

NWTA Executive Board

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ORG



What's good on the bookshelves

Heart-Shaped Box by Joe Hill

There are not too many ghost stories that I would rate as very, very good. This one IS very, very good. Horror fans and even romantic novel fans should not be disappointed. (By the way, if you did not know, Joe Hill is Stephen King's son.) This type of imagination just might be a genetic attribute.



Compulsion by Jonathan Kellerman

This is an interesting mystery that begins with a noted lack of commonality among the victims. The killer is quite the psychological mess and quite elusive. Builds nicely to an ending fitting for an Alex Delaware novel.

Charlie Donner

We are pleased that our history dates back to 1971 when The New York State Teachers Association certified our union. Today we are proudly affiliated with The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and The American Federation of Teachers (AFT). We are also honored to be a part of The American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).



The Agenda



Official Newsletter of Niagara Wheatfield Teachers Association—One Paper, Many Voices

Volume 35, Issue 8

April 2009; Darla Bubar, Editor

Wit and wisdom... *it bears repeating*



Kevin Rustowicz,
President

Dear Union members:

I have chosen to re-run one of my past articles as a reminder to all. A common theme in Unionism is solidarity. People often speak of it. Everyone has a different notion of what demonstrates solidarity. Here are 3 simple components of solidarity that I want to emphasize:

1. The dictates of professional protocol demand that a teacher speak to another colleague if there arises a professional concern. It seems trite at this point to reiterate the no-

tion that a teacher should not "report" another teacher to administration as a first line of addressing a professional concern.

2. Administrative meetings and committees should never be used as an arena to vent personal frustrations about other colleagues.

3. Most issues can be handled among professionals through introspection, proper communication and mutual professional respect. In order to preserve our collective solidarity, these components are critical.

Thank You,
Rusty

NWTA BOD Meeting Schedule

All meetings will take place on Thursdays at Edward Town Middle School in the Adult Learning Center beginning at 3:45 PM.

May 21 or 28, 2009 (TBA)

June TBA

Negotiations continue to move forward.

The team has several meetings scheduled with the District. The membership will be updated as news becomes available!

What You Can Do to Stay Healthy

There are everyday actions people can take to stay healthy.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hands cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread that way.

Try to avoid close contact with sick people.

- Influenza is thought to spread mainly person-to-person through coughing or sneezing of infected people.
- If you get sick, CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

Swine flu outbreak causes concern

From the CDC
April 26, 2009

Human cases of swine influenza A (H1N1) virus infection have been identified in the United States. Human cases of swine influenza A

(H1N1) virus infection also have been identified internationally.

International Human Cases of Swine Flu Infection *google: World Health Organization*

Helpful Eva

“AND WHAT did my little darling do in school today?”

“We had nature study and it was my turn to bring a specimen,” said Eva.

“Now wasn’t that nice. What did you bring?”

“I brought a bedbug in a bottle and I told teacher we had lots more and if she wanted I could bring her one every day!”



51

Submitted by Wendy Reddy, Errick Road

Tier 5 averted for now

Union members can help oppose the governor's plan to create a new retirement tier by contacting their representatives. To send a letter or fax, go to the Action Center at www.nysut.org. NYSUT is urging local leaders to encourage members who have not yet joined the ERS or TRS to do so immediately so they will fall under the Tier 4 benefits. The Tier 5 proposal would: In-

crease the retirement age from 55 to 62; change the vesting period from five to 10 years; require contributions from members throughout their career; and exclude overtime calculations and other stipends from a member's final average salary. While unions successfully kept Tier 5 out of the budget, creating a Tier 5 is still on the table as the governor negotiates layoffs with CSEA and PEF.

Take health care survey

Let your voice be heard by participating in the 2009 Health Care for America Survey sponsored by AFL-CIO and Working America, the 2 million member community affiliate of AFL-CIO.

Find the survey at www.aflcio.org/issues/healthcare/survey/index_survey.cfm?source=hc_survey_aflsite.

The survey is primarily about access to health care, but organizers have included quality of care as part of health reform. Your members can use the tab marked "share your story" to tell stories about what conditions are like for patients and health care providers and their concerns about the quality of care.

Upcoming events...

- Legislative Cocktail Party,**
April 30, 2009
- NWTA Officer Election,**
May 2009
- Statewide School Budget Vote,**
May 19, 2009
- NYSUT Leadership Awards Dinner,**
June 3, 2009
- Cooperate Challenge,**
June 4, 2009

NWTA elections update

In a few weeks, the NWTA will be holding its biennial elections for officers and delegates to conventions. It is not too late to submit your name or the name of a colleague for nomination to a position.

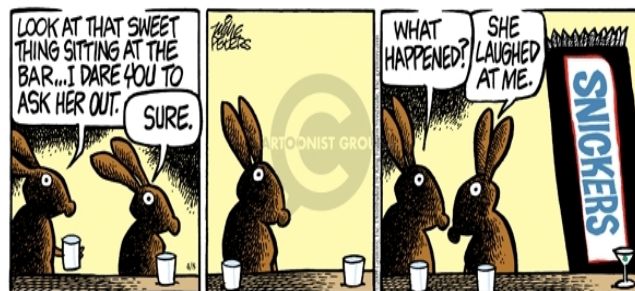
There are five officer positions, two grievance chair positions, and several delegate positions open for candidates as outlined in last month's issue of *The Agenda*.

Each elected position serves an office of two years. There are no term

limits. Should a candidate be unable to serve out his or her term, a new election for the position is called.

All nominations should have been made in writing to Election Chairman, Tom Chirayath, at the Senior High no later than April 29, 2009. These names will then be brought forth to the Board of Directors at the April 30, 2009 meeting. At this meeting, nominations can also be made from the floor, but each person nominated must consent to run for office.

The lighter side



American Teacher
May-June 2009 - Major Stories

1. **"Campaign for America's Future:" Healthcare Reform** — President Obama and several key members of Congress have made it clear that their goal is to pass healthcare reform legislation by the end of the year. Obama has tied reform to the nation's economic recovery, and the AFT stands ready and willing to support the president's efforts to make healthcare more accessible and affordable.
2. **Obama's First 100 Days** — The Obama Administration has charted a course that includes more than \$100 billion in new money for education, a focus on early childhood education, an expansion of the Children's Health Insurance Program and the signing of pay equity legislation that prevents employers from using a legal loophole to pay women less than men.
3. **Where We Stand** — AFT president Randi Weingarten says the time is ripe for *real* education reform. "Unprecedented resources are flowing into education, and the Obama administration wants teacher voice to be prominent in decisions about how those funds are used," she writes. The union and its members must also counter those who try to scapegoat educators and their unions by claiming that teachers unions are obstacles to reform, Weingarten says.
4. **NAACP Celebrates 100 Years** — This year marks the 100th anniversary of the nation's most prestigious civil rights organization. The AFT and NAACP have a long history of working together for social justice and educational equality. This issue of *American Teacher* highlights some AFTers who are activists with both the AFT and the NAACP.
5. **PSRP Conference** — Held in Baltimore, the annual AFT paraprofessional and school-related personnel featured remarks by AFT president Randi Weingarten, the union's executive vice president Lorretta Johnson and Maryland governor Martin O'Malley. All three focused on the need to ensure that recovery money earmarked for education is invested wisely.
6. **Tools for Teachers** — This issue's column offers some tips for encouraging kids to read—even while on vacation. It contains some links for some books and other reading materials that your students might enjoy.
7. **Class Notes** — A new report from the "Alliance for Childhood" says today's kindergarten students spend much more time studying math and literacy skills—and taking standardized tests—and less time learning through play.
8. **Special Report** — New York state's Teacher Centers are highly-regarded as a source of support and professional development for both new and veteran teachers. However, that didn't stop them from being targeted for elimination under a proposed state budget. Using an e-mail and postcard campaign, and rallies and a lobby day, educators and communities in New York fought back, forcing state legislators to back down from their threat to cut funding for the centers.



Statewide School Budget Vote

May 19, 2009

Make a difference!

Get out and support your local school budget by voting *YES* for education!

My View cont'd

something to offer our union, and no one would feel a new face at the table would be a burden. The NwTA is only as strong as we want it to be – all of us. So, as I think about the months ahead, I'm glad I took a moment to pull Ms. Ravitch's article off the bookcase this week. During a scary era of unemployment financial insecurity, and volatile markets, it's nice to be able to rest easier knowing our union is there for us – all of us.

We would love to hear from you! If you are interested in submitting an article, photo, or any other newsworthy event, please contact the Editor, Darla Bubar at dbubar@nwcsd.org.

**All submissions are subject to editing for space and clarity.*



Contract connection



Here's your chance to win a \$10 gift card from your choice of either Starbucks, Tim Horton's, or Dunkin Donuts! Decide if the following scenario is **complaint** or **grievance** based on our contract language. Cite the page and section number from our current contract that you used as evidence for your answer.

directed to be there with no additional compensation.

**all members in good standing are eligible. Winner will be drawn randomly from all correct entries submitted. Include your name, building, and gift choice along with your entry! One entry per person per month.*

Congrats to our February winner, Amanda Jasper; and our March winner, Gina Merlo!

The District has scheduled a Saturday Open House, and all staff are



Guest viewpoint... My View

By Gina L. Merlo

I admit it. I don't usually have much time to read "American Educator", the free AFT publication that arrives each season. In fact, I recently purchased another used bookcase just to hold all the periodicals that are waiting for someone to read them. Of course, headlines being what they are, I was intrigued by the cover question, "Why don't students like school?"

Now, before I lose my readership, let me say I soon grew bored reading about the need to build memory skills. As a menopausal mom, I am all too familiar with the need to build memory skills. I have no memory – I have post-its.

What did intrigue me was a quote from Diane Ravitch in her article, "Dispelling Myths about Teacher 'Tenure'" (page 3). When discussing unionism, she states, "I read recently that membership in unions is now under 10 percent of the private-sector workforce...In these difficult times, we may again see a turn to unionism, and for all the predictable reasons; having to do with protection from arbitrary and capricious management, to economic security, to the demand to have a voice in decisions about

the workplace."

First, I was shocked that only 10 percent of the nation's workforce is unionized. That counts out to only 1 in 10 workers having the collective bargaining power and protection of their union to safeguard their livelihoods, health benefits, financial security, and retirement plans. If I walk into a family gathering of 30 people, as I did this Easter Sunday, that average translates to only 3 of my family members enjoying the workplace security I sometimes take so easily for granted.

Reading Ms. Ravitch's column served as a healthy reminder to respect, support, and contribute to my union. Yes, the NWTA collects our dues each year, and yes, hundreds of us show up to ratification meetings to examine a new contract and pay scale. But how many of us are donating our time and talents to keep the NWTA strong? Do we feel we don't have the "know-how"? Do we feel we don't want to "ruffle any feathers"?

Despite the 6 years I held a position with the NWTA, I know I could raise my hand to both of those questions – but also need to remind myself they are both silly fears. Every person in the NWTA has

N-W school budget has 0% tax increase with three board seats up for election

Niagara Wheatfield's board of education is proud to offer the public a budget proposal for 2009-2010 that includes a ZERO tax increase, even in these unstable economic times, but that doesn't mean the district is not moving forward. Several new and innovative programs and developments for students are planned for 2009-2010, including the implementation of programs for the ninth grade that will ease the transition to high school and increase opportunities for success, and a universal pre-kindergarten program for preschoolers in the district. Superintendent Carl Militello has asked members of the community to exercise their right to vote on Niagara Wheatfield's budget proposal for 2009-2010 on May 19. "This is the one day every year when members of our community have the opportunity to show their support for our schools, and I ask them to do that so that our board of education, our administration, our staff and students can continue to build on Niagara-Wheatfield's legacy of excellence," he said. "We have a vision here, a plan for the next five years to meet the chal-

lenges of a difficult economy. I can assure the community that we are creating 21st century learners who will be globally competitive. Students come first here, and we don't just verbalize that, we demonstrate it everyday. Taxpayers should judge us by what Niagara Wheatfield is doing for their children, today and every day after."

Additionally, three candidates will be on the ballot at the May 19 annual school district election. Incumbents Samuel Monin of Wheatfield and Lori Pittman of the Town of Niagara will seek reelection while newcomer Kristen MacKenzie of Wheatfield will be the third candidate. Two three-year terms plus the remaining two-year unexpired term of the late Donald Moyer, Jr. are in contention. The two highest vote getters will be awarded the three-year terms. The third place finisher in the election will take the two-year term.

Voting will again take place at Errick Road Elementary School from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM.



From where I stand... *just complaining?*



Darla Bubar, Editor

The last Contract Contest posed this scenario for thought: *The District notified all staff that a new dress code will be in effect this coming fall, and blue jeans and sneakers are unacceptable attire.* And, there was some healthy debate among our members as to whether or not this would prove to be a grievance. Something to keep in mind is that although many things are spelled out in black and white in our contract, there are some issues that would cause change to our contract language that are grievable even though not written. When is



this the case, you might ask... ANY change in working conditions that is considered a negotiable item can also be considered a grievance based on past practice. Therefore, last month's scenario is indeed a grievance based on that rationale. If the administration chooses to try to enforce a dress code, especially if this enforcement results in any disciplinary action toward a members of our unit, a member can indeed, file a grievance. Happy Spring

~Darla

From the AFT

Unique New Benefits to Help Union Members Facing Hardships

A new program called Union SAFE (Security, Assistance and Financial Education) is now available to help union members with an array of new benefits that expand the extensive safety net already available to them through the Union Plus programs.

Vists www.UnionPlus.org/UnionSAFE to learn more!



you had MetLife In-Service dental coverage, you'd be smiling, too.

MetLife dental coverage is available to NYSUT In-Service Members. Enroll now.



For enrollment materials, call the P & A Group toll-free at 1-866-868-0939.

This coverage is endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust.

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Like most group accident and health insurance policies, MetLife dental insurance policies contain certain exclusions, limitations and terms for keeping them in force. The MetLife In-Service Dental Plan is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 5% of gross premiums for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, if appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at (800) 626-4101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs. Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York, NY 10166. © 2008 MetLife, Inc. © UPS. L11086299awp1109[AM States][DC,PR,vil] 0803-7117