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What Self Care Actually Looks Like

Ever since the pandemic started we have heard a lot of talk about self care. Specifically we have been told that we should be doing it. As educators we have heard this message from an abundance of sources. I have heard this stated in online PD offerings and articles geared towards teachers. It is mentioned in staff meetings and town-halls and included in various emails.

It is usually stated in a way that makes it appear to be an afterthought and comes across for what it is; a meaningless gesture that is negated by the reality of the demands placed on us. And when I think about it, never once did I get any useful advice as to how to actually practice self care. If examples are included at all they are typically just the generic, "eat well, exercise and rest up" advice that feels more like a command than an honest attempt to promote well being. In the end it feels like just one more thing to fit into an already overwhelmed schedule. But self care is actually essential. So we are left to figure out how to do it for ourselves.

Eating well, exercising and resting up are important. So is understanding what our limits are and how to live, work and play within them. There are only so many hours available to us. If we add

something on one end then something has to come off on the other end. We can not add more time or energy, only reallocate it.

To me self care is identifying what those limits are and then sticking to them. It means identifying what is important and what is less so. I have let go of activities that I used to do in my classes when the effort required was more than I was willing to put forth. To me self care means saying no to requests that would be too burdensome. It means advocating for resources and changes that I believe would be helpful. It means understanding what my role is and not solving problems that are not mine to solve. It means accepting that I have limited time and energy and then focusing what I do have on the areas that I care most about. That may mean forgoing the social studies lesson planned and instead focusing on a life lesson. I am okay with that because I know that I am conscientious and that I do good work.

Even with these limits I am working harder than ever. Yes, I work at home. Yes, I do union work on the weekend. But I am working within the limits that I have set. I also occasionally give myself days without any plans. I might end up visiting a friend, walking in nature or just sitting in silence. I schedule regular chiropractic visits and monthly massages (covered by our insurance in

case you didn't know). I understand that this is what it is for now, not forever, and I attempt to focus on what I can achieve instead of what I can not.

I understand that this will look different for all of us as we struggle to find the work/life balance that will allow us to serve our students while also tending to those things which make our lives meaningful. Setting limits is an important part of that. So trust that you are doing the best you can for your students and know that all other job responsibilities are secondary. Set the limits that you need in order to give them what they need. And yeah, don't forget to eat well, exercise and rest up.

In Solidarity,

Joal Bova

President, RCG BOCES Teachers' Association

Union Updates

- For NYSUT updates visit nysut.org

Pink Cloud Coming: Making Strides is Back in Person



Soon, you will feel the ground vibrating from thousands of walkers who are Making Strides in the quest for a cure for cancer: the pink cloud is back after last year's walks were silenced by the pandemic.

In 16 locations around the state, sneaker-clad walkers will be raising money throughout the month of October for research and support for cancer patients through the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks.

Additionally, ACS will host a live digital walk experience called "Making Strides on the Go"

for anyone who is not comfortable being in person.

The app will feature a music play list and survivor stories.

NYSUT is a flagship sponsor of Making Strides, and even when the walks were cancelled last year, devoted NYSUT members held creative drive-by and virtual events to raise more than \$273,000 for the cause, ACS reports.

In Making Strides of Westchester, for example, more than 2,500 participants drove through Manhattanville College, donned in pink and donating to ACS.

"Since 2002, when NYSUT became a flagship sponsor of the statewide

Making Strides event, our members have raised more than \$15 million for research and support," said J. Philippe Abraham, NYSUT secretary-treasurer, whose office oversees the statewide union's social justice initiatives. "That's a fundraising record to be proud of and I'm honored to lead this important union effort."

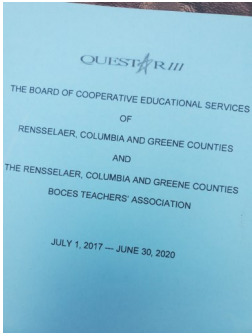
To read the full article visit:

<https://www.nysut.org/news/nysut-united/issues/2021/september/making-strides>

Author: Liza Frenette

Source: NYSUT United

Know Your Contract



Article 11: Teaching Conditions

11.25 Mentor-Intern Program

Regulations of the Commissioner of Education require the Agency to develop a teacher mentor program that will allow new teachers to obtain the mentoring necessary for teacher certification. Towards this end, the Agency will develop such a program in conjunction with the Association. Such program shall provide that mentor and intern assignments

will be made by mutual agreement of the Association and the Agency, subject to the approval of the District Superintendent or his or her designee; that the Mentor-Coordinator of the program shall be jointly selected; that the mentor and intern will each be provided with one day every other month of released time for the purpose of observations and other staff development activities; and that mentors will be paid a stipend of \$1000 at the end of the school year, pro rated as necessary, for successful

completion of the mentoring assignment.



Shared Success

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." – Helen Keller

When you first walk into the Questar III Rensselaer Academy (RA) it appears to be a school building like every other. American flags in each classroom, student work on the walls, bulletin boards filled with positive messages for the week or month, staff wearing ID badges and in the current times everyone is wearing a mask. However, if you look closer at RA you will find an atmosphere like no other. At RA it would not be uncommon to see a staff member walk into the building dressed for the work day in their pajamas. Just like it would not be unusual to walk into the building on any given Friday and feel you have walked into a flannel shop. RA has many spirit lifting and comradery days spread throughout the school year. The first Fridays' of every month are RA spirit days where everyone wears RA clothing or something with our school colors (red and grey). This brings a sense of family to RA. Every other Friday is flannel Friday. Hal-

loween is especially fun because we have a spirit week for staff and students. This entails wearing pajamas, mismatched clothes, your favorite team jersey and RA clothing. All of this helps to lighten the work environment and help us bond in a different way with our students. In this time of uncertainty and frustrations it lends itself to a lighthearted moment. We have other special events for staff/students throughout the year like Thanksgiving dinner with students, Secret Santa between staff, Breast Cancer Awareness, pot luck lunches on professional development days or half days, etc. Just when you thought "What else could RA possibly do", how about remember you when you get married by throwing you a shower, congratulating you when you have a baby and having a party, sending you a sympathy card when you have lost a loved one, congratulating you on your retirement with a card and small gift and helping you out in a time of need. There are so many ways that RA employees are more like family than just people that work

together. Isn't that how it should be when you spend 30, 40 or more hours a week with these people? Don't get me wrong, every family has its arguments and RA has had theirs, but we deal with them and move on and our family becomes stronger.

Covid-19 has thrown everyone a curveball, even RA. We started our year down staffed and it has been difficult for all but yet we somehow have found a way to make it work. Some days we are remote and some days we have kids that go home and have to be tested for COVID and other days we are faced with large numbers of quarantines. But if you stop for a moment and think, RA has something positive going on today—I want to be a part of that!!!

Written by: Kristen Esposito-Ublacker

Together again, honoring the work of public employees

For the first time since 2017, members of AFT Public Employees came together for a professional issues conference Oct. 8-10 in New York City. It was the AFT's first in-person meeting since the start of the pandemic, and it drew all three of our national officers to honor and learn from members who had never stopped doing essential work.

Members returned over and over to the conference theme, "Together We Thrive: Strengthening Our Communities Through Public Service," as a touchstone for how they had adapted an extraordinary array of jobs to meet the demands of the pandemic, including keeping prisoners and psychiatric patients safe; conducting statewide COVID-19 testing and tracing; safeguarding our natural resources; and keeping clean water flowing.

Nurses and health techs who work in state hospitals described harrowing conditions, especially early in the pandemic when little was known about the deadly new virus and no vaccines yet existed. They recounted how they stood together as a union demanding adequate staffing and adherence to science. And they recalled how the AFT itself procured millions of pieces of personal protective equipment to keep our members safe.

Wayne Spence, president of the New York State Public Employees Federation, discovered from a show of hands that most members at the conference were visiting New York for the

first time. "Welcome to the Big Apple," he said. "We went through a lot as a city, and we are grateful that we are back, and that we are here, in person. I can't tell you how much it means to me."

"This hotel is a union hotel, and they just reopened three days ago," Montana state senator and state chemist Jill Cohenour said in welcoming the crowd. "We are the first group, and we are excited to be back together."

Read the full article here:

<https://www.aft.org/news/together-again-honoring-work-public-employees>

[Annette Licitra]



Check out what your union membership has to offer!

Member Benefits Discounts & Deals

Below are the most popular vendors that NYSUT members have shopped with using MB Discounts & Deals this past year -- with a potential savings of almost \$900,000! Have you been missing out?

EAT

HelloFresh
Burger King
Subway
Domino's
Jersey Mike's Subs

PLAY

Six Flags Theme Parks
Hersheypark
Sky Zone Trampoline Park
Bronx Zoo
LEGOLAND New York

SHOP

Samsung
Apple
Dell
Lenovo
Advanced Auto Parts

TRAVEL

TripBeat
Great Wolf Lodge
Carnival Cruise Lines
Sandals Resorts
Norwegian Cruise Lines

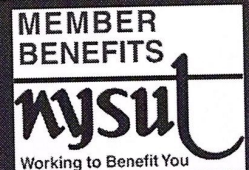
MB Discounts & Deals offers NYSUT members exclusive access to savings of up to 50% on restaurants, groceries and food delivery, theme park tickets, hotels and flights, oil changes and vehicle maintenance -- with more than 21,000 New York State deals and thousands more nationwide.

You can even refer your favorite local business (restaurant, coffee shop, workout facility, etc.) to join the network and provide NYSUT members with a special discount. Don't miss out... register your account today!

Member Benefits is proud to endorse MB Discounts & Deals along with dozens of other programs and services that may be able to benefit you and your family members. Take some time to explore our website to find out how we can help you make every dollar count!



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org
or calling 800-626-8101.



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



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

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Financial Counseling Program

Unbiased financial counseling with investment advisor Stacey Braun Associates.

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Synchrony Bank

Earn preferred rates on various savings products.

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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

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UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program

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

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(800-506-9788)

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Orlando Employee Discounts

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

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Worldwide group travel and adventure tours.

800-221-2610

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888-432-8872

Tankfarm

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

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

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Bose

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877-709-2073

Buyer's Edge, Inc.

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

USERNAME: 215
PASSWORD: NYSUT

973-660-1001

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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.

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

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Avis

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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

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

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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



The Power of the Union



Scan me

Call 800-626-8101 or visit
memberbenefits.nysut.org.