The 2019 NYSUT Representative Assembly

OFT President, Rob Pittman, #9M

Who is NYSUT? NYSUT (New York State United Teachers) is more than 600,000 members comprised of nurses, teacher assistants, aides, bus drivers, teachers, security, and more. NYSUT is 1,200+ locals ranging in size from a few as 10 members and one as large as 140,000 members. NYSUT’s collective efforts result in over 250,000 actions per year including lobbying for school funding, organizing our members, fighting anti-union forces, and overseeing our defined pension benefit! This makes NYSUT the dominant union in New York State and one of the largest in the United States.

Amy Rand, Josh Hickey, and I represented the OFT as delegates to the NYSUT 2019 Representative Assembly (RA) this past May 3rd - 4th in Albany, NY. Josh served as a delegate on the Civil and Human Rights committee while Amy and I served on the Organization Committee. Attending the RA is an educational, motivating, inspiring, and empowering experience. Attendees to the RA get to observe and participate first hand in a truly democratic process, since the Assembly is built from the ground up.

The RA is organized around resolutions and proposals derived from members and locals around the state, aimed at guiding the work of NYSUT in the coming year. Resolutions include: support for farmworkers’ fair labor practices; preserving natural habitats; school calendar days; teaching experience requirement for administrator qualifications; and temperature standards for classrooms. Sometimes multiple locals write and/or co-sponsor resolutions. These resolutions are reviewed in the various committees (usually consisting of a few dozen delegates) including the Organization, Pension & Retirement, Civil and Human Rights, Legislative/Political Action, Educational Issues, Health Care and Workplace Safety committee.

The delegates arrived on May 3rd, registered, and assembled at their designated committee location to review, discuss, and debate the merits of each proposed resolution. The committee gets to hear from the writers and sponsors of the resolutions, ask questions, and offer amendments. At times, discussion and debate is minimal. At other times, it may get very heated. The committee chair maintains order and the resolutions and any amendments are voted on by the committee. If passed, the proposed resolutions are submitted to the NYSUT General Assembly the next day for approval.

At the General Assembly on May 4th, the chairs of the respective committees addressed the NYSUT Board and General Assembly. (Continued on page 3)
President: Rob Pittman, #9M
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Executive Vice President: Donna Gales, #2
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Elementary Vice President: Jen Whyte, #9E
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Middle School Vice President: Mike Demarco, #9M
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High School Vice President: Josh Hickey, #7
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Affiliates Vice President: Tom Morreale, #7
esofocli@oceansideschools.org

Secretary: Amy Brown-Rand, #9M
arand@oceansideschools.org

Treasurer: Sue Frank, 9E
sfrank@oceansideschools.org

Membership and Welfare: Vicki Trum, #5
vtrum@oceansideschools.org

OFT Affiliate Representatives

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

Nurses: Sharon Hughes, #2 and Mary Beth Murphy, #7  
Security: Tom Morreale, #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/Board-Susan Henkus, 
Rita Kaikow, Sharonann Katcher, 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
What seemed like something out of a script for The West Wing—the teachers of an entire state or major American city going on strike for better pay and working conditions—became reality for thousands of teachers in places like West Virginia, Los Angeles, North Carolina, and most recently, New Haven. While negotiations between the OFT and our administrators are always sensitive, the teachers in these places garnered national attention for putting their jobs on the line in order to be treated as professionals and to get the best for their students.

Here is a breakdown of three high-profile locations in which teachers challenged the status quo, often through the force of their unions, in order to gain a better life for themselves and a better education for their students:

**West Virginia:** A true protest, the WV work stoppage was a continuation of last year’s protest but with an emphasis on a bill that the state senate was trying to rush through the legislative session. Due to the opioid crisis, many public schools in WV are understaffed, underfunded, and overburdened while the state government shows greater support toward charter schools and educational savings accounts. All but one of the state’s 55 counties canceled school for two days as teachers protested the bill. Eventually the bill was “indefinitely tabled,” ending the strike.

**South Carolina:** Unions are illegal in South Carolina. Yet, through the power of social networking, over 25,000 teachers formed a group called “SC for Ed.” The group organized a rally of over 10,000 at the South Carolina State House. Unfortunately, due to the illegality of unions, the politicians ignored the teachers. A rally for the upcoming 2019-20 school year is already being planned.

**Los Angeles and Oakland:** Both major Californian cities had citywide teacher strikes that each lasted a week. Forming protests and using the hashtag #red4ed, Los Angeles got the lion’s share of press coverage, but both protests made impressive statements. Oakland schools were almost entirely shut down for seven days, there were daily rallies that shut down downtown city streets, and thousands of teachers protested outside city offices. Both unions walked away with tremendous results: the L.A. teachers and the Oakland teachers walked away with a pay increase, and a reduction in class sizes. Each city also earned more specific gains particular to their needs.

Although each situation had its own context and goals, there is a common thread: equitable treatment for teachers and the best interest of students were at risk in each case. As a result, teachers took collective action to prevent the hammer from striking down. It is easy for us to look at Los Angeles and think: “That is so far away. Something like that has nothing to do with Oceanside.” But the truth is that, no matter where it happens, each individual is more powerful when working with the collective. Yes, it is scary to speak up. But when you speak up with hundreds or thousands of voices at once, you will be heard.

**Representative Assembly (continued from page 1)**

The chairs presented the recommendations of their committee. Again, the merits of any proposal are open to questioning and debate. There are, however, restrictions to the number of members who may speak for or against a proposed resolution and a time limit is imposed on each speaker. The debate on the floor of the general assembly, like in the committees the night before, may be as simple as asking questions for clarification or involve delegates lining up at the microphones ready to engage in heated exchanges.

The NYSUT RA is more than just committees and resolutions. It is a time to celebrate our union membership, pride in our profession and connect with our union sisters and brothers around the state. Alhassan Susso, the 2019 NYS Teacher of the year spoke and was honored, and videos highlighting the accomplishments of NYSUT throughout the state were presented. Presidential candidate Tim Ryan attended and addressed our 1,500+ members on the floor of the RA, then attended a town hall meeting with about two dozen members. Our NYSUT president Andrew Pallotta, various other NYSUT officers, and presidents of the AFT and NEA all gave inspiring and motivational speeches on union history, union values, and more.

The NYSUT RA will be in Albany for the next several years. As a member of the OFT, you can attend and participate in this democratic assembly. We are allowed to send up to eight delegates (seven members plus the OFT president) to attend the NYSUT RA each year. Our OFT executive committee will decide how many of our eight delegates to send based on interest and budgetary considerations. Look for nominations forms to serve as an OFT delegate to the NYSUT RA to be sent out late fall of 2019. I hope that you will consider attending!

Who is NYSUT? We are NYSUT and we are not going away!

**Correction**

In our March 2019 issue, it was mistakenly stated that author Laurie Zelinger was to publish her third book when in fact it was her fourth book. Her fifth book, Please Explain Time Out to Me: A Story for Children and Do-It-Yourself Manual for Parents, was released recently.
On Tuesday, May 14th, the OFT hosted its annual End of Year Party at Temple Avodah. A good time was had by all. A big thank you to our party planners, Kristin Stea and Alyssa Maltz (both from #5) who dedicated their time to make it a special night for everyone.

Our amazing party planners! Kristin Stea (left) and Alyssa Maltz (right).
**Celebrations**

*Marissa Alonso, #6,* her husband German and big brother, Alexander welcomed baby Rose Natalie on May 14th. She weighed in at 7lbs., 4oz. And 20.5 inches.

*Rosalie DiGaudio, #7,* and her husband Drew welcomed Theodore John on May 3rd. He weighed in at 6lbs. 4oz. and 19 inches.

*Caitlin Verity, #8,* and her husband Matthew welcomed Lucas Matthew on November 17th. He weighed in at 9lbs. 4oz. and 23 inches. Proud Grandma Kathie Kelly works at #5.

*Jamie Goldband, #9E,* her husband Jason and big brother Lucas welcomed Jacob Thomas on April 18th. He weighed in at 8lbs. 14oz. and 21 inches.

*Jennifer Belmonte, #4,* and her husband Steve welcomed Kaylee Veronica on February 15th. She weighed in at 6lbs. 12oz. and 20.5 inches.

*Alison Leone, #5,* her husband Stephen and big sister Gianna welcomed Dominic Anthony on February 28th. He weighed in at 10lbs. 13oz.

**OFTRC NEWS**

The newly structured OFT Retiree Chapter had a wonderful luncheon on May 21st at La Parma Restaurant. Over 35 retirees reconnected, dined and enjoyed their reunion. The newly formed OFTRC executive committee: Arlene Wegard, Susan Henkus, Lois Nevitt, Bonnie Zebalese, Debbie Lebowitz, Sharonann Katcher, and Roz Lorge made the day possible. Our NYSUT Representative, Barbara Keilty, and OFT President, Rob Pittman, joined the retirees as they heard Michelle Kennedy, from NYSUT Member benefits, discuss NYSUT benefits. We understand the importance of continuing our membership with NYSUT in retirement. It safeguards all our benefits, our hard-earned rights, health insurance, and pensions for those who are retired as well as insuring the future for all.

Oceanside retirees gathered for their annual luncheon on May 21st. It was wonderful to see old friends and colleagues. Special guests Rob Pittman and Barbara Keilty (RC 18 President) spoke with us about Union news.
Tenure Recipients

Congratulations to our members who were awarded tenure this year.

Alanna Kersting - Teacher Assistant, #9M
Danielle Stubbs - Elementary Teacher, #3
Deanna Confredo - Social Studies Teacher, OHS
Heather Safo - Special Education Teacher, #4
Kaitlyn Ward - Special Education Teacher, #6
Kevin Carlock - Special Education Teacher, OHS
Kim Polinsky - Teacher Assistant, #4
Kourtney Proske - ENL Teacher, OMS/#9E
Megan Lewitin - Elementary Teacher, #8
Michael Santisteban - Elementary Teacher, #8
Nicole Hattenrath - Special Education Teacher, #9E
Sean Michel - Technology Teacher, OHS

OFT Author Is on a Roll
Frank Nappi to have 6th book published.

As you may or may not know, in addition to being a former OFT Officer, Frank Nappi has had five novels published in the past. The last one came out 3 years ago. Now, we are happy to announce that after three years of planning etc. he has a memoir coming out soon. It is titled *I Became An Elementary School Outlaw*. It is being described as a sort of "Wonder Years" meets "Brighton Beach Memoirs" that chronicles his early educational experiences and the impact all of it (including his decision to become a teacher and teach in the manner that he does) still has on him today. Our membership is sure to find the story very compelling as it will hit home on many levels.

John Owen, author of the NY Times bestseller "Confessions of a Bad Teacher," had this to say about the book:

Frank Nappi's memoir is warm, witty and wise. He vividly captures the heart of a universal experience: what it is like for a child trying to navigate the education system and what a huge difference a good--and bad--teacher can make. So much so, that the impact of those teachers still shapes our lives and behavior decades later. Frank Nappi exposes how a sensitive little boy becomes a childhood rebel -- "I had small arms and shoulders and a huge reputation to lug around." -- and shares how this rebel grew up to become a successful teacher and author. Nappi brings to life how important it is for teachers -- and adults -- to truly “see kids” -- how their simple encouragement can mean so much, and their careless indifference or outright cruelty can be so damaging. You’ll enjoy spending time with Frank Nappi and his recollections and epiphanies. His life story will surely resonate with your own. - John Owens, author of the bestseller "Confessions of a Bad Teacher"

Everyone at Cricket Cottage Publishing is very excited about the book. They feel as though the amalgam of humor and poignancy make it a real winner that will be very popular with everyone because...everyone has been through the "school experience." As I said, teachers in particular may find it very intriguing.
Protect Your Loved Ones with Union-Endorsed Benefits

Insurance... it’s often the type of product you hope to never have to utilize. In the event you do need it, though, it’s important to have the insurance product that best meets your needs and those of your loved ones.

NYSUT Member Benefits endorses a variety of **crucial insurance programs** that provide important protection for NYSUT members and their families, including life, auto and home, disability, long-term care, dental and vision plans, and more.

Regardless of whether you’re participating in one of our endorsed insurance programs; legal or financial services; or many shopping, entertainment or travel offerings, NYSUT members receive a quality product and enjoy the **“Power of the Union”** behind them.

The **“Power of the Union”** should serve as a steadfast reminder to all NYSUT members that we are your advocate. Unlike when purchasing products available to the general public, NYSUT Member Benefits is here if you ever have any issues or concerns with our endorsed programs. You aren’t just a member to us... you are part of our union family.

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**Member Benefits is here to offer assistance with the student loan crisis. Visit our website for more information.**

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit *memberbenefits.nysut.org* or call 800-626-8101.

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