

PROVOCATOR

February 2019

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 49/NUMBER 3

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



BTF Calls for Removal of McKinley Temporary Principal Abraham

A resolution calling for the removal of the McKinley High School principal, which was unanimously approved by the Council of Delegates, has been dismissed by the superintendent of schools.

Superintendent Kriner Cash said in a Buffalo News article that he has complete confidence in the principal and will not be removing him from the post.

The resolution seeks the removal of Temporary Principal Marck Abraham after teachers at McKinley overwhelmingly took a vote of “no confidence” in the administrator and a teacher was assaulted by a student.

Abraham has been temporarily filling in for Principal Crystal Barton who has been on paid administrative leave for the past year-and-a-half.

Since Barton’s departure, the teachers “feel McKinley has become an unsafe environment for teaching and learning as a result of the Temporary Principal’s leadership,” according to the resolution.

The BTF received numerous complaints of unacceptable student behavior, no student discipline, lack of supervision in hallways and staircases, students not in compliance with the district code of conduct, bullying of teachers by Principal Abraham, inadequate security presence and response to teachers’ calls for assistance, and the artificial inflation of attendance data.

A survey of the teachers at the school resulted in a vote of no confidence in Abraham.

The information was sent to the superintendent and members of the Board of Education in January 2018, but nothing was resolved.

Since then, there have been several serious student altercations including the assault of a teacher by a student. That student was arrested after the incident yet the teacher remains on paid administrative leave while the incident is investigated by the district.

In light of these new incidents, and continued complaints about the principal, the BTF reiterated the lack of leadership and safety issues at the school. As a result, the District issued a statement, apparently approved by Dr. Cash, which said the BTF did “egregiously distort and mischaracterize what is occurring” at McKinley High School.

The statement said “so-called ‘vote of no confidence’ surveys are a bogus and bullying tactic that are always deeply flawed and unverifiable.”

BTF President Philip Rumore called the statement “insulting, derogatory and false.”

He said, “It insults all teachers who, while celebrating our students’ success, will not allow other students to create unsafe teaching and learning conditions. We will not participate in what may be called a cover-up by some.”

“To counter the superintendent’s and Board’s false public statements, the BTF has initiated a survey of all Buffalo teachers to identify serious behavioral disruptions, issues of underreporting and other disruptions,” Rumore said.

“We cannot and will not ignore unsafe and unacceptable learning conditions,” he added.

While awaiting the results of the survey, the resolution to remove Marck Abraham was approved unanimously by the BTF Executive Committee and Council of Delegates.

The three-page document outlines incident after incident of the abuse of teachers and dangerous conditions in the school.

It concludes that “it is apparent ...that Temporary Principal Marck Abraham bears responsibility for the dangerous safety and unacceptable learning conditions that have occurred since his appointment. Therefore, the BTF calls for the immediate removal of ...Marck Abraham as an administrator at McKinley High School.”

Transfer Letters Due March 23

If you are planning to move to another school next year, or just want to find out what openings are available, the deadline for transfer letters is March 23. Please note that the BTF has agreed to no modifications of the contract.

Transfer letters must be sent to Ms. Jamie Warren, Associate Superintendent for Human Resources; Buffalo Board of Education; 65 Niagara Square; City Hall Room 719; Buffalo, New York 14202.

As per Article XIV of the Contract (pages 30-31), a teacher can apply for a voluntary transfer for the next school year by writing a letter to the Human Resources Department by March 23.

In your letter, you should identify what and where you currently teach and that you want to be advised of all available openings in your tenure area. There is a sample letter on the BTF website under BTF Forms.

If you do not want your principal to know about the request, you can ask that your letter be kept confidential.

Once your letter has been received, your supervisor will contact you sometime during the summer and inform you of the available positions. You will then have four days to decide whether you want to accept a new position or remain at your current school.

Save the Date

March 1

Read Across America
Deadline to submit Rx info to SBF

March 3

Variety Club Telethon,
Seneca Niagara Casino

March 8

Women’s March,
Niagara Square

March 14

Nominations for BTF Executive
Committee, Council of Delegates
Meeting

March 23

Transfer letter deadline

March 26

BTF Retirement Workshop,
Salvatore’s Italian Gardens



UNPRECEDENTED BATTLES AHEAD

NEGOTIATIONS – Already, we are hearing State and local cries of revenue shortfalls and severe budget constraints. Locally, we hear, “We can’t continue to eat into our reserves”. Yet, administrators and worthless programs are added and money is wasted.

As always, we will be in Albany fighting to ensure that when the State budget is passed in April, the funding we need for our students is forthcoming.

As we continue to write negotiations proposals, based upon your input, we continue to work with NYSUT, legislators and yes, hopefully the District, to secure the funding we need.

As always, there will be forces that will seek to undermine our solidarity. They will, as always, fail.

TEACHING and LEARNING CONDITIONS - We cannot and will not tolerate unsafe, unhealthy and unacceptable teaching and learning conditions.

Since the District has apparently chosen to cover up acts of violence, incompetent leadership and unacceptable teaching and learning conditions, we have no choice but to, with your assistance, publicize unacceptable and dangerous teaching and learning conditions.

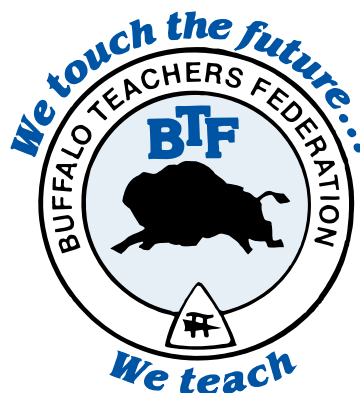
That the Superintendent and Board of Education would continue to defend administrators who are undermining the education of their students while not singing the praises of teachers and administrators who are working together and improving the education of their students is unconscionable, unacceptable and insulting.

These are but a small number of issues and battles we must confront. Where possible, we will seek to work together with the District.

ATTACKS by the BUFFALO NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD and OTHERS - Be assured the Buffalo News Editorial Board and ilk will continue their attacks on our solidarity.

However, we have not, and never will, have our solidarity broken or shrink from a battle that must be fought. As you have me heard me say many times,

“Not now. Not ever.”
 “Bring them on.”
 “You are the best. No, the very best.”



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,
 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-Nieves

K-12

Susan Marie Baker, Nicole Herkey,
 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*
 Anna Geronimo, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

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

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published six times during the 2018-2019 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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

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Letters to the Editor

BTF Sponsors Vietnam Veterans' Scholarship

Thank you for your recent gift of \$250 to the Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 77. Your gift has been applied to the Peter P. Tycz II Memorial Scholarship fund and will help deserving students stay in school. In recognition of your donation, your name will be placed on a plaque at the Chapter 77 Museum, 47 Main St., Tonawanda.

With the rising costs of higher education and the continued challenges of the local economy, we both know that there is a tremendous need for financial assistance; we averaged receiving over 90 applications per year. The number of our scholarships awarded is tied to fundraising and, since its inception in 2005, we were able to present 329 \$250 scholarships with a total value of \$82,250. With help from you, we hope to present even more in 2019.

Again, thank you for your investment in the future of our country and your recognition of the importance of higher education. The Chapter, the Tycz family, as well as the recipients, greatly appreciate your generosity.

Sincerely,
John Heffernan, Chairman
Scholarship Committee

Student Thanks BTF for College Scholarship

Hello. This is Hta Boe Rar and I am the recipient of the BTF Make a Dream Come True.

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you for making the BTF Make a Dream Come True Scholarship possible. I was thrilled to learn of my selection for this honor and I am deeply appreciative of your support.

I am going to be majoring in sociology with hopes of becoming a social worker. The financial assistance you provided will be of great help to me in paying my educational expenses, and it will allow me to concentrate more of my time on studying.

Thank you again for your generosity and support. I promise you I will work very hard and eventually give something back to others, both as social worker and possibly a scholarship to future students like myself.

Sincerely,
Hta Boe Rar

BTF Helps Students Experience Parks

Thanks to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the National Parks Foundation and the Buffalo Teachers Federation for the help in the 2017-18 Every Kid In a Park Program.

In June, 270 Buffalo City School District students from three schools visited the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site over seven sessions for an educational park experience!

Thank you for your help making it all possible. We hope to be able to welcome more Buffalo students next year!

Sincerely,
Mark Lozo
Education Director/Chief of Interpretation

NFJC Thanks BTF

Thank you very much for your generosity and support of the National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York's 66th Annual Citation Banquet which will be held on April 3, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

We anticipate a wonderful event because of the outstanding people we will be honoring. Thank you for lending your support to the work and mission of the NFJC. We very much appreciate your contribution and your commitment to the ideals of our organization.

Sincerely,
Lana D. Benatovich
President

BTF Supports Mayor's Reading Rules! Challenge

A heartfelt thank you for your generous support of my 17th Annual Reading Rules! Kids Summer Reading Challenge and Awards Ceremony for WNY youth in grades K-12 who successfully completed this vital literacy program. Your support through sponsorship, in-kind donation, or volunteerism was greatly appreciated.

I am pleased to announce that over 2,000 students completed their reading assignments and book summaries this past summer, which is the largest group of students in the program's history. It is an honor to welcome these students to a growing list of Champion Readers. Nearly 15,000 City youth have completed this program since 2006, when I introduced Reading Rules! in Buffalo during my first term as Mayor. I am grateful to the parents and caregivers of this year's participants

BTF Donates \$350 To VOICE-Buffalo Awards

On behalf of VOICE-Buffalo, thank you for your sponsorship of \$350 in support of our 2018 Annual Awards Banquet. Your generous support enables us to bring folks to the table who are otherwise denied a place in decision-making. Grassroots supporters like your business enable us to send new community leaders to training, expand our organizing campaigns, and continue to powerfully influence local, regional, state and national leader on issues of justice and equity. Every gift we receive assists us in bringing people of all faiths and income levels into the public arena to shape the decisions that impact the quality of life in Erie County.

VOICE-Buffalo, an interracial, urban-suburban coalition of faith-based congregations, community and business leaders, is recognized locally as a leader in community organizing efforts. Founded in 1996, VOICE works steadfastly in its commitment to its mission: to faithfully bring forth social justice and equity in our region through organized, collective action. In 2017 we focused our efforts in the areas of restorative justice, criminal justice reform, and community reinvestment and equitable economic access.

VOICE-Buffalo could not continue its efforts without the generous support of an engaged community. Thank you again for your thoughtful gift.

Most sincerely,
Dennis Walczyk
Board of Directors

for encouraging them to practice their literacy skills.

A special thanks to you, our sponsors, in-kind donors, and volunteers, who helped us put together a fantastic Reading Rules! Kids Summer Reading Challenge Awards Ceremony on Aug. 25th at the Buffalo Niagara Convention Center. Your generosity enabled us to treat our Champion Readers and their families to a festive celebration featuring breakfast, prize giveaways, free children's books, book bags, passes to cultural organizations, laptops, kindles, and educational scholarships.

Thank you again for your ongoing support for this powerful program and partnering with us to make a difference in the lives of our city and region's youth.

Sincerely,
Mayor Byron W. Brown

BTF to Host March 26 Retirement Workshop

A workshop for teachers considering retirement in the near future will be conducted Tuesday, March 26 by the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

The event will take place at Salvatore's Italian Gardens, located at 6461 Transit Road in Depew. Refreshments will be served.

After a few opening remarks from BTF President Philip Rumore, a representative from the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) will explain the various options for receiving your benefit. The presentation will include sample calculations of benefits, the Post Retirement Death Benefit, and penalties for retiring early.

When that portion of the program is finished, the NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists assigned to the BTF will make a presentation about the District benefits available to Buffalo teachers. This includes health care, the Early Retirement Incentive, payout for unused sick days, and a bonus payment for early notification of retirement.

The last part of the program will focus on the Supplemental Benefit Fund and options for picking up COBRA coverage after you retire.

If interested in attending, look for a posting in your building on the BTF bulletin board. Your Delegate Chair should have registration forms. You may also call the BTF office at 881-5400 for more information.

BTF Elects Delegates to NYSUT Convention

There were few surprises in the February election of BTF delegates to the New York State United Teachers annual Representative Assembly.

Twenty-one of the 25 elected delegates were incumbents who will return for another two-year term. They will attend the RA May 3-4 in Albany.

In addition, four Successor Delegates were elected to attend the convention if a delegate cannot go.

The delegates elected, in order of their vote totals, were:

- Phil Rumore
- Rebecca Pordum
- Lynn Garcia
- Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan
- Marc Bruno
- Joseph Montante
- Dennis Brancato
- Melissa Kenney
- Eve Shippens
- Sue Raichilson
- Tom Gattie
- Sophia Howard Johnson
- Michael Mecca

Thinking of Retiring?

Most people look forward to that day when they can retire. But before you make your final decision, be sure it is the right one for you and your family.

To help you along, here is a checklist of some of the things you want to do before you make your decision.

- Schedule a video conference with the NYS Teachers' Retirement System.
- Make sure you have applied for any and all prior service that may be available to you. Go to nystrs.org to download a Prior Service form.
- Get your notice of retirement letter in to the superintendent at least 60 days in advance to claim a \$500 early notification bonus.
- If you qualify for the age-related Early Retirement Incentive, be sure to mention this in your letter to the superintendent.
- Be sure to give at least 30 days' notice of your retirement to the District as state law requires this for termination of employment.
- Call your LRS and schedule a retirement consultation
- Be sure to attend the BTF's annual Retirement Workshop on March 26th.
- Be sure you are well-informed. Know the benefits to which you may be entitled including health care, payout for sick days, and all incentives.

- Trisha Rosokoff
- Chris Salamone
- Patrick J. Foster
- Ruyvette Townsend
- Tom Anthony
- Nicole Herkey
- Roger Aumick
- Cathy Stearns
- Gregory Sawicki
- Claire "Weegee" Rosart
- Janine E. Schuster
- Desiree Breckenridge Barnes

Although the BTF was entitled to 25 Successor Delegates, only four people sought the positions. All four were elected.

In order of their vote totals, they are:

- John McTigue
- Michael Jeffers
- Rachel Binda-Lis
- Sandra L. Shelvay

In addition to attending the Representative Assembly, delegates are expected to attend NYSUT meetings which are conducted at the WNY NYSUT Regional Office in Williamsville.

United Way Helps Students Explore Careers

The American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) of WNY, through United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, is an employer-driven United States Department of Labor (USDOL) workforce development grant for Advanced Manufacturers in WNY. AAI of WNY has been building relationships with schools to create connections with local advanced manufacturing employers so students can explore careers with non-traditional pathways.

In November 2018, students from Burgard High School toured the entire facility and got to experience some hands-on moments with the precision gears that are made there. Several students opened up toward mid-tour and had side conversations with the workers because they were interested in some of the machines and techniques with grinding and the mills.

In addition, students from South Park High School toured the facility with girls from Burgard High School in January. Students were amazed at what electronics are built here in Buffalo and almost every student inquired how to get a summer job there!



Successful Contract Negotiations/School Board Elections Depend on your Donations

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2019! This year will be a significant one for the Buffalo Public Schools as the 2018-2019 school year will see a hotly contested election cycle as every board seat will be up for election as shown below:

Name	District	Term Ends
Barbara Seals Nevergold	At-Large	2019
Patricia B. Pierce	At-Large	2019
Lawrence Quinn	At-Large	2019
Hope Jay	North	2019
Theresa Harris-Tigg	East	2019
Paulette Woods	Central	2019
Jennifer Mecozzi	West	2019
Louis Petrucci	Park	2019
Sharon Belton-Cottman	Ferry	2019

Board members play a critical role in decision making that has a direct effect on the learning environment for students and on the teaching environment for teachers.

This year is also significant because our negotiated contract with the district will expire June 30, 2019. If a new contract is not negotiated prior to then, it will be a brand new Board of Education that will set the parameters of negotiations for the superintendent, possibly be involved with the negotiations, and ultimately approve or reject any negotiated settlement.

As such, it is critically important that we work hard to get school board members elected who support public education, share our educational priorities, and who believe that creating a new relationship with teachers is key to establishing positive morale which translates into a better learning environment for students and a better teaching and working environment for teachers.

In the last election, \$65,000 in donations were raised by the candidates to fund their elections. The need for big budgets in order to win election to the Buffalo Public School Board of Education was best demonstrated in 2009 by Chris Jacobs who raised \$52,000 alone to win his seat.

The message to us is clear, if we want to get candidates elected who share our values, we need to be able to play in the big leagues by helping to fund candidates at close to the same level as other special interest groups.

Legally, our union dues cannot be used for this purpose. So, how can we

do this? Pass the hat at the next happy hour? Have a baked goods sale? Fortunately, there is a system already set up for this, and in case you haven't heard of it yet, it is VOTE-COPE.

VOTE-COPE is the political fundraising arm of NYSUT. It is described by NYSUT as the non-partisan action fund that coordinates the voluntary contributions of members to support NYSUT endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-education and pro-labor.

NYSUT mostly gets involved in state-level races such as elections for governor, state assembly, and the state senate, but also allows local unions like the BTF to actively fund local races by refunding up to 40% of all VOTE COPE contributions back to the local union.

These funds will be critical to our next election. If every member in the BTF contributed to VOTE COPE at a \$2 per paycheck level, the BTF would have approximately \$55,000 to invest on political action issues such as the 2019 school board race. That level of funding would put us in a good position to help get candidates elected who share our educational values and who want to work together to improve teaching and learning conditions in the Buffalo Public Schools.

This year is a critical one for us because of the coming school board election and the expiration of our current contract. Although we will not match the many thousands of dollars raised by the charter school advocates, union haters, and multimillionaires, we need to play in the "big leagues"

Nadia Shahram, Esq.
An Attorney With Purpose

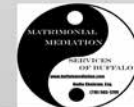


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- Suzanna C.G.

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of political fundraising in order to get candidates elected to the school board who share our values. We can do this by getting involved in VOTE COPE.

Our goal is to get everyone involved as contributing members! If you are not yet signed up, please call the BTF at 881-5400 or reach out to one of your building delegates to help get a contribution form.



AAUW Awarding Classroom Grants

Grants of up to \$500 are being awarded by the Buffalo Branch of the American Association of University Women for classroom projects.

Guidelines are flexible, with a "rolling deadline", but funds are limited and will be awarded on a first come, first served basis.

Buffalo teachers are strongly encouraged to apply.

For an application, visit aauw.buffalo.edu. The information is located in the "Scholarships, Loans, and Grants" tab for the Clarine Radt mini grant.

RUMORE CONTROL
881-4818

Three Teachers Attend Lobbying Workshop

BTF “Lobbying for Labor,” a workshop on the legislative process and lobbying government officials for funding, was attended by three BTF Executive Committee members.

The workshop, hosted by The Worker Institute at Cornell’s Institute of Labor Relations, (ILR), was held December 5th in Rochester. It was attended by Nicole Herkey, Eve Shippens-Nieves and Liz Spiro-Carman.

According to Spiro-Carman, the BTF participants hope to use the information to mentor BPS students into political activism and socio-political awareness through relationships with the BPS District-wide Student Council and possibly presentations at Saturday Community School programs.

The workshop, conducted in Rochester’s United Workers Building, was well-attended by AFL-CIO members from education and the trades. The presenters were former labor lobbyists Brian Curran, a Rochester attorney, and Ed Draves of the Bolton-St. Johns government relations firm.

Among the topics covered by Curran were Why Union Members Lobby Elected Officials, Does Lobbying Work?, Understanding the NYS Legislative Process, Best Ways to Communicate with Elected Officials, Researching About Legislation and Legislators, The Official NYS Budget Process, Lobbying Laws, and Communication with Union Members.

Draves presented a workshop entitled Tips on Meeting with Legislators, which covered the “Dos and Don’ts” of lobbying. It included information on scheduling a meeting, preparing for the meeting, actions during the meeting and follow-up to the meeting.

During the workshops, participants were walked through examples of bills currently before the NYS Assembly, and how to research sponsors, co-sponsors, amendments, committee reviews, and status of the bills. This important information is pertinent to guide lobbyists to know who, where, and when a group might lobby on particular issues.

According to Spiro-Carman, the BTF participants brought back information helpful for monitoring education-related bills in Albany. She said the information could help with timing lobbying efforts and improve our chances for input and adjustment to any education-related legislation.

The Worker Institute ILR has workshops scheduled for February-May.



BTF-Executive Board members, from left Liz Spiro-Carmen, Eve Shippens-Nieves and Nicole Herkey

For more information, or to participate in lobbying events locally or in Albany, contact the BTF workshop participants.

Did You Know...

That assignments, such as homeroom and study halls, are to be filled on a voluntary basis?

And, if no volunteers come forward, assignments are to be rotated and filled on a yearly basis?

If you didn’t, this provision can be found in Article X, Paragraph S of the collective bargaining agreement.

In addition, if a teacher is happy with the assignments (s)he is given, the District will make every effort to honor the request of that teacher to keep the same assignment on an annual basis.

NYSUT/AFT/ NEA/BTF Dues for 2018

It’s that time of year when everyone is gathering information to prepare their tax returns. Remember, if you file an itemized tax return, Union dues withheld from your paycheck may be tax deductible. Please check with your tax professional as new Federal tax laws are in effect.

The total dues for full time employees are \$878.40.

This includes \$569.14 for the period January-June (\$43.78 x 13 checks) and \$309.26 for September-December (\$44.18 x 7 checks).

For part time employees, the total dues are \$439.20.

This includes \$284.57 for January-June (\$21.89 x 13 checks) and \$154.63 for September-December (\$22.09 x 9 checks).

Two Graduate from NYSUT Leadership Institute

Two members of the BTF Executive Committee have graduated from the NYSUT Leadership Institute in Albany, NY.

Nicole Herkey, a Reading teacher at BPS #89 and Trisha Rosokoff, a teacher at School 45, attended the Institute for a week in August and returned for a three-day wrap-up and graduation at the end of January.

During the week-long training, they were immersed into intense union work. Some of the workshops included were Labor in the Past and Future, Team Effectiveness, Building the Power to Win, Tools for Strategic Planning, Identifying Natural Leaders, and Defining Leadership in Turbulent Times.

Herkey was appointed to the BTF Executive Committee in April 2016 to fill a vacancy. A BPS teacher since 2007, she currently is the co-chair of the Social Committee, and serves on the Grievance Committee, and the Political Action Committee.

Rosokoff was appointed to the Executive Committee in February, 2015. She has been a teacher in the BPS since 1999 and started her career at E.C.C. #78 as a kindergarten teacher. Since 2001, she has taught first grade at International School #45.

Nicole Herkey and Trish Rosokoff both are very active unionists. They have attended numerous trainings and union conventions and have represented the BTF in area parades, the annual Breast Cancer Walk, and the Vote No to the ConCon campaign. In addition, both have participated in numerous phone banks and door-knocking campaigns.



Above: Trish Rosokoff and Nicole Herkey board a bus in Albany and get ready to head out to an off-site training activity.

BTF Reps Lobby for Schools, Not Jails

Activists from around the state, including several Buffalo teachers representing the BTF, lobbied January 14th at the State Capitol for *Schools, Not Jails*.

Representatives from the Buffalo Teachers Federation were Margaret Chappel and Jacqueline Contreras, both from School 30; Sophia Howard Johnson, School 54; and Eve Shippens, East Community School. Ina Ferguson, an aide from School 17, was there to represent BEST.

The Buffalo group met with Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, District #141, NYS Senator Tim Kennedy, and a representative of Assemblyman Sean Ryan, District #149, to lobby for unpaid and overdue Foundation Aid for schools. The Foundation Aid lawsuit was won over a decade ago through the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

Currently, \$4.1 billion is owed to schools state-wide and a 3-year phase-in is sought. The lobbyists also

demand that \$50 million be invested in Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and another \$50 million in Safe and Supportive Schools to promote alternatives to suspension.

Schools with high numbers of black, brown, and economically disadvantaged students, like Buffalo Public Schools, are chronically underfunded based on need.

According to Shippens, research shows that a 10% increase in funding could increase graduation rates 10%.

"Eighty percent of high school drop-outs end up incarcerated, costing on average \$69,355 per inmate per year! By increasing funding for high needs schools, investing in social/emotional supports, and infusing the curriculum to better mirror the students in the classroom, we can lessen the impact of the school to prison pipeline," Shippens said.

For more information, check out #FREEnewyork or #SchoolsNotJails.

Reimbursement for Rx Co-Pays Available

Did you know that you can receive a reimbursement for prescriptions you and eligible family members had filled in 2018?

The Supplemental Benefit Fund will pay \$2 for every prescription filled for you and each eligible family member, up to \$100 per person.

You must obtain a computer-generated prescription roster from your pharmacist and submit it along with a completed Rx Co-Pay Claim Form to: SBF, c/o BTF, 271 Porter Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14201.

The Rx Co-Pay Claim Form is available from your building delegate, the SBF Office, or our website, www.btfny.org, under the forms tab.

The deadline for submitting the forms is Friday, March 1st at 5:00 PM.

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Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina

Joe Frandina
Optician

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Women Power

Several BTF members were among dozens of NYSUT members who turned out at the NYSUT Regional office to make signs for the 2019 Women's March. The nation-wide demonstration, scheduled for January 20th, was cancelled in Buffalo due to weather, but a new date has been rescheduled for March 8th. Among those making signs were Lynn Garcia, Trish Rosokoff, Sophia Howard Johnson, Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone, and Anna Klapakis.



Sophia Howard Johnson, Sue Raichilson and Lynn Garcia



Trish Rosokoff



Lynn Garcia

PROVOCATOR

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In The Classroom: I-Prep Students Send Experiment to ISS

Students from International Preparatory are soaring high after learning they are sending an experiment they worked on to the International Space Station (ISS).

The students, under the direction of Milken Award winning Teacher Andrew Franz, learned December 17th that they are winners of Mission 13 of the Student Spaceflight Experiment Project (SSEP). The SSEP is an authentic science competition headed by the National Center for Earth and Space Science Education (NCESSSE). It is locally run by WNY STEM Hub's Take Flight Experience.

The students, Alejandro Arrigo, Alex Everett, Joy Elaine Everett, and Sole Witt, will now have the opportunity to travel to Cape Canaveral in Florida to watch the launch of their experiment and to attend a science conference in Washington, DC.

The students were tasked with writing a collegiate level proposal, detailing an experiment that would be flying to the ISS. From September until right before Thanksgiving, they spent hours after school writing and editing.

The experiment focuses on observing the effects of space travel on *Bacillus subtilis*, a bacterium with a variety of manufacturing applications.

Their proposal was chosen from a number of competing schools in the greater Buffalo-Niagara region as one of three to be submitted to the national judges. They were shocked and excited when they learned they won.

In addition to working with Franz, the students were supervised by Dr. Derek Beahm of Buffalo State College.

Franz, who also headed up the Mission 9 winning team in 2015 called the "Spudlaunchers", says fundraising will begin soon for these hopeful scientists and details will be forthcoming.



1. Flanked by Andrew Franz on the left and Dr. Derek Beahm on the right, the I-Prep scientists pose for a photo.



2. Carefully pouring the contents of one test tube into another, the I-Prep students get their experiment ready.