



THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



Jan./Feb. 2021

Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals

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Graphic by Jake Maloney

by Robyn McDonough

I just wanted to take a moment to thank all Rondout Valley CSD employees, including administration, for what you are doing each and every day, especially during this pandemic. Many things are done behind the scenes out of the public view, but I see you. I see you working around the clock making phone calls, answering texts, and meeting with others to ensure our safety. I know you are making sure students have lunch and breakfast each day, packing up bags to be delivered to those at home. I hear you reaching out to families to check in on those students who may have fallen through the cracks, offering to meet with them one-on-one to catch them up or just lending an ear. I see you standing in the cold, greeting students, opening doors for parents, and scanning temperatures for students and staff alike, so they can safely enter the building. And you—I see you quietly walk through the empty halls each day spraying door knobs that sometimes never get turned, but there you are. I know you are all the biggest cheerleaders in making this school year a success and as normal as it can possibly be, given these incredible times we all find ourselves in, and it has not gone unnoticed. I'll admit that some days are more of a struggle than others, but no matter what, together we have climbed mountains to ensure we are there for each other from every building and every level throughout this district. It's one of the many things I love about working here. It truly takes a village. There is hope and light at the end of this tunnel we find ourselves in. Stay strong, Rondout. We got this.



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The Union Sound

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President's Message

by Robert McDonough

The new year is off to a decent start. The federal government is negotiating a new economic stimulus package. We are vaccinating 1.5 million Americans per day. COVID numbers are slowly starting to fall. And the vaccination rollout for the staff at Rondout, although not without hiccups, has gone fairly smoothly. School sports are slowly coming back, as hints of normality are starting to emerge.

We are coming out of this dark winter with a new hope for our country and profession. As vaccinations continue from now through the summer months, my hope is for a more "normal" school year in September.

I am happy to report that all of the unfinished business from the last round of teacher negotiations has now been completed. Both sides agreed to create committees to complete various tasks. For example, we modified the Earned Salary Increase document in the teachers' contract, creating additional combinations of in-service and graduate credits, and allowing our own RVF staff to provide professional development to each other. We also revamped the coaches salaries in Appendix B. I think our coaches will be very happy. I have been on four negotiating teams, and we were never able to give our coaches the raises they have long deserved.

We negotiated a change to all coaching salaries from flat stipends to a percentage of the teachers Masters Step 1 salary. By doing this, we have effectively negotiated a pay raise for our coaches every time the teachers get a raise. None of our coaches will make less money than they do this year, and moving forward, coaches will get a raise with each subsequent contract negotiation.

We also negotiated longevity stipends for coaches at two milestones: ten years and fifteen years coaching in the *same sport*. This is also a language change, as the old language only had one stipend after ten years in the *same position*. This old language prevented many of our coaches who moved from modified to junior varsity to varsity from getting the stipend because their ten years would reset each time they moved up through the ranks. With the new language, after ten and fifteen years in the same sport, regardless of level, they will receive stipends.

Finally, we negotiated postseason pay for our coaches. For far too long, our best coaches were penalized for performing well and going to the postseason, as they did not receive any pay for this extra time. To fix this situation and recognize our coaches that go to the postseason with their teams, we have added a postseason stipend of \$100 per week for varsity coaches and \$50 per week for assistant coaches. I am very happy for our coaches, as it has been way too long that our coaches' salaries have not kept up with our surrounding districts.

We have much to be thankful for already in this new year. The vaccination programs are starting to ramp up to acceptable levels, schools may get federal aid if Congress can pass economic recovery legislation, and we have continued to do the work of the RVF throughout the pandemic. Recently, we bargained an MOA allowing RVF members two hours of paid release time for each vaccination.

Working with the district to help our members has been extremely satisfying. We are off to a great start to the new year. I continue to be impressed with all of your hard work, dedication, and professionalism throughout one of the most challenging years in American history. Keep up the good work and keep your heads held high. We will get out of the woods soon . . . together.



Celebrate **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

Chancellor Dr. Lester Young

Virtual discussion
Wed. Feb. 24, 2021 4:00-5:00p.m. EST
Diversifying the educational workforce

wysut
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History Corner

by Jennifer Slauson

A TRAVEL DIARY

When it comes to holiday shopping, I tend to be one of those last-minute types. I dread shopping, so the onerous task of the holidays is my proverbial black cloud. Black Friday, Cyber Monday—nope. But as with most of life this past year, I did things a little differently. In fact, I had my gifts selected, packaged, and ready to ship by the first week of December. Off they went, leaving me with a smile and an I'm-on-top-of-it feeling of accomplishment and hope. It was the beginning of the end of 2020. A new year was brightly shining on the horizon until I started getting them. The notifications.

December 5 - Hudson, NY: "Pre-Shipment Info Sent to USPS, USPS Awaiting Item"

I sent a package Priority 1-3 day mail to Boston. My package wasn't that big, so it only cost \$8.65 to ship. Shipping can be expensive, but it's cheaper than buying a train ticket. You used to be able to send anything you wanted through the mail. For example, someone once mailed 80,000 bricks for a new bank from Salt Lake City to Vernal, UT, also about 170 miles away, just like my package. Wonder how much that cost? And once there was this couple in a custody dispute who mailed their child for \$0.17 from Stillwell to South Bend, IN, in a crate labeled "live baby." Today, you couldn't ship that many bricks because in 1916 the United National Association of Post Office Clerks (UNAPOC) worked with management and set a 200 lb per day limit for customers. Thankfully this also ended the shipping of humans.

December 7 - Nashville, TN: "Arrived at USPS Facility"

Clearly a day that will live in infamy. According to the USPS, packages shipped to/from Hawaii generally take between 3-5 weeks. What was my package doing a thousand miles west of where it started?

December 11 - whereabouts undisclosed: "In Transit to Next Facility"

The 1-3 days I anticipated had long since expired, but hey, it's the holidays, and the USPS website says this "in transit" status meant my package was "moving within their network" and was "on track to be delivered." Surely it's heading to Boston now. I shouldn't complain. Back in March 1970, thousands of New York City postal workers walked off the job

in protest. Wages were incredibly low and the unions had no collective bargaining power. The postal unions had to go to Congress and lobby for pay raises. Top pay for a 21-year employee at the time was just over \$8,000 and it cost, according to the Federal government, over \$11,000 for a family of four to live modestly in New York City. It was nicknamed "the strike that couldn't happen." But it did, and within days, 200,000 other postal workers in 30 major cities were striking. Mail service ground to a halt! At least my package was moving—"in transit."

Three more days go by. Ding! A notification.

December 14 - Tallahassee, FL: "Awaiting Arrival Scan" What?!?

December 16 - Atlanta, GA: "Received by USPS Sorting Facility"

OK, getting closer. Then, nothing. I've been ghosted by USPS. Longer transit times. Is this what the Postmaster General means when he talks about his new "strategic plan?" Since I'm not receiving notifications from USPS, I have time to read. I go deep into a WaPO article that says: "The plan also prevents first-class mail from being shipped by airplane, . . . forcing all of it into trucks and a relay of distribution depots." Trucks! OK, so my package's journey from Hudson to Boston has so far traveled 2,750 miles, and it's only in Atlanta. USPS does need a new strategic plan, but I don't know if this is the answer.

December 23 - Nashville, TN: "Departed USPS Facility"

Contact. My package has been on a sixteen-day sojourn but has returned to Tennessee. What was it doing in Florida and Georgia? The Georgia Senate runoff is two weeks away. Hmmm, could my package be involved in some nefarious scheme? No, I can't think like that. It's just delayed because of the holidays. According to the USPS website "sometimes packages are delayed or rerouted because of unusual circumstances." This is certainly unusual.

December 23 - 28 - unknown location: "In Transit"

May the Delivery Gods look upon my package with favor. I could have chosen to use a different mail carrier. But the USPS is ours. As a result of that 1970 strike, Congress signed the Postal Reorganization Act. The first paragraph reads: "The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States,

Continued on Page 4

History Corner, cont.

authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people.” To this end, the American Postal Workers Union (APWU) has started a campaign called “US Mail Not for Sale” to save our public service from being privatized for profit at the expense of underserved communities. “A basic and fundamental service provided to the people” whose “basic function . . . [is to] bind the Nation together.” Just like public education, the USPS is part of our democratic tradition and something we all rely upon individually and collectively. The Postmaster General and other top postal officials will be testifying before the House Oversight and Reform Committee on

February 24. Perhaps 2021 will bring about a second reorganization.

December 30 - Boston, MA: "Out for Delivery"

Package purgatory has ended. DeJoy to the world.

For more information about the history of the USPS, check out some of these sources that were used to write this article:

[History of The American Postal Workers Union](#)

[U.S. Mail is Not for Sale!](#)

[1970 Postal Reorganization Act](#)

[A Brief History of Children Sent Through the Mail](#)

[Postmaster General's new plan for the USPS](#)

Guest Column

by The RVF Executive Committee

OUR VOICE, OUR VALUES

VOTE-COPE helps negotiate important matters like our APPR, COVID-19 leave days, workplace safety, and more. VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan political action fund, and you can contribute directly through a payroll deduction by clicking on [this unique and secure RVF link](#).

Up to 40% of our contributions get returned to our Federation for local activities, such as school board elections and budget votes. In case you didn't realize, VOTE-COPE

- fights to keep class size down,

- lobbies against privatization in public schools,
- lobbied for a 10-month employee to get a full year's credit for retirement purposes,
- stopped districts' attempt at mid year cuts in 2009,
- successfully lobbied to get the one-time 55/25 retirement incentive years ago.

Your paystub also details how much you give to VOTE-COPE, so review this information when you have a moment to make sure that you increased your contribution during our recent drive; some people accidentally decreased their contribution. If you have any questions on how to initially contribute or increase your current contribution, please contact one of our VOTE-COPE team members: Dorothy Mayone, Kim McEvoy, Tim Whalen, Andrew Gillis, Colleen Vitti, or Rebecca Litchfield.

Law Update

by Robyn McDonough

NYSUT is working with the state Legislature on [bill number S2588](#), introduced by Senator Andrew Gounardes, and [bill number A3354](#) by Assemblymember Charles Fall, to grant public employees up to four hours of excused leave to get the COVID-19 vaccination. At

the local level, our RVF president recently negotiated a [memorandum of agreement](#) (MOA) with the district to grant all eligible employees up to two hours of release time for the same purpose. This MOA was approved at the February 16th Board of Education meeting. If Governor Cuomo signs this bill into law, it will supersede our MOA. Until then, please let your direct supervisor know when your appointment is and be ready to show them proof of vaccination upon your return to work.

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