Overriding Impact

See Pages 3, 4, 10 and 11

Photo by Janice Marra
CSEA member Mark Pasler wears a mask and gloves while collecting tolls for the Niagara Bridge Commission. Pasler is unit president. Outbreaks of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Ontario, Canada, across the river from where Pasler collects tolls, have led to the safety precautions. Despite the risks they endure, Pasler’s unit has been without a contract for three years. For more information about SARS, visit the Occupational Health and Safety pages at csealocal1000.net.

Longtime CSEA activist, staffer Jayes dies

Labor relations specialist Jim Jayes, 53, a former 25-year CSEA member and Roswell Park Cancer Institute employee and longtime Roswell Park Local president in Buffalo, died May 16.

Jayes joined CSEA’s staff April 13, 1998.

Jayes is survived by his wife Vicki, and two adult sons, Tim and Chris.

State remains mum on contract talks

ALBANY — Despite the fact that the state was given a clear indication by CSEA negotiators that significant contract talks are possible, at least on non-monetary items, the state continues to drag its feet on moving negotiations forward.

The state Legislature has acted and approved a sensible and fair budget for New York. Now it’s time for Gov. George Pataki to act and meet CSEA at the bargaining table.

There had been an indication in the second week of April of a willingness by the state to address some issues but no action.

“The state needs to recognize that the negotiations process will not go away, no matter how much they wish it would,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

CSEA to file charges against Albany County

ALBANY — CSEA is in the process of filing improper practice charges against Albany County for the county’s actions during protracted contract negotiations for county DPW employees.

The improper practice charges relate to bad-faith bargaining on the part of the county and include specific incidents of threats and intimidation levied against DPW employees.

CSEA recently learned members of management were telling employees that if they do not vote on a contract shortly they will “lose everything.” The county also tried to change terms and conditions of the contract after agreement had already been reached.

CSEA has continually agreed to accept recommendations of a fact-finder. The contract talks that began in 2001 have been held up by numerous issues including changes to worker compensation language and voluntary one-person snow plowing.

DPW workers have voiced opposition to the one-person snow plowing because it is dangerous to the public as well as the employee operating the plow. “When driving these plows, especially on narrow county roads, you need another set of hands and eyes to run the equipment. It’s all about safety,” said Ken Michalski CSEA Albany County DPW Unit President.

The other five bargaining units within Albany County have already settled their contracts.

“These guys worked so many long hours this past winter, on many days, including Christmas, they spent time away from their families to make it safe for residents of Albany County. For Albany County to turn around and treat these workers this way is just deplorable,” said Kathy Garrison CSEA Capital Region president.

Note: Each month, The Work Force will feature an excerpt of the union’s agenda for the future. To read the entire agenda, visit www.csealocal1000.net.

June 2003

Representing and Bargaining Just Contracts

All CSEA member must have the best possible representation by their union.

• Just and Fair Contracts: We will use every vehicle possible to ensure our members the best possible contracts.
  - Member Involvement: Every member has the right to be part of the negotiation process. The key success in the negotiation process is predicated upon full communication between members, leaders and staff.
  - Utilization of Resources: We will take advantage of every possible resource to successfully bargain just and fair contracts and represent our membership.
  - Employment and Financial Security: Every individual has the right to have employment and/or financial security.
**Pataki still wacky in budget brouhaha**

ALBANY — The state Legislature’s stunning 119 overrides of Gov. George Pataki’s budget vetoes — giving New Yorkers a fair and more sensible budget — could still face challenges from the governor if he chooses to continue to obstruct rather than to lead.

CSEA’s efforts at helping turn the tide of the governor’s wrong choices showed once again how New York’s leading union rises to challenges and fights to win. (See Pages 10-11 for more about CSEA’s fight.)

The legislature’s spending plan restores $1.9 billion that Pataki sought to cut, primarily in education and health care funding. Pataki’s original proposal would have slammed local property and school taxpayers with double-digit increases while also forcing large scale service cuts and job elimination.

The legislature also addresses the state’s projected $12 billion deficit by enacting an income tax surcharge on the wealthiest New Yorkers and closing some notorious corporate tax loopholes. CSEA aggressively sought these measures as part of a balanced approach to dealing with the state’s fiscal challenges.

Above left, CSEA President Danny Donohue confers with state Sen. Majority Leader Joseph Bruno during the May 3 Rally for Education in Albany. Above right, Donohue speaks at a news conference about the importance of making the right budget choices. At his left is Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver.

**Donohue slams Business Council over arrogant wage freeze proposal**

In an open letter to state lawmakers and Gov. George Pataki, the Business Council of New York State has urged that salaries for all of New York’s public employees be frozen as part of the effort to deal with the state’s budget deficit.

In public response, CSEA President Danny Donohue said: “Rather than targeting working people who add value to the economy, the Business Council would be better advised to propose freezing the obscene salaries and perks of all CEOs which keep going up in a bad economy whether they’ve been earned or not.

“The Business Council should also consider their lack of credibility around the issue of corporate tax loopholes. Unlike these big business tax cheats, public employees actually pay their fair share of taxes at every level.

The legislature’s budget addresses many of the corporate tax loopholes CSEA and others identified.

**Loophole out of Geoffrey the Giraffe’s reach**

The state Legislature approved closing a corporate tax loophole that allowed corporations to avoid paying taxes on their business in New York.

In the case of Toys ‘R Us, the toy store chain has a holding company in Delaware, a state with tax laws that benefit corporations. The holding company charges Toys ‘R Us stores operating in New York a fee to use the licensed character Geoffrey the Giraffe for its stores.

The fees allow the corporate giant to siphon off its profits in New York — which would be taxed — to Delaware, allowing the corporation to keep its profits from New York without paying tax on them.

Although the legislature acted, the governor claims there are technical flaws in the legislative language that will not close the loophole. The governor has not indicated he is prepared to work cooperatively on alternative language to address the problem.

Likewise, the governor may also balk at imposing new income taxes passed by the legislature that more equitably distribute the state’s tax burden.

“CSEA will continue to keep the pressure on the governor to do the right thing — get corporations and the wealthy to pay their fair share to help save jobs and create new ones,” Donohue said.
CSEA's diversity is two-fold: on the one hand, the union represents workers of all skills and trades in a variety of industries; on the other, union members come from diverse backgrounds and offer a spectrum similar to that of our nation's melting pot.

The following profiles are drawn from the rich diversity staff at Nassau University Medical Center to reflect on a small portion of CSEA's broad mix of cultures and people.

“Sometimes it's easy to take for granted some of the gains we've made in the union, but as you see here, we have won some of the best protections and benefits in the world,” said CSEA Local President George Walsh.

CSEA is in tough negotiations with NUMC for a new contract, as well as with Nassau County Local EEO. Often lost in coverage of such fights are the faces and stories of the workers affected by the pact. Here are some of their faces and stories.

JAMAICA
Petite, energetic and moving like a blur, CSEA member Doris Ruddock might not strike you at first as a grandmother of three whose path resembles a winding mountain road.

“I am a people person. I encounter people from all walks of life. I try to treat them in the way I would like to be treated,” said Ruddock.

For this registered nurse at Nassau University Medical Center, the road to a medical career had many twists and turns. When she first arrived in the United States from Jamaica in 1970, all she wanted to do was go back home. “I was intensively homesick for a long time. But after a while, you adjust,” she said.

Although she was a licensed practical nurse in Jamaica, she had difficulty finding work in her field in the United States. So Ruddock’s first U.S. job was in the garment industry. She saved enough money to open her own business, a beauty salon, which she owned and operated in Brooklyn for 14 years.

Eventually, the pull toward her medical roots was too strong to ignore, and she returned to school. It was when she was working with a temporary agency that she landed a job at NUMC in 1990, where she has been since.

Over the years, Ruddock’s passion for people resulted in union involvement. “I like fairness, and helping everyone, and I guess that’s what led me here. I feel if we all pull together, we should be able to achieve our goals. I’m hoping that someday, management and workers will be on the same level, so we can all communicate effectively and achieve our goals,” said Ruddock.

PHILIPPINES
Renuel Sison who hails from Manila, in the Philippines, also ...we celebrate our diversity and use it to strengthen us.

Liberia
For Julia Seymour, the Peace Corps was her bridge to the rest of the world, as well as to a new life. Julia was 22, a bride newly married to a Peace Corps Pre-Veteran, when she arrived from Liberia, West Africa, to study biology in the United States.

But it was 1969, and her first lesson was that many people weren’t ready to accept her.

“My husband is white, and I’m black so we encountered a lot of prejudice in the United States at first,” said Seymour. “But I never let it disrupt my life. Now people are more open in their attitudes,” she said.

“I was always a science nerd. I was trying to become a vet, but once I got married I knew I wouldn’t be able to afford it,” she said. So she worked her way through school, getting an associate’s degree in medical technology and a bachelor’s in business administration. In 1985 she landed at NUMC as a lab tech.

“The most satisfying thing for me is just doing the job to the best of my ability. Just by being here, I feel I’m making a contribution to this community and to this country, because we all help to build the United States into what it is every day,” said Seymour.

INDIA
As a young man, Anti Joshi worked in his father’s store and was raised in a politically active family in Western India. He recently completed his grievance training and is looking forward to serving his CSEA brothers and sisters when they have difficulties.

Joshi, who came to the United States in 1983, started as a medical technician at NUMC in 1987. He said he was very happy here — until 9/11.

“After that, I started to feel an anti-immigrant backlash, and many times was mistaken for a person of Middle Eastern descent,” said Joshi. “Even my name was coming home, and some passerby called him, ‘Little bin Laden.’ That hurt. Remains like that are very disharmonious,” Joshi said.

He wishes the outside world operated the way he has seen it operate at CSEA, he said. “Here, the union makes the work site a great place because they are always there for you. They stand up for you. So many people don’t understand the union’s benefits. But there is unity in strength, and the union is nothing but unity. That’s why I got into this fight — because everything the union does is about equality,” said Joshi.

NUMC medical technician Sweta Parikh left her home in India in 1983, when she was 24. After she arrived, she started working in a bank, while attending school.

She married a dentist and eventually they had two children. “I stayed home for three years, but returned to work part-time. I really wanted to stay in touch with my industry, but it was difficult, finding the balance between work and family,” she said.

After working for a time at A. Holly Patterson, Parikh transferred to NUMC in 1999. She said it has been a comfort to find a large Indian community in her hometown of East Meadow. “I like the chance to celebrate my heritage and culture, and I am especially looking forward to the International Days held by the NUMC unit and the Long Island Region,” said Parikh.

— Rachel Langert

Celebrating Diversity
NUMC Members Diverse Backgrounds Reflect Nation’s Melting Pot.
Probation workers increase skills

LIVERPOOL — As budget crunches across the state continue to squeeze local governments' abilities to provide training to workers, union-provided training opportunities become even more valuable and necessary.

That's why Brian Mayock, chair of CSEA's Central Region Probation Committee, believes attendance has grown at the union's biannual Probation Workers Workshop. The region recently held its third annual workshop outside Syracuse, and Mayock said it was an overwhelming success.

"In tough fiscal times, one of the first things to be sacrificed are training budgets, and as our members are asked to do more with less, the receipt of instruction that enhances your ability to do your job becomes even more valuable," he said.

"This is the largest group we've had and the most diverse in terms of what counties are represented. I couldn't be more pleased."

The day-long program began with informational tables on union benefits and services, and included a series of concurrent workshop sessions on such topics as Legal Issues for Probation Officers, Defensive Tactics, and Drug Recognition and Testing. More than 100 probation workers from counties around the region, as well as some groups from the CSEA Capital and Western regions, attended.

"The workshops that are being offered are needed. I wish I could attend every one of them," said Fulton County Probation Officer Christine Reynolds. "I hope to gain skills I can take back to my office."

Paul Dickens, a probation officer from Onondaga County, agreed, saying the workshop was "an opportunity to kick back and learn."

"It's great to network and learn what other counties are doing — to learn what you can do to improve your job performance," he said.

CSEA Central Region President Jim Moore welcomed those in attendance, and said he was proud the region was able to offer them such a valuable experience.

"We recognize that your jobs are indeed special, and we're very proud to be able to offer you specialized training that can help you enhance your job performance," Moore said.

"We're proud of the work you do in our communities, and we know you'll find these workshops worthwhile."

Another goal of the workshop is to involve probation officers more in their union, Mayock said.

"There's a real need for probation officers to view themselves as union members and join in the struggle to maintain the protections that we currently have and to seek improvements in our working conditions. We hope this workshop helps bring that sense of union community to those who attended."

— Mark M. Kotzin

Albany Co. Jail health care workers win union

ALBANY — After a protracted battle that included five workers being fired and then rehired, health care workers at the Albany County Jail have won voluntary recognition for CSEA to become their union.

The agreement came days before a scheduled vote when CMS (Correctional Medical Services), the private health care contractor hired by the county agreed to voluntarily recognize the employees' union.

Under the terms of the agreement with CSEA, CMS has also agreed to expedited contract talks. There are about 28 employees in the medical unit, three of whom are existing CSEA members already part of the county bargaining unit at the jail.

"What this means is that CMS has agreed to fast-track contract talks. This agreement to grant recognition and bargain in good faith means both sides want to move forward," said Kathy Garrison, CSEA Capital Region president.

Stephanie Spears, a physician assistant, was one of the workers initially fired after attending a rally. "We are incredibly happy, we have been waiting a long time for this," said Spears.
Librarians shelve Pataki cuts

Librarians from all over the state refused to be shushed, and the noise from a group that thrives in quiet helped turn the page on Gov. George Pataki’s budgetary assault on working families.

Christina Farmer was clearly irked at the injustice Pataki’s budget cuts would perpetrate on readers and students alike. “Public libraries serve everybody in New York state. There is no more democratic institution than the public libraries,” she said.

That’s why the inter-library loan librarian from the Suffolk Cooperative Library System in Bellport felt compelled to take part in a March library rally and lobby her lawmakers in the fight against Pataki’s budget cuts.

Albany chapter

“When I went to see Assemblywoman Pat Acampora, she had a big sign on her door,” Farmer said. “When I saw it, I just knew I had to come down and support that rally.”

The exasperated legislator walked away, and Farmer walked down the hall to the governor’s office to protest.

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The Suffolk Cooperative Library System is the library’s bookshelf. If one branch doesn’t have a volume, it relies on an interlibrary loan system to get it.

The Cooperative Library System coordinates the movement of books within the 55 libraries and 64 buildings in Suffolk, from Montauk to Cold Spring Harbor.

The web-based Suffolk Web email service supports local client e-mail, and acts as a conduit to e-mail, web and dial-up access for 90,000 subscribers in Suffolk County.

Front row, left to right, Diane Eidelman, Tracey Firestone, Kristina Farmer, and back row, left to right, Jim Battaile, Mickey Cantwell, and John Richardson all traveled to Albany to protest proposed budget cuts.

Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte, center, leads a group of demonstrators protesting proposed cuts in library funding.

“We support libraries’ and she promised to help us. But later when I found out she voted against restoring the cuts, I felt betrayed,” said Farmer. “I learn something new every time I go to Albany,” she said.

“I’ve gone through 30 years of state budgets, and seeing us and libraries getting pushed around by the governor and the legislature. So felt it was important to get out there and push back, rather than being polite,” said her co-worker John Richardson, head of Technical Services for the Suffolk Cooperative Library System, who also took part in the rally.

James Battaile, President of CSEA Suffolk Cooperative Library System Local, said the fiscal squeeze has been felt there for some time.

“Fifteen years ago the state provided the majority of our funding. Now it’s down to less than 33 percent, while the number of patrons we serve has increased exponentially,” said Battaile.

Battaile explained the Pataki budget would have cut state funding in half, and resulted in even hardship by jeopardizing federal funding as well.

Like many other departments, the Cooperative Library System also faces the daunting task of working miracles daily with an increasingly overburdened, skeletal staff.

The most visible victim of the budget cuts, was going to be the Cooperative Library System service called Suffolk Web.

Quiet campaign

So the librarians quietly used Suffolk Web to conduct a sophisticated campaign of public notifications, petition drives and virtual rallies over the Internet, to alert subscribers the program was in danger of elimination.

“We overloaded the e-mail server for the state Legislature, we flooded their phone lines, we had people send faxes online. The result was that library people really managed to get the governor and lawmakers’ attention in a big way,” said Battaile.

“Their activities were not only extremely effective, but very creative as well,” said CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte. “They really showed what a group of determined activists can accomplish, especially with the technology of the digital age. These librarians should serve as an inspiration to us all,” said LaMorte.

— Rachel Langert

“I work for BOCES, which is very threatened by the governor’s budget, and we need to support the right choices.”

— Marianne LePore, Southern Westchester County BOCES on why she participated in the May 3 Rally for Public Education.
TROY — George Rogers, a 10-year CSEA member and president of the CSEA Troy Unit, had been trying to get management to address his concerns about pay inequities, hiring practices and safety issues.

He went to meetings, he called people, he wrote memos, nothing. Finally, he took his case to the union and blasted the practices in a revealing story in the city’s paper, the Troy Record.

“I’m holding their feet to the fire,” said Rogers, who was fed up with the business-as-usual attitude at City Hall.

On the issue of pay inequities, Rogers blew the whistle on the city’s practice of rehiring retired employees and paying them more than $20 an hour.

“I have a laborer who has been working there for almost a year, working his butt off every day, who only makes $6.50 (an hour),” Rogers said.

“The bottom line is they are bringing back retirees who are making more in three days than many of the laborers earn in a week.”

These practices persist even though Troy is facing record deficits, and for two years in a row has been imposing double-digit tax hikes on beleaguered residents.

Rogers also takes issue with the city’s practice of hiring people from the outside when there are qualified workers already on the payroll.

At a recent DPW committee meeting, Deputy Mayor James Conroy defended the accusations saying the city does all it can to promote people from inside. Rogers isn’t buying it.

“Supervisors at DPW have told the laborers that if they don’t get a CDL (commercial driving license), they’ll never be promoted,” Rogers said. “So we have a guy that goes out and gets a CDL and they hire someone off the street who jumped right over him.”

Rogers said the only explanation given was that a “higher-up” wanted it.

Rogers said he feels obligated to stand up for the DPW workers in particular because “they don’t get any support from management.”

A serious issue Rogers raised with the media is the apparent lack of concern for the safety of the workers.

According to Rogers, complaints relating to work area protection, lack of vests, and lack of trench boxes went unanswered.

Reflecting on the city’s lackluster safety record, Rogers said, “PESH has been in and the city has been cited.”

CSEA Capital Region President Kathy Garrison said “these men and women already have a dangerous job, they should have every protection possible.”

— Therese Assalian
CSEA wins big in Erie County

BUFFALO — Legal action by CSEA has won back pay, reaffirmation of unit work, and direction to the employer, Erie County and Erie County Community College, to refrain from threatening employees in exercising their Taylor Law rights.

The arbitrator’s decision stems from improper practice charges filed by CSEA, when the college illegally subcontracted the work of a member who was out sick, and failed to assign the work to CSEA unit members in that case; and in football game assignments that required guard work by CSEA members.

The charges were supported by testimony of Section President Gary Ghozen and Vice President George Wagner, who had sought clarification of the supervisors’ actions.

The arbitrator also found the college guilty of failing to assign member Dale Bacchetti, a supervising maintenance mechanic, to provide coverage for an absent custodian of buildings and grounds, unilaterally changing Bacchetti’s shift schedule.

When Bacchetti, who had family reasons for his split shift status, asked for an explanation, he was threatened by a supervisor and told he would “never work a day shift again.” He was also threatened with the loss of his job by a supervisor, if the charge against the college was upheld. That threat, in modified form, was repeated by the county’s director of labor relations, in the presence of CSEA Labor Relations Specialist Penny Gleason and Ghozen, during a break in a pre-hearing conference when the administrative law judge was temporarily out of the room.

“He stated that Dale’s split shift was an accommodation,” said Gleason, “and that he would be put back on straight afternoons. He said ‘We will not make accommodations for people who bring us to PERB.’”

The arbitrator found the labor relations director’s comments “lamentable,” and wrote they had a chilling effect on employee rights, and were in “direct contravention and patently violative of the express public policy of this state.”

He ordered the college and the county to:
• Cease and desist from unilaterally transferring the work of custodians of buildings and grounds and senior building guards from the CSEA unit, and to return that work to the unit.
• Make unit members whole for any loss of wages and benefits, plus interest;
• Cease and desist from interfering with, restraining or coercing unit members in the exercise of their protected rights guaranteed under the Taylor law; and
• Sign and post a “Notice to All Employees” for 30 days, stating the above.

“This was a great win against anti-union animus,” said CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi, “We will be watching to see that the county follows these directives. These are part of the reasons that unions exist, to protect its members from abuse.”

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Be heard on June 3rd!

Voting for school budgets and school board candidates will take place across New York on June 3.

It is imperative that you get out and support the candidates and budgets in your community that support working families.

For information on how you can help, see Page 20 and visit the CSEA web site at csealocal1000.net.

CSEA Voices

“CSEA members tend to live where they work — it [budget cuts] affects us as members of our community, it affects our children and it affects our livelihood.”

— Gary Conley, CSEA Westchester County Local President on the importance of voting in school district elections and budget votes.
Capitol gains!

In the wake of events that have shaken New York’s political system to its core, it is clear that CSEA members have once again demonstrated why we are New York’s leading union.

The union was instrumental in the events leading to the state Legislature voting overwhelmingly to override Gov. George Pataki’s vetoes and establishing a state budget that represents a fair and responsible approach to dealing with the state’s $112 billion budget deficit.

“The efforts CSEA members made to ensure better choices for New York were second to none,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “The letters, phone calls, meetings with legislators, public demonstrations and other activities made a huge difference in this fight.”

CSEA members should be proud of their hard work and unity across the state, Donohue said.

CSEA members mounted a full-court press on the union’s priorities in Albany and in localities across the state. Working with the AFL-CIO and other coalition partners, including New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness, CSEA delivered its message.

The union also aired a statewide radio and television campaign to help make its point.

Events like AFSCME Lobby Day, the May 3 Rally for Education and numerous educational programs, demonstrations and in-district lobbying in every part of the state made a strong impact in the fight.

The state Legislature has demonstrated real leadership in taking some very responsible steps to deal with the state’s fiscal situation, but we still face very real problems in every part of the state,” Donohue said.

“The state and local government contract fights across New York and we also need to turn out in force to support school district budget votes on Tuesday June 3.

Above, CSEA President Danny Donohue addresses thousands of participants in the May 3 Rally for Education in Albany. The rally was one of many efforts over the past two years by CSEA to get New Yorkers to see the reality of the governor’s wrong budget choices.

Below, left to right: Youngsters who are New York’s future take part in the rally; CSEA President Danny Donohue and Executive Vice President Mary Sullivan fire up the crowd, at a prevously event outside CSEA Headquarters, and: A sea of CSEA pennants.

New York budget fight timeline

February/March

- Donohue slams governor’s budget for its wrong choices and broken promises in legislative testimony, calls for an income tax surcharge and closing of corporate tax loopholes to help deal with deficit.
- CSEA steps up letter-writing and phone call campaign to legislators along with community coalitions, building budget forums and public demonstrations.
- CSEA Political Action training provides activists for persuading the union’s cause; several lobby days take place directly to lawmakers.
- CSEA and coalition partners’ media campaign intensifies.
- Public opinion polls show anti-budget approval ratings for Pataki, growing support for “better choices.”

April

- Thousands of CSEA and AFSCME members press state legislators during the union’s annual Lobby Day.
- CSEA State Workshop program fires up hundreds of activists to take on the fight.
- CSEA conducts Albany briefing for hundreds of local and unit presidents.
- CSEA-directed events and demonstrations take place in every part of the state.
- Pataki refuses to hedge in negotiations with Senate and Assembly; threatens to veto any agreement they reach.

May

- Legislature enacts a responsible spending plan with significant budget restorations to help schools and localities avoid steep property tax hikes. Legislature’s plan generates revenue via income tax surcharge on the wealthiest/New Yorkers and by closing corporate tax loopholes.
- CSEA has strong contingent to support legislature’s plan at massive Rally for Public Education.
- Public opinion polls show Pataki’s job approval at its lowest level in eight years, strong support for legislature’s budget.
- State legislature enacts budget by overriding override of Pataki’s 113 line item vetoes of their

- Override vote is unanimous in the Republican controlled state Senate.
SUNY Local honors late CSEA member with worker memorial

PURCHASE — The lawn near the Performing Arts Center at SUNY Purchase will forever have a somber reminder of a CSEA member who died while serving the public.

CSEA joined with SUNY Purchase officials, community members and relatives of Luis Serrano on Workers’ Memorial Day to dedicate a concrete plaque in memory of the CSEA member who gave his life while trying to protect others from harm. The plaque was provided jointly by the CSEA SUNY Purchase Local and college officials.

Serrano, who was also a shop steward for the union’s SUNY Purchase Local, was killed in the early-morning hours Dec. 14, 2000, after a newspaper delivery truck struck him. He had been clearing snow and ice from the road adjacent to the Performing Arts Center when the incident occurred.

CSEA SUNY Purchase Local President Frank Williams, who had worked with Serrano at the building, remembered him as a man who had loved his family and enjoyed his work.

“Serrano) gave his last measure to protect us from ice and snow,” Williams said. “He was a great worker — the best of us — and he deserves nothing but the best from us.”

CSEA Southern Region President Diane Hewitt offered, on behalf of all CSEA members across the state, the union’s deepest sympathy for Serrano’s loved ones.

“It’s only fitting that we honor Luis Serrano on Workers’ Memorial Day,” she said. “I hope for the day when these types of ceremonies will no longer be necessary.”

Serrano is survived by his wife, Martha, a cleaner at SUNY Purchase and CSEA member, four children and two grandchildren — all of whom were on hand to pay tribute to him.

“I want to thank everyone who made this plaque possible and supported us, including CSEA,” Luis Serrano Jr., Serrano’s son, said. “I can’t thank you enough for your friendship and kindness to him and now to my mother. Thank you for making us feel that he’ll never be forgotten.”

— Janice Marra

Elsewhere on Workers’ Memorial Day ...

At left below, CSEA Western New York DDSO Local President Dawn Smith honors workers who have died on the job at the facility’s Worker Memorial. At right below, members of the Capital Region Area Labor Federation, including CSEA members, take part in a Workers’ Memorial Day ceremony in Albany.
CSEA snowplow operators, support staff feted as Hometown Heroes

ALBANY — CSEA represented snowplow operators and support staff from local government highway crews and the state Department of Transportation were honored as “Hometown Heroes” at a recent program sponsored by the Red Cross of Northeastern New York. CSEA member George Georgea, an employee of the town of East Greenbush, was also recognized at the same event for his heroic actions as a volunteer fireman.

CSEA President Danny Donohue helped make the presentation to the plow operators and offered the union’s appreciation: “These men and women truly are Hometown Heroes,” Donohue said. “They make our roads safe for our children to get to school, for emergency vehicles to get to where they need to go and for you and me to get to work. In fact, when you think about it, none of us can do our jobs until they’ve done theirs.”

“This winter in particular they earned our respect and appreciation,” Donohue said. A representative group of CSEA plow operators and other staff participated in the program and accepted the recognition award, a commemorative stamp poster provided by the U.S. Postal Service. Albany Postmaster Mike Esposito also noted how much postal workers appreciate the efforts of CSEA.

CSEA’s contingent of Hometown Heroes accepted their award from the Red Cross for their dedication on and off the job. At left is WGY morning host Don Weeks, who emceed the event. Responded to a fire and ran into a burning house to carry him to safety.

CSEA is proud of George and all of our members who do so much for the people in their communities every day,” Donohue said. “It’s great to have an organization like the Red Cross recognize their contributions.

The Red Cross event honors a broad range of individuals and groups who make an outstanding contribution to the community.

NYC SEFA team lets nothing stand in their way

NEW YORK — Tragedy, temporary displacement and a slew of retirements could not stop the State Employee Federated Appeal (SEFA) team of CSEA members working at the lower Manhattan Office of Temporary Disability Assistance office from reaching their goals.

“There was a lot of emotion and stress,” said Isabel Cruz in the wake of September 11, especially because their office is across the street from Ground Zero. “But something good came out of it.”

Cruz and her CSEA co-workers, (all members of the clerical staff), Shirley Lee, Gilbert Fontanes, Robin Singh and Angela Mohammad, were recently honored at a luncheon in Albany for “going beyond the norm to ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to participate” and for “carefully planning for upcoming campaigns.” They raised about $14,000.

It wasn’t an easy task, according to Singh who readily admits that she’s attended far fewer retirement parties lately. “A lot of people retired after 9/11,” said Singh. “We thought we would not reach our goal but we did.”

The team accomplished this by having raffles, auctions, 50-50s, and securing gift certificates and other goods from local vendors. “This is a great committee,” said Cruz. “We’re all committed.”

For all the CSEA members on the team, raising money for SEFA was also very personal. They have all had relatives who have either died or have been affected by diseases or medical conditions that are served by organizations that receive SEFA funding.

“A portion of my gift goes to St. Vincent’s Hospital,” said Mohammad. “If it weren’t for them, my daughter would not be with me today.” Her daughter had been in a coma for 31 days. Now she’s a healthy 16-year-old.

“I am extremely proud of our members and the selfless dedication they brought to this SEFA campaign,” said CSEA Metro Region President George Boncoraglio. “It’s yet another clear example of the compassion, creativity and conviction that CSEA members bring to their workplaces and their communities.”

—from David Galarza
30 years ago...

Thirty years ago, CSEA underwent a top to bottom restructuring that stands to this day.

In an effort to better meet the needs of its members at the grassroots level, the union reorganized into a regional structure with offices, staff and resources established in key geographic locations across the state (see related feature on Page 1B).

The four year initiative was led by a Restructuring Committee chaired by A. Victor Costa, an employee of the New York State Workers’ Compensation Board and long time leader in CSEA. Costa, now retired from public employment, recently shared his thoughts and perspectives on his years of involvement in CSEA as part of a history project under way to document the events and personalities that have shaped our union.

“We visited every part of the state and considered more than 2,800 suggestions from the membership,” Costa said. “We had more than our share of heated arguments but in the end our committee was unanimous in our recommendations to the delegates of the union who supported our proposals.”

Also in 1973:

- The Vietnam cease fire agreement is signed in January.
- The nation is embroiled throughout the year in the Watergate scandal with court actions and Senate hearings dominating the news. In October, President Nixon fires Watergate Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox and Deputy Attorney General William Ruckelshaus; Attorney General Elliot Richardson resigns in what comes to be know as the “Saturday Night Massacre.”
- Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns after pleading no contest to income tax evasion.
- Arab and Israeli forces fight the Yom Kippur War.
- U.S. median household income is $10,512.
- Sacheen Littlefeather stands in for Marlon Brando and refuses his Best Actor Oscar for his role in “The Godfather,” to protest the U.S. government’s treatment of Native Americans.
- The top films of the year include “The Sting,” “The Exorcist,” and “American Graffiti.”
QSAC workers demand fair play

NEW YORK — QSAC (Quality Services for the Autism Community) workers trying to organize a union at their workplace were recently invited to a QSAC management meeting that included the entire QSAC Board of Directors. At that meeting, workers described the problems at the agency and presented their demands and their desire to form a union.

“We told the board members about the problems we were having just trying to provide our consumers with basic needs,” said Movyn Baxx, who was fired for his union activism. “We also demanded that QSAC negotiate a neutrality card check agreement so that QSAC employees can finally decide whether they want a union while also being free of all this intimidation and harassment.”

Board members and management were provided copies of the neutrality proposal. Once it became clear that QSAC management was not willing to discuss the agreement, the workers reiterated their desire to reach an agreement and left the meeting.

“A free and fair election cannot occur in a climate of harassment and intimidation,” said CSEA Organizer Paul Frank. “Instead, we’re proposing a fair card check procedure, recognized and sanctioned by federal law.”

The state attorney general is conducting an investigation into whether QSAC is breaking the law under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. For several years, many employees have not been paid thousands of dollars in overtime. New York City’s and the state comptrollers have already sent letters to QSAC’s director on behalf of the workers and their desire to have a union.

Just days before meeting and before thousands of fans gathered at Shea Stadium, QSAC employees told management to stop striking out with employees. QSAC was one of several autism organizations that had been invited to participate in Autism Day at Shea Stadium.

In between innings, workers, CSEA members, and activists from Jobs with Justice held up large placards with letters that spelled out phrases like: “Hey QSAC: HIT A HOME RUN WITH THE UNION” and “ERROR ON QSAC: BE FAIR TO THOSE WHO CARE.”

Later QSAC workers and union activists surprised management by showing up at a local restaurant where QSAC was holding a fundraiser. While QSAC director Gary Maffei observed the workers, leafleting patrons and guests, another person in his party was busily snapping pictures of the workers. It was yet another example of how QSAC management continues to intimidate and harass workers from organizing. As a result, the union has filed several Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charges against QSAC with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

“Management continues to think that we’re just going to disappear,” said Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio. “But in fact the worker’s desire to organize a union is continuing to gain more support from parents of consumers, religious groups, politicians, and labor activists.”

QSAC, a private non-profit agency serving the autism community, receives more than 90 percent of its operating budget from the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. It employs approximately 650 people at 15 sites with 14 in Queens and one in Long Island. QSAC runs a residential program that is supplemented by day and after-school programs.

Workers at QSAC, fed up with short staffing, high turn-over, arbitrary firings and disciplinary actions, and problems with food and medical supplies, have formed a committee called QCARE (Quality Care Advocates for the Rights of Employees). The QCARE committee is working with CSEA to bring a union to their workplace.

— David Galarza

Justice for Farmworkers

CSEA President Danny Donohue takes part in the Albany leg of a march calling on New York to pass better laws to protect the state’s farmworkers. Farmworkers do not even have the most basic on-the-job rights and protections that most of us take for granted including a day off each week, access to toilets and the right to organize into a union.

At right, CSEA Education and Training Specialist Guillermo Perez, who marched from Harlem to Albany, takes part.
Summary of April 10 CSEA Board of Directors Meeting

CSEA Statewide Secretary Barbara Reeves

ALBANY — The CSEA Statewide Board of Directors met on April 10. In official business, the board:

• Appointed Lester Crockett as a trustee of the CSEA WORK Institute;
• Retained the services of PricewaterhouseCoopers for the fiscal year 2003 audit;
• Designated the American Arbitration Association as the independent agency for the 2004 combined elections;
• Authorized the president to enter into negotiations for a new site to house the Western Region office;
• Appointed Robert Holland, Dan LoMonte, William Walsh, Donna Smith, Stanley Bergman, Mary D’Antonio and Robert Rauff to the Long Island Region Political Action Committee;
• Expressed support for U.S. troops now and when they return home; and
• Placed into administration Green Haven Correctional Facility Local 138, Binghamton Psychiatric Center Local 441, City of Rensselaer DPW Unit 8267/Local 842, Avoca Central School District Unit 8712/Local 851, Haverling School General Unit 8717/Local 851, and Town of Delaware Unit 8813/Local 853.

Questions concerning the summary should be directed to CSEA Statewide Secretary Barbara Reeves, CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y. 12210, 1-800-342-4146 or (518) 257-1253.

'They said what?'

Visit CSEA’s web site and hear it through The Grapevine every day.

Stay up to date on the latest news and information affecting CSEA members with www.csealocal1000.net's Grapevine.

Daily updates and news archives.

The CSEA Store is open for business! Shop online for a wide variety of apparel, gifts and goods. The CSEA Store allows CSEA members to show pride in their union while letting folks in your community know that CSEA members are family, friends and neighbors.

“It’s very easy to buy knock-off items from Third World countries and save a few bucks on CSEA promotional items, but we don’t do that,” said CSEA Statewide Treasurer Maureen Malone.

“We need to buy union-made products and support union workers. If we don’t, who will?” Malone said.

Visit the store online today and see what awaits you. A print catalog will also be available soon.
The Health Benefits Department was very pleased by the overwhelming response to our Word Search Contest regarding commonly heard health insurance terms, which appeared in the April Work Force. The answer key is listed below.

Answer Key:
An type of medical or surgical care in which a subscriber occupies a hospital bed for at least a 24-hour period.

Answer: Inpatient

A fixed out-of-pocket expense for a specified covered service that the patient pays each time he or she visits a participating health plan provider. It is usually represented in a specific dollar amount (e.g. $100).

Answer: Copayment

An approved list of prescription drugs covered by a health plan.

Answer: Formulary

A provision in an insurance policy that relieves the insured of paying the premiums while receiving benefits.

Answer: Waiver of premium

A type of medical or surgical care in which a subscriber occupies a hospital bed for less than a 24-hour period.

Answer: Outpatient

Formal recognition by an agency or organization that evaluates a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards.

Answer: Accreditation

A physician who concentrates on medical activities in a specific field of medicine based on education and qualifications.

Answer: Specialist

The amount that must be paid by a subscriber during a calendar year before a health insurance plan will begin making benefit payments for services rendered at a non-participating provider.

Answer: Deductible

A means of sharing the costs of services between the plan and the subscriber. It is usually represented in a percentage amount (e.g. 80 percent : 20 percent).

Answer: Coinsurance

The form used to file for benefits under a health plan.

Answer: Claim form

A facility intended to provide care to terminally ill individuals with a life expectancy of six months or less.

Answer: Hospice

Improper or negligent treatment of a patient, by a physician, resulting in injury, damage or loss.

Answer: Malpractice

The health insurance plan’s right to recover money it has paid for health care benefits when another party is legally responsible for payment.

Answer: Subrogation

The period of time between enrollment in a health plan and the effective date of coverage.

Answer: Waiting period

Prescription drugs that are therapeutically equivalent to and contain the same active ingredient as their brand name counterpart.
R is for regions

The strength of CSEA comes from the unity of action and purpose of its 265,000 members. The union is structured to make the most of that strength by building solidarity at the local, region and statewide levels.

To better coordinate the activities, resources and effectiveness of CSEA across the state, the union is organized into six geographic regions with a region office in each: Long Island, Metropolitan (covering the five boroughs of New York City), Southern (covering the counties of the Hudson Valley from Westchester to Ulster County), Capital (covering Greene and Columbia Counties, the Capital District and the counties extending north to the Canadian border), Central (covering counties from the Southern Tier to the Canadian border), and the Western Region (covering the westernmost counties of the state).

Each region elects a Region President (who also serves as a statewide vice president of CSEA) and a slate of region officers. CSEA labor relations, political action, communications, safety and health and administrative staff work out of each of the union's six region offices under the supervision of a region director.

CSEA President Danny Donohue initiates the policy and agenda of the union in coordination with CSEA's statewide officers (Executive Vice President Mary Sullivan, Secretary Barbara Reeves, Treasurer Maureen Malone and the six region presidents/statewide vice presidents) and elected Board of Directors. Much of the activity of carrying it out is implemented region by region.

1. Long Island Region
   3 Garet Place
   Commack, NY 11725
   631-462-0030
   Nick LaMorte, president

2. Metropolitan Region
   40 Fulton Street, 22nd Floor
   New York, NY 10038
   212-406-2156
   George Boncoraglio, president

3. Southern Region
   568 State Route 52
   Beacon, NY 12508
   845-831-1000 or 1-800-757-CSEA
   Diane Hewitt, president

4. Capital Region
   1 Lear Jet Lane, Suite #2
   Latham, NY 12110
   518-785-4400 or 1-800-874-7344
   Kathy Garrison, president

5. Central Region
   6595 Kirkville Road
   East Syracuse, NY 13057
   315-433-0050 or 1-800-559-7975
   Jim Moore, president

6. Western Region
   482 Delaware Avenue
   Buffalo, NY 14202
   716-886-0391 or 1-866-568-7734
   Flo Tripi, president
New health insurance law, HIPAA, affects you

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) is a federal law designed to improve the nation’s health care system. Title I of HIPAA, which is already in effect, protects health insurance coverage for workers and their families when they change or terminate employment. It protects an individual's continued insurability. Before this law, if an individual lost insurance coverage for any reason, he or she could be required to prove insurability before obtaining new coverage. For individuals with chronic health problems or whose health deteriorated while they were insured, it was a serious problem.

Title II of HIPAA, which became effective in April 2003, includes national standards for the protection of the privacy of personal health information against access without consent or authorization. The law applies directly to three specific groups commonly known as “covered entities.” These groups include health care providers, administrators of health plans and health care claims eligibility clearinghouses.

HIPAA legislation may seem brand new to some, however, many may recall recently receiving in the mail a “Notice of Privacy Practices” from their individual group health plan. This notice was a requirement under HIPAA law for all health plans.

In an effort to help CSEA members familiarize themselves with the HIPAA legislation, we have put together a list of frequently asked questions:

Q: What is protected health information (PHI)?
A: PHI is any information that can identify you as an individual and your past, present or future physical or mental health condition.

Q: My 18-year-old dependent is away at college. Will the privacy laws prohibit me from getting information about his or her health insurance claims?
A: Yes, any dependent (over the age of 18) must complete a form that will authorize release of PHI to you.

Q: I handle the health insurance for my elderly parent. Will I still be able to call and receive information regarding my parent?
A: You will need authorization from your parent to release PHI to you.

Q: Is it true that I can no longer call for information about my spouse’s claims even though he/she is on my health insurance plan?
A: Yes, privacy laws prohibit the release of information to anyone, other than the individual or provider of the services unless there is a signed authorization from that spouse.

Q: Last year, my parents authorized the disclosure of information to me regarding their healthcare policy. Do they have to fill out another form?
A: Yes, a new authorization must be completed because of the privacy law that became effective on April 14, 2003.

Q: Will you release health information be released with a court order, or if subpoenaed?
A: PHI may be disclosed in response to a court order, subpoena, discovery request, or other lawful process.

Q: My dependent is overseas serving in the military, therefore, unavailable to sign the authorization form. Does this mean that I cannot receive information regarding his/her protected health information?
A: If you have power of attorney indicating that you have access to your dependent's medical information, your healthcare provider will be able to release your dependent’s protected health information to you.

Important information about Lyme disease

Visit the Joint Committee on Health Benefits’ web site at csea1000.net for important information about the spread of Lyme disease in New York and precautions you should take. Visit CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health section on the web site as well.

DUNKIRK RALLY — After nearly a year without a contract, and no progress in PERB impasse mediation, the 100-member Dunkirk Central Schools Unit and supporters recently demonstrated at a school board meeting. Turnout was excellent, with CSEA brothers and sisters from outside the unit joining the protest ...

ALFRED SIGN-UP — A majority of the 53-NYS College of Ceramics at Alfred University workers have signed CSEA membership cards, prompting a letter from CSEA President Danny Donohue to the University requesting voluntary recognition of CSEA as their bargaining agent. If a positive response is not received in 30 days, PERB will be petitioned to set up a representation election ...

LIVINGSTON COUNTY RALLY — More than 200 Livingston County Employees and supporters were joined recently by CSEA President Danny Donohue and Western Region President Flo Tripi in a rally for a fair contract. The 480-member unit has been without a contract since the end of 2001, and are fighting management attempts to remove unit positions, and other changes that would change and weaken the union. Donohue and Tripi applauded the unit’s members for staying unified, and assured them that the union’s 265,000 members stand with them in their quest for a fair contract ...

MADISON COUNTY VOTES YES — About 250 white-collar CSEA workers in Madison County government overwhelmingly approved a six-year contract. Union members voted by a 2 to 1 ratio to OK the tentative agreement negotiated with management. The contract was ratified by the county Board of Supervisors ...

ELLENVILLE GAINS TENTATIVE PACT — The nearly 150 CSEA-represented workers at Ellenville Hospital have a tentative contract agreement with the hospital. The hospital's nursing, technical, dietary, maintenance and clerical workers chose to form a union nearly a year ago. CSEA is also working with the hospital to ensure the facility's financial success ...

Stone Brook) have participated in demonstrations recently to protest Gov. George Pataki’s proposal to sell the facilities. CSEA believes there are better choices for improving the operation of the facilities and maintaining their vital role in the public health care system ...

HONORING PUBLIC EMPLOYEES — CSEA Executive Vice President Mary Sullivan recently joined CSEA members and Assemblyman Jack McEneny during a commemoration in the State Capitol of Public Employee Day ...

A recent statement from the AFL-CIO Executive Council forecasts media ownership rules that could be approved by the FCC soon would lift the current limits on the number of TV, radio and newspaper outlets a corporation could own and open the way for an unprecedented media consolidation placing the “public’s right to receive information from diverse sources” in serious jeopardy.

The council condemned the FCC’s efforts to accelerate consolidation and urged the commission to maintain current media ownership rules ...

LEAP YEAR PAY DIFFERENCE — A memo recently was sent to all state work sites outlining the change in pay due to the 2003-2004 state fiscal year including a leap year. The law means the formula the state uses to divide the year into pay periods has a greater denominator, resulting in a smaller amount of pay per pay period but still achieving the same sum annually. In short, if you work for the state and notice your paycheck is a few cents shorter than usual, it’s because of the leap year factor, not because your pay has been reduced.

AFSCME’s new Women’s Rights Department Director Iresema Garza, center, meets with CSEA’s Statewide Women’s Committee recently.

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Call your Political Action Coordinator to Volunteer for Get Out The Vote Efforts

Long Island Region: 
Gretchen Penn: 631 462-0030
Metropolitan Region: 
Matthew D’Amico: 212 406-2156
Southern Region: 
Jason Haenel: 845 831-1000

Capital Region: 
Rob Scholz: 518 785-4400
Central Region: 
Mike Ottaviano: 315 433-0050
Western Region: 
Bill Benfanti: 716 886-0391

Make Sure to Vote for CSEA-endorsed School District Candidates and Budgets on June 3.

Check the CSEA Web page and region Web pages for a listing of CSEA-endorsed school district candidates and budgets in your region.