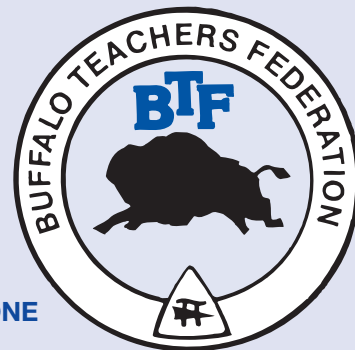


# PROVOCATOR

May 2024

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 54/NUMBER 3

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## New York State Budget: A Win for Tier 6, but Fight Continues

Though the state budget was late this year, there were many things in it that were worth the wait. One of them was an improvement to Tier 6, called the “biggest win for pension reform in 20 years” by the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

Going forward, Tier 6 employees will have the same 3-year Final Average Salary calculation that Tier 4 employees have and not the 5-year calculation that previously existed.

This is a big win because educators usually earn more later in their careers.

With this adjustment, Tier 6 members will eventually receive a bigger pension check, every month, for life.

While this is certainly not everything we want, it's a start. The campaign to improve Tier 6 likely will take several years to accomplish. Support from everyone is needed to help our Tier 6 brothers and sisters.

Fixing Tier 6 is about fairness and is necessary to continue to attract and keep talented educators. It's unfair that some NYSUT members must work

longer, and contribute more, to earn a significantly reduced pension. This should anger ALL union members.

Some of the inequities include the following:

- Tier 6 members pay 3 to 6 percent of their salaries into the retirement system their entire career — and their contributions grow with pay raises.
- Tier 4 member contributions are capped at 3 percent and end after 10 years.
- Tier 6 members must work to age 63 or face heavy penalties.
- Tier 4 members can retire at 55 with 30 years of service.

Please visit [www.Fixtier6.org](http://www.Fixtier6.org) and click on the “Get Involved” button to show your support. Together, we can do this! We need to attract and retain quality educators and that will be increasingly more difficult without legislative changes to the retirement system.

**ALL** of us need to be there for our Tier 5 and Tier 6 brothers and sisters. Thank you in advance for your support.

## District Warns Employees of Data Breach

Hundreds of current and retired employees recently received letters from the Buffalo School District warning of a data breach incident involving personal information.

Anyone receiving that letter from the District should follow the directions in the letter to secure their personal information.

That's the advice of BTF President Rich Nigro, who addressed the issue with an email to members and retirees.

In his email, President Nigro said, “We have received a few phone calls inquiring about letters some members and retirees have received from the District about a recent data breach. We verified with the District that bad actors did, in fact, gain access to certain information which may impact current and former BPS employees.

In response to this, the District issued letters to affected individuals suggesting measures they can take to safeguard their information. Anyone who received a letter was also provided

a link to Identity Defense along with a membership activation code to help monitor their personal information.

As one of the individuals who received this letter, I followed the Identity Defense link and used the activation code to create an account. I also froze my credit reports after the March 2021 ransomware attack. This offers another level of security and peace of mind. Just remember that you must thaw your credit reports any time you are applying for any type of credit. Both freezing and thawing your credit reports can be done quickly and easily either by phone or online.

If you received one of these letters from the BPS and have any questions that are not answered in this memo, please call the District's IT Department at (716) 816-3510”, Nigro advised.

BTF members who do not have personal email addresses on file should visit the BTF website, [www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org), to submit the information.

## Mandated Reporting Update Required by NYS Next April

All New York State teachers will be required to complete a Child Abuse Identification and Reporting workshop.

Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2021 amended Social Services Law §413 to require additional training within the New York State Mandated Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Maltreatment/Neglect coursework.

This law requires that mandated reporters, including those who have previously undergone the current training, complete the updated training curriculum by April 1, 2025.

This also is now one of the required workshops for state certification.

The updated training includes protocols to reduce implicit bias in decision-making processes, strategies for identifying adverse childhood experiences, and guidelines to assist in recognizing signs of abuse or maltreatment while interacting virtually within the New York State Mandated Identification and Reporting of Child Abuse and Maltreatment/Neglect coursework.

This updated training requirement impacts all certification areas, regardless of the certificate type, including Initial/Professional, Provisional/Permanent, Transitional or Reissuance/Renewal.

School personnel required to take the training include Building/District Leaders, Classroom Teachers, Social Workers, Nurses, Attendance Teachers, Psychologists, Dental Hygienists, Teaching Assistants, Visiting Lecturers, as well as JROTC, Adult Education, Career & Technical Education teachers.

For a list of approved providers, visit NYS Professions - Child Abuse Identification & Reporting Providers ([nysed.gov](http://nysed.gov)).

The NYS Office of Child & Family Services (OCFS) offers the 2-hour updated training for free - Mandated Reporter Training | Child Protective Services | Office of Children and Family Services ([ny.gov](http://ny.gov)).

Additional information about this requirement is available at Child Abuse Identification Workshop ([nysed.gov](http://nysed.gov)).



# Changes, Challenges, and Commitment

As we enter the home stretch of the 2023-24 school year, I reflect on both the accomplishments and challenges we have experienced these last 10 ½ months.

Since last July, the BTF has prioritized addressing the many grievances that have languished over the years. Simultaneously, we have ramped up efforts to work together with building delegates and Building Committees to address issues at the building level before they have the

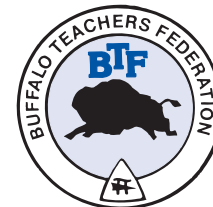
chance to fester and morph into greater problems. Doing so has resulted in a reduction in the number of grievances filed by the Federation. This, in turn, has yielded a quicker turnaround in decisions to grievances we have filed this year. In the past, a grievance could take anywhere from 1.5 – 6 or more years to receive a Level 3 decision. Often, the grievant was almost guaranteed NOT to receive a response the same year it was filed. I'm happy to report that trend has begun to change.

Another highlight, we are finally releasing our BTF Union app. The initial app rollout will allow users to view announcements from BTF Leadership. Members will also be able to look up and message other teachers. Every teacher whose personal email address is on file with the union need only visit <https://btfny.app/launch.html>, download the app (or login online from your computer), and complete the requested information. This app belongs to the union, and its content is meant for union members **ONLY**. Know that this platform is intended for members to engage in professional discourse and exchange of ideas. Please read the usage and privacy policies under the Files section after creating your account.

Challenges are something we deal with daily. From the change of 6:1:1 to 8:1:1 classes to Payroll mistakes to the bussing debacle, our members have endured a lot this year. However, the most recent and greatest challenge we face is the impending reductions-in-force. Teachers are concerned, and rightfully so, as they contemplate where and what they'll be teaching next school year. They worry about having to schedule childcare in the event they are assigned to a school farther from home or with a different start/end time. And, of course, we worry about the possibility of layoffs.

At the February BOE meeting, I questioned why the District wasn't leveraging their \$375 million budget surplus to mitigate the need for drastic cuts and why there was no information showing cuts to Central Office personnel. At the March BOE meeting, teachers advocated for the need to retain SST positions. On March 27th and at the BTF's request, the Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer Jim Barnes met with Peter Applebee (NYSUT Edu. Research Dept.), my officers, and me. We argued the need to utilize unrestricted funds from the District's budget surplus. And at April's meeting, Music teachers came in clutch with testimonies detailing the positive impact music has on children. Your voices were heard, and all our efforts paid off resulting in the substantial reinstatement of teacher positions originally slated for cuts. While we will continue to advocate the criticality of teacher retention, the outlook for our members is better today than it was just a few weeks ago.

Teaching is a job of service, and you all play a crucial role in the lives and development of the Buffalo Public School students you teach. And in the short time that I've served as your president, I have had the privilege to witness firsthand your dedication to your passion, your commitment to your students, and your perseverance in the face of daunting challenges.



## BTF at a Glance

### **BTF President**

Rich Nigro

### **BTF Vice President**

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan

### **BTF Treasurer**

Joseph Montante

### **BTF Secretary**

Mark Mecca

### **BTF Executive Committee Members**

#### **Pre-K-6**

Rachel Binda-Lis, April Hall,  
Kim Parzymieso, Tara Rosa,  
Janine Schuster, Chris Stephens

#### **7-12**

Tom Anthony, Dennis Brancato, Sam  
Fritz, Mike Jeffers, Rich Pyszczyk, Eve  
Shippens, M. Sue Raichilson

#### **K-12**

Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes,  
Melinda Cuvillo, Amy Flynn, Mel Holden,  
Karen Kane, Gregory Sawicki

#### **At Large**

Mike Mecca, Brian Meyer, David  
Stephens

### **BTF Headquarters Staff**

Rich Nigro, *President*  
Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, *Presidential Assistant*  
Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*  
Jenna Burke, *NYSUT Counsel*  
Devon Gawley, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*  
Robert Mueller, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*  
Jennifer Rhee, *NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website  
[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)

## PROVOCATOR

### **BTF Provocator Staff**

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

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# Letters to the Editor

## BTF Supports American Indian Education

*"This scholarship has lightened my financial burden and allowed me to focus more on the most important aspect of school: learning. Your generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to my community. I hope one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals just as you have helped me."*

-Lorinda (Sprint Lake Tribe)

A.A. Social Work, Cankdeska Cikana Community College

The American Indian College Fund and our scholars are deeply grateful for your support! Thank you for your recent contribution of \$500 on March 20.

Your gift directly increases the number of American Indians with college degrees – which is only 15.4% today. With your support, the College Fund has provided nearly 154,000 scholarships to American Indian scholars in the past 30 years. The scholarships you provide help American Indian students pursue their dreams of a college degree. You are helping to improve the lives of American Indian scholars, their families and our entire communities!

In the next few months you will hear from us again, giving you an update on our scholars and how you are making an impact. If you have any questions about the work we do, or would like more information, I encourage you to contact Aly Thomas, Senior Constituent Services Coordinator, at (303) 429-4197, or athomas@collegefund.org. Thank you!

*Wounspe gluha blihihunkic'iyapi,*  
(We strengthen ourselves with knowledge),

Cheryl Crazy Bull,  
(Sicangu Lakota)  
President & CEO

## Women's Committee Helps Community

Thank you for your generous support of Buffalo's newest neighbors. We are so grateful to partner with the Buffalo Teachers Federation Women's Committee to help those in their time of need.

From all of us at Vive and Jericho Road, thank you!

Alexandra Perry  
Partner Development Team

## FeedMore WNY Thanks BTF for \$500 Donation

Thank you for the generous donation of \$500 to FeedMore WNY Foundation. Your support of Feed Their Dreams will help provide Western New York children with the food they need to thrive.

As the cost of household essentials remain high, FeedMore WNY Foundation's more than 370 partner agencies and programs are serving a growing number of children. Your support of the Food for Babies, Backpack and School Pantry programs ensures the children of our community will receive the nutrition they need during the most critical time in their development.

As you know, the health of our children reflects the health of our community. Thank you for supporting their healthy development and all of our dreams for a stronger Western New York.

Warmest Regards,  
Judy Burnett Christian  
Annual Fund Director

## NFJC Appreciates Donation from BTF

On behalf of the Awards Program Co-Chairs, the National Federation for Just Communities Board and myself, I would like to thank you for your generous support of the 2024 Community Hope Awards. The NFJC of WNY is deeply committed to shining a spotlight on those that give so much to our community in many unique ways. Thank you for your partnership and allowing us the opportunity to recognize our honorees both at our networking event and on the televised program aired on our media partner, WGRZ-TV.

Having conversations, sharing stories, bridging divides, and building strong communities is the core mission of the NFJC of WNY. We work daily to bring people together and to push back against racism, bias, and discrimination. Founded in 1951, the NFJC consistently searches for new ways to have conversations that build relationships and community. Thank you for your support in helping us fulfill our mission.

Rene Petties-Jones  
President, NFJC of WNY, Inc.

## BTF Donates to Archie L. Hunter Scholarship

On behalf of the Archie L. Hunter Scholarship Committee, we wish to express our deepest gratitude for your recent financial donation. Your generous support plays a crucial role in helping us continue our mission of fostering youth development.

Sincerely,  
Archie L. Hunter Scholarship Committee

## Variety Club Thanks BTF

On behalf of Variety, the children's charity of Buffalo and WNY, we would like to say Thank You!

With your sincere generosity and continued support, we are able to provide the children right here in our tremendous community with the care they need.

It's an honor to be part of "the city of good neighbors" and help the kids who need us the most.

This would not be made possible without amazing donors like you!

It's truly a blessing and we are forever grateful. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

With love and gratitude,  
Your friends at Variety

## Child & Family Services Grateful for Support

Thank you for your generous gift of self-care products and toys to Child and Family Services made on December 18th. This year, Child and Family Services is celebrating its 150th anniversary, and your support has made this incredible milestone possible.

Every donation received allows the agency to continue providing counseling and shelter for women, men, and children seeking haven from domestic violence. Donors like you help the agency find homes for children in foster care looking for a family to be placed with forever. With your support, the agency furthers its advocacy work to help child welfare programming and students who need special education services, such as those who come to our Stanley G. Falk School.

Child and Family Services is excited to celebrate 150 years. Together, with the help from our community, we will nurture a healthy and more equitable Western New York for the benefit of current and future generations.

Elizabeth McPartland  
President and CEO



# SPED Teacher Lauded for Achievements

T. Alexander Miller, a Special Education teacher at Lorraine Academy, School #72, has been named one of Business First's 40 Under 40.

The honor, bestowed by the Buffalo magazine, recognizes 40 men and women for career success and involvement in community activities achieved before reaching the age of 40. Miller, 39, who lives in Amherst with his wife Brittany and son Roman, has been a Buffalo Public Schools teacher since 2010.

He is owner of Charles Burchfield Home & Studio, a two-story home and custom-built art studio in West Seneca that was the estate of the internationally-known artist. He bought the home in 2020 and this year started Burch Fest, an event honoring the painter's legacy.

Miller is a member of the Charles Burchfield Gardenville District and the West Seneca Historical Society and founder of [burchfieldstudio.com](http://burchfieldstudio.com).

In addition, he also owns and operates the Born & Raised Shop, a specialty store started in 2017 that

sells Buffalo-based products, including apparel, home décor, jewelry and more.

A portion of the proceeds from Born & Raised sales is donated toward the restoration of Charles Burchfield Home & Studio.

Besides these accomplishments, Miller owns and manages more than a dozen local apartment complexes and runs a Buffalo-based photography and retail business.

He founded White Gloved Vegan, [whiteglovedvegan.com](http://whiteglovedvegan.com), to promote the vegan lifestyle and is an international influencer and blogger.

Several years ago, Miller made the news when he raised doubts about the authenticity of a poster widely sold at Wegmans titled "Just another day in Paradise".

Miller uncovered that the photograph was actually taken in New York City. After his discovery hit the media, he took a photo of Shea's Theatre and Main Street and titled it "Forever in Paradise", which he says secured a partnership between his

company, [bornandraisedshop.com](http://bornandraisedshop.com) and Wegmans.

Miller also made national news when he proposed to his wife. He proposed while he was participating in a body painting campaign promoting cardiovascular awareness and plant-based eating in Times Square during a snowstorm.

A graduate of Alfred University and Buffalo State College, Miller hopes to write and publish a series of children's books about Charles Burchfield.



Above: T. Alexander Miller has made his mark on the Western New York community.

## BTF Represented on NYSUT Committees

Eighteen BTF members have been appointed to serve on statewide committees of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

Their participation in this volunteer role not only gives the BTF more visibility throughout the state, but also benefits our union by providing these members with expert knowledge in the areas in which they serve. Most have already attended or will be attending committee meetings in Albany.

The members and the committee they will serve on are:

Tom Anthony – Educational Technology

Andres Arroyo – World Languages  
Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes – Women's

Marc Bruno – Health/Safety

Norm Duttweiler – LGBTQ+

Molly Eldridge – Teacher Center

Fayezeah Fisher – Social Studies

Mel Holden – Library

Melissa Kenney – English Language Arts

Melinda M. Sullivan – Policy Council

Brian Meyer – Math Science

Technology

Joseph Montante – Pension and Retirement

Sue Raichilson - CTE

Trisha Rosokoff – ELL

Greg Sawicki – Special Education

Michele Schroeder – Art, Music

Eve Shippens – Civil/Human Rights

Stacy Valvo – Early Childhood

## Evening of Trivia Is a Big Success

More than 40 teachers and their guests attended the first-ever evening of trivia event on April 23 at Pour Taproom in Buffalo.

A similar event was planned for March 2020 but that event did not happen for obvious reasons. The trivia showdown featured teams of up to 6 players. Teams were read questions by the moderator and wrote and submitted their answers. Answer sheets were graded and a running total was kept.

The competition was tough and the top two teams finished just one point apart. All teams made a great showing

and the top three teams were awarded prizes.

Besides the events that have already happened this year, the Social Committee, chaired by Nicole Herkey, is planning a boat ride on the Miss Buffalo on June 9 and a Bisons game on June 28.

Social Committee events are conducted several times throughout the year to encourage BTF members and their families to get together with other members throughout the District. BTF members are urged join your colleagues for these events.



1. The team going by the name Extra Potent Potables finished in 2nd place with an overall score of 46 points



2. The Youngins not only made a good showing, but had a lot of fun in the process.



# Approximately 300 Attend Annual BTF Retirement Workshop at Salvatore's

To say this event was well received would be an understatement.

About 300 teachers and their guests attended the annual BTF Retirement Workshop, March 26, at Salvatore's Italian Gardens in Depew.

Sue Raichilson, chair of the Retirement Workshop, and BTF President Rich Nigro welcomed the attendees before turning the program over to Gerard D'Amore of the NYS Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) for his presentation.

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

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

The last part of the program was a presentation by LRS staff member Rob Mueller about the benefits to which BTF members are entitled under the contract. When a teacher retires, he/she may be able to receive termination compensation for unused sick days, the negotiated Early Retirement Incentive, and a \$500 bonus for early notification of retirement. Healthcare in retirement is a negotiated benefit that teachers

with 15 years of service with the District can take advantage of as a retiree.

The BTF sponsors this workshop every March. If you missed this year's seminar, you may still call the BTF for guidance with contractual issues regarding retirement.



1. Mindful of limits placed on final average salary, Gerard D'Amore presents sample calculations.

2. While enjoying coffee and dessert, attendees plan for the future.

# Committee of 100 Lobbies State Representatives

More than 700 NYSUT members, including four from the BTF, went to Albany March 4 & 5 to lobby legislators for money for education as part of the annual Committee of 100 Advocacy Days.

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

Participants from the BTF included President Rich Nigro, Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Treasurer Joseph Montante, and Teacher Center Policy Board Vice Chair Ruyvette Townsend.

The BTF representatives met with Western New York lawmakers to urge more funding for Buffalo Schools, make changes to Tier 6, keep the "Save Harmless" provision, and push for the state to continue to fully fund Foundation Aid.



L-R: Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Rich Nigro, Ruyvette Townsend, and Joseph Montante

## Save the Date

**May 21**

BTF Retirement Dinner  
Salvatore's Italian Gardens

**June 9**

Miss Buffalo Boat Ride

**June 11**

Council of Delegates Meeting  
Grapevine Banquets

**June 28**

Buffalo Bisons Baseball Game  
Sahlen's Field

## More Than \$3,500 Raised for Telethon

Once again, the BTF and Buffalo teachers opened their hearts and donated more than \$3,500 to the Annual Variety Club Telethon.

The Telethon, which benefits the Oishei Children's Hospital, was held March 9 and 10 at Variety, the Children's Charity of Buffalo and WNY in Lancaster.

BTF President Rich Nigro and VP Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan appeared on March 10 during "Labor Hour" along with leaders of other local unions.

The fundraising effort was organized by the BTF Public Relations Committee.



Above: BTF President Rich Nigro (Left) and VP Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan (Right) pose with Bills' Legend Darryl Talley



# Counseling Memos and Your Rights

A counseling memo is not discipline; nevertheless, no one likes to be told he/she is doing something incorrectly. Therefore, here are some things to keep in mind when dealing with the receipt of a counseling memo.

A counseling memo may be used by an administrator or supervisor for the limited purpose of making a teacher aware of a rule, policy, procedure, practice or expectation. The purpose of a counseling memo is to warn and instruct the teacher as well as discuss future conduct, expectations and areas for improvement. A counseling memo may not include any discipline or the threat of discipline, although whether a memo or letter to the file is a counseling memo or discipline in the nature of a letter of reprimand will depend on all of the facts and circumstances.

Even though a counseling memo is not discipline, a Buffalo Public School teacher should not receive a counseling memo without a union representative present. If the administration insists on issuing the counseling memo without a union representative present, against the wishes of the teacher, the teacher should state, "I believe I am entitled to representation so let's continue this meeting when representation

is available" in response to administration's questions. After the meeting, the teacher should notify his/her union representative immediately about the meeting and denial of representation.

At the end of the meeting, the administration will ask the teacher to sign the counseling memo. It is each teacher's choice whether or not to sign the counseling memo. If the teacher decides to sign, make sure to add the following language to the memo, "My signature acknowledges I have received this memo not that I agree with its contents."

In response to a counseling memo, a teacher has a right to provide a rebuttal. In the Buffalo City School District, there is no time limit as to when a Buffalo Public School teacher has to respond to a counseling memo. The most prudent course of action is for the teacher to request a copy of his/her counseling memo. The teacher should then prepare a rebuttal to the counseling memo. Prior to submitting the rebuttal, the teacher should provide the BTF with a copy of the counseling memo and draft rebuttal for review.

Once the BTF has reviewed and suggested possible changes, the teacher should provide the rebuttal to his/her administrator by email or

in person with a request for a date stamped copy and request that the rebuttal be attached to the original memo and be placed in the teacher's personnel file. The teacher should keep a copy of the email or date stamped copy for his/her own records. See *Provocator*, "Keeping Records is a Must" (February 2023) for more information about which records to store.

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

## Did You Know...

That teachers with two complete years of satisfactory teaching service in an area for which they are certified are granted a waiver from future "selection procedures" in their certification areas and are provided with preference over applicants with less service time in Buffalo Public Schools?

This is a new provision in the contract and was part of the 2023 collective bargaining agreement.

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Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina



Joe Frandina  
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## Teachers to Be Honored by NAMI

Three teachers have been recognized by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) for their community action for better mental health awareness, support, and education. Eve Shippens of East High School, Virginia Eberle of School 6, and Chris Salamone, formerly at Virtual Pathways High School and now retired, were honored at the May 9th meeting of NAMI.

The event, which took place at Pearl Street Grill and Brewery, was the first community-wide gathering since the pandemic. The keynote address was delivered by Michael J. Billoni, a local author and Buffalo booster, and an advocate for mental health.

The “Covid Heroes” awardees did not hesitate to step up in March

of 2020 when the pandemic brought operations to a halt, jeopardizing all services to the community. “With these three incredible teachers’ dedication, we were able to put our vital programs online in a very short time in a way that honored NAMI’s required program fidelity as well as participants’ privacy and confidentiality”, said Jeffrey Pirrone, Executive Director.

Shippens and Salamone taught the program’s first-ever online Family-to-Family class and Eberle not only taught classes, but also brought the Family Support groups online. The BTF congratulates the trio for their service to BPS and to the community at large.

## Welcome New Members

The following 21 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last issue of the Provocator. Welcome to the union!

Emily Donahue

Gina Dormer

Alyssa Erazo

Jannatul Ferdaush

Colleen Garvin-Browne

Maureen Hann

Jeremy Jindra

Karen Kowalewski

Ashley Lovullo

Robert Magill

Tyler Mecklenburg

Johnathan Nelson

Elizabeth Orloff

Caitlyn O’Toole

Beatrice Owunwanne

Jasmine Peterson

Andrew Rose

Charissa Smith

Darrin Strickland

Alicia Vetter

Hope Wardlaw

## A Night with the Buffalo Sabres

Eight Buffalo teachers and their guests had fantastic seats and a wonderful experience at the Buffalo Sabres vs. Ottawa Senators game on March 27th at Key Bank Center.

Executive Committee member Chris Stephens secured a donation

of 8 pairs of suite tickets to the game and worked with Social Committee Chair Nicole Herkey to turn the event into a special evening.

The tickets were raffled off and the proceeds from the raffle were donated to the Making Strides against Breast Cancer Walk. A total of \$1,540 was raised for this worthy cause.

While the game resulted in a 6-2 loss for the Sabres, the experience and camaraderie for those who attended was memorable. There’s always next year for the Sabres and perhaps a new coach will make a difference.



Above: Buffalo teachers enjoy a night at a Sabres game while supporting a good cause.

## Ten Unionists Attend NYSUT Winter Workshop

A group of ten leaders from the BTF attended NYSUT’s Winter Leadership Conference in March. The training was held at the Niagara Falls Convention Center on March 8 & 9.

Participants were able to choose which sessions they wanted to attend from among 15 offerings. Some of the 90-minute workshops included: The Impact of Wage Inequality, Current State of the Labor Movement, Dealing with Children with Disabilities, and You Be the Judge.

Among the participants were BTF President Rich Nigro, VP Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Secretary Mark Mecca. Treasurer Joseph Montante, Executive Committee members Brian Meyer, Karen Kane, Mike Jeffers, and Tara Rosa. Building delegates Naomi Carey and Cheryl Greene also attended.

Making conferences like this and others available to our members is part of the effort to train as many future leaders as possible. The workshops were informative and well-received by all who attended.



1. As the presenter speaks about the current state of the labor movement, Mark Mecca, Rich Nigro, and Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan listen carefully.

2. Instead of really going over Niagara Falls in a barrel, the 10 BTF conference attendees instead settle on a barrel photo.