RETIREE BENEFITS UNDER ATTACK!

See Page 3
CSEA, courts reach contract

ALBANY — CSEA has reached a tentative agreement with the New York State Office of Court Administration on a new contract covering more than 6,000 non-judicial employees in the state’s Unified Court System.

“CSEA and the Unified Court System have reached a fair and responsible agreement that recognizes the value and importance of the court employees who make the system work every day,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “These were challenging negotiations and I am extremely proud of the focus and commitment of the CSEA bargaining team.”

The four-year agreement retroactive to April 1, 2007 includes salary increases in every year of the agreement, improved downstate and Mid-Hudson Valley location pay, enhancements in longevity bonuses for long term employees, improved payments to the Employee Benefit Fund and Labor-Management programs, and increased funding for body armor for security personnel. There were no significant changes to health insurance provisions. CSEA also agreed to a salary increase deferral for employees earning more than $115,000 annually until a judicial pay raise is enacted. Employees at or above that level will have their salaries held harmless but will receive the contract provisions once the judicial pay raise issue is resolved. If it is not resolved by the end of the contract, the employees will receive all of the contract cost of living adjustments retroactively.

This issue would affect about 500 individuals out of the bargaining unit’s 6,000 members.

CSEA/Unified Court System Contract Ratification Schedule

- June 3, ballots mailed
- June 13, replacement ballots available (Call 800-342-4146, ext 1279 or 518-257-1279)
- June 24, deadline to return ballots, 5 p.m.
- June 25, ballot count, results announced on csealocal1000.org

Former CSEA Director Joseph Dolan, 73

ALBANY — Former CSEA Executive Director Joseph Dolan Jr. died May 7 at 73. Dolan began his career at CSEA in 1965 as an Albany field representative, working his way up to executive director, a job he left in 1982.

In a 2003 interview, Dolan recalled his early years working for CSEA meant joining a lot of bowling leagues and going to a lot of clambakes in order to meet with the membership. But with the advent of the Taylor Law in 1967, and CSEA’s affiliation with AFSCME in 1978, Dolan saw the transformation of CSEA from an association into a union with full collective bargaining rights.

Dolan also served as Department of Correctional Services assistant deputy commissioner, was elected to the Albany County Legislature serving from 1970 to 1990, and also served on the Albany zoning board of appeals, serving as its chairman from 1987 to 1990.

From 1980 until his death, Dolan was board chairman and CEO of the Irish American Heritage Museum, an organization he worked tirelessly to promote. He was a Navy veteran of the Korean Conflict.
CSEA recently ripped the Empire Center and the New York State Association of Counties for their attempts to mislead the media and the public over legislation to protect local government retirees’ health care benefits. The Retiree Health Insurance legislation (S. 6457a/A.9393a) would prohibit the state, counties and municipal employers from shifting health care costs to retirees and prohibit them from diminishing health insurance benefits for one year while a study is completed to determine how to provide health insurance in the most cost-effective manner.

“Media coverage of this issue has been outrageously one-sided and does not accurately present the full story on what is at stake,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “NYSAC has its own narrow agenda on this issue to pursue unrestricted unilateral action in this case regardless of who gets hurt. But the Empire Center, which is a front for corporate fat cats, is even more reprehensible in their manipulation of the facts.”

“This legislation is about what is right and fair in making sure that localities live up to their responsibility to retirees that their promised health care coverage will continue to be there,” Donohue said.

“CSEA will not apologize for standing up for our members but in this case it is also appropriate public policy,” he said.

The CSEA leader pointed out that the public sector should be setting a good example in living up to its moral obligations rather than aping the excesses of the corporate world which increasingly has walked away from its obligations to its employees at great public and human expense.

The Empire Center’s hypocrisy in challenging public employee health care coverage is galling at a time when many irresponsible businesses benefit at taxpayer expense under programs like Family Health Plus and Child Health Plus. Public employees do not qualify for these state programs, yet families of four earning nearly $85,000 annually can qualify and provide incentive to business to avoid providing health care coverage and its associated cost. At the same time there are too many New Yorkers without health coverage at all.

“Retiree health coverage is just one of many real problems that New Yorkers face,” Donohue said.

“CSEA and other unions believe keeping promises to retirees and doing what’s morally right is in the best interest of New Yorkers as a whole. But we also believe that our governments at all levels should be stepping up to issues like ensuring health care for all Americans rather than letting the public policy agenda be dictated by those who are not acting in the broader public interest.”

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**Facts misrepresented in the media**

- The bill does not prohibit employers from making appropriate changes in retiree health insurance. Instead, it stops them from making unilateral changes.
- The bill does not increase employers’ responsibilities under GASB Rule 45, an accounting requirement whose importance has been greatly overstated by employer organizations. In fact GASB 45 is a recent accounting requirement put in place because private sector employers routinely underfunded and misstated their own pension and health insurance obligations.
- The bill is modeled after an existing, successful law that has applied to school districts since 1994. Last year the governor called for the creation of a task force and this bill simply complies with that request.
- Contrary to recent editorials on this matter, this bill does not affect any public pension fund in any way. Public employee health benefits are not funded by the pension system.
- NYSAC’s position that this bill limits an employer’s ability to lower property taxes is shortsighted and inaccurate. This bill will prevent retirees from being forced into more expensive Medicaid and/or other socially funded health care, which would only increase local property taxes.
- The effort on part of employers’ and big business is yet another example of the race to the bottom mentality and how to vilify public employees rather than address the real problems that our local communities face.
Retirees don’t deserve broken promises

They’re at it again.

The Empire Center, a lobbying operation that’s a front for big business, has launched a new offensive aimed at taking away your rights and benefits.

To make matters worse, the New York State Association of Counties and the New York State Business Council are playing along, too. The media either doesn’t understand the facts or doesn’t want to, and the public is being fed a line of misinformation.

The issue involves legislation we support to protect local government retiree benefits. There is a similar law already in effect protecting school district retirees. The legislation would place a moratorium on unilateral action by localities to diminish or eliminate health coverage for retirees for one year while a study of the issue is done. It would not prohibit localities from negotiating change or taking other appropriate actions to control costs.

Of course, when the Empire Center presents the issue as the “big bad CSEA” trying to lock in benefits forever no matter what the cost to taxpayers, the public doesn’t like it. But the facts are otherwise.

We believe that when the public understands the truth — that we are simply trying to make sure that benefits promised to retirees will continue to be there for them — they will have a much more sympathetic reaction.

CSEA will continue to do everything we can to tell our side of the story accurately and effectively no matter what outsiders do to try to manipulate the truth.

You can help, too. Call your state legislators and tell them not to be intimidated by those who misrepresent the facts.
Activism spares school counseling program

SYRACUSE — CSEA activists beat back a proposal to contract out their jobs and in the process gave a textbook example of how to fight city hall or, in this case, a county legislature.

“We were worried that if any of our students failed to receive the services we offer, it could have had a tragic impact upon them, their families and our whole school community,” said Student Assistance Counselor Marcy Weed.

The Onondaga County Mental Health Department’s acting commissioner announced in early April he was seeking to contract out its School Based Support Program, which the county has run for the last 17 years.

The program places 11 counselors into six area school districts to provide full-time mental health clinical services throughout the school year, with an emphasis on substance abuse prevention, suicide prevention and anger management and relationship issues.

The workers didn’t have much time to fight back.

Fighting the plan
Workers met with CSEA staff and Central Region President Colleen Wheaton to develop a strategic campaign. Union members couldn’t understand why such a successful, well-received program was on the chopping block in the first place, especially considering the county’s share of funding was only 5 percent — the rest comes from the state and the participating school districts.

CSEA reached out to union-supported county lawmakers on the legislature’s Health Committee to slow the process. A handout was printed for legislators dealing with the unanswered questions regarding the proposal.

At the Health Committee meeting, workers and union representatives were on hand to witness legislators grilling the acting commissioner over his plan. The committee put the resolutions on hold and unanimously voted for a public hearing. At the next meeting of the entire legislature, the vote was again unanimous to hold a public hearing.

CSEA-represented county workers reached out to other unions, community groups and those who benefit from the program’s services. Union representatives also met with county administrators to try to resolve concerns the county and participating districts had regarding the program.

Victory for workers
In the end, everyone’s efforts paid off. During the public hearing, dozens of teachers, students, principals, administrators, parents, union activists and officers, including Onondaga County Local President Phil Graham, guidance counselors and the counselors themselves spoke in favor of the program.

The only speakers in favor of contracting out were the companies who were bidding on taking over the program.

The following day, the Health Committee was scheduled to again take up the resolutions transferring the program’s operating funding. Instead, CSEA and a county official were brought to the table to explain how they were working together to mitigate the county’s and districts’ concerns.

The county agreed to pull the resolution and its proposal to contract out the program after receiving a warning from several legislators not to waste their time with issues that can be worked out through cooperation rather than legislation.

“We have a great program, with great employees and some minor issues that we could work out cooperatively,” Wheaton said. “We didn’t need contracting out to address people’s concerns, and we’re glad the legislators and the county recognized that.”

— Mark M. Kotzin

CSEA Voices

“We were worried that if any of our students failed to receive the services we offer, it could have had a tragic impact upon them, their families and our whole school community.”

— Thanyania Morris, cleaner, Buffalo State College, on CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health Conference (see pages 10-11 for more).
THE WORK FORCE
June 2008

Food, training and income harvested at prison farm

FALLSBURG — The dairy farm off Route 52 is like any other. Cows are lined up in the barn for milking, pasteurizing equipment whirs nearby and a mixture of homegrown feed is piled high in a bunk silo.

The only difference? This farm is one of 13 operated by the New York State Department of Correctional Services, charged with providing dairy for inmates at about a dozen state correctional facilities nearby.

Prison farms have a long history in New York, but remain largely unknown to the public. While the farm in Fallsburg has been around since the 1940s, it’s been the responsibility of Sullivan Correctional Facility since 1985.

Source of income

Staffing the farm are six CSEA members who supervise the farm operation, along with two corrections officers who supervise inmates working on the farm.

“Working on the farm is a vocational program for the inmates,” said CSEA member Duane Hannold, who supervises the pasteurization plant at the farm. “They start by earning 32 cents per hour.”

Prison farms in New York state serve several purposes. They provide a cost effective way of providing dairy, meat and produce to the inmate population, they are an occasional source of income when products such as cream are sold to outside vendors and they serve as a source of job training for minimum security inmates.

“The inmates know nothing about farming when we get first get them,” said Hannold, who like his co-workers has a background in dairy farming. “We teach them everything from milking to pasteurization. When they leave the facility, they go out of here with a trade.”

CSEA members keep the farm staffed seven days a week. Drivers such as CSEA member Reggie Hillriegel make deliveries to neighboring prisons.

Farmers like Jeremy Hubert man a small greenhouse that provides vegetables for the inmates and flowers for community projects inmates undertake. Farm manager Mike Walter supervises the entire operation, from breeding to growing the crops that provide feed for the cows.

While dairy farming has seen a decline in downstate New York, the farm at Sullivan Correctional Facility, where 54 cows produce about 89 pounds of milk each day, remains busy as ever.

— Jessica Ladlee

We learn many new skills on a variety of topics, such as how to deal with stress in the workplace and how to avoid heat exhaustion. That’s important for the cleaners working in the dorms. It’s also a good opportunity to discuss safety issues with people from other locals and to look for solutions.

— Ken Penski, 36-year painter, University at Buffalo, on CSEA’s Occupational Safety and Health Conference (see pages 10-11 for more).

Farm Manager Mike Walter, who is responsible for supervising the entire farm operation, tends to the fields adjacent to the facility.

Reggie Hillriegel, a driver at the farm, with a week-old calf born at the facility.

Right, Duane Hannold with one of the Holstein cows used for milking.

Farmer Jeremy Hubert cares for a poinsettia plant in a greenhouse at the farm. The plants are used for local beautification projects.
**Ulster fight settled**

KINGSTON — Solidarity was the key to a fair contract for members of the Ulster County Unit, who recently overwhelmingly approved a three-year deal offering fair wage increases to accommodate the rising cost of living.

“Getting as much information on negotiations out to our members as quickly as possible was a priority for us,” said Unit President Terry Gilbert.

“Unfortunately, a number of incorrect contract details were printed in a local newspaper article on the tentative MOA (memorandum of agreement),” Gilbert said. “It caused a lot of upset, understandably, but we were quickly able to counteract that damage by getting the word out to our members about what was really in the proposed contract. We wound up with terrific turnout at our membership meetings reviewing the agreement and lots of positive comments on the deal our negotiating committee worked out.”

In addition to wage increases, the contract included a jump in longevity payments and the opportunity for employees to apply unused sick time toward health insurance premiums when they retire.

The Ulster County Board of Legislators is expected to vote on the contract in early June.

— Jessica Ladlee

Read a detailed analysis of the fight at www.csealocal1000.org.

**Onondaga County workers demand respect**

SYRACUSE — CSEA members in Onondaga County are taking on the county executive, charging that she is showing a lack of leadership and respect in not moving their contract talks forward.

CSEA’s Onondaga County Local represents 3,351 Onondaga County workers whose contract expired in January. Local leaders say County Executive Joanie Mahoney has failed to deliver on assurances that she would address county workers’ concerns and deliver them a fair and timely contract.

“Mahoney retained county Employee Relations Director Peter Troiano as the county’s chief negotiator, a decision that frustrated the CSEA leadership. “We’ve been repeatedly unable to make progress with Mr. Troiano as their negotiator, and we were hoping that would have changed with the new administration. Unfortunately, that hasn’t happened,” Graham said.

— Mark M. Kotzin

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Sprucing up for summertime

DARIEN — Thanks to the efforts of CSEA members, New York’s state parks are ready for summer fun. CSEA-represented park workers across the state are preparing their facilities for what many are expecting will be a very busy summer season.

In the Genesee Parks Local in CSEA’s Western Region, 70 permanent employees and about 240 seasonal workers have been focusing on preparations such as mowing lawns, clearing out downed trees, and getting campsites ready for visitors. More campers than usual are expected this summer.

“Camping in a state park is a great value,” said CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi. “Our CSEA members will be there to ensure visitors have a memorable time during their summer vacation.”

Camping reservations up

Camping reservations are up at Darien Lakes and other state parks in the region, said Genesee Parks Local President Tom Cervone. He speculates higher gasoline prices and other increased costs are fueling camping as an ideal vacation.

“We filled up for Memorial Day very early,” he said. “We’re thinking with the gas prices (higher) all over the state, it is going to be a busy summer for camping.”

And residents aren’t waiting for summer; people are already making their way to the park. On a chilly recent morning, several campers backed their vehicles onto their sites and began to settle in.

“So many retirees are camping now; it’s not just the weekends we’re busy,” Cervone said. “We also fill up anytime there is a concert at the nearby amusement park.”

“I try to talk to all the campers while they are here. It is surprising how many have just started camping and have purchased a camper for the first time.”

Early preparation

Darien Lakes State Park has 150 camp sites — all with electricity — on its 240 developed acres. Another 1,560 acres remain “wild” and support hiking, snowmobiling and hunting.

Parks crews spent time in the undeveloped acreage removing dangerous tree limbs and grooming hiking trails. Developed areas are manicured regularly.

“We start mowing as soon as we can mow,” Cervone said. “Every picnic table has to be moved. We also cleaned all the grills, pressure-washed the pavilion floors and put fresh mulch in the playground area to cushion it for the kids. There are just two people to clean six restroom and shower buildings.”

Animal control can also be part of a park’s upkeep. Workers at Darien Lakes strategically installed split rail fencing and chicken wire around the park’s lake in an attempt to keep Canada geese at bay. The birds have taken up residence in many parts of Western New York, soiling parkland and creating a general nuisance.

“With the chicken wire, we try to keep the geese off the lawn,” Cervone said. “If they can’t walk up on the grass to graze, they will leave.”

In addition to Darien Lakes in Genesee County, the Genesee Parks Local includes the 17-mile long Letchworth State Park in Wyoming and Livingston counties; Hamlin Beach in Monroe County and Lakeside Beach in Orleans County.

Want more information about state parks in your region? Visit the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation website at http://nysparks.state.ny.us for recreation opportunities near you.

— Lynn Miller
MATTITUCK — CSEA is turning up the heat on the Mattituck-Cutchogue School District Board of Education in an effort to spur stalled contract negotiations that have dragged on for almost three years.

The union is spearheading a campaign to raise public awareness of the protracted negotiations, which has increased tensions between CSEA and district officials.

“The school board has not negotiated with us in good faith,” said Mattituck-Cutchogue School District Unit Vice President Nancy Morrow. “We won’t stand by silently as the school board makes a mockery of our existing contract and thumbs its nose at the collective bargaining process.”

Mattituck-Cutchogue School District Unit President Sam Strickland, Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte and Mattituck-Cutchogue School Unit Vice President Nancy Morrow demonstrate for a fair contract.

CSEA recently co-sponsored the League of Women Voters of New York State’s annual Students Inside Albany conference.

The union is a longtime sponsor of Students Inside Albany, a program designed to increase high school students’ awareness of their civic responsibility of participating in government. The three-day conference brings students from across the state to Albany to visit the state Capitol, meet their legislative representatives and get a first-hand education about the workings of state government.

CSEA representatives also participated in the conference by presenting a program about the legislative process.

Before attending the conference, many of the students participated in pilot programs through LeaderSpark, a league leadership development program designed to inform and involve young people in their governmental activities.

CSEA is a strong supporter of LeaderSpark, which is an outgrowth of the union’s involvement with the Students Inside Albany program.

This year’s Students Inside Albany conference marks the first year in which LeaderSpark has been incorporated. LeaderSpark teaches students various leadership skills including qualities and styles of leadership, working with groups, planning projects, dealing with conflict, and public speaking and interviewing skills.

LeaderSpark volunteers are always needed across the state, and CSEA members are urged to participate.

To volunteer or for more information on the Students Inside Albany or the LeaderSpark programs, contact Stephanie Lopez, program coordinator, at the League of Women Voters of New York State office: 518-465-4162 or via e-mail at stephanie@lwvny.org.
Leading the way to worker safety

"Occupational safety and health continues to be one of the most important areas of concern for CSEA members and our union as a whole. This year’s program provided valuable and practical information and workshops, empowering our members to help make their work sites safer and healthier," CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

Union activists are working to bring greater vigilance for safety and health in the workplace, improve upon existing occupational safety and health strategies and learn about new regulations, methods and procedures. The conference also featured an April 25 Workers Memorial Day ceremony that honored CSEA members who have died on the job over the past two years (see Page 11).

At right, CSEA occupational safety and health activist Donald Mulder Jr. of Brooklyn DDSO makes a point during a conference workshop on union strategies to address workplace violence. At right is workshop presenter Jonathon Rones.

CSEA occupational safety and health activist Donald Anthony Brown and Stacey Pettigrew take part in the collage workshop, giving union members skills to create safety and health posters for their workplaces. More than 150 union members attended the workshop.

From left, CSEA Standing Committee on Occupational Safety and Health members Frank Cosentino, George Walsh, Paul Blujis, and Jeannette Engle stand as Anthony DeCaro reads the name of a CSEA member who died on the job in the last two years at a memorial ceremony during the Occupational Safety and Health Conference. Committee member Karen Pecora and committee Chair Jim McHugh also took part in the ceremony.

CSEA mourns nine members who have died on the job during the past two years:

- Dean Norris, a CSEA-represented Orange County Department of Public Works employee, died June 10, 2006, after being struck by a vehicle while flagging traffic away from a county road crew working to improve sight lines of the road.
- Robert L. Rutt, 56, a Wyoming County Department of Public Works employee, died Dec. 12, 2006, after a forklift he was picking up from a job site slid from a flatbed truck and struck him.
- Michael Loe, 45, a CSEA-represented Monroe County Department of Public Works employee, died Feb. 4, 2007, after losing his footing and falling into the Mohawk River at Lock 9 of the Erie Canal in Rotterdam.
- Ryan Thomas Brady, 31, an Allegany State Park employee and CSEA activist, died Dec. 16, 2006, when the truck he was driving while on a work assignment struck a tree in a remote section of the park.
- Michael J. Russo, 47, a Medina Department of Public Works employee and CSEA activist, died Jan. 31, 2007, after falling out of a bucket lift while trimming a tree.
- John Holliman, 54, a Town of Hempstead sanitation worker, died Feb. 14, 2007, from a heart attack while loading salt into a truck.
- Henry Williams, 63, a laborer at the SUNY College of Technology at Farmingdale, died June 19, 2007, while operating a tractor on the campus in Frewsburg. The Chautauqua County Workers Memorial Committee hosts the annual event, led by CSEA retirees James Kurtz, CSEA’s OSH mascot, flies in to save the day in the skit’s collective bargaining session. At left, CSEA’s OSH mascot, the Canary, flies in to save the day in the skit’s collective bargaining session. At left, CSEA’s OSH mascot, the Canary, flies in to save the day in the skit’s collective bargaining session. At left, CSEA’s OSH mascot, the Canary, flies in to save the day in the skit’s collective bargaining session. At left, CSEA’s OSH mascot, the Canary, flies in to save the day in the skit’s collective bargaining session.
Ergonomic Product Guide is here!

A new safety and health web resource developed by the New York State & CSEA Statewide Safety and Health Committee, titled Ergonomic Product Guide, is available on the web.

The guide can help CSEA employees, CSEA leaders and state agency managers learn about:

- The basics of ergonomics in the work environment and how to reduce work-related injuries.
- How to address risk factors through the selection and use of equipment that may eliminate or minimize injury for employees in food service, groundskeeping/maintenance, laundry/housekeeping, and mail and supply/shipping and receiving positions.
- Examples of ergonomic products available that can help reduce the chances of developing work-related injuries, such as carpal tunnel syndrome, back injuries, and tendonitis.

The web guide was prepared through the collaboration of CSEA, the New York state Governor’s Office of Employee Relations, and the NYS & CSEA Partnership for Education and Training.

To download your copy, go to the safety and health pages of the Partnership’s website at www.nyscseapartnership.org.

For more information about ergonomics and the Ergonomic Product Guide, call the Partnership at (518) 486-7814 or for areas outside the Capital Region call (800) 253-4332, or e-mail safety@nyscseapartnership.org.

AFSCME announces Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship Program

AFSCME recently announced the 2008 Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship Program for children of AFSCME/CSEA members.

This scholarship was established in 1990 in honor of Jerry Clark, who was deeply committed to progressive social and economic ideals and who served for many years as AFSCME’s political action director. This year, some changes have been made in the terms and criteria for the scholarship, as noted below.

The scholarship will be awarded to two students who are currently sophomores majoring in the social sciences. The winners will each receive $5,000 per year for their junior and senior years of study, as well as an opportunity to intern with the International Union’s Political Action Department.

A selection committee at the International Union will choose winners based on the following criteria:

- The student must be a child or financially dependent grandchild of an AFSCME/CSEA member.
- The student must have a grade point average of 2.5 or better.
- The student must demonstrate a commitment to social justice and political activism.

Applications are available by writing, e-mailing or downloading, as follows:

Write for an application at the following address:

Jerry Clark Memorial Scholarship, c/o AFSCME Education Department, 1625 L Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036

You can also get an application by e-mail at education@afscme.org, or download an application from AFSCME’s website at www.afscme.org.

Completed applications for the 2008 scholarship must be postmarked no later than July 1, 2008. The winner will be announced by Aug. 1, 2008.

Westchester County Local awards scholarships to members’ children

WHITE PLAINS — The Westchester County Local has awarded 13 scholarships to children of local members.

The local awarded 12, $1,000 scholarships to:

- Shani Cassells, whose mother, Melonie Cassells, belongs to the Westchester Medical Center Unit;
- Domenic Facciola, whose mother, Marie Facciola, belongs to the Byram Hills School District Unit;
- Desiree Gordon, whose mother, Winsome Gordon, belongs to the Town of Greenburgh Unit;
- Chris Kaduthanam, whose father, Baby Kaduthanam, belongs to the Westchester County Unit;
- Arielle Lhotan, whose parents, Robert Lhotan and Suzanne Schatzle, belong to the Westchester County Unit;
- Gregory Moy, whose mother, Janet Moy, belongs to the Pleasantville School District Unit;
- Kristine Olli, whose mother, Deann Olli, belongs to the Westchester County Unit;
- Jenny Prakash, whose parents, Koshy and Leelamma Prakash, belong to the Westchester County Unit;
- Michael Ryan, whose mother, Giselle Ryan, belongs to the Lakeland School District Unit and father, Donald Ryan, belongs to the Westchester County Unit;
- Andrew Sacchi, whose mother, Patricia Sacchi, belongs to the Village of Ossining Unit;
- Poja Thaker, whose parents, Hitesh and Darshana Thaker, belong to the Westchester Medical Center Unit; and
- John Zade, whose mother, Forogh Shabak, belongs to the Westchester Medical Center Unit.

The Grace Ann Aloisi Scholarship, a $1,000, four-year renewable scholarship, was awarded to Taylor Reno, whose mother, Tina Reno, belongs to the Town of North Castle Unit.
CSEA-represented emergency responders save infant’s life

LEWIS — The coordinated response by CSEA-represented state and county workers in Essex County is credited with saving the life of a 3-month-old baby.

On April 15, daycare provider Jean Brown discovered during a routine check that Nicholas Thompson was not breathing. Brown’s mother, Vera Collins, placed a 911 call that was received at the Essex County Public Safety Building.

State Police Communications Specialist and CSEA member Lee Torrance dispatched the call and heard the terrifying words, “We have a baby that’s not breathing.”

Torrance quickly turned to an emergency medical dispatch card and began giving instructions on performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on Nicholas. Torrance spoke with Collins, who then repeated instructions to Brown, who was performing the CPR.

Meanwhile, Essex County 911 dispatcher Max Thwaits alerted the Elizabeth-Lewis Ambulance Squad and the Essex County Sheriff’s Department.

Sheriff’s Deputy and CSEA member Robert Rice heard the call and raced to the house. When he arrived, the infant was still unresponsive. Rice flipped him over and slapped his back a few times. The child started breathing.

“It was pretty shallow,” Rice said. “My biggest concern was what would happen if he stopped breathing again.”

The ambulance arrived soon after and rushed Nicholas to the hospital, and he has since made a full recovery. Tests gave no indication why he might have stopped breathing.

On May 5, the Essex County Board of Supervisors recognized the efforts of Torrance, Rice and Brown. Nicholas’ parents were also on hand to thank them.

“It felt good to see him, healthy and well,” said Torrance.

Legislators praised Torrance and Rice for the calm and professional manner they carried out their duties.

But for Torrance, that’s part of the job.

“An emergency to someone is an emergency, regardless,” he said. “You don’t handle the calls any differently. Everyone gets the same professional treatment.”

— Therese Assalian

Committee’s DVD gifts brightens hospital stays

HAVERSTRAW — Giving back to the community is what keeps members of the Rockland County Local Women’s Committee busy.

This year, committee members raised money to buy three portable Sony DVD players, which they recently donated to the spinal cord injury unit at Helen Hayes Hospital in Haverstraw.

Patients from throughout the Northeast who have spinal cord injuries get quality care at Helen Hayes, a state run hospital that employs hundreds of CSEA members.

Hospital workers will be able to loan the DVD players to patients so they will be able to watch a DVD of his or her choice. The committee also donated a Blockbuster gift card, so patients will have access to recently released films.

The Women’s Committee is chaired by Rockland County Unit members Joan Williams and Vi Martinez. New Rockland County Local President Fritz Ernest joined the committee for the donation.

— Jessica Ladlee

Right, Rockland County Local Women’s Committee members and Rockland County Local President Fritz Ernest at Helen Hayes Hospital in Haverstraw with one of the three portable DVD players they donated.
In 1918, CSEA’s first President, William Thomas, was appointed to serve on a newly formed Commission on Pensions. The commission’s report two years later led to the establishment of the New York State Retirement System, which continues to serve CSEA members to this day, ensuring retirement security. It was the association’s most significant early success.

Over the decades, CSEA has worked hard to protect the integrity and stability of the New York State Retirement system to be sure it will continue to provide the benefit. The union has sought to improve the system by legislation, through lawsuits and in the court of public opinion.

At a time when many private sector workers are seeing their pension rights diminished and even losing their promised benefits, the New York State Retirement System is one of the most important benefits that CSEA public employee members have available. It is consistently one of CSEA’s top priorities to guard the system from attack.

William Thomas, a native of Ogdensburg, served as the association’s president from its founding in 1910 until 1918. He was a stenographer in the Attorney General’s office.

Also in 1918 …

- World War I ends when the Allied powers, including the United States, sign an armistice with Germany on Nov. 11.
- After the Russian czar and his family are killed by revolutionaries, a civil war erupts in Russia, leading to the rise of Communism.
- An outbreak of Spanish influenza kills nearly 20 million people worldwide, including 500,000 in the United States.
- Daylight Savings Time goes into effect.
- A New York subway accident kills 92 people and injures 100 others after a train jumps a track in Brooklyn at 30 mph, which was then five times the speed limit.
- Pulitzer Prizes in fiction, drama and poetry debut.
- The Boston Red Sox defeat the Chicago Cubs in the World Series. The Red Sox would not win another championship for 86 years.
CSEA sponsors coalition’s “Full Circle” conference

LATHAM — CSEA recently co-sponsored the statewide “Full Circle for Economic Justice” conference held by the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State.

The two-day conference, which drew attendees from CSEA and other coalition supporters, focused on issues including health care, fair trade, organizing workers, political action and justice for farm and domestic workers.

Conference speakers included Patricia Smith, commissioner of the State Department of Labor; Marilyn Clement, national coordinator of Healthcare-NOW and Bishop Howard Hubbard of the Albany

Summary of April Board of Directors meeting

ALBANY — CSEA’s statewide board of directors met April 17. In official business, the board:

• Designated Rochester as the site for the 2009 Spring Workshop which will be held June 12 to 14;
• Appointed John Shepherd, Lester Crockett, Jack McPhillips and Bob Timpano to the CSEA Political Action Fund;
• Elected Michael Febraio, Jack Rohl, Thomas Moynan, John Shepherd, Abe Benjamin and George Lawson to the Directors’ Committee;
• Selected Mary E. Sullivan, Nick LaMorte and Billy Riccaldo as trustees of the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund;
• Recommended the name of Diane J. Hewitt be inscribed on the CSEA Memorial Plaque;
• Approved a three-year lease agreement for a vehicle to be used by the Local 865 president;
• Designated Dawn Smith, Abe Benjamin, Frank Strack, Jean Ahlert, George Lawson and Ron Gillespie to the Budget Committee;
• Appointed Kathy Button, Lester Crockett, Tom Moynan, Jackie Goldsmith, Deborah Downey, Bob Timpano, Betty Thomas, Mark Dotterweich, John Shepherd and Lynn Wool to the Personnel Committee;
• Elected Rose DeSorbo, Carol Guardiano, Laverne French, Mary Jo Tubbs, Tom Pirozzolo and Debra Raguso to the Charter Committee;
• Assigned Mary D’Antonio, Bill Lebaron, Patty Whiteman, Ron Revers, Brenda Chartrand and Marcia Olszewski to the Publications Committee;
• Named Richard Plumadore, Clarence Russell, Liz Piraino, Ed Russo, Linda Stiefel, Kelly Volpe and Mark Semo to the Committee to Study the Cost of Operating Group Life Insurance;
• Adopted a special election schedule to fill vacancies on the statewide board of directors;
• Retained the services of Pricewaterhouse Coopers to audit the union’s 2008 fiscal year;
• Placed into administratorship Albany County Department of General Services Unit 801-6000-05, Nassau County District Attorney’s Office Unit 830-7550-35 and Town of Ontario Unit 8259-9111-00;
• Designated the following region Political Action Committees:
  • Long Island Region — John Shepherd, Barbara Reynolds, Daniel LoMonte, William Walsh, Alex Bard, Mary D’Antonio, Ron Gurrieri, Catherine Custance, Dominic Ciaramella, Gary Kornova, Rutha Bush, Robert Rauff, Harry Ader, Chris Marshall, Paul D’Aleo, Debbie Nappi-Gonzalez, Pete Collins, Gary Steckler, Jerry Laricchiuta, Thomas Dowdney, Kevin Ray, Sr., Albert Smith, Jeff Peress, Robert Arciello;
  • Metropolitan Region — Joe Aravena, Frank Cosentino, Ken Crosson, Patricia Metzger, Mary Harmon, Lester Crockett, Vinny Martusciello, Charles Perry, Barbara Rustin, Jacqueline Stanford, Alva Heron, Abraham Benjamin, Linda Williams, Douglas Murphy, Frank Cook, Linda Williams, Crispin Booker, Francis Baxter, Neil Kirby, Reginald Taylor, Barbara Felder, Mary Ellen Hansley;
  • Capital Region — Scott Allison, Ron Revers, Jeff Zabielski, George McCroy, Gordon Duprey, Joseph McNally, Joseph Kivlen, Joanne De Sarbo, John Genter, Joanne Brannock; and

Wilson Schools Unit members fight for fairness

Right, Wilson School District Aide Lisa Shaffer and Secretary Lisa Giglioti send their message to passing motorists during a recent demonstration at Wilson Middle/High School in CSEA’s Western Region. The Wilson Schools Support Staff Unit has declared impasse in contract talks with management. CSEA hopes a neutral third-party mediator can help work out issues including health insurance, the disciplinary procedure and the need for fair an equitable treatment of workers throughout the district.
Empire Plan enrollees: a reminder about Centers of Excellence

The Empire Plan
Centers of Excellence are a select group of providers recognized as leaders in specific fields of medicine.

The Empire Plan offers Centers of Excellence for cancer treatment, transplants and infertility. At the plan’s Centers of Excellence, you receive paid-in-full benefits for covered services. No co-payments apply, but you may have out-of-pocket expenses for certain services, like laboratory and pathology tests required by the center and received outside the center.

Remember to ask for an Empire Plan participating provider when you receive services outside a Center of Excellence. When you use a non-participating provider, the basic medical deductible and coinsurance apply.

If the center you use is more than 100 miles from the patient’s home, a travel, lodging and meal expenses benefit is available to the patient and one travel companion. Eligible travel expenses may vary by the program and location and are reimbursed in accordance with federal guidelines.

The Centers of Excellence programs are available only when you enroll and receive prior approval from the Empire Plan. Centers of Excellence benefits for cancer and infertility are available to all Empire Plan enrollees, while the transplants centers’ benefits are available only to Empire Plan primary enrollees. (Empire Plan primary means that the Empire Plan pays first, before another group health insurance plan, including Medicare.)

Remember, to receive the paid-in-full benefits and the travel benefit, you must call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) for approval of these benefits.

Choose United Healthcare for the cancer and infertility programs; choose Empire BlueCross/BlueShield for the transplants program.

Protecting Your Benefits

CSEA Employee Benefit Fund Legal Reimbursement Plan: Are you covered?

Did you know that the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund has a Legal Reimbursement Plan that can be negotiated for members of local government?

Local government bargaining units can negotiate this benefit into their contracts. The plan provides $1,000 per calendar year, per family. Members are free to choose any attorney according to individual needs and type of case.

Many services also cover the spouse and dependents. The plan provides for three categories of service: Regular Benefits, $50 Deductible Benefits and $20 consultation fee matters.

Regular Benefits include general consultations, document review, wills and living trusts, real estate closings and adoptions. Examples of $50 Deductible Benefits include traffic violation representation and debt collection defense.

Consultation fee matters include personal injury and estate settlement matters.

For more information on this benefit, contact EBF at (800) 323-2732, and ask to speak with someone in the Marketing Department, or visit our website at www.cseaebf.com.

This benefit can be coordinated with CSEA’s Legal Services Program Plan. For more information on the Legal Services Program Plan, call (800) 342-4146 and follow the prompts.

CSEA Legal Services Program

CSEA members AND their family members can get quality legal representation at little or no out-of-pocket cost for the following matters:

- Workers’ Compensation;
- Social Security Disability;
- Personal Injury;
- Personal Legal *
- Taking Care of Business/Elder Law Matters *
- Injuries/Illness or Non-Injury Related Matters

*Representation also available at pre-negotiated, discounted rates.

CSEA Legal Services Program

Call 1-800-342-4146

Follow the Prompts for “Injury/Illness or Non-Injury Related Matters”

CSEA
New York’s LEADING Labor Union

Danny Donahue, President
www.cseaebf.com

Promoting Good Health

Visit the Empire Plan’s website at www.empireplan.com to find articles, links to other websites, and a selection of articles written by physicians and other medical professionals affecting your health.

Call 1-800-342-4146 for more information about the Empire Plan.

THE WORK FORCE  June 2008
Uncontested Board of Directors Seats

State Division: Insurance
Annie Dora Campbell, Liquidation Bureau;
J. A. Becker, Broome County;
Rose MacBlane, Elmira Psychiatric Center;

Mental Hygiene Region 5 (two seats)
Lori Nilsson, Central New York DDSO;
Jim Smith, Town of Brook; 

Local Government Division: Onondaga County
Carmen Church, Onondaga County Social Services;

Schuyler County
Sandra Rhodes, Schuyler County Welfare;

Wayne County
Tom Edwards, Wayne County Social Services;

Contested Board of Directors Races

State Division: Universities (one seat)
Debra P. Nappi-Gonzalez, SUNY at Stony Brook;

Local Government Division:

Rockland County (one seat)
Brian G. Spillman, Town of Ramapo;

Office of Children and Family Services
Michael F. Geraghty, Jr., Tryon Limited Secure Center;

Geraghty

The Work Force

Important Notice to Current & Former Insureds Under the CSEA Sponsored Group Disability Income Program Under Group Policy G–11628 Underwritten by New York Life Insurance Co. and Administered by Pearl Carroll and Associates:

The New York Court of Appeals has recently decided that disabilities due to a preexisting condition, as outlined in New York Insurance Law Section 3234, are to be treated as an extended waiting period instead of a permanent bar from benefit payments. As a result of this decision, New York Life and Pearl Carroll and Associates will automatically be undertaking a re-examination of claims denied based upon preexisting conditions since June 27, 2004 under the above Group Disability Policy. All Members who had a claim denied due to a preexisting condition since this date will be notified of the results of their claim review.

If you believe you may have had a disability claim denied by New York Life due to a preexisting condition during the above period, please call Pearl Carroll and Associates Disability Claims Unit at 1-800-697–CSEA (2732).

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 Records Department at 1-800-342-4146, Ext. 1327, of any change in your status and what arrangements you are making to continue your membership in CSEA.
Berkley leading the way to change

Editor's Note: Throughout this year, The Work Force is devoting the Leading Edge to interviews with CSEA's 10 statewide officers and region presidents. This month we feature statewide Secretary Denise Berkley.

Berkley, who has been a CSEA activist and local officer for nearly 30 years, has worked as a developmental aide at the Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Services Office, a facility operated by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Her roles as a volunteer member organizer, assisting with union organizing campaigns, her chairing of the statewide Constitution and Bylaws Committee and her boundless enthusiasm have served her well as she's assumed statewide office.

WF: How did you get involved with CSEA?
Berkley: I got involved in 1979; I was anti-union. I didn't believe in the union because I didn't like the representation. I was upset about something with management and I decided to run for building rep and I won.

WF: Why were you anti-union?
Berkley: I didn't have a history. I was like most young people; you don't learn about unions in school. I was a young worker coming into work to get a paycheck. I didn't know about the union and I dismissed it because I had no knowledge about it.

WF: How did your perspective change about the union?
Berkley: It changed quickly and that anti-union attitude went away completely. I started learning how the union was structured and I learned the local constitution right away. I started learning how to be an advocate and how to challenge management.

WF: What were some of the challenges you faced as a new union rep?
Berkley: The challenge was trying to convince members to get involved; they had the same attitude I previously had that the union just wants to take your money. I had to learn how to approach members on a one-on-one basis and convince them that we needed them — we all are the union. I also had to learn how to speak with management, letting them know that we were angry, but not so angry that we couldn't get things accomplished. I had to learn how to walk that fine line.

WF: What do you say to young people to encourage them?
Berkley: We have to tell them we need them to bring in new visions and ideas to the union movement. We need them because they are the future. We cannot do business as usual. The approach that I've found to work well is the one-to-one, sitting down and listening and making sure that they know that you want them there, that they feel welcome. You also have to approach them with things they like. With some, we used a youth basketball team; with others we used social events. We had to approach them with things they loved to do. That's how we opened the door to bring them into the union.

WF: What would you say to young people to know about you?
Berkley: Two things I love a lot. I love spirituality; I believe union work is spiritual work. And I also love dancing.

WF: You are the first person of color to hold one of CSEA's four statewide offices. How does that make you feel and what do you want to do with that responsibility?
Berkley: It's a wonderful, humbling experience and I thank God. I think of some of my predecessors; Jimmy Gripper who was the first African American region president; people who mentored and taught me along the way and I feel like I am standing on their shoulders. It is because of them that I'm here. I hope it says to other African Americans, Latinos and Asian members that statewide office is attainable. I can reach and be a major player in CSEA. That belief was my motivation and I hope it will motivate others to come into the organization and do more.

WF: You also have done a lot of work as a volunteer member organizer supporting the union's organizing drives for new workers. What have you gained from that experience?
Berkley: It's been a wonderful experience. When I listen to some of those workers, working in the same field (developmental disabilities) as me but without union protection, it really hits you, the conditions; the things they have to deal with. As union members with CSEA, we don't know how blessed we are. I always said that I wished I could videotape all the conversations so that I could show it to members to see what we have and what they didn't have.

I remember that in one agency they talked about young ladies having to do lap dances to get a raise. I almost jumped out of my seat. To hear about how workers were putting in ridiculous hours and not even getting overtime, workers on the night shift being monitored hourly by a supervisor by phone, these are unheard of things for CSEA. Just hearing that makes you understand why we need unions.

WF: What would you like the rank and file members to know about you?
Berkley: Two things I love a lot. I love spirituality; I believe union work is spiritual work. And I also love dancing.
June CSEA calendar of events

Statewide:
- June 6-8: CSEA Spring Workshop, Niagara Falls
- June 6-8: CSEA's Metropolitan Region page at CSEA's website at www.csealocal1000.org.

Long Island Region:
- June 4-5: Defensive Driving, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m., CSEA Long Island Region Office, Commack
- June 4-5: Local Government/Private Sector Grievance Training, Registration: 5:30 - 6 p.m.; Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., Bureau of Public Safety, Troy
- June 4: Member Information Day, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Empire State Plaza
- June 7: Defensive Driving, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., CSEA Capital Region Office, Latham. Call 1-800-942-6894 to register.
- June 24 & 26: Defensive Driving, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m., CSEA Capital Region Office, Latham. Call 1-800-942-6894 to register.

Central Region:
- June 11-12: Local Government Discipline and Interrogation Workshop, Registration: 5:30 - 6 p.m.; Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., CSEA Binghamton Satellite Office, Binghamton
- June 17-18: Local Government Discipline and Interrogation: Representing Members In Interrogations Training, Registration: 5:30 - 6 p.m.; Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., Herkimer Community College, Herkimer
- June 17: Defensive Driving, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Holiday Inn Oneonta, Oneonta
- June 19-20: Contract Negotiations I: Maximizing our Leverage Workshop, Registration: 5:30 - 6 p.m.; Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., Wayne County Local Office, Lyons
- June 28: Defensive Driving, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., CSEA Western Region Office, Amherst.

Metropolitan Region:
- Check for upcoming events at the Metropolitan Region page at CSEA's website at www.csealocal1000.org.

Southern Region:
- June 4-5: Defensive Driving, 6 p.m. - 9 p.m., CSEA Rockland County Local Office, New City. Call 1-800-942-6894 to register.
- June 7: Defensive Driving, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., CSEA Rockland County Local Office, New City. Call 1-800-942-6894 to register.
- June 16-17-18: Defensive Driving, 6 - 9 p.m., Westchester County Local Office, White Plains.
- June 16 & 18: Defensive Driving, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m., CSEA Rochester Satellite Office, Rochester. Call (585) 272-0800 to register.
- June 11-12: Local Government Discipline and Interrogation: Representing Members In Interrogations Workshop, Registration: 8:30 a.m. - 9 a.m.; Workshop: 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Newburgh City School District Unit Office, Newburgh
- June 28: Defensive Driving, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., CSEA Western Region Office, Amherst.

Western Region:
- June 7: Defensive Driving, 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., CSEA Rochester Satellite Office, Rochester. Call (585) 272-0800 to register.
- June 18-19: Defensive Driving, 6 - 9 p.m., CSEA Rochester Satellite Office, Rochester. Call (585) 272-0800 to register.
- June 24-25: Contract Negotiations I: Maximizing our Leverage Workshop, Registration: 5:30 - 6 p.m.; Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., Wayne County Local Office, Lyons
- June 28: Defensive Driving, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., CSEA Western Region Office, Amherst.

For more information on the listed events or to participate, contact your region office (phone numbers are listed on Page 4) or visit your region page at CSEA's website at www.csealocal1000.org. Please note that additional events may be scheduled in your region, so check your region calendar page on the website.
Retiree Health Care Comparison
A CSEA member vs. a wealthy executive

Mary is a retired public employee. She was a member at DMV and retired in 2000.

Pension: $12,000
Health Insurance Cost: $207 a month or $2,496 a year.

Edmund is a retired corporate executive. His company was in the Business Council, and he retired early in 2000, with a generous buyout.

Average Executive Pension: $15 million
Health insurance cost: $0

Who’s kidding who?
Business Opposition is Outrageous!
Pass Retiree Health Insurance Protection

Call you state legislator at 1-877-255-9417. Tell them to pass S.6547-a (Farley) / A.9393-a (Abbate)

It’s about keeping promises.

CSEA-backed retiree health insurance legislation (S.6457a/A.9393a) would prohibit state, county and municipal employers from unilaterally shifting costs to retirees or diminishing benefits for one year while a study is done on how to better address the issue. The New York State Association of Counties and business groups have seriously misrepresented the issue and misled the public. The real issue is keeping promises to retirees who depend on their health coverage.