

SRP NewsLink

A NEWSLETTER FOR NYSUT'S SCHOOL-RELATED PROFESSIONALS LOCAL LEADERS

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SRP of the Year: Thelma Shaw from BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk

Thelma Shaw's generosity glowed through in her remarks after she received the union's coveted SRP of the Year award at the NYSUT RA.

"I am proud to be an SRP. If I could, I would share this award with every SRP in the state," she said.

That spirit is the current that runs through all her efforts. Her leadership style brought her the

presidency of the BOCES Educators of Eastern Suffolk, a 1,500-member local with

"The passion that I have for the students I work with, and the union I represent, fuels the fire that drives me."

two separate contracts representing teachers, social workers, psychologists, teacher aides and teaching assistants. A teaching assistant, she is one of the handful of SRPs leading an umbrella local.

Her union involvement dates back to 1976, and includes serving as building representative, treasurer, executive vice president and contracts benefit officer for the local. She acknowledged the other representatives from her local, including her daughter who now teaches at BOCES, and some administrators who came to join in the honor.

Shaw said, "The passion that I have for the students I work with, and the union I represent, fuels the fire that drives me. I still look forward to each day and greet it with the same enthusiasm I had



35 years ago."

Referring to NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue's speech from the 2007 RA, Shaw said she was "confident the NYSUT quilt will continue to grow."

SRPs: On The Move ... in September

The NYSUT School-Related Professionals Leadership Conference will be held on September 26-28, at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. A special event will be held on Saturday evening to honor this 30th anniversary of our statewide SRP Conference. The weekend program is rich in information and fun activities. We are offering 26 workshops choices, tours of NYSUT headquarters, food service and custodial off-site/hands-on workshops, and exciting speakers. This is a time to reach out and meet and share experiences

with other SRP members from around our great state. Registration materials will be mailed in early May. The registration deadline will be in August so your local will need to plan accordingly. Don't miss it!

**SRP Leadership Conference
September 26-28
Desmond, Albany**

**SAVE THE
DATE!!**

Welcome new members

Warm greetings to our newest NYSUT SRP members: the teaching assistants in the Keene CSTA, the teaching assistants in Three Villages in Suffolk, and the approximately 150 members in the Monroe BOCES I. Our schools are better when SRPs have a strong voice on the job.



Representing more than 600,000 professionals in education and health care
For more, see www.nysut.org.

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AFT PSRP Conference

April 23-27
Washington, D.C.

Committee of 100

May 12-13
Desmond, Albany

School Budget Vote

May 20

SRP Leadership Conference

September 26-28
Desmond, Albany

National Administrative Professionals Day

April 23

National School Nurses Day

May 7

SRPNewsLink

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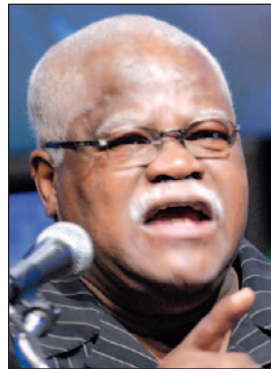
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NEA ESP Conference held

On March 7-9 in historic Baltimore, the NEA held their national ESP (Education Support Professionals) conference. The theme, "ESPs: Vital Partners in Public Education," was woven through the workshop offerings



Reg Weaver

and speaker remarks. As noted by NEA President Reg Weaver, "Every teacher and principal knows that they couldn't do their jobs without you. And every child and

every parent knows the same thing. You are needed. You are appreciated. And this conference is your opportunity to be rejuvenated." And rejuvenating it was! Several NYSUT SRP leaders availed themselves of the NYSUT 2-for-1 cost savings to attend the conference. Our very own Mary Jo Roberge from the North Syracuse EA was the New York nominee for the National ESP of the Year award! Though the honor was won by Laura Vernon, a deserving safety assistant in Wisconsin, we are so proud of Mary Jo and all her years of service to her local and to NYSUT. This conference will be held again in the spring of 2009 in Orlando, Fla. Be on the lookout in SRP NewsLink for the dates.

SRP presses Washington for school improvements

Activists call for federal investment

A clerical chapter union leader from the Brewster Teachers Association in Putnam County had a "phenomenal" two days advocating in Washington on issues that matter to School-Related Professionals and all public school educators.

As part of a national contingent of American Federation of Teachers members working with the American Association of Classified School Employees, Joanne Colombo met with elected leaders and congressional staff to press on issues of education funding and the need for school infrastructure improvements. The AFT is one of NYSUT's national affiliates.

While new to the activist role in Washington, Columbo said, "As an SRP, I know I have an important role to play in educating children. You can't be intimidated by being in a politician's office. It felt good to talk about these issues."

Colombo met with staff for Hudson Valley Congressman John Hall and with a representative of New York's senior senator, Chuck Schumer.

"I stressed the importance of federal

funding for schools because state funding is often not enough," she said. "We must have healthy schools so all our colleagues and our students have a safe environment to educate and to learn. If we don't give our students that, what lesson are we teaching them?"



Joanne Colombo

Along with the other unionists, Colombo met with two state attorneys general to discuss school security concerns. "As we spoke, you could see the lights come on for them about the important role SRPs play in direct contact with students every day," she said.

NYSUT Vice President Kathleen Donahue, who oversees SRP issues for the union and works with Colombo on NYSUT's SRP Committee, called Colombo "a great advocate for SRPs and an excellent representative."

PHOTOS NEEDED!!

It's time to look through your old photo albums and boxes of pictures from past SRP conferences, SRP activities, SRPs working, SRPs having fun, etc. In honor of our 30 years of SRP conferences, our plan is to do a photo slide show at the September 26-28 SRP Leadership Conference. So dig deep and share those treasures so we can all take a trip down memory lane together. Send photos to Margaret MacCartney, NYSUT, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110. Photos will be returned if your name and address is on the back of each.

Enroll for vision plan benefits

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed voluntary Vision Plan includes an annual eye exam and one pair of eyeglasses. Contact lenses may be chosen in lieu of glasses. You have the choice of glass or plastic lenses in single vision, bifocal or trifocal and more than 220 frames with no co-pay. The plan includes many types of lenses and coatings. A few options are available with discounted co-payments.

The plan, provided by Davis Vision, has a plan year that runs each Jan. 1 through Dec. 31. Maximum benefit is received by using an in-network provider. Providers are highly qualified, licensed optometrists. You are encouraged to review the participating providers, which include all Davis and Empire Vision Centers, before enrolling.

You may access this information online: www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, click on "Insurance," "Vision Plan" and use the link to Davis Vision, or you can call Davis toll-free at (877) 923-2847. Use control code 4482 to gain access to the Davis Web site or phone system. If using the Web, click on "find a provider" in the upper right hand corner of the Davis home page and enter the control code.

The plan's annual fee is \$130 for individual coverage and \$230 for family coverage. You may enroll at any time. The premium will be the full amount and you will have the balance of the plan year to use the full benefit.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs.

Do you check the NYSUT, NEA, and AFT Web sites?

There is a wealth of information for you and your membership on these three sites. www.nysut.org has useful information for our members about what is going in NYSUT, wonderful resources to download and read, and updates on laws and regulations. Under "resources," click on Information Bulletins (on the right) to access a list of bulletins on relevant topics such as NCLB's Fact Sheet for Paras, or Reauthorized IDEA. NYSUT also has a leader site for union leaders, with more in-depth information and topics. At www.nea.org, you will find national news, get a message from President Reg Weaver, and lots of great information. Once there, click on "information for support professionals" and read about other support staffers and their jobs, find information on getting grants, NEA publications, get current conference information, etc. Last, but not least, is www.aft.org. This will also give you the national perspective in the union world. Click on the paraprofessionals and school-related professionals site to sign up for their SRP electronic newsletters, get access to available publications, and read about other SRPs around the nation.

A VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Margie Brumfield

SRP Advisory Committee chair



Hello all! What an interesting time in history we are living in. Presidential politics! It is important to keep your members motivated to cast their votes — no one should sit on the sidelines to just wait and see what happens. NYSUT and AFT have worked hard to inform our members about the candidates, the issues and what they mean for our schools and students. Be sure all your members have registered so that they can vote on Election Day.

This is a busy time for NYSUT School-Related Professionals. Those who attended the NEA ESP Conference in early March in Baltimore will agree that it was wonderful! The workshops were totally relevant to SRPs and were very diverse.

- The NYSUT RA was held April 10-12 in NYC. The resolutions and initiatives voted on at this annual convention will set NYSUT's direction for the coming year. This is yet another opportunity where delegates make their voices heard.
- The AFT PSRP Conference will be held on April 25-27 in Washington DC. Check www.aft.org for details and registration deadlines. NYSUT is once again offering the 2-for-1 incentive to help locals send participants. Forms can be found on the leader access section of www.nysut.org or call Margaret MacCartney at NYSUT HQ.
- Last, but certainly not least, the SRP Advisory Committee is very excited about the plans for the NYSUT SRP Conference September 26-28 at the Desmond in Albany. Conference information will be mailed in May.

This year ends my term representing you as the chair of the NYSUT Advisory Committee. I am now a NYSUT SRP director at large representing you on another level. This is an awesome opportunity. I promise you that I will always try to bring an informed perspective to the NYSUT Board of Directors on the behalf of all SRPs. It has been an honor and my pleasure to represent your interest as the chair, and I look forward to seeing many of you in September at the conference. We have a great program planned for all!

For SRPs, every child counts

Every year when I meet with the new teaching assistants, I remind them that they make a difference in the lives of students. As new teaching assistants, they often don't realize their ability to inspire. They think that they are just a small part of their students' lives, but that is definitely not true. Through the many years that I have worked in this district, I have watched students develop special relationships with many staff members. Maybe it was the person who listened to them when they had a problem, or someone who told them that they did have ability to achieve, or maybe it was the morning smile and friendly conversation that got them through their day. Students bond or make special connections with a variety of people. It's the interactions — not the job title — that create this association. Recently, a former student in one of my push-in classes



asked if I would present her diploma at graduation. I was so touched that I wanted to cry. We had had a good working relationship in class. I gave her strategies to pass the "dreaded" Math A state exam, and we maintained our sense of humor and developed a certain trust. However, I never thought that she would give me the honor of presenting her diploma. I can tell you other stories of teaching assistants who still hear from former students who reach out to them. Their past students thank them for being supportive, putting forth effort and showing genuine concern for their well-being.

Mary Jo Roberge is a teaching assistant, member of the North Syracuse EA and the 2007 SRP of the Year.

National School Nurses Day coming: May 7

This day was established to foster a better understanding of the role of school nurses in the educational setting. Since 1972, National School Nurse Day has been set aside to recognize school nurses and the important work they do. In many instances, the school nurse is the only health care professional that some children see. The issues our students, at every age level, bring to our school nurses are challenging and are handled with the utmost skill and professionalism. The 2008 theme is "School Nurses in Action: Transforming School Communities". Go to www.nasn.org for more information.

NYS Grants School Employees Leave Time for Cancer Screenings

Two new laws provide school employees with leave time for donating blood (3 hours per year) and for mammograms and PSA screenings (4 hours per year). While NYSUT hailed the legislation as a great victory for our members, school districts soon raised the issue that is was not clear from the reading of the legislation whether the leave was intended to be paid or unpaid. The laws are clear that the leave was not to be deducted from any other contractual leave time.

NYSUT has issued a strongly worded legal advisory that the intent of the law was to provide paid leave for these purposes. The union is pursuing legislation that will clarify and strengthen our rights on this important issue.

For copies of the Legal Advisories in these matters, for copies of the law or for advice, please contact your LRS.

(Reprinted from "The Edge" from the Tarrytown Regional Office)

Winning a stronger voice on the job ... In historic vote, Oregon school workers affiliate with AFT

More than 21,000 paraprofessionals and school-related personnel represented by the Oregon School Employees Association have affiliated with the AFT, marking the largest affiliation of an independent union in AFT history. The vote tally for mail-in ballots counted Feb. 4-5 by the League of Women Voters was 5,121 to 885, clearly demonstrating that the school employees represented by OSEA overwhelmingly supported a recommendation by OSEA's leaders and seven-member study committee to support affiliation. "Our organizations share the same values and priorities," says AFT President Edward J. McElroy. "This affiliation will make OSEA and the AFT better and stronger." The vote caps a decade-long process in which the AFT made a deep commitment to OSEA members. "It formalizes what has always been a close relationship between our unions and allows us to take our partnership to a new level," says OSEA President Merlene Martin. "The additional resources and support provided by the AFT to its affiliates will make OSEA even stronger and will secure a bright future for our union." Read more at www.union-voice.org/ct/yp1JN151oqoG/.