

This past weekend, I was at Gurney's for a Long Island Presidents' Conference (LIPC). Almost 100 local presidents attended and NYSUT President Karen Magee was in attendance for part of the weekend. There was a great deal of discussion about many items including the Freidrichs vs CTA Supreme Court case, the possibility of a constitutional convention in 2017 and the effect that the minimal tax cap is having on both local school budgets and negotiations. This time spent delving into these issues and connecting with other local union presidents was invaluable.

Karen Magee updated us on the many actions NYSUT continues to take regarding testing and evaluations. Her overarching theme was that "We are not done. We are just getting started and we must get it done working together." NYSUT advocates for all of us. Some recent actions include the filing of a lawsuit challenging SED for infringing on collective bargaining rights in the APPR process. NYSUT leaders and members were part of the Governor's task force. That task force made 21 recommendations regarding testing, common core and evaluations, many of which are being acted on by the Regents. The current moratorium on using state provided growth scores for teacher evaluation was an outgrowth of the task force.

While at LIPC, presidents received a legal update on the result of cases NYSUT has litigated and on the status of pending cases. A few of the cases dealt with the discipline of teachers due to the use of social media. There are times that First Amendment rights are not applicable. For example, a teacher was disciplined because she took photos of ELA test questions and then posted them on Facebook along with comments. These are secure exams and thus this is not allowable. There have also been cases of teachers posting disparaging remarks about students and/or parents on various forms of social media. These cases have also resulted in discipline and serve as a reminder that as public employees we must always be careful of what we say and how we act. An update on the NYSHIP buyback case was also given. This case is still ongoing and NYSUT is currently working on an appeal.

In the previous newsletter, I reviewed the detail of the Freidrichs' case. You might recall that the principle of "fair share"; all who benefit from union representation should share fairly in the costs of that work, is at stake. In New York state, the law says that if you choose not to be a union member, you must still pay your "fair share" for the union's work that benefits you, for example, the salaries and benefits that unions negotiate, better working conditions, health and retirement benefits and so on. This "fair share" is also called an agency fee. All of this could change depending on the Supreme Court's ruling which is expected by the end of June. This is just another attack on all unions and public education. We must remain united in our support for both unions and public education. Expect to hear more about this case and what you can do over the next few months.

A possible constitutional convention in 2017 is another threat to all of us. Your NYSUT dues help to protect your pension by making it possible for three of the NYSTRS Trustees to be teachers. NYSUT provides the release time for teacher members on the retirement board by reimbursing the school district for their time. The teacher members are looking out for your best interests. Currently your pension is protected by Article V, section 7 of the NY State Constitution. It states that a pension is a contractual relationship and the benefits shall not be diminished or impaired. Have you ever wondered why these pensions are not taxed by NY State? That would be an impairment. Recently in Colorado, public employees who have been retired for many years saw their pensions reduced. Why was this possible? They did not have a constitutional pension guarantee like we do in NY. Could this happen in NY? It could if our constitution is changed. This would affect all public employees such as town workers, fire fighters and police not just school employees. The fight to prevent this from happening will take all of our efforts. Stay tuned for more details.

We continue to deal with the tax cap and all of the problems that go with it. As Syosset and other districts around the State prepare their budgets for the 2016-17 school year, they are faced with the reality that the tax cap is not 2% this year but about 0.12%. Budget presentations were made at both the January and February Board of Education meetings. Please attend the March and/or April budget hearings so that you can hear firsthand what the plans are for next year's budget. Without significant increases to state aid many districts will be forced to make hard choices.

In Unity,

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## Benefits Of Being a NYSUT Member



1. Higher pay & better benefits
2. A contract you can rely on
3. A strong voice at work
4. Professional learning

### 5. NYSUT Member Benefits

NYSUT members & their families can choose from a variety of insurance, financial, legal, and shopping & travel programs designed with the NYSUT member in mind – including term life insurance, auto insurance, legal & financial services, car rentals, vacation packages, and much more!

## Member Appreciation Month is back again this February!

Since it was such a big hit last year, we're doing it again! Member Appreciation Month is coming February 2016.

This year will be even bigger because it's a leap year... that means more chances to win even more great prizes!!!

Once again, Member Appreciation Month will be filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers. Prizes will include gift cards, Beats headphones, a Go Pro camera and more.

To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is participate in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.



We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

It's the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer more than 40 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call 800-828-8101.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payees to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.



## SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

### LI Teachers Benevolent Fund Scholarships

Eligibility: Children of in service members of NYSUT locals which are participants in the Long Island Teachers Benevolent Fund, who are high school seniors, graduating this year, and who will be attending a post-secondary institution on a full time basis.

Criteria: Proof of academic achievement by submitting copies (original not necessary) of:

1. School Transcript including the current GPA
2. SAT or ACT scores

Applications are due in the STA office not later than Friday, March 7 for processing. Applications are available in the STA office or either call ext. 5784 or email [donnas.sta@gmail.com](mailto:donnas.sta@gmail.com) for a copy.

### AFT Scholarships & Grants

This program offers four 4-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to students who are dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education. Applications for the 2016 Porter Scholars Program are now available online:

<http://www.aft.org/about/member-benefits/scholarships>. The deadline for the AFT Robert G. Porter Scholars Program for high school students is March 31, 2016. The deadline for the Member Grants Program is March 31, 2016. Please contact [PorterScholars@aft.org](mailto:PorterScholars@aft.org) if you have any questions.

### Designation of Beneficiary

TRS death beneficiary information

Need to name or update your beneficiary information?

You can review your beneficiary information by checking your annual benefit profile or through your online "MyNYSTRS" account via [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org)

To designate or change your beneficiary info, just print the Designation of Beneficiary form: <http://www.nystrs.org/main/forms/net11-4.pdf>

### K-12 Educator Expense Deduction

If you are an eligible educator, you can deduct up to \$250 (\$500 if married filing jointly and both spouses are educators, but not more than \$250 each) of any unreimbursed expenses (otherwise deductible as a trade or business expense). Qualified expenses are amounts you paid or incurred for books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), other equipment, and supplementary materials that you use in the classroom. For courses in health and physical education, expenses for supplies are qualified expenses only if related to athletics.

For more information: IRS Topic 458  
<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458.html>



Congress made permanent the federal educator tax deduction, which allows educators to deduct eligible out-of-pocket classroom spending up to \$250. The deduction was expanded to include eligible professional development expenses.

**Your Employee Assistance Work/Life Program (EAP) provides support for a variety of personal and professional concerns including emotional well-being, family and relationship issues, job-related difficulties, substance abuse and others. Trained professional counselors are available 24/7. Your EAP can help. Call 800-833-8707 for a free and confidential consultation.**

# Rep Council Notes...

Meetings: 1/8/16 & 2/9/16

Approval of Goals  
 Treasurer's Report  
 Political Action  
 Wellness  
 TRACT  
 REC  
 President's report

Rep. Council Attendees:

Baylis

Glenn Donlon\*

Berry Hill

Robin DiMaggio\*  
 Jodi Beckoff  
 Courtney Orphanos  
 Sandra Hoffman  
 Amy Aiosa  
 Melissa Kessler

Robbins Lane

Linda Blanchfield\*  
 Joyce Ettinger\*

South Grove

Bridget Perlmutter\*  
 Caterina Bozza\*  
 Michele Webb  
 Jody Braun\*

Village

Allyson Giles\*  
 Eileen Hoffman\*  
 Michelle Potvin\*

Walt Whitman

Candace Nupp\*  
 Michele Strauss\*  
 Jennifer Gustafson\*  
 Lori Bookspan

Willits

Lisa Funk\*  
 Denise Martinez  
 Susan Gallagher  
 Marcus Crenshaw  
 Elissa Wagner

H.B. Thompson Middle School

Tania Johnson  
 Ann Cullen\*  
 Marissa Occelii  
 Darlene Darress  
 Regina Pisacani

South Woods Middle School

Mike Gross\*

REC

Matty Wolfson

Syosset High School

Beth Schettino  
 Stacey Balducci  
 Rosemary Jones\*

Registered Nurse

Susan Murphy

OT/PT

Bonnie Pantell

Psych Services

Alena Kupferman

TRACT Center

Fran Bernstein\*

\*Attended both meetings

## REMINDERS:

STA Rep Council

March 10 & April 14

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Budget Information Meeting

March 21 at 7 p.m.,  
 SW Middle School

## For 2015 Tax Purposes...

- Full-time teachers paid dues in the amount of \$925.00 from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015.
- Full-time nurses paid dues in the amount of \$495.00 from January 1, 2015 through December 31, 2015
- Part time teacher and nurses should look at their last pay stub in December from which dues were deducted.

2015-2016

SYOSSET TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kim Pritchard, President	Carol Castaldi
Kat Kelly, Vice-President	Megan Halleran
Michael Callahan, Treasurer	Mark Hanik
	Allison Noonan
	Debra Puccio
	David Steinberg

## STAnd United

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Syosset Teachers' Association  
 President: Kim Pritchard  
 Editor: Donna Stanziani  
<http://www.syossetta.org>