Is your neighborhood healthy?  
Page 5

Legislative agenda:  
COLA, pension reform  
Pages 10-11

A Nicaraguan connection  
Page 13

Battle at Long Beach goes public  
Page 16

Vol. 3 / No. 5  
MAY 2000

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION  
CSEA Local 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO

CSEA's goal:  
Put Hill on the Hill

See Page 3

Your Nassau County Local 830 Express newsletter is enclosed
Nassau County CSEA workers OK lag pay; avoid 500 layoffs

MINEOLA — CSEA Nassau County workers recently voted overwhelmingly to accept a lag payroll to avoid 500 layoffs in a county that is awash in red ink.

For several months, Nassau County has been on the verge of financial collapse following years of irresponsible fiscal management, misplaced priorities, budget gimmicks and politics, union leaders said.

“The workers have decided. Despite their anger over the county forcing them to choose between a lag payroll and layoffs, they voted to accept the lag payroll to avert layoffs, furloughs or demotions through 2002,” said CSEA Nassau Local President Tony Giustino.

When the lag payroll is implemented, CSEA members will be paid for 10 of every 11 days they work until 10 days have been deferred. These days will count toward a pension and will be paid back to workers when they leave county employment at whatever rate of pay they’re making at that time.

In return, the county has signed an agreement stating no CSEA members will be laid off, furloughed or demoted through 2000. If any layoffs, furloughs or demotions occur before year end of 2002, the county must pay all deferred money to all workers immediately.

Making a hard choice
CSEA Nassau Local member John Aloisio said, “I voted for it because if it saves one job, I’m willing to do it.”

“The county work force did not create this deficit. These are hard working people who did not want to see their union brothers and sisters lose their jobs. They did not want to see county residents suffer by having services decimated,” said Giustino.

“CSEA has more than done its part to help pull the county out of the fiscal abyss. They had better get their financial house in order and a good place to start would be to cut millions of dollars in patronage and outside contracts,” said CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte.

Two other county unions also voted to accept the lag payroll in lieu of layoffs.

Sheryl C. Jenks

CSEA training set for treasurers

Training sessions for Local and Unit treasurers have been scheduled by statewide Treasurer Maureen Malone. Sessions will be held at the following sites on the following dates. Registration is at 5:30 p.m.

- May 10, Southern Region, Suffern Holiday Inn Hotel/Conference Center (Suffern)
- May 15, Central Region, Radisson Hotel Utica Center (Utica)
- May 16, Central Region, The Holiday Inn (Oneonta)
- June 7, Capital Region, The Desmond (Albany)
- June 8, Capital Region, Lake Placid Hilton (Lake Placid)
- June 13 Long Island Region, Long Island Region Office (Commack)
- June 14, Long Island Region, Holiday Inn (Rockville Centre)
Hillary Clinton, the clear choice for working families

SYRACUSE — Calling her the clear choice for working families, CSEA has endorsed Hillary Rodham Clinton for the U.S. Senate and promised to use its considerable political muscle in her campaign.

“There is no doubt at all that Hillary will be a great senator who will represent all the people of this state,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said during the official endorsement in Syracuse recently.

Clinton, who is expected to face New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a Republican, in November, attended the endorsement session and spoke to CSEA activists gathered at the union’s annual state workshop.

Meeting and listening
The last several months, Clinton has attended numerous union functions across the state and spoke at CSEA’s convention last fall.

Clinton also received a rousing ovation in Albany during CSEA’s annual lobby day which attracted 1,500 activists from CSEA and its international affiliate, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). (See related story on Pages 10 and 11.)

Introduced to union members by national AFSCME president Gerald McEntee, Clinton promised to be the voice and vote for working people in Washington.

“Labor is one reason America was so successful in the 20th century and the reason it will be in the 21st century,” Clinton told the cheering throng in Albany.

“You represent the vitality, strength and compassion of the work force,” she added.

Clinton’s stance on the issues important to union members has struck a chord with CSEA leaders and members.

“She cares deeply about the issues CSEA members care about — good jobs and wages, health coverage, protecting Social Security, and making our schools better and safer,” said Donohue.

“I feel very proud that CSEA has endorsed her because it is the right thing to do for the members. She definitely has working families’ best interests at heart. She is so sincere when she speaks that you can feel it and you know that her agenda is our agenda.”

— Liz Pearsall, executive vice president, Long Island State Employees Local

“I know that many of you are on the front lines, you’re making sure that our loved ones get the best possible health care, making sure that our children get the education they need, dealing in so many ways with improving the quality of life here in our state.

“It hasn’t always been easy for you, but you stood together in adversity. You stood your ground and in so doing you have been anchors — anchors in communities that held together schools and hospitals and services.”

— U.S. Senate candidate Hillary Clinton, to CSEA activists in Syracuse, after CSEA endorsed her.
If the recent state contract mobilization wasn’t enough of a demonstration of the power of a united CSEA, then get ready as we prepare to move pension reform forward.

CSEA will vigorously pursue the pension improvements outlined in the state contract agreement for all our members in the New York State Retirement system, not just state employees. This means we will seek elimination of the 3 percent employee contribution for all CSEA members with 10 years of participation in the system. We will also seek service credits for all our members in Tiers 1 and 2.

We will work hard to make this a reality. But that’s not all.

This is the year we must also make a permanent Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) a reality for the retirement system. This has been a CSEA legislative priority for many years and the time is now to make it happen.

There is growing support for these pension reforms and we will join with the state AFL-CIO on May 9 to rally for what’s right. We will be joined on that day by our staunch ally in this fight, state Comptroller H. Carl McCall.

On an extremely newsworthy AFSCME Lobby Day (see Pages 3, 10, 11), it was Comptroller McCall who made us all sit up and take notice when he stated, “We can afford to eliminate the contribution by members and at the same time provide a permanent COLA for all public employees in the State of New York...We’re going to do it this year. You deserve it and retirees who are struggling certainly deserve it, and as the state’s chief fiscal officer, I am telling you we can afford it.”

These pension reforms will be CSEA’s single-minded purpose in the weeks ahead because they will benefit every one of our members for decades to come.

You can help by calling your state legislators, toll free at 1-877-255-9417 and tell them to join CSEA in supporting these reforms.
Hunting invisible killers

On the prowl for household hazards

NIAGARA FALLS — Gail Root is a door-to-door detective who hunts invisible killers.

Carbon monoxide, lead paint and other potentially dangerous household problems are her targets and part of her job as coordinator of the Niagara County Healthy Neighborhoods Program.

Root and two public health technicians, Michelle Domagala and Tony Zaccarella, Niagara County CSEA Unit members, go door-to-door in select neighborhoods to provide a wide range of services and information to families and households in need.

“When we come across people in need who we can help, it’s a very warm and fuzzy feeling to be able to do so,” Root said, adding they visited more than 4,100 households last year.

Armed with carbon monoxide detectors to monitor the home environment, and smoke detectors and batteries to replace expired batteries, the trio checks for hazards such as lead-based paint, gas appliance leaks, insect infestation, lack of heat and other household problems.

The program, which targets economically depressed areas, is federally funded and Niagara County is one of eight in the state to receive a second, three-year grant.

Helping with the little things

Prevention is part of their job, the workers said.

“If we see something that would or could be done to avoid health problems, we can give homeowners or tenants the information that will help reduce hazards,” Domagala said.

“Smoke detectors, or a lack of one, is a good example. Sometimes a battery is not replaced because the household doesn’t have a ladder to check or change one,” Domagala added.

Many residents are unaware of their eligibility for managed care or child health services or other benefits before the staffers inform them, the county employees said.

“And you never know what you’ll encounter until you knock on the door,” said Root.

“One home may have no need for our services, while the one right next door could be disastrous. Observance of living conditions sometimes helps spot problems like lead paint in older buildings, which is so important where small children are living,” Root said.

The program distributed more than 100 15-amp fuses to homes that were improperly using 30-amp types to expand electric capacity, causing a potential fire hazard.

“We carry a carbon monoxide tester to measure levels where there might be a problem,” Zaccarella said.

Keeping families safe

“And we provide info on where residents can obtain their own detector. Gas space heaters sometimes leak or are poorly vented, and can be causing headaches and other discomforts, so we ask questions that might help detect the presence of the gas.

“We had such a situation recently, where a 9-1-1 call was made to save a woman in distress from carbon monoxide,” Zaccarella noted.

“We work well with other community agencies,” said Root. “They help us find people in need, and we help steer people to the right source of help whatever their need might be,” Root said.

“It's a great feeling to be so helpful, and I also write a help column in two area newspapers, where I can pass on tips that can help anyone,” she added.

— Ron Wofford

Healthy Neighborhoods Program Coordinator Gail Root, center, and public health technicians Tony Zaccarella and Michelle Domagala prepare materials to be distributed. Above right, Zaccarella monitors carbon monoxide levels in a home.

CSEA questions settlement as quick cash for Erie Co. hospital

BUFFALO — CSEA activists and members have plenty of questions about a potential plan by the Erie County executive that would change the current funding setup for the Erie County Medical Center (ECMC), where about 1,100 members work.

County Executive Joel Giambra wants to sell the county’s share of the national lawsuit settlement with tobacco companies, worth $635 million over 30 years, for $235 million in up-front cash.

The proceeds would go into a trust fund for ECMC operations and also be used to cover rising Medicaid costs.

A task force will be appointed soon to study the issue and members from several unions at the hospital are expected to participate.

“Does this plan insure the hospital’s survival? Can they guarantee there will always be a place for those in need, especially the specialties the hospital provides, like the trauma center and burn treatment center, the only ones in the area? Is this really just a back-door privatization plan?”

Barbara Nogacek, administrative control clerk, Erie County Medical Center
Criminal justice forum a hotbed of ideas for change

Alternatives to incarceration and reforming the state’s drug laws were among the many issues discussed in statewide meetings on crime and punishment in New York State.

Since January, community discussion groups, comprised of criminal justice professionals, union members and concerned citizens, have been examining the state’s criminal justice system as part of a project sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New York State.

The purpose of the project, “Balancing Justice In New York State,” is to define what the goals and expectations of the criminal justice system should be and empower citizens to reshape the system to reflect those goals and expectations.

A similar project in Oklahoma recently convinced the deadlocked Oklahoma legislature to pass the most comprehensive criminal justice reform legislation in that state’s history.

The discussion groups are just the beginning, said project coordinator Rob Marchiony.

Forum June 3 in Albany
The next step is a statewide action forum on June 3 in Albany.

There, participants from across the state will form task forces and begin recommending changes for the criminal justice system.

Participation in the community discussion groups is not a prerequisite for attending the larger forum in June.

Members interested in attending should contact Rob Marchiony, project coordinator, League of Women Voters of New York State, 35 Maiden Lane, Albany, NY 12207, (518) 465-4162.

E-mail: justice@lwvny.org.
For more information about the project, visit the Web site at: www.lwvny.org/balancingjustice.

There is still time for members in the New York City area to take part in the Balancing Justice In New York State project.

Discussion groups there will meet through late May.

Members who want to participate should contact Gerry Migliore at (212) 414-0773. E-mail: gerry365@aol.com.

If you are a CSEA member who’s participating in the Balancing Justice In New York State project, we’d like to tell your story in a future edition of The Work Force.

Call Executive Editor Ronald Kermani at 1-800-342-4146 ext. 1273.

Voices of the Work Force

“Morale is very low. People will be hired off the street with a higher grade and you have to train them, yet you are never getting that grade.”

— Fran Sims-Davies, administrative clerk, Attorney Registration Unit, state Office of Court Administration
Probation workers share dangerous job's rigors

LIVERPOOL — CSEA-represented workers in probation departments across the state constantly face difficult and dangerous clients as part of their day. Recently, in a CSEA Central Region workshop for probation workers, they shared their stories and experiences and learned from each other and the union how to better deal with the professional challenges they encounter.

Workers from several CSEA regions attended programs about deadly physical force, intervention strategies to handle aggressive kids, and an integrated approach to working with substance abusers. A session dealing with proper incident reporting of violence against probation workers was also held.

For those who attended, training credits were granted by the state. All who attended said the knowledge gained was worthwhile. “Any type of training like this is great. As a field probation officer I make a lot of unannounced home visits, and deal with a lot of clients with alcohol and drug problems. Because my work is so remote, and communication is limited, it’s a real challenge to remain safe,” said St. Salisbury.

Lawrence County probation Officer Marnie Salisbury.

Genesee County Probation Officer Timothy Michalak agreed that clients with drug and alcohol problems present a special problem to probation workers.

He said the training on using an integrated approach with these people was helpful. “I believe there’s a tremendous value in workshops like this. It allows officers to perform their job duties in a more efficient manner and gives them a better understanding of how to deal with people and the problems they have with drug and alcohol abuse. It also gives them a better understanding of treatment programs,” Michalak said.

Central Region Probation Committee Chair Brian Mayock said the real value of the workshops was to show the union’s support for safety and health issues affecting the probation workers. “I cannot over-emphasize the importance of the union showing us that support. It’s a dangerous job, becoming more and more law enforcement oriented,” Mayock said.

“But safety is handled differently in every area. In our department we carry firearms, but in the past our management said that ‘this job isn’t as dangerous as you people say it is.’ My response to that is ‘does somebody have to get hurt or killed before we take the most basic safety precautions?’” he asked.

CSEA Central Region President Jim Moore said he was pleased with the growth of the biannual workshop since the last time it was presented.

“We’re pleased we’re getting such great turnout and support from our workers in the probation field,” he said. “It proves that there’s a need for this type of training and we’re happy we can provide this opportunity for them.”

— Mark Kotzin

On the prowl for kosher violations

BROOKLYN — Fake matzo? Bogus kosher deli?

As the Jewish community celebrated Passover this spring, CSEA members in a small unit of the state Department of Agriculture and Markets made sure products that are advertised as kosher really were.

CSEA member Kevette Shields is part of the kosher law enforcement team that is on the prowl for products which may use a kosher stamp or seal, but in fact have not passed the rigorous inspections and earn the respected rabbinical seal.

The only CSEA member in the 12-person office, Shields keeps it running by acting as “secretary, assistant, receptionist — I handle the phones, type, file update records, basically do any and all clerical work that is needed,” she said.

Her work allows the inspectors to do the site-visits necessary to ensure kosher goods meet the necessary requirements.

“When a store or deli represents themselves or their products as kosher, there are certain guidelines they are required to follow by law. This office regulates those businesses,” Shields said.

The office also monitors the use of symbols on foods. Certain Jewish organizations have individual symbols — similar to the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” — that denote the products or foods have met their standards.

These symbols are widely respected indicators of quality and some vendors pay large sums to obtain the use of selected symbols.

The kosher law enforcement employees make sure the products displaying these symbols are authorized to do so.

“If there are repeat violations after the warnings, we will seize the product and require the vendor to x-out the symbol or prohibit them from selling it,” said Shields.

— Ann Carroll

Voices of the Work Force

“I’ve been with Rockland County 20 1/2 years. I’ve watched the situation change. I’ve been able to see firsthand how the county has changed. We’re all doing more with less, demands are greater. A lot of changes are positive. I like my job. I love problem solving. I enjoy being a shop steward. The most important part is communication, being a conduit between the officers and the rank and file.”

— Cecily Lieberman, clerk typist, Rockland County
Working safely earns 100-day recognition award for DOT members

SPENCERPORT — Union members at the state Department of Transportation (DOT) in Rochester know safety is no accident.

Using safety tips learned at CSEA training sessions, members of the CSEA Rochester DOT Local assigned to the Monroe West section have been cited for working 100 days without any loss of work hours.

“We’re really proud to show that our guys are doing a great job for the public,” said Chuck Parsons, Local vice president. “And doing it safely is the only way to go.”

The workers accomplished the safety mark by following department safety guidelines for motor vehicle use, and avoiding accidents, motor equipment damage and personal injuries that required time off, Parsons added.

“The DOT guidelines, along with regular consultations with our occupational safety and health specialist, John Bieger, should be credited with helping us reach this goal,” Parsons said.

Parsons said he is proud of his members’ safety record because they work in very hazardous conditions on expressways, where the traffic is much faster and more dangerous.

“We reduce some of the danger by knowing how to set up a traffic safety work zone,” Parsons said.

Although Gov. George Pataki recently vetoed a bill granting hazardous duty pay to DOT workers assigned to highway crews, Parsons and other CSEA members vowed to continue fighting for the dangerous duty pay.

The Monroe West residency was one of nine statewide to reach the 100-day safety mark.

— Ron Wofford

The sky is no longer falling in the Bronx

BRONX — CSEA members at the Roberto Clemente State Park no longer have to weather the barrage of garbage tossed from the windows of a nearby apartment tower.

The union and the state have agreed to protect park workers from debris that is flung by residents living in the tower onto cleaning crews below.

The deluge of debris has plagued the otherwise well-maintained park and puts the CSEA-represented cleaning crews in harm’s way.

“Garbage, bottles, car batteries, sand bags from the roof, even refrigerators and air conditioners,” said Willie Castro, a park worker, “are all thrown into the area we are working in.”

To solve the problem, the state will give the land surrounding the apartment complex to building management, which will fence the area and be responsible for its upkeep.

“Rainy” season approaches

This arrangement happened just in time for park workers.

“The situation is worst in the summer, when the weather is warm and people keep their windows open,” said Barbara Moore, the CSEA labor relations specialist for Clemente workers.

“This is the first summer CSEA members will not be responsible for maintaining that area, and as long as they are out of harm’s way, they are satisfied,” she said.

Before this settlement, management tried to protect workers by having one crew “spot” for falling debris while another crew cleaned, notifying the police, and cleaning before residents woke up.

That didn’t work, union members said.

“Now the probability of our members getting hurt, maimed or killed is gone,” said Dan Morra, CSEA occupational safety and health specialist.

“When you have refrigerators, doors, air conditioners, even bowling balls thrown, you never know what could happen,” he said.

“While we have protected our members at Roberto Clemente,” said CSEA Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio, “in the long term this problem could potentially affect another group of workers the building hires, who might not have a union to stand up for them. It shows the strong need to organize new union members.”

— Ann Carroll

Voices of the Work Force

“The best thing about my job is working to provide and keep a nice park for the public. I’m big on the appearance of the park. The worst part of this job is being understaffed. We need more full-time workers to care for 1,000 acres here, and 600 acres at Greece Canal Park.”

Russ Sciolino, supervisor, Monroe County Parks Department
Charter schools charting stormy course

One of the state’s first charter schools has no home.
That’s one of many problems facing Albany’s New Covenant Charter School, and one reason why CSEA is fighting for legislation to make charter schools more accountable and responsible to the communities they serve.
Charter schools are public schools, paid for with taxpayer dollars, that can be operated by private entities.

More importantly, charter schools can drain public school finances, threatening the jobs of CSEA members working in public school districts.

To address these problems and others, CSEA has drafted legislation to require public hearings and greater disclosure of policies and finances before a charter school can be formed.

The union also is working on a measure to develop an alternative funding method so existing school districts are not left holding the bag and students do not suffer.

CSEA also is pushing to protect the rights of charter school employees who wish to unionize.

Where’s the school?

Students at New Covenant in Albany are finding a more fundamental problem with the school — there isn’t one.
Instead, they shuffle from trailer to trailer for classes, despite promises of a new building, and have no gym or playground.
Meanwhile, parents are raising their concerns, including a lack of behavior and discipline policy, a lack of enforcement of other school policies, such as dress code, and a lack of communication with administrators.

Special education services, which the school touted as one of its strengths, is not a major component of the school and has caused the special education enrollment to drop from 43 to 32 students in the first year alone.
Worse, the chartering agency, the Urban League of Northeastern New York, has declared bankruptcy and is facing an Internal Revenue Service investigation.

Many union concerns

“CSEA members should be concerned because charter schools are a financial drain on the public school system,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

“Taxpayer dollars are drawn away from existing schools and given to private or not-for-profit companies to educate a select number of students, depriving public school districts of vital revenue,” Donohue said.

These school districts are then faced with the dilemma of raising taxes or cutting existing services and jobs to compensate.
Worse still, charter schools are not directly accountable to the voters, taxpayers, or other established education groups, union leaders said.

— Casey McClenon and Cassie Prugh
CSEA Political Action interns

Voices of the Work Force

“I like the job security. The kids are always tearing up the playing fields and I always have lots to do. The district is always good about sending me out for education. It’s a good place to work.”

Mark Gregorek, groundskeeper, Saratoga Springs School District

Why CSEA is concerned about charter schools

- Charter schools are a financial drain on the public school system;
- They are not directly accountable to the voters, taxpayers, or other established education groups;
- They are allowed to employ up to 30 percent of their teaching personnel with non-certified teachers, allowing great discretion when hiring teachers;
- There is also no elected school board to oversee the operations of the school;
- Charter schools are not bound by many important regulations established by state agencies, including the state Education Department.
Unions flex lobbying muscles for working New Yorkers

More than 1,500 lobbyists from CSEA and other unions converged on the Capitol recently, urging lawmakers to pass bills improving workplace safety and giving retirees a permanent cost-of-living (COLA) pension increase.

"Lobby Day is a concrete manifestation of individuals banding together collectively to make a difference — to have an impact on our political system — to get things done. "Lobby Day is about taking politics personally. "You know that as public employees you have a greater opportunity than any other group of workers to impact your jobs, your lives and your futures through political action.

"Every worker in America knows what it is like to be hired and many of them know what it is like to be fired, but how many of them have the power to hire and fire their bosses? "Not many, that's for sure. In fact, not any that I can think of except public employees."

— AFSCME President Gerald McEntee

State Comptroller calls for permanent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and pension reform this year

"We can afford to eliminate the contribution by members (to the pension system) and at the same time provide a permanent COLA for all public employees in the State of New York. "We're going to do a permanent COLA this year because you deserve it. The retirees who are struggling trying to live on fixed incomes, certainly deserve it and need it."

"I want to tell you as the chief fiscal officer of this state we can afford it. "When I became the comptroller some six years ago, the total assets in the pension fund were $56 billion ... today it's grown to $122 billion. "That has meant that the state, the municipalities, the employers, the taxpayers — their contribution this year to the pension fund for the first time in history ... is zero. "That has saved the taxpayers almost $2 billion over the last three years. So since we have done so many good things for the employers and the taxpayers, it's now time to take care of the workers and the retirees."

— State Comptroller H. Carl McCall
Two fires rekindle concern about workplace safety

ALBANY — Recent fires in downtown’s high-rise state offices have prompted CSEA health and safety officials to again question the readiness and reliability of safety systems in the gleaming marble complex which houses thousands of employees.

CSEA’s Health and Safety Department is asking all union Locals in the sprawling Empire State Plaza complex and in other downtown state offices to make sure all fire safety and evacuation systems are working.

The union’s heightened concern follows two fires, one which created intense smoke at night and forced the closing of offices for 400 state Public Service Commission workers the next day.

Oil-soaked rags ignite

That fire ignited when a private painting contractor’s employees left linseed-soaked cloths in a trash gondola covered by a sheet of plywood.

The potent combination burst into flames shortly after CSEA members completed their night-cleaning rounds.

The fire was reported by a passer-by who saw smoke billowing from the top of the tall agency building.

Thick smoke filled the surrounding floors and the automatic smoke alarms rang.

A smoke-removing system in the building didn’t work, causing more difficulty for firefighters and the CSEA-represented night cleaners who rushed to investigate the alarms.

The following day, CSEA officials questioned state officials about the cause of the fire and media reports that various safety systems failed.

Did the systems fail before?

A week earlier, CSEA asked the state for information about a report of an early morning smoky fire in an elevator shaft in another agency building at the Empire State Plaza.

Media reports said various employee warning systems, an emergency telephone and the public address system had failed. Workers in the building ran down several flights of stairs, yelling to the employees reporting for work to leave the building because of the fire.

CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health Department is investigating and has asked the state for a report on this situation.

— Daniel X. Campbell

Triangle Shirtwaist Factory catastrophe led to new fire codes, reforms

• March 25, 1911 in New York City
• 146 workers killed
• Fire spread rapidly because of fabric scraps and machine oil
• Panicked workers clogged three escape routes
• Desperate women leapt to their deaths from windows
• New York state Legislature created new fire and building codes, soon adopted in cities throughout the U.S.

Mr. Niznik goes to Washington

State Department of Transportation bridge maintenance worker Peter Niznik of Utica is traveling to Washington, D.C., to testify on CSEA’s behalf in hearings for a new OSHA ergonomic standard. Many of CSEA’s members working in transportation-related fields suffer from repetitive-stress injuries caused by jackhammers, vibrating machine levers, and working in confined spaces.

Don’t get bugged this spring

A mild winter means a bumper crop of Lyme-disease carrying ticks. CSEA members working outdoors can avoid the pain and suffering of Lyme disease with a few simple precautions:

☐ Use insecticide around ankles;
☐ Wear long pants, high boots;
☐ Tuck trouser legs into socks;
☐ Periodically check for ticks;
☐ Consult with your physician about receiving the Lyme disease vaccine.
A Message From Nassau County Local 830
President Anthony Giustino

Politicians Make CSEA Workers Scapegoats for County Budget Mess

At what point in time did the thousands of loyal and dedicated county workers and their families become non-entities?

To the people who run Nassau County, we seem to have been relegated to the junk pile of society.

First, the county executive blackmails us with the threat of layoffs if we don’t agree to a lag payroll. Some choice! We reluctantly put it to a vote and our members agreed the lag was preferable to layoffs.

The county would exact its pound of flesh from the union by initiating an extremely unpopular lag payroll. We knew where we stood and were resigned to take the lag.

But wait a minute! The Republican minority of the county legislature said the lag didn’t inflict enough pain and suffering on county workers.

Only a few days before the lag payroll vote, the Republicans proposed a pay freeze. “Main Street has spoken!” they said.

Are they implying CSEA members are not “Main Street”?

Let’s see...we have more than 11,000 members. Counting their families (mothers, fathers, wives, husbands, children, etc.) we estimate, conservatively, that more than 50,000 Nassau County residents fall within the family circle of our members.

And that figure doesn’t include other relatives and friends. It also doesn’t include the 20,000 CSEA members from other locals, and their families and friends. If we’re not Main Street, who is?

Now we have the county executive imposing a lag payroll and the Republican minority proposing a pay freeze on top of that.

Well, at least we still had the Democratic majority as our friends. They promised us both before and after last year’s election they wouldn’t do anything to hurt us. And nothing happens without their approval.

Guess what?

Our good “friends” announced at a press conference several days later the most Draconian and the most anti-labor proposal probably in the history of CSEA.

In my nearly 30 years as a county worker, I have never seen a plan that does more to hurt working men and women. Nor has our union ever experienced a more solid slap in the face.

Not to be outdone by the county executive’s lag payroll or the Republican minority’s pay freeze, Democratic Majority Leader Judy Jacobs announced she wanted to re-open the contract (which she and her colleagues supported and approved) to demolish the terms of a bargaining agreement that took nearly three years to hash out.

Included among her bag of “goodies” was the privatization of several county-operated facilities and a plan to make county workers start paying for up to 25 percent of their medical coverage.

The assault on county workers has been relentless and it’s not difficult to see why.

They needed a scapegoat for the mess they created and we were the handy victims.

They certainly couldn’t blame themselves. What would the voters think? So through carefully crafted public relations campaigns, we became the culprits.

It’s appalling they’ve seen fit to place our county workers under attack. They know full well it was not our members who caused this shameful fiscal mess we’re in.

We did not put the county budget together year after year as Nassau sunk further and further into a financial morass. We had no vote. But they did!

Now it’s our workers who are being asked to pay the price. Yes, we know life is not fair. And yes, we know we’ll have to bear at least some of the brunt for mistakes others made.

See Message Continued on Page 8
LEGAL UPDATE

The Disciplinary Interview

By: Louis D. Stober Jr., Esq.
CSEA Regional Attorney

A recent state Supreme Court Appellate Division case involving a Nassau County police officer provides an important lesson under the disciplinary section of the collective bargaining agreement.

In this case, Cortes et al v. County of Nassau, et al, 248 A.D.2d 616, 670 N.Y.S.2d 509, a police officer was called into internal affairs and questioned about the conduct of another police officer.

At the interview was an internal affairs officer and an assistant district attorney, but no union representative.

The officer had previously refused to appear for questioning by the district attorney's office.

The union sued, claiming the county acted improperly by compelling the officer to submit to interrogation with an assistant district attorney present without benefit of legal counsel or union representation.

The Appellate Court held the collective bargaining agreement does not grant the right to counsel to an officer who is directed to appear before the internal affairs unit as a witness and does not prohibit a member of the district attorney's office from being present at witness interviews.

By being forced to testify, the officer received "use" immunity, which means the actual statements he gave in the interview could not be used against him in a subsequent criminal prosecution.

The Appellate Court also held statements made by the officer in an internal affairs investigation could be shared with the district attorney's office even if they could not be used in a criminal prosecution of that witness.

Important to CSEA Members

This is an important case to CSEA members as well.

Section 10-4.3 of the CSEA collective bargaining agreement prohibits the county from using any statement made by an employee in a disciplinary setting when his/her rights under Section 10-4 were violated.

However, there is no prohibition on a representative of the district attorney's office being there or with the county sharing the information obtained at an interview with the district attorney's office.

Therefore, it is extremely important any employee who is being interviewed by a departmental representative insists on the presence of a union representative before answering any questions.

Also, members must be extremely careful of what they say if the interview involves the possibility of criminal charges.

This decision is a reminder of just how important it is to be represented whenever members are questioned under circumstances that could affect their jobs.

Members who are in a similar situations should contact your union representative immediately since they cannot afford to waive union representation.

Catch Us Online

For up-to-date CSEA information and the latest news from your union, be sure to visit us online at www.nassau-csea830.org.
**Payable Next January**

**June 15 is Deadline To Cash in Comp Time**

Eligible county employees who want to convert their unused compensatory time (CT) to cash must notify their department by June 15.

Under the terms of the current contract, employees who have a base salary at or below the final step in Grade 15 are eligible for the cash payments.

Employees who cash in their comp time will receive payment the following January if they inform their department by June 15.

Compensatory time that has not been paid in cash or used by employees will become part of an employee's termination pay and subject to installment payment rules.

This payment will be made at the rate of pay in effect at the time of separation.

Members who have questions should call their Unit president or CSEA Local 830 at 571-2919.

**Democratic Proposal is Way Off Base**

**Say “No” to Privatization, Nassau’s Golfers Urged**

The rates for a round of golf will rise dramatically on the seven Nassau County-operated courses if the Democratic majority on the county legislature gets its way.

Senior citizens will probably get hit the worst, union officials feared, if the public courses are run by private companies.

CSEA is circulating a petition among county golfers urging them to protest this ill-conceived privatization idea.

County golf courses are huge profit centers, bringing millions of dollars each year into the county treasury, more than it costs to operate them.

The income generated by these courses has allowed the county to keep the fees reasonable and give special breaks for senior citizens.

“Private operators will be looking to make big profits, so you can be assured the cost for a round of golf will soar,” said Nassau CSEA President Tony Giustino.

“Our public courses, built with taxpayer money, will become private country clubs,” he added.

CSEA is urging golfers and other concerned citizens to oppose the plan by writing or calling:

- County Executive Thomas S. Gulotta - 571-3131
- Legislative Democratic Majority Leader Judy Jacobs - 571-6216
- Legislative Republican Minority Leader Peter Schmitt - 571-6212

For letter writers, the address for all three is: County Executive Building, One West St., Mineola, New York 11501.

**Reminder:**

**Crossing Guards Dinner Coming Up in June**

The annual Crossing Guards Awards Dinner will be held June 8 at the Elegante Grand in Massapequa from 6 to 11 p.m.

**Stay Informed. Tune in to**

**“CSEA in Focus”**

**Thursdays at 7 p.m.**

repeated Saturdays at 8:30 a.m.

**on WGBB, 1240 AM**
**Health Department Tips On Mosquito Control**

CSEA member Sandy Gagliardo of the Nassau County Health Department offers these tips to help protect members from a possible revisit of the mosquito-borne West Nile virus this year.

The following tips to reduce the mosquito population are contained in a health department booklet, “Nassau County Mosquito Control Program.”

- Remove or empty standing water from old tires, garbage cans, pails, children's toys or any object that can hold water.
- Keep swimming pools chlorinated and their covers free of stagnant water.
- Clean and unclog rain gutters to keep them draining properly.
- Change the water in bird baths every two or three days.
- Install window and door screens and keep them in good repair.
- Avoid using bug zappers since they also kill beneficial insects.
- Replace outdoor lights with yellow “bug” lights.
- Avoid mosquito-populated areas if possible.
- Report mosquito complaints or dead birds to: Nassau County Mosquito Control: 571-8707.

---

**Summertime Caution**

**Mark Your Calendar for Thursday, May 4**

Tickets are still available for CSEA's Annual Spring Fling on May 4, but they're going fast.

Response has been excellent to this popular event at The Sands from 6:30 to 11 p.m. in Atlantic Beach, said Beth Luttinger, social committee chair.

The theme for this year's event will alternate between country music and disco and will feature a buffet dinner, dancing and country line dancing lessons.

The buffet will include hot and cold dishes, an ice cream sundae bar, beer, soda, coffee and tea.

The cost is $22 for Nassau Local 830 members and $32 for guests. No tickets will be sold at the door.

Fliers with reservation forms are available through Unit presidents or at the CSEA office, 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola.

The Sands is on Beech Boulevard in Atlantic Beach, near the entrance to the Atlantic Beach Bridge.

For more information, call Beth Luttinger at 571-2919, ext. 11.

---

**Member Benefits Fair Set For May 8 At A. Holly Patterson Geriatric Center**

A Membership Benefits Fair will be held Monday, May 8, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the A. Holly Patterson Geriatric Center auditorium.

Les Eason, CSEA Unit president, urged all Unit members to attend the fair, which will feature informational booths on the wide range of benefits available through CSEA membership.

Admission is free.
CSEA HIP Healthy Heart Program
Keep Healthy and Have Fun!

Join CSEA’s Free Bicycling Program

CSEA members looking for some healthy exercise during the off hours should check out the CSEA/HIP Healthy Heart Program.

The program funded the purchase of a dozen bicycles CSEA members can use for free.

Six bicycles are located at Eisenhower Park Security Headquarters off Parking Field No. 2 and the other six are at the Wantagh Park Administration Building.

Before using a bike, CSEA members will first need to obtain a cycling program identification card from Tim Carter at the CSEA office in Mineola, 400 County Seat Drive.

Members can visit the office Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. to obtain the ID card.

Members will also receive a free plastic water bottle when they obtain the ID card.

Bicycles may be borrowed by CSEA members who present their card to the security station at Eisenhower Park and the administration building representative at Wantagh Park.

Each employee may borrow up to two bikes for two hours when the park is open. Safety helmets and locks will also be provided.

“This program will allow members the convenience of riding a bike without the necessity of transporting their own bike. It will enable them to get out and exercise on a regular basis in a park setting,” said Jane D’Amico, Local 830 executive vice president and project director of the Healthy Heart Program.

Both Wantagh Park, located off Merrick Road in Seaford, and Eisenhower Park, located in East Meadow, have bicycle paths.

For more information, call CSEA at 571-2919.

Free T-shirts will be given at the end of the season for riders who borrow the bikes more than two times.

CSEA Proposes Measures To Help Balance County Budget

To help ease the county budget crisis, CSEA has been suggesting ways for Nassau to raise additional money and/or cut costs without hurting employees.

In a recent letter to County Executive Thomas Gulotta, Nassau CSEA President Tony Giustino outlined 24 measures designed to help balance the county budget.

The county has adopted some of the measures suggested by CSEA and is considering others.

The county adopted the Voluntary Leave Program and is considering making non-law enforcement jobs at the Nassau County Police Department civilian jobs.

If implemented, the CSEA cost-saving proposals would boost revenues and cut costs by millions of dollars, union leaders said.

Nassau CSEA has formed a standing committee, chaired by Comptroller’s Unit President Stan Bergman, to continue to find ways to streamline county services without affecting taxpayers or workers.

Many Great Trips Planned in 2000 for CSEA Members

Don't forget: Local 830 is planning an array of exciting trips this year for CSEA members, family and friends.

CSEA's in-house travel coordinator, Alice Groody, has come up with a good mix of places to visit at affordable prices.

“Trips are booked quickly and I don’t like to see people disappointed,” said Groody. Although payment in full is required for all one-day trips, Groody said participants may pay in installments for longer trips.

CSEA trips are paid for in full by participants and are not subsidized with union dues.

Travel to most destinations is via deluxe motorcoach, departing from Field #6 in Mineola.

Travel to Alaska and the Bahamas is via commuter airline. Deposits are required to hold reservations.

For complete itineraries and prices, or for additional details, call Groody at 571-2919, ext. 22 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays during office hours.

Tallying the Vote

CSEA officers and members tally figures on the lag payroll vote at CSEA headquarters in Mineola. (See story on Page 1.) The final figures were 2,961 “yes” votes and 1,760 “no” votes.
Nominations Being Accepted For Women’s Achievement Awards

June 16 is the deadline for nominations for the Outstanding Achievement awards which are presented annually at the Women in Local Government Annual Recognition Dinner.

The dinner is sponsored by the CSEA Local 830 Women’s Committee and will be held Thursday, Sept. 21 at the Jericho Terrace on Jericho Turnpike in Mineola.

Members who want to nominate a candidate may use the form on this page and return it to the CSEA Women’s Committee, 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola, NY 11501.

Applications may be submitted only by a Local 830 CSEA member in good standing.

Nominees must be women who are either current dues-paying Local 830 CSEA members or dues-paying retirees originally from Local 830.

Nominees will be evaluated on the basis of demonstrated commitment to the concerns of women within the labor movement and beyond.

According to Jane D’Amico, Local 830 executive vice president and Women’s Committee chair, factors that will be considered include:

• Dedication to the advancement of CSEA women’s goals within the labor movement and/or the public sector;
• Volunteerism and/or community service;
• Outstanding job performance;
• Other criteria such as: outstanding achievements related to women, humanitarian contributions, activism, or other special qualities.

I NOMINATE
DEPARTMENT
JOB DESCRIPTION
Home Address Phone
Work Address Phone
Nominated By: SS#
Work Phone Home Phone

Describe fully how the nominee meets the criteria outlined in Section 3 above. Be as specific as possible. Attach additional pages if necessary.

RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:
CSEA Women’s Committee, 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola, NY 11501
Support Urged for Women’s “Pay Equity” Rally on May 11

By Loretta H. Butler
CSEA Women’s Committee

Financial analysts state we should work “smarter not harder.” That theme will be driven home May 11 during a rally sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Women On The Job and the Women’s Committee of CSEA Local 830.

The demonstration for pay equity will be held at the county court house, Old Country Road and County Seat Drive in Mineola. The program starts at noon and will end at 2 p.m.

Working harder, longer

Most women in this country have to work 37 percent longer and be stronger than their male counterparts while trying to achieve the American dream.

The average salary for males in 1998 was $35,345. The average salary for females in 1998 was $25,862. The difference in wages amounts to $9,483. This dollar amount represents a 26 percent monetary difference in their favor. Imagine your male counterpart, who performs the same duties and tasks as you, waving goodbye to you on Dec. 31, 1999. He takes a four-month vacation, with a few weeks left over for good measure, has time to perform spring cleaning, or maybe just relax, take some yoga classes or spend leisurely days at the gym.

There are no time constraints. After all, your male coworker has until May 11, 2000, to return to work and still be on par with your salary. He would lose no financial ground. Come Dec. 31, 2000, your male coworker would receive an end-of-the-year tax statement identical to yours.

Women have to work so much longer to attain adequate financial compensation. Women have to work longer, and be stronger during our quest to earn a livable wage.

Working for wages that are 26 percent less than males ultimately means women have less money for food, lodging, clothing and transportation.

Losing the economic race

Women are not charged 26 percent less for these services. The ultimate transgression, however, directly affects how much money women have to invest or how much money women will have to live on when we retire. Women should not be penalized our entire productive years and then suffer further financial insult during what should be considered the golden years. The golden years should not resemble distressed wood.

We must band together. We must speak out collectively. Our voices must be heard. Attention must be focused on this issue each and every year until the financial scales are balanced for men and women.

We must be afforded the ability to work smarter, not harder. After all, working 37 percent less time to earn the same salary would enable women to use the longer hours to achieve personal as well as financial gain.

Help Make a Difference in the Fight Against Breast Cancer

The Revlon Run/Walk for Women in New York City on May 6

CSEA members at the Nassau County Medical Center are organizing a team for the 2000 Revlon 5K Run/Walk for Women set for Saturday, May 6 in Manhattan.

The event raises money for the fight against women’s cancers. NCMC is the only Long Island hospital slated to receive a grant from the proceeds. The money will be used to help under-served women who use NCMC’s Breast Imaging Center.

According to NCMC Unit President George Walsh, the hospital wants to sign up at least 60 participants for the event.

Men, women and children interested in joining the team are welcome.

Brochures containing registration forms are available at area stores and restaurants, the NCMC information desk in the main lobby and at the NCMC public affairs office on the ground floor (572-6055).

Checks should be made payable to the Revlon Run/Walk for Women. Participants will receive a commemorative T-shirt and will be invited to the post-race festivities, which will include food and music.

On May 6, the teams will gather for opening ceremonies at 8:15 a.m. in Times Square. The event begins on 7th Avenue and 48th Street at 9:15 a.m. The finish line and post-race ceremonies will be located between the East Meadow and North Meadow at Central Park.

More than 30,000 people participated in last year’s race, raising more than $700,000 for New York organizations involved in cancer research and treatment.

“Laughter and Health” is Topic Of Free Seminar on June 15

Is a lighthearted spirit the secret to health and longevity?

Find out the answer to this and other health-related questions on June 15 when the Women’s Committee holds another in its series of free seminars.

Dr. Martin Plutno will discuss “Laughter and Your Health,” an entertaining seminar designed to show participants how to laugh their way to good health.

The program is set for 5 p.m. at the CSEA Office, 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola. Refreshments will be served.

Jane D’Amico, Women’s Committee chair and Local 830 executive vice president, said seating is limited for the seminar.

Members who are interested in attending should make reservations early by calling Jewel or Judy at 571-2919.
Message from Nassau County Local President Tony Giustino

Continued from Page 1

But through it all, there seems to be one thing they have all forgotten.

WE HAVE A CONTRACT!

We have a valid and legal contract. Its terms are enforceable.

The contract provides for regular pay raises. The contract provides for fully paid health insurance through the year 2007.

The contract prohibits the types of contracting out that were proposed.

We have no intentions of renegotiating these items. Even the lag payroll would have violated the contract had we not voted on it. In that instance, the county executive discussed the matter with us in advance and at least gave us a choice between evils.

Although I speak often with the legislators on both sides of the aisle, not a single one of them had the professionalism to talk to us first before dropping bombs in the media.

The lesson I've learned from this unfortunate episode is that support from politicians is as fleeting as a thief in the night.

CSEA endorsed most of the candidates who now attack our livelihoods and the well-being of our families. Shame on them!

This I pledge: CSEA will continue to fight relentlessly for the rights and well-being of our members - through political action, through the courts if necessary, and through exercising our contractual prerogatives — whether the politicians like it or not.

Yours in Solidarity,

Tony Giustino, President
CSEA Nassau Local 830

Although I speak often with the legislators on both sides of the aisle, not a single one of them had the professionalism to talk to us first before dropping bombs in the media.

A Message from
Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte

The vote is in and you have overwhelmingly approved a lag payroll to avoid 500 layoffs.

My emotions are mixed. On one hand I am really touched because so many of you cared so much about the welfare of your brothers and sisters and the communities you serve.

Five hundred workers faced layoffs but nearly 3,000 voted to save those jobs. That speaks very highly of all of you.

Then there is the other hand, the one that would love to smack County Executive Tom Gulotta for making you choose between a lag payroll and layoffs when he has done so little to pull Nassau County out of the fiscal abyss!

The up side is that you do have a signed agreement with the county that says there will be no layoffs, furloughs or demotions through 2002 or the county has to pay all deferred money back to all workers immediately.

That is an extremely strong incentive for the county to stick to the agreement.

CSEA will not back down. CSEA members have done their part, now it’s time for the county to bite the bullet and cut patronage and private contracts (many which are also patronage).

A quote by long-time CSEA member John Aloisio will forever depict the meaning of brotherhood.

He would not have been touched by layoffs because of his seniority, but said he voted yes for the lag payroll because “If it saves one job I am willing to do it.”

Have a wonderful Mother’s Day and a memorable Memorial Day.

Fraternally yours,

Nick LaMorte, president
CSEA Long Island Region

Plan Ahead: Get Your Tickets Now
For 2001 Martin Luther King Jr. Brunch

It's never too early to reserve a spot at CSEA’s annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ceremony Brunch.

The Unity Committee, which sponsors the program, has announced tickets are on sale for the 2001 event, which will be held Saturday, Jan. 6 from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Coral House in Baldwin.

The price is $30 per person.

According to Tim Corr, Unity Committee co-chair, the event will include entertainment, raffles, door prizes and guest speakers.

The Unity Committee will also award scholarships to the children of CSEA members.

For more information or to buy tickets, call Corr at 571-2919, ext. 14, or Juanita Mckinnies at 378-2790.
Helping build better lives

Central America calls and Thew answers again

PLATTSBURGH — Susan Thew is a dynamo waiting for a challenge.
Her energy erupts into action.
It doesn’t matter if she’s working as a public health sanitarian or as executive vice president of the Clinton County Unit, or as a volunteer in hot, steamy Nicaragua, this CSEA member gets things done.

Thew is very proud of her church’s effort to help a small community school, an orphanage in Chiquelistaqua, Nicaragua. She and 37 high-school students and 37 adults volunteered recently and spent eight days ministering to the poor in the rural Central American nation.

The volunteers did outreach in the community, worked in the soup kitchen, built four small homes and staffed a medical/dental clinic.

“I only lasted one day in the clinic,” Thew said.

Nothing taken for granted

“In America, we take our health care, insurance coverage, and our personal health almost for granted. But in a Third World country if you don’t have money — you don’t get health care,” she said.

“No cash, no care. There are women my age who have eight to 10 children and have never seen a doctor or a dentist! They needed medical and dental care desperately. But since they couldn’t afford care — they never received any,” Thew said.

The volunteer medical/dental team was made up of nine nurses, one dental hygienist, and a doctor. Three Spanish teachers and a few Spanish-speaking students assisted in the clinic, which treated more than 800 Nicaraguan adults and children in a very short time.

Watch what you eat

Thew found her niche, not in the medical/dental clinic or in the rudimentary house building activities, but in doing something she does on the job. She became the group’s sanitarian.

“We had a warm chicken salad sandwich for one of the locally prepared meals.

After that, while we enjoyed the country and the culture, we relied on the food supplies we brought for our lunches and we were very selective in what local dishes we would sample,” she explained.

“This way we avoided personally experiencing our own medical care,” Thew said smiling, thinking about the stomach problems that were avoided by being careful about what they consumed.

Others getting involved

The local volunteer effort is building as the 75 participants are spreading the word about the importance of their school mission.

Last year, Seton Catholic School students and the Plattsburgh community raised money to build a library for the small school in Nicaragua.

This year they focused on building four small homes in the rural community, installing computers and upgrading the electrical and plumbing facilities at the school.

“We’re looking into upgrading the school’s water system and improving the general health of the orphans and the school students,” Thew said.

Thew is contemplating another volunteer effort next year.

“We have many basic needs like money to run the soup kitchen, medical supplies, and volunteers who can help improve the way of life by just sharing their skills,” she said.

“We can’t change the world, but together we can improve one little part of a Third World country,” Thew said.

— Daniel X. Campbell
New York's laws allowing for private charter schools stack the odds against everyone but the charter schools themselves.

Public school districts are forced to make up extra revenue drained from them by neighboring charter schools.

A lack of accountability to the voters, taxpayers and established education groups leaves little room for recourse when things go wrong. The schools may employ up to 30 percent of their teaching personnel with non-certified teachers.

Worse, charter schools are not bound by many important state education regulations.

CSEA is pushing for legislation that would correct some of these glaring discrepancies and protect the rights of charter school employees who wish to unionize.

The governor also recently vetoed legislation that would have extended union representation to the support staff of charter schools with more than 250 students if employees of the school district where the charter school is located are unionized.
40-hour fast highlights state's working poor

NEW YORK CITY — The group of priests, rabbis, imams, and brothers were carrying nothing but candles. Yet as they walked the steps leading to the Metropolitan Opera House, they met an impenetrable wall of blue. New York City police officers threatened to arrest any of the clergy who tried to approach the plaza at Lincoln Center. Their crime: supporting the right to organize for 95 food service workers employed by Restaurant Associates at the Metropolitan Opera.

The candlelight vigil for justice at the opera house was one of dozens of vigils, pickets, and public meetings held recently throughout the state during the fifth annual 40-hour public fast organized by the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition.

Thousands of people from across the state abstained from eating for almost two days to focus attention on the plight of the working poor — the tens of thousands of people in this state working who are full-time jobs for poverty-level wages.

Plight of the working poor

“Our religious traditions and our history of labor struggle unite us in a 40-hour fast each year on behalf of working people who suffer even in these times of abundance,” said Rabbi Michael Feinberg, executive director of the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition.

“By fasting, we commit ourselves to speak out and act for justice against hidden abuses facing the invisible workers in New York.”

Art Fleischner, a CSEA labor relations specialist in Albany, participated in the fast and is active in the labor-religion coalition.

Invisible workers, hidden abuse

“The theme this year is invisible workers, hidden abuses. We’re using the fast to draw attention to the work these folks do,” said Fleischner.

Using Worker Memorial Day to make workplace safer

Union members across the state observed Workers Memorial Day April 28 by honoring colleagues who have been killed or injured on the job.

The activists also pledged to work with their state and federal lawmakers to:

- Pass a federal ergonomics standard;
- End congressional and employer attacks on workers’ safety and health and workers’ rights;
- Reinforce the right of workers to organize and join unions without employer interference or intimidation;
- Enact stronger safety and health protections and enforcement;
- Adopt stronger whistleblower protections for workers who report job hazards and injuries;
- Cover all workers under the job safety law.

Deadline approaching for scholarships

May 15 is the deadline for the New York State AFL-CIO scholarship which provides $8,000 over four years to a student studying labor relations or a related field in college.

An application and a list of criteria may be obtained by writing NYS AFL-CIO, 48 East 21st St., 12th Floor, New York, NY 10010.

A winner will be announced in June.

July 1 is the deadline for the Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship which is awarded to a college sophomore majoring in political science.

The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), CSEA’s international affiliate, is sponsoring the contest which will award one student $10,000 a year for two years.

Applications and rules for the Clark Scholarship may be obtained by writing Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship, c/o AFSCME Education Department, 1625 L St., NW, Washington, DC 20036 or by e-mail at education@afscme.org.

A winner will be announced by August.
Following the money:
Long Beach Hospital battle spills into the catering hall

LONG BEACH — Long Beach Medical Center workers brought their campaign for contract justice to a black-tie crowd of hospital patrons recently as they made a direct appeal to contributors at the medical center’s annual fund-raiser.

Workers, who have been embroiled in a battle for their first contract since becoming CSEA members last year, demonstrated outside the event to enlist the support of the hospital’s vendors and major contributors.

More than 75 CSEA members chanted slogans and displayed a banner which read “CSEA Local 741 — The Heart of the Hospital.”

Two union representatives attended the by-invitation-only event and quietly handed out index cards outlining the workers’ issues.

After politely giving these palm cards to about 100 well-heeled party-goers, both men were escorted from the gala, union leaders said.

Many issues unresolved
The protest was not solely about the contract.

Union workers have been discriminated against in many ways, including being asked to contribute twice as much to their health insurance as non-union workers at the medical center.

“Management is investing time, money and energy into fighting its workers. CSEA wants LBMC management to work with employees to make the medical center the best it can be. That can’t happen until management treats the workers with fairness and respect,” said CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte, who attended the demonstration.

CSEA, LBMC to have heart-to-heart talk with federal investigators

Workers at the hospital voted in June to be represented by CSEA.

During and after the organizing campaign, hospital managers have lashed out at workers, bringing many up on bogus charges and denying workers union representation.

Over the last five months, workers have filed charges with state and federal regulators to halt what they claim are widespread violations of their rights.

“CSEA is asking the community to join workers in their quest for fairness. These workers are looking for dignity and respect in the workplace, healthy working conditions and a fair contract,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

— Sheryl C. Jenks

State and federal regulators investigating employee allegations against LBMC:

☐ The National Labor Relations Board for a series of unfair labor practice charges against the hospital, including failure to bargain in good faith, illegally harassing and disciplining CSEA supporters;

☐ The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration for charges of unsafe working conditions and OSHA violations;

☐ The federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for charges of discrimination based on ethnic background and gender, and;

☐ The state Department of Health for allegations of health code violations.
CSEA/AFSCME Member Benefits Save You $$!

AFSCME Advantage Family Savers
Member-only savings on everything from renting a car to sending a bouquet of flowers.

Theme Park Discounts
• Discounts through the Magic Kingdom Club® including:
  Admissions to Walt Disney World® and Disneyland.
  Discount on purchases at Disney Stores nationwide and the Disney Catalog.
• Seasonal discounts through Anheuser-Busch Theme Parks including:
  Admissions to Sea World® (all locations), Sesame Place®, Adventure Island®, Busch Gardens®, Water Country USA® and Hershey Park®.
  Discount on purchases within any of the theme parks.
• Discounts through Universal Studios FAN CLUB® including:
  Admissions to Universal Studios®.
  Discount on purchases inside Universal Studios and at Spencer Gifts® Stores nationwide.
  Discount on stays at select hotels near Universal Studios locations.
• Discounts on daily admissions to various Six Flag Parks nationwide.
  Tickets may be interchanged between parks — discounts may vary.
  To enroll in the Magic Kingdom Club or for more information, write to: Theme Park Discounts, c/o AFSCME, P.O. Box 9389, Minneapolis, MN 55440-9389 or call 1-800-238-2539.

Walt Disney World Hotel Leisure Travel Discount
• Exclusive union-members-only leisure rates at Hotel Royal Plaza in Walt Disney World Village.
• Visit the Hotel Royal Plaza website at www.royalplaza.com.
  (*Or letter from local confirming membership.)

National Ear Care Plan (NECP)
• Access to a network of nearly 2,000 hearing-care professionals nationwide.
• Open to members and their immediate families — including parents and grandparents.
• Membership fee to join the network is $10 per family, per year.
• Free annual hearing screening.
• 20% to 60% savings on basic audiologic testing.
• 20% savings on hearing aids.
  To join call: 1-800-766-3363 (9 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET, Mon.-Fri.)

Union-Made Checks and Return Address Labels
• Personalized, union printed checks and return address labels that promote a pro-union message and features AFSCME's logo.
• Checks are accepted by all banks and credit unions.

Break in membership affects eligibility for union office, voting privileges
A break in union membership status can have long-term future implications. Your membership status affects your eligibility with respect to:
• seeking or holding union office;
• signing nominating petitions for potential candidates;
• voting in union elections, and;
• voting on collective bargaining contracts.

Only members "in good standing" can participate in these activities. To be in "good standing," your dues cannot be delinquent.
If you go on unpaid leave or for any other reason have a break in your employment status, your dues will not continue to be paid through payroll deductions. You must make arrangements to pay your dues directly to CSEA to continue your membership status. If you are either laid off or placed on leave without pay status due to becoming disabled by accident, illness, maternity or paternity, you may be eligible for dues-free membership status for a period not to exceed one year.
Note, however, you must continue to pay dues to run for office. Dues-free or gratuitous membership allows members to continue their insurance coverage while out of work. It does not protect your right to run for or hold office.
You must notify the CSEA Membership Records Department at 1-800-342-4146, Ext. 1327, of any change in your status and what arrangements you are making to continue your membership in CSEA.

Union Plus Flower Service
• Save 15% when you send floral arrangements, roses, plants, wreaths or gift baskets.
• Order toll-free, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
• Minimum order: $29.99.
  To place an order: Have a major credit card ready.
  Call toll-free 1-888-667-7779.
  A representative will assist you with your order.

Union Plus Car Rental Discounts
• Budget — save up to 15% off daily, weekly and weekend rentals.
• Avis — save up to 20% off daily, weekly and weekend rentals.
• Receive discounts automatically when you reserve with your Union Plus® Credit Card.
  Reservations: Budget: 1-800-455-2848 / ID number: V816100
  Avis: 1-800-698-5655 / ID number: B723700

North American Van Lines
• Interstate moves with special union-members-only benefits.
• Competitively priced for union members.
• Free estimates.
• Free $50,000 replacement-cost insurance on household goods.
  For more information or to arrange for a free estimate call toll-free 1-888-524-5533 (8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, Mon.-Fri.)

Educational Resources Discount
• Discounts on Encyclopedia Americana, The New Book of Knowledge, Grolier Study Skills and other educational books and software.
• Discounts of as much as 65 percent.
• Guaranteed lowest advertised product prices for union members.
• An additional 5 percent off when charged to the Union Plus Credit Card.
  Call 1-888-733-READ (7323) and ask for the special union discount. Fax: 1-203-775-3749. E-mail: crosbyentp@aol.com

Union Plus® Credit Card
• Discounts on Encyclopedia Americana, The New Book of Knowledge, Grolier Study Skills and other educational books and software.
• Guarantees lowest advertised product prices for union members.
• An additional 5 percent off when charged to the Union Plus Credit Card.

Inside Albany
2000 Inside Albany
(www.insidealbany.com)

INSIDE ALBANY broadcast schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside Albany</th>
<th>WMHT</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>6:30 p.m.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albany Area</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>5:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binghamton</td>
<td>WSKG</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>4 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>WNET</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Island</td>
<td>WLJW</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>NET</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>12 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plattsburgh</td>
<td>WCFE</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>6:30 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester</td>
<td>WXXI</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>WCNY</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>6:30 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watertown</td>
<td>WPBS</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once you meet Tom Byrne, you never forget him.

This strong leader who spent most of his waking hours working as the CSEA state employees Local president on Long Island, is also a one-man comedy show, a gritty fighter for veterans and a loving husband.

For these reasons and many more, Byrne recently received the CSEA Mission Achievement Award at the union’s workshop for state leaders in Syracuse.

“Tommy Byrne exemplifies the principles of our mission statement: honesty, inclusiveness, full participation, respect, diversity, open communications, accountability and fiscal responsibility,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

“Byrne is a tireless fighter for the people who has distinguished himself on a number of fronts: as a long-time local president, as a member of the Long Island Region Political Action Committee, as a grievance representative, and especially as chairman of the Special Veterans Committee.

“He deserves particular credit for championing the needs of U.S. veterans and the plight of prisoners of war and the missing in action,” Donohue added.

CSEA State Mission Achievement winner Tom Byrne

CSEA State Mission Achievement winner Tom Byrne on the job, above, and at home with his wife and grandniece and nephew.

Career started in a car

Byrne’s state career began 25 years ago with the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). His job: slide onto the front seat of strangers’ cars several times a day and give road tests to nervous motorists.

Byrne loves to laugh and make others do the same. His stories, most of which are true, rival those of any stand-up comic.

“It’s funny, people’s idea of the law. People were always insisting on getting in the passenger door when the law only says that you should enter the car safely,” Byrne said.

“I had a pregnant woman who was either having twins or was in her 10th month. No matter how many times I told her to please go around to the driver’s door she insisted that she had to get in the passenger side. She said shyly ‘Oh no, you’re trying to trick me’,” Byrne recounted.

“That lady, God bless her, gets in the passenger side. She squeezed herself over the shift and that big belly broke the rear-view mirror right off the windshield. I figured before she had the baby in the car I had better-pass her quick,” Byrne said.

“Then there was the elderly man who had to be retested because he had three accidents within a year-and-a-half.

“There was no seat belt law at that time but this guy insisted he had to put it on. Now, this guy clearly never wore a seat belt.

“He couldn’t get it around him before it retracted and he kept trying over and over again. Finally, he literally put the shoulder strap over his head and squeezed into it. He nearly pulled the skin off his head,” said Byrne, laughing.

“That’s one of my favorite stories,” said Byrne’s wife, Jean, who listened and laughed with each tale as if it were the first time she heard her husband spin it.

Of course there were the near-death experiences, too.

“I had this woman who was a total maniac. She nearly ran over a postal worker until I pulled her foot off the gas and slammed the brake with my hand. When I get up from the floor she says, ‘Can I try again?’ I said, not with me, you can’t.”

His family, his life

Byrne is a devoted husband who has been married 30 years.

While they never had children, the Byrnes spend a lot of time with their relatives, especially their grandniece and nephew, siblings Heather and Stephen.

“They’re the world to me and Jean. We have them here a lot and they truly own my heart,” Byrne said.

Byrne told of the time he drew a handlebar mustache on Heather when she was four, only to realize he used an indelible marker.

“Yeah, that took a while before it wore off. Her mom wanted to kill me!” Byrne laughed.

Giving of himself

Byrne, who has held a number of CSEA titles, has served as the State Employees Local president for 18 years. He also holds posts in the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus.

Byrne has served as marshall of the St. Patrick’s Day Parade and marches in Brentwood every year.

Byrne also serves on the Disabled American Veteran’s Association and he becomes somber when he talks about his work on behalf of veterans.

“I think people forget how much veterans sacrificed. I think we should always remember our vets, especially our disabled comrades and those who never returned. They gave everything so we can live as well as we do today,” Byrne said.

“Veteran’s Day is a big day for me. I served in Vietnam from Nov. 11, 1963 to Nov. 11, 1966. I quit smoking years ago on Nov. 11 and I will retire on Nov. 11,” he said.

Retiring, and staying involved

“When I retire I will miss the everyday involvement with the union and my members. I will miss helping people. I plan to do consulting work so I will remain busy,” Byrne said.

“Now that I have my soapbox, I’d like to tell my union brothers and sisters to pay attention to the candidates we support and to be involved with CSEA. There are so many incredible hardworking members and staff,” said Byrne.

“I have gone on all the trips. I’ve met the president, vice presidents, assemblymen and members of Congress. But it is the CSEA activists who have impressed me the most,” Byrne said.

— Sheryl C. Jenks
Union-backed law bans school bus standees

ALBANY — CSEA scored another major legislative win recently when Gov. George Pataki signed a union-sponsored bill banning standees on school buses.

The CSEA-driven law prohibits drivers from operating a school bus while students are standing. The bill applies to drivers employed by school districts and private contractors.

The union, which represents 10,000 school bus drivers throughout New York State, said the law will better protect school children by allowing drivers to focus more on the road.

“School bus drivers are responsible for the safe transport of our most precious cargo — our school children,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said. “This law will go a long way toward helping them carry out that responsibility.”

School bus drivers concur. “It’s a good idea, for the safety of everyone concerned,” said Cheryl Kaczmarek, a school bus driver in the Iroquois School District in western New York.

Although her district forbids standees, driving with kids in the aisles is dangerous.

Union leaders blamed the standee problem on bus overcrowding because of inadequate fleets, and said the new law will encourage school districts and private contractors to purchase newer and safer buses.

LEAP to extend programs to school districts

They have a thirst for knowledge and spend all day at school. But school district support staff are often overlooked when it comes to educational opportunities.

Until now.

CSEA’s Labor Education Action Program (LEAP) has helped thousands of CSEA-represented state employees boost their careers by offering tuition vouchers and help with career planning and basic education skills.

When LEAP’s advisement services were extended to local government and private-sector CSEA members last summer, it was enthusiastically received by school district members.

LEAP officials met recently with CSEA’s Special School Employees Committee to begin designing a program specifically for school employees.

Committee Chair Ron Gillespie, an electrician at the Corning School District, said this is precisely what the workers have been waiting for.

“I think school district support staff were identified as the forgotten heroes, the ones who are left out on other staff development programs,” Gillespie said.

Opening the door

Aside from the services LEAP normally offers, the program will focus on title-specific vocational training and helping employees climb their career ladders.

“I don’t think there are that many school districts that I am aware of that have educational opportunities in their contract. When it comes to career advancement, support staff and non-instructional employees are pretty much out there on their own,” said committee member Bob Anderson, a storekeeper at the Niagara Falls School District.

LEAP has started providing some services to some school district units, but still has a bit of homework to do before the program is fully up and running.

The next step will be selecting a school district to work with to put together a more comprehensive program and test it as a pilot project, said CSEA labor relations associate John Phillips, who serves as staff adviser to the Special School Employees Committee.

For more information, school district Local and Unit presidents should contact David Street at LEAP, 800-253-4332 ext. 360.

— Ed Molitor

SINGING FOR A GOOD CAUSE — A CSEA member and a union staffer are half of an Albany-based pop band which is using the debut of their CD to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Joanne DeSarbo, Schenectady Local president, plays the drums and Lisa Carey, who works in the CSEA Labor Education Action Program, is the group’s singer.

“Playing in C. Jane Run is a way to relieve my stress, it’s my alter ego” DeSarbo said. C. Jane Run has been selected to play a showcase at the Emerging Artists and Talent in Music festival in Las Vegas in early June.

Leaving the door open

Aside from the services LEAP normally offers, the program will focus on title-specific vocational training and helping employees climb their career ladders.

“At this point, I don’t think there are that many school districts that are aware of this,” said committee member Bob Anderson, a storekeeper at the Niagara Falls School District.

LEAP has started providing some services to some school district units, but still has a bit of homework to do before the program is fully up and running.

The next step will be selecting a school district to work with to put together a more comprehensive program and test it as a pilot project, said CSEA labor relations associate John Phillips, who serves as staff adviser to the Special School Employees Committee.

For more information, school district Local and Unit presidents should contact David Street at LEAP, 800-253-4332 ext. 360.
Where did you get your news today?

If you're looking for daily coverage of issues and events concerning CSEA, there's only one place to go — www.cseainc.org. Stop by today and see how we've grown.

Up-to-the-minute union news

Valuable member benefits information

Resources for activists

Links to other CSEA Locals

As more and more CSEA members, activists and officers go online, they're finding CSEA's home page a necessary stop on the information superhighway. Visit us today!