum, featuring Sue the T-Rex, the Science and Industry Museum, which included boarding the German U-505 submarine from WW II, and the Lincoln Park Zoo. They also went to the top of the Willis Tower, enjoyed a dim sum lunch

in Chinatown, a night at Dave and Busters, and an outstanding dinner show called Tommy Guns Garage.

For seven years, Olmsted High School has taken a trip in the fall to destinations such as New York City, Boston, Washington, and Philadelphia. The "Traveling Owls," as they are known, was the brainchild of former Olmsted teacher and current BTF Treasurer Joseph Montante who has planned and organized all 7 trips.

"It is my hope that the Traveling Owls will be able to continue now that I am no longer at Olmsted," Montante said. "The kids have such a fantastic experience on these trips because it's a mix of educational sites, cultural highlights, and fun."

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 that you would like to share with your BTF 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 e-mail to salamone426@aol.com.

Name _____

School/position: _____

Personal Email _____

Phone _____

Description of event _____

All submissions become the property of the Provocator.



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Walkers representing the BTF



Walkers from Southside Elementary



BTF WALK ORGANIZERS: Ruyvette Townsend, co-chair, President Phil Rumore, Vice President Becky Pordum and Rachel Lis, co-chair.

BTF Raises More Than \$3,000 For Cancer Research

More than \$3,000 was raised for the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk held October 14 at Canalside. More than 50 BTF teachers and their families joined other NYSUT members for the walk.

A theme basket raffle and a 50/50 drawing during the October Council of Delegates meeting contributed to the \$3,083 total. Baskets for the raffle were made and donated by members of the Executive Board.

Donations also came from the following: schools #3, #54, #65, #67, #69, #93, Academy High School, Riverside High School, the Teachers' Center, and the BTF.

Rachel Lis and Ruyvette Townsend were co-chairs of the Cancer Walk. Sue Raichilson helped with registration of walkers and runners. BTF President Phil Rumore attended the event and donated to the cause.

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Happy Holidays from the Staff at BTF Have a Safe and Restful Break



SEATED: Joseph Montante, Rebecca Pordum, Phil Rumore, Dennis Licherelli, Deana Fox, Nick Whitman
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