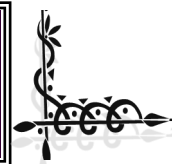




THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



September 2019

Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals

Volume 44, Issue 1

Calendar of Upcoming Events



OCTOBER

- 03: Retiree Workshop/Meeting at The Chateau
- 04: RVF Headless Horseman Hayride @ 6:15pm
- 05: Third Annual Color Run and Craft Fair from 10:00am-3:00pm
@ KES
- 08: BOE Meeting @ 7:00pm at the DO
- 09: School closed
- 14: School closed
- 16: RVF Executive Committee Meeting @ 4:15pm at the RVF
Office
- 18: Homecoming Bonfire
- 18: Deadline for submissions to *The Union Sound*
- 19: RVF Highway Cleanup @ 8:00am in the HS parking lot
- 19: Homecoming Game @ 1:30pm on the HS football field
- 22: BOE Meeting @ 7:00pm at the DO
- 25: Defensive Driving reservations due to Rich Gohl

IN THIS ISSUE:

Monthly Calendar By Robyn McDonough	1
Editor-in-Chief's Welcome By Robyn McDonough	1
President's Message By Robert McDonough	2
We've Got Your Back! By Colleen Vitti	2
Benefits Bulletin By Robyn McDonough	2
History Corner By Jennifer Slauson	3
PAC Update By Robert McDonough	3
Health and Safety By Rich Gohl	3

Over the summer, I attended the Leadership Conference in Cooperstown, where the theme was *Doing Things Differently*. As the new Editor-in-Chief, I am excited to take on this challenge to create a publication that is current and informative for our members. We have redesigned *The Union Sound* layout to include informational sections that will run consistently each month, so you always know where to look for important information. We encourage you to submit short articles about union-related topics

that focus on what we do for our students, district, and community. Articles and photos can be submitted to our new email address: rvfunionsound@gmail.com.

I'd like to welcome back Tara Edmonds and Colleen Vitti to the team and give a warm welcome to both Jenn Slauson and Rob McDonough. I know that by working together and *doing things differently*, we will produce a fantastic issue each month for our membership.

~Robyn McDonough

The Union Sound

The Voice of a Sound Union

Editor-in-Chief:
Robyn McDonough

Assistant Editors:
Tara Edmonds, Jennifer Slauson,
Colleen Vitti

President:
Robert McDonough

Contributors:
Rich Gohl, Robert McDonough,
Robyn McDonough,
Jennifer Slauson, Colleen Vitti

President's Message

by Robert McDonough

Well, another school year has commenced. I don't know about you, but it always takes me a good three weeks to get back into the swing of the routine. I hope your school year is off to a great start, and you are enjoying educating your students. I've been trying to make my way around to the different buildings and meet everyone. I've enjoyed visiting some of your classrooms and especially enjoyed meeting the younger students. It's nice to step away from the high school and see the great things happening across our District. (A very special thanks to the kindergarten class that coerced me into doing the "Start and Freeze" dance with them.)

On opening day this year, I spoke about my goal of bringing us together and fostering a better understanding

and closer relationship with each other. I am very excited to see individual RVF members stepping up to organize fun, community-building activities, such as nature hikes after school, softball games, and random, spur-of-the-moment payday get-togethers.

The RVF will sponsor five official events this year. The goal of these events is to have some fun and to create ties with each other and our community. We will have the Haunted Hayride and first Highway Cleanup in the fall, the New York City bus trip in the winter, and the RVF picnic and second Highway Cleanup in the spring. I know we are all busy with our own hobbies, families and friends, but I challenge each one of you to just pick one or even two RVF events to attend this year.

My goal for us is centered around the mission statement of our Federation and the belief that the closer we become, the stronger we become. I wish you all a great year, and I hope to see you at one of the upcoming RVF events!

We've Got Your Back!

by Colleen Vitti

GRIPE OR GRIEVANCE?

While at the NYSUT Mid-Hudson Leadership Conference, I attended a two-day workshop entitled "Defending Your Contract." Our three contracts, negotiated through collective bargaining, serve as our final word. If one of our contracts is not followed, a situation is either rectified or grieved. For the most part, this process is straightforward. A gripe, however, is often a bit trickier. Frustrating

situations arise—challenging schedules, involuntary moves to new buildings, disputes with colleagues—that fall outside the contract but are still nonetheless incredibly challenging and stressful for our members. We know this. In these cases, the RVF is still here to listen and give a voice to your concerns—but we may not be able to effect change with all gripes. Yes, we have your back. Yes, we 100% support all members. Yes, we will talk with administration to explore ways to improve the situation. But a gripe is different from a grievance, which is an actual contract violation. If you're not sure whether you have a gripe or grievance, please reach out to any RVF representative. We are here for you regardless!

Benefits Bulletin

by Robyn McDonough

Hopefully you were able to meet up with our Benefit Trust administrators in September to take advantage of our collectively-bargained agreement in the contract that provides benefits to RVF members through employer contributions. Member benefits include Vision (Davis Vision), Dental (Delta Dental), Life Insurance, a Legal Plan

(that includes will writing), and Financial Planning help.

You should have also received a NYSUT Member Benefits brochure in your mailbox this past month. Being a NYSUT member entitles you to so many benefits! A sure way to stay in the loop and keep updated is to sign up for the MAP (Member Alert Program). This voluntary email service will provide reminders of all the great benefits available to us. You will need your NYSUT member ID number and can sign up at the following website: memberbenefits.nysut.org/program-service/map-signup.

History Corner

by Jennifer Slauson

DID YOU KNOW...?

This year marks the 125th anniversary of Labor Day. (Cue balloon drop, confetti, cheers, and 40% OFF SAVINGS - NOW THROUGH MONDAY ONLY!) A national holiday, described by the Department of Labor as a day

“dedicated to the social and economic achievements of American workers,” Labor Day has been around since 1894. Its creation is directly linked to the Pullman Strike which disrupted rail service across the US in the middle of that year. Amid the crisis, President Grover Cleveland and Congress sought to placate the striking railroad workers and the labor movement by establishing the first Monday of September as a national holiday. However, Labor Day celebrations had been going on in cities across the US (and elsewhere) for over a decade. One of the earliest was in 1882 in New York.

Political Action

by Robert McDonough

Since the disastrous 2010 Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission (FEC) Supreme Court decision and the age of Right-to-Work laws, engaging in political action has never been so important for unions and isn't as hard as you might think. You don't have to go to rallies, protest, or storm the Capitol for change. We all have busy lives, and many of us just can't make commitments like that. But two things we all can do that will make an enormous difference is donate to VOTE-COPE and use the NYSUT MAC app on our cell phones.

VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan political action fund, and you can contribute directly through a payroll deduction. VOTE-COPE contributions do not go to political candidates. Your contribution will help fight for positive legislative change within our profession. For

example, VOTE-COPE monies were essential in successfully lobbying for a charge of an assault on a school employee to be changed from a misdemeanor to a felony. Also, up to 40% of our VOTE-COPE contributions get returned to the RVF for local activities, such as school board elections and budget votes.

The NYSUT MAC app is so easy to use that you can make political change while watching your son or daughter's soccer game. You simply download the app on your phone, choose the issues that matter to you, and send pre-fabricated emails or faxes to your legislators. For example, last year there was a bill on the floor of the state legislature that involved maximum classroom temperatures allowed for those hot June days. We can enact change with the click of a button on a phone app; being too busy is no longer an excuse. We all have too much skin in the game to turn our heads the other way. Let's all give to VOTE-COPE and download the MAC app to our phones. Making our Federation stronger has never been easier.

Health & Safety

by Rich Gohl

The Defensive Driving class will take place on November 2 from 9:00am to 3:00pm at the RVF Office. All members, retirees, and their families are invited to take advantage of this RVF-sponsored program. The cost is \$30 per person and the RVF will provide lunch for those who participate.

Reservations and payment of either cash or check (made payable to Stephanie Gurda) are both due by October 25. Please contact Rich Gohl at rgohl@rondout.k12.ny.us if you have any questions.

Ensuring the health and safety of all those who work in or attend Rondout Valley Central School District is a vital part of our educational environment. If you have any concerns or issues in your building, please contact Rich Gohl directly. Thank you.



Your Union-Endorsed Benefits: Debt Consolidation & Mortgage Savings

NYSUT Member Benefits understands the challenges that the hardworking women and men of this labor union face when it comes to financial issues such as student loan re-payment options, credit card consolidation or debt management, or saving on purchasing or refinancing a home.

Student Loan & Debt Counseling Program

Your union membership allows you to receive a no-obligation debt and/or student loan consultation at no cost with a certified counselor through the Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed **Cambridge Credit Counseling** program. Cambridge provides individualized student loan counseling along with a unique web portal available at a reduced rate to help explain the various options when paying student debt; debt relief services are also offered.

UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program

The Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed **UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program presented by Mid-Island Mortgage Corp.** offers union members and their families savings of up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs. Your union membership also entitles you to no application or processing fees; no commitment fees; no underwriting fees; no lender or broker fees; and reduced attorney and title fees.

The Power of the Union

Regardless of whether you are participating in either of the programs mentioned above; one of our endorsed insurance, financial or legal programs; or our many shopping, entertainment or travel offerings, NYSUT members receive a quality product and enjoy the **"Power of the Union"** behind them. Unlike when purchasing products available to the general public, Member Benefits is here as your advocate if you ever have any issues or concerns with our endorsed programs.

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



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