Member Newsletter
Volume II, Issue 3
February 2018

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Lisa Cutten, 1st Vice President
Jennifer Ott, 2nd Vice President
Joe DiTucci, Professional Advancement Chair
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Message from the President

In honoring and celebrating the life of my dear friend and colleague Lisa Cutten, I want to preface what follows by saying that I am acutely aware of the fact that it is impossible to capture all the wonderful attributes and character traits of her life in this short tribute. I will do my best!

Shortly after I was hired to teach in Spencerport, I met Lisa Cutten. In fact, she was the first teacher I met here. We met before the school year started. It was my first year teaching, so I was excited, anxious, and scared. During our first conversation, I shared how anxious I was. She reassured me repeatedly that everything was going to be okay. She explained with enthusiasm how Munn was a family and a team that worked together and relied on each other. It didn't take long for me to realize how true this was! She also told me that if I needed help with anything, that I could reach out to her directly. I somehow knew right after we met that we would become friends.

Lisa was many things. She was intelligent, honest, thoughtful, patient, and strong. She was always loyal. However, above all, she was kind. No matter how contentious or stressful a meeting or encounter became, she always stayed true to her most prominent attribute. Kindness! It was what made her so special and unique to those who knew her! Through her example, I came to understand the power and resiliency of kindness. I learned that it could change people's hearts and minds and help effectuate change in some of the most difficult situations. However, on several occasions, I witnessed others mistakenly misjudge Lisa because of her kindness. This was a mistake because wrapped inside all that kindness was a raging passion to teach, help, and protect others. She was a fierce advocate for our students and every one of us. Her focus with every committee she served on, every event she coordinated, and every contract she negotiated was on the impact it would have on our students, all those that support us, and every member of our association. She had a keen understanding of the fact that a teacher's working conditions are a student's learning conditions.

While Lisa was a passionate advocate for every STA member, she held a special place in her heart for our colleagues at Munn. She worked tirelessly to engage, organize, and unify the STA. Through the NYSUT Local Action Project, she focused on member engagement. Lisa understood the collective power of our union when every member is involved and engaged. She shared new ideas with me on a regular basis. Every one of them was geared towards motivating more and more members to get involved. She understood that passive unionism had to be curbed because it would embolden those who are attacking public education and our profession.

I plan on honoring Lisa every day by being kind to others and working as hard as I can to fulfill her goal of having an actively engaged association. She always reinforced the importance of “being a doer instead of a viewer.” In that spirit, I would like to invite each one of you to join me in honoring Lisa by supporting the STA in a more active way.

In closing, I have learned that as each of us travels through life, a host of people will come into our lives. Some leave our lives as quickly as they came in. Others become acquaintances that we communicate with occasionally, but they remain at the outer edges of our lives. Yet, every once in a while, someone comes into our lives and they have a profound impact on us. They become part of our inner circle. These are the people we grow to trust and confide in. These are the people we hold dear in our hearts. They become our friend! More than anything else, this is what Lisa Cutten was to me! Yes, she was my colleague and a trusted confidant, but most importantly, she was one of my dearest friends, and I miss her!

John Kozlowski, President

At Lisa’s memorial service, her colleague Matt Fink shared the following.

Last week, Rod bestowed upon me the great honor and responsibility of speaking about our friend and colleague. From the moment Rod asked me...I knew what I had to do. Lisa's favorite television show is The Voice. With that in mind, I thought we could sing a line from a Beatles song in her honor. So if you'll please join me, loud enough for Lisa to hear in heaven, in the words of The Beatles, "and in the end the love you take is equal to the love you make."

You see it's an equation. "And in the end the love you take is equal to the love you make." Not true... not true for our math specialist friend Lisa.

At school Lisa had many roles: friend, teacher and unionist.

Friend: I vividly remember my opening day at Munn, over 20 years ago, when Lisa was the very first person who spoke to me. I was a 25-year-old punk, with a full head of hair and the belief that I could change the world, and she was already a mentor teacher. After some small talk and finding out that she had been teaching for 10 years my eyes opened wide and my smart-ass reply was, "Wow, I was 15 when you started." But in true Lisa fashion, she handled it gracefully. Her blue eyes twinkled, she smiled her beautiful smile, and she just walked away. Little did I know that I would have the pleasure of working and learning from her for so many years. And even better, have the honor of calling her a friend.

Teacher: During her career in Spencerport, Lisa wore many hats. Third, fourth, fifth grade teacher, and most recently, Munn's Math specialist. No matter which hat she wore... Lisa was a true educator. Her love for all children illuminated every aspect of her professional life. She strove for their best interests, their happiness ...their future. Lisa worked tirelessly to get students to know multiplication facts, division concepts and word problems; but most importantly, she strived to get all students to recognize their true potential. Lisa deeply believed in the potential that all human beings possess and would never settle for less. Lisa's students were blessed to have her as a teacher and a role model. Every student who ever worked with Lisa is better because of it.

Unionist: Lisa was also an instrumental part of the glue which has held Spencerport's Union together. If you enjoy your working conditions, your salary, your benefits, your job security, your due process rights and your professional voice, know that Lisa Cutten is one person for whom you must be grateful. As a strong unionist, she worked tirelessly to fight for our rights as professionals. In her memory, we all have the responsibility to carry on her efforts and further this profession that she always worked to enrich.

At the core of the union is the concept of synergy. Coming from the Greek word synergistic meaning "working together," the word union sums up our friend Lisa Cutten. I then looked up the word synergy and was brought full circle. You see Lisa, your life was not an equation as The Beatles stated. In the end, your life was synergy:

"Synergy...the creation of a whole that is greater than the simple sum of its parts."

Lisa's colleagues shared the following.

Fortunately, I had the rewarding opportunity to work with Lisa a few times over the years. As a substitute teacher, Lisa would take the time out of her busy schedule to make sure I was comfortable with her plans and her students. She would also explain any math content or strategies that she used that I was not familiar with. Finally, Lisa provided me with ample resources and math activities in order to keep students engaged and practicing the skills. Her passion for teaching provided me with valuable knowledge about the elementary math content. I am blessed to have had the opportunity to be mentored by such an enthusiastic role model. —Amanda Schepler

I met Lisa when I first became involved in the Executive Council in 1996. I was a fairly new teacher, and Lisa was very welcoming and appreciative of all the work being a representative entailed. She had a heart of gold and the friendliest smile on Earth. You could never tell if she was not feeling well or if she was having a bad day because she was more concerned about how you were doing. She was very soft spoken, but was able to get her point across in her own way. I loved asking her about her grandson and watch her eyes light up! Lisa had a passion for her students and the union that was second to none. I hope to have even a fraction of the impact that Lisa has had in Spencerport! —Danielle Blossom

Lisa….friend….caring….bright….tender….hardworking….dedicated….loyal….persistent….helpful…. sparkly…. respectful….curious….missed! —Judy Pray

I worked with Lisa for many years on the Spencerport Teachers Association's Executive Council, and she was just one of the nicest, sweetest, most genuine people I've known. She was so caring, always asking how I was and how my family was. We walked together on the recent breast cancer walk and made phone calls together for the STA. I so enjoyed spending time with her! Lisa was an inspiring and special person, and I miss her! —Deb Yeara

My Dearest Friend Lisa,

As I think about our 30 years of teaching together, I can't help but hear your laughter in these pictures. You always made life joyful. We are so much alike, both of us wanting the best for others, in school and life.

Celebrating the "big" events in life with you made them that much better. You always went above and beyond to make the day even that much more special. I feel so blessed to have shared our 50th birthdays celebrating together.

Lisa, life wasn't always easy, but you moved beyond your health issues to help others and make teaching in Spencerport amazing. You always looked out for our members. It was wonderful having an elementary teacher on our side. Thank you for all your time at Board Meetings, Negotiations and STA events. Your special touch on the STA bulletin board at Munn made each of us take notice and help out where needed.

I still can't believe I won't walk into school, see your smile, and hear your laugh. Rest in Peace my Dear Friend! —Stacy Lonardo

I was blessed to have worked with Lisa early in my career here at Spencerport. Our Munn family was connected, no matter what you grade level you taught. We got to know each other passing in the hallways and at the regular Friday breakfast treat day in the Faculty Room.

My earliest memories of Lisa are of her smile and her kind manner. She spoke to you as if you were the only one who mattered. She shared herself with others through the respect she showed and the generosity of her time, talent, and other things.

Today, in my 6th grade classroom, the students had to write about an object or food that mattered. It was kind of like "show and tell" in my room. I shared with them three important objects with them about different aspects of my life and explained how each object mattered to me. And then it hit me- I have an object at home that always reminds me of Lisa.

At the time we worked together, the "sales social parties" were in full gear. Pampered Chef and Tupperware gatherings included food and fun. I always enjoy hanging out with my friends and eating tasty food together. I like to cook when I have time, and I especially like to bake all sorts of desserts; pies, cookies, Kuchens, cakes. You get the point. Apparently, there was something that was taking up space in Lisa's kitchen and she wanted to make sure it went to a good home. So one day, I received a gift from her – a Tupperware cake holder. To me, it was quite a gift and I felt funny accepting it from her, but I've used it and cherished it all these years. I haven't quite thought of it in the last 6 months (we were renovating our kitchen and everything was packed away) but when I opened the box to find a new spot for it on my shelves, I was reminded of the loving, generous person Lisa was to me and to everyone.

My last memory of Lisa was here at school. She was always so good about popping in to say hello. I just didn't know that would be the last time I saw her. The way she lived her life is an inspiration to me. I'm so grateful for her and her friendship. I was blessed to know her…and that I remembered the wonderful gift from her that I will cherish, always. –Andrea Page

I had the honor and pleasure of getting to know Lisa during the last two years. Gretchen Breon, Lisa and I joked that one day, the three of us all would run for the Churchville-Chili Board of Education. Lisa's sparkling eyes, beautiful smile, and infectious laugh were the deceptive exterior to someone who was fierecely devoted to protecting public education. Lisa advocated for all of us in Spencerport, knowing that our working conditions directly impact the children in our classrooms. We miss her, and we will honor her legacy by continuing to fight the good fight. —Emmy Thevanesan

Throughout our careers we encounter so many people. As we transfer to new buildings, shift grade assignments, even simply switch to different classrooms, we easily lose touch with each other. It can be hard on friendships. Such is the life of a teacher.

Lisa Cutten was so much more than a work colleague to me. We met at Executive Council and became friends as I got more involved with our union. It's an unexpected bonus when a colleague turns out to be someone you click with, share interests with, and develop a connection with. Through numerous NYSUT functions and coffees at Jitter's, Lisa and I became great friends. It is a treat to make a new friend at this point in your life.

As you may know, Lisa was truly kind-hearted. She was a wonderful listener offering very practical advice both personal and union related. I have already caught myself multiple times thinking, "I just need to ask Lisa; she will know what to do about this." Lisa was a positive person who enjoyed life. She and I had many laughs together last April when we traveled to the NYSUT RA in NYC. I'm so glad to have had the chance to explore a bit of NYC with her.

One of my last fond memories of Lisa is when I spent two weeks with Lisa, John, Joe, Jenn and M.J. at Saratoga Springs working on how to help our union continue to be as strong as it possibly can be. It was much more than colleagues working on a project. And now without her there, it all is so much harder and so much less fun to even think about doing. When I think of our final LAP week this July, I realize it will be very different. I know we will miss her.

I am so grateful to have had such a wonderful friendship with Lisa, and as I remember her, I'd like to share one thing. Pay attention to the friends you have, and especially those bonus friendships that pop up. Be nice and listen. We need to be there for each other. There is no guarantee of another day. I miss my friend, Lisa Cutten. Coffee at Jitters is not the same without her. –Gretchen Breon

Lisa and I taught summer school together for many years. Every morning, she would come in with an iced coffee from Jitters. Because it was so hot and humid in our classroom, Lisa's drink would leave water rings everywhere she went. The children and I were always getting our papers wet, and we loved teasing her about this. One day, I made a "coaster" for Lisa. It was a small plastic basket lined with a brown paper towel. I can still picture Lisa walking around with this basket, sipping from her iced coffee inside! –Heather Shaw

My favorite story involving Lisa has to deal with our STA polo shirts. The first time she gave me my shirt, it was a bit small, but I wore it proudly. I checked the size and it was what I had ordered, a large. Maybe I had gotten a bad shirt? I came to find out that it was small because Lisa had given me a woman's shirt. I told her this at our next meeting, and she explained that through all the confusion she must have made a mistake. She gave me a new shirt, a bigger shirt. All was forgiven…….. until I put on the new shirt – another woman's shirt. Coincidence?? I'm happy to say that I did finally get a man's shirt; not that there's anything with a man wearing a woman's shirt. –Doug Lennon

I have had the pleasure of knowing Lisa through my work with the Spencerport Teachers Association. Over the years, I grew to know Lisa as a teacher, an officer in the STA, and perhaps most importantly, as a friend. As a teacher, Lisa was always child-centered, working and striving to help each child succeed. Through the STA, she worked tirelessly for the members and the organization to make the union, and by extension, our district, a better place. As a friend, there was no better, always willing to lend a hand or an ear or whatever she could to help out. She knew we needed each other. Below is part of a poem by Maya Angelou entitled "Alone."

Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not stone
I came up with one thing
And I don't believe I'm wrong
That nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

She certainly was a wonderful human being and friend. The world was a better place with Lisa in it, and I will miss her. —Joe Di Tucci

I was very fortunate to work with Lisa at the Math Center at Munn for 15 years. Every day I was a witness to Lisa's kindness, caring, and professionalism. She always found time to listen, offer advice and help. She always put others first. She remembered to ask about my personal life, my kids, my family and never forgot my special days. Over the time, our relationship developed into a wonderful friendship. Lisa always wrote my evaluations.

Here is one for you, Lisa.

Kindness - Excellent
Friendliness - Excellent
Professionalism - Excellent
Carrying for others (family, students, teachers, community) - Excellent
Mentoring other teachers and TAs - Excellent
Listening skills - Excellent
Teaching skills - Excellent
Respecting others - Excellent
Sense of fashion - Excellent
Love for life and other people - Exceeded Expectations

—Mira Wojdak

Lisa's work with the Spencerport Teachers Union on behalf of the teachers and students was invaluable, and the effects of her efforts will still resonate in the years to come. Her dedication was unwavering, and no matter what the current situation, issue of the day, or teaching climate, she always put the students, our kids, first. I am a better teacher for having known Lisa. I am a better activist for having known Lisa. And I am a better person for having known Lisa. Lisa has left her smile in the hearts of everyone she touched. Her spirit will always be kept alive in Spencerport. –Julie Bianchi

Lisa was an amazing person. She always had a smile on her face. She would go about solving problems in the calmest of ways. I always envied the way she dealt with things. I enjoyed talking with Lisa. She had a way of helping you see that things would work out okay. I will miss her wisdom. —Sue Chatterton

I had the privilege and honor to have had Lisa Miller Cutten as my 3rd grade teacher. I was in her very first class when she started at Munn, probably around the age of 22. I remember feeling so lucky that she was my teacher. Lisa was such a natural at teaching. She was very loving and caring toward her students. When I was scared, shy or intimidated, she knew how to make me feel comfortable and safe. She had the sweetest voice and the kindest smile. I don't remember the particular content she taught me in 3rd grade, but I certainly remember the way she made me feel. She also helped to instill the love of learning in me, which helped steer me in the direction of becoming a teacher myself. She was such an asset to our schools and community. She was an amazing teacher and an incredible person who will not be forgotten. –Sarah Colasanto

You might hear people joke about having a work husband. Lisa was my work sister, my soul sister. She believed in school nursing, she believed we were professionals who belonged in the STA, and she advocated for us.

If you live with health conditions, they are not acute illnesses that pop up suddenly like a cold. They are a chronic illness you learn to manage to live your life. Lisa lived that life to the fullest. She pushed herself for school and the STA.

Lisa always stopped by my office, sometimes for herself, sometimes for a student, sometimes to talk & show off a grandbaby pic or share her trips to Florida, and often just to check in and ask me how I was doing. When she was making a copy outside my door, she would poke her head in and say hi. I still look for her to come through the door. She left a hole in my office and my heart.

Two songs keep running through my head, Bee Gees "How Do You Mend a Broken Heart?" and Christopher Cross "When You Think of Laura." I have been getting through the days with that chorus running through my head (name changed of course). When you think of Lisa, laugh, don't cry, I know she'd want it that way.

Lisa loved dragonflies, so whenever I see one I will think of her and smile, but I will miss her forever.
—Beth Hoben

Janus Update
"Right-to-Work" (for less)

On January 18th, STA Executive Council members had an important training led by Steve Monks, our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist (LRS). He rolled out NYSUT's "Campaign Without an End," which is what they are calling the collective effort to maintain full membership in our union.

Since 1992, unions in New York State have benefited from a provision in that year's Executive Budget known as "Agency Fee." In layman's terms, Agency Fee means you never have to join the union; however, since your salary and benefits are negotiated on your behalf by a union, then you must pay a fee to that union. This is known as fair-share. As the Supreme Court determined 9-0 in the Abood v. Detroit BOE in 1977, there should be no "free riders." Since unions are required to provide the same level of advocacy for employees who choose to opt out of the union as they do for those who are members, paying the union for such services is only fair. By eliminating Agency Fee, this would allow individuals to be "free loaders" in their union, enjoying the benefits and protections of the union contract without paying their fair share.

In the past few years, you may have heard the phrase "Right-to-Work." This misnomer refers to laws that are enacted by states that prohibit unions from negotiating salary and benefits and ban the requirement that all workers in a bargaining unit pay dues or fair-share fees to offset the cost of the union representation and services. Currently, 28 states have enacted "Right-to-Work" laws. Wisconsin, for example, passed Right-to-Work legislation in 2015. As a result, less than half of Wisconsin school districts now have certified teachers' unions. In 2011, Governor Scott Walker and the state Legislature passed Act 10. In doing so, the impact on teachers and school districts has been catastrophic. The retirement system, which was 100% funded by the school districts, now requires that teachers contribute $5,000 annually. This fee is deducted from a teacher's salary. Districts have imposed high deductible healthcare plans. On average, this costs a teacher an additional $5,000. Act 10 has cut the median teachers' benefits by 18.6%. Each year since the passage of Act 10, a teacher earns around $11,000 less now than before Act 10.

THE WISCONSIN WARNING

BY ELIMINATING AGENCY FEE, THIS WOULD ALLOW INDIVIDUALS TO BE "FREE LOADERS" IN THEIR UNION, ENJOYING THE BENEFITS AND PROTECTIONS OF THE UNION CONTRACT WITHOUT PAYING THEIR FAIR SHARE.

EACH YEAR SINCE THE PASSAGE OF ACT 10, A WISCONSIN TEACHER EARNS AROUND $11,000 LESS.

AFTER PASSING "RIGHT-TO-WORK" LEGISLATION IN 2016, LESS THAN HALF OF WISCONSIN SCHOOL DISTRICTS NOW HAVE A CERTIFIED TEACHERS UNION.

On Monday February 26th, the United State Supreme Court will begin hearing arguments in the case of Janus vs. AFSCME. This case began in Illinois with a healthcare worker named Mark Janus who, with the assistance of anti-union lobbyists, filed a lawsuit against his union saying that his mandatory dues were a violation of his first amendment rights to association. We are bracing for a 5-4 vote by the Supreme Court in favor of Janus, and we expect that ruling to come in June; however, it could come earlier. This ruling, at the national level, will override state Agency Fee laws like the one New York State currently has.

At building meetings, which will begin very soon, John Kozlowski will be sharing more information about what it means to be a member of the STA and NYSUT in a non-Agency Fee world. It is likely that employers will refuse to process payroll deduction without a recently signed form proving that you "really want to be in the

union." We will be asking you to sign a membership card for the 2017-2018 school year. It is likely that signing union cards annually will become our new normal.

As part of the "Campaign Without an End," and in order to provide you with updates and alerts, we will be asking you to give permission to the union to use auto dialing and texting to your cell phone. The need for instantaneous communication has never been greater. The anti-union forces are mobilized and well-funded. We need to be prepared so that what happened in Wisconsin can never happen in New York.

To paraphrase from Matt Fink's beautiful eulogy about Lisa, our working conditions, salary, benefits, health care, due process rights, and professional voice are the results of a union that tirelessly advocates on our behalf. Solidarity is more important now than ever before.

Emmy Thevanesan, Cosgrove Building Rep & STA Political Action Coordinator
Steve Monks, NYSUT LRS

STA INTERVIEW:
Steve Monks, NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist

The 2017-2018 year is what we call a "negotiation year." Our contract expires on June 30th, 2018, and our PAC (Professional Advancement Committee) Representatives are hard at work negotiating a fair contract. As educators, we know that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. The STA members who represent us at the negotiations table are our President, 1st Vice President, and PAC Chair: John Kozlowski, Lisa Cutten, and Joe DiTucci. This year, Stacy Lonardo will negotiate in Lisa's place.

However, John, Stacy and Joe will have another person working with them during negotiations with the district: Steve Monks, our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist (LRS). Mr. Monks agreed to be interviewed for this issue of our STA Newsletter. It is extremely important that we all know who is working on our behalf and what services they provide.

STA: Can you please start by explaining the role of an LRS?
Steve: My role as an LRS is to assist the STA in all areas related to collective bargaining, contract administration, and legal advocacy. I work with the STA on professional issues as well as union activities. By utilizing a strategic approach, I assist the STA in maximizing member engagement and building the capacity of the STA to meet the workplace needs of its members. There is no task more crucial to a union than this.

STA: How long have you been an LRS?
Steve: I started working as an LRS on December 8th, 2003. I find the job just as exciting now as I did when I first started. Before that, I was a teacher in Greece for 22 years.

STA: Can you please describe your role with the Spencerport LAP Team?
Steve: My role is primarily one of support and guidance. The talent and professionalism of the LAP team is second to none. There will forever be a void without Lisa.

STA: What will your role be when our STA officers negotiate our new contract this spring?
Steve: Negotiations is one of the most important responsibilities that a union has. My role is to support the bargaining team with such things as data gathering, analysis, and guidance at the bargaining table or in any other capacity that the team deems necessary. The Rochester Regional Office collects and disseminates crucial information from around the region that will be invaluable as we proceed with these negotiations.

S**TA:** You work downtown in the NYSUT Rochester Regional Office. What services does the NYSUT regional office provide for locals like the STA?
Steve: In addition to negotiations, the Regional Office supports its locals with: grievance/arbitration, matters relating to the enforcement of the Taylor Law with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), APPR, Rep training, working conditions and so much more. Additionally, the LRSs have access to the best Research and Educational Service Department in the state. NYSUT's Research and Ed Services department in Latham is an invaluable resource that I use on a regular basis. Whether I have a question relating to teacher certification, CTLE or a Special Education compliance, I can always rely on receiving a comprehensive, accurate and timely response, enabling me to be responsive to my locals.

STA: In your years as an LRS, how would you describe this current era in public education?
Steve: We are in uncertain times. From the national to the local level, everything is topsy-turvey. The sustained attack on public sector unions at the national level continues. The debacle of APPR at the state level continues. School districts are struggling with budgets due to an unrealistic tax cap. I find that teachers are overwhelmed with the ever-increasing workload demands due to such things as over testing.

STA: What should a teachers' union be looking for from rank and file members?
Steve: It should be looking for cohesion. There are many anti-union forces that are attempting to pit teacher-against-teacher by pushing an anti-union agenda. The Janus vs AFSCME case that will be heard by the United States Supreme Court in February is a clear example of just how organized the anti-union forces are. STA members may hear from anti-union groups this spring as part of an organized effort to undermine unions. Members need to be alerted to these "campaigns" before they are contacted. As unions, we need to remain united. By remaining united, we remain strong. By remaining strong, we can defeat our opponents.

STA: Thank you very much, Mr. Monks!

What Does the STA Mean to You?

In late December 2017, a widely-shared story on social media told about the firing of a 6th grade art teacher in Utah, dismissed from his job after a parent called police and alerted them that their child's teacher had shown the class pornography. During a lesson, Mateo Rueda had his students go to the school's library to look through art books and a collection of art postcards. Some of these postcards depicted 19th century nude paintings. During the investigation, the school's principal was found shredding the postcards—which originated in the school library—that contained nudity. Police came to the school, viewed the postcards, and ruled they did not constitute as pornography.

Rueda was fired from his job but is appealing the decision. A district official who spoke to the media anonymously said that it wasn't so much the postcards that were the issue, but the way Rueda handled the situation with his students. Parents claim Rueda "belittled" the students who were upset by the nude images by telling them to "get over" it. He allegedly told the students nudity in art is very common, and that one day, they might go to an art museum and see nude paintings.

Also in December, NYSUT members received their quarterly issue of the NYSUT newsletter, which included an article about a teacher in New York City brought up on 3020-a charges after a student accused him of kissing her on the cheek in class. Two other adults and a classroom full of students were present when the alleged incident took place, and no evidence supported the student's claim. However, the New York City Department of Education aggressively pursued termination for the teacher, and when the hearing board ruled unanimously to dismiss the charges, the NYCDOE appealed. Fortunately, the ruling of the appeal also was in favor of the teacher.

Finally, on December 30th, the *Democrat & Chronicle* opinion page published a letter from a local resident on the topic what teachers need to do for students to be successful. His suggestions were brilliantly simple: set the passing rate for all subjects at 85%, and make sure all students reach that 85% benchmark!

Mr. Rueda was immediately fired from his job because he teaches in Utah, as opposed to a state like New York, where teachers are represented by strong unions that guarantee them their due process rights and protections. As the Janus ruling approaches, the NYSUT newsletter will likely continue to share cases underscoring that membership in your union is the way to protect yourself against capricious and false allegations. Mr. Rueda will likely fund his own legal defense, while here in New York, NYSUT has full-time attorneys ready to defend each and every one of us from the irreparable harm that can come from a false allegation.

HAVE YOU EVER READ A LETTER TO THE EDITOR ABOUT HOW NURSES NEED TO IMPROVE AT THEIR JOBS? DOCTORS? DENTISTS? PLUMBERS? LAWYERS? ACCOUNTANTS? TRUCK DRIVERS? PHARMACEUTICAL REPS? HAIR STYLISTS?

So where does the *Democrat & Chronicle* letter fit in? Before I answer that, have you ever read a letter to the editor about how nurses need to improve at their jobs? Doctors? Dentists? Plumbers? Lawyers? Accountants? Truck drivers? Pharmaceutical reps? Hair stylists?

The only profession that comes close to educators in terms of public scrutiny is law enforcement, and a reasonable, civic-minded person would argue that the constant demonizing of teachers and police is detrimental to society as a whole.

Everyone thinks they know how to "fix" education. A family member once told me that teachers should be rated according to the percentage of their students who show up to class each day. "If the teacher is doing a good job," she argued, "the kids will really want to come to school." It took about 30 seconds to get my relative to realize how absurd her statement was, but the fact that these conversations happen at all is, at best, exhausting, and at their worst, infuriating.

In June, we are bracing for a Supreme Court ruling that will, for all intents and purposes, make joining your union optional. As of right now, under a law known as Agency Fee, employees whose contracts and benefits are negotiated by a union can "symbolically" opt out, but they must still pay dues—their fair share—because they receive the benefits that the union negotiates on their behalf. After the Janus

WE ARE BRACING FOR A SUPREME COURT RULING THAT WILL, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, MAKE JOINING YOUR UNION OPTIONAL.

ruling, public sector union members will be allowed to legally be "free riders," accepting the benefits of the union, but without paying union dues in return.

In our remaining issues this year—April and June—we are asking STA members to consider sharing a personal story for the STA newsletter about what being in a union means to you. We are especially appealing to veteran teachers who may recall "tougher times" so that your sage advice can help those of us with 10, 20 and even 30 years left in the field navigate the stormy weather that lies ahead.

Your story can be as short or as long as you'd like, and we can also help you write it. You may also submit a story written as a group, or you may submit a story anonymously.

Please email Emmy Thevanesan, Gretchen Breon or Rob Allen if you would like to share a story on what being in the STA means to you.

In Solidarity!

Emmy Thevanesan, Cosgrove Building Rep & STA Political Action Coordinator

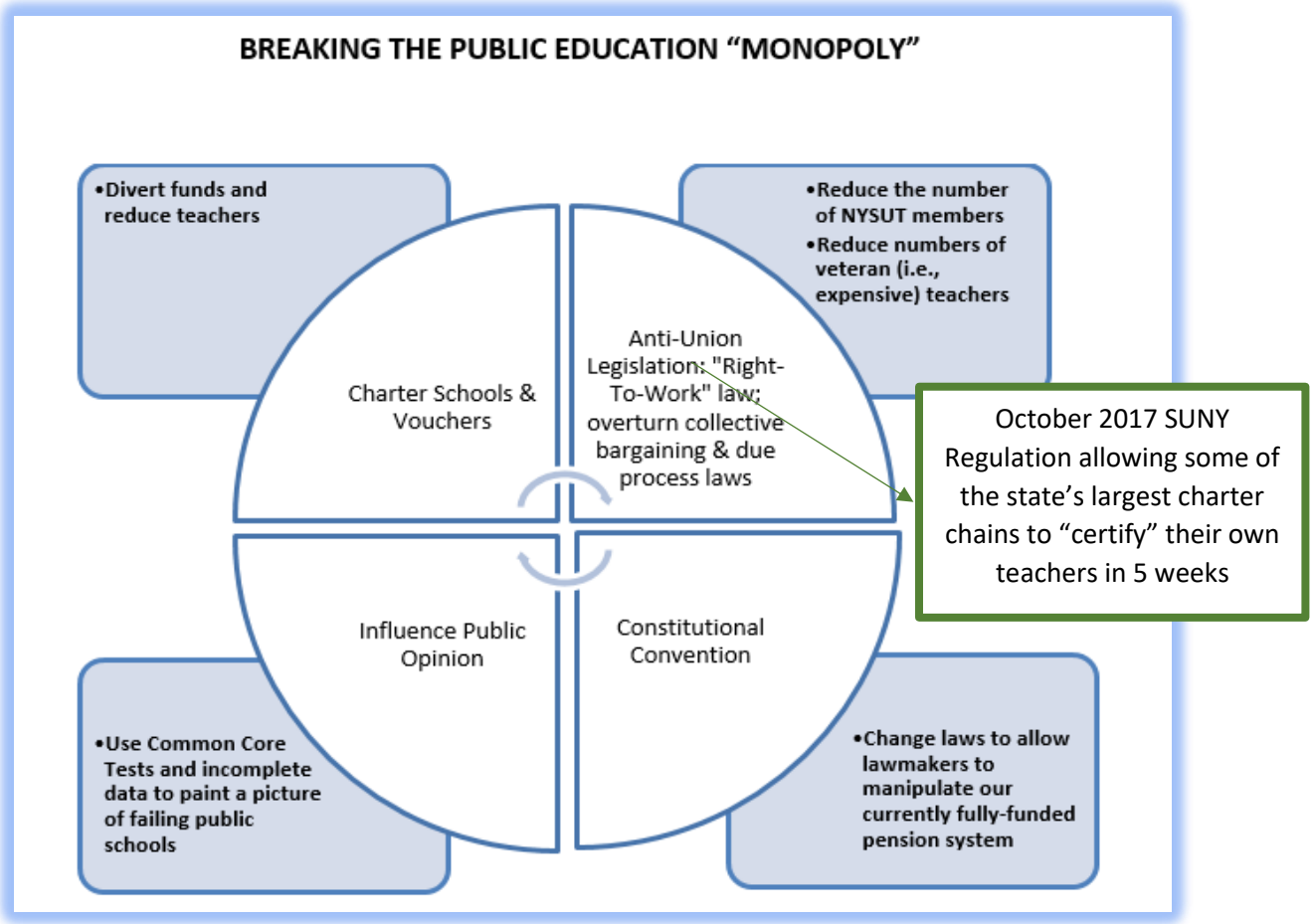
APPR Update

One of the most contentious issues involving the grades 3-8 Common Core Math and ELA tests, first administered in 2012, was their use in evaluating teachers under the new APPR legislation. When the Opt Out movement took off, NYSED issued a moratorium on using Common Core test scores in teachers' evaluations until the 2017-2018 school year. With that moratorium set to expire, educators across the state received an email from Commissioner MaryEllen Elia on Tuesday, February 6th, asking for our feedback. Commissioner Elia has also recently made remarks on extending the moratorium.

NYSUT's response to these remarks was, "The state has had at least six years to listen to the voices of teachers and parents who are angry and frustrated with this broken teacher evaluation system. We don't need any more surveys or delays. This is the year to fix it. Evaluations must be returned to local control with no state mandates."

On February 6th, NYSUT 1st Vice President Jolene DiBrango wrote on Facebook, "I want to be clear. We want APPR fixed now. We want all state mandates removed. We want a return to local control. If you are a NYSUT teacher and received a survey in your inbox today, please know we are carefully examining the survey to provide you with the best guidance before you start the survey. That information will be available to your presidents on Thursday."

Your STA leadership will email you this information as soon as it is available.



An excellent resource to stay informed and to get involved is NYSUT's Member Action Center. https://mac.nysut.org/. You can sign up to get action alerts sent to your cell phone each Tuesday. **When calling lawmakers or members of the Board of Regents to advovate for our profession, consider using these talking points:**

- ✓ Oppose vouchers, and ask for your lawmaker's position
- ✓ Oppose charter expansion/lifting the charter cap/increasing funding for charter schools, and ask for your lawmaker's opinion
- ✓ State your support of strong unions for a healthy middle class, and ask for your lawmaker's opinion on right-to-work legislation
- ✓ Call to inform your lawmaker that you are a constituent who supports public education; that you believe charter schools and vouchers are an unsustainable drain on resources meant for real public schools
- ✓ Tell your lawmakers to address the root cause of achievement gaps between districts: poverty
- ✓ Contact members of the Board of Regents and share issues/topics that you believe should be their focus and priority
- ✓ **Oppose the October 2017 SUNY Charter Regulations allowing certain charter schools—some of the state's largest chains—from certifying their own "teachers" in five weeks of training**

https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator
http://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/

Christmas on the Canal

On Sunday December 3rd, dozens of STA members and their families participated in giving away free books to community members at Spencerport's Christmas on the Canal celebration. For the past two years, Spencerport teachers and staff have filled out forms for AFT First Books, a program that delivers free books to any participating organization. The STA received thousands of books this past spring.

On the morning of December 3rd, teachers and their family members volunteered to sort and box the books to ensure we brought a variety down to the village for Christmas on the Canal. We loaded the beds of two pickup trucks with about 1,000 books, and we had to make three trips back to the trailer to get more! Our community members expressed delight and gratitude at being able to fill a bag with high quality, free books! The STA extends a sincere thank you to all of the teachers who helped with this endeavor. We will be passing out more books at the Fireman's Carnival in June. If you are interested in participating, speak to a building rep.

STA Book Give-Away

The STA embraced the reason for the season in December with another book give-away on Friday, December 15th. We signed out the Community Room at the Crerand Circle apartment complex on Lyell Avenue. From 5 to 7 pm, we offered free books and cookies! This was our first experience with this type of event, and we were pleased to have about 15 families stop by and fill bags with books. One woman in particular was able to fill a box of books to give to a family from her church who had just immigrated to the country.

STA members, and some of their families, signed up to help transport the books, set up the room, distribute books, and clean up. Thank you to all of our volunteers! We hope to make this an annual event with better publicity, so if you are interested in participating next year, keep an eye out for information!

Showing Our #Solidarity

The STA is gauging interest in holding a second sale for the red #Solidarity shirts. Members who purchased the shirts have been wearing them on Wednesdays to show that they are going "red for public ed."

Check your email and the STA Social Group Facebook Page for polls on whether or not we will do a second sale early this spring. Going red in #Solidarity helps send the message throughout our buildings that we are all #StickingwiththeSTA and that we care about the future of public education. #Signyourcard at this spring's building meetings!

STA on Social Media

If you are on social media, you already know that the STA Facebook and Twitter pages provide our members with invaluable information on a variety of important topics. Our social media coordinator, 6th grade ELA teacher Gretchen Breon, also posts articles on the research-based best practices that should drive the curriculum in all schools.

You may also have heard—or be part of—a Spencerport Teachers Teaching T-Shirts Facebook group that began with a group of teacher tee-shirt loving teachers across several buildings. Last month, 293 orders were placed for shirts with the phrase "Choose Kind." Our digital issue this month will include pictures of the teachers in our union showing their pride and passion for education wearing the different shirts they have purchased together. If you want to join this group, please look for it on Facebook!

This month, we are excited to launch a new Facebook page called the "STA Social Group." This group, which we envision as "free from politics," is a place where we can build our sense of community by planning social events, sharing fun pictures from our buildings, and more. If you're on Facebook but are not yet a member, search for us!

STA Calendar of Events

February 15th– Executive Council Meeting**,** 4:00 PM in Cosgrove Room 626

March 1st– STA Faculty/Student Basketball Game Fundraiser, High School Gym

March 15th– Executive Council Meeting**,** 4:00 PM in Cosgrove Room 626

March 29th– Mobile Food Pantry at Cosgrove Middle School & FirstBook Give-Away

April 12th– Executive Council Meeting, 4:00 PM in Cosgrove Room 626

May 17th – Executive Council Meeting, 4:00 PM in Cosgrove Room 626

June 7th– Spencerport Fireman's Carnival/First Book distribution

June- TBD- New Teacher Celebration

Celebrations

Bernabi

Sara Sage and her husband, Jeremey, are expecting a new baby on July 28th, 2018!

Dave Szmania and his wife, Leighann, welcomed a baby boy, Oliver Andrew, on December 13th, 2017. He was born at 6 lbs, 13 oz, and was 20 inches long.

Please email Bernabi celebratory news to Tracey D'Alonzo.

Canal View

Dan Brust's daughter, Haley, recently broke the St. John Fisher record for Women's Long Jump at 5.52 meters (18.11 ft). At the Houghton December Classic, Haley broke the previous record by a foot. She was named Female Athlete of the Week during the month of December.

Nicole Hastings became a "Gigi" on Thanksgiving, November 23rd, 2017, to a beautiful grandson named Luca Jaxon Lussier. Nicole shares, "He is the apple of my eye!"

Eric and Felice Berends welcomed a son, Wesley John Berends, born on Christmas Day at 10:59 in the morning. Wesley was 8 lbs, 2 oz, and 21 inches long. Mommy and baby are both doing well!

Caitlyn and Anthony Culotta welcomed Nico James Culotta into the world on January 11th, 2018, at 1:25 pm. He weighed 6 lbs, 13 ounces and was 19.5 inches long.

Please email Canal View celebratory news to Sue Chatterton.

Taylor

Kristin Bruer is excited to share that she is purchasing her first house! Her closing date is March 16th, 2018.

Please email Taylor celebratory news to Danielle Blossom.

Munn

Please email Munn celebratory news to Stacy Lonardo.

Cosgrove

Dan and Kimberly Cleveland welcomed a baby girl, Harper Mae. She arrived promptly on her due date of December 1st, 2017, and weighed 8 lbs, 3 ounces.

Michelle Marasco's son, Trent Marasco, was accepted and will be attending Nazareth College next year for Elementary Education. He also received a nice portion of scholarship money!

Dan Van Vleck's daughter, Caroline Van Vleck, is working with AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps from January—November 2018. She is a Team Leader for the North Central Region, based out of Vinton, Iowa. AmeriCorps NCCC Traditional Corps partners with local and federal organizations to complete hands-on service projects throughout the United States. Projects address one or more of the identified issue areas: Natural and Other Disasters; Infrastructure Improvement; Environmental Stewardship and Conservation; Energy Conservation; and Urban and Rural Development.

Please email Cosgrove celebratory news to Frank Cafarella.

High School

Seth Adanti and Liza Wade survived/dominated the Winter Warrior half marathon on the coldest day of the year. They were some of the few who braved -20 degree wind chills and 15 mph winds to complete the 13.1 mile run.

Malena Guadagnino and her husband, Joe, opened a brand new fitness studio, ROC & Soul Fitness, in the Village of Webster. ROC & Soul Fitness offers barre, yoga (including a fun yoga fusion class), and a cardio/weights class, called ROC Core & More. Check out a class! During February Break, bring your teacher ID and save 15% on all classes (February 18-25). www.rocandsoulfitness.com

Kristin Cocchiara's son, Jason, earned his brown belt in Karate last week. He just turned 10 and has been taking karate since he was 4!

Becky DiNatale's son, Matthew, received the Coach's Award for Varsity Cross Country at Kendall High School.

Kim Yantz graduated from Yoga teacher training in January. She is now a RYT (200 hour registered yoga teacher). Kim received her training at Breathe Yoga. She is teaching a class here at the high school on Wednesdays at 3:15 starting February 7th, 2018.

Joe and Liz Gallina welcomed their fourth child, a baby girl named Gabriella Katherine, on December 1st, 2017, at 3:40 am. She was 6 lbs, 8 oz, and 18.5 inches long.

Please email High School celebratory news to Courtney Hoerner.

#STA Pride

#Solidarity Wednesdays
#GoRedforPublicEd

#Teacher Tee Thursdays

LOVE

cosgrovetech8
#UseTech 4Good
#UseTech 4Good

SENIORS
SENIORS

MAKE THE
positives
SO LOUD THAT THE

Teach
LOVE

STA Leadership

Officers
John Kozlowski, President*
Lisa Cutten, 1st Vice President*
Jennifer Ott, 2nd Vice President*
Joe DiTucci, PAC Chair*
Jacquelyn Lanpher, Secretary*
Cheri Hall, Treasurer*

Nurses' Representative
Beth Hoben*

Teaching Assistant President
Laurie Wood*

Bernabi Building Reps
Ryan Ewanow*
Laurie Scutella*

Canal View Building Reps
Sue Chatterton*
Laura Gannon*

Munn Building Reps
Matt Fink*
Scott Schwind*

Taylor Building Reps
Danielle Blossom*
Medea Bonny*

Cosgrove Building Reps
Rob Allen*
Janeen Henry (alternate)
Doug Lennon*
Emmy Thevanesan*
Teresa Trujillo*

Wilson Building Reps
Kristin Cocchiara*
Becky DiNatale*
Steve Kelley*
Amanda Van Huben*
Jody Wyant*

NYSUT At-Large Delegate
Gretchen Breon*

Political Action Coordinators
Ryan Ewanow
Emmy Thevanesan

PAC Representatives
Ryan Ewanow, Bernabi
Sue Chatterton, Canal View
Stacy Lonardo, Munn
Danielle Blossom, Taylor
Doug Lennon, Cosgrove
Jacquelyn Lanpher, Wilson

Social Media Coordinator
Gretchen Breon

Webmaster
Bryan Swanson

Newsletter Editor
Emmy Thevanesan

BPT Representatives
Ryan Ewanow, Bernabi
Sue Chatterton, Canal View
Stacy Lonardo, Munn
Danielle Blossom, Taylor
Doug Lennon, Cosgrove
Kristin Cocchiara, Wilson

**Denotes Executive Council vote*

Membership has its privileges!

Your union is steadfast in its fight for better contracts, safer working conditions, fair pay, advocacy, and upholding the labor rights of the dedicated women and men proudly working in the education and health care industries on a daily basis.

Endorsed By:
MEMBER BENEFITS
nysut
Working to Benefit You

But your NYSUT membership does so much more! It also provides you with the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of more than 40 endorsed programs & services offered by NYSUT Member Benefits, including a variety of quality, competitive insurance plans.

As an Example: With the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed MetLife Auto & Home insurance program, NYSUT members receive special group rates on auto insurance, homeowners insurance as well as motorcycle, boat, personal property and other types of insurance -- rates that are NOT available to the general public.

That is why we encourage you to always look for the "Endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits" logo before you or your loved ones make any purchasing decisions.

Visit ***memberbenefits.nysut.org*** or
call **800-626-8101** for specific information about this program.

Newly endorsed Member Shopping Program available for use!

We heard the requests of the NYSUT membership and spent months diligently researching new member shopping program options. The NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation is please to announce that the Purchasing Power Member Shopping Program is now available for use by eligible NYSUT members.

Purchasing Power is an online shopping option that offers another way to purchase brand-new, brand-name products and pay for them over time through the ease of payroll deduction or ACH withdrawals. Eligible NYSUT members can enjoy access to products such as computers, appliances, jewelry, furniture, televisions, electronics, travel packages and much more.

While Purchasing Power is not a discount program, it can save you money and stress compared to high-interest credit cards or rent-to-own stores. As always, you are encouraged to shop and compare before making any purchasing decisions.

Visit ***nysutmbc.purchasingpower.com*** or call **800-537-3135** to learn more.

MEMBER BENEFITS
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For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

Jan./Feb. '18