Resounding reply to health care commission report

CSEA’s voices heard

ALBANY — CSEA members across the state overwhelmingly have responded to recommendations recently made by the Governor’s Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century, and their voices have been heard.

Lawmakers have been deluged with thousands of faxes, telephone calls and testimony and it’s become clear few of the commission’s recommendations for hospital closings and consolidations, which could have heinous outcomes, will come about without more scrutiny and legislative wrangling.

“CSEA members have turned out in force and made a strong argument that the state’s lawmakers have understood,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said. “There is still a lot of work ahead of us but clear also recognition that many of these recommendations cannot go forward as proposed. CSEA will hold lawmakers to their word.”

Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno said the legislature will have to work with Gov. Eliot Spitzer to fix the parts of the plan “that need to be fixed.”

Prominent Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari also said the proposals will take a long period of time to implement and will provide opportunity to work on the issues with the new administration. He indicated particular concern about finding a better approach for the future of the State University of New York hospitals.

CSEA mounted numerous public events and rallies, leaders testified at public hearings in every part of the state and the union also mounted a media campaign to get its message out and get communities involved.

Among the issues of major concern to CSEA are proposals for the following public hospitals and nursing homes:

• In Erie County, the commission calls for the merger of the public Erie County Medical Center with the private sector Kaleida Health under a wholly new entity.

• In central New York, the commission proposes merging the public Upstate Medical University Hospital, a SUNY teaching hospital in Syracuse, with the nearby private sector Crouse Hospital into one hospital under a new entity that would not be public sector. The action would be the first step in privatizing all of the SUNY hospitals, including Stony Brook and Downstate Medical Center.

• Also in Central New York, CSEA is concerned about the proposal to give the county-owned and operated Van Duyn Home and Hospital to the private Community General Hospital. (See Page 5 for more about the fight to save ECMC, Van Duyn and SUNY Upstate.)

• The commission is also proposing significant bed reductions at the following public nursing homes: A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility (Nassau County), Taylor Care Center (Westchester County), Valley View Center for Nursing Care & Rehab (Orange County), Glendale Nursing Home (Schenectady County), Willow Point (Broome County) and Mount View Health Facility (Niagara County).

CSEA SUNY Stony Brook Local President Carlos Speight leads a group of union members demonstrating outside Stony Brook University Medical Center. Nearly 250 CSEA members turned out to protest a proposal to privatize the hospital.

Sean Davis, a cook at Van Duyn Home & Hospital in Syracuse, calls his area state lawmakers to urge them to vote against the Berger Commission report.

A CSEA member from the Glendale Home in Schenectady County takes part in an Albany rally.
Health care controversy, other important work ahead in the New Year

A lot of change is in the air as we start the New Year. Gov. Eliot Spitzer and his new administration will have a lot of work ahead. For CSEA, this will mean a lot of adjustment, not just to policy shifts, but also to a new set of officials.

While CSEA was an early and strong supporter of Eliot Spitzer, I said at the time of our endorsement that we certainly don’t expect to see eye to eye on every issue. I have already publicly and loudly disagreed with the governor-elect’s support for the recommendations of the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century, which proposes the closing and merger of health care facilities across the state, including enormous negative impact on numerous CSEA-represented facilities and the communities we serve (see stories pages 3, 5). We expect this issue alone will be difficult and controversial for years to come.

I assure you that when we disagree with the Spitzer administration, like its predecessors, over state budget items or other policy issues, CSEA will work vigorously for what we believe is right and in the best interest of our members. CSEA will not back away from that commitment.

We cannot know in advance how the new administration will proceed. We must prepare for any and all circumstances. You and the members of your local must do the same.

Important information and regular updates are always available on the CSEA website: www.cseaolocal1000.org. I urge you to visit the site regularly and stay involved through your local and unit to make a difference.

We have much important work ahead of us in the New Year. I am confident that, working together, we will succeed.
Van Duyn, Upstate fights on

SYRACUSE — The Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century’s recommendations for Central New York has CSEA and others in the health care community fighting proposals to privatize and merge SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse and Onondaga County’s Van Duyn Home & Hospital with nearby private hospitals, as well as increasing beds at Broome County’s Willow Point nursing home.

The commission’s recommendations were met with a flurry of opposition from labor and management. At Van Duyn, where CSEA fought hard over the past two years to win a successful campaign for increased state funding to keep the facility publicly owned, it was an outright slap in the face to the hard work of union members, as well as joint efforts to explore shared services with neighboring Community General Hospital on sharing services.

“I am very proud of the work we perform and the wonderful care we provide for all residents of Onondaga County regardless of their means. Our employees take pride in the work they do. The commission report makes it very clear that the emphasis behind their recommendations is money savings, not quality care,” CSEA Van Duyn Unit President Barbara Taylor told members of the state Assembly Health Committee.

Upstate Medical University Local President Michelle Hunter said if the teaching hospital was privatized, important specialized services, such as the hospital’s burn unit and Level One Trauma Center, might be closed due to profitability concerns.

To build support against the commission’s recommendations, CSEA members at Van Duyn held a marathon phone bank session, flooding area legislators with phone calls. Members at Van Duyn and SUNY Upstate Medical University also faxed thousands of letters to lawmakers asking them to bring the commission’s report to a vote and to vote to reject it. Taylor and Hunter also joined Political Action Coordinator Rick Noreault in meeting personally with several state legislators to lobby them to reject the plan. CSEA is continuing to fight for a better approach.

— Mark M. Kotzin

Union responds to ECMC merger bid

BUFFALO — Western Region CSEA members joined together to fight the final report of the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century.

The commission has recommended Buffalo’s Erie County Medical Center be merged with a private sector hospital and become an entirely new entity. That move could threaten the safety net provided by public health care, leaving thousands of Western New Yorkers with no place to go. Additionally, the merger could jeopardize the hospital’s top-notch regional Level One Trauma Center, exceptional burn unit and other highly specialized services.

“We cannot play games with public health care. It is important that those most in need continue to have access to the excellent medical care provided by ECMC,” said Region President Flo Tripi. CSEA Western Region members networked throughout their units and locals, collecting signatures on more than 2,000 letters faxed to seven targeted state legislators. CSEA will continue to fight for a better approach in the new year.

Efforts to fight the proposals also included letters to the editor, testimony by Tripi at the Senate’s public hearing at the University at Buffalo and by Region Director Roger Sherrie at the Assembly hearing in Buffalo, and a multi-union demonstration outside the Erie County Medical Center. Sherrie also presented CSEA’s position when he served as a guest on an hour-long TV news special titled “WNY Hospitals in Critical Condition.”

The Erie County Local purchased radio and television ads along with two other unions representing ECMC workers.

— Lynn Miller

CSEA Onondaga County Water Environmental Protection Unit President Bob Reilly demonstrates in support of Van Duyn Nursing Home and SUNY Upstate Medical Center.

“We, the commission report makes it very clear that the emphasis behind their recommendations is money savings, not quality care.”

“I’m a new member of our local’s women’s committee, so I’m here to see what other committees are doing. I’m going to let our members know about the unity and new ideas we had here at this conference. Times are changing, and we as women are very strong.”

— Joyce Dawkins, Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Services Office Local and first-time CSEA Women’s Conference attendee, on why she attended the conference. (For more, see Pages 14-15)
ALBANY — A state court unanimously ruled it was illegal for the Pataki administration to force employees and retirees covered under the state health insurance program to contribute toward the cost of Medicare Part B premiums for retired public employees.

The Pataki administration was attempting to force employees and retirees to pay at least $86 million per year the state had previously paid. As we saw it, the Pataki administration was taking money that wasn’t theirs to take, harming CSEA members and many others,” Donohue said. “We are pleased the court agreed with our assessment.”

CSEA and many other unions sued in January when the state “reinterpreted” long-standing civil service law and began charging employees and retirees directly for the Medicare Part B premiums for the first time in 40 years.

CSEA claimed the state’s action violated state civil service law, rules and regulations, which require employers to pay 100 percent of the cost of Medicare Part B premiums. Nothing in the law, rules or regulations allowed the state or other public employers to pass on the costs to employees or retirees.

Soon thereafter, the state comptroller issued an opinion supporting CSEA’s position that the change was illegal. However, a state Supreme Court ruling dismissed the union’s case in March.

In reversing the lower court’s decision, the Appellate Division’s 3rd Department ruled the state’s new interpretation was “arbitrary, capricious and contrary to law.” The court ruled the state’s new interpretation was inconsistent with the plain language of the law, its legislative history as well as the state’s “correct” 40-year interpretation of the law. The state must now stop forcing employees and retirees to pay the Medicare Part B expense and will have to reimburse them for those payments since Jan. 1, 2006.

As The Work Force went to press, it was unclear whether Gov. George Pataki would appeal the decision. Unanimous Appellate Division rulings require court permission for appeal to the state’s highest court, the Court of Appeals.

Also unclear is how the money would be distributed to workers and retirees.

There are more than 1 million people covered under the Empire Plan as a health insurance option for state and participating local government employees and their families.

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Canal worker’s death investigated

ROTTERDAM JUNCTION — CSEA and the state are investigating the death of veteran canal worker and CSEA member Michael Len, 45, of Cohoes, who died after falling into the Mohawk River at Lock 9 of the Erie Canal.

Len was cleaning debris when he apparently lost his footing and plunged into the river at about 9:30 a.m. Dec. 7, according to state Police. He was in the water for about 30 minutes before he was located and recovered about a half mile down the river.

State Police reported Len was wearing a life jacket, but turbulent waters reduced its effectiveness. He normally worked as chief lock operator at the Green Island Bridge, raising and lowering the bridge and maintaining its mechanisms, but was working as part of a crew closing Lock 9 for the season.

Co-workers tossed lines and life rings to Len, but he was unable to reach them in the strong current.

“He was a bright individual. He was an easygoing guy and a good friend,” Lock 6 chief operator Joe Zier Jr. told the Daily Gazette of Schenectady.

CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health Department and state Public Employee Safety and Health staff are investigating the incident.

Former CSEA ad executive Johnson dies

Noel C. “Bud” Johnson is not a household name in the CSEA ranks but he was a major player in making CSEA a household name across New York state.

Johnson, who died Nov. 8, started an advertising agency in 1963 that became one of upstate’s most prestigious agencies during the 1960s and 1970s.

The time frame coincided with CSEA’s growth as a labor union.

His firm, Van de Car, Deporte & Johnson, was retained by CSEA to help secure its place in the media. He engineered the “Public Employees: Where would you be without them?” advertising campaign that defined CSEA image for more than a generation. He also had a hand in designing the original CSEA logo which replaced the archaic “We Serve” motto.

Interment was at the Gerald B.H. Solomon Saratoga National Cemetery, with military honors.

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Clarkson workers ratify agreement

POTSDAM — Determination, solidarity, hard work and a multi-faceted, innovative contract campaign has resulted in an agreement for the 100 CSEA-represented facilities and services workers at Clarkson University.

The private-sector workers had been battling the university’s administration over a wage offer they overwhelmingly rejected this summer as “insulting.”

Clarkson University Local President Ed Collins said administrators had offered the workers the same as the rest of the campus work force had been given, which the workers termed unfair because it didn’t allow them to keep up with rising costs of living.

The workers demanded a more fair wage offer by initiating a contract campaign designed to increase public awareness and pressure campus officials to move off of their “take it or leave it” offer.

CSEA’s campaign included putting up signs in area businesses and car windows, demonstrating on the campus and through Potsdam, leafleting and attending campus events.

To turn up the heat, the union developed the website www.lightforfairness.com, and launched an innovative media campaign to draw public attention to the site.

After their second meeting with a federal mediator one week after intensifying their campaign, CSEA left the table with a tentative agreement.

The contract includes a fairer wage increase and an additional wage reopener for the tentative pact’s third year. The agreement also locks in employee health insurance contributions for the three-year period.

Collins said member solidarity and community support were the keys to the union’s success in getting university administration to extend a more fair contract offer to workers.

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Lifespire workers ratify first, historic contract with CSEA

MANHATTAN — CSEA members at Lifespire, a not-for-profit provider of developmental disabilities services based in New York City, have overwhelmingly approved their first CSEA union contract.

The 1,200 Lifespire employees are the largest group of private-sector workers to join CSEA. The solid contract, which provides retroactive wage increases to July 1, along with longevity payments and other benefits and protections, includes a commitment between CSEA and Lifespire management to work cooperatively to secure more resources to further improve wages, benefits and quality of care.

"CSEA is committed to keeping New York's care for individuals with developmental disabilities the model for the nation," CSEA President Danny Donohue said. "We are so proud of our members at Lifespire and their management's recognition that fairness and respect for the workers goes hand in hand with quality care for the individuals they serve. We will work together for real improvements.

"I want to congratulate our new brothers and sisters from Lifespire for all the hard work and effort they put into getting this first contract," CSEA Metropolitan Region President George Boncoraglio said. "This contract is a testament to the hard work and quality care they provide to all of their consumers."

The campaign to bring a union to Lifespire was preceded by several months of an innovative and comprehensive organizing campaign throughout New York City building support from community groups and elected officials.

Card check neutrality Lifespire workers reached a card check neutrality agreement with management in early December 2005. Lifespire agreed to recognize CSEA if a majority of employees signed to join the union.

"This first contract is the best way to start the holiday season," said Norma de Guzman, a senior developmental aide and a leader in bringing the union to Lifespire. "We love our consumers and the work we do and this contract will allow us to continue providing the kind of care they deserve."

The Lifespire union and contract victory are part of a comprehensive statewide campaign for improvements in quality care throughout the developmental disabilities system. "Lifespire looks forward to partnering with CSEA to bring improvements to New York's service delivery system," said Mark van Voorst, Lifespire's CEO.

"We are particularly pleased that CSEA has joined Lifespire as a partner in advancing Lifespire's mission to care for the developmentally disabled by providing competent and professional services," said Bish Krakow, chair of the Lifespire board. "To the extent we can promote a model of mutual cooperation, we have made a good beginning with our agreement."

"The campaign is necessary because of an epidemic in turnover rates — up to 40 percent annually — among front-line employees of many not-for-profit agencies that threaten the long-term quality standards of services and care.

New York's system of care for individuals with developmental disabilities is generally viewed as a model for the nation and CSEA's relationship with the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is highly regarded as a model for cooperative labor relations. The seriousness of the employee turnover problem in the not-for-profit agencies has raised multiple concerns for the future.

Fighting for quality care Not-for-profit agencies provide an increasingly higher percentage of the overall services to individuals with developmental disabilities in New York. Most of the agencies also receive up to 95 percent of their operating budgets from public funding.

By contrast, more than 16,000 CSEA members provide life skills, medical services and critical continuity of care for nearly 10,000 group home residents of all ages and ability levels 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Most of the workers are employees of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, but the union has recently made strong inroads in representing employees in not-for-profit agencies. Turnover rates among CSEA-represented employees in the developmental disabilities field are about 5 percent.

— David Galarza

CSEA Voices

"Lifespire looks forward to partnering with CSEA to bring improvements to New York's service delivery system."

—Mark van Voorst, CEO, Lifespire, on the not-for-profit provider's commitment to work cooperatively with CSEA to secure more resources to further improve wages, benefits and quality of care for those who care for individuals with developmental disabilities.
CSEA urges change at OCFS

ALBANY — CSEA is pressing Gov.-elect Eliot Spitzer’s incoming administration to address major areas of concern in the state Office of Children and Family Services.

During the Pataki administration, the agency has been rife with complaints about understaffing, delivery of service, contradictory protocols and a lack of cohesive mission and discipline. “For too long, our members have raised legitimate concerns about OCFS’ handling of its youth centers, staffing levels and workload. It would not be too difficult for our new governor to have a positive effect on this agency, because frankly, the only way to go is up,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

A recent report by the state Office of the Inspector General found fault with the management of the Louis Gossett Jr. Residential Center in Lansing, Tompkins County, and at the same time, exonerated Gossett staff, which had stood accused of abusing residents.

The report criticized OCFS and the Gossett Center for not providing sufficient mental health services for troubled youths, but there is some question as to how much mental health care the agency is expected to provide.

CSEA members and their leadership at OCFS facilities across the state have long expressed concerns about staffing levels, overwork, and occupational safety and health issues. CSEA members have unfairly taken the brunt of misguided media coverage of recent events.

— Lou Hmielecki

Decorating for the holidays

David Weaver, a laborer and member of the Hudson City Unit, hangs a stocking in one of the miniature houses that are part of the “Santa’s Village” display in the city’s Seventh Avenue Park. CSEA members employed by the city decorate Hudson’s downtown every year in preparation for the city’s Winter Walk.
The unhealthy state of health care and what you can do: a special report

Local government agencies, school districts and private sector employers spend more on health care than on any other item, thanks to skyrocketing health care costs, and the pain is being passed onto CSEA members.

High health care costs, including those for insurance premiums and prescription drugs, has spurred many public employers to propose cutting worker health care benefits, raise premiums and co-payments and cut public services.

The situation seems dire for working people; health care costs in the United States have increased by 73 percent during the past 10 years and the Kaiser Family Foundation projects that prescription drug costs will total more than $446 billion by 2015 (see Pages 10-11).

However, CSEA members can take control over health costs and negotiate health care benefits that are comprehensive and save money by using the union’s many resources, including the Health Benefits Department and the Employee Benefit Fund. This four-page report will also highlight CSEA’s insurance programs through Pearl Carroll & Associates.

Leading Union is proving that we can win over skyrocketing health care costs.

Health care crisis spiraling out of control

TARRYTOWN — Steel literally holds General Motors together, while coffee revs up Starbucks’ profits.

Steel and coffee define these corporations, yet General Motors and Starbucks each spent more on health care last year than they did on their companies’ most basic supplies.

In New York’s public sector, health care costs have spiraled so out of control that 10 counties spent their entire property tax revenues on Medicaid.

Dr. Jon R. Cohen, chief medical officer of North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, shared these statistics with stunned CSEA members at the union’s recent Women’s Conference. He said he believes health care should be a basic right, but said it has been treated as a privilege in New York.

“Only prisoners have the legal right to health care,” he said.

During the last five years, prescription drug costs have doubled from $85 billion to $170 billion. Overall health care costs in recent years have jumped by 73 percent, yet average worker wages have only increased by 15 percent. About two-thirds of the state’s hospitals lost revenues last year.

Cohen said about 25 percent of health care costs last year stem from paperwork.

“About 1 percent of the cases is responsible for 20 percent of the cost,” he said.

Along with prescription drugs, Medicaid is one of the biggest culprits of public health care spending. New York state spent about $48 billion on Medicaid last year, and much of that cost is passed onto counties that are already struggling to meet health care costs.

“Counties cannot build roads or improve education as a result of Medicaid increases,” Cohen said.

With prescription drug costs skyrocketing and employers increasingly cutting health care benefits and raising premium costs and co-payments, many workers find themselves without access to affordable health care.

In New York state alone, 3 million people are uninsured, and 2 million of them are middle-class people working in small businesses that offer no or high-cost health coverage.

He advocated passing an amendment to the state constitution to guarantee citizens access to minimally basic health care. A Massachusetts law passed last year requires most employers to offer health coverage and residents to buy health insurance or be covered under a subsidized plan if they are unable to afford a health plan.

Cohen criticized the private health savings accounts supported by the Bush administration, calling them a “failure.”

In these tax-preferred accounts, workers contribute thousands of dollars annually for health care in lieu of employer-sponsored group insurance. The money, which comes out of the workers’ pockets, is used in conjunction with high-deductible health insurance. The health savings accounts shift health care costs back to the individual.

— Janice Marra
The unhealthy state of health care and what you can do: a special report

Prevail at bargaining table with Health Benefits Department, Employee Benefit Fund

Members of your bargaining unit have been working under an expired contract and it’s unlikely you will have a new agreement anytime soon. The main reason for the stalled negotiations is your employer is seeking to cut workers’ health benefits and raise employee contributions because of high costs.

Sound familiar? This scenario is increasingly common for many CSEA bargaining units as health care costs continue to rise, but members can still get the comprehensive and fair health benefits that has helped make CSEA New York’s Leading Union with the help of several of the union’s professional resources.

Health Benefits Department

CSEA members and staff are facing issues related to negotiated health benefits, the CSEA Health Benefits Department can help and guide.

The department coordinates and oversees the union’s negotiated health benefits, and its primary goal is to enhance and expand health benefits while containing costs to employers and members.

Department staff have expertise with facing the health care industry, and their insight and experience can help local government members stretch their health care dollars further. Department staff educates CSEA members on the efficient use of their health care benefits. Additionally, the department conducts research into health care options to help find the most cost-effective benefits for CSEA members at affordable costs.

Rx for health care costs

In the United States, health care costs have risen by 73 percent during the past decade, while wages have only risen by 15 percent. New York state spends about $48 billion on Medicaid per year—the single largest expense for most of the state’s counties. Among the insured, costs of premium and co-payments have also increased significantly.

Health care costs are rising primarily for the following reasons:

• People are living longer.
• High cost of medical technology, research and development.
• New prescription medications for ailments — and a hefty budget for many of them.
• Increased disability rates.
• Large profits for many insurance and pharmaceutical companies.

The Employee Benefit Fund CSEA’s Employee Benefit Fund also an essential resource for local government units looking to negotiate high-quality — and affordable — dental, vision and other health benefits into their contracts.

EBF provides benefits to more than 450 local government, school district and public authority units across the state. Its staff has considerable experience in dealing with the complexities that surround Local Government negotiations.

When CSEA local government unit negotiating teams are trying to find the best dental and vision benefits, they can turn to EBF for expert advice.

This service may be used by unit officers at any time, whether they are preparing for contract negotiations or are already in the middle of a contract, and would like to review programs and benefits.

This service can help units compare various benefit programs before they settle on a provider. For example, if a CSEA unit has dental coverage that is not through the EBF, it wants to see its coverage with any EBF plans or other providers. EBF staff will compare and evaluate the quality of all proposals.

This study will show the specific strengths and weaknesses of all the plans reviewed. Similar analyses can be made with the vision coverage program.

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To contact the CSEA Health Benefits Department, call (518) 765-4774 (within the Capital District area) or (909) 206-2442
Visit the Health Benefits Department web page on CSEA’s website at www.csea2local100.org /health_benefits.php

To contact the Employee Benefit Fund, call (800) 323-2752 (800EBF-CSEA). Visit EBF’s website at www.cseaebf.com

Greenwich school unit finds success

GREENWICH — CSEA members have been increasingly saddled with high health care costs, but the Health Benefits Department can help members — and employers — better manage health care costs by bringing fresh ideas to the bargaining table that cut costs and protect health benefits.

“We just think outside the box,” says CSEA Health Benefits Specialist Margaret Biaggini. “We want to offer a very unique perspective to health benefits coverage. We can help maintain and improve our members’ health benefits while saving them and their employer money.

That innovation helped protect health benefits in the CSEA Greenwich School District Unit 10 contract.

The 2007 members pay 10 percent of the cost of their health insurance premiums. When the unit began its contract negotiations with the Washington County school district last year, district administrators proposed to increase the premium contribution to 13 percent of the cost. Greenwich administrators also offered the union a four-year contract with 2.5 percent raises each year.

CSEA Greenwich School District Unit and Washington County Local President Brenda Facin said the negotiating team was dissatisfied with the proposal and wanted to find a way to save on health care costs, yet retain the same level of benefits.

She turned to her labor relations coordinator, Richard Blair, for help, and he recommended turning to CSEA’s Health Benefits Department for research a possible solution. Facin said a cost analysis of the unit’s health care options, particularly the CEG Blue Cross/Blue Shield’s Matrix and PPO health plans, and found that the PPO offered a similar level of health benefits at a significantly lower cost.

Several of the unit’s active members, as well as many of the unit’s retirees, were covered through the Matrix plan.罡mmon found that if they all changed to the PPO option, the district would save $55,000 each year.

Along with Facin, Blair and the unit’s negotiating team, Facin presented her findings to the membership.

“We talked to everyone, especially those who were covered by the Matrix plan. We had to convince the membership that the PPO benefits are just as good, if not better in some areas, than those in the Matrix plan,” Facin said. “We also showed them how they would save money by switching plans.”

Facin said the union decided to propose their findings to district administrators.

“We offered to give up the Matrix plan and save the district money, but in return, we asked the district not to increase our health insurance costs, and in fact, decrease the percentage of our raises each year,” she said.

District administrators were receptive to CSEA’s proposal, agreeing to a five-year contract with 4 percent raises each year in exchange for discontinuing the Matrix plan. The district also gave each unit member stipends for 2006 and 2007, as well as PEPP CHECK- off and Work INSTITUTE programming to train members. Unit members ratified the contract unanimously.

Facin said members of her unit are now reaching out to CSEA with questions about their health benefits.

“Our relationship and understanding with the district continues to grow,” she said.

Facin attributed the union’s success to a positive relationship with the district.

“I attribute our successful negotiations to Margaret and Rich,” Facin said. “They’re specialists in their field and they really know what they’re doing.”

Facin said district administrators, including Superintendent John McAndrew, are very supportive of the work.

“They have total respect for CSEA,” she said. “I realize that other units have much more difficulty in dealing with their employers, so we’re grateful that our district works well with us.”

— Janice Marrs

Brenda Facin, shown here in her office at Greenwich High School, used CSEA’s Health Benefits Department to negotiate for her unit a comprehensive health care plan that also saves money for members and district administrators.

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CSEA’s Valuable Insurance Program protects your health, peace of mind

For more than 70 years, CSEA members have been able to add an extra layer of protection to their health, lives and families through the union’s supplemental insurance programs. Even if CSEA members have very comprehensive health benefits through their employers, unexpected illnesses or injuries can derail their financial health. The union’s insurance programs can help financially protect members and their families.

Working with Pearl Carroll & Associates, which administers many of CSEA’s insurance programs, the union’s insurance program goal is to provide members with the best possible insurance plans at the best possible price. Pearl Carroll & Associates is an independent company based in New York state, so their focus is on members as neighbors.

CSEA and Pearl Carroll & Associates designed some of the insurance programs to meet members’ unique needs. They are underwritten by some of the most respected insurance companies in the business, providing complete, competitive and affordable coverage. With an easy payroll deduction system in place, CSEA members also have no worries about paying their premiums on time.

On this page is an overview of CSEA’s supplemental insurance programs.

Critical Illness
The CSEA Voluntary Critical Illness Program, also called Specified Illness Insurance, provides members and their families with benefits should they be struck by cancer, heart attack, kidney (renal) failure, stroke and other conditions requiring a major organ transplant.

While most medical insurance plans provide coverage for catastrophic expenses, not all expenses associated with an illness are covered. The CSEA Critical Illness Program will pay a lump sum benefit that can be used to meet out-of-pocket expenses such as deductibles, co-insurance, travel, phone or household help. There is no coordination of benefits. Full benefits are paid directly to the insured regardless of what he/she may collect from any other insurance.

This type of coverage acts as a supplement to insurance plans and may not, by law, be used as a substitute. Under New York law, anyone who is not insured under an individual or group policy that arranges or provides basic hospital and basic medical and/or major medical insurance is not eligible for this coverage.

Classic Disability Income Plan
If CSEA members are unable to work due to an extensive illness or injury, the Disability Income Plan pays a monthly benefit. This monthly benefit amount will begin after a specified waiting period and will continue for a specified benefit period.

Your eligibility for benefits will be determined by your group policy including its exclusions and limitations, pre-existing conditions and coordination of benefit provisions.

Hospital Income Plan
The Hospital Income Plan is a supplemental insurance policy that pays a daily benefit to CSEA members are hospitalized for an accident, illness, or injury.

This benefit, which is paid directly to enrolled members, is over and above any other available insurance, and is not dependent upon the amount of medical expenses involved. These benefits can help members offset the cost of deductibles, co-payments and other out-of-pocket medical expenses related to hospitalization that are not covered by health insurance.

This plan also contains benefits for ambulance services, second opinion and outpatient procedures.

Life insurance plans
CSEA members can help protect their families financially in the event of their deaths through one of the union’s sponsored life insurance programs. CSEA and Pearl Carroll & Associates have designed several individual and group life insurance products to fit your needs.

CSEA’s Security Life Premier Plan covers members and their families for up to $250,000 in the event of a policyholder’s death. This program does not build any cash value.

The union’s Family Protection Whole Life Insurance Plan offers life insurance coverage with accumulating cash values after the first few years of coverage. This plan also allows an insured member to take out cash loans from the cash values of the plan.

The Estate Master Select Universal Life Insurance Plan offers life insurance coverage with accumulating cash values after the first few years of coverage. This plan also allows an insured member to take out cash loans from the cash values of the plan. This plan allows CSEA members to adjust their death benefits and premiums as their family needs change without buying another plan.

For more information or to enroll in an insurance program, contact Pearl Carroll & Associates at (877) 847-2732 (877-VIP-CSEA) or visit the CSEA insurance program website at www.cseainsurance.com.
CSEA members save prison farm from ruin

FALLSBURG — Had a group of CSEA members working at Sullivan Correctional Facility not acted quickly on Oct. 26, 2005, operations at the maximum-security prison would be running differently today.

Sullivan Correctional Facility is home to one of the several dairy farms run adjacent to state correctional facilities across New York. These dairy farms provide inmates in their prisons’ region with milk and other dairy products.

The farmers are state employees who work along with inmates, who are supervised by corrections officers, to raise a large dairy herd, pasteurize the milk the cows supply, and deliver it to 11 other correctional facilities in the area.

The farmers at Sullivan Correctional Facility say they are proud of their farm operation. Sullivan’s farm, one of the highest milk-producing corrections farms in the state, has been designated as a Dairy of Distinction, an honor bestowed on many private farms. Saved from fire

In October 2005, when a CSEA member first smelled smoke in the area of the farm’s bedding silo, workers quickly took action.

Farm managers said quick thinking saved the state hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages while preserving the source of milk for correctional facilities in the lower Catskills.

“Jeremy Hubert, one of our farmers, first saw the smoke, so he told the corrections officers at the farm,” said Larry Bracken, farm manager. “It was a cooperative effort between us and the corrections officers. Jeremy went and grabbed fire extinguishers, while Mike Walter, our lead farmer, went and grabbed hoses to connect to the fire hydrants we have on the farm.”

While Bracken and Hubert continued to fight the growing fire, Walter and farmer Duane Hannold pulled the farm’s dozens of Holstein cows to safety. By the time local firefighters arrived, the fire was extinguished.

“The potential for disaster with this fire was huge,” said Sullivan Correctional Facility CSEA Local 6113 President Mervin Armstead, who recently honored the farm workers at a local meeting. “These men went above and beyond. They prevented the fire from becoming a real disaster.”

“I am always proud that whenever there is an obstacle, the members of CSEA go over it, around it and through it to get the job done,” said Southern Region President Diane Hewitt, who presented plaques to the farm workers.

Now, it’s business as usual again at the farm. Nearly 24 inmates work eight-hour shifts during the farm’s operating hours from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

A sign of the high quality of this operation, a portion of the Sullivan herd was recently sold, fetching an impressive $200,000 for the state.

— Jessica Ladlee

CSEA gives relief to June flooding victims

SYRACUSE — CSEA members affected by June’s severe flooding who applied for help from the union’s flood relief efforts recently received a gift from their union brothers and sisters just in time for the holidays.

The most severely affected CSEA members mostly live in New York’s Schenectady Valley and Southern Tier.

CSEA members raised money for flood relief through multiple fund-raisers and donation collections, including a website the union established at www.csea-cares.com. The union’s efforts got a huge boost in September when AFSCME President Gerald McEntee presented Moore and CSEA President Danny Donohue with a check to CSEA’s relief fund for $50,000.

The proceeds of the CSEA fund-raising efforts were split evenly between the union members who applied for relief. Letters like the following were typical of those received thanking CSEA for its efforts.

“I received the check from the union yesterday and wanted to send along my thanks. The money is really appreciated, especially at this time of year when we are dealing with the added stress of Christmas, with so much money going out to fix our home. Please extend my appreciation to everyone involved in organizing the flood relief committee. Thank you so much. Merry Christmas. We’ll hope for a better 2007,” said Dana Wilson of the Broome County Local.

“We’re so proud of what our committee members were able to accomplish to help our brothers and sisters in need, and we thank all who donated on their behalf,” Central Region President Jim Moore said on behalf of the union’s region presidents.

— Mark M. Kotzin
CSEA Women’s Conference

CSEA women building a better future

TARRYTOWN — More than 400 CSEA members sharpened their leadership skills, mastered career and personal life management tips and strengthened their solidarity at the union’s recent statewide Women’s Conference.

In keeping with the conference’s theme, “Union Women Building a Better Future,” CSEA members attended workshops and other presentations throughout the weekend aimed at developing new skills and honing acquired ones. The conference is also open to men and non-activist CSEA members. 

CSEA President Danny Donohue said women have advanced the labor movement.

“CSEA is uniquely gifted by having many female officers and delegates,” Donohue said. “New York works at every level because of the work women do every day.”

“The CSEA Women’s Conference provides a unique opportunity for our members to discuss and share ideas on topics traditionally of concern to women,” Standing Women’s Committee Chair Jackie Stanford said. “With women of all ages increasingly entering and advancing in the workplace, addressing work and family issues has become even more important for women and men.”

Providing one of the conference’s most uplifting moments was the “Sounds of Unity” session led by the New York Drum Café. During that plenary session, which generated a standing ovation, attendees banged on various-sized drums to celebrate their diversity and unity.

Other conference programs addressed topics that concern members in and out of the workplace, including political action, sexual harassment, financial planning, domestic violence, stress management, yoga and Tai Chi.

Another conference highlight was a presentation on the state’s health care crisis by Dr. Jon R. Cohen, chief medical officer at North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System.

Cohen said health care is the largest cost for public and private entities. “Counties cannot build roads or improve education as a result of Medicaid increases,” he said. “Ten New York state counties spent their entire real estate tax collections on Medicaid last year.”

— Janice Marra

Custance wins 2006 Irene Carr Leadership Award

TARRYTOWN — Catherine Custance, a Long Island Region activist who has devoted years of service to union and women’s causes, was presented this year’s Irene Carr Leadership Award at the CSEA Women’s Conference.

“Catherine gives selflessly of her time and talents whenever and wherever she is needed,” said Long Island Region President Nick LabMorte. “She is always a fine representative of CSEA, a passionate advocate for workplace safety and justice, and this recognition is well-deserved.”

In 2005 Custance was selected to become one of the first participants in CSEA’s Leadership Education and Development Program, which is designed to cultivate new leadership in the union, insuring its continued health and vitality. 

Custance, executive vice president of the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center Local, created a domestic violence awareness workshop during her participation in CSEA’s first Leadership Education and Development program. She has presented the program to CSEA members across the state, including at the Women’s Conference.

“Domestic violence is an issue that is near and dear to my heart,” she said. “Since I’ve begun presenting the program, I have been able to help 62 CSEA members who were facing domestic violence and the last three have been men.”

Carr, a former statewide secretary who died in 2004, fought for what she called “work and family issues,” including encouraging women to take union leadership roles and building more than 50 child care centers at state agencies.

— Janice Marra and Rachel Langert

CSEA President Danny Donohue congratulates Catherine Custance on winning the 2006 Irene Carr Leadership Award. (Photo by Jessica Ludee)
Tarrytown — Michele Baker had planned to live in New Orleans for the rest of her life.
Instead, the past president of AFSCME Local 872 was forced to flee her home and job as a custodial supervisor amid Hurricane Katrina and its devastating floods.

During the dark days following the storm, it was AFSCME members’ solidarity that brought Baker and her husabnd some light and helped the couple recover from Katrina.

“We were helped by the solidarity of our union,” Baker said during an address at the recent CSEA Women’s Conference. “Without AFSCME, we would be much worse off today.”

Trapped in the storm
Baker had planned to evacuate to Atlanta, but she was unable to leave New Orleans when her father died shortly before the storm. She and her husband weathered the storm in their sport utility vehicle and found themselves trapped when floodwaters rose after the city’s levees broke.

“I held onto my husband and prayed for safety,” she said.

At one point, National Guard soldiers passed by them and Baker, who is unable to swim, begged for help.

“They said they couldn’t stop for us,” she said. Eventually, Baker and her husband waded through the floodwaters and reached the Superdome, where conditions were quickly deteriorating for thousands of people trapped in the shelter of “last resort.” They shared the last of their own food supply with several young children.

“When I was walking through the water, it was all about survival and trusting God,” she said. “Our administration didn’t come through for us.”

Helping hands
Driven by solidarity and the Bush administration’s lackluster response to the disaster, AFSCME members, including CSEA members, began helping their brothers and sisters affected by Katrina by raising money, collecting basic supplies and searching for members in shelters in Gulf Coast states.

Baker and her husband boarded a bus at the Superdome for a shelter in Baton Rouge, La., where an AFSCME searcher later found them.

“I started yelling, ‘my union came for me!’” she said. “My union helped us, not our government.” Unable to return to her storm-devastated east New Orleans neighborhood, Baker needed a new beginning. AFSCME paid $5,000 to Baker and other members affected by the storm.

The international also gave her a job as a staff organizer for AFSCME Local 1550 in Houston, where Baker now lives.

“(Union members) don’t just come together for grievances,” she said. “We come toward each other for love and support. Our union helped us get our lives back together.”

She has visited her home in New Orleans, which she said looked like a ‘war zone,’ and hopes to move back to the city one day. She would also like to see more New Orleans residents return.

“We’re desperate and still need help,” Baker said. “We appreciate everything CSEA and AFSCME have done for us and please do not stop here. We have a long, long way to go.”

CSEA Executive Vice President Mary Sullivan said Baker’s story proves the need for union solidarity.

“When no one is there to help us, we need to be there for each other,” she said.

— Janice Marra

CSEA members can help Katrina victims by purchasing Cooks from the Heart, a cookbook of CSEA members’ favorite recipes. Visit www.csealocal100.org/cooks_order.php for more information or call 1-800-342-4146, ext. 1256.

Photos of the Women’s Conference

January 2007 THE WORK FORCE Page 15
Important 2007 changes regarding Empire Plan participating laboratory providers

There will be a change in participating providers of laboratory services under the Empire Plan Medical Program effective Jan. 1, 2007.

- As of Jan. 1, 2007, Laboratory Corporation of America (LabCorp) will be the sole national participating provider of laboratory services for the Empire Plan Medical Program. In addition to LabCorp, many other regional and local laboratory providers continue to participate, providing broad access to participating providers for laboratory services.
- Effective Jan. 1, 2007, Quest Diagnostics will no longer be a participating provider of laboratory services for the Empire Plan Medical Program.

What this means to you

While you may not always know what laboratory your physician uses, to minimize your out-of-pocket expense it is important your physician sends your samples to an Empire Plan participating laboratory for testing. As long as your physician uses a participating laboratory, you will not be responsible for any cost other than your co-payment for covered services.

What UHC is doing

United HealthCare continues to expand the network of regional and local participating laboratory providers in areas where Quest has in the past provided lab services, including New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. LabCorp is also working to increase its presence in these markets.

United HealthCare, in cooperation with LabCorp and the regional and local participating laboratory providers, has initiated an aggressive communications campaign to target participating doctors to ensure they are aware of these changes. Participating physicians are receiving letters, telephone calls and site visits that will continue through the end of this year and early 2007.

What you should do

Ask your physician to verify that your laboratory participates in the Empire Plan. If the laboratory your doctor regularly uses is no longer a participating provider after Jan. 1, 2007, United HealthCare will be happy to help you or your physician identify laboratories covered under the plan.

For a list of participating laboratory locations, visit the New York State Health Insurance Program’s (NYSIBM) website at www.cs.state.ny.us/ebd/welcome/login.cfm. Follow the prompts and then select "Using Your Benefits." For more information, you can call 1-877-7NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447); select United HealthCare (option 1) and then select the option for Plan Benefits (option 1).

See Page 18 for more about Empire Plan changes for 2007.

PEOPLE PERSON —

The PEOPLE recruiter of the month of November is Barbara Rustin of the New York Metropolitan Retirees Local in the Metropolitan Region. She recruited 14 new PEOPLE members.

CSEA PEOPLE program protects and improves our job benefits and, in particular, in Washington, Albany and in your community. Your support and participation in PEOPLE strengthens CSEA’s clout in the workplace, in the legislature, in your community and in the labor movement. PESH CITIZEN STATE 2007 — The state Public Employees Safety and Health Bureau issued five citations following reports that CSEA members at Bear Mountain State Park were working under hazardous conditions, including suspected crumbling asbestos and lead exposure, during renovations at the Bear Mountain Inn.

Following a complaint CSEA filed with PESH last May, renovations at the historic inn were stopped. CSEA argued workers were not being informed whether asbestos and lead were present. The PESH citations require that workers in affected areas be informed of risks and trained in asbestos awareness. PESH also said park officials must officially determine the amount of asbestos at the inn and other potentially affected work sites within Bear Mountain State Park. Other requirements in the citations included educating workers on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s lead standards, in the event they are exposed to lead, and having management provide records of asbestos containing materials and lead in the workplace.

May 15 is deadline for submitting proposed resolutions, changes to CSEA’s Constitution & Bylaws

Proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the CSEA Constitution & Bylaws for consideration by CSEA delegates to the union’s 2007 Annual Delegates Meeting must be submitted by May 15, 2007.

Proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the CSEA Constitution & Bylaws may be submitted only by a delegate and must be submitted on the proper forms. Forms for submitting resolutions are available from CSEA headquarters and region offices.

Proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws must be submitted no later than May 15 to Statewide Secretary Barbara Reeves, CSEA Headquarters, 143 Washington Ave., Albany, N.Y., 12210-2203.

The 2007 CSEA Annual Delegates Meeting will be held Sept. 17 - 21 in Lake Placid.

Break in membership affects eligibility for union office, voting privileges

A break in union membership status can have long-term future implications. Your membership status affects your eligibility with respect to:

- seeking or holding union office;
- signing nominating petitions for potential candidates;
- voting in union elections, and;
- voting on collective bargaining contracts.

Only members “in good standing” can participate in these activities. To be in “good standing,” your dues cannot be delinquent.

If you go on unpaid leave or for any other reason have a break in your employment status, your dues will not continue to be paid through payroll deductions. You must make arrangements to pay your dues directly to CSEA to continue your membership status. If you are either laid off or placed on leave without pay status due to becoming disabled by accident, illness, maternity or paternity, you may be eligible for dues-free membership status for a period not to exceed one year. If you are called up for active military duty you may also apply for dues-free status.

Note, however, you must continue to pay dues to run for office. Dues-free or gratuitous membership allows members to continue their insurance coverage while out of work. It does not protect your right to run for or hold office. This does not apply to members who are on leave due to being called up for military duty. Members on active military duty, upon return, are considered to have had continuous membership status for all CSEA election purposes.

Please notify the CSEA Membership Services Department at 1-800-342-4418, Ext. 1327, of any change in your status and what arrangements you are making to continue your membership in CSEA.
CSEA Legal Services Program: truly a diamond in the rough

The CSEA Legal Services Program provides our members and their families with opportunities for quality legal representation in numerous non-employment related areas. Currently there are five separate plans within this unique Program.

“Taking Care of Business: You, Your Family and Your Life” covers advanced directives such as wills, health care proxies, and powers of attorney. It also includes areas generally referred to as “elder law” covering estate planning, Medicaid eligibility and long term care arrangements to protect family assets and plan for unexpected contingencies. You have worked hard to have your own home, put away money for retirement and save for your children. All of this could be threatened at any moment by a loved one’s illness or disability. Taking Care of Business entitles you to legal consultations, guidance, document preparation and, where needed, representation.

Our Social Security Disabilities Benefits [SSDB] Plan provides representation to those who become unable to work because of a disability, whether physical or mental, but are not age-eligible to retire [65 or older depending on date of birth]. SSDB provides monthly payments to workers meeting the SSA definition of disabled and covers every disability, not just on the job disabilities. Hereditary conditions and those that result from aging are considered as well. Unable to do “any substantial gainful work” due to a physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last one year can qualify you for benefits. This SSDB Plan entitles you to consultation, guidance, and representation to secure these benefits if you or a family member qualifies.

The CSEA Workers Compensation Legal Assistance Program (WCLAP) helps injured workers to secure full coverage for all medical care resulting from a work-related injury, as well as wage replacement for temporary or permanent loss of earnings and special compensation for loss or partial loss of a limb. While you have two years to file a WC claim, notice to your employer does not constitute filing for a WC claim to be initiated on your behalf. And, once filed, a WC claim entitles you to the medical benefits and weekly payments for a minimum of 18 years and possibly for life.

Our CSEA Personal Injury Plan helps you if you sustain a personal injury as a result of an accident caused by someone else’s carelessness. The injury does NOT have to be work-related to be covered or compensable. Examples of accidents covered by our Personal Injury Plan include: auto accidents; pedestrian accidents; bike or boat accidents; slips or falls; dog bites; construction work; defective or unsafe products; and medical malpractice. For many non-work-related accidents the timeframe for commencing an action against the third party is very short; even as short as 30 days for no fault auto filings or 90 days in other instances.

And, there is the CSEA Personal Legal Services Plan, designed to help you with the many life events such as adoption, marriage and divorce, real estate transactions, consumer installment contracts, document review, and more, for which quality representation by an attorney will be important to you and your family members. Under the administration of our CSEA Legal Department, all program attorneys have agreed to provide their services at substantially discounted prepublished fees, or 20 percent discount for Taking Care of Business, or with no out-of-pocket expense where fees are provided by statute as in Workers Compensation matters. Fees vary across the state, depending on the geographic area of the participating attorney. Without the benefit of the CSEA Program discount, these services would cost you much more.

Finding a CSEA Legal Services Program attorney is as simple as calling the CSEA toll-free number: 1-800-342-4146 and following the prompts for the Legal Services Program. Listen to the directions for accessing the Injury-Related Plans, or the Non-Injury Related Plans, which include the Taking Care of Business Plan. Information is also available on the CSEA website at www.csealocal1000.org.

CSEA’s Legal Services Program is truly a “diamond in the rough,” providing you and your family with quality services and expertise. But, like a good diamond, the LSP has many facets and it increases in value literally and otherwise, only if you take it out, use it and share it with others.

REMINDER TO PRIVATE SECTOR LOCAL PRESIDENTS

The term of office for current Private Sector Local officers will expire on June 30, 2007. Elections for office must be conducted and completed before the new term begins on July 1, 2007.

A letter was sent by the Statewide Election Committee (SEC) on August 15, 2006, to each Private Sector Local President requiring each Local Executive Board to select an election committee and chairperson prior to October 15, 2006.

If you have not selected an election committee, please do so immediately. Please refer to the SEC’s Aug. 15 letter for procedural requirements.

If you did not receive a copy of the Aug. 15 letter, or have questions pertaining to it, please contact the SEC at 800-342-4146, ext. 1447.
Health insurance option transfer period extended until Dec. 29

Members who are considering changing health insurance options for 2007 should weigh many factors before making a decision. A good source of specific health insurance information is the free Choices guide available from their agency's benefits administrator. Choices contains information on the Empire Plan and health maintenance organizations that participate in the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP).

Check the rates
At press time, the health insurance rates and deadlines publication for 2007 was being printed and mailed to enrollees' homes. Members who want to change health insurance options must submit a signed Health Insurance Transaction Form PS-404 to their agency's health benefit administrator by Dec. 29, 2006.

The 2007 biweekly health insurance premium deductions for CSEA active state employees are noted on the chart on this page. Although the Empire Plan has experienced a modest premium increase this year, the HMO premium rates vary. Many of the HMOs have made significant changes to their co-payments and benefit structure which may have resulted in a decrease in premium and extensive increases to out-of-pocket expenses. Please remember to review all benefits changes and premium rates during this option transfer period. This is necessary because requests to change health insurance options outside the option transfer period are limited. See your General Information Book/Empire Plan Certificate for more information.

Payroll dates
New health insurance options for administrative lag - exempt employees will begin Dec. 29, 2006. If you change options, the earliest paycheck in which an adjustment will be made is the Dec. 13, 2006, paycheck.

New health insurance options for administrative lag payroll employees will begin Dec. 29, 2006. If you change options, the earliest paycheck in which an adjustment will be made is the Dec. 27, 2006, paycheck.

Because of processing time, most paycheck changes will be made retroactively in mid-to late-January and will include retroactive deductions to the effective date of coverage. More information about the option transfer period is available at agency personnel offices.

See Page 16 for important changes in laboratory providers participating in the Empire Plan.
I am proud to tell you the state of our union has never been better or stronger, but the challenges we face have never been greater.

Most importantly, actions at every level of our union over the past year have helped to secure our future and better prepare us for what lies ahead.

In the coming year, each of us must renew our commitment in word and action to demonstrating that we truly are New York’s leading union.
CSEA is focused on making our union more effective and responsive for our members. Everywhere we turn, working people are under attack and it is up to all of us to stand up for fairness and respect.

Through our International union, APSCME, and in our own actions, an historic overhaul of our union has begun to enhance our political clout, improve our ability to organize new members and better train our activists for the fight ahead. It is a necessary part of safeguarding the rights and benefits we have won and ensure that we have the resources and ability to keep lighting successfully at the national, state and local levels.

We cannot transform our union without your help. The strength of CSEA comes from having thousands of members in thousands of places, making our voices heard at all those locations. It doesn’t happen on its own. We need more members to become activists. That means helping out in local activities — a contract campaign or mobilizing around a protest issue that affects you, or even volunteering on a community or charity activity or social event.

CSEA also needs activities to become shop stewards and local or unit union officers. It may be a big step for you and will require enormous determination, training and learning, but our future depends on scores of individuals like you, stepping up to represent your union.

CSEA also strives to make sure our officers have the best available training and help to get the job done and that means new skills, technology and approaches. Our Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) program is such a groundbreaking effort that needs to grow. LEAD provides a yearlong, intensive curriculum for union activists to help them become better leaders. Our first statewide LEAD class graduated last year and our second group of activists began their training this year.

CSEA’s focus on quality and efficiency campaign using a wide range of traditional and high tech tactics helped bring about positive results.

Many of our largest county units and the state bargaining units will be among the CSEA units facing contract negotiations in 2007. CSEA will be working vigorously to achieve fair settlements.

Campaigning for Quality Care

CSEA’s Quality Care campaign for the future of developmental disabilities services and the people who provide these services in New York gained momentum throughout the year. The QualityCare.com website was launched to help gain wider understanding and exposure for what is at stake.

Securing a first contract for the employees of Lifespire, the largest group of private sector employers to ever join CSEA, demonstrated the benefits of cooperative and respectful labor-management dialogue. Both CSEA and the Lifespire management are in agreement to work together for the widespread improvements that will benefit services, workers and most importantly the individuals.

CSEA was also instrumental in the state legislature’s overwhelming approval of the Quality Care Act, which would have provided an additional $25 million in funding to help boost the scandalously low pay of employees of not-for-profit agencies providing developmental disabilities services. Unfortunately, at press time, the legislation’s fate was uncertain due to incomprehensible opposition from the largest service contractors, led by NYSCC, Inc.

More Secure Work Sites

CSEA played the leading role in the enactment of the landmark Worksite Security Act, which will help make New York the national leader in protecting public employees from potential workplace violence. The law requires public employers with more than 20 employees to assess potential risks and take appropriate measures to reduce them.

CSEA laid the groundwork for this legislation following the murder of four members at the Schuylerville County Department of Social Services in Warren Glen in 1992. After the murders, CSEA worked with many localities across the state to assess risks in public buildings and develop cost-effective measures to protect workers and the public. During this time it became clear that New York needed statewide standards for safer work sites.

Working for Better Health Care

One of the highlights of the 2006 legislative session was CSEA’s securing a commitment for an additional $110 million in annual state funding of county nursing facilities. That victory was thrown into some question at year’s end with the release of the recommendations of Governor Pataki’s Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century. The commission recommends the merger of numerous facilities and widespread privatization of key public health care centers. CSEA believes would undermine the access and quality of health care in many communities.

CSEA mounted an immediate and vocal statewide campaign urging better choices. (See story, Page 2)

Responding to Disaster

Whether it was the floods of summer or the unexpected snows of October, CSEA members were going above and beyond the call of duty on the front lines of public safety. Off the job, CSEA members demonstrated their incredible humanity and generosity in helping individuals and communities survive and rebuild. Even beyond the borders of New York, CSEA members continued their efforts to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters. It is truly inspiring!

CSEA 100 Project

CSEA is proud of who we are and what we do. For nearly 100 years we have grown and changed into New York’s leading union while holding true to our purpose and principles. Especially as we approach our centennial, it is important to preserve and learn from our history as we chart our course ahead. You can view an online gallery of nearly 1,000 photos that tell the story of CSEA at www.csea@100.org/whoswho.php. Thanks to CSEA, tremendous work has been accomplished at the CSEA archives, housed in the Greeman Special Collections at the University at Albany. Throughout our history, CSEA has accepted many challenges and we are stronger for it. We are well prepared for the challenges of 2007 and beyond and will continue to do what is right. I look forward to working with you and making the year ahead our best yet.
CSEA was appalled when the Governor’s Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century, released a report recommending widespread closures and other downsizing to many of the state’s hospitals and nursing homes.

Lawmakers have heard CSEA members and have made it clear that few of the recommendations will come about without addressing problem areas.

When the report recommended the privatization of State University of New York hospitals, the gloves came off.

The SUNY Stony Brook Local, in coordination with the Long Island Region, mounted a Day of Action Dec. 11 to deal a ‘one-two punch’ to the Berger report and the whole notion of privatizing SUNY.
Health Care

"I strongly urge you to defeat this plan. It is bad medicine for New York," CSEA Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte told the state Assembly panel convened in Medford to hear testimony on the recommendation.

The report on hospital and nursing home restructuring and downsizing was scheduled to become law if state lawmakers failed to reject it by Dec. 31, 2006.

"This is not a health care policy. It is a budget policy based on the Pataki administration's slash and burn approach to health care," said LaMorte. "We cannot and will not embrace a plan that ignores the needs of the most vulnerable, the wider community and hospital work force."

While LaMorte was testifying at the hearing, hundreds of CSEA members flooded the street outside Stony Brook University Hospital carrying signs that said, "Public Health Care is Not For Sale!" The workers also called for the report to be rejected as it is a prescription for health care disaster.

In preparation for the Day of Action, the region and the local papered the hospital with notices urging everyone to call their lawmakers and urge them to reject the plan.

CSEA Political Action Coordinator Gretchen Penn attended virtually every Stony Brook holiday event to get members' signatures on letters to their lawmakers, and then CSEA flooded the lawmakers' fax machines and phone lines with the message — "Say NO to the state's report!" — CSEA Labor Relations Specialists Guy DiCicco and Les Eason, who are assigned to the local, also provided much support and help in the campaign.

After a while, when members were lobbying on mobile phones supplied by the union, some of the legislators' answering machines were either turned off or completely clogged with messages, but CSEA kept hammering away.

"Each and every member who picked up the phone, signed a letter or came to the rally was a tremendous help in the union's effort to help them," said LaMorte. "We wanted the pressure to get so that these lawmakers realize there's nowhere to hide from us and our disgust with this move.

"There are recommendations in the Berger report that would combine to cripple this facility, and endanger its mission, which is to provide health care to everyone without regard to their ability to pay," said CSEA Stony Brook Local President Carlos Speight. "This is a public teaching hospital; Suffolk's only Level One trauma center, and if they privatize it, as is called for in the report, the state and federal money will be slashed and the hospital will turn its focus from patients to profits. That would be a disaster for the community.

"Make no mistake; privatizing the jobs of some 4,000 public employees at the medical center amounts to a direct attack on CSEA members and their families," said LaMorte.

"The hospital employees here are the bedrock of strong and stable communities and state lawmakers will change that at their own peril."

LaMorte said this position has the backing of 50,000 members on Long Island and 265,000 CSEA members across the state.

"The state might claim taking this institution private will make it more cost effective, but the truth is that CSEA members already save the public money by providing essential services every day," said Speight. "It doesn't make any sense for overpaid outside contract workers to steal your tax dollars without having to answer to anybody, but that's just the kind of change that the Berger report will enable."

Speight said the hospital often fails to properly use its greatest resource — its own state employees. "CSEA members working at this hospital could have saved the state more than $2 million last year alone if SUNY had used the hospital construction crew it already has for in-house projects rather than give the work to higher-paid private contractors, and that's just one example."

"State lawmakers have said these concerns need more review and problem areas must be addressed before these plans such as the SUNY hospital proposal will go forward."

— Rachel Langert

On page 1, as the first group of protesters came out to march in the shadow of the hospital, Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte testifies the Berger report will harm the most vulnerable in society, the hospital work force and the greater Long Island community if it is not rejected by the state legislature. Behind him is Gretchen Penn, the region's political action coordinator.

At left, before testifying, Region President Nick LaMorte was interviewed by a Channel 12 reporter. Below, the protest at the Stony Brook University Medical Center drew a large energetic crowd of members from all over the hospital, including the housekeepers, below left, who had their say.

Long Island Reporter 3
Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

There are so many things I want to say to you as we begin this New Year. I have been fighting for the betterment of CSEA members for about 30 years now, first, as a member in the Farmingdale School District, then as a unit officer, president of the Nassau Educational Local, and finally as a region officer.

Through it all, I have been by your side, speaking on behalf of the membership, participating in some difficult contract fights and taking action in many campaigns to beat back either a federal, state or local effort to restrict our rights.

One of the things I learned very early on was that it really doesn’t make a difference if the contract campaign, the issue or the problem doesn’t affect me directly. The reason is, as a CSEA member, as a union member, whatever affects one union person directly, affects every other member indirectly. Just because management or some elected official has got it out for your co-worker today, that doesn’t mean he won’t be coming for you or me tomorrow. The point of being in a union is to fight these attacks as a group, in union.

That’s why many CSEA activists come out in support of each other at rallies, demonstrations, school board or government meetings. I was so glad to see members and officers from many of the other locals signing petitions and making phone calls to lobby against the state plan to privatize the Stony Brook University Medical Center. Some even came out to demonstrate with them. That is the true union spirit. It’s something we can always use more of. There will always be another fight tomorrow and it is up to all of us individually to stick together and watch each other’s backs. Remember: If they come for your co-worker or neighbor today, they’ll be coming for you tomorrow.

My motto for this year will be: Stand strong and keep fighting!

Wherever you work, whether there are 9 of you or 9,000, CSEA will be fighting by your side.

In solidarity,

Nick LaMorte, president
Long Island Region

Region PAC says thanks for election help

COMMACK — The Long Island Region’s Political Action Committee has expressed thanks to 40 CSEA activists who participated in the union’s 2006 election campaign.

The volunteers’ hard work helped several state legislators in Nassau and Suffolk win re-election despite strong opposition.

“These members represented all of CSEA this election cycle and gave their time and energy to make sure that our elected officials remember that CSEA is a driving force in this state,” said John C. Shepherd, Political Action Committee chairperson.

In support of union-endorsed candidates, the volunteers gave out campaign literature on the street and went door-to-door in targeted districts, sent out mailings, called other CSEA members from phone banks, took part in candidates’ fund-raising efforts and helped get out the vote on Election Day.

“Thanks to their work and the support of CSEA members, their family and friends, all 38 candidates we endorsed won election. Our record in endorsements was as successful as it could be,” said Shepherd.

The largest group of volunteers came from Suffolk Local 852, with President Bill Walsh heading the list of 17 activists taking part in the campaign.

Tying all the union’s election efforts together was Gretchen Penn, political action coordinator for the region.

The volunteers honored by the PAC are: Judiciary Local 330 — Kevin Ray and Barbara Mansilcauto. Pilgrim Psychiatric Center Local 418 — Catherine Custance. LIDSDO Local 430: President Daryl Wilson, Shirley Baker, Ruth Bush and Peter Marriott. SUNY Stony Brook Local 614 — Debbie Nappi-Gonzalez and MaryAnn Phelps. Nassau Local 830 — Jerry Laranchuta, Ron Gunteri and John Rinaldo.

Suffolk Local 852 — President Bill Walsh, John Christ, Dave Clark, Carmela Conte, Virginia Foran, Mike Giglio, Wendell Mealy, Jeannie McCarthy, Jim McDowell, Peter Messina, Beverly Pefeliter, Robert Pritchard, Joanne Silvia, Tom Skoby, Christopher Smith, Debbie Trapp, Richard Vecio and John Walton.

Suffolk Education Local 870 — Kristen Devine and Maria Navaro. Town of Oyster Bay Local 881 — Bobby Raflit.

Nassau Municipal Local 882 — Steve Abramson, Eleanor Arnost, Michael Delasanz, Carol Ebron, Gary Komova and Michael Taylor. Suffolk Retirees Local 920 — Mille Lucas.

Long Island Reporter
Long Island Region Holiday Party

CARLE PLACE — More than 320 CSEA members and their guests enjoyed themselves at the Long Island Region’s annual holiday party, held at the Chateau Briand here Dec. 13.

There was a lot of food, music, dancing and socializing. There were only two speakers and both spoke briefly.

After welcoming everyone to the party, Region President Nick LaForte paid tribute to those who serve their fellow union members in the Long Island Region.

“We have a great region and a great crew — the shop stewards and grievance reps who help us do the job we do,” he said. “It’s a wonderful union. It’s the greatest union in New York state, no, in the United States.”

He also paid tribute to a group of retirees present, calling them “our founding fathers.”

CSEA President Danny Donohue, the other speaker, said CSEA was the best union in the country “not because of the leaders in this room, but because of the members you represent.”

LaForte took the microphone again and asked everyone to introduce themselves to one person he or she didn’t know and strengthen the bonds of solidarity.

He ended by urging all those present to have a good time. “Let’s dance,” he said. “Let’s party. This is our night.”
The Vets Committee ‘elves’

The CSEA Long Island Region Veterans Committee was busy spreading lots of holiday cheer to area veterans in December. CSEA members from all over the Long Island Region gave generously and the committee collected many boxes full of toiletries, warm socks, sweats, underwear and other items. Then the committee members made a couple of trips to deliver them in person.

“We wanted to show these modern American heroes that their sacrifices and years of service are greatly appreciated, even all these years after they actually served,” said Committee Chair Maryann Phelps. “Just because they aren’t wearing a uniform anymore, that doesn’t mean they should be forgotten.”

Committee members, with the help of Oyster Bay Local Executive Vice President Bobby Rauff, brought the first batch of donations to the Veterans Administration Hospital in Northport. Phelps later made another trip to bring more items to the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook.

“I just want to thank everyone who responded to our call for donations,” said Phelps. “We had help from so many people, and it really helped make the program a success.”

’Tis the Season

Region Women’s Committee adopts a family

COMMACK — Members of the region Women’s Committee have made the holidays a little brighter for Clara, a young girl at Stony Brook Hospital.

Last year, committee members exchanged raffle gifts at their holiday party. Afterward, one member suggested that instead of buying gifts for a raffle, they “adopt” a needy child for the holidays.

“We went through Maryann Phelps who is part of the SUNY Stony Brook Local, which includes the hospital,” said Bobbi Eisgrau, committee chair. “That’s the hospital closest to us and many CSEA members work there.”

This year, members contributed $225 for the child. Jill Mallon of the Department of Transportation Local bought the gifts, which were wrapped by committee members and were given to Clara at Christmas.

“We got her dolls, winter coats, nightgowns, jeans, a jacket, pants — whatever a little girl needs,” said Eisgrau.

The committee plans to continue “adopting” a child for the holidays each year. “We’re a very giving committee,” said Eisgrau, “and as long as we have it to give, we will.”

Below, members of the Long Island Region Women’s Committee display some of the gifts they are donating to Clara, a young girl at Stony Brook Hospital.
Long Beach Unit wins higher tier pay schedule in 2008

LONG BEACH — A community-wide campaign by the Long Beach Unit has won members hired since 1998 an upgrade to the higher tier pay schedule after 10 years of service.

At its Dec. 12 meeting, the city council voted unanimously to establish the tier schedule. Previously, there had been no way to move from Tier B to Tier A.

“Since 2003, 13 members will cross over,” said Colleen Silvia, president of the Long Beach Unit of Nassau Municipal Local 892.

“Waiting a year allows the city to budget for the crossover.”

In future years, as employees complete 10 years of service they will move to Tier A, increasing their salary by thousands annually.

“A lot of Tier B employees have to have second jobs, so this will really help their families,” said Silvia.

About 100 CSEA members are in Tier B. She said the existence of two tiers had created a lot of tension. “Most employees in Tier B felt like second-class members, working next to someone making a higher salary,” she said. “It was important for them and an important issue for the local.”

John Mooney, the unit’s executive vice president, and Bill McCarthy, chair of its political action committee, spearheaded the campaign.

A petition with more than 1,000 signatures supporting the union’s drive from city residents was presented to the city council and 75 unit members were present at the Dec. 12 meeting.

“Our own political action committee and executive board coming together and actively approaching all city council members, whether Democrat or Republican, enabled us to accomplish this,” said Silvia.

“It was a unanimous vote yes. All council members supported it.”

Silvia also expressed the union’s appreciation to three city officials, City Manager Ed Eaton, Comptroller Sandra Clarson and Corporation Counsel Corey Klein, for their efforts in getting the resolution placed on the city council agenda.
CSEA members in the Mattituck-Cutchogue School District are launching their campaign to fight for a new contract.

The members have been working without a contract since the end of June. A CSEA contract campaign is a series of well-planned activities, incorporating political action, community outreach, increasing levels of public pressure, and direct member involvement in things like demonstrations and leafleting, all coordinated and designed to break through a contract logjam. Typically the campaign uses the expertise and skills of CSEA staff, as well as elected officials from the unit, local and region levels.

During his statement at a recent school board meeting, Unit President Sam Strickland told everyone about the way the people provide essential support services to the district every day, and help ensure the school day runs smoothly. When he mentioned the unit was without a contract, the board president shut him down. He told Strickland “That’s enough,” and would not let him speak any more.

At the unit’s holiday party, Strickland urged members to support the union’s efforts to secure a fair and equitable contract. “You are key to this whole process. We need your support to make this work,” he said.

Editors note: Since the Mattituck-Cutchogue School Board refused to allow the union’s elected official to speak on the workers’ behalf, we decided to print what the board did not want anyone to hear.

The following is the text of Unit President Sam Strickland’s remarks:

“My name is Sam Strickland and I am the president of the CSEA unit at the Mattituck-Cutchogue School District. I represent 83 members, most of whom are residents of the district.

We are teachers’ assistants, clerical, groundskeepers, custodians, bus drivers and matrons. The CSEA members here at Mattituck-Cutchogue provide all kinds of critical support services for this district.

We work directly with students to help teachers maintain order and a proper working environment in the classroom. We work behind the scenes to make sure students’ transcripts and records are properly maintained. We drive the children to and from school, making sure they arrive safely at your door. We help out in the library, in the nurse’s office and we guard the school grounds. We all work together to maintain our schools as clean, presentable and most of all, as safe and secure places for our children in which to learn.

I travel with sports teams and I have seen the schools in many other districts, so I can tell you that Mattituck-Cutchogue’s schools are just as clean and well maintained by my members as the schools in any other district. Any visitor can tell you that the overwhelming majority of our people in this district are doing a great job.

But, our contract expired on June 30, and despite our best efforts this district has refused to bargain in good faith, and make even a reasonable attempt to reach a fair contract with us. The result is, we reached impasse in September and we are undergoing mediation, in the hope that an independent, third party might help us come to an agreement.

This school district wants to move us from our self-insured plan, over to the Empire Plan, which will more than double our out-of-pocket costs, and for most of my members, will also result in higher premiums.

They want us to dig deeper into our pockets without giving us anything in return. That is not negotiating. That is the equivalent of ramming much higher costs down our throats, without allowing us to share in the million-dollar windfall that we will make possible.

Not only is this not fair to us, the people who make this school district work, but it is also unacceptable.

It was not our poor planning and shortsightedness that resulted in a costly medical plan that isn’t as efficient as it should be. We are not the administrators here, and we should not be made to suffer for other people’s mistakes.

To the board, we say, we want to cooperate with you. We have tried. But we also need your cooperation. This should be a two-way street.

Instead, this district has elected to waste thousands of dollars in attorneys’ fees to stonewall, and stall, and fight its dedicated employees, and the longer that fight goes on, the more it will cost.

My members work hard every day for this school and for this community, but we have families to feed, and mortgages to pay, healing costs are going up, and the holidays are coming.

All we are asking for is to be treated with respect.

As CSEA members we have the backing of 50,000 members in the Long Island Region and of 265,000 members around this state. We are part of New York’s Leading Union, and I can assure you that in the course of a long and protracted contract campaign, that all will become clear to you.

We aren’t making any outrageous demands, so let’s work together for the benefit of everyone involved. Thank you.”

— Rachel Langert

Mattituck-Cutchogue School District Unit President Sam Strickland shares a lighter moment with Mattituck High School Teachers’ Assistant Maureen Deegan at the unit holiday party.

Mattituck-Cutchogue members step it up

Oyster Bay Local reaches out

Three leaflets were distributed during the last week of December, giving members a copy of the new edition of the local newsletter, "The Messenger," and a 2007 calendar.

The visits of the local’s Public Relations Committee are not at Christmastime only. The committee makes the rounds four times a year, giving members the opportunity to meet their local’s leaders and raise any concerns with them face-to-face.

“We want our members to see their president and shop stewards,” said Executive Vice President Bobby Raffi.

OYSTER BAY — Town of Oyster Bay Local President Augie Buckhardt got his chance last month to play Santa Claus — sort of. Buckhardt, joined by other local officers and shop stewards, visited the town’s work sites during the second week of December, giving members a copy of the new edition of the local newsletter, "The Messenger," and a 2007 calendar.

The visits of the local’s Public Relations Committee are not at Christmastime only. The committee makes the rounds four times a year, giving members the opportunity to meet their local’s leaders and raise any concerns with them face-to-face.

“We want our members to see their president and shop stewards,” said Executive Vice President Bobby Raffi.

Lori Kabelka, who works in the Town of Oyster Bay’s Engineering Department, gets a 2007 calendar and the newsletter from Augie Buckhardt, center, and Sal Cecere, Highway Department shop steward.
I’ve been thinking lately about CSEA and exactly what it is as an organization. When I say organization, I’m speaking of the entire association, starting with our statewide office and ending with our individual units. To sum it up in a word, CSEA is impressive.

Why am I using this month’s article to write about CSEA? I don’t think most of our members really understand how our union works, how it is organized and what makes it tick. It’s important to you, as a CSEA member, that you understand your union and all the mechanisms and individuals of which it is comprised. CSEA has a tremendous amount of invaluable resources at its disposal because of the size of its membership.

It was not until I decided to run for this office that I realized how organized and vast our union was. Since my election, I have made many trips to Albany to speak with our statewide representatives about the many difficult issues we face here in Nassau Local 830. My first surprise was just how large our statewide headquarters is. It’s truly impressive with four stories of work area. We have our own print shop and nearly a dozen other departments to deal with the complex day-to-day business of running New York’s leading union. The place is bustling and it never stops. Imagine that every time you receive a mailing from CSEA, more than 250,000 other pieces of mail went out with it!

Our statewide president is extremely busy, as you can imagine. The reason for hiring more than 200 staff members working in headquarters is because that’s what it takes to effectively run this powerful union. Statewide Treasurer Maureen Malone administers a budget of nearly $100 million annually! Our union is in the major leagues, and I am thankful for that. I’m thankful because I know that when and if we ever get to a point where we need the cavalry, CSEA can come through for us like no other union in the state. Our association with AFSCME is crucial.

What Exactly is CSEA?

Thank you for being a receptive audience and I hope you all had a great holiday and have a very happy new year as we look forward to a stronger, more unified 2007!

because together we add another 1.4 million members who are ready to stand behind us on important global issues such as health insurance and job security.

Along with the statewide officers, CSEA has officers covering its geographical regions, including the Long Island Region, led by President Nick LaMorte. Nick presides over all CSEA members who work throughout Long Island, or about 50,000 members. We are within the union’s Long Island Region and I frequently meet and speak with President LaMorte. You should know that Local 830 is the region’s largest local, with nearly 10,000 members between the county and health care corporation. Our region is there to make sure that we are not hurt politically, that other aggressive unions not affiliated with the AFL-CIO do not invade our ranks, and to help us when needed by putting pressure on government officials. Many times, Nick works closely with CSEA’s Political Action Director, Fran Turner. Together, they put forth a strategy that is beneficial to all CSEA members. When we need legislation passed in Albany for our members, Nick and Fran will work with me to get it done. Without them, we would be like so many other independent unions who rarely succeed in getting statewide legislation passed. It’s a daunting task and getting such legislation passed requires great teamwork and, quite frankly, political power. We could never do it alone and for that I am grateful to be part of this union.

I know there are those of you who would like to have their titles upgraded. We have successfully achieved these upgrades in some of our units. Additionally, without a strong union, many of our hardworking members would have been unjustly fired. You would never have the benefit packages you have today, because I can tell you firsthand, the county would have dropped these benefits long ago if it could have. I can also tell you...
CSEA Nassau County Local 830

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A Monthly Publication of CSEA Nassau County Local 830
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CSEA Nassau County Local 830

Happy Holidays from CSEA Local 830

...and a happy and healthy new year!

CSEA spends hundreds of thousands of dollars fighting grievances and disciplinary reviews. That's very important, especially since we win the majority of them. Recently, this local won three members hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay as a result of illegal layoffs. One class action cost the county $5 million through payments to hundreds of our members, and just recently we added another $1.5 million to that award! These types of awards and wins do not happen by accident; they happen because CSEA has the knowledge, resources and will to pursue them. These resources include the very capable law offices of Louis Stober Jr., without which we would not have achieved these successes and many other important decisions. We don't win them all, and we still have many open issues that need to be addressed, such as the lack of promotions and out-of-life work. You need to know we will never give up on these issues and others that have entrenched themselves in this county for decades. Unions as a whole are not what they were 20 or 30 years ago, but CSEA is still powerful enough to keep the pressure on management. As such, I'm proud to be a part of it and so should you. We can complain about certain shortcomings, but in this county I don't see any other union that could do it better than CSEA. Hey, it's my opinion, and my column, so I'll take the liberty of giving CSEA some well-deserved ink.

Thank you for being a receptive audience and I hope you all had a great holiday and have a very happy new year as we look forward to a stronger, more unified 2007! Yours in solidarity,

Jerry LaRicchia

This Month in Labor History
Jan. 25, 1915

The Supreme Court upholds "yellow dog" contracts which forbid membership in labor unions.

Log onto the MEMBERS-ONLY AREA of the CSEA web site to access information about the Legal Assistance Program (LAP) and the Legal Services Program (LSP) and other CSEA Legal Dept. services. www.csealocal1000.org

They Said It:

Quote of the Month

“We are proud and happy to be partners with CSEA.”

— Art Giannelli, CEO, Nassau Health Care Corporation, Dec. 13 Press Conference, in regards to working with CSEA to improve Nassau University Medical Center
We are sorry to inform the CSEA community of an untimely death of one of our members and department leaders. Terri Kopitsch, the Local 830 unit president for the Nassau County Health Department, died on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 23, at 52.

Kopitsch had worked for the Health Department for 23 years and has held various union leadership roles for nearly 20 years. She was known by her co-workers as the “mayor of 240 (Old Country Road)” for her dedication to her job, to the union and to people in general. “She just tried to be friends with everyone, and saw goodness in everyone,” her husband, Victor Kopitsch, said. Terri and Vic Kopitsch had been married for 23 years and resided in Hempstead.

Everyone at CSEA would like to send their heartfelt condolences to Victor and the rest of the Kopitsch family. “Terri’s hard work and commitment was always very much appreciated and will be sorely missed,” said Local 830 President Jerry Laricchiuta. “She was very passionate about her work and it showed. I wish all her friends and family the best during this difficult time.”

Condolences can be sent to:
Victor Kopitsch
104 Rutland Road
Hempstead, N.Y. 11550

BECOME A MEMBER OF
www.CSEA830.ORG!!!

New Website Includes:
• Brand new, functioning “Members” section with contracts, unit constitution and member benefits information;
• Links to local CSEA staff and unit presidents by telephone and e-mail,
• Archives of all radio shows, video links to the Local 830 commercial and footage from CSEA meetings, pictures and current Express newsletters;
• Up-to-date information on all the latest in CSEA news;

AND MUCH MORE!

Sign up Today!
Local “Idol” Helps CSEA Spread Holiday Spirit

Former “American Idol” star and Levittown resident Kevin Covais lent a helping hand to CSEA Local 830 by encouraging the community to donate toys for needy children this holiday season. Covais finished 11th in the 2006 season of the hit television show and became a national icon for his unique singing ability and personality. His father is retired Capt. John Covais, a former CSEA member at the Nassau County Correctional Center.

CSEA Local 830 teamed up with the Economic Opportunity Commission to collect the toys, which were distributed Dec. 22 at 134 Jackson St. in Hempstead during the EOC’s “Christmas on Jackson Street.”

On Wednesday Dec. 13, at 6:30 p.m. on WGBB AM 1240, Covais was a guest on Local 830’s radio show “Talent Labor with Local 830,” to discuss the need to be charitable not just during the holiday season, but all year round. To top it off, Covais performed holiday melodies at the Local 830 holiday party Dec. 20 at the Crest Hollow Country Club in Woodbury.

Local 830 also is adopting members’ families this year. Twenty local families were adopted by different departments and unit presidents, who were responsible for gathering toys, books, toiletries and essentials for the families to make their season more pleasurable.

CSEA Local 830 President Jerry Larichchuta is proud of CSEA members for their hard work in this endeavor and is happy to have Covais aboard to stress the significance of it.

“It’s important to realize there are a lot of people out there who aren’t able to enjoy the holiday season for various reasons,” Larichchuta said. “I’m just happy we have been able to step up as a team to try and make the season more enjoyable for the community.”

Next month’s Express will have plenty of pictures from the CSEA Local 830 holiday party.

‘Tis the Busy Holiday Season for Local 830

This holiday season has certainly proved to be a busy one for Local 830 President Jerry Larichchuta and members of his executive board. To go along with his weekly meetings at Nassau University Medical Center with Art Gianelli, weekly radio show meetings with local government officials and various holiday engagements all over the county, Larichchuta met with members in many county departments.

Nov. 16 marked the police civilian unit membership meeting at police headquarters. Nov. 22 was the drug & alcohol unit membership meeting at 60 Charles Lindbergh Blvd. On Nov. 27 and 30, Larichchuta attended luncheons with small groups of unit presidents to discuss issues in certain departments.

In December, there was an important membership meeting at the Juvenile Detention Center. After the CSEA press conference there in March 2006, there has been a strong emphasis on serving the members there and alleviating all the problems and concerns.

Local staff also attended other holiday parties, including NUMC at the Chateau Briand, Social Service Department at the Sands at Lido Beach, County Attorney, Civil Service Commission, CSEA Long Island Region and Local 880.

“I think it’s important to be active during the holiday season,” Larichchuta said. “It’s a time that you want to spend with people close to you and here in CSEA, I want us all to be close and have a pleasurable holiday season together.”

Above, Larichchuta and Local Vice President Ron Gurnieri meet with unit presidents.

Below left, from left, former Local 830 President Tony Giustino, Local 830 Executive Vice President, Diane Ross and President Jerry Larichchuta.

Below right, Jerry Larichchuta addresses the attendees at the NUMC party.

Photo Montage of CSEA in 2006!

Jerry Larichchuta with Department of Public Works employees in January.

CSEA Local 830 presented a special photo montage of the year that was at their holiday party Dec. 20. Find more great photos like this one, in a special link to that presentation at www.csea830.org.

Retiree Recognition

The administrators and staff of A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility congratulate Frances Hubbs.

In recognition and grateful appreciation of her 25 years (1981-2006) of professionalism, dedication and caring of our patients, a plaque was presented to Hubbs. Her leaving is a great loss to the facility but it is a well-deserved retirement for her. She has been an ultimate professional.

Frances Hubbs
Nassau University Medical Center

December Nassau University Medical Center Employee of the Month

At a reception hosted by the employees of Nassau University Medical Center, Lori Coughlin, a health aide for the ambulatory pediatric care department, was recognized as the December Employee of the Month. Coughlin, a resident of Massapequa, spends her days running errands and supporting the needs of the hospital’s pediatric clinic. Her work ethic is respected by all the clinic’s staff and, most importantly, by her young patients. She is trustworthy, dedicated and her attitude is upbeat and caring.

Lori Coughlin

A. Holly Patterson December Employee of the Month

At a reception hosted for the employees of the A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility, Rene Flores, a food service worker, was honored as the December Employee of the Month for the nursing home. Flores, a resident of Uniondale, is a dedicated employee who is much loved by the residents of the nursing home for his friendly and caring attitude when he provides them their meals.

Rene Flores

CSEA

Nassau County’s largest public service union

10,000 MEMBERS STRONG

NASSAU LOCAL 830, Jerry Laricchiuta, president • Carol Croston and Kelvin Lewis, Unity Committee co-chairs

Martin Luther King Jr. 13th Annual Ceremony Luncheon

Presented by CSEA Unity Committee

Saturday, Jan. 6, 2007 • 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Coral House • 70 Milburn Ave., Baldwin

Limited Seating. Tickets available on a first-come, first-served basis.

ADVANCE SALE ONLY — NO TICKETS AT DOOR
$35 Adults; $20 Children 12 and Under

Guest Speaker: Jose Lopez, Commissioner of Nassau County Parks, Recreation & Museums

Achievement Awarded: Pat Cautheria and Don Ryan

Entertainment: Carolyn Harding, Vocalist; Concetta Walker, DSS Gospel Group; James Seabrooks, Vocalist

* ALSO RAFFLES AND DOOR PRIZES*

Please complete & return coupon below with payment. Check should be made payable to CSEA Nassau Local 830 and mailed to: CSEA Nassau Local 830, 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola, N.Y. 11501. For more information, contact: Juanita McKinnies: 516-378-2790 or 516-353-0459 (cell); or Tim Corr: 571-2919 ext. 14.

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**Veteran’s Corner**  
*By Debbie O’Connell*

This past month, CSEA Local 830 invited Nassau County Legislator and former Director of the Nassau County Veterans Agency, Dennis Dunne, on “Talkin’ Labor with Local 830” to discuss various issues, including serving and respecting our nation’s veterans.

We would like to thank everyone who helped donate gifts this holiday season, and all who supported our troops overseas in 2006. This year, we requested help in donating food, clothing and essentials to our veterans, asked for contributions of DVD movies to send overseas for the enjoyment of our troops and created a deployed support program to support members and families of those serving abroad. Also, we collected many items for the annual Stand Down at the Freeport Armory to help our veterans. In all of these instances, CSEA members and the community stepped up to the plate to help out our current troops and our veterans in need and we thank you for that.

Looking ahead to 2007, we ask for your continued support. Any questions on any of our veterans programs, please call Debbie O’Connell at 571-2919, ext. 22.

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**This month from**

**Talkin’ Labor With Local 830**

“Talkin’ Labor with Local 830” ventured into many different areas for show guests this past month.  
Guests included statewide CSEA President Danny Donohue, and Nassau County legislators Dennis Dunne, Dave Denenberg, and Donohue was in town for the CSEA Long Island Region holiday party Dec. 13, and found time to stop by Dec. 14 for an intriguing interview with Jerry Laricchiuta on various CSEA issues across the state.

Normally “Talkin’ Labor” guests come from the world of unions and government, but Local 830 delved into the world of entertainment for its Dec. 13 guest, “American Idol” star Kevin Covais, Covais, who is from Long Island, discussed the need to be charitable and donate toys, gifts, and other items during the holiday season.  
7 expected guests include the long-expected interview with County Executive Tom Suozzi, PBA President Gary Delaraba and Town of Hempstead Receiver of Taxes Donald Clavin Jr.  
We missed any of these shows, please log onto csea830.org and click on the “Talkin’ Labor with Local 830” icon to listen to any show of your choice. To listen to new shows as they air, tune into WGBB AM 1240 on Wednesday nights between 6:30 p.m. and 7 p.m.

*Guests on Talkin’ Labor With Local 830 this month included, clockwise from above left, Ed Mangano, Dave Denenberg, Dennis Dunne and CSEA President Danny Donohue.*

**Thank You!**

**Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. on WGBB AM 1240**
A Message From Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte

Stand Strong, Keep Fighting!

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

There are so many things I want to say to you as we begin this New Year. I have been fighting for the betterment of CSEA members for about 30 years now, first, as a member in the Farmingdale School District, then as a unit officer, president of the Nassau Educational Local, and finally as a region officer.

Through it all, I have been by your side, speaking on behalf of the membership, participating in some difficult contract fights and taking action in many campaigns to beat back either a federal, state or local effort to restrict our rights.

One of the things I learned very early on was that it really doesn’t make a difference if the contract campaign, the issue or the problem doesn’t affect me directly. The reason is, as a CSEA member, as a union member, whatever affects one union person directly, affects every other member indirectly. Just because management or some elected official has got it out for your co-worker today, that doesn’t mean he won’t be coming for you — or me tomorrow. The point of being in a union is to fight these attacks as a group, in unison.

That’s why many CSEA activists come out in support of each other at rallies, demonstrations, school board or government meetings. I was so glad to see members and officers from many of the other locals signing petitions and making phone calls to lobby against the state plan to privatize the Stony Brook University Medical Center. Some even came out to demonstrate with them. That is the true union spirit. It’s something we can always use more of. There will always be another fight tomorrow and it is up to all of us individually to stick together and watch each other’s backs.

Remember: if they come for your co-worker or neighbor today, they’ll be coming for you tomorrow.

My motto for this year will be: Stand strong and keep fighting! Wherever you work, whether there are nine of you or 9,000, CSEA will be fighting by your side.

In solidarity,

Nick LaMorte
Long Island Region

Important Message to all Nassau County Residents

MINEOLA — “If you get a letter suggesting that you can obtain a copy of your deed for a fee from any agency other than the Nassau County Clerk’s Office, don’t call them, call us,” said Nassau County Clerk Maureen O’Connell. The clerk was recently alerted to a mailing sent to homeowners urging them to obtain certified copies of their deeds that are recorded in the County Clerk’s Office. Regrettably, the solicitation letter homeowners are receiving indicates they can obtain a “Certified” copy of their deed for $85 plus $4.50 for postage and handling, when it only costs $5.20 from the clerk’s office. O’Connell said, “Please don’t order any of your records from any other agency other than the County Clerk’s office or you will be paying too much!”