**WCSD Budget Passes!**

Unofficial Results of May 18, 2010 Vote:

- Budget: 6855 yes, 4093 no
- Bus Prop.: 6048 yes, 4448 no

Board candidates: 6555 Shultz, 6060 Walker, 5750 Nandi (all 3 were elected)

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**RA Convention 2010**

**Seen on a button:**

Due to budget constraints,
the light at the end of the tunnel
has been turned off

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Cecil E. Roberts, *President of the United Mineworkers of America: Solidarity Knows No Bounds*

Diane DiChiara, RA Delegate 2010

Why should the president of a coal miners’ union care about the workers who recently died in a nonunion’s mine horrific catastrophe killing 29 people? The answer is simple: it is because we are all connected. This is no more evident then in Roberts’ West Virginia community where a young man, Cory Davis, mowed the lawn for Roberts’ 91 year old mother and Cory’s grandparents live besides Roberts’ mother and Cory was the same young man who in 8th grade asked to have his picture taken with Roberts for a coal mining report and whose father, Roberts’ coached in Little League baseball and…Corey died in the mine on April 5th. Cory’s connection to Roberts is just one of the many examples of the bond that exists between the people in Montcoal, West Virginia. This is the bond that connects the suffering, which unites the miners into one family, one brotherhood of *solidarity*.

(cont’d on following page)
Solidarity Knows No Bounds (cont’d from page 1)

During his 20-minute speech, Roberts called upon his Baptist roots to testify and testify he did. He spoke of a young coal miner, Josh Napper, who left behind a letter to his mother, which foreshadowed his death. In the letter, Josh expressed his love for his mother, his fiancé, and for his young baby daughter. With that said, Roberts loudly proclaimed, “Those are the kind of letters young men write when they go to war. In the United States of America those are not the kind of letters you write before you go to work.”

Roberts pointededly called to task Massey Energy Company’s CEO for being “anti-union, anti-government, anti-regulation, and anti-safety laws.” Don Blankenship has been the CEO and Chairman for approximately ten years. The company is known for its successful strip-mining and mountain top removal operation (Ohiocitizen.org). According to Roberts, Blankenship “controls the economy” as “you cannot have a job in his company unless you bow down to him.” A potential employee must make the decision - “a job or a union.” How many of us - if in the same situation would be forced to choose the job, over the union? Roberts declared that if justice prevails, “[Blankenship] will go to jail in chains for 40 years over this.”

Roberts also quoted Mother Jones, known as the “Miners’ Angel” for her courage to organize workers in the early 1900s, as he said, “Pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living” and that is what Roberts is doing. He said, “laws work” and in 1969 the first health and safety laws were passed in the coal industry. These laws gave government the right to fine and shut down coal companies for disregarding issues of health and safety. For the years prior to 1969, 32,000 coal miners died in mines. Since 1969 the death toll is at 3,200. Roberts went on to say, “we need good laws…enforced” and individuals who do not comply should “go to jail.”

So, in the face of this tragedy Roberts asked, “What can we do?” He paused briefly, looked towards President Ianuzzi, and then cast his attention back to the NYSUT audience. Massey Energy needs to be changed - from the CEO to the Board of Directors and “every dime of investment money should be used” to do this; furthermore, he urged “every union to join this fight.” Roberts stated that we “use our collective political power” to make an example out of somebody.” He went on to strenuously proclaim that “this is the time, this is the moment, if not now, when?” We need to tell Congress we want laws that “protect the health and safety of coal miners and school teachers and construction workers, every single worker!” Roberts received one of many standing ovations from the NYSUT listeners. He declared that every worker should be empowered to say to a boss that places him or her in an unsafe working condition, “Kiss my ass!”

But laws are not enough. Every worker needs the “right to be able to join a union without interference from any boss, any CEO” and labor “needs the right to organize in this country.” Roberts reinforced this goal with the following proclamations, “for better pensions,” “for safety,” “for expansion into middle class,” “for more democracy in this country,” “for a healthy work place,” “for a better economy,” “for a voice at work,” “for a better America,” “for a stronger United States of America.” With each proclamation NYSUT’s RA responded loudly and in unison “Join a union!” This was followed by another standing ovation.

Roberts proclaimed, “Ghandi marched; Dr. King marched; Moses marched; John L. Lewis marched” and “when the people get to marching, the leaders get to listening.” Roberts feels that as a labor movement we are “at our best when we’ve been a marching and demanding.” Marching, the presence of the masses, Roberts believes is stronger and more impressive then e-mails and faxes. The labor movement cannot remain silent about issues of health and safety for coal workers and all workers.

My fellow delegates and I were caught up in the wave of emotion and passion in which Roberts spoke. Those 29 coal miners were no longer “just a terrible story” we had read and forgotten about weeks earlier. The coal mining industry was no longer the occupation of the poor Appalachian worker with whom we were not connected. I am embarrassed by my ignorance and lack of knowledge especially since I – like you – am connected to those 29 coal miners who were employed by the Massey Energy Company.

According to a 1990s movie, Six degrees of Separation is all that divides us from one another. What is our connection to the 29 coal miners and Massey Energy? It is our pension fund “which controls $14.1 million in shares of Massey stock” (Mother Jones 4/13/2010). With this awareness, the coal industry can no longer remain, for me, a foreign entity. And so, I strayed from the writing of this article to become more aware and to find out if anything, what was being done. Quite quickly I found a response from the Comptroller’s office in regards to the tragedy. Thomas DiNapoli, NYS Comptroller and trustee for our retirement fund is calling for the removal of Don Blankenship as CEO of Massey Energy (Mother Jones 4/13/2010); furthermore, in a letter on April 27, DiNapoli asked other investors to withhold their votes for Massey Energy Board of Directors: Phillips, Gabrys, and Moore. They are up for reelection on May 18th. DiNapoli said “Directors Phillips, Gabrys and Moore have neglected their responsibilities to oversee risk and have failed to protect our investments…there’s no excuse for the lack of accountability at Massey. The solution is clear: they have to go” (Office of State Comptroller 4/27/10). It will be more than interesting to see if the investors follow DiNapoli’s suggestion. Will they do as Roberts demands and see this as the time to take action and to make Blankenship and the Massey Board of Directors the example? With the disaster in West Virginia, this is the chance for all unions to show that “Solidarity knows no bounds”.

Cecil E. Roberts, President of the United Mineworkers of America
NYSUT to Investigate Protecting Teachers Regarding Online Sites

by Meredith Inkeles, NYSUT RA Delegate

As students use social networking sites and technology more and more, it is no surprise that teachers and other school employees have become the target of online attacks. Attacks range from angry rants to creating fake sites; it is happening nationwide. Recently in Fresno, CA, three students created a fake Facebook page for their principal. In Pennsylvania, two students created a fake MySpace page identifying their principal as a sex offender. Fourteen students from the Boston Community Leadership Academy created a Facebook page containing lewd and derogatory comments about a teacher. Closer to home, in Mattydale (suburb of Syracuse), a seventh grader created a Facebook page filled with libelous, obscene, and inappropriate postings about a teacher.

While attending the NYSUT Representative Assembly 2010 in Washington, D.C., I attended one of the Legal/Political Action Committees. During this session, the most debated topic referred to Resolution #37 – Teacher Protection Regarding Online sites. During the session, a number of NYSUT members spoke about events happening in their own districts. A Facebook page was created about a young teacher saying she uses drugs. Another member commented on how a student(s) created a Facebook page about a male one-on-one TA labeling him as a pedophile. On YouTube, a student posted a video showing students fooling around in a classroom while the teacher was working with another student. We all agreed that something has to be done because a teacher’s reputation is all s/he really has and once it is tarnished, even falsely, it is extremely difficult to get it back.

Bellmore-Merrick United Secondary Teachers, North Merrick faculty Association, Plainedge Federation of Teachers, and Retiree Council 17 drafted and submitted this resolution with vague wording; the committee amended the wording to add specific provisions. In the end, the resolution was adopted as amended in the committee session: “Resolved, that NYSUT investigate the possibility of encouraging the New York State Legislature to pass legislation offering specific protections: at the request of the employee, removal of accusations, malicious materials and/or photos from the communication site within 24-48 hours; at the request of the employee, mandatory investigation to ascertain identity of the poster and any others who posted additional postings; disciplinary response commensurate with superintendent’s suspension and permanent removal of the student(s) from the employee’s classroom; to teachers and school employees from false and malicious postings and photographs placed by students on social networking and other Internet sites.”

Later in the day, the resolution was brought in front of the entire RA body. Even more discussion arose. A member from the Monroe-Woodbury Teachers’ Association asked to have the resolution sent back to the Board of Directors but he was voted down. Finally, a friendly amendment was added to the last sentence to include the fact that not all members are classroom teachers; the body adopted the wording to add on “or from direct contact with the student(s).”

These cyber attacks are a credible threat to teachers and we need to be protected. However, it will not be an easy piece of legislation to pass. In a number of cases, the parents stand by their children and lay blame on the teachers or the district. Also, there is controversy surrounding the fact that no one really knows if what is posted on Facebook or tweeted on Twitter is covered by the First Amendment. Mischievous, irate, or spiteful students have always found ways to prank or harass school employees and I fear that as even more technology emerges, these types of assaults will become more frequent and commonplace. Keep yourselves safe.
“We Must Stand United”

Before we left for the RA Convention in DC, the excitement was building up as it usually does. The convention always seems to revive all those feelings I had as a beginning teacher so many years ago. Our Amtrak excursion was uneventful and we reached DC and settled in. The next day we registered and visited all the NYSUT Services and Benefits on display. That evening the first of the General Sessions would take place. Usually I’m so inspired by the speakers.

Defining Excellence was the new slogan for this year. Senator Charles Schumer, as always, expressed his appreciation of the teachers, for without the teachers who educated him and who voted for him, he may not be the person he is today. He said he was proud to be the co-sponsor of the “Keep Our Educators Working Act”, to bring $1.4 billion to the state for the schools. Then came Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, who also thanked NYSUT for supporting her from the start and is also a co-sponsor of “Keep Our Educators Working Act.” So far nothing was firing me up.

Dennis VanRoekel, the President of the NEA, said “we can’t reform public education if there are no people left to do the educating” He called for us to “dream big” and have the “courage to act”. NEA Vice President, Lilly Eskelson, had us singing her folksong “Solidarity Forever.” Nancy Zimpher, the SUNY Chancellor, expressed her anticipation of working with the union. The young DC students singing, although they were talented, didn’t do it for me. I must say, Pasquale’s performance in a video about education was an Academy Award winner.

I was getting frustrated, waiting for that speaker to appear and tell us about defining excellence. Dick Iannuzzi then addressed the delegation. He stressed that the status quo must change and what must change first is the “disparity in wealth in our nation’s history: It’s about the quality of life created by a grossly unequal distribution of wealth…poverty. That is often what teachers are confronted with. He stressed that in times like these “we must stand united” and the journey to seek solutions will define excellence.

Friday was Randy Weingarten’s turn to inspire me. She continued to speak about how everyone blames the teachers and organized labor for the economic problems we are all facing. She called for us to “get angry.” We are public servants. We cannot solve all the problems of the war or any of the other issues facing this country. Do they really think we want poverty, violence and poor environmental conditions in our schools? She asked how test scores show teacher effectiveness without including other factors? Do these teacher bashers have solutions? We are the scapegoats. She asked us to demand accountability from the top down and bottom up; accountability from everyone and to see the need to work with the community. We must remind people we are taxpayers too. We must change the people and the media’s perception of us.

cont’d on next page...
Pink Hearts, Not Pink Slips
SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT AMERICA ARE FACING DEVASTATING CUTS. OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE HANGS IN THE BALANCE.
Reprinted from http://www.aft.org/fight4america/pinkhearts/about.cfm

By the end of this school year, it is estimated that as many as 300,000 teachers, school support staff and higher education faculty will receive pink slips throughout the country.

This will result in drastic increases in class sizes and less individualized instruction; it will erode classroom discipline and school safety, and eliminate essential programs like art, music, AP classes and summer school.

“The magnitude of the cuts is staggering. The number of educators who might be pink-slipped in the fall is nearly equal to the population of Toledo, Ohio,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “This isn’t just about saving jobs; it’s about saving the next generation.” [Read the full press release.]

The “Pink Hearts, Not Pink Slips” campaign aims to draw attention to the devastating impact educational budget cuts—and the resulting layoffs—will have on our students, their schools and our communities.

Starting on May 4, National Teacher Day, we are encouraging everyone to wear pink hearts to acknowledge the important contributions of educators. Educators put their heart and soul into their work, and every day they make a real difference in the lives of children. Budgets may be tightening, but students need educators in the classroom, not in unemployment lines.

Our government didn’t walk away from Wall Street. We should demand no less from them when it comes to saving our children’s future. We must voice our support for federal legislation that will provide $23 billion to help school districts avoid layoffs and cuts in vital services for children.

Help us preserve the education lifeline our students deserve.

Sign our "Give Pink Hearts, Not Pink Slips” petition and help us reach our goal of 300,000 signatures—one for every educator who may receive a pink slip by the end of this school year. Sign the petition at: http://action.aft.org/c/44/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=66

“We Must Stand United”
(cont’d from previous page)

Antonia Cortese, an AFT leader, and Thomas DiNapoli, the state comptroller, both talked of hard times, but agreed the teachers could generate the ideas that could make a difference. The public school system is the path to the American Dream. We must remind people that our pensions are less than the bonuses received by those in the corporate sector.

The approximately 2000 RAs learned about new legislation. We learned the importance of collective bargaining to achieve educational changes. We learned that while NYSUT has maintained reserve funds to operate, those will most likely diminish. The poor economy affects us all.

Before we knew it, it was time to pack up and head back to Dutchess County. After a train delay, we were on our way. When we finally were on the train back to Poughkeepsie, we secretly had prepared to have a birthday party for Pasquale, our esteemed leader. We had all the fixings, cake, and candles, enough for all of us, our Arlington friends and even some other NYSUT RAs we had met. Then I knew what inspires me. It’s the camaraderie, the love, friendship and support of my colleagues. That was enough to inspire me to fight for quality public education, the preservation of collective bargaining agreements and respect for what we do everyday.
Video New York’s DiNapoli Discusses Massey Energy Leadership: Video Bloomberg
Apr. 13, 2010. 05:12 PM EST

Want to learn more about pension fund investments?

A complete listing of NYS Local Retirement Fund assets can be found in the 2009 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) at http://www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/about_us/annual_report_2009/index.htm

Video

Bill Moyers PBS special from October, 2006 Is God Green? Part II focuses on the impact of West Virginia’s coal mining industry on the health and welfare of the residents. Don Blankenship President and CEO of Massey Energy the regions largest coal company has a long-standing philosophy against unions.


Congratulations to Kristin Gargano (Science JJ) and her husband Robert on the birth of their first child Robert Thomas (4.5 lbs) on 5/12/2010
RETIREMENT Planning?

The NYSTRS released its schedule of statewide Retirement Planning Seminars for 2010. These daylong meetings are designed to help active NYSTRS members prepare for retirement. It is beneficial for those who have less than 10 but more than 5 years until retirement. Topics include System benefits, financial planning, legal affairs, adjusting to retirement, and Social Security. Seminars run 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. and you may arrive beginning at 8 a.m. There is no fee to attend and your spouse/companion is welcome too, but you must make a reservation in advance. Seminars are not designed for one-on-one retirement counseling. The following are a list of dates and locations for the seminars:

Albany:
July 26
August 16

Fishkill:
August 25

Middletown:
August 26

Mount Kisco:
August 11

**You can register online through the MyNYSTRS area of the website at www.nystrs.org (select the "My Tools" tab), or by calling NYSTRS at (800)356-3128, Ext. 6180 weekdays from 8:30-4:15pm. When calling, you must provide your EmpID or Social Security number, date of birth, address, and home phone number. If your spouse/companion will attend and is also a member, please provide this information for him/her too. Please bring your latest Benefit Profile with you to the seminar.

NYSUT Backs New Teacher Evaluation Process

New York State United Teachers on May 11 threw its support behind a state regents legislative proposal that would change the way teachers are evaluated, laying the groundwork for a meaningful, transparent and objective process that focuses on teacher growth and effectiveness, and advancing student learning.

"We believe this new process is a major step in the right direction, and will be good for students and fair to teachers," said NYSUT president Richard C. Iannuzzi, who is also an AFT vice president. "Most importantly, it can help advance effective teaching by requiring evaluations to focus on growth for all teachers, and requiring support and professional development for those who need to improve."

This agreement, which now must go to the Legislature for approval, "underscores that it is essential for the union to be at the table and for teachers to define excellence in our profession," Iannuzzi told reporters at a press conference in Albany, N.Y. "NYSUT's position has always been that student test scores can play a role in teacher evaluations—but they should never be the sole factor. This agreement clearly establishes that test scores are not the sole determinant of teacher effectiveness."

Iannuzzi stressed that a teacher evaluation process, no matter how good, does not in itself increase student achievement and is just part of what's needed to advance student learning. "In concert with parents and community members, we must continue to advocate for small class sizes, fair funding, quality professional development and the support services our students need," he said.

He noted that, as an added plus, the agreement positions New York state to put forward a more competitive application for the second round of the federal Race to the Top grants.

This new process maintains the essential role of collective bargaining in shaping teacher evaluations at the local level. NYSUT and its members will continue to bring a practitioner's voice to a new state advisory committee that will help shape the specifics of this plan. [NYSUT press release]

May 12, 2010 reprinted from www.aft.com
The Wappingers Congress of Teachers
 Presents
 NYSUT’s Defensive Driving Program
 (Recognized by the National Safety Council)

THIS COURSE IS OFFERED TO WCT MEMBERS AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY ONLY
 TUESDAY, JUNE 1, 2010 & TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2010 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sessions will be held at Roy C. Ketcham High School, Room 134.

Family members are welcome to participate. A fee of $30.00** per person is necessary to cover cost of materials.
(Participants MUST attend both sessions).

**If you subscribe to auto insurance through NYSUT MemberBenefits (METPAY), there is a $25.00 refund.**

Benefit to Participants:

Upon completion of the course, members and their family members, who are principal operators of a vehicle, are entitled to a ten percent reduction in the base rate of their liability (bodily injury and property damage), no-fault (personal injury) and collision insurance premiums each year for three years.

WCT members and their family members who complete the course may receive a subtraction of up to four points on their driving records. This applies only to points for violations occurring within the 18 months immediately before course completion. It does not affect points for earlier violations and can never be used as a “credit” for future points. Points may be reduced only once in any 18-month period.

To register, send the clip-off below and your check to the WCT office ASAP. Reservations will be accepted on a “first come, first serve” basis. No cancellations after Thursday, May 27, 2010.

Defensive Driving – June 1st & June 8th

Member’s Name __________________________________________

Are you attending? Yes______ No______

Family Members (Attending):
1) ______________________________
2) ______________________________
3) ______________________________

School (School Mail Location) __________________________

Home Phone _________________________________________

A check for $30.00 per person must accompany this form. Please make check payable to “WCT.”

You must be a WCT member or WCT family member to enroll in this course.
Appointments are (1) hour blocks available between 2pm & 6pm on a first come first served basis. When you call the office to schedule an appointment, we will forward a questionnaire to you. Please complete it and bring it with you to the meeting.

Since these slots fill up very quickly CALL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. The WCT office number is 227-5065. If the above dates are not convenient for you, call Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. directly at 1-888-949-1925 and other arrangements may be possible.
Get Your WCT Gear

Short sleeve tees, long sleeve tees, and lanyards are available for purchase at the WCT Office. Shirts range in size from small though 3X. Please stop by the office to make your purchases. Payment for these items must be a check made out to WCT - cash will not be accepted.

WCT Gear is available at the WCT Office:

- $9 for short sleeve tee
- $12 for long sleeve tee
- $2 for lanyards

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- Networks: Wired/Wireless
- Mobile Computing (Laptops/PDAs)
- Digital Photography/VHS to DVD

Ed McKenna - 845-471-7607
EdmundTMckennaJr@gmail.com
2010 Newsletter Schedule
May 21, 2010
June 4, 2010
June 18, 2010
FOR RENT: 2 BR, 2BA Condo for rent in Ocean City, MD. Bayside with boat docks, pool. Centrally located, close to everything and just across the street from the beach. Call Sandy to reserve your week 896-1678. To view photos go to: http://www.larrymulvehill.com/condo/condo.htm

FOR RENT: LAKEFRONT HOUSE on Lake Wallenpaupack, PA Swim, fish motorboat. Sleeps 8, level lot, private new dock for fishing/boating/sunbathing. Fully equipped house including BBQ's, bonfire pit, bicycles, HDTV, A/C. Southern exposure, wonderful sunsets. Only 1.5 hrs from Fishkill. $1,200 week, some weekends available for $300. call Gary 845-462-4686 for photos and details.

For Sale: $132000 / 2br - Beautiful 2 Bedroom Condo For Sale By Owner (Fishkill/Beacon, NY) Large, bright, quiet, 2nd floor unit with many updates in well-maintained community. Features a kitchen, spacious living room, dining room with Pergo floors, master bedroom w/ walk-in closet, 2nd sizeable bedroom with large closet, 1.5 bathrooms, central air, new windows and sliding door to private Trex balcony with serene view. Tranquil park-like setting includes pool, tennis courts, playground and walking trails. ***Showings available by appointment*** Listing at: http://hudsonvalley.craigslist.org/reo/1741494297.html


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