



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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STRONGER TOGETHER



Many staff members and students wore pink in support of one of our RVF members who recently underwent breast cancer surgery. We truly are stronger together.



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The Union Sound

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President's Message

by Robert McDonough

We made it to the holidays. This year has been very challenging for us. The substitute teacher shortage is the primary reason we all feel as if we don't have a second to breathe all day. Last Friday, I met with Antonio Delgado, Michelle Hinchey, and Kevin Cahill and explained to them the tremendous impact this has on our staff's mental health. I lobbied them to fund education more fully, so the burden isn't placed on the property owners. But educators' salaries need to be increased, or this sub shortage will not disappear. We are currently involved in contract negotiations with the district for both the teachers and the paraprofessionals, but we are limited to the raises we can negotiate because of the 2% tax cap law in New York, which I also spoke about with our legislators when we met.

In addition, a lot of work goes on behind the scenes every day that you may not know about. Dr. Morgan and I have created many MOAs over the past four years that have benefited our staff, and my goal is to negotiate these agreements permanently into the contracts. Here are just a few:

1. September 1 start date to preserve Spring Break.
2. Language protecting us from abuse of the authenticator app they are requiring us to put on our personal phones.
3. Added an Athletic Trainer to our union.
4. Bring your out-of-district child to school here in return for extra assignment/chaperoning/coaching/etc.
5. Entirely new coaching salary scale that gets automatic raises when the teachers do, as well as postseason stipends.
6. Added Behavior Analysts and negotiated what pay scale to put them on.
7. Added Future Farmers of America (FFA) club with a \$4,000 stipend.
8. Modified the entire Earned Salary Increase document, including moving the deadline from September 1 to October 1 of each year.
9. COVID vaccine release time.
10. Allowing two RVF members to be the Athletic Director for a year.
11. Compromise on pro-rated pay for coaches last year due to shortened seasons.
12. Added a district-wide nurse facilitator to the contract.
13. Added a swim coach to the contract.
14. Reduction of our work year by one day, last year only.
15. Clerical: Added Greenhouse tech to contract.
16. Para: Added lunch monitors to contract.
17. Para: Added language allowing paras to be paid for as little as one period of coverage.

Throughout this horrible pandemic, the RVF has listened to your feedback and continued to move our profession forward. I hope you all have a restful vacation with family and friends. Let's all put 2021 into the history books and look forward to a brighter and better 2022.



History Corner

by Jennifer Slauson

THANKFUL FOR UNIONS

In my mid twenties, I worked at the Museum of Modern Art. It was an amazing place to spend eight hours a day. My job had me working with one of the world's premiere collections of artistic expression, and I spent my time in the refinement of delicately lit galleries abuzz with patrons and in the deep recesses of storage rooms draped in yards of muslin. I talked with curators, artists, and researchers. On my lunch breaks, I would grab something quick and sit in the Sculpture Garden, a tiny oasis in midtown. On weekends there was an ongoing foreign film series with lots of Fellini; I would come in and enjoy the matinee.

But my personal *La Dolce Vita* changed in the spring of 2000 when the union that represented me and 250 other museum employees voted to strike. When I was first hired at MoMA I remember HR telling me all about the benefits I had: health insurance, four weeks of paid vacation to start, pension plan, blah, blah, blah, and that there was a union, the Professional and Administrative Staff Association (PASTA)—the Local 2110 of the UAW. In 1971, MoMA workers, as *avant garde* as their employer, organized. MoMA Local 2110 was one of the first unions of museum professionals. “Don’t worry,” she assured me when she started detailing how much in dues would come out of my meager check each week, “If you don’t want to join, you don’t have to. It’s an open shop.” I had no real concept of what she was talking about and even less of an understanding of what unions did for members, let alone the history of the labor movement. All I knew is that if I didn’t join, there’d be that much more in my paycheck.

At its heart, the strike was about bread-and-butter issues like wages and healthcare. PASTA members made from \$17,000 for entry-level secretarial positions, to \$60,000 for an assistant curator. The average was \$28,000—not a livable wage—and we all lived far from Manhattan, commuting in from the farthest reaches of Queens or Jersey. The Museum managed our health insurance and wanted unilateral decision-making power. Whatever, at least I had health insurance. The idea that it should or could be collectively bargained didn’t cross my mind. Looming larger was the issue of the “open shop.” At the time, I didn’t get what the big deal was. It was important though, and PASTA voted to strike knowing that a third of its workers, like me, were not in the union and were likely to keep working. The union wanted a “closed shop,” and management wanted an “open shop.”



https://mobile.twitter.com/moma_local2110/status/1001934514250289153

Not long after the initial walkout, I crossed the line. I needed that paycheck. Scab. I wasn’t alone. It was hard, facing 10-foot-tall Scabby the Rat, listening to catcalls, the constant rattling of stone-filled cans and drumming, and angry protest chants every day. I would sneak in through the bookstore entrance to avoid having to see my friends and colleagues and leave via a service entrance used for oversized sculptures on the backside of the building. By the end, nearly half the strikers had come back to work. Many, like myself, just needed the money; others felt an obligation to the public to continue their work for upcoming exhibitions.

The strike lasted 134 days. Negotiations were long, and both sides gave concessions. There were no “winners.” In the end, PASTA became an “agency shop.” Members received 18% over five years, and the museum got greater flexibility in administering health insurance.

Twenty plus years later I realize now how thankful I am for our union and for all the progress unions have made for workers. It is because of a union that I was able to enjoy those eight-hour days, those work-free lunches, those weekend matinees, paid time off, a pension, and health insurance, not to mention the right to collectively bargain with my employer. I wish I had understood it all back then. I get it now.

In solidarity, thank you.

Do you have union-related questions that you need answered? We have a great [FAQ section](#) on our website that you should check out! Still not finding the answers you need? Then please reach out to any Executive Committee member listed below for help OR you can [fill out a Google form here](#) and your questions will be shared with the correct representative.

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 Colleen Vitti, Assistant Editor
 Jenn Slauson, Assistant Editor
 Tara Thibault-Edmonds, Formatting Editor

UNION-MADE HOLIDAY GIFTS

Games

- Barrel of Monkeys
- Candy Land
- Chutes and Ladders
- Clue
- The Game of Life
- Monopoly
- Pictionary
- Risk
- Scrabble
- Sorry

Beauty Products

- Avon
- Caress skin care
- ChapStick
- Dove
- Old Spice
- Revlon

Candies

- Allan Candy peppermint candy canes
- Jelly Belly
- Laffy Taffy
- Tootsie Roll Pops
- Hershey's chocolates

Sports Products

- Bare wetsuits
- Callaway Golf
- Louisville Slugger
- Standard Golf
- Top-Flite Golf
- Wilson NBA basketballs and NFL footballs

AFL-CIO

AFLCIO.ORG/HOLIDAYGIFTS



New Wellness Series
STRESS SOLUTIONS
for **EDUCATORS**
Jan. 11 - Feb. 8, 2022
Register for free
CATHERINE ZACK
Meditation Teacher



Starting in January 2022, AFT and Share my Lesson will join forces to bring educators a new, free wellness series called Stress Solutions for Educators. Click on the image to learn more and to sign up for any or all sessions. Namaste.



Check out all your union membership has to offer!

Legal Service Plan

Plan benefits include:

- Crucial estate planning documents (a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Durable Power of Attorney)
- Free telephone consultations
- Guaranteed maximum fees for specific legal matters

Financial Counseling Program

Plan benefits include:

- Unbiased objective advice
- Free telephone and virtual consultations
- Assistance with retirement planning, 403(b) savings, college savings, tax planning and more

NYSUT Member Benefits

Every Dollar Counts!

These are just two of the dozens of endorsed programs & services available to union members and their families.

Whether it's insurance products, financial or legal services, or discounts, shopping or travel, NYSUT Member Benefits offers numerous programs that can help you save time and money while protecting those you care about most. Many of these programs can be purchased through payroll or pension deduction for greater convenience and savings opportunities.

Member Benefits also provides the advocacy role that is so important should an issue or concern arise. We encourage you to take the time to explore the Member Benefits 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.

