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the WCT COMMENTATOR

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From the President's Pad

Counting Our Blessings

Dear Members,

With the Holiday Season upon us, we must reflect and be thankful for the people who touch our lives and make a difference in our daily endeavors. Considering today's tough economic climate, we should be grateful to be in a profession that enables us to provide for our families.

I must thank the WCT Administrative Assistant, **Linda Leito**, for her dedication and professionalism that help make this union productive and successful.

With 2009 going to be a challenging year, we are very fortunate to have such a hard-working and dedicated Executive Board who will guide us during these strenuous times. I would like to thank **Michael Lyons** (VP Elementary), **Raymond Koretsky** (VP Secondary), **Flip Gertler** (VP Political Action), **MaryAnn Moran** (VP External Communications), **Meredith Inkeles** (VP Internal Communications), **Christine Romano** (Secretary), **Donna Basile** (Treasurer), **Martha Bilsback**, **Michelle Ross**, **Dawn Sala** (Elementary at Large), **Diane Di Chiara**, **Paul Nostrand**, and **Jane Stockslager** (Secondary at Large) for their unwavering commitment to our goals.

New York's worsening fiscal condition, as a result of the meltdown on Wall Street, has had a devastating impact on the State's finances. The State's financial-services sector accounts for 20 percent of New York's overall tax revenue. The concern and apprehension

(Continued on page 2)



From the President's Pad *(continued from the front cover)*

caused by this turmoil is greater in New York than any state in the nation. The state Comptroller's Office projects the crisis could result in the loss of 225,000 private-sector jobs over the next two years, further hurting state tax-revenue.

The Wall Street crisis, which prompted Congress to pass a \$700 billion bailout package, has left New York with a budget deficit that is expected to reach \$15 billion in the 2009-2010 state fiscal year beginning April 1st, according to the state Division of Budget.

On Tuesday, December 16th, Gov. David Paterson released his proposed Executive Budget that, if adopted by lawmakers, would make deep cuts to school aid. Though Paterson said his proposed 2009-2010 spending plan would reduce school aid by \$698 million - the actual cut would total more than \$2.5 billion when factoring the \$1.9 billion allocation the state is required to pay schools under current law and the terms of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.

School funding would total \$20.7 billion in the next fiscal year, a 3.3 percent cut compared to this year. That would be a 12 percent cut from what had been promised - the state's formula to address inequities highlighted in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision.

NYSUT will continue to work vigilantly to mitigate the adverse impact of the many damaging proposals under the Paterson budget that, if enacted, would:

- Eliminate Funding for Mathematics/Science Initiatives.
- Eliminate Funding for Additional After-School Programs.

- Cut full-day kindergarten and universal pre-kindergarten planning grants (\$1 million) and reduce full-day kindergarten conversion aid (\$2.5 million).
- Freeze foundation aid and universal pre-kindergarten funding through 2011.
- Eliminate funding for Teacher Centers, a popular statewide professional development network (\$40 million).
- Eliminate funding for the state Teacher Mentor-Intern program (\$10 million).
- Institute a \$133 million cost shift to school districts for pre-school special education, making districts responsible for a 15 percent share of preschool special education costs, reducing the state and county shares.
- Increase retirees' contributions for health insurance premiums.
- Require state employees and retirees to contribute to Medicare Part B premiums.

NYSUT is also looking closely at the governor's proposed plan to create a Tier 5 retirement category for state and local-government employees - which the union maintains would not generate any immediate savings for the state during the economic crisis. The proposed Tier 5 requirements would apply only to new hires. The new tier would raise the retirement age to 62 from 55, require employees to contribute to the pension fund beyond their 10th year of service and raise the vesting period from 5 to 10 years. NYSUT also notes the state Constitution prohibits the diminishment of retirement benefits for current employees and retirees.

Locally, Dutchess County will receive approximately \$20 million less in aid. This

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From the President's Pad *(continued from page 2)*

unfortunately translates in the loss of \$6,118,429, or 12.30%, for Wappingers Central School District as presently included in the 2009-2010 Executive Budget Proposal.

NYSUT is cognizant of the severity of the state's financial problems and has every intention of working with Gov. Paterson and other lawmakers to alleviate the burden on taxpayers. New York State cannot simply cut its way out of this economic crisis; focus must be turned to increasing revenues in order to help the state recover.

NYSUT has put forward and is advocating for a comprehensive list of revenue enhancers. They include: Tapping the state's Tax Stabilization Fund, which would raise \$1.2 billion; impose a temporary income-tax surcharge on those earning more than \$1 million per year. Adjustments in the income-tax rate for New York's highest-income households could bring to the state treasury \$2 billion and \$7 billion in additional revenue each year.

NYSUT also recommends the Paterson administration to pursue a federal stimulus package aimed at helping states facing economic difficulties as a result of the Wall Street meltdown. During a time of economic downturn, the state should be investing in its public schools, which are fundamental to keeping jobs and encouraging economic growth in New York State.

As a local, the WCT plays a vital role in keeping active members, as well as the retirees, informed with relevant and credible information, made available through the State and NYSUT.

At the request of Superintendent Powell, the WCT, along with the other union leaders in the

district, have met and taken a proactive stance in addressing possible cuts for the 2009-2010 academic year. Suggestions were made to the Superintendent and the school board that would save a significant amount of money in order to avoid cuts in staff positions, and therefore deliver the best education possible to our students. I applaud the Superintendent and the school board for keeping an open dialogue during these difficult times, and considering the input of all concerned parties as part of the solution. I would like to reassure our members that the leadership of the WCT is doing everything possible to be proactive, prepared, and to make informed decisions in order to protect positions and benefits.

It is imperative that the members remain united as we navigate through these turbulent economic waters. I strongly urge you not to listen to unfounded rumors or be affected by provocative and inflammatory headlines. **We should not be guided by fear!** We need to be supportive and stand in solidarity with younger members who fear loss of their livelihood. If necessary, a crisis committee will be in place for the professional and emotional support of our members. As developments occur, the membership will be informed via the WCT News e-mail.

On behalf of myself and my family, I would like to wish you and yours a very happy and blessed holiday season filled with peace and joy!

In solidarity,

Pasquale Delli Carpini

Pasquale Delli Carpini
WCT President

(* Information obtained from NYSUT's Leader Access)

Gayhead Elementary School Wishes Happy Holidays to the Troops!

By Jerylin Gilman and Nicole Scalzo

In an effort to make the holidays a little happier for those men and women from the Hudson Valley who are serving our country at this time, the children in the Letter House at Gayhead Elementary School, wrote letters and made cards to be sent to each troop. Classes also gathered to participate in a videotape to be sent to the service men and women. The children sang both patriotic and holiday songs, as they held up several hand made posters with words of thanks and good wishes for the holidays.

A parent organization called, *Semper Fi Parents of the Hudson Valley*, will take the letters, cards and the video and ship them, along with other holiday gifts, to those troops who are serving or who have been wounded and are in veteran hospitals at this time.

It was our joy to be able to participate in this project for the troops. We appreciate all those brave men and women who willingly serve to make this world a safer place.



Giving Back

By Jeanne Paino, WCRT

On November 5, 2008, Bonnie Kieffer and I had the pleasure of participating at the RCK Career Day. It was a great opportunity to express to young adults about the 30+ years we both spent in education. Even though we are both retired now, we still have a passion for teaching. We agree that they were very fulfilling years in our lives.

The Ketcham students were very interested in learning about their potential career choice. They asked very pertinent questions and expressed many feelings of anxiousness. They seemed willing to listen to our advice and many thanked us for “giving back.”

We also want to thank Jennifer Roy, Cynthia Beahan, and Catherine Kim who were willing to assist us during the day. We would like to extend congratulations to the entire RCK staff for a job well done. The day was fun and we hope we are asked back again next year.



(Jeanne Paino, pictured on the left and Bonnie Kieffer, on the right)

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Mrs. Solomon and others, have made me aware of the religious origin of Mr. Spock's "Vulcan signal" — one that has existed for thousands of years as the "Kohane Blessing."

I especially thank Mr. Cohen, whom I met by chance in White Plains and to whom I offered my PAX card. He saw the symbol and explained the Nimoy "connection." I was pleased to discover that Mr. Cohen shares the Kohane bloodline and that the symbol on my PAX card is linked, thru Leonard Nimoy, to history! Furthermore, it is comforting to know that the sign sprang from such an august source.

Mrs. Solomon was correct. "'Pax Nobiscum' did not adequately credit its historic roots." It does now. Like the Testaments of the Bible (Old and New), this hand-delivered symbol is given the respect it properly deserves. I have added a new page to my site which pays tribute to this history, and provides a link to sources of more information on this influential symbol.

Ultimately, making roads *safer* for **all** drivers is our *common* goal. From the outset, I thought this hand-delivered sign to be a different and practical way to thwart Road Rage. I still do; *more-so* now.

I've been asked: "What does the candle represent?" It symbolizes: **Rationality * Good Judgment * Safety.**

That's the message everyone can communicate by being a powerful, bright "**candle**" behind their steering wheel.

Yours in Solidarity,

Shalom Lanu. Adieu. Sat Siri Akal. Live Long and Prosper. Pax Nobiscum.

Conrad

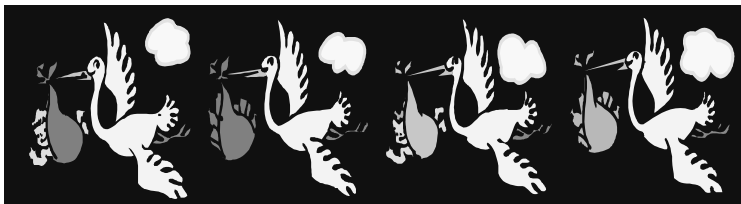
**Editor's Note:* for more information on Pax Nobiscum, visit www.conradpaxnobiscum.com.

It is time to send in your prescription reimbursement form. If you need a claim form, go to the WCT web site at <http://wcteachers.org/78201.html>.

**Last Pay Day of
2008:
Tuesday, December 30**

Good News!

- Congratulations to **Donna Marie** (Myers Corners - Grade2) and Eric Lahl who are proud to announce the birth of their son Derek Arno Lahl on November 7, 2008. He was 8 lbs., 1 oz. and was 21 ½ inches long.

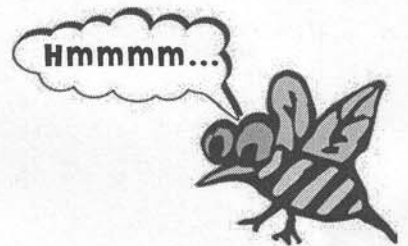


Members' Classified Ads

FOR RENT: 1 bedroom apartment in Hopewell Junction. Beautiful, quiet neighborhood, close to many district schools. Large closets, great outside deck, pool. \$900 a month includes everything. Contact Carrie -505-7444. Available January.

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What's all the Buzz about?



You might have heard your colleagues talking about MAP, the Member Assistance Program available from NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Or maybe you've already joined. But if you haven't, you may want to once you read about MAP's benefits.

By joining MAP, an e-mail based program, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers and reminders from Member Benefits or from providers of its endorsed programs. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration for endorsement. When possible, you'll help Member Benefits test potential new services and provide feedback.



Often, MAPers are entered into drawings for prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs and Member Benefits. Since MAP's introduction, MAPers have entered drawings for a Bose® Wave Music System, free admissions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, 100 gallons of heating oil from Heat USA, a summer fun pack filled with a variety of items, a DVD player and OfficeMax gift cards. In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly drawings; to date, prizes included digital cameras, a cross-cut shredder and an iPod nano.

MAPers receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from

its providers of endorsed programs. On average, a MAP e-mail alert is sent once every three weeks.

Rest assured, Member Benefits will only share your e-mail address with endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.



This exciting program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member. Enroll on our secure page by logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and clicking on the "MAP Sign-up" navigation tool on the left-hand side of our home page.

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, visit 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.



Members' Classified Ads



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Computer (PC/Mac) Setup / Repair / Improvements Software Setup and Instruction

- Virus/Spyware Protection, Detection & Removal
- Data Backup & Recovery
- Networks: Wired/Wireless
- Mobile Computing (Laptops/PDAs)
- Digital Photography/VHS to DVD

Ed McKenna - 845-471-7607

EdmundTMckennaJr@gmail.com

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**We're on the Web!
see us at:**

WCTeachers.org

* Next issue of the
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January 9, 2009.



Board of Education Meetings

Schedule (*meetings are held at the District Offices at 8:15 PM*)

- January 12, 2009 - Ketcham, Orchard View, Sheafe
- January 26, 2009 - Fishkill, Fishkill Plains, Wappingers
- February 9, 2009 - Evans, Myers, Van Wyck
- February 23, 2009 - Brinckerhoff, John Jay, Orchard View
- March 9, 2009 - Gayhead, Sheafe, Vassar
- March 23, 2009 - Ketcham, Kinry, Oak Grove
- April 6, 2009 - Evans, Fishkill, Wappingers
- April 26, 2009 (TUESDAY) - Fishkill Plains, Myers, Van Wyck
- May 4, 2009 - Brinckerhoff, John Jay, Vassar
- May 18, 2009 - Gayhead, Orchard View, Sheafe
- June 8, 2009 - Ketcham, Wappingers

Financial Advisor Dates

A financial consultant from Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. will be in the WCT office:

- January 7 & 21
- February 4 & 18
- March 4 & 18
- April 15 & 29
- May 6 & 20
- June 3 & 17



Appointments are one (1) hour in length from 2 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on a first come first served basis. Since these slots fill up very quickly, **call as soon as possible**. The WCT office number is 227-5065. If the above dates are not convenient for you, call Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. 1-888-949-1925 directly and other arrangements may be possible.