



THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



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Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

A note from the Editor:

Moving forward, *The Union Sound* team will be working in conjunction with the RVF webmaster to keep our calendar of upcoming events current. Since dates and times sometimes change at a moment's notice, we want you to have the most accurate information at all times. You can find the latest calendar information on our website at rvfederation.com. Click on Members and then Calendar. If you haven't visited our website yet, now is a great time to become familiar with all the resources available to our members. Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay home if you're able to.



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MAKING MASKS

RVHS math teacher Lisa Magrin (at left) has sewn nearly 100 cloth masks for local medical personnel with the help of these two how-to resources: YouTube video [How to Sew a Reusable Mask](#) and *New York Times* opinion [It's Time to Make Your Own Face Mask](#). She is certainly not alone in this endeavor. Marian Zajac and Wendy Caruso (example above) have been busy sewing away as well.

The Union Sound

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President's Message

by Robert McDonough

Dear Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals,

I never imagined in a million years that in my first year as your president, we would be facing a global pandemic and unprecedented economic shutdown. Because of the extraordinary speed in which this pandemic crashed upon us (it's hard to believe this has all happened since I last wrote to you), *The Union Sound* team and I decided to make this issue a "triage" issue, not only for us as educators but also for our own mental health and sanity, as spending months in our homes is not something we are used to. Please use our RVF website rvfederation.com as a resource. I had our webmaster put many resources on our [links](#) page for you as educators, as well as links to more information on using technology, COVID-19, mental health, and the Employee Assistance Program.

I encourage you all to attend the Board of Education meetings on Zoom. I have been attending both budget committee meetings as well as board meetings. The Board of Education and our superintendent are committed to working through this crisis with minimal damage to staff. The current budget is reducing staff through retirement attrition, but no staff is being cut in the preliminary budget. This is why we all have to make sure we get out and vote on the school budget which has been moved to June, and get others to vote yes on the budget as well. This year's budget vote will be the most important one for us in decades, and I am going to need all of your help in using social media to get it to pass.

I have to say that the silver lining I've seen during this crisis is gleaming with hope. I have seen educators revamp education in less than a month and continue to educate their students. In some cases, this happens while simultaneously educating their own children at home. I have seen altruistic and selfless acts of kindness and generosity. I have seen people put their own safety aside to feed our students and community. I have seen administrators, teachers, students, secretaries, and paraprofessionals donating countless hours of their time to help local medical staff and others. I have seen us all spending precious time with our loved ones, whether at home or on Zoom (my family plays Pictionary or charades on Zoom with my brother and his family every Friday). I have heard laughter (I would be remiss if I failed to mention the competitive arguments here as well) over family game nights on old board games like Sorry and Monopoly that haven't left the closet in decades. You have each been heroic in your own ways, and we have all taught our students and own families what grit, perseverance, and community service look like. We have shown them how to wake up each morning and put one foot in front of the other. We have taught them how getting through tough times builds character. We are taking on this challenge of our generation with our chins held high, the way our grandparents and great-grandparents did during the Great Depression and WWII generations ago. The composure in which we dealt with this crisis will be in the history textbooks someday.

Fred Rogers of "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" once said that in desperate times, "Look for the helpers." You have all been helpers in this crisis: beacons of light for our community and loved ones. I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Union Sound* and can utilize it as a resource during these trying times. Take care of yourselves, your families, and each other.

Health Tips

OUR MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS TOO

Many New Yorkers would agree that Governor Andrew Cuomo is full of good ideas these days. In addition to taking the lead on combating COVID-19-related issues, he has announced that NYS is going to partner with Headspace, which offers free online mindfulness and sleep exercises, to help address our mental health amidst

this global pandemic. Backed by science, exercises on this website include resources for both adults and children to help reduce stress and anxiety. You can try out these valuable tools at headspace.com/ny.

At the end of March, Cuomo also announced a New York State COVID-19 emotional support helpline staffed by over 6,000 mental health volunteers. Don't hesitate to reach out by calling 1-844-863-9314. A trained professional will be there to assist you.

Guest Column

by Stephanie Chan Haver

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

I wanted to reach out and provide three resources regarding this reality we are in. The first is from the [Harvard Business Review](#). I found it helpful, as it framed this pandemic and how we process social distancing as a form of grief. It also offers specific coping strategies.

The second is an [Edutopia article](#) on maintaining relationships with students without your physical classroom. This separation has taken away the natural

“presence” you have over your students and the ability you have to co-regulate their emotions just by proximity when they cannot do so independently.

The third resource is a website the RVE psychologists have made. We are continuously adding resources for students and families. The focus is on social skills, well-being, and resources for mental health that we are aware of in our community. Feel free to direct any student to the [Rondout Valley School Psychologist Page](#) and/or use it for your own families as well.

Lastly, I encourage you to connect and see each other. Use Zoom, FaceTime, or whatever platform is best for you. I have found that it has a therapeutic effect and restores some feeling of normalcy.

Guest Column

by Alison Abbruzzi

TIME TO RELAX

Greetings, colleagues! I hope you are healthy and safe. My daughter and I created a YouTube channel called “Time to Relax” introducing basic breathing techniques, restorative poses, and inspirational poetry to help navigate these challenging times. Here is a [link](#) to our latest video. Wishing you all radiant health and peaceful equanimity. Be well and breathe.

Project Resilience is a new initiative in which local restaurants partner with Ulster County and United Way to make meals for our community members who are impacted by COVID-19 and may need temporary assistance. Volunteers deliver the meals three times a week to area residents who have signed up and filled out a short application. As of April 20, 50,000 meals have been delivered to 7,000 households. To learn more about this program or to sign up to receive meals, visit Ulster County’s [Project Resilience page](#).

The Employee Assistance Program has created a virtual [brochure](#) with information on their services. Contact Kim McEvoy if you have any questions.

We’re Still Open HV is a list of area small businesses who want you to know that they are still open and have made accommodations in response to COVID-19. Click on the image to search by keyword, town, category, or county to see who is listed. Now more than ever, these establishments and businesses need our help.



WereStillOpenHV.com | Info@WereStillOpenHV.com

NYSUT has released [Job Interruption Resources](#) that are now available to all members.

NYSUT Social Services

We at NYSUT know your life is complicated, busy and full. Unexpected complications arise which can be managed by having a positive course of action, the right information, and/or help from a caring professional.

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