INDEX
Page 3
Nassau County CSEA members protest "pork and patronage."
Page 4
CSEA continues to fight for members' security in the wake of the Watkins Glen tragedy.
Page 5
CSEA wins a round in the battle against privatizing Niagara County's nursing home.
Page 6
CSEA members save money in Ulster County by doing their own bridge repair.
Page 7
A CSEA member fights drunk driving.
Page 8
CSEA wins back the job of an activist fired unfairly.

CSEA unit helps during holidays
MT. PLEASANT - Employees of the Town of Mt. Pleasant made the holidays brighter for hospital patients in Westchester County.
Unit President Barbara Adams wanted to acknowledge the generosity of CSEA members and management who donated candy and toiletries to the cancer patients at Rosary Hill Nursing Home and toys for the children who are undergoing rehabilitation at Blythedale Children's Hospital in Valhalla.
"This is the second year we've done this," she said. "I just want to thank everyone for their help."

Nassau DPW workers save county money

MINEOLA - When Joe Licardi heard that Nassau County was thinking of contracting out an unpleasant job, he and his fellow Department of Public Works (DPW) employees didn't like the precedent it would set.

So they volunteered to clean out a long-unused parachute hangar full of pigeon droppings, a health threat that caused the county to receive a health and safety citation.
"We saved the county at least $5,000," said Licardi, DPW Unit president. "And I think we demonstrated that we have a DPW workforce that is dedicated to keeping public work for public employees."

DPW employees from several worksites volunteered to scrub and hose down the old hangar at Nassau Community College Campus, Licardi said.
"It was a great demonstration of our guys pitching in to help the county," he said.

The unit is part of CSEA Nassau County Local 830.
A fight for public service
CSEA battles ‘pork and patronage’ in Nassau

CSEA pressure pays off in Nassau budget

Nassau County CSEA members and public services are the big winners as a result of a bipartisan county budget adopted by the Nassau County Board of Supervisors as this edition of The Public Sector went to press.

"The public pressure that CSEA brought on the supervisors through testimony, demonstrations, political action and newspaper ads paid off," said CSEA Nassau County Local 830 President Rita Wallace.

There are no layoffs and the budget restores about 1,000 positions to help maintain essential services. CSEA remains critical of excessive contracting-out of services that could be better performed by Nassau County employees.

MINEOLA - "Privatizing is hogwash!" shouted CSEA Nassau County Local 830 members who mounted a massive protest outside a Nassau County Board of Supervisors budget meeting, recently.

To drive home CSEA's disgust with politicians willing to sell public services for patronage and pork, the union parked a giant pig at the supervisor's front door.

Union members, incensed by North Hempstead Town Supervisor Ben Zwirn's proposal to sell the Nassau County Medical Center (NCMC) to private, for-profit vendors, hung Zwirn in effigy. Privatizing NCMC will lead to nothing but "pork and patronage" for the politicians, shouted hundreds of CSEA Nassau County members facing chilling winter winds.

"This is nothing but a hare-brained scheme," Nassau CSEA Local 830 President Rita Wallace said.

"Who can believe that a bunch of greedy doctors will maintain the quality of urgently needed medical center health services when they don't bring in the bucks?" asked Wallace, pointing to a Los Angeles study of privatized public health services which called them catastrophic failures. "It's insulting and dangerous to put our Nassau families at risk."

County officials are studying a proposal to privatize NCMC, which houses the state-of-the-art trauma center and burn unit.

According to NCMC Unit President Sue Duffe, CSEA members believe that a profit-motivated consortium of physicians would not feel compelled to maintain units that are not money-makers like the hospital's pediatric intensive care unit.

"Who would have taken in the 400 babies born here to indigent mothers last year with no insurance?" Duffe asked.

Two weeks prior to the rally both Wallace and CSEA Long Island Region President Gloria Moran participated in lengthy budget hearings at the county seat in Mineola. In a packed hearing room till 1 a.m., the Nassau Board of Supervisors heard from CSEA officials, senior citizens, religious groups and other community organizations opposed to the privatization of NCMC and the A. Holly Patterson Geriatric facility.

CSEA is building a coalition of families, union and community organizations in support of the medical center.

The medical center situation is just one of CSEA's concerns about contracting out in Nassau County. For years the union has raised concerns about wasteful county practices in contracting with for-profit vendors over work that could be handled better and more cost-effectively by county employees.

HUNDREDS OF CSEA MEMBERS PROTEST the waste of contracting-out public services in Nassau County. Among the union's concerns is a proposal to privatize the Nassau County Medical Center.
Securing public worksites
CSEA's highest priority

Alarmed by increasing acts of violence against front-line public employees, CSEA has prepared a guide booklet on workplace security for distribution to state and local government managers statewide.

CSEA is following up the distribution by meeting with public employers across the state to assess worksite risks and implement steps to improve security.

The issue of safety in the workplace took on a sense of urgency following the murder of four CSEA-represented Schuyler County social service workers in October.

"Securing public worksites is CSEA's most important priority," CSEA President Joe McDermott said. "Our members are facing on-the-job violence in cities, suburban and rural areas. It's happening everywhere and it's unrealistic for anyone to think 'it can't happen here.'"

CSEA's guide booklet, "Security in the Workplace," covers areas such as in-house security procedures, appropriate training, structural modifications and the range of security systems and devices that are available. The union recommends site by site assessments as to what security measures are appropriate while stressing that adequate protective measures do not necessarily require costly capital investments.

McDermott offered the resources and expertise of CSEA's Safety and Health Department and Employee Assistance Program to assist public employers in developing appropriate security.

Additionally, CSEA is seeking improvements in the Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) standards to include workplace security. Currently the PESH standards do not specifically address security. CSEA is seeking an immediate emergency standard through the state Labor Department.

CSEA has sought safety improvements through labor-management initiatives for years, and many public employers have beefed up security, such as installing metal detectors, posting security guards or installing plexiglass partitions to safeguard people. But the Watkins Glen murders in Schuyler County emphasized the need for stronger actions.

Direct contact increases the danger for workers

Workplaces where public employees and the public come together in direct contact are increasingly dangerous. The problem of inadequate security is widespread, involving hundreds, perhaps thousands, of state and local government worksites. Thousands of public employees are in potential danger at any given time.

And that's why improved workplace safety is one of CSEA's highest priorities.

Take the Nassau County Department of Social Services facility, for instance. CSEA members who work there say it's a very dangerous place.

'It's like a war zone," DSS Safety Chairman Mike Timmons says.

"We are threatened and everything, and you may get killed here," says DSS receptionists Mary Bryant and Esther Williams.

Chairs in the waiting area are nailed to the floor to prevent frequent incidents of clients using them as weapons against county workers and other clients. An angry client once threw a computer terminal at an employee who had to be treated at a hospital for injuries. This is the same office where CSEA member Michael Caposi was stabbed by another distraught client and was so traumatized by the incident that he could not return to work at DSS.

"People are coming out of mental hospitals and jails and then coming here," said CSEA Unit President Bob Caldwell, who has consistently requested metal detectors be installed as part of an expanded security program.

In Madison County in central New York, the county has recently limited building access, installed a metal detector, stationed a sheriff's deputy in the reception area and plans to install panic buttons and special locking doors.

"The county administration was quick to respond with new safety steps to protect our members. We credit them for their timely and professional response," CSEA Madison County Local 827 President Rosie Tallman said.

In Herkimer County the county has limited building access, purchased security mirrors, removed name signs in the parking lots and taken other measures to improve safety.

CSEA Herkimer County Unit President Sherri Morris-Schiebel said the slaying of four Schuyler County DSS workers in October brought back memories of a 1984 incident in Herkimer County when a man shot and killed his girlfriend and then himself in front of terrified DSS employees.

"Employees here are more cautious now," Morris-Schiebel said. "They realize a lot of the new security measures are for their protection, not their inconvenience."

NASSAU COUNTY Department of Social Services employees are exposed to all forms of physical violence from clients. Employees have petitioned Nassau County Executive Thomas Gulotta to construct plexiglass partitions around exposed work areas and for more police presence throughout the building.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

In Niagara County

Talks could end contracting-out plan

LOCKPORT - A year-long fight to avert the privatization of Mount View Health Facility, Niagara County's nursing home, may soon be won. The county has agreed to talks that may cancel privatization.

“We're hopeful the talks will bring about the end of calls for privatizing such a valuable public facility,” CSEA Political Action Coordinator Roger Sherrie said.

He was referring to a joint agreement signed by CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Mark Jurenovich, Niagara County Legislature Chair Lee Simonson, AFSCME Area Representative Frank DiStefano and AFSCME Local 182 President Rosemary Roberts.

The agreement postpones for three months any attempts to sell the facility while serious discussions are held by all three sides on ways to make Mount View more self-sufficient.

“This dialogue will be intended to increase labor-management cooperation, reduce taxpayer subsidies, improve employee morale and enhance patient services,” said the joint statement.

While all agree that the forthcoming discussions will be challenging and may require arduous compromise, this statement represents a faithful effort of all involved to enter this dialogue with a sincere desire and effort to keep Mount View a public facility.”

“This represents a real turn of events from a year ago when legislators predicted the home would cost the county $2 million for 1992,” said Linda Gibbons, Niagara County Employees Unit president. “I think it’s a real tribute to the tenacity and ability of Roger Sherrie, who stuck in there when almost no one thought it could be saved and kept plugging away. He helped us to show the value of keeping Mount View public.

“With close to half of the budget’s $2 million remaining in Mount View’s account at year’s end, the facility budget for 1993 will be reduced to $600,000,” she said.

While things are looking better for Mount View’s future, Sherrie warns the battle is not yet won.

“The picture is much brighter than it was a year ago, but we must continue to stay positive and work toward achieving our goal through these talks,” Sherrie said.

“Hopefully, we'll be able to celebrate a new beginning within three months.”

CSEA fights layoffs in Schoharie County

By Daniel X. Campbell
CSEA Communications Associate

SCHOHARIE - Given a choice of giving back a hard-earned 5 percent salary increase or facing layoffs, Schoharie County Local 848 members voted overwhelmingly to stand up against the unilateral demand of the county Board of Supervisors.

As The Public Sector went to press, Schoharie County was in the process of passing a budget with a 24 percent tax increase coupled with a layoff threat of 20 full-time workers and two part-time employees spread throughout a workforce of approximately 320.

The layoffs would hurt the county’s highway and social services departments the most. Taxpayers will need those services more as the winter deepens and the local economy is hit by the layoffs of county workers.

In what must be considered one of the most trying weeks in Schoharie County labor relations history, the Schoharie County workers spent time on the informational picket line, at a public hearing on the original proposal for a 59 percent tax increase and at the bargaining table and union ballot box.

“We’re in double trouble,” CSEA Local 848 President Bill Betz said. “We’re taxpayers here and we work here, too. We want to help the county but we want to be sure that our members are protected. The board wanted us to make up our minds on a salary cut while they still weren’t sure about the real budget tax increase and the total number of layoffs.”

Albany County workers still angry over budget ‘deal’

ALBANY - CSEA Albany County Highway Department members are angry with the political deal which has supposedly resolved a long, bitter county budget battle.

The highway department is hit hard in a county budget calling for the layoffs of 80 full-time and 30 part-time workers. The budget deal was cut after the county executive extended the effective date of the layoffs from Dec. 31 to March 31.

“We were not satisfied, not satisfied at all,” CSEA Capital Region President C. Allen Mead said. “In good faith our members attended many meetings on the proposed budget with both Democrats and Republicans, showing them what could be generated, jobs and services saved. But 80 members still face layoffs after a 90-day extension. We want jobs saved, not extended.”

What is upsetting the workers most is that the politicians were able to save five political jobs in the county executive’s office but couldn't find a way to save more of the workers’ positions.

“This isn’t over,” Mead said. “We are going to continue to fight to save more jobs. We're in bargaining for all four of our units and any money the county asks us to generate in cost savings will have to be directly assigned to saving additional CSEA bargaining unit positions, not political ones.”

During the many public hearings on the proposed budget, CSEA members informed the various parties of the union’s willingness to save tax dollars by ending double insurance coverage situations through a buy out. Initially, the county executive’s budget believed savings which could be generated through this method could save a substantial number of positions.

“They can’t take that money without negotiations and we won’t negotiate it without the savings being used to save our members’ positions,” Mead said.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT NEWS

Ulster County employees are

Bridging inflationary costs

WARWARSING — Construction costs increase by leaps and bounds everywhere, but Ulster County employees are saving taxpayers money this year.

That’s because county employees are doing the infrastructure repair work instead of profit contractors.

“We are one of the few counties in the state doing its own bridge work,” County Bridge Supervisor Jim Cannizzaro said. “Some small repair work is done in most counties, but we’re doing major construction.”

Bridge crews often have to shut down an access road for days while they repair a bridge — inconveniencing many people. Despite that, recent letters to Ulster County officials after work on a bridge in Phoenicia was completed were overwhelmingly complimentary.

“Grateful residents now have a safe way home,” one writer said.

“Work progressed swiftly and in record time,” another resident said, “I don’t believe a private firm could have done it any better or faster.”

“Thanks for the miracle,” said the supervisor of a nearby town, “I want to commend all the workers for their diligence, hard work and courtesy to the residents.”

Department of Public Works Commissioner Thomas Hart said training and using DPW workers to repair the bridges is saving the county about two-thirds of what it would cost to contract out the work.

Hart, who has experience building bridges, said he was happy to pass his knowledge on to county employees.

“They understand the wherewithall of how to go about it and what I want accomplished,” he said.

“We proved we can do it,” Cannizzaro said. “Ulster County will set the pace.”

POMONA — Rockland County has been cited for numerous violations of state health standards for the manner in which county environmental health aides (EHAs) were required to decapitate animals suspected of having rabies.

The EHAs are required to decapitate already dead animals so the skulls can be sent to the state Department of Health labs in Albany for analysis. Most counties in the state contract out decapitations to veterinarians.

A Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) inspector cited Rockland County after CSEA filed a complaint charging the employees were forced to work in primitive conditions with improper tools and little or no protective equipment.

An article about the situation in the November edition of The Public Sector drew an unusually large number of responses from readers concerned about the conditions under which the employees were required to perform the grim task.

“The Rockland County Health Department’s transmission prevention policy was deficient,” the PESH report stated. The report also ordered the county to provide employees with proper equipment “to protect them against blood or other body fluids that potentially contain the rabies virus.”

The PESH inspector ordered the county to provide training by a veterinarian and proper tools and work surfaces, which the county has since provided.

CSEA also presented its case at a grievance hearing as this issue of The Public Sector went to press. Unit President Caroline Osinga filed the grievance charging the practice violates the safety and health clause in the CSEA/Rockland County contract.

In dangerous conditions, Rockland workers are

Forced to face rabies

By Anita Manley
CSEA Communications Associate

NEW CITY - Some workers in Rockland County are being forced to face the deadly rabies virus as they hack off the heads of animals in primitive conditions with improper tools and little or no protective equipment.

Determined to avoid the potentially risky practice, CSEA is fighting with every resource available. The union has gone to court to force the county to stop ordering the environmental health aides (EHAs) to do the decapitations. The state Department of Labor has already inspected the worksite based on CSEA’s complaint, its report is pending.

And CSEA has filed a grievance because the practice violates the safety and health clause in the contract.

The EHAs decapitate the animals suspected of having rabies so the skulls can be sent to the state Department of Health labs in Albany for analysis.

CSEA is fighting the assignments because they are not in the EHAs’ job description: work is easily contracted through contact with infected animals, and the conditions under which the employees perform the work are unsanitary and dangerous, CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Annette Raetz said.

CSEA Unit President Caroline Osinga met with the county health commissioner in August, but made little progress.

“We said that if these problems had not been properly addressed by the immediate supervisors, Raetz said. “We cited lack of training and personal protective gear.”

Most New York state counties use veterinarians to perform the decapitations. Rockland County officials said they don’t hire one because of budget constraints. Raetz said.

The EHAs decapitate animals in a 15-by-18 foot fenced-in area behind an animal shelter. They are expected to use tools such as pruning shears, hacksaws and hunting knives. They previously used an ax. The county recently issued the EHAs new knives, a sharpening stone and a cutting block.

Rather than a sterile stainless steel table, the EHAs bend over a steel table, tools and some training. Previously the employees used knives and axes to decapitate animals on a cement slab that doubles as a door stop in an area behind an animal shelter.

None of these changes happened until the union started to make noise,” Raetz said.

“What they have done is not sufficient,” Raetz said. “They should have surgical masks and individual protective eye gear.

What the county should do is hire a trained medical technician to do the work.”

Raetz also objects to the employees being forced to work outdoors, especially in extreme weather.
Fumigation results stink

CSEA files complaint over unsafe practices in Eastchester high school

EASTCHESTER - CSEA has filed a complaint with the state Department of Labor (DOL) over unsafe conditions at a school after it was fumigated.

While waiting for the DOL report, CSEA members are fuming themselves after the Eastchester School District tried to blame an employee for the problems.

The district hired a contractor to fumigate the high school on a Sunday, but when custodians opened the school the next day, it was still a mess. "It was a nightmare," Unit President Roy West said. "They used so much liquid that even after 13 hours the building was full of puddles and an oily film, and the place smelled bad."

Despite the conditions, school district officials opened the building. After students and teachers complained of nausea; rashes, disorientation, asthma attacks and eye irritation, West said, the district closed the building. Then officials ordered the maintenance crew to clean up the mess. "They gave us no protective equipment and we didn't even know what the stuff was," West said. "Our people started to clean and some of them became ill."

When the district re-opened the building the next day, West complained to the Westchester County Department of Health which sent an inspector. He immediately closed the building. Meanwhile, CSEA Health and Safety Specialist Dan Morra filed a Public Employee Safety and Health complaint with DOL.

Finally, the district hired a professional cleaning company, but the health department still would not clear the building for occupancy.

School officials then asked CSEA members to clean once again. West insisted on and obtained protective equipment for the custodians and a written assurance from the health department that the building was safe. A week later, the building opened once again.

West, meanwhile, expects the district to be cited for numerous health violations.

Many school district employees are still complaining about health problems. Ironically, the district is now trying to blame a CSEA member, claiming that a custodian did not properly ventilate the building. West said.

The school district's course of action "was totally inappropriate," West told the school board. "Had they responded properly to the situation right away, I never would have been forced to go to the Department of Health."

West said he will establish a Health and Safety Committee "to prevent the possibility of this ever happening again."

CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Shawn McCollister praised West for his action. "There was a lot of confusion and a lot of unanswered questions," he said. "Roy's intuitiveness and diligence in handling the situation and protecting the members were excellent. He communicated constantly with the membership and pestered management into getting a potentially dangerous situation resolved.

Education, support help her cope

By Anita Manley

CSEA Communications Associate

WAPPINGERS FALLS - If there is good that can come from pain, then there is a lesson to be learned from tragedy. Arlene and Bill Jacobs share their pain and tragedy to help others learn about the consequences that come from drinking and driving.

They know this first hand. Six years ago, their son Chris was killed by a drunk driver. Their older son Billy was severely injured and today is still in the process of recovery. Two other teens were also killed in the same accident.

"This is my therapy," said Arlene, a library clerk with the Wappingers Central School District and member of Dutchess County Educational Local 867.

Now active with the Dutchess County Chapter of R.I.D. (Remove Intoxicated Drivers), Jacobs is helping other families to cope with their own tragedies and at the same time is impressing upon lawmakers the importance of the enforcement of tough legislation to deter drivers who drink.

It's not easy to re-live the memories, Jacobs said, but if it helps to instill a fear that stops even one person from drinking and driving, it is well worth it.

Jacobs described some of the calls she has received since her sons' accident. One was from a mother who showed a newspaper article about the 1986 accident to her son, an occasional social drinker. Other calls come from parents whose children have survived accidents, like a parent whose daughter was in a coma. Recently, a student at the high school her son attended asked Jacobs to speak as part of a drunk driving project he was coordinating. He videotaped her talking about the accident and the work of RID. Bill was also featured in the tape.

"I told the kids how Billy had to re-learn to breathe, eat, walk and go to the bathroom," she said.

As a RID activist, Jacobs has been involved in community awareness and education projects. One project the group is proud of is a Victim's Aid Package distributed to families at the hospital. It contains information to help families through a crisis by telling them just what steps to take when a loved one is involved in a drunk driving accident - victim's rights, legal resources and even a map of the hospital.

RID's goals are to strengthen and enforce drunk driving laws. The chapter sponsors a Memorial Day Service held in front of the Department of Motor Vehicles in Poughkeepsie. They display a banner with the names of victims of drunk driving.
CSEA’s efforts put member back to work

MALONE - After more than two years of legal battling, CSEA Franklin County Local 817 member Jay Shanty says he’s glad to be back to work, and has CSEA to thank for getting him there.

Shanty, a medium equipment operator for the Village of Malone, recently returned to his job with full back pay of more than $20,000. CSEA won an arbitration for him, arguing he was unjustly fired.

Shanty lost his job in April 1990 after being disciplined for insubordination and misconduct. CSEA said he was fired because of his union activities.

According to CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Charles Bird, the union and the village agreed before a PERB hearing officer to settle the case with binding arbitration. Shanty’s case went to PERB after the union filed an improper practice charge claiming that Shanty was disciplined for his union involvement.

A shop steward and CSEA unit secretary, Shanty also had a grievance pending when he was fired.

Shanty said he was fired after he took some pictures on the job of practices he believed were unethical. The subsequent suspension and termination were over “a bogus charge” of misconduct and insubordination, he said.

He immediately turned to CSEA Franklin County Local 817 President Mary Hanna for help.

Hanna said Shanty was anguished over his termination, which she termed “unjust.” She told Shanty that everything would be okay, that CSEA would help him get his job back and to just “hang in there.”

She’s glad that advice paid off, she said.

“He is a good and conscientious worker, as well as a concerned union officer,” she said. “I’m very pleased that we came through for him and that he stuck with it through the long, frustrating haul.”

During the two years it took to win his job back, Shanty was forced to go on unemployment and was out of work for a while before going back to his previous employer. He got a “raw deal,” he said, but CSEA helped him through it.

“It was unjust, but at least CSEA was always there for me. I couldn’t have done it without the union,” he said. “Mary gave me a lot of moral support; she kept me going. Charlie, too. I learned a lot about the system and how the union backs you up. I can’t thank them enough.”

In his award, the arbitrator said the village did not have just cause to dismiss Shanty, noted that there was insufficient evidence to establish any charges of misconduct or insubordination and ordered him reinstated with full back pay.

No contract means a bleak holiday season

PORT JEFFERSON STATION - Contemplating a bleak holiday with no contract settlement in sight, more than 300 CSEA Comsewogue School District employees and their supporters hit the streets, demanding to be heard by the School Board.

“I can’t predict what’s going to happen, but this was the biggest demonstration we’ve ever had,” CSEA Comsewogue School District Unit President Lucy Jackson said.

“The board is holding the cards, but they got a look at how many people we had there and it was terrific!”

A 24-year employee who has been on CSEA negotiating teams for 19 years, Jackson’s request to address the board was flatly denied.

“We packed the room with CSEA members. Then the board went into executive session and refused to hear from CSEA,” Labor Relations Specialist John Clahane said. Calling the board’s behavior regrettable, Clahane maintained that the Comsewogue School Board has an obligation not just to CSEA members, but to the whole community to let them know what’s going on and hear both sides.

Local newspapers carried CSEA’s complete two page statement in stories about the board’s refusal to allow the union to be heard, Jackson said.

With the press coverage we received, I think this will work to the union’s advantage because now the people in the district will all have had the opportunity to hear the union’s side of this dispute,” she said.

Negotiations were scheduled to resume in mid-December.
A message from CSEA President Joe McDermott

Let's get to work on CSEA's legislative goals

CSEA is already preparing to build on last year's success in the state Legislature. Our agenda (see page 11) is as broad-based as ever, but three important pieces of legislation that affect each and every member will be at the top of our agenda.

We must fight this half-baked idea that hiring for-profit private vendors saves money and makes sense. It does neither. CSEA is determined to put our opposition to such irresponsible policy into law.

We are submitting a bill to the state Legislature which would make it more difficult for governments and school districts to contract out services that rightfully belong in the public sector. If passed, the law would require governments to prove the alleged effectiveness of selling out to a for-profit vendor and would require more responsibility from that vendor.

I am convinced that given a fair comparison, public employees will come out on top, providing better, more responsible service at a better cost. All the while, government maintains direct control over the provision of public service.

Fairness is at the heart of another CSEA legislative priority: permanent cost of living adjustments (COLA) for public employee retirees. All public employee retirees are suffering the ravages of higher costs for everything from food, clothing and shelter to ever-increasing health care costs.

We need to fight for permanent COLA for retirees not only because they need help in keeping up with inflation, but also because they earned a fair and equitable retirement. It's unfortunate we have to fight in the Legislature for COLA when it should be a matter of simple common decency, but we do — and we will.

Speaking of pensions, CSEA will continue its campaign to give the NYS Employee Retirement System a new Board of Trustees, with public employee representation, to oversee its business and investment of retirement system funds.

The system now has a sole trustee, the state comptroller. The money he invests is our money, and we should have some say in those investments. CSEA has been calling for creation of a Board of Trustees with employee representation for several years, and we will continue until we win.

We face tremendous obstacles in winning our legislative objectives, but we can do it. Last year, with the help of hundreds of activists and a complex grassroots effort, we convinced the Legislature to pass into law Local Government Agency Shop. Again the odds were great, and we had to fight for a decade, but we stuck to our guns, and we triumphed.

I can't emphasize enough the importance each and every CSEA member played in that victory — and I can't emphasize enough that we need your support and activism again this year.

Your presence alone is powerful: Legislators listen when we tell them we represent 265,000 public employees and retirees. But you are far more powerful when you join the fray. You can make phone calls, write letters, work with your local's Political Action Committee. The more CSEA members we have, the better off we are. But the more active members we have, the stronger we are.

We face great obstacles, and we need all the strength we can get. Get involved, and help CSEA improve all our futures.
INDEX

Page 11
CSEA lines up its legislative agenda.

Pages 12-13
A comprehensive round-up of CSEA's important news in 1992.

Page 14
CSEA Local and Unit officers elected last year took advantage of extensive training in CSEA's Officer Institutes.

Page 15
A CSEA member helps save the life of two young girls, nieces of another CSEA member.

Page 16
The annual CSEA Women's Conference covers important issues of workplace safety and political achievements.

Notice of Election

CSEA regional officer elections will be conducted this year

All CSEA regional officer positions will be up for election this year. CSEA's statewide Board of Directors members are expected to adopt a regional officer election schedule at the Board's Jan. 14 meeting. A complete election schedule and listing of eligibility requirements as approved by the Board of Directors will be published in the next edition of The Public Sector.

Under CSEA's open election procedures, any member in good standing can have his or her name placed on a ballot by obtaining the required number of CSEA member signatures on an official petition form.

Coming in next month's edition

Long Island public employees demonstrate their value in storm emergency response

As this edition of The Public Sector went to press, CSEA state and local government members on Long Island were hard at work dealing with the aftermath of the N'oreaster that struck the region in mid-December.

The storm, which weather experts say was possibly the worst to ever hit the Long Island and Metropolitan New York City area, caused dramatic flooding, coastal erosion, and disruption of public services while wreaking havoc on thousands of lives.

Public employees have played an integral role in helping people put lives back together, preventing further damage and bringing communities back to normalcy.

The tireless dedication and caring of CSEA members is a clear demonstration of the value of public employees.

The Public Sector will provide full coverage of the Long Island clean-up effort in the February edition.

CSEA Southern Region III office
735 State Route 52
Beacon, NY 12508

New CSEA Southern Region office opened

FISHKILL — CSEA Southern Region members have a bright new efficient office to go to on union business.

CSEA replaced rented offices in Fishkill and moved into a new 7,500-square-foot building located about four miles south of the old office.

The new address is:
735 State Route 52
Beacon, New York 12508

The new telephone number is:
914-831-1000

Summary of Board of Directors meeting

Editor's note: The Public Sector regularly publishes a summary of actions taken by CSEA's Board of Directors at the Board's official meetings. The summary is prepared by CSEA Statewide Secretary Irene Carr for the information of union members.

In official business at its most recent meeting, the board:

• Adopted a "CSEA Boycott Policy" which states that to promote "a united position in support of our brothers and sisters in the labor movement, the President of CSEA shall advise regions, local and units of our participation in any boycott, job action or demonstration" and the "Regions, locals and units which are asked to participate, in the name of CSEA, in boycotts, job actions or demonstrations shall contact the Office of the President for advice and direction";
• Placed in administratorship the Onondaga County Probation Unit of Local 834;
• Added to the Region I political action committee Robert Blumhagen and Claudette Sullivan; and
• Proposed that the union's 1993 legislative agenda include the elimination of all Mini-Public Employment Relations Boards.

Questions concerning this summary of actions taken by CSEA's statewide Board of Directors should be directed to CSEA statewide Secretary Irene Carr, CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210, 1-800-342-4146 or 518-434-0191.

Long Island public employees demonstrate their value in storm emergency response

Public employees have played an integral role in helping people put lives back together, preventing further damage and bringing communities back to normalcy.

The storm, which weather experts say was possibly the worst to ever hit the Long Island and Metropolitan New York City area, caused dramatic flooding, coastal erosion, and disruption of public services while wreaking havoc on thousands of lives.

The Public Sector will provide full coverage of the Long Island clean-up effort in the February edition.

Inc. (Local 721), Brookhaven Materials Recycling Facility (Local 722) and NYS Division of the Lottery (Local 661);
• Designated Lake Placid as the site of the 1995 Annual Delegates Meeting;
• Added to the Region II political action committee Sammy Losato, John Marchese and Claudette Sullivan; and
• Proposed that the union's 1993 legislative agenda include the elimination of all Mini-Public Employment Relations Boards.

Questions concerning this summary of actions taken by CSEA's statewide Board of Directors should be directed to CSEA statewide Secretary Irene Carr, CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12210, 1-800-342-4146 or 518-434-0191.
CSEA sets legislative goals

ALBANY — CSEA is gearing up for the 1993 session of the state Legislature.

In 1992, CSEA achieved one of its highest priorities: local government agency shop. Fresh from that victory, CSEA's Political Action Committee has compiled an ambitious legislative agenda.

While continuing to press for important goals, such as pension supplementation and permanent agency shop, CSEA will pursue a variety of legislation to improve the working conditions and lives of its members.

A list of many of the 1993 legislative goals follows.

**Agency Shop**
This bill would make agency shop permanent and uniform for all public employees.

**Agency Shop Extension**
This legislation would extend current agency shop fee provisions for two years.

**Contracting Out**
This bill would limit the conditions under which governments can contract out to private vendors.

**Independent Hearing Officers**
This bill would ensure the appointment of independent hearing officers in disciplinary proceedings.

**Injunctive Relief**
This bill would allow public employee unions to apply to the courts for injunctive relief for an employee facing improper practice charges.

**Right to Union Representation**
This bill would give public employees the right to have a union representative present during informal interrogations, investigations and inquiries by their employers.

**Older Workers Benefit Protection Act**
Federal law requires New York state to eliminate disparity for employee disability retirement and death benefits. Under current law, benefits diminish based on the employee's age. This bill would require a level playing field be put in place for all employees regardless of age.

**Abolish Mini-PERBS**
This bill would abolish mini-PERBS other than the New York City Office of Collective Bargaining.

**VDT Safety**
This bill provides minimum safeguards and protections for video display terminal operators, such as alternative work schedules, protection for pregnant employees and general specifications for VDT terminals and furniture.

**Family and Medical Leave**
Under this legislation, employers would guarantee employees their jobs while allowing them to take time off for specific family and medical situations.

**Dependents Health Insurance**
This bill requires that unmarried surviving spouses and dependents be able to purchase health insurance at one quarter of the full cost.

**Inpatient/Outpatient Staff-to-Patient Ratios**
This bill would establish ratios of staff to patients in Office of Mental Health.

**School Issues**

**Elimination of School Bus Standees**
This bill would make it unlawful to operate a school bus to or from school or school activities with any passenger standing.

**Unemployment Compensation for Education Support Employees**
Under this bill, New York state would offer unemployment benefits between academic years or terms to non-instructional school employees.

**Contingency Budget**
This legislation would provide school districts a way to adopt budgets that include cafeteria and transportation services without voter approval.

**Retiree Issues**

**Pension Supplementation, Permanent COLA**
This bill would extend present supplemental retirement benefits, increase percentages and provide annual cost of living adjustments to the pension allowance of retired public employees.

**Health Insurance For Retirees**
This bill would prohibit municipalities and the state from reducing the health insurance benefits of retirees.

**Board of Trustees**
This bill would create a Board of Trustees with employee representation for the Employees Retirement System. The system now has as sole trustee the state comptroller.

**Tier Shift/Retroactive Retirement Credit**
This bill would establish an administrative review procedure to allow credit for previous service and assignment of retroactive dates of membership.

**South African Divestment**
This bill would require the divestment of retirement system funds invested in entities doing business in or with the Republic of South Africa over three years.
**MARCH**

Wayne County CSEA members refused to return to their work sites after the June strike over a health benefits package. The members were in the middle of a state-wide strike by CSEA local councils, and the strike continued throughout the year and carry over unresolved problems at three Saratoga County office buildings. (CSEA)

**APRIL**

Several CSEA state locals conduct series of collective bargaining meetings with state department heads, gathering data on the state's fiscal year. (CSEA)

CSEA state council talks. (CSEA)

CSEA officials plan CSEA state-wide conference to be held in June. (CSEA)

**JUNE**

CSEA's annual convention to be held in June. (CSEA)

CSEA's state-wide Board of Directors takes charge of the CSEA state council. (CSEA)

CSEA's official publication.

**AGUST**

Safety inspector, responding to CSEA's calls for help, made emergency repairs to the fire hydrant near the Saratoga County Office Building in Troy. (CSEA)

**SEPTOMBER**

State Legislature approves local government reform bill, which is expected to go into effect in January 1993. (CSEA)

CSEA's official publication.

**OCTOMBER**

CSEA member named recipient of the Irene Carr Leadership Award for his work in the Albany office complex. (CSEA)

**DECEMBER**

CSEA's new state council office to be opened in January. (CSEA)

CSEA's official publication.

CSEA's official publication.
**GENERAL NEWS**

**Officer Institutes a success**

CSEA trains 1,500 local, unit officers across state

CSEA local and unit officers elected in 1992 had the opportunity to learn the details of their jobs and experience the spirit of CSEA leadership at a series of Officers Institutes held across the state.

The institutes also gave the local and unit officers a chance to meet with CSEA’s statewide leaders at the same time they were benefiting from the efforts of CSEA’s education and training staff.

More than 1,500 officers attended the weekend institutes held in each of CSEA’s six regions.

CSEA Statewide Secretary talks with officers, including CSEA Local 648 Third Vice President Mary Pat Fox, right, at the Central Region Institute.

Capital Region officers prepare for the Institute.

CSEA Local 507 President George Ballard, CSEA Executive Vice President Danny Donohue, CSEA President Joe McDermott and Local 507 First Vice President Jack Shaw talk at the Southern Region Institute.

CSEA statewide Treasurer Mary Sullivan talks with Dominic Spacone, a unit president in Retiree Local 903, at the Western Region Institute.

The Officers Institute for the Metropolitan Region packed in a crowd of newly-elected local and unit officers.

The Officers Institute brought smiles to the faces of these Long Island officers.

January 1993
MT. HOPE - Two youngsters who were severely burned in an explosion of a propane tank are doing well, thanks to a CSEA member and his wife.

The two girls, Bridgett, 7, and Kelli, 6, were the subject of a story in the November edition of The Public Sector. They are the nieces of Margaret Trentacosta, a CSEA member who works for the Ramapo-Catskill Library System in Orange County.

What was not included in the previous story was the heroic effort of neighbors Ralph and Frances Gonzalez, who live next door to the accident scene. Ralph, a member of CSEA DMNA Local 252, was in his house when he heard the explosion next door.

Gonzalez saw white smoke and fire and immediately called the Otisville Volunteer Fire Department. While he was on the phone, Bridgett and Kelli’s mother, Jessica, came to the door with her children under her arms. The girls and the mother were screaming hysterically.

“They’re clothes and most of their hair was burned off and you could see where their flesh had been removed,” Gonzalez said.

Coincidentally, Frances had seen a program on television just the night before on the treatment of burn victims. She and the girls’ mother removed the children’s clothing with scissors and applied cool water to the girls. Ralph, meanwhile, helped firefighters and police who by this time had arrived.

Dr. Robert Salisbury, director of the Burn Center, said Mrs. Gonzalez’s quick thinking prevented deeper injury to children’s skin. A police officer on the scene, Robert Hughes, said, “In my opinion, they saved them from further injury.”

“I’m just glad we were home,” Gonzalez said, who pointed out that the houses are in a rural area with the next closest home a mile away.

Trentacosta reported recently that the girls are doing well. Bridgett has been released from the hospital, but will require further plastic surgery and will be fitted with a special garment that she will have to wear to protect her skin. As this issue of The Public Sector goes to press, Kelli hopes to be home for the holidays. The family has rented a new home in Orange County which was offered to them after the family’s story appeared in a local newspaper.

Trentacosta said the community has been very supportive in contributing to the burn fund for the girls, one of whom has no health insurance. Expenses have been incurred by the family from hotel bills and transportation to Westchester Medical Center.

The address for the Burn Fund has been changed since it was published in the November Public Sector. Anyone wishing to contribute, can send their donation to the Everett Burns Relief Fund, P.O. Box 945, Middletown, NY 10940.

Lisa Hauth and Deborah Yoder pursued their grievances to the end

Heroism is defense of a principle

By Daniel X. Campbell
CSEA Communications Associate

ALBANY — CSEA members who file meritorious grievances and are willing to pursue them to the end, win or lose, are heroes and heroines in the eyes of the union. Such individuals have learned there is a way to fight the system, to make a point by taking a stand on a principle.

People such as Lisa Hauth and Deborah Yoder, two grade 14s in the state Department of Social Services (DSS), for instance. Hauth and Yoder have used the collective bargaining system’s grievance procedure as it is supposed to be used.

They won an out-of-title work grievance, not once but twice, and along the way helped CSEA establish new legal precedent which will aid CSEA members in the future.

Hauth and Yoder were constantly being asked, and ordered, by DSS management to perform out-of-title work at a grade 18 level. Both performed the work in an exemplary manner, and after doing the out-of-title work for several months without any relief, they filed a grievance seeking out-of-title pay.

Working within the CSEA contract, Hauth and Yoder contacted CSEA Local 688 President Charlie Staats, who in turn informed CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Michael Sheldon of the situation, and the four began working together as a team.

Hauth and Yoder produced records of their numerous out-of-title work assignments, having kept copious notes of each assignment they were given. They compared their job descriptions and the job descriptions of other related titles in higher grades, and categorized their duties in such a way that it was patently clear they were indeed performing out-of-title work.

Meanwhile Staats and Sheldon compiled the paperwork necessary to pursue the out-of-title claim.

In February 1991 Hauth and Yoder were informed by the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) that they were performing out-of-title work and they were awarded nearly $3,000 each in back pay. GOER also ordered DSS to not assign anymore out-of-title work to Hauth and Yoder.

“The importance of this grievance and the resulting court action is that it established that CSEA can go to court to enforce third step grievance decisions regarding cease and desist orders on out-of-title work,” said CSEA Associate Counsel Paul S. Bamberger, who developed the union’s court case. “This case demonstrated that we don’t have to go back and continually file new grievances indefinitely in out-of-title work situations.”

“DSS management isn’t too happy with this decision, and upper state management isn’t happy with CSEA’s persistence in this case and the use of court orders to stop out-of-title work situations,” Staats said. “But all of this could have been avoided if DSS has complied with the first decision and stopped forcing the employees to perform out-of-title work.”

Lisa Hauth
Local 688
President
Charlie Staats

Deborah Yoder
Local 688
President

DSS paid the women but then...
Worksite security, political gains highlight CSEA Women's Conference

By Lily Gioia
CSEA Communications Associate

WHITE PLAINS - With the theme “New York Works Because CSEA Women Work,” the 12th Annual Women’s Conference honored SUNY New Paltz Local 610 President Diane Lucchesi as recipient of the 1992 Irene Carr Leadership Award. Five hundred activists joined CSEA President Joe McDermott in saluting her distinguished efforts to improve employment opportunities for women in non-traditional jobs.

This year’s conference was overshadowed by the recent murders of four Watkin’s Glen social service workers, CSEA women slain by a distraught client who later turned his gun upon himself. McDermott told conferees of recent National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health findings that “homicide has become a leading cause of workplace deaths among women.”

CSEA Safety and Health Specialist Wendy Hord and NYS Kirby Forensic Psychiatric Center Director Dr. Renata Wack led a jam-packed workshop titled “Violence in the Workplace - There Ought To Be a Law!” CSEA is addressing the urgent need for facility security campaigns across the state, Hord said, by working to develop statewide security standards.

“CSEA is contacting every county to ascertain that security measures are in place and identify other measures that are needed,” Hord said.

In another presentation, AFSCME Women’s Rights Department Director Cathy Collette told an enthusiastic audience that their hard work in the Clinton election campaign will pay off in legislation to improve women’s work and family lives. After 12 years of an anti-woman Republican administration in Washington, “We can now look optimistically toward finally having a President in the White House who won’t veto a Family and Medical Leave Act or the Freedom of Choice Act,” Collette said.

To celebrate the number of newly-elected women who will serve in the 103rd Congress in January, as well as the contributions of America’s foremothers, CSEA Women’s Committee members appeared in costumes. They addressed the Conference as famous women in American history including Eleanor Roosevelt and Sojourner Truth.

Seminar topics included money management and tax trends, legal issues for women, fighting the tuberculosis epidemic, building workplace strength and women in the labor movement, among others.

McDermott encouraged activists to read CSEA’s “Essentially Women” newsletter for alerts on important legislation. The most recent issue about the “Violence Against Women Act” was snapped up by conference participants.

Getting into the spirit of women’s history

CSEA President Joe McDermott joins members of the CSEA Women’s Committee dressed as women in history. They are, from left: Helen Zocco as Eleanor Roosevelt, Harriet Hart as Sojourner Truth, Ellen Burke as a woman in a non-traditional job, McDermott, Sylvia Thomas as Rosa Parks, Genevieve Clark as a nurse, Cathy Barretta as a modern woman and Lucy Jackson as Clara Barton.
CSEA members win $82,000

By Mark M. Ketzin
CSEA Communications Associate
BINGHAMTON — Christmas came early for more than 30 CSEA-represented workers at the Binghamton Psychiatric Center (BPC) when they received more than $1,000 in their paychecks.

The award came after CSEA filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) because BPC's evening shift workers for years have not been able to take meal breaks without interruption.

"DOL corrected a long-standing injustice and gave a nice, unexpected bonus to those who suffered under the old policy," CSEA Local 441 President Keith Zulko said.

For years, BPC evening shift workers had to stay on the wards during meal breaks and were often interrupted to attend to clients.

The unfair practice violated the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which requires that employees get an uninterrupted half hour break. CSEA raised the problem, repeatedly in labor-management discussions, but it was never resolved.

In 1989, Local 441 Grievance Chair George Stevens and CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Gerald Phelan filed the federal DOL complaint.

DOL ruled that the facility had to stop the practice and pay compensation to the workers for 1988 to 1990. For CSEA members, that compensation totaled more than $82,000.

CSEA member June Nickerson, a therapy aide, has worked the evening shift for 11 of her 19 years at BPC. She said she always thought the policy was unfair, but that it was just part of the system.

"It seemed like you never got your dinner time away from the clients. There was always some kind of interruption," Nickerson said. "We didn't think anyone could do anything about it. It was great that CSEA interceded on our behalf.

Nickerson and more than 30 other therapy aides received the maximum $1,052 settlement. About 70 others will get some settlement money. For example, Zulko will get paid for the eight months he worked evenings. But the compensation was less important than the principle, he said.

"The real effect of this decision is to right a wrong," he said. "I always felt that the practice was wrong and that the employees were entitled to the full time."

The practice is related to the continuous problems of short staffing and out-of-title work that plague Office of Mental Health (OMH) system, Zulko said.

"The real issue is the short staffing that the state has created, forcing the workers to take piecemeal breaks to ensure proper coverage," he said.

The situation is improving, Zulko said. Workers must schedule breaks and are encouraged to leave the wards. Zulko praised the facility director, Dwight Rhodes, for his cooperation.

CSEA Central Region President Jim Moore said Zulko and his members should be proud of the decision which proved once again that abuse of CSEA members' rights will not be tolerated.

At Ossining Correctional Facility:

CSEA clears member

OSSINING - Lou Pristero can finally get a good night's sleep.

CSEA successfully fought charges that Pristero, CSEA Local 161 president, was indirectly responsible for the stabbing of a corrections officer at Ossining Correctional Facility.

Pristero, an electrician, said he lost his screwdriver somewhere inside the facility in 1990. He filed a lost tool report as required by the Department of Corrections. More than a year later an inmate used a screwdriver to stab a guard. Officials said they had reason to believe the inmate used Pristero's lost screwdriver in the assault.

They also accused him of not filing a lost tool report and threatened him with a six-month suspension. A disciplinary hearing took place in November.

"I don't think I slept five minutes the night before," Pristero said.

"I told them it wasn't my screwdriver," he said, noting that the screwdriver was never produced during the hearing.

Charges were finally dropped and Pristero credits CSEA with keeping him working during the months before the hearing.

"The Department of Corrections needed a scapegoat," he said. "The union bailed me out."

CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Rich Blair praised attorney Barton Bloom "for his professionalism in a well-prepared and well-executed defense of the charges."
Danger on the road

HAWTORNE - After threatening a state Department of Transportation (DOT) worker with his car, a driver was fined only $50.

Scott Weaver, a member of CSEA Local 507, was directing traffic on Westchester County's busy Saw Mill Parkway while a crane operator cleared the roadway of debris. When Weaver stopped the traffic at one point, the first driver became impatient.

"The crane operator dropped his first bucketload and the driver honked his horn and yelled to me 'Let me pass! I'm in a hurry!" Weaver said. "I told him that if anything hit his car, I would be responsible and he'd just have to wait."

The driver told Weaver, a 13-year DOT employee, that he had no business stopping him and began edging toward him.

"When he hit my leg, I jumped onto his car hood so he wouldn't run me down," Weaver said. The driver kept moving.

A quick-thinking DOT truck driver blocked the car with his truck. Weaver managed to get to his truck, called his boss, Shop Steward Mike Raguseo, who called police. Luckily, Weaver was not hurt.

The police took the driver away in handcuffs, but released him three hours later with a ticket for failure to obey a flag-person.

"A $50 fine for nearly running a man down!" Raguseo said. Police said there was nothing more they could do.

Accidents at construction sites are not unusual. The day after Weaver's problem, a car hit two DOT engineers on the Taconic Parkway, injuring one of them critically.

In June 1979, three DOT employees were killed by a truck while working on Route 84 in Newburgh.

"Workers are constantly being threatened by drivers who do not want to stop for construction," Raguseo said. "People don't pay attention," Raguseo said. "I've seen men shaving, women putting on make-up, drivers reading maps and newspapers. They don’t realize how fast they’re driving. I’ve seen them run into the back of equipment.

"We're out there to repair the roads for the drivers," he said. "We go through extensive safety training, but until the drivers realize what they’re doing, we have no control."

NYSHIP provides important numbers, addresses

The Joint Committee on Health Benefits has compiled a list of important NYS Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) contacts and telephone numbers regarding health insurance and other CSEA-negotiated benefits for CSEA-represented state employees.

Please clip and save for future reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS ABOUT:</th>
<th>CONTACT/ADDRESS:</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBERS:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment, Eligibility, Options, Employee Benefits Cards, Mailings</td>
<td>CSEA Employee Benefit Fund, P.O. Box 11-156, Albany, NY 12211</td>
<td>(518) 465-4555</td>
</tr>
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<td>CSEA Prescription Drug, Vision, and Dental Programs</td>
<td>CIGNA/Paid Prescriptions, Inc.</td>
<td>1-800-272-PAID (7243)</td>
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<td>OCA employees, effective Jan. 1, with questions regarding prescription drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMO providers, covered services, emergency care, cards</td>
<td>Call Your HMO directly</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMPIRE PLAN Benefits Management Program: Hospital Pre-Admissions Certification, Prospective Procedure Review and Second Opinion</td>
<td>Empire Plan &quot;Health Call&quot; (Intracorp)</td>
<td>1-800-992-1213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services</td>
<td>American Psychmanagement (APM)</td>
<td>1-800-446-3995</td>
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<td>Blue Cross (Hospital) claims</td>
<td>Contact the Blue Cross office serving the area where you live.</td>
<td>(518) 465-0171 (Within Albany and Alaska) 1-800-342-9815 (Within NY State) 1-800-428-4292 (Other states except Alaska) 1-800-942-4640 (Within NY State) 1-800-431-4312 (Outside NY State)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan (Medical/Basic Medical) Claims-Allow 30 days for processing Pre-determination of Benefits</td>
<td>Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, C.P.O. Box 1600, Kingston, NY 12401-0600</td>
<td>1-800-537-0010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whether your Physician is a Participating Provider</td>
<td>Check with your provider, or contact Metropolitan Life Insurance Company</td>
<td>1-800-336-3696 (Within NY State) 1-800-722-7789 (Outside NY State)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General health information and referrals</td>
<td>Metropolitan Health Care Call Line</td>
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January 1993
State Government News
At SUNY Health and Science Center

Library assistant leads statewide group

SYRACUSE — Even though she works in a library, CSEA Local 615 member and delegate Ellen Price isn’t a librarian — and she wants everyone to know it.

Price is a media services clerk in the Medical Library at SUNY Health Science Center in Syracuse and the current president of the New York State Library Assistants Association (NYSLAA). Her goal is to make sure library assistants get the recognition they deserve.

All too often, Price said, library assistants - clerks, aides, technicians and various other support staff - are mistaken for librarians and are not recognized for what they do. The mistake is an easy one to make, as job duties have changed over the years, she said.

“It’s easy to mistake us for librarians because our roles have definitely been blurred over the last decade,” she said. “Many of the duties previously performed by librarians are now being done by library assistants.”

Many of the role changes are due to increased automation in many libraries, which require different skills from those of the certified librarians. Increasingly, another function of library assistants is to interact with library patrons, Price said, relieving librarians of some pressure and allowing them to get their work done.

Price, also a member of CSEA Local 646, is proud of the work that NYSLAA does; it is one of the few organizations not affiliated with existing associations for librarians. The organization, officially founded in 1988, is run by library assistants with the express purpose of enhancing their status, furthering their professional growth and providing a network for communication among members, she said. They have their own newsletter, the NYSLAA Network Connection and annual conferences with professional development workshops; the executive council members often travel across America to keep pace with new ideas and technologies important to library assistants.

“The faster pace of technology necessitates an organization like ours to share responsibilities and compare how things are done in different places,” Price said. “Sometimes we end up finding easier ways to get things done.”

As president, Price presides over five regional groups throughout the state. She is also joined by CSEA SUNY Binghamton Local 648 member Donna Pfianz, who serves as a NYSLAA vice president. Because the organization is very public service oriented, Price said, she wants to reach out to other CSEA members who perform similar work to make them aware of the organization and what it can do for them.

Communications office gets the space it needs

NEW PALTZ — Persistence can pay off. Just ask the communications employees at SUNY New Paltz.

It took four years, but they finally got sufficient space to do their jobs.

When workers in campus telecommunications office complained about lack of space, office supervisors made the usual requests for more room.

While college officials agreed the office needed more space, they made no commitments. CSEA filed safety and health complaints, but there are no standards for space.

Five workers, desks, computers, file cabinets and a safe were crowded into fewer than 400 square feet. The telecommunications office manages the entire telephone system for the college, voice and data systems including computers and voice mail and phones for the students.

After CSEA persisted on the issue for years, the administration finally did something. Now the telecommunications office is located in a suite of five offices with nearly 900 square feet — four years after the request was first made.

“It was a matter of cooperative effort,” CSEA Local 610 President Diane Lucchesi said. “It’s been incredible what we’ve been able to get done. It’s just a shame it had to take so long.”

At SUNY New Paltz:

Health Dept. member needs leave donations

MONTICELLO - Mid-Hudson State Employees Local 009 President Vinnie Lord is asking CSEA members who work for the state Health Department to open their hearts and donate annual leave days to a co-worker who will be absent from work until July.

Adelaide Tobin, an eight-year employee who works as a keyboard specialist, has leukemia. According to her co-workers in Sullivan County, Tobin is planning to return to work once her treatment is completed in July. The problem is, she has run out of leave accruals.

Thanks to the new sick leave donation program negotiated by the union, CSEA-represented state employees who run out of time do not have to run out of paychecks. According to the agreement that established the program, the donors must “be employed in the same agency or facility” as the person receiving the donation. In this case, the agency is the state Health Department.

Donations can be made only in full-day units from annual leave and donors must retain a minimum of at least 10 days of annual leave to their credit after making a donation.

Prospective donors should contact their CSEA local.
The battle continues

OMH hearings 'a charade,'
testimony a waste of breath

ALBANY — Calling public hearings on the latest version of the Office of Mental Health (OMH) Five-Year Plan a charade, CSEA officials have chosen not to waste their breath on public testimony.

CSEA has, however, submitted written objections for the record and renewed its public attack against OMH deficiencies.

CSEA has been publicizing its concerns statewide through media activities to coincide with the series of OMH hearings. "The latest five-year plan simply continues the current irresponsible OMH policies of closing facilities without regard for the consequences," CSEA President Joe McDermott said. "We detailed our views about the deficiencies at the last set of hearings and have repeatedly stated them publicly since then.

"But neither our concerns nor those of any other group concerned about state mental health policy have any impact whatsoever on OMH."

For that reason, CSEA decided it served no purpose to testify at hearings. "CSEA has repeatedly focused attention on OMH deficiencies that are the shame of all New York," said CSEA Executive Vice President Danny Donohue, who chairs the union's Mental Hygiene Task Force. "But the real shame is that no one cares that lives are destroyed and the resulting problems are dumped on our communities. We'll keep hammering away at these issues but our priority is to protect the interests and jobs of our members."

"CSEA will not condone OMH irresponsibility by helping them perpetuate a hoax on the public."

CSEA wins on bumping rights

ALBANY — CSEA won the first round of a legal battle to protect the seniority and bumping rights of direct care workers in the Office Mental Health (OMH) and Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

A state Supreme Court judge ruled that employees in Mental Hygiene Therapy Aide (MHTA), Community Residence Aide and Residential Program Assistants titles must have the same bumping rights in layoffs. The decision upholds the 1972 CSEA-NYS layoff unit agreement that considers OMH and OMRDD as a single layoff unit. That means OMH employees can bump into OMRDD jobs and vice versa.

But as facilities closed and patients, primarily in OMRDD, were moved to community residences, the state decided the community titles were different. As a result, when layoffs came in recent years, MHTAs with seniority were effectively blocked from bumping less senior employees in the community-based titles.

The judge ruled that the similarity between the direct care titles could not be ignored.

However, the victory is not complete because the state is appealing the decision.

"The practice was a slap in the face of long-term employees and violated our longstanding agreement," CSEA President Joe McDermott said. "What the state tried to do was wrong and it should rectify the situation instead of making it worse by dragging it through a lengthy appeal."

CSEA fights plan to undermine South Beach PC

STaten ISLAND - CSEA members at South Beach Psychiatric Center are agitated over OMH attempts to undermine the future of their facility.

CSEA has learned that OMH is pressuring at least one general hospital in the South Beach catchment area to take over part of the facility's admissions capability.

South Beach competitively services Staten Island and a portion of Brooklyn with a full range of high quality care for mentally ill people. CSEA believes that OMH should be seeking to enhance that delivery instead of trying to destroy it.

"This facility is in a unique situation for a lot of reasons but one of the most important is that we provide a full range of services effectively," said CSEA South Beach Psychiatric Center Local 446 President Joel Schwartz. "Giving away even a portion of our acute admissions is like cutting off our supply of oxygen," he said.

The local is taking nothing for granted and is now making the community and local legislators aware of the situation and what's at stake.

CSEA files grievance over proposed closing of Central Islip laundry

CENTRAL ISLIP — CSEA has filed a class action grievance as one facet of its fight for its members at the Central Islip Psychiatric Center (CIPC) laundry.

As reported in The Public Sector last month, the union is outraged over plans to close the laundry next spring. CSEA had no advance warning of the closing, which was announced at about the same time the state awarded an "experimental" contract to a private, for-profit vendor to handle some state laundry services.

CSEA is questioning how the contract is "experimental" if the state is contracting at the same time it is eliminating a major component of its laundry operations.

"Our laundry members deserve better than this," CSEA CIPC Local 404 President Barbara Allen said. "The state made no attempt to discuss this issue and explore options. Now they're trying to tell us there are no options, and we don't buy that."

"The state's actions are suspect at every step in this process," CSEA Deputy Director for Contract Administration Tony Campione said. "We want all the facts out on the table."
Nothing keeps Pat Rowe down

By Ron Wofford
CSEA Communications Associate
BUFFALO - Pat Rowe, a calculations clerk at Buffalo Psychiatric Center, isn't normally one to complain. He's usually too busy with his state job, coaching the Silver Wheels wheelchair football team, taking care of his home and paying his mortgage and taxes.

But economic restrictions on his earnings under Medicaid are creating a dilemma. Rowe, 40, has battled cerebral palsy all his life; hip surgery in 1980 didn't produce the desired results and he now must use a wheelchair. That hasn't slowed him down, but Medicaid restrictions worry him. "I am in a difficult situation," Rowe said. "I am currently receiving approximately 42 hours of personal care aide services through Medicaid. I live on my own, have a home and pay a mortgage and taxes. Medicaid has very definite income limits; the more I earn, the more I must repay Medicaid."

"While I am fortunate to work when so many of my disabled peers cannot, I need to make more money, but when I earn more I am penalized so much that it seems like I'm paying taxes twice. As a grade 6 public employee, I simply cannot pay for personal care aide services on my own."

Rowe, a 14-year BPC employee and member of CSEA Local 403, said he is desperately trying to maintain his independence and his home, for which he has worked very hard through the years. He is seeking information about any alternative to Medicaid. "As it looks now, I, along with other disabled adults, will not be able to maintain our positions in the job market, even with the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, although several provisions have helped improve things at my worksite," Rowe said. "There are just too many disincentives that will keep the disabled worker out of the job market. If I am unable to maintain my home and lose it, I will cost Medicaid more than I am presently costing them by working. I have been told jokingly by my friends that I should quit my job and just live off the system. But I want a better quality of life, and I'm willing to work and pay for it."

Despite his concerns, Rowe keeps busy trying to improve the quality of the lives of others. A decade before he started using a wheelchair himself, Rowe founded the Silver Wheels wheelchair football team. Using a wheelchair hasn't stopped him from coaching the Wheels. "I wanted an activity that would show because someone is in a wheelchair, they are not without ability," Rowe said.

He has received numerous civic and community service awards for his Silver Wheels work, which he calls his "full-time hobby." He receives no compensation as coach, president and director. Rowe arranges charity games with able-bodied groups or individuals who also must use wheelchairs in the game. The "field" is usually a gymnasium or basketball court, with nine players per team. Silver Wheels has a total roster of about 30 players, ages nine to 40.

Rowe is always seeking game sponsors or volunteers for game assistance or other outings with the group. He would like to arrange a game sometime with CSEA members from area locals and units. "It's a lot of fun," Rowe said, "and it helps able-bodied folks see things from a disabled person's perspective."

CSEA member Pat Rowe is coach of the Silver Wheels football team for those in wheelchairs.

Fear is legacy of brutal attack in 1985

Pat Rowe doesn't consider himself a "victim" of cerebral palsy, but he has been a victim of a brutal crime. In 1985, he was stabbed 23 times near the heart and on both arms by a drug-addicted assailant who then stole the van belonging to the Silver Wheels team. The attacker later received a six to 18-year prison term. Rowe missed several months from work while recovering. "I guess I'm still recovering," Rowe said. "I try not to let it affect my work, but I'm less trusting and more fearful of people now. The main thing that kept me going through the ordeal was knowing so many people were depending on me to keep Silver Wheels going."
ALBANY — CSEA’s fight with the state Department of Transportation over the irresponsible one-person plowing (OPP) policy is once again generating plenty of heat this winter. CSEA has renewed its attack on the dangers of the policy and DOT’s unwillingness to work out a reasonable and responsible approach to the situation.

CSEA broke off talks with DOT in November after two frustrating months of trying to get DOT to address the safety, certification and compensation issues for the drivers.

State DOT putting squeeze on local officials

Pressuring state plow operators to accept OPP apparently isn’t enough for DOT. There are now indications that DOT is also putting the squeeze on local governments to adopt the policy.

DOT reportedly wants local highway departments with which it contracts for plowing to implement OPP as a cost-cutting move and to help legitimize the state’s policy. DOT is threatening funding disincentives to force compliance.

While the heavy-handed DOT tactics are disturbing, how local governments respond could raise a whole range of new safety and health issues.

Any attempt to ramrod an OPP policy into place at the local government level without taking the necessary precautions or preparation could be a safety and health violation.

Since DOT’s OPP training has already been cited by PESH for being inadequate and inconsistent, slap-dash imitations should be challenged.

There are other safety issues that could also be considered potential safety and health violations if localities try to implement one-person plowing. They include the type of equipment used, equipment modification, if any, policies on the number of consecutive hours that can be worked, types of roads being covered, and turnaround policies, for example.

CSEA is urging its local government highway units which are under pressure to adopt OPP to file PESH complaints immediately.

The union is also urging its members and local government officials to write to state DOT Commissioner Franklin White objecting to the DOT tactics. Write to him at the New York State Department of Transportation, State Office Building Campus, Albany, NY 12226.

“We’re damn mad,” CSEA president Joe McDermott wrote to CSEA DOT members in a letter explaining the situation.

Last season CSEA successfully challenged DOT’s preparation and training in implementing the policy through a Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) complaint upheld by the state Labor Department. The PESH citation found that DOT’s training program was inconsistent and inadequate.

As a result of that citation, DOT promised to work with CSEA to address the procedures, but DOT has not followed through. CSEA has notified the Labor Department about DOT’s failure to correct deficiencies and is awaiting the results of the department’s reinvestigation.

According to a report in the Watertown Times, DOT claims to have saved $6 million on snow and ice removal last year. CSEA is appalled that DOT is unwilling to use any of that “savings” to ensure safer operations through improved training and certification procedures, upgrading equipment and involving the operators in the implementation of the policy.

“DOT can’t have it both ways,” CSEA President Joe McDermott said. “If they’re saving money they should be using some of it to improve the safety and pay of the operators to reflect the more difficult and responsible work they’re performing. If they’re not saving money then why are they shoving OPP down everybody’s throat?”

Last year, one person operators were involved in numerous mishaps and two motorists were killed in OPP accidents.

“Once again, DOT is playing fast and loose with safety to try to save a few bucks,” said CSEA President Joe McDermott. “But all they’re gaining is ‘blood money’.”

CSEA/state contracts being mailed to members, fee payers

CSEA-represented state employees will soon be receiving their personal copy of the 1991-95 CSEA/State contract. Copies of the collective bargaining agreements are being mailed to more than 99,000 CSEA members and agency shop

fee payers represented by the union.

State employees who have not received their copy of the contract by the first week in February should contact the appropriate CSEA regional office to obtain a replacement copy.

"You have blind spots in the truck. All the mirrors in the world don’t help!"

Bob Ginda, president of CSEA Orange County State Transportation Local 515

"The state preaches safety and then we go to OPP. Safety goes right out the window!"

Vince Rudinski Jr., heavy equipment operator, CSEA shop steward, CSEA Orange County State Transportation Local 515

"You have 11 levers in a double wing truck, plus 10 speeds and a sander. There are too many things for one person to watch."

Craig Schmick, highway maintenance supervisor, CSEA Orange County State Transportation Local 515 member

Traffic a special hazard during Long Island storms

Anger over DOT’s one-person plowing policy is not exclusive to the snowbelt regions of the state. CSEA members on Long Island are also being heard from.

“We don’t get a lot of snow, but we sure have to operate in a lot of traffic and that means that OPP can be just as dangerous here as it is upstate,” said Long Island Department of Transportation CSEA Local 508 President Hank Jenny.

To make sure the public understands that their traveling safety is at issue, the Long Island CSEA members took to the shopping malls during the holiday season to distribute flyers about DOT’s reckless OPP policy.

CSEA members are also objecting to DOT tactics on Long Island. One member sent a postcard to DOT Commissioner Franklin White that read: "You are a disgrace to public service. Your policies are endangering lives. They’re not saving money. They’re just saving a buck."

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INDEX

Page 17  
CSEA wins big for Binghamton Psychiatric Center workers.

Page 18  
A driver threatens a DOT worker with a lethal weapon -- his car.

Page 19  
SUNY New Paltz communications workers finally get the space they need.

Page 20  
A round-up of breaking news in the Office of Mental Health.

Page 21  
Pat Rowe overcomes his disability but fights the Medicaid system.

Page 22  
CSEA continues the battle against one-person plowing.

HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE A SUCCESS  
The Women's Committee of CSEA's Teachers' Retirement System Local 658 collected 411 pounds of food for the Capital District Food Bank. Local 658 members Donna Keefer, seated, Patty Salamack, standing, Colleen Dougan and Dolores Crawford, packed the food.

DFF VIDEO EXCELLENCE — CSEA President Joe McDermott, right, and Division for Youth (DFY) Commissioner Leonard Dunston display The National Juvenile Justice Video Award of Merit presented to CSEA and the state for a DFY training video produced with negotiated labor-management funds.

NEW OFFICES IN NEW YORK — The newly-relocated CSEA Metropolitan Region office near South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan welcomed scores of union activists and legislators to an open house and legislative reception.

"The new two-floor expanded facilities provide nearly twice the space of our previous office at almost half the rental costs," CSEA Region Director Alan Jennings said.

At the reception are, from left, Jennings, New York City Council Representative Adam Clayton Powell IV and Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio.

EAP PACT SIGNED  
The Employee Assistance Program, which helps employees cope with personal problems that might affect their work, is now available for SUNY Oswego employees. Present for the signing the EAP agreement were, seated from left: Guy Kevin Reed, EAP regional representative; Dick Guyer of CSEA Local 611; SUNY Oswego President Stephen L. Weber; Greg Auleta of the United University Professionals; Natalie Waters of CSEA Local 622; and Mike Payne of Council 82. They are surrounded by members of the EAP Steering Committee.
Coach Rowe has a game plan for life

--- See page 21

NOTICE OF ELECTION of CSEA region officers...Page 10