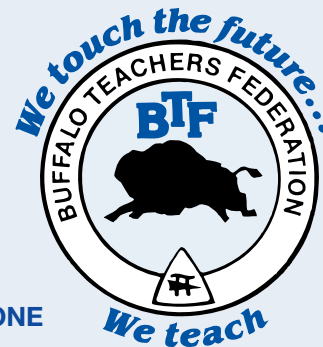


PROVOCATOR

Spring 2017

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 46/NUMBER 1

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



Committee of 100 Lobbies State Representatives In Albany

More than 600 NYSUT members, including five from the BTF, went to Albany March 6-7 to lobby legislators for money for education and other critical issues as part of the annual Committee of 100 Advocacy Days.

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

BTF President Phillip Rumore and Rebecca Pordum, BTF treasurer and presidential assistant, attended the event as the BTF representatives. Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, director of the Teacher Center, Thomas Gattie, BTF Executive Committee member and teacher at Hutch Tech lobbied to stop cuts in Teacher Center funding. BTF Executive Board Member Ruyvette Townsend attended to lobby for the "Grow Your Own" initiative that encourages students to attend college and major in education.

The BTF representatives met with Western New York lawmakers to urge funding for Buffalo Schools and all other critical issues. See www.btfny.org News and Alerts.

Rumore told the legislators that more than a billion dollars "has been stolen from our students."

He said Buffalo schools was owed \$1,112,301,212 from when "New York State was found guilty of violating the New York State constitutional requirement to provide all New York State students with a 'Sound Basic Education,'"

To comply with a court order to rectify the problem, the 2007-08 state budget included funding called "Foundation Aid." It included a four-year phase in of funding increases that was partially implemented in 2008-09, but was then frozen in 2009-10 budget. As a result, Buffalo students have had more than \$1 billion withheld from them.

"Incredibly, the governor has attempted to hide the removal of the Foundation Aid Formula thereby canceling the billion dollar debt to our students," Rumore said.

Other issues Rumore took to the Western New York delegation included:

- NYS did not give school districts its share of lottery money

- Charter Schools siphon \$69,924,800 per year from Buffalo Public Schools. "The most critical problem relating to Charter Schools is that they draw desperately needed funding from District schools that cannot be compensated for despite the loss of students," Rumore explained.

- BTF wants funding for the "Grow Our Own" program which would provide full college funding for Buffalo students who want to become teachers and are willing to teach in Buffalo for a number of years after graduation.

- BTF recommends the immediate repeal of receivership legislation and the return of local control to the citizens of NYS and a state-wide \$150 million continued appropriation for receivership schools to continue successful programs after June 2017.

- Recommends the elimination of the current APPR legislation and return the development of teacher evaluations to local control wherein it is negotiated by the parties.

- Urges the legislature to support and expand access to critical Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and increase aid for CTE programs.

- Opposes "Parent Choice" voucher legislation, a Constitution Convention and a proposal that would allow approved special education providers and private schools to petition for flexibility in complying with certain special education requirements.

- Supports funding for community schools, the Assembly's progressive tax plan for the state's highest earners which raises \$5.6 billion in new revenue to support public education, health care and infrastructure improvements, closing the "carried interest" loophole which allows partners at private equity firms and hedge funds to pay a greatly reduced federal tax on much of their income by declaring it to be capital gains.

- Said NYS is the second worst in the nation in disparity of what affluent kids get and what poor children get in school funding.

Other participants in the annual Committee of 100 -- which has grown beyond its name -- asked lawmakers to support important budget and policy

priorities that affect our schools, campuses, workplaces and communities.

Classroom teachers, college faculty and professionals, and other educators spent their time in meetings with local legislators. They pressed for an increase of \$2.1 billion in school aid, the same level of funding called for by the Regents; a strong, multi-year investment in SUNY, CUNY and the state's community colleges; and restoration in state subsidies to SUNY hospitals, among other priorities.

The lobbyists, when asked by lawmakers where the money would come from, told them it could come from a "millionaire's tax" and "carried interest loopholes."

BTF and NYSUT is backing legislation in the Assembly to extend and expand the "millionaire's tax." If approved, this would mean an increase in state revenue by \$5.6 billion.

BTF and NYSUT also support a two-house initiative to close the "carried-interest" loophole. This loophole, which only benefits hedge-fund managers and private equity partners, costs taxpayers about \$3.5 billion a year in tax revenue. The union feels that money could be used to expand programs that support students and middle class families.

BTF is also pressing for repeal of the punitive school receivership statute and rejection of the proposed education tax credit/voucher scheme. The union urged the Legislature to enact legislation to require any school on the receivership list to automatically become a community school.

BTF and NYSUT is also requesting the Legislature maintain the \$255 million in existing community school funding and to add \$100 million in new funding to adequately sustain community schools statewide through a Community School Categorical Aid.

Members also urged the Legislature to set a more positive course for public education by electing Regents who will listen to educators and parents and to fully address their concerns about student assessments and the misuse of test scores.



The Robotization of Education

You may think that the stories you have read and movies you have seen depicting unthinking robots ruling the world are fantasy. Unfortunately, they are becoming reality. However, the “robots” may not be machines but instead our children.

The abuse of what I call “robotizing” tests is beginning to turn our students and teachers into beings more like robots than thinking, feeling and creative people.

We are brutalizing and desensitizing our students by inflicting developmentally inappropriate and invalid tests that provide us no useful and timely information to diagnose, support and reward our students’ progress.

Instead, we are teaching our students that the instructional time spent on the test preparation, pre-testing and high stakes, pressure cooker, robotizing tests that they are being forced to take, while robbing them of many weeks of instruction, are good for them.

Teachers have little or no control over what and how they teach, but rather must teach from a script and may be admonished if they deviate from that script.

Students are not only being provided with a scripted, inflexible experience, but they are then forced to take inappropriate, high pressure, mind numbing tests that have no relevance to them over and over and over again. It is like giving blood tests

over and over to healthy people until they become incapacitated.

Teachers are being forced to “robotize” instruction and assessment while our students are treated as if they were robots.

Yes, we must have testing. Teachers test often; however, they receive immediate results that are used to help our students.

Students new to our country (over 80 languages are spoken in the Buffalo schools) must take tests after being in our country for only one year.

Students with disabilities must be tested.

In addition, as you know some students and adults are good test takers and others are not.

The Tests – The New York Common Core Task Force (the Task Force created to examine the tests) concluded, “Until the new system is fully phased in, the results from assessments aligned to the current Common Core Standards, as well as the updated standards, shall only be advisory and not be used to evaluate the performance of individual teachers or students”.

Yes, there should be methods to determine the quality of teaching and learning.

The question is how do we assess learning, knowledge, critical thinking, creativity and the love of learning without destroying them?

Teachers do not fear fair evaluations; however, we, as do many parents, oppose the testing of students and the evaluation of teachers based upon invalidated, unvalidated, age inappropriate student tests that mitigate against student creativity, against student critical thinking and against students’ love of learning.

In short, we and many people will not accept the educational “robotization” of students and teachers.

BTF at a Glance

BTF President

Philip Rumore

BTF Vice President

Edith LeWin

BTF Treasurer

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Secretary

Kevin Gibson



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Sophia Howard-Johnson, Christopher Stephens, Trisha Rosokoff, Rachel Binda-Lis, Phyllis Mays, Teresa Leatherbarrow

7-12

Tom Gattie, Melissa Kenney, Dennis Brancato, Chris Salamone, Tom Anthony, M. Sue Raichilson, Lynn Garcia

K-12

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Mark Mecca, Gregory Sawicki, Nicole Herkey, Lucille Emmi, Susan Marie Baker, Sean Crowley

At Large

Mike Mecca, Joseph Montante, Ruyvette Townsend

BTF Headquarters Staff

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

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

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

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The BTF is an affiliate of NYSUT, AFT and NEA.

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Letters to the Editor

BTF Contributes To Clean Air Organization

Thank you for your donation to Clean Air: Organizing for Health and Justice! Because of your support, of our Sustainability Fund, we are able to continue to take on bold campaigns that make real change in people's lives.

Last year we:

- Successfully advocated for Participatory Budgeting (PB) through 20 phone banks, five Common Council hearings, and countless team meetings, and won \$150,000 for PB in the City of Buffalo, bringing it to Buffalo for the first time ever.

- Organized a coalition of community stakeholders to make sure we were prepared when Huntley announced its closure in September 2015, and won \$19 million in the NYS Budget for communities facing coal plant closure.

- Joined forces with residents living near the old American Axle site on East Delavan, who are facing pollution from PCBs and other toxic contaminants.

- Were featured as national experts on environmental justice and civil rights on Al-Jazeera's award-winning program, The Stream, and were invited to the White House to help guide the expansion of PB in the United States.

We rely on funding from those who share our commitment to the environment and health equity. We are a small organization that makes a lot happen. With your contribution to our Sustainability Fund, we can provide stability to our staff and campaigns as we envision a bright future for the

BTF Buys Ad From Fire Department

On behalf of the Buffalo Fire Department and Local 282, I would like to thank the Buffalo Teachers Federation for supporting our 126th 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.

Sincerely,

Thomas P. Barrett, president
IAFF Local 282

Huntley Coal site; expand Participatory Budgeting city wide; and keep up our fight for environmental justice in neighborhoods across Western New York.

Thank you for supporting smart, effective organizing.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Newberry
Executive Director

BPO Thanks BTF For \$500 Donation

Thank you so much for your gift of \$500 to the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra's 2016-17 Annual Campaign. With your generosity and commitment, you are helping to ensure the future of our orchestra.

Another festive holiday at the BPO has come to a close, but our season holds many exciting programs yet to come! As we celebrate this special season, we would like to extend a special "thank you" to all the members of our BPO family – you make the joyful music and the spirit of this special season possible!

With gratitude,
Jennifer J. Barbee
Director of Development

BTF Supports Citizen Action Leadership Awards

Thank you so much for the contribution of \$1,000 to our 2016 Progressive Leadership Awards Gala. The event was a great success, and it could not have happened without your support. Especially now, as our movement fights back against an all-out assault on justice, your contribution is critical to helping us continue to build grassroots power through community organizing.

For 33 years, Citizen Action of New York has fought for social, economic and environmental justice. Our strategy is to combat forces of hate and greed by creating systemic change – bringing individuals, organizations and coalitions together to win on key issues and elect progressive candidates at the local, state and federal levels.

This year, we honored four leaders who have each made significant contributions in the fight for justice: Kate Linker, board president, Greater NYC for

BTF Supports Black Achievers Dinner

Thanks again for your support of our 44th annual Black Achiever Awards dinner. You were invaluable in making it an overwhelmingly successful evening. I am honored by the generosity of those who sponsored, attended or assisted with our dinner.

I am pleased to announce that the event was sold out and exceeded our expectations. Over 800 people attended the event, including many elected officials, business and community leaders, media luminaries, family and friends of the awardees and supporters of Black Achievers Inc. This event is held every year to recognize, reward and celebrate excellence within our community.

Overall, the evening was a huge success and enjoyed by all who attended. Special thanks to our Black Achievers Inc. volunteers for helping to organize another successful awards dinner. In addition, I would like to thank our talented musical guests David Vaughn, Larry Salter Soul Orchestra, Will Holton and Drea D'Nur.

Please mark your calendars for this year's event, Saturday, Oct. 7, 2017, as your participation continues to be appreciated by everyone at Black Achievers Inc.

Very truly yours,
Herbert L. Bellamy, Jr., president

Change; Shaun King, Senior Justice Writer, NY Daily News; Linda Sarsour, executive director, Arab-American Association of New York and Dennis Trainor, vice president, CWA District 1.

And, for the first time this year, we presented our Lifetime Champion Award to Assembly Member Jim Brennan who has served for decades as a committed partner in the movement.

We also had the pleasure of hearing from AG Eric Schneiderman, who thanked the honorees and Citizen Action for our relentless organizing work at the local, state and federal levels. As the AG said, "when they go low, we go local."

We truly appreciate your continued support of Citizen Action of New York and thank you for joining us in this important celebration of progressive leadership by so many dedicated activists.

Sincerely,
Karen Scharff
Executive Director

More Than 100 Call For Education Justice



More than 100 people braved the frigid cold March 4 to march on behalf of Buffalo Public School students.

The People's March for Education Justice, sponsored by Citizen Action and the Alliance for Quality Education, was supported by the BTF and Buffalo Parent Teacher (BPTO). Marches were held simultaneously throughout the state.

The Buffalo event started at the Erie County Holding Center on Delaware Avenue and concluded at Hutch Tech High School, where several speakers, including BTF President Philip

Rumore addressed the crowd. More than half the crowd consisted of Buffalo teachers and members of NYSUT (New York State United Teachers.)

Some of the issues brought to attention by the march were:

- Full & Fair funding for all Public Schools from Pre-K - College
- End the School to Prison Pipeline: Solutions, not Suspensions
- Increase Access to Early Care and Learning Opportunities for Babies & Toddlers
- Raise the Age for imprisoned youth
- End the state's over-reliance on high-stakes testing
- Protect Public Education: End of School Privatization
- Implement Culturally Responsive Curriculum
- Increase Supports for Students in Poverty
- Increase Supports for Immigrant Students & English Language Learners
- Protect the Educational Rights of Students with Disabilities

RUMORE CONTROL
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Four Complete NYSUT Leadership Institute

Four BTF members graduated in February from NYSUT's 15th Leadership Institute. The Institute, conducted every two years, was held in Latham, N.Y.

Bargaining units from across the state, who are affiliated with NYSUT, send members to the intensive week-long institute to learn about themselves, the power of unionization and how to become an effective leader.

The BTF sent Executive Board Members Sophia Howard Johnson, Melissa Kenney, and Joe Montante and Eve Shipman, a BTF delegate.

The Conference included team-building exercises, labor history lessons and examples of successfully used collective action to bring around change.

Other workshops dealt with the union's role in promoting social justice issues, courageous labor history leaders who have made a difference, and coalition-building.

Montante called the Institute "an invaluable experience."

"In addition to learning many techniques to deal with situations proactively, I made several connections with union brothers and sisters across New York State," Montante added.

"Attending the NYSUT Leadership Institute has been the best union experience of my life," Kenney offered.

She said the Institute taught her that the union can grow and become stronger through dedicated members willing to work together. She also learned about working in individual schools to activate and build their membership.

"The union should be thought of as a gym membership," Kenney said. "We not only pay our dues, but we work hard to make changes."

She said engaging with union members from around the state gave her new perspectives and motivated her to share what she learned with the BTF Executive Committee. Among the ideas she would like to see implemented are "ways to motivate our members to become more involved in our union."

Shippens agreed that the Leadership Institute was beneficial.



BTF participants with NYSUT Secretary/Treasurer Martin Messner, center.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to have been part of this year's NYSUT Leadership Institute. It was a long time to be away from home, but that time was necessary in order to really build relationships with other union leaders throughout the state," she explained.

"I enjoyed the topics covered in the sessions, including union history, union solidarity, and expanding racial and social justice advocacy within our locals.

"We also got a chance to reflect on our own leadership style and practice how to use the different styles to build dynamic teams. In a union as large as our local, we need leaders within buildings, on executive committee, doing committee work, and as our officers. This training definitely provided tools to be an effective leader at any of those levels," Shippens added.

Howard Johnson summed up her experience at the Institute with a quote from the late Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.

"You don't make progress by standing on the sidelines whimpering and complaining. You make progress by implementing ideas."

More than 700 members from throughout the state have graduated from the NYSUT Leadership Institute. Other current BTF members who have completed the Institute are Executive Board Members Tom Gattie, Lynn Garcia, Kevin Gibson, Chris Salamone and Rebecca Pordum.

Annual 'Cats In Hats' Event Promotes Reading

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

Thanks to the BTF, cats were once again prowling from school to school March 2 to celebrate Read Across America Day and acknowledge the birthday of Dr. Seuss, who wrote the famous, *Cat In The Hat*.

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

The cats, retired teachers Lynn Diagostino, Barbara Pawlak, Mary Ann Gramza, Larry Finkelstein and Betty Kulpa, visited 9 schools.

Many schools also participated in Read Across America activities during the week of March 2nd. The BTF supplied the schools with Cat in the Hat Stickers and certificates for the students.

In addition, Mags Dempsey and Stan Nowak, also retired teachers, visited three hospitals to give gift bags to the mothers of newborn babies born on March 2. They distributed the bags at Buffalo Mercy Hospital, Women and Childrens' Hospital and Sisters' Hospital.

Each bag contained a Dr. Seuss book and stuffed character, a BTF coffee mug and pen and a Read Across America Brochure detailing the event and its importance.

Included in the bag was a note to the mothers "from" their newborn. The note read:

"Dear Mom,

Today is the biggest day of my life. It is the day I was born! A whole world of living awaits me, and the Buffalo Teachers Federation, hoping to help me prepare for the joys of learning, has provided me with my first book.

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

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

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

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

Love, Your New Baby



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

The annual Read Across America Day always coincides with the late Dr. Seuss' birthday. This year would have been his 109th birthday.

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

Tips For Encouraging Young Readers

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

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

Dental Payments Hiked For 7 Services

The Trustees of the Buffalo Teacher Federation Supplemental Benefit Fund (BTF/SBF) are proud to announce a dental upgrade effective for services performed **ON OR AFTER March 1, 2017**. The ADA increases are the seven (7) dental procedures most frequently used by Buffalo teachers and their families.

Below please see the new reimbursement rates for the seven upgraded procedures and in parenthesis the % increase over the previous reimbursement rate:

- ADA# 120 – Oral Exam = **\$20.00** (25%)
- ADA #272 – Bitewing 2 film x-ray - **\$17.00** (21%)
- ADA #274 – Bitewing 4 film x-ray = **\$25.00** (25%)
- ADA #1110 – Prophylaxis – Adult = **\$30.00** (11%)
- ADA #1120 – Prophylaxis – child under 12 years of age = **\$25.00** (25%)
- ADA #2391 – Resin Composite – 1 Surface Filling **\$60.00** (20%)
- ADA #2392 – Resin Composite – 2 Surface Filling = **\$75.00** (25%)

It should be noted that the Trustess are hopeful of making further increases to the BTF/SBF dental and optical plan for services performed on or after July 1, 2017.

Save The Date!

April 2: Variety Club Telethon, 12:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Seneca Niagara Casino.

May 31: Retirement Dinner, Salvatore's Italian Gardens, 6461 Transit Road, Depew.

More information will be provided to the schools when it becomes available.

BPTO Sponsors Free Night at the Buffalo Museum of Science

A Night at the Buffalo Museum of Science, sponsored by the Buffalo Parent-Teacher Organization, was held February 25.

The event was free to families whose children attend Buffalo Public Schools, and was attended

Tickets were distributed by principals in the city's elementary schools for distribution to the students.

The BPTO hopes to make the Night at the Buffalo Museum of Science an annual event. It also sponsors a free day at the Buffalo Zoo in late spring.

The BPTO, open to all Buffalo parents, teachers, administrators and community members, meets monthly at East High School.

Each meeting, held on Saturday from 9-11 a.m., includes a continental breakfast and informational guest speakers.

Upcoming meetings and guest speakers are:

- April 22: Anne Botticelli, Student Success Plan & Early Elementary Education
- May 20: Mrs. Jaime Cohen, Every Student Succeeds Act

The Provocator Wins NYSUT Writing Award

The Provocator, the BTF's official newspaper, won the Award of Distinction in the 2016 Journalism Awards competition sponsored by the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

The award, presented to the BTF in early February, was given in the Best Writing category.

NYSUT sponsors the competition annually. Member organizations from throughout the state submit articles and photos in several categories.

Contributors to the paper include BTF President Philip Rumore, Managing Editor, Rebecca Pordum, Editor Chris Salamone and Photographer Joe Montante.



Olmsted "Owls" Travel to Belize During Break

Fifteen students from Frederick Law Olmsted School had an incredible experience by traveling to Belize during the February break.

The students were accompanied on their one-week sojourn to the tropical Central American country formerly known as British Honduras by teachers Joseph Montante and Elaine Pietka and two parents.

The adventure started in Belize City. From there, the group visited the Lamanai Ruins, once a major city of the Maya civilization. On the boat ride to Lamanai, the students saw monkeys, birds, crocodiles, and iguanas.

The next day brought fun and adventure as the group took a jungle survival hike, went zip-lining, and enjoyed cave tubing. After making their way to San Ignacio, Olmsted's "Owls" had an opportunity to meet and interact with young Belizean students and played soccer as well as duck, duck, goose.

A visit to the Belize Zoo, which features and rehabilitates indigenous animals only, rounded out their stay on the mainland.

The last three days of the tour were spent on Ambergris Caye in San Pedro (the place

Madonna sang about in La Isla Bonita). Here, the group went snorkeling in a coral reef, did SNUBA (modified SCUBA), and relaxed at the beach.

"It was a life-changing experience for these kids", said Montante, who organizes international trips for Olmsted students, as well as trips to U.S. cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Washington, DC. "They'll remember this trip for as long as they live and that's always my goal."

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27- BTF Members Learn To Help Colleagues At NYSUT Winter Leadership Conference

Educating and activating union members is a top priority of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) to preserve legislation protecting labor unions in the coming years.

Participants of the 2017 Winter Leadership Conference, sponsored by NYSUT March 10-11, were encouraged to inform the members of their Locals on the importance of fighting a Constitutional Convention in New York State.

The Triborough Amendment to the Taylor Law, union dues deductions and retirement benefits for public employees are all in danger of being eliminated if New Yorkers vote in November to hold a Constitutional Convention.

The 1982 Triborough Amendment prohibits a public employer from altering any provision of an expired labor agreement until a new agreement is reached. The Taylor Law is a New York State statute that authorizes a state Public Employment Relations Board to resolve contract disputes for public employees while curtailing their right to strike.

Every 20 years New Yorkers vote on whether to hold a convention in which the state constitution is reviewed and amended. The last convention cost more than \$350 million and all of the proposed amendments were defeated by voters.

Retirement pensions for public employees are expected to come under fire if a convention is held.

Hutch Tech Students Attend Theater

History came alive recently for some students at Hutch Tech High School who attended a play about the life of Harry S. Truman.

The event was organized by History Teacher Mary Manley, who accompanied her students to the one-man show about President Truman.

The play was performed at the New Phoenix Theater, located just across Johnson Park, adjacent to the school.

The play, which featured David Lundy as President Truman, provided insights into the president's life before and during his presidency.

According to testimonials written by the students, they thoroughly enjoyed the show.

More than 400 NYSUT members participated in the Conference, which was held in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Buffalo. Participants attended a variety of 90 minute workshops presented by NYSUT staff.

In addition to the Constitutional Convention, workshop topics included:

- Managing Local Union Finances
- Union Rep Training
- Best Practices for Effective Leadership & Governance
- Developing Future Leaders
- Member Benefits
- PAC/School Board & Budget Votes
- Point-Counterpoint
- Privatization of Public Schools
- Special Education
- Your Local in 2020

Twenty-seven members of the BTF attended the Conference. They were:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| • President Philip Rumore | • Sophia Howard-Johnson |
| • Treasurer Rebecca Pordum | • Melissa Kenney |
| • Thomas Anthony | • Petra Mencia |
| • Dennis Brancato | • Joseph Montante |
| • Marc Bruno | • Sue Raichilson |
| • Cathy Burgin | • Trish Rosokoff |
| • Jeanne Cummings | • Chris Salamone |
| • Mary Favata | • Greg Sawicki |
| • Kim Gabel | • Janine Schuster |
| • Lynn Garcia | • Eve Shippens |
| • Tom Gattie | • Cathy Stearns |
| • Nicole Herkey | • Susan Trifiletti |
| • Angela Hester | • Janine Williams |
| • Kimberly Holzman | |

Telethon Set April 2 In Niagara Falls

In an attempt to increase participation in the annual Variety Club Telethon, the BTF is calling on members to step forward.

Building Delegates are asked to collect donations for the event and all members are invited to be present when the BTF makes its donation.

The Telethon will be held Sunday, April 2. BTF President Philip Rumore, Treasurer Rebecca Pordum and Public Relations Committee Co-Chairs Rachel Lis and Ruyvette Townsend traditionally appear at the Telethon at 12:30 p.m. to present the BTF donations.

The Telethon, normally held in Buffalo, has been moved to the Seneca Niagara Casino, located at 310 4th Street, Niagara Falls, NY.



Bennett Tigers To Roar For Many Years

Bennett High School teachers and staff had plenty of reasons to smile recently when it was announced that the Bennett Tigers will live on in area sports lore.

In a joint statement, BPS Athletic Director Aubrey Lloyd and David Mauricio, Chief of Strategic Alignment & Innovation and former Bennett principal, confirmed that effective next year, all athletic teams at the school will be known as Tigers.

This year's football team was slated to be the last to represent Bennett due to a phase-out plan that has since been aborted by the school district.

The school was rebooted in September when the district admitted freshmen for the first time in three years to the new Bennett Computing Academy of Technology Sciences (CATS), a community school.

All sports at Bennett High School are currently conducted with students from Middle Early College, also housed in the Main Street building.

Retired Teachers Thank BTF For Settlement

Two retired BPS teachers were so thankful to receive back pay money in the new BTF contract settlement, they treated the Executive Board members and office staff to an array of fruit and donuts.

Mary Ellen Clark, who retired in 2010 and Kathy Kulak, who retired in 2008, surprised the BTF with the treat in February.

The retirees said they were grateful for the back pay negotiated for retirees. Retirees were awarded a one-time payment of \$2,500 in the settlement. Accompanying the goodies, was the following thank-you card:

"The last few years have made it abundantly clear how very hard you have all worked to resolve this often trying, time consuming and sometimes thankless job of resolving the new contract.

"Phil, you have worked tirelessly and always put your personal and professional well-being on the line for a multitude of issues. Your steadfastness and commitment are unwavering and have been a large part of the strength that our union enjoys today."

"Edie, you have been there every step of the way as well. Your knowledge and diligence have made you an invaluable resource and friend to every BTF member."

"As two of the retired teachers who didn't expect anything but received some remuneration from the new contract, we wanted to do a small something to let you all know that we appreciate your efforts on our behalf. I am sure it was not easy for the Executive Board and all of the delegates to "sell" the new contract and attempt to please as many members as possible."

"There are many other devoted members who could be mentioned as well. We wish you every continued success and well-being for years to come."

Mary Ellen Clark, retired 2010
Kathy Kulak, retired 2008

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BTF Makes 'A Dream Come True' For Students

The BTF "Make a Dream Come True" Scholarship Fund, established in January 2006, recently marked its 10th anniversary of annual awards to college-bound students.

The Fund was established by the Council of Delegates using monies left over from the back pay settlement account. It is administered through the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo to assist students that are graduates of Buffalo Public Schools or graduating seniors that are legal dependents of teachers who are members of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

Every year since its establishment, the Fund has used the interest from the settlement money to help students with their college costs. Grants totaling \$9,300 were awarded in 2016.

The applications are accepted and processed by the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo. The deadline for the 2017-2018 school year was March 1. The winners of the 2016 scholarships were Jessica Kondal, Julia Ziaja, Shanna-Gay Spence, Lincoln Buccieri and Gavin Griffin. Two of the students sent the following thank you notes to the BTF:

It was wonderful news to hear I was reconsidered for a scholarship. I am in my senior year at Hilbert and will use the money to help pay for my last semester. Thank you for helping defray the cost.

Sincerely,
Gavin Griffin

I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your generosity. The BTF Make a Dream Come True Scholarship Fund has afforded me the opportunity to further my education and career goals without worrying about how to get by. I am pleased to report that I am doing well academically, and that I will be able to return your gift to the community through service one day.

Sincerely,
Julia Ziaja

I was very pleased to learn that I was a recipient of the John R. Oishei Foundation Scholarship and the BTF Make a Dream Come True Scholarship. I am writing to express sincere gratitude for the generous financial towards my tertiary education.

I am presently a senior, graduating in December. My program of study is Criminal Justice. Following completion of my studies, I intend to pursue a career within a federal law enforcement agency.

Your financial generosity has allowed me to place my concentration on my studies, which will facilitate a successful and rewarding completion. Your generous act exemplifies your understanding of the importance of my education. I hope that someday, in the near future, I will be able to aid in the achievement of another student's goals.

Sincerely,
Shanna-Gay Spence

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