

Feb. 1, 2008

Vol. 36, No. 10

# the WCT COMMENTATOR

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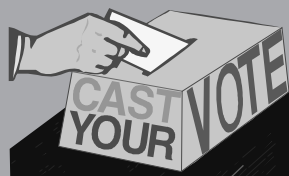
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**REMEMBER TO  
VOTE ON  
PRIMARY DAY -  
TUESDAY,  
FEBRUARY 5,  
2008!**



## Unions Add 311,000 New Members in 2007, Reversing Downward Trend

The labor movement's strong organizing efforts are reaching thousands of new workers eager for the benefits and protections of union membership, according to new data released Jan. 25 by the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

The agency's annual report on union membership shows that unions added 311,000 members nationally in 2007, increasing the total number of union members to 15.7 million. That was the largest single-year increase since 1979. Union members now account for 12.1% of employed wage and salary workers, up from 12.0% in 2006. Last year's BLS report showed that union membership had declined from 12.5% in 2005 to 12.0% in 2006, so this year's increase signals a positive trend in union growth.

AFL-CIO president John Sweeney said the latest figures show that "working people are pushing to form and join unions in order to improve their lives, despite record levels of resistance from employers. They know that a union card is the single best ticket into the middle class, especially in today's economy." The AFL-CIO story on the report is available here: <http://blog.aflcio.org/2008/01/25/union-membership-on-the-rise/>.

The BLS report confirms the long-established fact that union membership brings significant economic advantages. In 2007, among full-time wage and salary workers, union members had median weekly earnings of \$863, compared with non-union employees who had median weekly earnings of \$663. Other BLS reports have shown that union members also are more likely to have health benefits and defined-benefit pensions.

A breakdown of the report reveals some interesting trends:

—The union membership rate for public-sector workers (35.9%) is substantially higher than for private industry (7.5%). Within the public sector, local government workers (a group that includes teachers) have the highest union membership rate (41.8%).

—Among occupational groups, education, training and library occupations (37.2%) and protective service occupations (35.2%) have the highest unionization rates.

—African-Americans are more likely to be union members (14.3%) than whites (11.8%), Asians (10.9%) and Hispanics (9.8%).

—The four states with the highest union density are New York (25.2%), Alaska (23.8%), Hawaii (23.4%) and Washington (20.2%).

## New Orleans Schools Still Need Book Donations

Reprinted from *Inside AFT*—Week of Jan. 21

The Restructured School District in New Orleans desperately needs children's library books (no textbooks) for kindergarten through 12th grade. This replaces the AFT's books-for-the-troops program, which received thousands of books from AFT members. Send the books directly to: Troy Peloquin, RSD Volunteer Coordinator, 1641 Poland Ave., New Orleans, LA 70117. Contributors are responsible for the postage. For more information on the program, contact Mary Keane at the AFT public affairs department, [mkeane@aft.org](mailto:mkeane@aft.org).

## Love the Skin You're In

By Jane Stockslager

Now that our tans have faded, the leaves have fallen and snow is covering the ground, let's talk about a reality check, a reality "BODY CHECK."

After spending the last two years being suspicious of every freckle, staring at each mole, and fearing the worst, may I encourage everyone to become **proactive** against a very deadly but curable form of cancer, **Melanoma**.

Melanoma is a type of cancer originating from the cells that give color to our skin. Most people have 10 to 30 moles on their bodies. Most of these noticeable marks are perfectly harmless. A new mole, a change in a mole such as scaling, bleeding, or oozing may be a reminder that it is time to seek medical advice.

Many highly qualified dermatologists are able to give you a Full Body Check in a matter of minutes. I urge you as a fellow member (and take your little members) to make an appointment to have a skin check up.

Love the skin you're in! Do it for yourself and those who love you!

## Union Database Helps Analyze Latest Trends in Health Benefits

NYSUT Leader - January 18, 2008

Ever wonder how the health benefits premium increases experienced by your local members compare to some of the national and state trends? Here's the latest.

Besides maintaining a NYSUT health benefit database, NYSUT also tracks health care trends reported by several non-profit organizations such as the Kaiser Family Foundation as well as national consulting firms such as the Segal Company. The same information is often used by management during contract negotiations.

Nationally, health premiums increased 6.1 percent in 2007 as compared to 7.7 percent in 2006 according to the Kaiser/HRET Survey of Employer Sponsored Plans. The average individual premium was \$4,479 with the worker share of \$694 (15.5 percent) and the average family premium was \$12,106 with the average worker share of \$3,281 (27.1 percent). Preferred provider organizations (PPOs) covered 57 percent of workers; HMOs, 21 percent; point-of-services (POS) plans, 13 percent; conventional indemnity plans, 3 percent; and consumer-driven health plans, 5 percent. Consumer-driven plans include high deductible health plans which are often paired with a health savings account (HSA).

The Segal Health Plan Cost Trend Survey forecasts declines in national health care cost trends for the fifth consecutive year in 2008. Projected trends for traditional indemnity plans were 12.5 percent; PPOs, 10.6 percent; POS plans with gatekeepers, 10.5 percent; and HMOs, 10.7 percent. Medicare Advantage HMO plans have the lowest projected medical trend of 8.8 percent for 2008.

Please note these are only trends and your actual rate increases will vary based on your specific group health insurance plan design and claims experience.

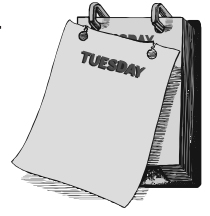
# Red Means Stop

Red lights mean **STOP!** The law has not been changed. A bus with red lights on or flashing is not to be passed according to NYS law. Violators will be ticketed and subject to fines on our roads and in our school parking lots.



This is a gentle reminder from the Safety Committee to proceed with caution on our grounds and whenever there is a school bus in sight. Please respect those lights and protect our children and their drivers!

# Dates to Know



## FEBRUARY:

- Superintendent's Conference Day - February 6, 2008
- BOE meeting - February 11, 2008 (VW & SR)
- pay day - Feb. 15, 2008
- no school - February 15, 2008
- no school - February 18, 2008
- BOE meeting - February 25, 2008 (MC & OG)
- pay day - Feb. 29, 2008

## MARCH:

- BOE meeting - March 3, 2008 (JJ)
- pay day - March 14, 2008
- BOE meeting - March 17, 2008 (EV, VR, & KR)
- no school - March 21, 2008
- no school - March 24, 2008
- Superintendent's Conference Day - March 25, 2008
- pay day - Mar. 28, 2008

## APRIL:

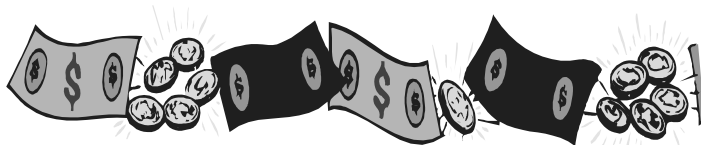
- *General Membership Meeting - April 7, 2008*
- BOE meeting - April 7, 2008 (WJH & FP)
- pay day - Apr. 11, 2008
- Spring Recess - April 14 - 18, 2008
- BOE meeting - April 22, 2008 (GY, BR, & VR)
- pay day - Apr. 25, 2008

## MAY:

- BOE meeting - May 5, 2008 (RCK, FS, & SR)
- pay day - May 9, 2008
- *WCT Recognition Dinner - May 16, 2008*
- BOE meeting - May 19, 2008 (VW, JJ, & OG)
- pay day - May 23, 2008
- no school - May 23, 2008
- no school - May 26, 2008

## JUNE:

- pay day - June 6, 2008
- BOE meeting - June 9, 2008 (MC, EV, KR, & OG)
- pay day - June 20, 2008
- pay day - June 26, 2008



# Additional Financial Consultant Dates

Due to a large response – *March 12<sup>th</sup>, April 9<sup>th</sup>, and May 8<sup>th</sup>* – from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m are being added to available Financial Consultant dates. Please call the office for an appointment (227-5065).





## Are You Using The MAP?

Approximately 2,000 NYSUT members have joined MAP, the Member Assistance Program through NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Each week, more members sign up as they hear about the benefits.

MAP is a quick, painless, unobtrusive e-mail program that provides reminders about the more than 40 endorsed insurance, financial, legal and discount plans available to you as a NYSUT member.

MAP e-mails are sent every three weeks or so. You can open them at your convenience and no trees are killed in the process! You have the option of reading the brief text message or viewing it in html format in your browser, complete with eye-pleasing colors and graphics.

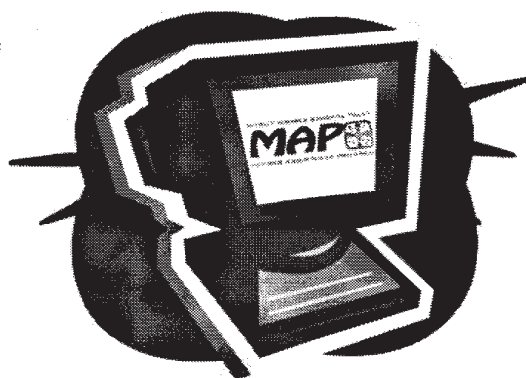
Very often, "MAP Alerts" include the opportunity to win valuable prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs. MAPers have received such prizes as a Bose Wave<sup>®</sup> Music System, tickets to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, OfficeMax gift cards and 100 free gallons of heating oil.

In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly raffles; prizes to date have included digital cameras and an iPod nano.

What kind of information do you receive? The message may be an advance notice of a change in an existing plan, a new endorsement or simply a reminder about a program. Sometimes you will be asked your

opinions on programs under consideration for future endorsement, including which features are most important to you.

Most MAP messages are sent from Member Benefits. Occasionally a provider of an endorsed program will send one. Member Benefits oversees the content and frequency of messages. Your e-mail address will not be shared with outside parties other than endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval to send you an offer or information, the vendor is required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the MAP Alert.



If you haven't yet joined, simply complete a brief sign-up form on the Member Benefits Web site, [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), and within three weeks, you'll start to receive MAP Alerts.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org), visit [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs.



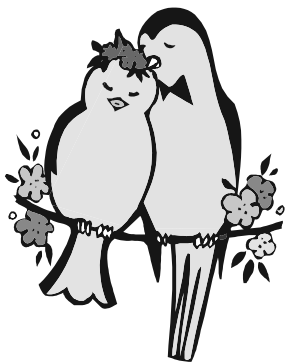
# Happy News at Vassar Road!

■ **Lisa Books** (1st gr.) and husband Dan, along with big brothers Kevin & Dylan, welcomed 7lb.4oz. Emily Rebecca to the family on Oct.16. Congratulations!

■ **Jenny Verb** (art) married Paul Ward on Aug. 23rd in Disney World. Congratulations to Mr. & Mrs. Ward!

■ **Kathleen Skidgell** (3rd gr.) and **Ken Licari** (Psychologist VR & KR) were engaged in Dec. '07 and plan to marry in Aug. '08. Best wishes to Kathleen and Ken!

■ **Jeannie Rauschenbach** (kndg) and **Bill Newman** (JJ) were engaged on Christmas Eve '07 and plan to marry in July '09 Best Wishes to Jeannie and Bill!



## Members' Classified Ads

**FOR RENT:** Think Summer! Charlestown, R.I. (just 2 1/2 hours from home) four bedroom house within walking distance of pristine Charlestown Beach. Vacation near Newport, Mystic, Foxwoods, and Block Island. The house offers large screened-in-porch, washer/dryer, dishwasher, outside shower, and free beachside parking in private lot. Walk to Duncan Donuts, coffee shop, deli, and casual restaurant. Pictures available. Call Roberta at 221-9872.

**HOUSE FOR SALE:** 1800+ sq. ft. townhouse located near Sylvan Lake. Three bedroom, 2½ bath with new kitchen and finished basement. Rights to lake, tennis courts, and basketball court. Located minutes from Taconic and I-84. Call Jason at 845-223-9872.

### FOR SALE BY OWNER

**Hopewell Junction:** 3/4 bedroom ranch, full finished downstairs: family room with fireplace, sauna, possible mother/daughter or rental, very solid, new furnace, well pump, septic tank & more. 4 car garage/workshop. Very private 2 acres, walk to Fishkill Creek to kayak to the Hudson, near Taconic Pkwy, prestige area. \$314,000. **Seller may be able to buy down your interest rate if you qualify.** 845-266-5304

**ROOMMATE WANTED:** Looking for another young-professional roommate to share house in Southside, POK. \$650 a month includes everything! (Heat, electric, washer/dryer, high speed internet, cable, off street parking.) Please call Melissa- 453-7723.

**HOUSE FOR RENT** (Martha's Vineyard): Several weeks are available for the summer season. The cost is \$875 per week. You would need to purchase boat tickets which go on sale soon if you should decide to go. If you would like more information please call Lorraine Blaszak at 221-3357.

**FOR RENT:** Village/Fishkill - large 1bedroom/1bath condo, first floor/patio. Conveniently located near Rt 9 & I-84. Washer and dryer in unit. Clubhouse and indoor swimming pool. Two months security & rent, no smoking/pets, references and credit check required. For more information contact 297-2853.  
**FOR SALE:** 2002 Hyundai Accent 4 door sedan- automatic - 68,000 miles, A/C, cd player, power doors and windows. **SAVE ON GAS \$.** \$4,500. Call 473-7045 or cell 845- 224- 5987.

**FOR SALE:** 2 Kawai pianos, low priced for quick sale. 1) Ebony Satin Grand, 6'8" - magnificent sound, excellent action and mechanical condition, \$6500. 2) Glossy Black Studio Upright, excellent action and mechanical condition, great sound for an upright, \$1400. Call Rita @ (845) 462-5051.

**ROOM FOR RENT:** in new condominium. Retired WCD teacher looking for professional person. Bedroom plus loft/den. Private full bathroom. Heat, wifi, cable included. Use of community workout room, pool. No air conditioning and must be conservative on heat. Very close to JJ. \$600 per month. Call Dave @ 845-926-7954.

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(Continued on page 6)

# Members' Classified Ads

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2537 Route 52, Suite 15  
Hopewell Junction, NY  
12533

**NYSUT 13-270  
AFT 1989**

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*(Continued from page 5)*

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