November 2019
Volume 12, Issue 1

OFT: An Atypical Union
Rob Pittman, OFT President, #9M

This past summer, Donna Gales (our Executive VP) and I attended a NYSUT workshop. It was an opportunity for us to talk with union leaders from other local unions to hear the perspective of many NYSUT Labor Relation Specialists (LRS), as well as from Matt Jacobs, our NYSUT Regional Staff Director. We learned that our union is ahead of many of the other locals with respect to APPR, contract negotiations, school board relationships, and labor management; Mr. Jacobs made a point of highlighting the OFT’s accomplishments in these areas. One major goal that came out of the meeting was for all locals to better communicate with their members about what their union does throughout the year(s). The following is a summary of the many things our union does, which would not be possible without the leadership of our reps, officers and of course, the membership, support and participation of every OFT member, every day!

1. Our OFT representatives have regularly scheduled labor management meetings with administration at each level and the OFT officers meet monthly with district administration. Donna and I were shocked to learn that many other locals do not enact this practice, which is not a contractual item. Rather, it is a practice that was started by our union founders and preserved by our union leaders throughout the years. This is significant because these meetings foster a regular, mutually respectful, and trusting working relationship with administration. It also enables our union to have input into administrative decisions, and affords a timely mechanism in which to collaboratively address issues. Additionally, the district provides us with two union offices (one at the District Office and the other in the high school) in which we hold our meetings and use of district email and mailboxes for union communications. A few locals at the conference shared that they actually pay rent for a union office outside their district.

2. We connect with, and support, the Oceanside community in which we live and work in various ways. The OFT does this through long-established events, such as: “OFT From the Heart,” OFT & OFTRC (OFT Retirement Chapter) scholarships, and most notably, our annual OFT Toy Drive. Many of our members generously contribute toys, Kohl’s gift cards, Stop & Shop gift cards, time and cash to these drives, which directly supports the Oceanside Community Service Center (OCS). Our officers also attend the annual OCS dinner, the annual Kiwanis dinner (which has honored many OFT members over the years), and the OFT contributes to the annual Kiwanis “Super Bowl Pancake Breakfast.” Our donation to this event sends one Oceanside child in need to camp each summer.

3. The work of “every OFT member, acting every day.” Many of our members have independently done extraordinary things to support our community in times of crisis. We were there during Hurricane Sandy, the store/apartment fires on Long Beach Road and the recent tragedy to one of our students. We are there for many more subtle, but just as significant, actions like being there for students in times of personal crisis and attending funerals to support students who lose a family member or, tragically, when a student passes.

4. The OFT presents a new book to every incoming kindergarten student. This year we purchased over 400 copies of “Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes,” by Eric Litwin and James Dean. Our members distributed them to parents at “Back to School” night, with a welcoming letter from the OFT. (continued on page 6)
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OFT Officers
2018-2019

OFT Affiliate Representatives

Administrative Assistants: Michele Cadogan, #3  
Monitors: Laurie Denson, #3

Nurses: Sharon Hughes, #2 and Mary Beth Murphy, #7  
Security: Leo Bonacasa, #7

Teacher Aides: Susanne Cavale, #9E, Natalie Esposito, #6, Donna Fulgieri, #7,
Andrea Johnson, #9M, Roe Palette, #7, Michele Worley, #6

Pre-K: Maria Cantone and Christina Peruffo, #6  
Eyeglass Coordinator: Susanne Cavale, #9E

OFTRC (OFT Retirees): oftrcmail@gmail.com  
Executive Committee - Susan Henkus, Rita Kaikow, Sharonann Katcher, Leslie Krasnoff, Debra Lebowitz, Roslyn Lorge, Lois Nevitt, Arlene Wegard and Bonnie Zebalese.

OFT Additional Positions

OFT Times Co-Editors-in-Chief: Jeanmarie Johnson, #9M and Brian Weinstein, #9M

Grievance Chair: Frank Nappi, #7  
Eyeglass Coordinator: Sue Frank, #9E

VOTE COPE Coordinator: Amanda Iemma, #9E

Public Relations/Outreach: Christine Blake-Jeremias, #8

New Teacher Coordinator: Stephanie Bragman, #9M

Maternity Leave Specialist: Heidi Burns, #8  
Webmaster: Christine Sartory, #7
On October 18th, OFT members gathered at Kasey’s in Rockville Centre. Members had a chance to catch up and fill each other in about fall activities. It was wonderful to gather and socialize outside of the school setting, and a great time was had by all.
A Warm Welcome to Our New Staff!

The OFT welcomes our new members and wish them a productive and fulfilling school year.

Nicole Amador-Silva #7
Stefanie Amendoeira #9M
Madison Avati #7
Brian Barbaccia #7
Stephanie Berkowitz #9M
Aileen Carey #9E

Stephanie Carlstrom #9M
Heather Finkelstein #3
Stephanie Fraser #7
Samantha Jannotte #5
Sheena John #7
Sibo Kang #9M&CA

Colleen Kaufmann #3
Taylor Keteltas #2
Elisa LiBretto #2
Kimberly Litvinoff #9E&6
Daniella Lloyd-Werman #3
Nicole Martinek #7

Rosa Martinez #3
Jennifer McCabe #7
Nicole McCann #7
Michelle McKeon #7
Stephanie Ognibene #2&4
Erin Patel #7&9M

Teacher Aides: Elena Albano, Conor Broderick, Vincent Cerullo, Riannon P. Daly, Diane Diaz, Carole Fitzsimmons, Luisa Lari, Vaishali Mehta, Justin Rosenthal, Colleen Todd, Brian Whelan, Sean Whelan.
**Celebrations**

Donna Gales, #2, announces the marriage of her son, Douglas DiDominica to Victoria Bogosian on October 12th 2019.

Maria Nulty, #6, and her husband, John welcomed James Joseph on August 22nd. He weighed in at 6lbs. 15oz. and 20 inches.

Stephanie Coogan, #4, her husband, Rory and big brother, Seamus welcomed baby Jack on August 5th. He weighed in at 6lbs. 10oz.

Carly Albano, #5, her husband, Brennan and big sister, Makenzie welcomed baby Stevie Liv on June 8th. She weighed in at 6lbs. 1oz. and 19.5 inches.

Megan Lewitin, #8, her husband, Andrew and big brother, Noah welcomed Leanna James on June 4th. She weighed in at 5lbs. 6oz. and 20 inches.

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Janet Cavagnaro, #7, and her husband, Joseph, welcomed baby James on September 21st. He weighed in at 6lbs. 10oz.

Jaclyn Sigona, #3, her husband, John and big sister, Gracie welcomed baby John Paul on July 12th. He weighed in at 8lbs. 9oz. and 20.5 inches.

Lynsey Wolfson, #9M, her husband, Warren and big brother, Ollie welcomed baby Remi Parker on October 6th. She weighed in at 8lbs. 6oz. and

OFT: An Atypical Union (continued from page 1)

5. Our OFT members support the Oceanside PTA and SEPTA by renewing their annual membership and the OFT has representatives attend PTA Council dinners and meetings. All this strengthens our connection to the Oceanside community and results in our union and members being viewed as partners in the community rather than as just employees of the district. This has resulted in numerous annual public acknowledgements of appreciation of our union and our members. In fact, last October, OCS honored the OFT at their annual dinner for the decades long support our union has provided to this important organization. This is significant because OCS doesn’t normally honor anyone at their dinner.

6. Every year, the OFT hosts a new member breakfast and an annual celebration dinner in honor of our members who earn their tenure. We have several dedicated annual member socials throughout the year including one specifically for our OFT affiliate groups in November, our OFT “Back to School” social, an OFTRC luncheon, and of course, our wonderful OFT “End of Year” party which celebrates our union and generates graduation scholarships for students we all had a hand in educating. Our Executive Vice President, Donna Gales, sends personal notes of recognition and congratulations to OFT members for their achievement of professional development benefitting our students while earning their MA, MA +30, +60, and +75 on our salary scale. Our members have committed to joining our union officers in attending monthly board meetings for some fifteen years now showing we are engaged and committed to the Oceanside community.

7. Our union has hosted an annual “Board of Education Appreciate dinner” for the last fifteen years. This maintains, builds, and strengthens our relationship with our Oceanside Board of Education members. This relationship is most unique to the OFT and Oceanside.

There are so many other things our union does. There is the obvious and expected role of negotiating contracts and representing members in disciplinary issues. There’s the less obvious, but formidable task of negotiating our APPR (outstanding job done by our APPR committee) and navigating and negotiating the large areas of labor management that are not clearly defined in our collective bargaining agreement (CBA). Of course, we must not forget the significance of what each of us, whether it be our guidance counselors, teachers, aides, teacher assistants, security, nurses, monitors, psychologists, social workers, and physical/occupational therapists, do each day for our students and their families. You are the best in your professions, you care, and are there for our students. The children know that you care, and so the parents know and appreciate that too!
REIMBURSEMENTS TO RETIRED MEDICARE PART B PAYMENTS FOR NYSHIP ENROLLEES

By, Rita Kaikow

Did you know that you are eligible for full reimbursement for Medicare Part B payments if you are enrolled in the NYSHIP? All NY school districts are required to automatically send this to their retirees. BUT, they may not send you the full payments to which you are entitled. You should check to see what you are getting. If it’s less than $135.50 per month, you are entitled to the difference between what Oceanside UFSD sends and what you actually pay directly, or what is taken from your Social Security payments.

When I received a message about this asking me to share information about the reimbursement status, I did a bit more research before doing so. I am getting less than the $135.50 per month and I know others are as well. The answer is: what you are being automatically reimbursed depends upon what the standard Medicare Part B cost was the year that you retired. Many of you will be paying well beyond the $135.50 per month, depending upon your income. Your Medicare Part B and Part D payments are based upon your adjusted gross income. It is about two years behind. That means your payments may be based upon your income from two years ago.

IRMAA may come into play in regards to what you pay and therefore impact the reimbursements to which you are eligible.

“IRMAA is an acronym for Medicare's income-related monthly adjustment amount (IRMAA). This is a higher premium charged by Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D to individuals with higher incomes.” (https://65medicare.org/what-is-irmaa/)

If your income has decreased due to no fault of your own, you can request readjustments to what you are paying for Medicare Part B and D. There are some tax guidelines that impact this. Although my income had decreased, I was not able to get the Medicare Part B and Part D payments reduced because the original financial transactions that had temporarily increased my income were voluntary.

I was paying out more than I received automatically and have to request the difference every year, which I hope those of you who are eligible are doing. The 1099 you get from Social Security will help.

If you haven’t been submitting for the difference, you need to contact Hope Riesel to find out what you need to do now.

Medicare Part B 2019 reimbursement is $135.50 for Part B which affects all retirees enrolled in NYSHIP who are on Medicare. This amount changes annually. Social Security sends an update to retirees or those on disability in October/November, stating the upcoming year’s cost for Part B. Additionally, according to your tax returns 2 years back (i.e.: 2018 for 2020) those who are over the federal income thresholds established for single ($85,000) or family ($170,000) have an additional charge called IRMAA imposed for Medicare Parts B and D. As NYSHIP insurance holders, these thresholds also charge additional for prescription insurance (Silverscript), which is administered through NYSHIP. This charge, Part D, is NOT reimbursable because when Civil Service Law 167-A was finalized, there was no prescription plan in place. Therefore it is non-reimbursable.
Where’s the Air?  By, Laura Cassar-James, School #8

It is hard to believe that, in 2019, our schools are not air conditioned. A typical classroom has over 20 students and at least one teacher. What room with that many people in it, during the months of June and September, is not air conditioned? Better yet, where is the air? Where are the air conditioners?

So, where is the air? Surrounding districts like Rockville Centre and Lynbrook have air conditioning. Most of NYC has air conditioned schools. So, where in Oceanside are the air conditioners? Well, you can find some. Look in the offices of our administrators. Most have their own AC unit. The main office is also air conditioned. There are no students gathered to learn in either place. Is it not ironic that all Board of Education meetings have been moved to a school that has an air conditioned meeting room?

Does indoor air quality matter? According to OSHA, indoor air quality describes how inside air can affect one’s health, comfort and ability to work. “Air quality” includes: temperature, humidity, and an adequate supply of fresh outdoor air. Having no air conditioning is not a complaint and should not even be up for debate; it is a health issue, pure and simple.

OSHA states that, “People working in buildings with poor indoor air quality may notice unpleasant or musty odors or may feel that the building is hot and stuffy. Some workers complain about symptoms that happen at work and go away when they leave work, like having headaches and feeling tired.” Need we say more? Who amongst hasn’t felt these symptoms?

What about productivity? How does an excessively hot, indoor work environment affect our output? As teachers, we work extremely hard each and every day to prepare for our students. We work to keep them engaged and motivated. Does excessive heat hamper this? Of course! Look at our bodies- we are sweat-soaked. Yet, we teach through this, and with smiles. This is who we are. We focus on the fact that the heat will only last a few weeks. Think of how much more we could accomplish in a comfortable work environment. Our energy levels alone would substantially increase.

Student productivity would also increase with air conditioning. Their stamina, energy, and output are dependent on a comfortable environment. We challenge them with baseline assessments in an environment that is less than optimal.

It is time to do what is right for all of us. This is not the 1960’s. Air conditioning is a way of life; not a luxury.

Breast Cancer Walk

It was a beautiful day for a walk on Sunday, October 20th as staff, friends, and family from Schools #5 and #8 represented the OFT for the 2019 Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Jones Beach. This year the OFT donated over $2,000 to this worthy cause, and we’ve been recognized, with a plaque, for our efforts by the American Cancer Society. Thank you to all who contributed!