SEA members across the state continue to staff phone banks, hand out literature, participate in rallies and go door to door on behalf of CSEA-endorsed candidate for governor, Carl McCall.

Continued on Pages 10-11
Blue Cross talks break down on L.I.

As The Work Force went to press, 10 hospitals in the Long Island Health Network had broken off talks and ended their participation as Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield network hospitals. Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield is the hospitalization carrier for the New York State Health Insurance Program’s Empire Plan, which provides coverage to many CSEA represented state, Nassau County and other municipal workers.

Empire Plan enrollees will continue to receive the same coverage for hospitalization regardless of whether services are received at a network or non-network hospital. Please be aware, however, that using non-network hospitals will likely result in larger premium increases for 2003 and beyond.

The Empire Plan is an experience rated plan, therefore, premiums are based on actual claims paid. Utilization of non-network hospitals, where the insurance company is required to pay full, rather than discounted charges, will increase claims experience and, subsequently, health insurance premiums. In order to reduce the negative impact on claims experience, Empire Plan enrollees should consider utilizing one of the following hospitals which remain part of the Blue Cross network:

- Brunswick General Hospital (Amityville),
- Central Suffolk Hospital (Riverhead),
- Eastern Long Island Hospital (Glenport),
- Franklin General Hospital (Valley Stream),
- Huntington Hospital (Huntington),
- Island Medical Center (Hempstead),
- Long Beach Medical Center (Long Beach),
- Long Island Jewish Medical Center (New Hyde Park),
- Nassau University Medical Center (East Meadow),
- North Shore University Hospital (Glen Cove, Manhasset, Plainview, Syosset),
- Southampton Hospital (Southampton),
- Southside Hospital (Bay Shore),
- Stony Brook University Hospital (Stony Brook).

Although using a non-network hospital will not diminish your Empire Plan hospital benefit, you may experience differences in billing procedures, as these hospitals will no longer be reimbursed directly by Blue Cross. Additionally, if the hospital will not submit the billing to Blue Cross, enrollees must submit an itemized bill to Empire BlueCross BlueShield, New York State Health Network, P.O. Box 1407, Church Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10008-1407.

Blue Cross will issue payment for covered services, less any copayments or penalties (such as not calling for pre-certification of inpatient stay), directly to the enrollee. The enrollee will be responsible to forward payment to the hospital.

CSEA is still holding out hope that Blue Cross and the Long Island Health Network might still reach an agreement. Until then, be assured that the Empire Plan’s comprehensive benefit package allows enrollees to access care at any hospital. For further information please call 1-800-495-9323 to speak with a Blue Cross representative regarding this situation.

CSEA President Danny Donohue to visit Southern Region

President Danny Donohue will visit the CSEA Southern Region on Thursday, Oct. 17 to meet with members.

The meeting will be in the Southern Region office, 568 State Route 52, Beacon.

Donohue will meet with union members from 1 to 7 p.m. Please call the Southern Region office at (845) 831-1000 or 800-757-CSEA (2732) to sign up for a visit and directions.

Photo of the Month

CSEA members from Delaware County march in a ‘Solidarity Parade’ at the Delaware County Fair to protest working without a contract.

Delaware County fired up

DELI – Determined Delaware County workers were definitely sticking together as they recently marched in a “Solidarity Parade” at the Delaware County Fair. Decked out in green CSEA T-shirts, the CSEA members proudly marched and rode on a float to remind county residents that they provide needed service and are still working without a contract.

The march was part of an extensive membership-driven campaign to get contract negotiations back on track, after talks stalled over the county’s refusal to discuss the issue of partially county-paid health insurance premiums for retirees. As they head into mediation, the workers have been mobilizing a strong grassroots effort to get the word out about their contract struggle.

With an Awareness Committee regularly meeting with CSEA region staff, the workers have developed numerous ways to get their message out. They’ve posted lawn signs, held several county-wide “sticker days,” put up posters all over town, and handed out information at the local “Fair in the Square” days.

To educate the public on the issue of retiree health insurance, the union put together a brochure entitled “It’s About Time,” which details the results of a union study that found every surrounding county provides their workers some amount of paid retiree health insurance premiums. The brochure also demonstrates how offering such a benefit would not cost the county any additional funding, or affect current health insurance premiums.

“For us, it’s an easy argument to make,” said CSEA Delaware County Local and Unit President George Lawson. “The county could provide us this benefit and still save money for taxpayers. Unfortunately, they’ve been turning a deaf ear ever since we brought the matter up.”

CSEA Central Region President Jim Moore joined the workers in their Solidarity March, and said that the region was proud to support the workers in their struggle. Moore has met with the Awareness Committee several times and has provided region support for the mobilizing effort.

“We’re doing everything in our power to get the word out to the residents of Delaware County that the workers who provide them needed services on a daily basis are getting the short end of the stick in these negotiations, and that they deserve better,” Moore said.

— Mark M. Kotzin

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New CSEA ad campaign demonstrates

How the CSEA work force makes it happen across New York State

As Labor Day arrives, CSEA will once again take to the state’s radio and television channels with a new series of ads promoting the value of CSEA members and the work they perform every day.

“CSEA’s advertising campaigns are a very important part of this union’s activism for our members and the services they provide,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “Too often the quality and value of our members’ work is taken for granted by elected officials and the public. This union is committed to making sure that the hard work and dedication of CSEA members is understood and recognized.”

“Time and again advertising has helped get our message out and produce positive results in coordination with other activities,” Donohue said. “It’s just one of the tools we use to make sure our members’ voices are heard.”

“Many localities and schools are already having some serious fiscal pressures and the year ahead promises some big challenges,” Donohue said. “It’s especially important to make sure everyone understands just what services may be at risk.”

The radio and television spots, which begin airing statewide around Labor Day, feature prime, representative examples of the invaluable work CSEA members carry out.

“CSEA is proud of all our members’ work” Donohue said. “These spots present some highlights that only begin to tell the story of what CSEA members contribute on the job and in their communities,” Donohue stated.

Additionally, the spots are targeted to localize the message to the communities where they will air to make a stronger impression on the audience that sees and hears them. Like CSEA members, they can be expected to make a positive impact.

Monroe County budget crunch

CSEA continues to battle Monroe County layoffs

ROCHESTER — CSEA continues the fight against layoffs of members who provide services in Monroe County, which has announced a budget shortfall of $23 million for this year, and estimated a deficit to be $65 million for next year.

The county executive, vowing not to raise taxes, wants to cut the county work force by 700 jobs, and cut many county services. CSEA represents about 2,700 of the county’s 5,000 employees.

“We have been meeting with county management, and have whittled 192 planned layoffs down to about 70, but we won’t stop there,” said CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi.

Pink slips, effective in 30 days, went to those 70 CSEA members Aug. 19. The laid off members provide services in parks, transportation, social services, public safety, health, finance, information services and aviation facilities.

CSEA Labor Relations specialist Debbie Lee and Unit President Jim Volpone say they are leaving no stone unturned in efforts to reverse the trend of balancing the budget on the backs of those who provide needed public services.

“We are still awaiting an accurate accounting of those eligible members who have opted for the early retirement incentive,” said Volpone.

“The numbers change daily, but we know at least 230 members have decided to take the early out, so far. But we’ve got a long way to go, with the county wanting 700 layoffs, or retirements and job abolishments. Either way, we will continue to mobilize our members, and we plan to take our fight to the legislature when we have done all we can with the county administration. We’ll do all we can to reverse every pink slip issued to our members. We need every member to heed our call to action.”

Volpone said members will be called upon to show their unity by attending unit meetings planned for early September, and pickets planned for various county Legislature and budget committee meetings.

He said members will be issued buttons they should wear every day to show they are in solidarity against job and service cuts.

More information is available at the unit/local office by phone at 1-585-328-5250.

— Ron Woford

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Monroe Crisis May Be Sign Of Things To Come

If there was any doubt about the challenges CSEA members are likely to face across the state in the year ahead, look no further than what’s happening in Monroe County right now. Faced with a budget shortfall of $23 million this year and anticipated deficit of $65 million next year, the county executive is seeking to eliminate 700 jobs and drastically cut county services.

Already scores of CSEA members have received pink slips as the confrontation over the budget reduction plan heats up. (See story on Page 3)

CSEA is not backing down in our commitment to fight for the rights of our members and the essential services they provide to the public. The proposed cuts in Monroe County will most certainly hurt the quality of life in the Rochester area.

CSEA members are facing similar challenges in Nassau County where a new county executive is about to begin a new round of negotiations with CSEA as he grapples with serious budget problems stemming from years of mismanagement by the previous administration.

Monroe and Nassau Counties are not alone in the budget squeeze. Localities across the state have been affected by state budget shortchanging, the economic downturn and other factors. New York state further lost an estimated $6 billion in tax revenue as a direct result of last year’s terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Some localities are better able to deal with the budget challenges than others. But all have to face up to it in some way.

CSEA members have always been willing to do their fair share in tough times but only when we are approached fairly and straightforwardly. CSEA members often have some of the best ideas about how to save money and get the job done more effectively. Too often our suggestions and ideas are ignored.

CSEA knows that creative, long-term solutions to deal with budget problems across New York are in all of our best interests. We also know that management needs to work with us, in partnership if we are to achieve them.
Otsego County balks at care staffing CSEA pitches for more help

COOPERSTOWN — Baseball fans gathering for Hall of Fame Week in Cooperstown, probably expecting to hear strains of “Take me out to the ballgame,” recently got an earful of another sort, thanks to some fired-up CSEA members.

The angry CSEA Otsego County workers marched outside the Baseball Hall of Fame and Doubleday Field to bring attention to the issue of short-staffing they say is having a devastating effect on residents they care for at the county nursing home, The Meadows.

CSEA Otsego County Unit President Ray Snyder kicked off the rally outside the nursing facility, along with dozens of staff and some of the home’s residents who are equally frustrated over the lack of staff and proper equipment. After a brief march and rally outside The Meadows, the workers headed uptown to the baseball festivities to draw more attention to their plight.

We care

“We are here today because we care. We care about the people who are in dire need of our support — the residents who live in The Meadows, our co-workers and the children that deserve a future in this county,” Snyder told the workers who gathered at the rally.

“Here at The Meadows, our residents are paying a dear price. Caregivers have been abolished, needed equipment seems to be cut frequently, and the employees walk these halls daily in tears. They leave for home feeling stressed and depressed due to the fact that they could not be completely effective due to staffing and equipment cuts,” he added.

Certified Nursing Assistant Mindy Leonard, an 18-year veteran at the facility, said staffing levels have significantly deteriorated over the years.

“I’m here because I love the people. I love caring for them. They deserve the respect that’s being taken away from them. I’m out here on behalf of the residents because a lot of these people don’t have people to come out and speak for them, so I’m here to speak for them,” she said.

“The staffing is not appropriate for the needs of the residents. It’s absolutely deteriorated in the time I’ve been here. Also, the equipment is either archaic or cheaply made. We don’t have the proper equipment for the residents’ needs.”

Morale suffers

Certified Nursing Assistant Geoffrey Perkins said the shortages are very demoralizing for the facility’s caring staff.

“I’m upset that I have to work short-staffed. You can’t give your full care to your residents. It’s frustrating. You’re constantly busy and you just don’t have time to get things done. Being understaffed, the residents suffer the most — they’re the real victims here,” Certified Nursing Assistant Nancy Chandler agreed.

“It’s just ridiculous. There’s so much work and there’s no way you can do it and do it right. You can take shortcuts, but you can’t do what you want to do for the residents. It’s really sad.”

She said she hoped the demonstration would open the eyes of county leaders and get some needed attention to the issue of short staffing.

“I’m hoping that they’ll realize that there’s a real problem and that they have to talk with us,” she said.

Snyder said the union has been asking to meet with the county on the issue, but that the chair of the board of supervisors refuses to allow labor-management meetings to occur. Snyder said that CSEA will continue to work to pressure the county Legislature to resolve the situation and ease the staffing crunch.

― Mark M. Kotzin

CSEA members picket outside of baseball Doubleday Field recently in Cooperstown.
“This is really a dangerous job,” said Schnurr about the family offenses unit. “It’s a family issue.” And while he and his deputies are well equipped to use their firearms to protect themselves, Schnurr is quick to admit that “your mind and your mouth are your best weapons. You try to diffuse a situation using common sense.”

Since January, the department has processed more than 1,400 orders of protection, seized 85 weapons and executed more than 420 vacate orders. And while their workload has increased over the years, the number of deputies performing these tasks has dwindled from about 60, when Schnurr started with the department 16 years ago, to 40.

“We could definitely use people here,” said Schnurr while also talking about important support and clerical staff the department has been forced to trim. Now these administrative tasks fall on other deputies who already are overburdened.

Nevertheless, despite the dire fiscal situation in Nassau County, Schnurr said he remains optimistic that no deputy will be laid off.

Indeed, he’s hoping that in their upcoming contract negotiations they’ll be able to make a stronger case for increasing their pay scales and at the very least bring them to par with their colleagues in the Nassau County Police Department.

“I feel like we do make a difference,” said deputy Christopher Scholz.

— David Galarza
New Westchester Co. security alarms CSEA

WHITE PLAINS — Tighter security measures at the Westchester County Michaelian Office Building have raised CSEA workers’ concerns about potential fire hazards in the building.

The county recently installed an electronic security system in the building to increase security.

As a result, several entrances have been blocked, including the former main entrance on Martine Avenue in White Plains.

“That entrance isn’t even available as an emergency exit anymore,” CSEA Westchester County Unit President Jack McPhillips said. “It’s completely bolted.”

Emergency workers, such as firefighters, only have access to one entrance to the building — the side, Court Street entrance, where doors are narrow and visitors are greeted with metal turnstiles that require a security badge to pass.

County employees also are now required to use security badges to gain access to certain stairwells and exits, including emergency exits. While all doorways are supposed to be accessible without security badges during an emergency evacuation, recent system tests have set off alarms among CSEA leaders in the county.

Fire exits locked

“When the county conducted its testing of the security system, the fire exits were locked even to people who had badges,” said Peter Costa, CSEA Westchester County Unit Safety and Health Committee chairman. “There are no manual exits in the case of an emergency. If the power fails in the building, these doors stay locked.”

The security system also potentially blocks workers and visitors who do make it into stairwells. Most of the exit doors from the stairwells work electronically — without manual push bars or break-glass alternatives to escape or alert emergency workers.

“In the event of an emergency, the power in the building — or even the system — might fail,” Costa said. “People may get trapped.”

Workers have to use electronic access keys to get out of these entrances in emergencies, although many county employees do not necessarily have access to every stairwell in the building, McPhillips said.

In fact, many stairwell doors on several floors “shut down” at 7 p.m. — a situation that has caused workers to be trapped in stairwells.

“There are employees in the building 24 hours a day. Many people are nervous about getting trapped,” McPhillips said. “The county is actually discouraging people from working late.”

Costa is also concerned about emergency workers’ ability to enter the building, and contacted the City of White Plains Fire Department to investigate. He added that county officials were initially reluctant to let fire officials investigate the facility.

“There’s only one door (the Court Street entrance) in which the Fire Department could enter the building,” he said. “With their equipment and the electronic turnstiles, they would have problems getting into the door. Worse, they would be trying to get into the door as people would be trying to get out.”

But when Costa approached county officials with their concerns, they were met with closed doors of their own.

“The county maintained that they didn’t have to let (outside) fire inspectors into the buildings or meet fire codes because it’s a government agency,” McPhillips said. “While there’s a lot more security, the county wasn’t responding to our safety concerns.”

But pressure on Westchester County officials from CSEA spurred the county to give Fire Department officials a tour of the Michaelian Building to examine potential fire hazards associated with the new security system.

While White Plains fire officials found the security system in the Michaelian Building in compliance with fire code, the department did have a few concerns about the facility and will continue to monitor the county’s progress on addressing these concerns.

Westchester County will also monitor itself by hiring a full-time fire inspector who will inspect county facilities regularly.

While Costa is satisfied with the findings, he promised that CSEA’s vigilance over health and safety issues in Westchester County will continue.

“We are pleased that the county is going to hire a fire inspector, but we will continue to monitor the buildings closely to ensure that there are no more potential hazards to our members and to the public,” he said.

— Janice Marra

Dealing with the public can be challenging. You have your good days and your bad days, and you have to keep your temper and not blow up at them, even if they’re irate at us. I enjoy working with the public.

— Cindy Stuck, a supervisor for the state Department of Motor Vehicles in Seneca County, where she’s worked for 15 years
Employee suggestion program open to suggestion

BEACON — Peter Ronne has been told all too often that his check is in the mail.

But the president of CSEA’s state Department of Transportation Local in Middletown is not buying his agency’s claims when it comes to a payment that Ronne is owed for suggesting a way for DOT to save $1.8 million — and improve the safety of CSEA members on the job.

In 2001, Ronne, with the help of his local’s Safety Committee, submitted a proposal to DOT to save money on tarping for large dump trucks — and improve the department’s highway workers’ safety at the same time.

The current state-issued truck tarp requires workers to climb on a metal ladder on the side of the truck and walk along the bed to place and remove the tarp over items such as gravel and debris.

But the truck surfaces get slippery, especially during wet weather, and have led to workers falling off the trucks and getting injured.

“Accidents have happened to our members, especially in rainy weather,” Ronne said. “There have been quite a few accident reports that are related to CSEA members falling off the trucks when covering or uncovering loads. So, through our Safety Committee, we thought of a new tarp system that doesn’t require getting on the truck.”

Ronne created a canvas tarp system that costs about $120 for materials and takes about four hours of labor to install. The tarp is released and removed by rope and pulleys, pulled by a worker on the ground beside the truck.

“It’s easy to slip off the side of the truck,” said Bob Rivera, a highway maintenance worker at the Middletown DOT Residency and 27-year CSEA member.

A safety issue

“We’re usually on the side of a highway when we’re covering our loads with the tarp. It’s much safer to stay off the truck and cover the load using a rope,” Rivera added.

Ronne’s tarping system has been installed on 57 trucks throughout the DOT Region 8 Hudson Valley area — an estimated savings of $50,000 for the state agency.

But one year later making the initial proposal, the department has not compensated Ronne as it claims in the program’s written regulations.

“This is not just about the money,” Ronne said. “This issue is about the safety of CSEA members across the state. As a local president and a member of our local’s Safety Committee, I have an enormous responsibility to ensure the safety of our members. The state is simply ignoring a major safety issue.

Under the state rules for the Employee Suggestion Program, workers who suggest an idea to save the state money are paid 10 percent, or up to $50,000, of the state’s savings throughout the first year of use.

Ronne said department officials at various region work sites support his tarping system for safety and financial reasons, and some DOT sites are planning to use it.

Saves money

“These tarp is rugged, simple and easy to fix,” Ronne said. “It could save the state $1.8 million.”

But instead of jumping on Ronne’s proposal on a statewide basis, DOT has issued a bid proposal to purchase tarp for about 200 trucks at an estimated cost of between $1,800 and $2,400 per truck. The state questions the necessity of Ronne’s tarp system on the trucks, noting that the established tarping system is sufficient.

Ronne refutes the state’s claims that its established tarping system has nothing to do with the safety of the workers.

While the state recognized Ronne earlier this year with a Certificate of Merit and offered him a small payment, neither Ronne nor other workers feel he is getting what the state justly owes him.

“(What they offered me) was a slap in the face,” he said. “It’s also an insult to our Safety Committee, especially when the state is using this idea.”

While Ronne has approached CSEA’s Legal Department to intervene in the situation, he feels that the damage is already done.

Ronne and other CSEA members employed at DOT’s Hudson Valley work sites no longer buy the department’s promise of treating all workers fairly through DOT’s Employee Suggestion Program.

“The Employee Suggestion Program has lost credibility among CSEA members,” he said.

— Janice Marra

The better way

CSEA’s Peter Ronne demonstrates the tarp-covering device he developed which allows truck operators to safely cover trucks, preventing falls from truck beds.
No summer vacation for Connetquot schools crew

When the last school bell rings in the Connetquot School District in eastern Long Island, the work truly begins for the CSEA members who work in and around its dozen buildings.

“We make sure they are sanitized from top to bottom,” said William Softy, president of the district’s local and a grounds worker. “What’s making this year the hardest is that we’re under construction. We’re making additions in all the buildings in the district.”

There are 12 buildings in the district that house some 7,000 elementary, middle and high school students from the communities of Oakdale, Bohemia, Ronkonkoma and Idle Hour.

CSEA members work as custodians, groundskeepers, security guards and food service providers.

“We’re a pretty tight-knit family,” said Softy. “We look out for one another.”

Among the many tasks performed by custodians are cleaning and waxing the floors, washing windows, cleaning desks, and moving furniture. Groundskeepers service some 244 acres in the district including playgrounds and fields.

Vinnie Massilo, a 33-year member of CSEA, has worked in just about every facility within the district. Also known as the Monsignor, Massilo’s eyes glisten when he’s asked to recall his earlier days as a CSEA member and custodian for the district.

“It’s all physical labor here,” said Massilo. “But we have a great crew.”

Regardless of their role in the custodial, maintenance and food service departments, members are required to attend classes on topics related to their jobs.

Some of the trainings that members have attended recently have dealt with the handling of chemicals and blood borne pathogens.

“This is the time of year when the whole school is empty and you make sure that the school is spotless,” said custodian Gary Barone. “I want to make it a clean and safe place to learn.”

Behavioral studies

Recently, custodians have been offered classes that relate to the social behavior of students. “They are expecting more from custodians in terms of interacting with the children,” said Softy.

This summer George Armor, a grounds supervisor, oversaw the building of a new playground. Members have helped construct about 15 playgrounds over the last four to five years. They make sure all the equipment is up to safety standards.

Work is also currently going on at Ronkonkoma High School. By the time they are finished the school will have four new fields to accommodate a few more sports.

“We have an extensive sports program,” said Armor, adding “we try to use all organic products on the fields.” He and his crew have taken classes on the use of organic materials at the Cornell Cooperative Extension.

That training is exactly the type of statewide awareness CSEA is pushing for through its support of the Healthy Schools Network coalition.

John Merschoff, a former president of the district’s local and a custodial supervisor, still gets a little emotional when he recalls the way his CSEA brothers and sisters pitched in when he underwent a bout with esophageal cancer.

“I was really taken aback,” said Merschoff. “I was gone for about two months and there was not one problem.”

The only problem Merschoff, Softy and other CSEA members are concerned with is the increased workload now that the district is nearly doubling in size with the new additions.

“This year is going to be totally new, but we’ll need some help,” said Merschoff.

Craig Runsen and Patrick Higgins, both grounds workers, take special pride in the work they do for the district. After all, they attended schools in the district and graduated from Ronkonkoma High School.

“It feels like I’m giving something back to the community,” said Runsen as he helped Patrick and other co-workers unload metal shelves from a truck. “I work with some really good, friendly people.”

— David Galarza
CSEA’s statewide effort mobilizes for Sept. 10 primary

Continued From Page 1

"In our union, we know all about the strength of our membership. We have seen time and again what can be accomplished when people work together — challenges can be met, obstacles can be overcome. CSEA’s commitment is harnessing that power to work for our candidates,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

CSEA members across the state are enthusiastically supporting his candidacy. As comptroller, McCall has a solid history of support of working people, especially public employees. He demonstrated great leadership in terms of fighting for a personal cost-of-living increase for state pensioners as well as beating back attempts by governors of both parties to use the pension fund to balance the budget.

Danny Mehl's experience in business and as a community leader makes him an outstanding candidate for lieutenant governor,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

Across the state, that support has become more evident as union members take to the streets and volunteer at phone banks, urging their support for McCall.

Nassau County Local President Tony Gustiano was thrilled with the endorsement of McCall. "Carl McCall has been an outstanding advocate for CSEA members for years and years," said Gustiano.

"That’s why I’m so proud that CSEA is standing up to support him in this election.”

As chapter president of the Nassau County Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), Jane D’Amico toured her support of McCall. "I know that Carl McCall has come out strongly on pay equity issues for women and minorities. He’s got my support and I will work tirelessly on his behalf,” she stated.

Tyrone Webb, president of the CSEA SUNY Binghamton Local noted: "I’ve already signed up to be involved with the Broome County Democratic Committee. Wherever they need me — door to door, canvassing, attending events, whatever the campaign entails.”

Tim Finnigan, SUNY Geneseo local vice president, passed out a McCall sign to George Phelps, local president of Attica Correctional Facility.

On Page 1 McCall is joined in Syracuse by enthusiastic CSEA supporters.

CSEA endorsed gubernatorial candidates Carl McCall (center) and Dennis Mehiel (right) greet CSEA campaign workers at a Buffalo campaign stop.

Above, Metropolitan Region CSEA retirees greet Carl McCall.

At left, McCall thanks his CSEA supporters at a campaign stop in Syracuse.

CSEA backs Mulrow for state comptroller

President Danny Donohue addresses the crowd at CSEA’s endorsement of Bill Mulrow for state comptroller.

"CSEA is endorsing Bill Mulrow as the next state comptroller.

"CSEA members know that it is very important to have a state comptroller who knows finances and is someone we can trust. Bill Mulrow is clearly the most qualified candidate on both measures," CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

Mulrow grew up in a working-class family — his mother a waitress and his father a union laborer. After earning scholarships which provided him with a world-class education, Mulrow led a successful 20-year career as a financial manager.

"Bill Mulrow has a proven record of outstanding accomplishment in both business and public policy, but most importantly he understands the challenges that working people experience every day," added Donohue. "Bill will be a worthy successor to Carl McCall as state comptroller by bringing his strong professional skill and real world knowledge to the job."

"I will be the kind of state comptroller who will keep the pension fund strong and growing, and I will be the kind of state comptroller that will put government back on the side of the people,” Mulrow said.

Mulrow called CSEA’s political support, “the crown jewel of the labor movement.”

CSEA was also instrumental in helping to secure the NYS AFL-CIO’s endorsement of Mulrow.

Registered Democrats are urged to vote for Mulrow in the Sept. 10 New York State Primary. For more information on how you can volunteer for his campaign, contact your local political action coordinator.
Assaults spur county to add deputies to patrol buildings

SCHENECTADY — After a civilian was mugged in a Schenectady County building, CSEA members knew action needed to be taken. CSEA members met regularly to form a security plan and worked diligently with county officials and the county Sheriff’s Department to address their security needs.

Their efforts partially paid off when county officials appointed a deputy to patrol the county buildings. Less than a week later, an arrest was made after a woman struck a CSEA Department of Social Services case worker. The woman was arrested but the CSEA member was injured.

“Our employees need to feel safe while on the job,” said Joanne DeSarbo, president of CSEA Schenectady County Local and EAP Coordinator for Schenectady County. “Our safety committee is meeting once a week to address these concerns. Additional measures need to be taken, but we are taking small, meaningful steps towards a solution,” she added.

Although only one arrest has been made, deputies have witnessed fights inside the county office building and in front of the building. Much of the violence is tied to plaintiffs and defendants in the county’s Family Court.

“In the past, an armed guard was enough security,” said DeSarbo. “Unfortunately, in today’s society, we need someone with more authority who can detain and handcuff,” she added.

The safety committee is researching security systems for the building as well as changing some entrances and exits to increase safety, DeSarbo said. The committee also is pursuing a mobilized security guard for the building grounds and adding more guards at the entrance.

A storage room on the first floor of the main county building has also been cleared out to make way for a security office.

DeSarbo will continue to work with County Manager Kevin DeFebo and Sheriff Harry Buffardi to address security needs at the Schenectady County buildings and said she is pleased with the cooperation she has received thus far.

“Both the county manager and the sheriff have been very supportive of our requests,” said DeSarbo. “This project has truly been a collaboration between labor and management.”

—Amy Scharf

Two more CSEA members die on the job

CSEA sadly grieves the loss of two members who died while on the job in late July and early August.

On Tuesday, July 30, CSEA Delaware Valley State Employees Local member James Gotthardt Jr., a highway worker with the State Department of Transportation (DOT), died of an apparent heart attack. He collapsed outside of a DOT truck at the East Branch Rest Area off of Route 17.

Attempts at CPR were unsuccessful.

George Nader, 56, an Otsego County Department of Public Works worker, died of an apparent heart attack on Friday, Aug. 9.

Nader had complained of chest pains while out mowing but did not seek assistance. He died while being driven from the worksite.

CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health Department is looking into both incidents.

The two deaths bring to four the number of CSEA members to die on the job this summer.

PESH cites Sch’dy County

SCHENECTADY — The state Department of Labor recently cited Schenectady County over improper training procedures after an accident last spring that left a CSEA member with a fractured skull.

CSEA member Christopher Smith, a mechanic for the county Highway Department, was injured in April after the hood of a truck he was working on fell, fracturing his skull.

The DOT’s Public Employee Safety and Health (PESH) bureau cited the county for improper lock-out and tag-out procedures, according to CSEA Occupational Safety and Health Specialist Gary China.

Proper lock-out and tag-out procedures require workers to label equipment that has the potential to fall and injure a worker, China noted.

PESH ordered the county to correct its procedures. County officials say they have begun training the DPW workers.
Lake Placid duo’s projects save village thousands

LAKE PLACID — Everything was in place for the village’s debut of its trolley service. Everything, except for a shelter for the trolley stop.

Village officials had sought to purchase a pre-fabricated structure, priced between $5,000 and $10,000, but were put off by the generic look and high cost.

Instead, they turned to two local men — one a CSEA member and the other a former member — for help. The two drafted plans, ordered the materials and built the shelter. The project was completed in less than five weeks at a total cost of $1,200.

Who are these quick-moving, cost-saving builders? They’re firefighters in a CSEA-represented fire department.

This is just one of many community improvement projects David Wood and Al Goff have taken on, saving village taxpayers thousands of dollars.

CSEA member Wood and Goff designed the shelter in a rustic Adirondack style. The idea was to build a structure that blended into the natural surroundings of Lake Placid.

Standing 11 feet high and 12 feet wide, the shelter is made of cedar with a galvanized metal frame painted forest green. The roof is made of cedar shakes. Located at the train station, the shelter is designed to be portable.

The trolley service, Placid XPRSS, was launched on June 28 and is already reducing pollution and congestion in the village’s busy Main Street corridor.

Village Trustee and Transportation Committee Chairman Jamie Rogers calls it “a huge success, way beyond expectations.”

Pitching in elsewhere

Wood and Goff are particularly proud of two trucks that are new additions to the firehouse fleet. They built a tanker truck for hauling water for less than $10,000. The same truck purchased new would cost around $35,000.

They also built a mobile command center that doubles as a backup should the main radio system go down. This truck, with its sophisticated radio equipment, would cost around $50,000 to purchase. Their total cost was around $35,000.

Other projects include a firehouse meeting lounge and repair of the village’s pontoon boat. The tireless two are already on to the next project; building bike racks for the village. And, coming soon, another trolley stop. Rogers commends Wood and Goff for being “always willing to take on a challenge and help the community.”

— Therese Assalian
On Sept. 11, 2001 our lives changed forever.

Five CSEA members, employees of the state Department of Taxation and Finance who worked in the World Trade Center lost their lives:
Ivette Anderson
Florence Cohen
Harry Goody
Marian “Marty” Hrycak
Dorothy Temple

In the aftermath, thousands of CSEA members responded in so many ways. Many, such as NYS Department of Transportation workers and Nassau County Ambulance Medical Technicians were directly involved in the rescue and recovery activities.

Others had essential work to do in less visible roles in places like the State Emergency Management Office and Metropolitan area hospitals. Many more helped families and individuals by providing services in workplaces like the Crime Victims Board, Workers Compensation Board, the Department of Labor and numerous other agencies.

Countless CSEA members also helped in their communities as volunteer firefighters, disaster relief volunteers or by raising and contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars and donating their blood.

CSEA mourns for the dead and honors their memory as we say thank you to all who continue to fight for the living.
Show your solidarity on Labor Day

Labor Day parades and activities offer members a chance to show pride in labor's history as well as send an important message about the current strength of unions. A variety of Labor Day events are planned around the state during September. Check out the information below to participate in your area. For more information, contact your regional office or check on-line at www.csea-local1000.net.

Monday, Sept. 2
The Buffalo parade will start at noon at the Thruway Mall (Walden Avenue entrance). The parade heads west on Malden and North on Harlem Road into Cheektowaga Town Park.
The Rochester parade will begin at 11 a.m. at the corner of Strathallan Park and East Avenue. CSEA members should assemble at 10 a.m. The parade will proceed from East Avenue and Alexander Street to Main Street, ending on Main Street and Plymouth Avenue.
The Massena parade will begin at 11 a.m. CSEA members are asked to line up at 10:30 a.m. at the corner of Willow Street and Woodlawn Avenue. A free picnic immediately follows at Spring Parks.

Central New York Labor Federation’s Annual Labor Day Celebration will take place at the New York State Fairgrounds. Join CSEA members for the day’s events including the Labor Parade at 10 a.m. An interfaith “Blessing of the Workers” service follows at 11 a.m. For free admission and parking tickets, members must commit to marching in the parade. Call your local or unit president to reserve your tickets. Assemble for the parade at 9:30 a.m. by the fair’s Indian Village.
The Capital District Solidarity Committee is sponsoring a Solidarity Picnic at the Gansevoort Smith Memorial Park, Menands. Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided; bring a dish to share. Contact Doug Bullock at 518-869-9023 or call 518-426-0883 for more information.

Tuesday, Sept. 3

Please note that this replaces the Labor Day Parade this year. The program will include a look at the future of workers, unions and the economy in New York City. A special tribute will be made to commemorate the anniversary of Sept. 11 and to honor all those who died in the terrorist attacks, including more than 600 union members. Entertainment begins at 3:30 p.m. with the official program beginning at 5 p.m. CSEA members are asked to assemble at the corner of State and Bridge streets between 3 – 4 p.m. For more information, contact Lester Crockett at 212-312-7064.

Saturday, Sept. 21
The Capital Area Labor Federation and Central Labor Council Labor Parade will take place at 11:30 a.m. CSEA marchers will meet at Beverwyck Park near Albany High School at 9 a.m. The parade winds down Washington Avenue into Washington Park. Immediately following the parade, there will be speakers, food, music and a formal ceremony.

New state law makes buying college apparel no sweat

ALBANY — A new law CSEA lobbied heavily for allows the State University of New York and the City University of New York to refuse to sell clothing made in sweatshops even if the goods carry the lowest price.

A similar bill was passed last year affecting New York’s public school districts.

Gov. George Pataki recently signed the measure, which came about after national attention focused on the practice of manufacturers whose factories employ men, women and children to work grueling and long hours for pennies a day to produce high-priced designer apparel.

The new law marks the culmination of a two-year effort on the part of activists at SUNY Plattsburgh, who campaigned to assert influence in Albany.

SUNY Plattsburgh Local Executive Vice President Betty Lennon worked with students, staff, labor and religious leaders to educate the campus and surrounding community about the deplorable sweat shop conditions.

Lennon pushed for the ban on sweatshop goods sold on campus — most frequently found in sweatshirts and T-shirts.

Lennon said she is “very excited” about the new law, but also said she and others “will be watching to make sure that the administration complies.”

“The anti-sweatshop movement in the U.S. has been strongest on college campuses,” said Brian O’Shaughnessy, director of the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition.

“One important part of this new law gives an ethical imperative to New York’s 83 public colleges. Enacting sweat-free policy should be a top priority in the upcoming fall semester.”

— Therese Assalian
Resolutions proposed for CSEA’s annual delegates meeting

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS for consideration by delegates attending CSEA’s 92nd Annual Delegates Meeting, Sept. 10-13, 2002 in New York City.

Members wishing to see copies of any resolution should contact their delegate.

1. Educating youth about unions, its leaders and history

Submitted by Diane Hewitt, Delegate – Local 415 in conjunction with Lee Pound, President – Local 918

The resolution proposes that CSEA’s Education and Training Department research and develop a pamphlet describing labor’s history, its leaders and how they have brought about major cultural and economic changes to our country.

The pamphlet will be made available to all CSEA members and staff in order to distribute it to administrators in public and private schools to use in their curricula.

The Resolution Committee recommends this resolution be adopted as amended.

2. Veterans license plates

Submitted by Robert L. Pyjas, Delegate – Local 815

This resolution proposes that CSEA’s Political Action Department support and lobby the state legislature to provide special license plate tags to all honorably discharged veterans and military award recipients free of additional charges.

The Resolution Committee recommends this resolution be adopted.

CSEA has focused on a variety of veteran’s issues such as protecting jobs of those called to service, ensuring retirement credit for military service, securing adequate health coverage as well as supporting more resources for public services aimed to help veterans and their families. These are priority issues for veterans and should take precedence over license plates that can currently be purchased in these tough fiscal times.

3. Health and Safety Coalitions

Submitted by Les Eason, Delegate – Local 830 on behalf of the Committee on Minority Issues

The resolution proposes that CSEA continue to partner in coalitions with organizations that strive to make the workplace and community a safer and healthier place.

The Resolution Committee recommends this resolution be adopted as amended.

4. Officer/Activist Education and Training

Submitted by Les Eason, Delegate – Local 830 on behalf of the Committee on Minority Issues

This resolution proposes that CSEA reintroduce the LUTI (Local Union Training Instructor) program.

The LUTI program trains activists to provide training to other activists to be shop stewards and grievance representatives. The LUTI trainers will not replace the training staff but will work in conjunction with them.

LifeWorks: helps state members balance work/personal lives

CSEA members employed by New York state executive branch agencies statewide have a benefit available to help balance their work and personal lives.

LifeWorks is a resource and referral program that offers information, advice and support on issues union members may face. The service is free and confidential.

Some issues that will be covered under the LifeWorks service include parenting and child care, education, older adult concerns, mid-life and retirement, personal budgeting as well as other issues that may cause personal or job-related stress.

Celeste DeSilva, who works at the State Insurance Fund in New York City, used LifeWorks to help find transportation for her husband who has kidney disease get to clinics.

“It helped me a lot. I thought I would have to take time off from work,” said DeSilva. “It gives me peace of mind, not worrying about him trying to use the bus system,” she added.

LifeWorks also helped Barry Hartman who works at DOL in Nassau County. He was looking for health insurance for his adult son.

“After I called LifeWorks, I got an e-mail response that same day,” stated Hartman. “Their research was fantastic and they called back a week later to ask if I needed anything else. I want people to know it works. It saved me a lot of time.”

LifeWorks users call a toll-free number, (800) 362-9874, or TTY/TDD at (800) 346-9188 to talk to a consultant who provides advice, resources and referrals to local agencies that specialize in the caller’s issue. Members can also access LifeWorks’ web site at www.lifeworks.com for materials and referrals.

Users will be asked for their company name. For CSEA members, either type “nys” online or note “New York State” on the telephone call. The password for state employees is 2670.

LifeWorks is sponsored by the New York State Family Benefits Program and is administered through Ceridian LifeWorks Services.
One of the benefits of belonging to New York’s leading union is having available the best insurance programs of any union.

Do you have adequate life insurance coverage? How about disability or long term care insurance? If you are unsure about your policies or in need of additional coverage, why not take advantage of the wide variety of insurance products CSEA has to offer. Although probably not your favorite topic for stimulating conversation, insurance is an important benefit area to CSEA members. As a member, you are able to purchase a wide variety of insurance options at group discount rates.

“Who CSEA has done is put together a benefit insurance program that is unparalleled. No other union can match the range and quality of what we have to offer,” said CSEA Statewide President Danny Donohue.

Donohue believes the CSEA insurance program strengthens the security of union members. By belonging to CSEA, members are offered bargaining power to gain premium rates on a wide variety of products.

Working in conjunction with CSEA to acquire the premium rates is JLT Services Corp. JLT has served CSEA for more than 60 years. JLT began by building CSEA’s product base from a single term-life product to an extensive portfolio of options, including five different types of life insurance. Today, JLT provides access to a wide variety of insurance products that can help protect the personal security of CSEA members.

Another convenient advantage that most CSEA bargaining units can get is automatic payroll deduction for insurance billing.

An important goal of the Insurance program has always been and will continue to be customer service. “We will go to bat to provide optimum customer service for our members,” CSEA Statewide Treasurer Maureen Malone said.

For more information on the insurance options offered by CSEA, call 1-800-929-6656.
Vote on Primary Day
September 10