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Spring has arrived and if you are like me you can not wait to be outdoors. This Spring we also have the hope that life will slowly emerge from its COVID Winter and begin to return to some semblance of normalcy. We have much to be thankful for and many accomplishments that we can be proud of. This has not been an easy year but here we are... We have managed to open our programs and have delivered to our students the best that we have to offer. Recently two of our own, Amy Gillett, a Criminal Justice teacher and Beth St. Claire-Bedell, a Special Education teacher, were recognized by WNYT as Top Teachers in our area. Congratulations to both of you! It is always nice when educators are acknowledged. Even more so when they are two of our own!

In a year marked by social distancing and isolation, a sense of community has been more important than ever. One of the things I miss the most is being able to congregate in the lunch room or sitting with my colleagues during a staff meeting. Many of our programs share a sense of camaraderie which has been difficult to maintain under these circum-

stances. We need to remind ourselves that we are stronger together.

That phrase has been repeated in Association communications all year. It appeared on the face masks we distributed in the Fall and was part of my opening remarks and many communications since. We have come back to it so often because it is true.

I ask that you take some time to ponder how we can strengthen our Association. A survey was recently sent regarding Association participation and communication. If you haven't completed it yet, please do so. In addition to dealing with the pandemic we are also in the process of contract negotiations. Communication and participation is more important than ever.

Participation in the Association can take many forms. Start with reading and understanding your contract. It is important to know what it says, and just as importantly, to know what it does not say. Many issues that come up are not contractual, but when our Association is strong our voice carries weight.

STRONGER TOGETHER

If you are able to become more involved you might consider attending our monthly meetings. You might also want to join a committee or volunteer to be a building rep. Please encourage your colleagues to read their union communications and to check out our website at <http://rcgboces.ny.aft.org/> or our Twitter (@BocesRCG) <https://twitter.com/bocesrcg>. Twitter is a great way for us to pass along important communication coming from NYSUT and to keep membership informed on the latest developments with NY State Ed. Dept. Finally, keep informed on developments within Questar and make your voices heard. A great way to do this is through participation in the Town Halls where information is disseminated and questions are addressed.

We value your input and ideas. Thank you for your continued support and participation. We are, after all, stronger together.

In Solidarity,

Joal Bova

President, RCG BOCES Teachers' Association

Union Updates

- **For NYSUT Coronavirus Updates**
Visit: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/coronavirus-toolkit>

Pro athletes do it... why can't we? NYSUT and allies call for more COVID testing in schools

No matter how you feel about Tom Brady you gotta give him credit. He was the last man standing during a football season that might never have happened, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It wasn't his offensive line, however, that saved the season; it was his union.

"Everybody loves football in America," said DeMaurice Smith, executive director of the National Football League Players Association. "But this year, it took the most herculean effort I've ever been a part of to mount and complete a 256-game schedule in a sport where grown men wrestle with each other, and to crown a Super Bowl champion."

Smith joined NYSUT for a virtual news conference Thursday on the

importance of ramping up COVID testing in school districts across w York in order to open safely.

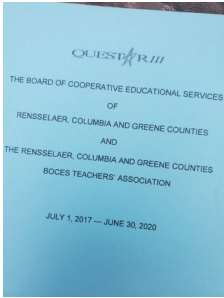
Author: Ned Hoskin

Read the full article here:

<https://www.nysut.org/news/2021/march/covid-testing>



Know Your Contract



Article 6: Salary

6.3 Early Retirement Incentive

A. An employee, having served at least ten years with the Agency, who retires during the term of this agreement pursuant to the rules and regulations of the NYS Teachers' Retirement System or the NYS and Local Employees Retirement System during the first three years of retirement eligibility without penalty, shall receive \$15,000 minus \$40.00

multiplied by the difference between the number of days of sick leave he or she has accumulated and 170 days provided such employee had 180 sick days or ore of accumulated sick leave at the commencement of the last year of his or her employment prior to retirement.

B. An employee having served at least 10 years with the Agency who retires during the term of this Agreement pursuant to the rules and regulations of the NYS

Teachers Retirement System or the NYS and Local Employees Retirement System during the first three years of retirement eligibility without penalty with less than 180 days of sick leave accumulated shall receive \$15,000 minus \$40 multiplied by the difference between the number of days of sick leave he or she has accumulated and 180.



Being a performer during Covid is no easy feat; social distancing, mask-wearing, and the need to sanitize all shared materials have made live performance nearly impossible. But the students of the New Visions: Visual & Performing Arts program have been determined to share their talents in spite of the many obstacles.

The New Visions: Visual & Performing Arts program is designed to provide high school seniors with opportunities to explore a wide array of careers in the visual and performing arts. Based at The Arts Center of the Capital Region in historic downtown Troy, the program blends an integrated curriculum in college-level English, music, art, theatre and film studies with hands-on experience in a creative

academic environment. Students participate in both workshops and classroom instruction, in addition to developing a portfolio and/or preparing the audition materials needed to apply to a college arts program.

New Visions students also gain valuable insight into career options by working directly with local visual and performing artists such as jewelry designers, photographers, dancers and actors and through visiting art galleries and attending live theater productions. Furthermore, they conceptualize and compose professional-quality work in a variety of media—from recording a CD to writing, directing and filming a movie using state-of-the-art editing equipment. In the spring,

students showcase their artwork in the Student/Faculty Gallery at The Arts Center and write and perform a live theatre production.

I was extremely unsure of the probability of getting most of these tasks accomplished during a pandemic...until I met with my students on the first day of school. Their energy, enthusiasm, determination, (and all-important understanding of technology!) ensured that not even a pandemic would keep them from realizing their potential!

Peg Danner Frank, Program Instructor
New Visions: Visual & Performing Arts

Shared Success

“It always seems impossible, until it’s done” ~Nelson Mandela

Senate passes \$1.9 trillion in relief: What it means for AFT members



Working people and their advocates are breathing a collective sigh of relief after the Senate passed the American Rescue Plan March 6. Once signed into law, this powerful piece of legislation will provide much-needed assistance to accelerate COVID-19 testing and vaccination programs and to get money to families struggling with job loss, food insecurity, the threat of homelessness and other challenges related to the pandemic. Funds could start flowing as early as next week.

The bill is expected to cut child poverty in half, extend a lifeline to unemployed people, help families pay their bills and keep a roof over their heads, help states and local communities maintain public safety services, save jobs, and safely reopen schools.

“This plan is quite literally a lifeline for an economy that desperately needs one,” says AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have lost more than half a million jobs in public education and more than 100,000 jobs in healthcare. This is what government looks like when it takes swift action to care for us all.”

The relief built into the American Rescue Plan is on its way because of hardworking advocates like union members and their coalition partners, who relentlessly called legislators, wrote petitions and led campaigns to articulate the need and provide help to the American people. The AFT was a leader in this massive movement that included other unions, education advocates, parents, champions of racial and socioeconomic equity, and so many others working to provide basic support to working families, schoolchildren and the communities where AFT members live and work.

Read the full story here: <https://www.aft.org/news/senate-passes-19-trillion-relief-what-it-means-aft-members>

Legal or financial concerns?

NYSUT Member Benefits can help

Whether it's assisting NYSUT members with everyday essentials, important choices about insurance needs, or making prudent decisions about financial and legal concerns, NYSUT Member Benefits can help.



Scan the QR codes below to learn more about the following endorsed programs and services.

Legal Service Plan: For a low annual price, our Legal Service Plan provides unlimited toll-free legal advice; a simple will, health care proxy, living will and power of attorney; and guaranteed maximum fees for many legal matters. If a NYSUT member who is a current participant in the Legal Service Plan passes away due to COVID-19, the law firm of Feldman, Kramer & Monaco has offered to extend a number of services at no cost to the member's family.



SCAN ME

Financial Learning Center:

We recently contracted with popular financial publisher Kiplinger's Personal Finance for our new Financial Learning Center. This interactive microsite offers numerous articles on a wide variety of financial topics, including selecting the best value in tax planning software and more. No matter your point in life or financial situation, you are sure to find something of interest.



SCAN ME

Mid-Island Mortgage: With our UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program presented by Mid-Island Mortgage, NYSUT members receive special purchase and refinancing mortgage discounts for a variety of home-related needs. Whether you're looking to buy a home, lower your mortgage payment or planning a home improvement project, Mid-Island Mortgage can help you save up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs.



SCAN ME

Cambridge Credit

Counseling: Our program with Cambridge Credit Counseling can assist NYSUT members with better understanding their student loan re-payment and debt consolidation options. NYSUT members can receive a no-cost, no-obligation, consultation with a Cambridge certified counselor. Cambridge is also the provider of NYSUT's Student Loan Debt Webinars.



SCAN ME

NYSUT Member Benefits offers dozens of programs and services that are available to NYSUT members and their families, including the following options:



DINING & SHOPPING DISCOUNTS



TRAVEL & TOURS



CAR & TRUCK RENTALS



LIFE INSURANCE



AUTO & HOME



LONG-TERM CARE & DISABILITY

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org, call 800-626-8101 or scan the QR codes above.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

Member Benefits Quick Guide

INSURANCE COVERAGE

Auto/Home/ Boat/Motorcycle

Special group rates on coverage for auto, home, renters, boat and motorcycle, and personal excess liability umbrella coverage from MetLife.

866-697-8822

Term Life/ Level Term Life

Financial protection for your family from MetLife.

888-386-9788

Disability

Income replacement benefits, provided by MetLife, help cover expenses if you become partially or totally disabled and unable to work.

888-386-9788

Dental

Competitively-priced coverage from MetLife, including preventive and routine services.

888-883-0046

Catastrophe Major Medical

Supplements existing coverage if you have a serious medical issue, are confined to convalescent or custodial care, or require home health care.

800-626-8101

New York Long-Term Care Brokers

Long-term care insurance specialists help you choose the best coverage at the most competitive premium.

888-884-0077

Vision

Full coverage from Davis Vision for an eye exam, and one pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses per benefit period.

800-626-8101

Pet Insurance

Nationwide insurance for pets covers accidents and illnesses, ranging from ear infections to cancer, plus optional pet wellness plans.

866-838-3461

WrapPlan® II Universal Life Insurance

Transamerica provides coverage that increases as your term life coverage decreases or ends.

866-697-8897



LEGAL & FINANCIAL SERVICES

Legal Service Plan

Legal expertise on a range of personal legal matters provided by Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C.

800-626-8101

Financial Counseling Program

Unbiased financial counseling with investment advisor Stacey Braun Associates.

800-626-8101

Synchrony Bank

Earn preferred rates on various savings products.

800-901-2965

Cambridge Credit Counseling

Get expert assistance on student loan repayment options and/or debt consolidation, along with no-cost consultations.

STUDENT LOAN COUNSELING

888-254-9827

CREDIT & DEBT COUNSELING

888-254-0398

UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program

Save up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs with Mid-Island Mortgage Corp.

800-50-NYSUT

(800-506-9788)

TRAVEL & TOURS

Orlando Employee Discounts

Save up to 30% on theme parks, attractions and vacation packages.

866-463-0193

Grand Circle Travel

Worldwide group travel and adventure tours.

800-221-2610

MENTION NYSUT MEMBERSHIP FOR SPECIAL RATES AND OFFERS

HOME ENERGY

American Solar Partners

American-made modules, installed by IBEW union pros.

914-699-3366

Heat USA

Buying group that provides discounted heating oil and service plans.

888-432-8872

Tankfarm

Savings on propane service. No fees for rental, delivery or compliance.

855-966-1444





DINING & SHOPPING DISCOUNTS

NEW PROGRAM! Member Benefits Discounts & Deals

Exclusive member access to savings of up to 50% at 700,000 locations nationwide.

800-406-6020

Bose

Discounts on personal and home sound systems.

877-709-2073

Buyer's Edge, Inc.

Discounts on appliances, vehicles, furniture and other major purchases.

USERNAME: 215
PASSWORD: NYSUT

973-660-1001

Office Depot/ OfficeMax

Online and in-store discounts on school and office supplies.

855-337-6811, x 12897

Powell's Books

One of the world's largest independent booksellers and proud union employer.

800-878-7323

Purchasing Power

Member shopping program offering consumer products, vacations and online education services with easy and convenient payment plans.

800-537-3135

1-800-Flowers

Flowers and gifts delivered worldwide.

800-356-9377

USE CODE:
NYSUTMB



CAR & TRUCK RENTALS

Alamo

800-462-5266
USE CODE: 213855

Avis

800-698-5685
USE CODE: A441200

Budget

CAR RENTAL:
800-455-2848
USE CODE:
BCDX928400

TRUCK RENTAL:
800-566-8422
888-633-3857

USE CODE:
56000070789

Enterprise

800-736-8222
USE CODE: NYSUTMB

Hertz

800-654-2210
IN THE U.S.
800-654-3001
OUTSIDE THE U.S.
USE CODE: CDP85352

National

800-227-7368
USE CODE: 5028191



HEALTH & SAFETY

EPIC Hearing

Provides access to audiologists and ENTs, plus special pricing on hearing aids.

866-956-5400

USE CODE:
NYSUTMBC

Defensive Driving Training

Online training course provides savings on your liability and collision insurance, and can reduce up to four points on your license.

800-626-8101

USE CODE:
NYSUTDDC

Connect America

Personal emergency response system for individuals living independently.

844-996-9788



AS A MEMBER OF NYSUT, we are fighting for you every day—for better contracts, safer working conditions and fair pay. Through our advocacy, we uphold hard-won labor rights for our members — and the best possible conditions for the students, patients and others that our members serve. We also offer you exclusive access to a variety of endorsed programs and services offered by NYSUT Member Benefits, and our national affiliates, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA). From insurance to vacations, use this brochure to start taking advantage of all we have to offer. We're union proud and honored to serve you.



In solidarity,
J. Philippe Abraham
Chairperson, NYSUT Member Benefits Trust



100,000+

**PAYROLL/PENSION
DEDUCTION**

More than 100,000 NYSUT members take advantage of this convenient way to pay for endorsed programs. Payment options often include enhanced coverage or additional discounts.

\$1,500

**AUTOMATIC
INSURANCE BENEFIT**

Every member receives this accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit at no charge. It includes free travel coordination services.

\$25,000

**ONE YEAR, NO-COST,
TERM LIFE INSURANCE**

Provided for every new NYSUT member for one year. Guaranteed renewal includes free preparation of a Will, grief counseling, funeral and beneficiary claim assistance, and estate resolution.

15%

**METLIFE MULTI-POLICY
DISCOUNT**

By purchasing exclusive NYSUT member homeowners and auto insurance through MetLife, you'll receive a 15% multi-policy discount.

18-79

**ELIGIBLE AGES TO
PURCHASE LONG-TERM
CARE INSURANCE**

With discounted rates for members and partners, New York Long-Term Care Brokers program specialists will help explain and compare different coverage from multiple insurance companies.

100

**FREE FINANCIAL
LEARNING MODULES**

Available at memberbenefits.nysut.org, check out our Financial Planning Center for quick overviews of important topics such as retirement planning, student loans, budgeting and more.

90%

**CASH BACK ON
ELIGIBLE VET BILLS***

Nationwide offers pet insurance policies for dogs, cats, birds or exotic pets. Enjoy up to a 10% discount for multiple pets enrolled in a household.

**Some exclusions may apply. See policy documents for a complete list of exclusions.*

\$5,000

**ADDITIONAL BENEFIT
FOR AFT MEMBERS**

This accidental death & dismemberment insurance benefit for AFT members will double if an injury or death occurs in the workplace.

\$150,000

**ADDITIONAL BENEFIT
FOR NEA MEMBERS**

Additional life insurance and accidental death & dismemberment insurance from \$1,000-\$150,000 (depending on circumstances). Details at: memberbenefits.nysut.org

For information about these programs or contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.



To learn more about our endorsed programs and services, please visit:

memberbenefits.nysut.org

NYSUT Member Benefits

800 Troy-Schenectady Rd. Latham, NY 12110-2455

PH: 800-626-8101 FX: 518-213-6413

memberbenefits.nysut.org

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