

Show Your Support!

June 12th General Membership Meeting & WCT Rally



General Membership Meeting -

RCK Auditorium 6:15 PM - 7:45 PM

Board of Education Rally -

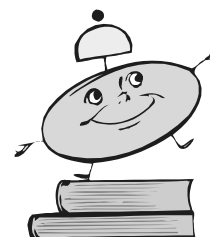
WJH Auditorium 8:00 PM

* It is highly recommended that members carpool to the BOE meeting. We expect to see you there.

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Countdown: # of days left in the 05-06 school year -15



Retiree: Jane Petrone teacher, 33 years

My first year teaching was a fifth grade class at Sheafe Road Elementary School where I taught for two years. I then went to James S. Evans where I taught for many years, both fifth and sixth grades. From Evans I went to Wappingers Junior High School, because the sixth grades were moved out of Evans. When the sixth grades moved out of Wappingers Junior, I moved to Kinry Road Elementary School. Teaching sixth graders became my area of experience.

My students have given me many, many memories which I will always cherish. Every day has been a new day. No two students have ever been the same. The kids brightened my days, made me laugh, and often won my heart. It was the greatest feeling of accomplishment to see the light bulbs go on in students' brains. I also loved the challenge of trying to figure out what would work to make other light bulbs go on, if you know what I mean.

I will miss my colleagues. I have enjoyed immensely collaborating on projects, curriculum development and sharing insights about students. I have found working on a team very rewarding. Working together has allowed me to grow professionally. My team members and I have laughed together and made the best of some rough situations.

My advice to new teachers is to give teaching your best. Remember that children are our future. They may be taking care of us when we are old. We need to give them compassion and understanding and yet be firm. Think long term on how your actions may affect a student. Last, but not least, there are days, such as Halloween, when you coast. Coasting means making the best and accepting what comes your way on a difficult teaching day!

My husband, Dominic, and I will be moving to Myrtle Beach, SC this



summer. I will not miss the cold or the snow, but I will miss the snow days and sleeping in. I have accepted a teaching position in Georgetown Middle School, teaching sixth grade, of course! I don't know for how long I will teach, but I do know I am not ready to give it up yet. It will be a very interesting experience since I have never taught in any place, but Wappingers. I wish the best of the best to the WCSD teachers and community.

Retiree: Marge Moran teacher, 32 years



My entire teaching career of thirty-two years was all spent in the WCSD, twenty-eight years as a speech therapist and the last four years as a

developmental learning specialist with the kindergarten program. During that time, I had the opportunity of working in every building in the district, including a few church basements, with the exception of Evans Elementary. I served years as teacher-in-charge of the speech therapy department. I have seen many changes over the years, especially in the area of special education. It has been a pleasure to work with such an enthusiastic, open-minded staff whose priority has always been the student. I will truly miss the daily interaction which has been stimulating, supportive, and fun. I will also miss the students who made every day different and challenging. Seeing them achieve goals

and grow in independence was exciting to me every time it occurred.

I look forward to enjoying a more relaxed schedule. I plan to continue working, although part time, in the field of speech therapy. I am excited to have more time to spend at my new home in Clinton Corners. Who knows, maybe I'll even become a gardener? Traveling, spending time with my husband, children, and grandchildren all loom on the horizon of retirement. Thank you all for your friendship, love, and support over the years. You truly have been my extended family, and I will miss you all!

2006 NYSUT RA Convention

Special Feature Issue

560,000 Members With One Voice

Dreams of statewide unity became reality on Friday, May 5, 2006 as delegates voted unanimously to unite New York State United Teachers with the National Education Association of New York, creating a single statewide voice for public education, health care and working families

“Unification means solidarity,” NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi told cheering delegates.” It’s a long time in the making.”

“At long last, we’ll walk the walk together,” NEA/NY President Rapaport told delegates. He noted that the combined membership would reap the benefits

Union Made/Fair Trade:

Conscious Consumerism Highlighted at 2006 Convention

NYSUT does not only promote and support the welfare of teachers and other education-related professionals, but also the globally impoverished worker. In each delegate’s convention bag was a “fair trade” dark chocolate candy bar. NYSUT and the Labor-Religion Coalition support a Fair Trade Project. Fair trade means guaranteeing a price that will allow a farmer to support his/her family and allow children to attend school instead of work.

To learn more about the NYSUT/Labor-Religion Coalition’s Fair Trade Project, visit www.labor-religion.com.



If you would like to order fair trade coffee, tea, or chocolate, check out the following web sites:

www.equalexchange.com
www.deansbeans.com
www.usacoffeecompany.com

of both organizations and stressed the importance of “the history we make.”

Friday’s vote represents the final step to bring more than 525,000 NYSUT members and 35,000 members of NEA/NY together as one union Sept. 1. NEA/NY delegates voted April 29 to approve the same unification measure at their annual Delegate Assembly.

Reprinted from NYSUT web site - <http://nysut.org/ra2006/news/20060506unification.html>.



(NEA/NY President Rapaport, NYSUT President Iannuzzi, & Past NYSUT President Hobart)

At the 2006 RA Convention, over \$100,000 was raised to help our hurricane-devastated brothers and sisters. So far, NYSUT has contributed over a quarter of a million dollars to the AFT Hurricane Relief Fund.

Reflections from a First Time Delegate

By Ellen Korz

Seven WCT/NYSUT delegates met at the Poughkeepsie station, bound for Rochester, New York on May 4, 2006, to attend the NYSUT Representative Assembly. Thanks to the good humor of the group and some characters we met, we endured what should have been a five-hour trip that turned into a nine-hour excursion. Once our train was repaired, it really was a comfortable and pleasant ride.

This being my first convention, I had no idea what to expect. It turned out to be a gratifying experience. It is a powerful feeling to be with almost 2,000 educators and people related to education. Everyone had the same goals and enthusiasm for change. Senator Hillary Clinton, NYS Comptroller Alan Hevesi, Senate Democratic Leader and Lt. Governor candidate Patterson, and many others gave encouraging, informative, and often entertaining speeches.

There were a few highlights for me. One was the young man Jason and his basketball team that received notoriety recently. His coach and team were recognized for

their courage and compassion. Another was the recognition of two pioneers from the early days of union activities. Together, these two educators had 100 years of union service. They were amazing to listen to and to hear the struggles and successes they had faced.

*"All the while,
I thought how the
WCT has many
people we could
have had honored
as well."*

There was so much information and so many people recognized for their accomplishments. All the while, I thought how the WCT has many people we could have had honored as well. We've had many accomplishments that go unnoticed. One of the goals of the PR Committee will be to inform the state of our members' achievements.

It wasn't all work; we played, too. This was a great group to travel with, and I thank my companions for the entertainment and for a chance to get to know some colleagues I may

never have gotten to know.

The combining of NYSUT and NEA/NY now makes us an even more powerful union. Now more than ever supporting the union is essential. Only through that support can we make change.

Train Trek: The Road to Rochester

By Diane DiChiara

Plane? Car? Bus? Train? How should we travel to the RA Convention in Rochester? An efficient and economical train ride was chosen, as this seemed to have the added bonus of being leisurely and hassle-free. Thus began the road to the RA Convention 2006, and, like all roads, there would be a few bumps and curves along the way.

As the group assembled on the Poughkeepsie platform on Thursday morning, little did we realize that transportation was about to become the overriding theme of our RA experience. By day's end, we were to have spent double the usual time trying to reach our destination, and from each of us emerged a driving desire to get to Rochester.

Train arrival time came, but no train. Train-track rumors began to circulate, and schedule-abiding teachers began to shake. Reassuring Amtrak personnel announced that when the train arrived, *there would be significant delays, very few available seats, and, yes, they were the only train-game*

in town for us. Teacher thinking caps went on, and contingency plans were developed on the spot...track. Plane? Bus? A reasonable rental car could probably still be had. Frantic phone calls were made, timetables were assessed, and then, to our surprise, the worn-out train slowly rolled into the station. With a shared sigh, we boarded the train.

The group swiftly scurried into available seats. Amtrak personnel comments were confirmed as two of our members traveled to Albany in the Snack Car, but we were moving, if only at a snail's pace, *leisurely and hassle-free*.

In Albany, a new engine was eagerly awaiting **The Little Engine that Could**, and the members all got seats in the same passenger car. In a *leisurely and hassle-free* fashion, the engine was hooked-up, the train moved, and the stations began to roll by....Schenectady, Amsterdam, Utica, Rome, Syracuse, and Rochester!

(Continued on page 5)

The Role of a NYSUT Delegate



Our delegates usually arrive at the convention center early Thursday afternoon of the convention weekend. I say *usually*, because that was not the case this year. Our train to Rochester was delayed several hours! As a result, we missed the typical Thursday afternoon experience of “NYSUT Services and Benefits on Display.”

This is an opportunity to visit the different booths and gather information that we can relay to the rest of the membership (not to mention a great opportunity to stock up on free pens!).

On Thursday evening, the convention kicks off with the first general session. It usually lasts a couple of hours and includes a welcome by the NYSUT President and other special guest speakers. The next morning begins with our “Resolutions and Amendments Committees” meetings. The RA is broken into different committees that discuss, debate, amend, and vote on proposals (written by NYSUT locals) for which we feel NYSUT should lobby. Ultimately, each committee recommends three proposals to be of highest priority for NYSUT. I was on the Political Action committee, and our top priority was Domestic Partnership benefits.

Following the committees meetings, we enter the next general session, break for lunch, and then resume another general session through late afternoon. Friday is a long, but eventful day. At the general sessions, the entire RA votes on

the recommendations from each committee. We also hear speeches from members of NYSUT’s leadership, Commissioner Richard Mills, as well as State and/or National political figures.

This year, Senator Hillary Clinton spoke to the RA. Her speech focused on improving education and health care. She voiced her concerns over cuts to education and health care in the President’s proposed budget. She vowed to keep fighting for President Bush to fully fund NCLB. After her speech, I had the opportunity to shake hands with the Senator and to thank her for being there for us on the issues that matter.

Between speeches, there are award presentations (such as teacher of the year) and special recognitions such as that of Jason McElwain of the Greece Athena boys basketball team. Jason is an autistic student who had been team manager all year long. With the team well ahead and under four minutes remaining in the final game of the season, the coach put Jason in the game. Jason lit up the court, hitting six three-pointers and a total of 20 points! It was a remarkable story!

Saturday morning is the last general session of the convention. The leadership of NYSUT puts a close on the convention, and as they send us back to our locals, they remind us of our tasks at hand and battles in the year to come.

It may sound like there is a lot of work and long sessions during the day, and believe me, there is, but don’t feel too bad for us delegates. We also know how to enjoy our free time at night!

In Solidarity,
Ray Koretsky
 Ray Koretsky
 V.P. of Grievances

Train Trek: The Road to Rochester (continued from page 4)

However, this traveling odyssey was still not over, as this determined group of WCT RAs needed to get to their hotel. To the delight of the representatives, there were several taxis at the station. With just a little trepidation and a murmuring of “I think...we can...,” the group split and darted into three awaiting vehicles. Through the city of Rochester we rode, past the suburbs and mansions of years past, to the outskirts of town and the DoubleTree Hotel. Continuing on our economical mission, two of our members reaped a great “off the meter” benefit of \$15.00 per person rather than the usual \$25.00 charge. For bookkeeping purposes, please note, the remaining group was charged an “on the meter” rate of \$7.00 per person.

Our traveling still not done; the convenient convention center was located back in the city of Rochester. As dusk descended, this worn-out, bedraggled group of RAs reassembled with what was left of their stalwart resolve in front of the hotel. An almost unintelligible, but determined, “I think...we...can” was whispered, and we boarded a bus bound for the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. As we settled in for a *leisurely* and *hassle-free* trip, schedule shredding echoed throughout the bus, and, at last, our journey had come to an end.

Novice Notes

By Diane DiChiara

As a novice at the RA convention, I did not quite know what to expect. Thursday, our traveling day, had been fraught with frustration. What would Friday bring?

"Walking the Walk" was the theme of the convention that was attended by more than 3,000 delegates from across the state. NCLB seemed to be the topic of the day as delegates and speakers exchanged ideas and concerns. Friday brought the exhilaration of being part of a large group with common political and educational interests.

In the morning, there were various Resolution Committees. The WCT delegates participated in groups that covered Civil and Human Rights, Educational Issues, Healthcare and Workplace Safety, and Legislative/Political Action. I was a participant in the Educational Issues committee. The resolutions were submitted by various locals throughout the state. The issues focused on NCLB, class size, science lab safety, a statewide uniform IEP document, mandatory kindergarten, and a Regents week for elementary and middle schools. Listening to the debates, hearing the motions, voting, and being part of the process strengthened my personal belief in the importance of union participation and work.

Throughout the late morning and into the early evening, the delegates had the privilege to hear a variety of speakers. Both Senator Clinton and Alan Lubin spoke to the need of the federal government's making a greater commitment to education. They both agreed to continue the fight for full funding for NCLB. Lubin went on to stress that the right to a "public education is a civil right, and while the laws that allowed for segregation in the past may be gone, segregation is still with us in New York State." Senator Clinton also spoke about the unfulfilled promise of the federal government for funding special education under IDEA. While most of the delegates cheered Senator Clinton, there were representatives who held up signs during her speech demanding that the US remove troops from Iraq.

NYSUT Vice-President Maria Neira celebrated the "everyday heroes" of the classroom. She honored the teachers of the various classrooms she had been in across the state. Ms. Neira said teachers across the state are "walking the walk" on a daily basis and gave examples of the preschool teacher who told her students to "kiss their brain" after reading

a complex sentence, the grade 3-8 ELA and math teachers who administered and scored 3.9 million assessments, and the Greece Athena varsity basketball coach Jim Johnson and his team that included Jason McElwain, an autistic student.

AFT Executive Vice President Toni Cortese spoke against using students as "guinea pigs with untested methods" and to the inadequacies of NCLB. She stated that many students in "impoverished areas are basically only getting reading and math...that's not a liberal education." She stated that the "government should use what works - smaller classes, modern textbooks and professional development oriented to the classroom."

Comptroller Alan Hevesi declared "defined-benefit pensions, like those for public employees, including the NYS Teachers' Retirement System, as overgenerous" a myth. He pointed out that, "70 percent of those receiving pensions from the state's ERS retirement system receive less than \$20,000 per year, with some considerably less."

Friday was historic as it brought together the New York State United Teachers and the National Education Association of New York. As

NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi said, "Unification means solidarity." This joining creates a single statewide voice for education.

Other highlights of the convention included the honoring of the NYS Teacher of the Year Steve Bongiove and the NYSUT Lifeline Award winners. The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership "Not for Ourselves Alone" Award was given to Ray Frankel and Josephine Sano who have more than a combined 100 years of education and union involvement. Frankel and Sano spoke to the value of political action. Sano commented on the importance of reminding those new to teaching that benefits such as maternity leave and tenure are hard-fought gains and not "birthrights". Sano summed it up best by telling the delegates to follow Hubert Humphrey's advice to "Live one week as a tiger, not a year as a chicken."

*"Live one week
as a tiger, not
a year as a
chicken."*

COMMENTATOR deadline for the next issue is the Monday after the paycheck. Send all information for the June 16th issue to WCTINK@HOTMAIL.COM, or to the WCT Office by Monday, June 5th.

Dates to Know:

Remaining 2006 Board Meetings

June: 12th & 26th

July: 10th

WCT Shirts

Shirt forms available online at...

<http://nysut.org/wappingers/shirtform.pdf>

2006 Pay Dates:

June 16th & 23rd

Quotes from the 2006 RA:

“At long last, we will indeed walk the walk together.”

- NEA/NY President Robin Rapaport on the NEA/NY – NYSUT unification

“No one watching leads to widespread corruption.”

- Comptroller Alan Hevesi on the Long Island School District controversy

“Paper and pencil tests don’t measure everything a student must know.”

- First Vice President Maria Neira on closing the achievement gap

“Statistical data is no way to judge what it is that teachers do.”

- David Paterson, Senate minority leader running for lieutenant governor, on education

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SUMMER RENTAL: Two-bedroom duplex, sleeps 6, in Surf City, New Jersey. Steps to ocean and the bay beaches. Call Olga for more information 845 226-8030.

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FOR SALE: Bassett bedroom set. Includes headboard and frame (queen), 2 nightstands, wide dresser with mirror, all in a honey oak finish. \$250. Call 236-3221.

(Continued on page 8)

MEMBERS' CLASSIFIED ADS (continued from page 7)



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FOR RENT: Room in luxury condo near RTEs 84 & 9. Private bath, pool privileges. Available July 1st. \$500/month. Call 926-7954.