

Looking Back, And Ahead

Inside this issue:

Member Wellness	2
Shared Success Story	2
AFT Update	2
Member Benefits	3
Member Benefits	4-6

Two years ago on March 12th and 13th I was at the Albany Capital Center attending the NYS Council for the Social Studies annual conference. There was talk of Covid-19 at the conference but it went on more or less as normal. It was at that conference that I began getting phone calls from the Questar administration about the possibility of school closing for a period of time. By Friday afternoon it was only a question of when, not if. Monday morning we reported to school to prepare for a short, possibly two week closure. Some speculated that perhaps it would be extended to four weeks to get us through the upcoming Spring break. When I left that day I had no idea that I would not see students in person again for the rest of the school year. Never did I suspect that I would be writing about the ongoing pandemic two years later.

The amount of change over this time has been dizzying. Two years later over 900,000 Americans have died as a result of Covid-19. Many students have yet to enjoy a return to full time in-person instruction. Those who have, experienced gaps due to remote days and quarantine. Mental health crises and behavioral issues among students have increased. Enrollment is down at

community colleges across the nation and in k-12 districts in the three counties we serve. Businesses have closed, scarcity and inflation have risen, and employers, including schools, have struggled to fill essential positions.

The backdrop to all of this is an increasing loss of civility and public discourse in our country. This has been fomenting on the national level for some time with a recent poll indicating that 80% of Americans are worried about the future of democracy in our country. This polarization has trickled down to the state and even local school board levels with heated arguments over masks, curriculum, and books in school libraries.

It has been a rough two years. After predicting the end of the pandemic a few times, I don't want to get my hopes dashed again, but changes are ahead. This might include more in-person events at schools and a relaxing of certain COVID related policies including the mask mandate. While this may cause anxiety in the short run, these are important steps on our way back to pre-pandemic living.

This transition will be bumpy at times, and likely there will be setbacks. It is a time for all of us to reflect on the last

two years. What has worked for us? What has not? Hopefully we can cut loose those which have not and build on those that have.

Some things related to our professional lives will be under our control. How we interact with students and structure our instruction and services for example. There are other aspects that will be out of our direct control. But the experiences we have gained are valuable and must guide the future of public education. We must not forget the role we can play in that. Our experiences and knowledge make us powerful advocates. Don't be afraid to share your insight and ideas.

Public education WILL be redefined in the wake of the Covid pandemic, that is for certain. The question is, WHO will redefine it. We must insist that educators have a prominent seat at that table. We must all become strong advocates, and let's remember that we are stronger together.

In Solidarity,
Joal Bova
President, RCG BOCES Teachers' Association

Union Updates

- **For NYSUT updates visit nysut.org**

**NYSUT Representative Assembly
April 1-2. Albany.
Local and Retiree Council
Presidents Conference:
March 31 - April 1.**



For more information about the RA, visit: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources/sites/representative-assembly/about-the-ra>

We look forward to seeing convention delegates in Albany this spring for NYSUT Representative Assembly 2022.

The well-being of our members, guests and staff remains NYSUT's top priority. Currently, we intend to hold this event

in-person in accordance with COVID-19 safety practices and CDC guidelines. We will notify you if there are any necessary changes to this plan.

More information will be available in the coming weeks. Check back for updates here at nysut.org/ra.

What is the RA?

Members make their voices heard by electing local delegates who represent them at NYSUT's annual convention, the Representative Assembly.

The RA is the union's highest policy-making body, except for a membership referendum. All NYSUT members are welcome to attend the annual Representative Assembly, but only duly elected and reported delegates may debate and vote on proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, proposed resolutions and other business that might be brought before the Representative Assembly according to NYSUT Constitution and Bylaws provisions or policy.

Stay Connected

Further information on the NYSUT RA will be sent to delegates in future mailings and posted at the leader site. Log on frequently to keep current with respect to critical issues impacting the RA and other matters of importance.



Trying to manage the everyday activities of our lives can, at times, seem overwhelming. Working in the field of education can also bring different and additional stresses.

This has been a difficult time for many and trying to make daily progress can feel like a heavy load, needing some heroic efforts to continue to engage and keep our students learning, safe and well. Spending hours each day with our students, hearing their life stories, getting to know them, can be a wonderful experience. But also, at times, it can be truly heartbreaking.

That is why all of us who work in a school setting; teachers, teacher assistants, social workers, psychologists, administrators, and other staff have been exposed to what is known as second-hand trauma. That means we can experience the losses or life situations of our students and their families almost as if it were happening to us, or to our own family and friends.

The news is full of stories and articles stating that we are in a mental health crisis. There is plenty of evidence of people turning to use of medications to

alleviate some of this secondary trauma. With everyone trying their hardest to pull together and help each other, the following tips might be useful for you or to share with someone else:

Try something new- It gives your brain different connections. Be kind to yourself with your efforts, you might find a great new hobby or interest!

Try to lessen some of the load where you can- Most of us might feel that we need to keep doing, moving and achieving. There is something to be said for allowing yourself to be still, to make time for things you enjoy. A good place to start is Courtney Carver's Be More with Less. <https://bemorewithless.com> She has some great tips for simplifying and streamlining your life.

Get outdoors- This is one of my "go tos" that always works. While there is a part of me that often does not want to go (maybe I'd rather be having some tea and a snack!), I always feel better when I get outside. Even a short 5 or 10 minute walk can work wonders.

Practice gratitude. This one is also an easy habit with lots of positive benefits. When you wake up or before sleeping – think of a couple things you are grateful for.

Here is a great one for those of us who might get anxious or stressed. It's called tap and breathe, a technique that Mary Sise teaches in these videos to reduce stress. It is a little odd looking- but worth trying and very effective in a short amount of time.

<https://tapping.marysise.com/tappings...> There are other videos on this site if you don't care for this one. The great thing about tapping is once you have done it a few times, just thinking about it will have the same effect on your nervous system, calming your brain and body down.

This is another one of her videos which really resonated with some of my interactions with high school students – or any really tough interaction. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tex54X0BoCQ>



New Visions: Scientific Research and World Health

Class of 2022



NV: EPICH students working on the Robo-Master

(a model robot similar to the bomb detonator on which they have been working)

in the lab-maker space at ETEC.

The New Visions: Scientific Research and World Health program is a highly selective, college level experience offered to academically advanced high school seniors. It involves hands-on laboratory research in the emerging biotechnologies, scientific literacy, and global health. Students seek careers in medicine, healthcare, biotechnology, pharmacy, biomedical research, etc. Located at University at Albany's Health Sciences Campus in Rensselaer, NY it is also home to the Cancer Research Center, the Albany School of Public Health, Regeneron, Albany Molecular Research Inc., Taconic Farms Inc, NYSDEC, and many other research and health-related entities. Our classroom and laboratory are in the D wing of the former Sterling-Winthrop building. Students examine emerging biological research efforts and global health issues working with scientific professionals both independently and collaboratively to explore solutions to real life issues.

-Ruth Russel

The New Visions: Emergency Preparedness, Informatics, Cyber and Homeland Security (EPICH) program introduces students to the necessary content and skills in emerging technologies and the use of data to anticipate and manage natural and man-made disasters and security. This seniors-only program is located on the University at Albany's main campus in the University's brand new, state-of-the-art ETEC building. Students complete college courses that are directly applicable to a variety of career pathways in cybersecurity, homeland security and emergency preparedness. In addition to college coursework, students will learn beyond the classroom through experiential components including visiting intelligence hubs throughout the Capital Region, being introduced to professionals in the field and threat simulations where students will problem-solve and position resources in real time to protect and save lives.

-Marci Fraser

Shared Success

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." - Nelson Mandela

Reading Opens the World

The Texas

AFT and the Houston Federation of Teachers are providing bilingual, STEAM and social and emotional learning books to families of middle and elementary school students;

The Louisiana Federation of Teachers, Red River United and the Jefferson Federation of Teachers are distributing more than 1,500 books to families in need this holiday season;

The Nashua Teachers' Union in New Hampshire distributed hundreds of books at Elm Street Elementary's family vaccination clinic;

The Ohio Federation of Teachers and Ontario Federation of Teachers are starting Coffee at the Curb to provide books and literacy information to families at morning drop-off at Stingel Elementary School;

The Oregon School Employees Association—in partnership with OSEA Chapter 600 Head Start of Lane County, OSEA Chapter 603 Mt. Hood Community College Head Start, OSEA Chapter Willamette ESD, NeighborImpact Head Start and Clackamas County Children's Commission Head Start—is distributing nearly 2,000 early childhood education books and literacy materials to families at Head Start centers across the state; and

United Teachers Los Angeles is distributing 1,000 bilingual, STEAM and social and emotional learning books as part of Winter Wonderland Week events to encourage reading over the winter break.

Reading is a foundational skill necessary for virtually everything we do. It opens possibilities for all children to succeed—to learn and grow, to explore and imagine, to investigate and verify, and to lead fulfilling lives. Reading well instills confidence and helps reduce inequities. The disruptions due to the pandemic make focusing on literacy even more important, to assist our students not just to catch up but to thrive.

The American Federation of Teachers is launching Reading Opens the World, a new initiative that focuses on:

Giving teachers and school staff the tools and professional development that translate the science of reading into usable resources to help students read and read well.

Giving parents and caregivers fun and research-based tips and tools to support literacy.

Building on and forging new connections among families, communities, educators and schools to be partners in students' literacy.

Giving children and young people free books to read, love and keep, because ...

Reading Opens the World!

AFT affiliates hosting holiday family literacy events

In addition to our launch event in Washington, D.C., through the month of December, more than 20 AFT locals are holding events to engage families and caregivers and to provide books and literacy resources for kids, including:

The Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico held family fiestas at four schools in rural and remote locations across Puerto Rico;

AFT Massachusetts and the Lawrence Teachers Union will be hosting a book and literacy event at Lawrence High School's Mobile Market;

AFT-Wisconsin will host several family literacy events in rural parts of Wisconsin in partnership with the Butternut Federation of Teachers, Menasha Federation of Teachers and St. Croix Federation of Teachers and other community partners;

AFT-West Virginia, AFT Marion County and AFT Randolph are hosting holiday family literacy events and distributing family-friendly books;

The Florida Education Association is distributing more than 1,000 books for every family at Lake Forest Elementary in Alachua County;

The Gary Teachers Union in Indiana is inviting families to the union office to choose books to read over the winter break and stock their home libraries;



For more information visit: <https://www.aft.org/read>



Check out all your union membership has to offer!



INSURANCE YOU CAN COUNT ON.



PROVIDERS YOU CAN TRUST.

**VALUE-ADDED EXTRAS YOU
CAN'T GET ELSEWHERE.**

SOMEONE WHO HAS YOUR BACK.



NYSUT Member Benefits **Every Dollar Counts!**



When it comes to protecting yourself, your loved ones, your income or your most valuable possessions, NYSUT Member Benefits has insurance programs that fit the bill. Whether you are looking for **auto & home, life, disability, long-term care, dental, vision, or pet insurance**, there is a Member Benefits-endorsed plan that may be of assistance featuring value-added extras unavailable to the public.

Get started by first bookmarking the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org. There, you will find numerous tools and resources available to you as a NYSUT member – including a **Financial Learning Center** with articles designed to help educate you on financial decisions and topics.

Member Benefits also endorses several discounted shopping programs that can help you save on both everyday and more expensive purchases. Finally, if you ever have an issue or problem when using a Member Benefits program, our staff take great pride in their ability to quickly assist members with any concerns that may arise.

Visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 to learn more about the endorsed programs and services available to you through your union membership.



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



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

Jan/Feb 2022

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



The Power of the Union



Scan me

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