



THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



Sept./Oct. 2021

Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals

Volume 46, Issue 1

Shoulder to Shoulder



RVF Fall 2021 Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup Crew! Thank you to everyone who showed up and pitched in to help keep our stretch of the road litter free.



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The Union Sound

Editor-in-Chief:
Robyn McDonough

Assistant Editors:
Jennifer Slauson,
Tara Thibault-Edmonds,
Colleen Vitti

President:
Robert McDonough

Contributors:
Michele Juric,
Robert McDonough,
Robyn McDonough,
Kim McEvoy,
Jennifer Slauson,
Colleen Vitti

President's Message

by Robert McDonough

To the nearly 55 new members we have gained over the past two years and to all the veterans who have been in Rondout for some time, welcome to the 2021-2022 school year! Also, welcome to our members in three brand new positions created by the RVF: a greenhouse technician in the clerical unit, an athletic trainer in the teachers unit, and school monitors in our paraprofessionals unit.

I know this has been a long stretch for all of us. I'm sure we all had high hopes over the summer of a return to normalcy this year. And then the Delta variant reared its ugly head, upheaving our hopes and expectations. I know this marks the second challenging year in a row, and I know you are all exhausted and overwhelmed. Honestly . . . I am too. I know how you all feel.

But what I have seen over the past year and a half can't be described by words like "overwhelmed" and "exhaustion." I label what I have seen from all of you with words like "dedication," "courage," and "perseverance." I know you never signed up to be a hero. But you all are just that. Continuing to selflessly educate America's youth through a pandemic . . . frankly, it's remarkably heroic.

Your RVF union has also been continuing to work, despite the state of the world around us. During the heart of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, many of you helped us deliver food for both the district as well as the local food pantry. You stood by me at the food pantry, stocking shelves and taking in deliveries. And at that time, none of us really knew much about the virus, and the vaccine was not available yet. But you still showed up. You volunteered at the vaccination clinics we held as a district last year in the high school gym. We recently collected over one thousand cans of food for those in need, and last year we collected socks for the homeless. We have maintained our agreement with Ulster County by continuing our Adopt-a-Highway program, holding two highway cleanups per year. And for two years in a row, we delivered senior surprise signs to every senior's front lawn.

At the high school, we helped the principal construct outdoor classrooms for the students. At the elementary level, we have worked with the district to try and address the bus driver shortage we face, and we successfully lobbied the district to add an additional kindergarten class in order to lower kindergarten class size numbers. At the junior high, we negotiated with the district to remove the student "pods," where teachers had to move rooms every

period. And we contributed free ice cream vouchers for our 2021 IS/JHS graduates. At the district office, we have advocated for additional security measures for our members who work at the entrance of the building and collect large sums of cash. This November, we will be continuing our tradition of celebrating SRP day by presenting each SRP with a token of our appreciation.

You all helped contribute to these

achievements, while you simultaneously have your own busy lives at home and your students here at school. It's extraordinary.

I want to encourage you all to stay engaged with each other. A union is only as strong as the relationships we have with each other. Attend your building meetings. Show up to a highway cleanup. Come to unwind at the retirement dinner and other RVF gatherings. It is important that we have these interactions with each other outside of a busy school day.

This year, we will be negotiating two separate contracts. Both the Paraprofessionals' contract and the Teachers' contract expire in June of 2022. We will work hard to get a fair deal. All your RVF Executive Committee needs from all of you is to never give up. Lean on each other when you need to, and get to know some of your colleagues outside of work. Friendship and comradery is what binds us together more than our profession alone does. Keep pushing forward, and we will get through this together. At times, you may feel overwhelmed, but from where I stand, all I can see is perseverance.



Kim's Corner

by Kim McEvoy

YOUR UNION AT WORK

SAVE THE DATE: November 30, 2021, beginning at 2:30pm for our WILL DAY. Please make sure you check your mailboxes for further information from the Benefit Trust. Will Day will be held at the RVF Union Office. You'll meet with an attorney in person in a socially-distanced setting. This event is free of charge.

SAVE THE DATE: December 16, 2021, at 5:00pm for a TRS (Teachers Retirement System) WORKSHOP for teachers and teaching assistants. This workshop will be held via Zoom, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions. This workshop is not applicable to those members who fall under the ERS (Employees Retirement System): clerical staff, nurses, behavior specialists, and teacher aides. Please watch for an email from Kim McEvoy with the Zoom link.

A BIG THANK YOU

The meaning of Union: U-N-I together we CAN! Thank you to all who helped fill our local pantry during our RVF Members Can Drive, collecting close to 1,000 cans, personal items, and monetary donations for our community and students, showing our union value. Thank you to all those who also helped pick up the boxes, load them into my car, and deliver them to the pantry. I CAN't thank you enough.



Have you met Gia?

If you have MVP Health Care, there is a great new app to add to your phone should you need to speak to a health care provider with questions or need health care 24/7.

Free Confidential Social Services

I recently came across something on Twitter that someone posted. It consisted of a picture of someone lifting or trying to lift a large boulder up a mountain and the caption said, "Just because someone carries it well doesn't mean it

isn't heavy." Remember that your union is here to help you. NYSUT offers free confidential social services for all NYSUT Union members. They can be reached at socialservices@nysut.org or by calling 518-732-6239.

Do you have questions in general? Please reach out to your Union Team members who are here to help:

Kerhonkson

Darlene Cummins (Building Rep)
Elizabeth (Kim) Strauss (Teacher Rep)

Marbletown

Melissa Feinberg (Building Rep)
Laurie Knapp (Teacher Rep)

Intermediate School

Colleen McGarril (Building Rep)
Lora Kishel (Teacher Rep)

Junior High School

Colleen Vitti (Building Rep)
Beth Sulpice (Teacher Rep)

High School

John Soi (Building Rep)
Eric Loheide (Building Rep)
Rebecca Litchfield (Teacher Rep)
Deb Ricci (Teacher Rep)

District Office/B&Gs

Ann Connors (Building Rep)

Clerical Unit

Deb Gottstine

Paraprofessional Unit

Maryanne Gates (K-6)
Cyndi Murphy (7-12)

Health and Safety

Eric Loheide

Grievance Chair

Jake Maloney

Political Action Coordinator

Kim McEvoy

The Union Sound Team

Robyn McDonough, Editor-in-Chief
Colleen Vitti, Assistant Editor
Jenn Slauson, Assistant Editor
Tara Thibault-Edmonds, Formatting Editor

Union Officers

Robert McDonough, President
Dorothy Mayone, 1st VP (organization)
Felice DiGennaro, 2nd VP (educational issues)
Tara Thibault-Edmonds, 3rd VP (membership)
Kim McEvoy, Treasurer
Jen Hannis-McCain, Recording Secretary
Marianne Hawryluk, Corresponding Secretary

Working on your behalf . . . **Union Strength.**



RVF members Colleen Vitti, Allison DuBois, Lisa Magrin, and Carie Devries completed a 5K at Dutchess Community College in September with some friends and family.

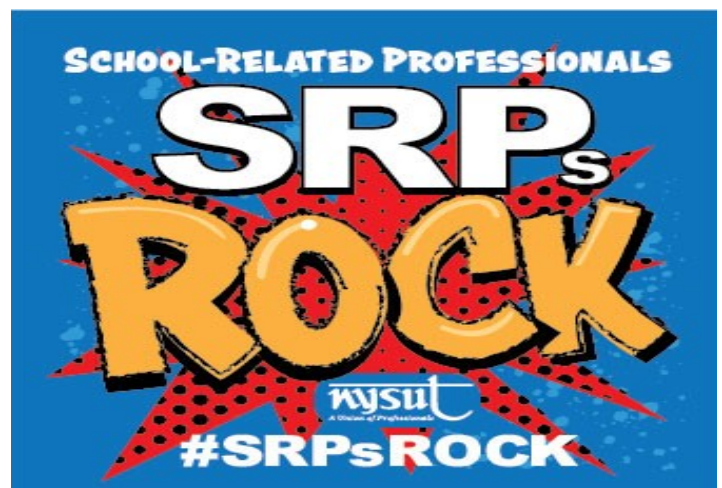
IN LABOR NEWS:

- Hold the onions! McDonald's workers in twelve U.S. cities walked out on Tuesday, October 26, citing workplace harassment.
- *Snap, Crackle and Pop* will be back around the negotiating table early next week as Kellogg's resumes talks with its 1,400 striking cereal plant workers.
- Don't worry—it's safe to pour another round: workers at one of the world's largest bourbon producers, Heaven Hill, have voted to ratify a new contract. Cheers!

A warm welcome to the newest members of our Teacher, Para, and Clerical Units who recently joined our proud RVF family.



We are here for you.



UNION-MADE *Halloween*

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| • Abba-Zaba | • Jordan Almonds |
| • Boston Baked Beans | • Laffy Taffy |
| • Butterfinger | • Nestlé Crunch |
| • Ghirardelli Chocolate | • Rolo Candies |
| • Hershey's Kisses | • Smarties |
| • Jaw Breakers | • Tootsie Rolls |

aflcio.org/Halloween

AFL-CIO

Check out what your union membership has to offer!

Member Benefits Discounts & Deals

Below are the most popular vendors that NYSUT members have shopped with using MB Discounts & Deals this past year -- with a potential savings of almost \$900,000! Have you been missing out?

EAT

HelloFresh
Burger King
Subway
Domino's
Jersey Mike's Subs

PLAY

Six Flags Theme Parks
Hersheypark
Sky Zone Trampoline Park
Bronx Zoo
LEGOLAND New York

SHOP

Samsung
Apple
Dell
Lenovo
Advanced Auto Parts

TRAVEL

TripBeat
Great Wolf Lodge
Carnival Cruise Lines
Sandals Resorts
Norwegian Cruise Lines

MB Discounts & Deals offers NYSUT members exclusive access to savings of up to 50% on restaurants, groceries and food delivery, theme park tickets, hotels and flights, oil changes and vehicle maintenance -- with more than 21,000 New York State deals and thousands more nationwide.

You can even refer your favorite local business (restaurant, coffee shop, workout facility, etc.) to join the network and provide NYSUT members with a special discount. Don't miss out... register your account today!

Member Benefits is proud to endorse MB Discounts & Deals along with dozens of other programs and services that may be able to benefit you and your family members. Take some time to explore our website to find out how we can help you make every dollar count!



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org
or calling 800-626-8101.

