What’s Past is Prologue
OFT President, Rob Pitman, #9M

Ed Thorp, a retired member of our Union and self-proclaimed rebel rouser had two bumper stickers on his briefcase. On one side of the briefcase, a sticker stated "The five day workweek: brought to you by the Union." The other side read: "Ignore your rights and they will go away."

So many of us read these words each day we passed Ed in the Middle School, and how appropriate now that we are faced with this exact dilemma. Collective bargaining rights, defined pension plans, Forever Wild environmental protection, workers compensation, welfare benefits, and so much more are all on the line with the possibility of a New York State Constitutional Convention. It is our responsibility now to preserve the rights that our predecessors fought so hard to gain decades ago.

Our OFT reps and officers are our leaders working on the front line of our Union. They are responsible for what most members expect: they enforce our contract; represent members in disciplinary issues with administration; negotiate contracts; meet with administration about policies and voice the concerns of our members; educate and disseminate information on issues pertinent to our profession; work to build solidarity; organize OFT events, and much more. However, we are all the Union!

It is convenient and comfortable to expect that our elected leaders are going to take care of any and all issues concerning our profession. But that is not the reality, or true strength, of our Union. It is our solidarity, our collective voice, and united action that is the core of our strength, as well as our past achievements.

Union giants like Al Shanker, Tom Hobart, Antonia Cortese, and others, organized our members and paved the way for our success half a century ago. However, it was the members' faith and willingness at that time to strike, sacrifice their time, risk their jobs, and put their families' security on the line that armed these leaders with the leverage they needed to grant us a voice in our profession. In 1967, against overwhelming odds, the NY State Legislature passed the Taylor Law giving our profession collective bargaining rights. This achievement led to so many more successes including the Triborough Agreement, which is an amendment to the Taylor Law in 1982.

We all benefit from the sacrifices and achievements of our past Union brothers and sisters. We enjoy the rewards of their efforts without realizing or appreciating what they succeeded in doing for us; it’s human nature. Those of us who have not been in the profession as long as others have always known these rights. As a result, we don't contemplate a life without them. Instead, we take these rights for granted.

The challenges facing our profession and our professional organization are ominous. YOU ARE THE UNION! Get out and vote on November 7th. Remember to flip the ballot over and vote "No" on a constitutional convention. There are no excuses! We need to make this a first round knock out for all of us to avoid a more difficult battle later. As Ed Thorp was keen to remind us: Don't ignore your rights, or they will go away!
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Security: Tom Morreale, #7

Monitors: Rose Fargasso, #8

Teacher Aides: Susanne Cavale, #7, Diane China, #7, Donna Fulgieri, #7, Andrea Johnson, #7

Pre-K: Maria Cantone and Christina Peruffo, #6

OFT Additional Positions

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: Christine Blake-Jeremias, #8

Maternity Leave Specialist: Heidi Burns, #8

Webmaster: Christine Sartory, #7
On Thursday, August 24, the tenth annual OFT New Teacher Breakfast was held with great success to welcome all new staff to the Oceanside School District. Organized by OFT Building Rep Mary Ralph, the annual OFT New Teacher Breakfast is intended to introduce new members to our union and to impart the benefits associated with union membership. As excited, nervous, and enthusiastic new staff members munched on bagels, muffins, and fresh fruit (with some coffee, of course), OFT building reps and officers took the opportunity to introduce themselves, explain the union structure, and impart time-tested advice for a successful first year at Oceanside.

While it may be a vague memory to some of OFT’s more experienced teachers, the New Teacher Breakfast is always a positive first step toward letting all new teachers know that they are part of the OFT family, and that the union is here to support them.
The OFT would like to welcome our new members and wish you a productive and fulfilling school year.

School 2

Daniella Biscardi
Julia DeMaio
Corrine Protasiewicz
Suzana Silva
Casey Walegir

School 9M

Elena Almer
Danielle Auriemma
Michael Kelly
Sabrina Loria
Katie Rich
Jennifer Rollo

School 3

Ericka Bucking
Natalia Rappa
Kristin Seaman
Alisha Tricarico

School 3

Patricia Bonvissuto
Kaitlyn DiLapi
To Our New Staff!

Welcome our new members and we wish you a productive and fulfilling school year.

School 4
- Jill Mustich

School 5
- Emily Bogart
- Alison Leone
- Kelsey Zinnel

School 6
- Stephanie Coons
- Nirmala Ramsaran
- Kerri Schramm

School 9E
- Patricia Pacheco

Castleton
- Esther Rosario-Castillo

School 7
- Erica Dzwlewicz
- Brian Ellis
- Andrew Landers
- Maria Marengo
- Katherine Treubig
- Joanna Zappalla

Administration
- Gail Daugherty
By Josh Hickey, #7

Recently, I had the opportunity to participate in a NYSUT program known as “Education Autumn.” This program was one of a series throughout the state involving member-to-member direct action. Over the last few weeks, I knocked on more than 200 NYSUT members’ doors and had the opportunity to talk to all kinds of people about a wide variety of topics, ranging from the value of being a union member, to educational justice and the struggles to improve our schools, to our profession and our communities.

At some point, the conversation gets around to voting “No” on Proposal 1: the Constitutional Convention. But before that happens, we usually have a conversation about what it means to be a union member. I’ve sat on couches and porches to talk with spouses, parents, friends, neighbors and children. One of the most remarkable things about the experience is how many NYSUT members live in our communities. Sometimes there are other union members in the house, and we all get in on the conversation about how we need each other’s support.

Union members and public employees are the lynchpins of our communities. Together, we make society work. Together, we pay the taxes and perform the services that let us live our lives, enjoy recreation time, raise families, and provide meaningful community relationships. We all do our parts, each in our own way, to keep life moving along. Police, firefighters, school personnel, sanitation, drivers, and shop clerks are all part of our everyday lives. Without them, we’d be struggling to survive.

I come to work, and some of those same realities are evident to me. What I do as a classroom teacher is dependent on the work of so many individuals. From teaching and support staff, to custodians and cafeteria staff, to security and clerical personnel…we all depend on each other. Our work becomes exponentially more difficult without the people we have around us. By working together, we can accomplish amazing things, and the children we work with go on to grow up and become the future.

That process is going on around us all the time, to the point where sometimes we might dismiss all the different ways our lives are interconnected. We come to expect that those processes and systems will continue to work as they always have. Maybe it’s the historian in me, but I can’t help but think of the long years and the constant struggles it took to get to the point where we have even simple protections like workplace safety, sick leave, negotiated salaries, pension plans, and a role in the decision making process.

The upcoming “Janus vs. AFSCME” case, soon to be decided by the Supreme Court, represents yet another attack aimed at the core of the basic protections provided by our union. It is hard to predict just how sweeping the decision will be, but it is certain that part of the decision will result in changes to Agency Fee laws. In other words, it would allow for some to not pay their fair share and still attempt to reap the benefits of union contracts. These people would act like parasites, sucking off the time, training, experience, and cost of union protections and negotiations, while providing nothing to the collective effort.

Together, we have the strength to do great things. We have the knowledge, skills, and power of all of our members to help support and sustain us. It is a community like any other, and we can’t forget that it takes work and effort to maintain it. With it, we are strong; without it, we are alone, negotiating the terms of our employment as individuals.

There are some very wealthy individuals (The Koch Brothers, The Waltons, The Broad Family, Bill Gates, Laurene Jobs) who are trying to dismantle public education and destroy teacher unions in many different ways. What better way is there to show them that all educators will stand in solidarity to protect our schools, our children, and our profession by staying IN the union and making it stronger? Becoming a “free rider” undermines the work of our brothers and sisters who came before us, and supports the agenda of those mentioned above.

As I am walking through neighborhoods, looking to have meaningful conversations about what being a union worker means, I often think about a song I first heard on the picket line during my parents’ strikes and lock-outs when they worked for New York Telephone. Now just over 100 years old, this song was written by Ralph Chaplin to bolster and support the American labor movement, and it is as true today as it ever was.

The first verse goes:

When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one
For the Union makes us strong

We don’t all need to knock on doors. Instead, we can engage in our communities by running for office, working through social media, or reaching out every day to our colleagues in order to maintain the relationships that make our union and our communities strong. The OFT is currently working with NYSUT to enhance the ties we already share. Volunteers will be reaching out and speaking with their colleagues about the things we all have in common, hoping to build on and galvanize the work that is already done every day. These things do not just magically happen—it takes effort and dedication, but we are worth it. Talk to your building rep today to volunteer to be an Ambassador for Public Education. For more information about the Education Autumn program, see the link below:

On Friday, September 15, the second OFT Social was held at Cannon’s Blackthorn Restaurant and Bar in Rockville Centre. The event offered OFT members and officers the opportunity to get to know one another outside of the professional setting, and to allow members to decompress after the first full week of classes. Appetizers were eaten, drinks were imbibed, and good times were had by all!

On Sunday, October 15th, the American Cancer Society held its 24th annual Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk at Jones Beach. Over 60,000 people participated in the walk raising nearly $1.4 million to support breast cancer programs. The OFT raised over $1,500 district-wide through member contributions. The OFT would like to thank Christine Blake-Jeremias, our Making Strides collection coordinator, for all of her hard work. Thanks also go out to all of our participants and donors.
Please Join the RVCTA for a RALLY AGAINST A NY CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Monday, November 6th from 4-6pm

“corner” of Sunrise Hwy and Long Beach Rd.
Rockville Centre (park in Field 12 - - north side of Sunrise)

- Taxpayers Should Not Fund a Party for Albany Insiders!
- Save hundreds of Millions in Taxpayer dollars!
- At risk: The right to unionize and collectively bargain, public pension protections, public education, protected wild lands, voting rights

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Join us on November 6th

Then VOTE NO on November 7th!!!!!!

We want to hear from you!!

Do you have something to say? Good news you want to share? Please send your writings, news or photos to jjohnson@oceansideschools.org and bweinstein@oceansideschools.org.
If you would like to use a print photo, please send it to Jeanmarie Johnson at school #9M. The photo will be scanned and sent back to you.