CSEA reaches tentative state contract agreement, page 2

Fighting back in Local Government

Nassau, Erie County workers fight for jobs. See page 3
CSEA, state reach tentative contract

**Plan balances shared sacrifice with fairness and respect**

ALBANY — CSEA has reached a tentative contract agreement with New York state on a five-year deal to avert impending layoffs of CSEA-represented state employees and keep people working.

The agreement was reached after challenging negotiations with the Cuomo administration that will provide long-term benefits to the 66,000 CSEA-represented state Executive Branch employees and New York taxpayers.

“I applaud CSEA’s leadership for their hard work to reach this deal, which is a win-win for CSEA members and the state of New York,” said Gov. Andrew Cuomo. “I commend the union and its leadership for making a significant contribution to help get the state’s fiscal house in order and making the shared sacrifices these difficult times require. Working together, we will turn this state around and get our economy moving once again.”

“These are not ordinary times and CSEA and the Cuomo administration have worked very hard at the bargaining table to produce an agreement that balances shared sacrifice with fairness and respect,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

“CSEA stepped up to help produce the labor savings that Governor Cuomo sought while the governor responded to CSEA’s concerns about job security along with a wage and benefit package that recognizes the pressures on working people,” Donohue said.

“CSEA believes our members and all fair-minded New Yorkers will see this agreement as a responsible labor-management approach to facing the challenges in front of our state,” Donohue said.

The agreement includes provisions to keep CSEA-represented state employees on-the-job delivering essential services to New Yorkers. It will rescind imminent plans to issue layoff notices to CSEA-represented employees included in the 9,800 reductions previously announced by the Cuomo administration. It also provides other job security assurances for the life of the contract.

The agreement would also maintain all side letter labor-management agreements currently in place between CSEA and New York state and establishes a committee to address the state’s use of temporary service employees, consultants and contractors to determine how state employees can be better utilized to fill this role.

The tentative agreement has been approved by the state legislature contingent on ratification by CSEA rank and file members. CSEA will be conducting informational meetings in every region and providing full details of the agreement to all members before to the ratification vote, which will be conducted by mail. Ballots will be mailed July 22 and are due back Aug. 12. They will be counted Aug. 15.

The CSEA negotiating team is composed of 23 CSEA state employees selected to represent their co-workers.

**Contract highlights**

**Wages:**
- No across the board salary increase in Fiscal Year 2011 and 2012;
- $1,000 (not added to base pay) starting April 1, 2013; ($775 lump sum payable April 1, 2013 / $225 lump sum payable April 1, 2014)
- 2 percent across the board increase payable April 1, 2014;
- 2 percent across the board increase payable April 1, 2015;
- No changes in payments of step increments;
- No changes in Longevity payments.

**Furloughs**
- Five unpaid days off in Fiscal Year 2011; (The value of the five days will be spread over the remaining pay periods equally.)
- Four unpaid days off in Fiscal Year 2012. (The value of the four days will be spread equally over pay periods in the fiscal year – employees will be reimbursed for the value of these days starting in year five of the contract.)

**Health Benefits**
- Grade 9 employees and below – 2 percent increase in premium; (Individuals - 10 percent increasing to 12 percent and family coverage – 25 percent increasing to 27 percent of premium cost.)
- Grade 10 employees and above – 6 percent increase in premium; (Individuals - 10 percent increasing to 16 percent and family coverage – 25 percent increasing to 31 percent of premium cost.)
- Various incremental changes in coverage provisions, co-payments and prescription drug benefits;
- No change in ability to use sick leave credits to help defray the cost of health insurance premiums in retirement.
Situations will be worse with new tax cap

Local government workers fight back

Editor’s note: Across the state, CSEA members working in local government are facing job losses and difficult contract negotiations as communities struggle with loss of revenue from a weak economy.

The situation will get worse as New York’s new tax cap takes effect, limiting the ability of counties, cities, towns, villages and schools to manage their budgets. Here are two examples of the types of fights CSEA is facing in local government.

Nassau County Local to sue over layoffs

CSEA will challenge Nassau County over 128 layoffs, with the union contending that the county plans to replace the public employees with private contractors.

At the June 28 special meeting of the Nassau County Legislature, legislators voted 10-9 to lay off CSEA members working for Nassau County.

Ironically, the Nassau County comptroller released a report a day later indicating the county has a $26 million surplus, a fact that seems lost on the county executive.

Hundreds of CSEA members, friends and families packed the chamber to dispute the layoff proposal brought forward by County Executive Ed Mangano.

More than five hours of public comment was given by dozens of members who feared losing their jobs, as well as their co-workers and family members.

CSEA has frequently met with Mangano over the past several months to find ways to mitigate these potential layoffs. “It appeared at the end of the day, that there was nothing that we could do to make him rescind his layoff plan,” Nassau County Local President Jerry Laricchiuta said. “The presence of the Nassau Interim Finance Authority overseeing county finances, and the wage freeze for county employees is an additional X factor that hamstrings us when it comes to concessions.”

After the mass layoffs of 1992, CSEA won more than three dozen lawsuits, accounting for close to $3.5 million lost in wages. CSEA contends that could happen again this time around.

“We intend to take action immediately as we believe there are several areas where private contractors are being used to replace our members in violation of our contract,” Laricchiuta said.

Information on use of private contractors, specifically in Information Technology and Assessment, was provided to legislators and was presented on the record on June 28.

Mangano announced the layoffs by holding a news conference on June 13.

Erie County Unit facing 300 layoffs

CSEA’s Erie County Unit is once again dealing with layoff games from Erie County’s executive.

County Executive Chris Collins announced plans in June to cut 300 jobs from the county budget next year. He refused, however, to elaborate on the plan, bringing down the very workers who provide essential services to residents every day.

“People are really upset,” said CSEA Erie County Local and Unit President Joan Bender.

“Everyone is already doing more with less and morale is really low. Now he is leaving people wondering if they are going to be one of the people being cut at the end of the year. How do you work for six months not knowing?”

No clear reason for cuts

Under Collins’ misguided plan, about 100 people would be laid off and the remaining 200 cuts would be through attrition or “efficiencies.” He plans the cuts even though county finances are strong, sales tax revenue has rebounded and the county will end the year with a multi-million dollar surplus.

Throughout his four years in office, Collins has attempted to dismantle the county work force. He has also severely reduced funding to libraries and cultural organizations, negatively affecting services and quality of life in the region.

The county executive is up for election this November. CSEA has officially endorsed Mark Poloncarz, Collins’ opponent, in the race.

“We need a county executive we can talk to and communicate with and Mark Poloncarz will do that,” Bender said. “Chris Collins does not believe he needs to communicate with us. He believes talking with the union is beneath him.”

— Lynn Miller
Gov. Andrew Cuomo has enjoyed success in advancing his agenda during his first six months in office, including bargaining in good faith with CSEA to reach a tentative state contract agreement.

CSEA has been very clear since before the governor took office that we will work cooperatively when we agree on the issue, but we will make our case strongly and publicly when we disagree. There is obvious evidence of that in recent months.

A major area where we disagree with the governor is the property tax cap approved by the legislature in the closing hours of the legislative session. New Yorkers want property tax relief, not a tax cap, which will simply make it harder for schools and local governments to manage their budgets. The cap will tie the hands of public officials rather than providing greater flexibility.

It’s hard to believe that many local government and schools officials actually sought a measure that will give them less ability to deal with their budget challenges than they have now!

CSEA does not believe the tax cap will lead to lower taxes. We do believe it will lead to loss of services and potentially layoffs, which will not be good for people or local economies.

Something else to think about: the tax cap requires a super-majority 60 percent vote (of taxpayers or the governing body) to override it. That’s simply undemocratic, putting the will of the majority at the mercy of a much smaller group.

Get ready for some difficult fights in the months ahead as local government budgets, especially, present some impossible choices and the reality of the property tax cap hits home.
OLEAN — Sheri Ambuske is proving that social media can be one of the best resources to build unionism and participation in the PEOPLE program.

The account clerk typist for the Department of Community Services and Mental Health in Olean, has already recruited 22 members using social media tools like texting, Twitter and Facebook.

While researching her local as part of a project for the LEAD program, Ambuske discovered astonishingly low participation rates in the PEOPLE program. She worked with statewide PEOPLE coordinator Cheryl Palmer to map out a plan to recruit more members.

They settled on four locations in the mostly rural area and when they arrived Ambuske would email and text workers to let them know where they were. In that time, Ambuske helped recruit 22 new PEOPLE members.

“They would stop by and we would stress the importance of the Triborough Amendment and our pensions and FMLA,” said Ambuske.

“Our contract is up in 2012 and we have excellent benefits,” Ambuske said. “Should (the state) try to eliminate Triborough, we could lose many of our benefits and we would have to start all over again.”

Ambuske is convinced that social media is the new way of contacting people.

“Just doing the one message and having the text coming from someone they know, that made it possible,” she said. “It boils down to the mass numbers that you can contact on a dime and everybody is getting the same exact information.”

Ambuske is aiming to recruit hundreds more members.

“I think that people need to understand that we are not just about things that are happening today and things that are happening tomorrow, we need to be concerned about next month and next year,” said Ambuske.

“It’s about holding onto the things we have because once they are gone, they are gone,” said Ambuske. “What kind of working conditions do you want them to have? What kind of benefits do you want them to have?”

With the ability to reach mass audiences with social media, Ambuske said workers can turn back the negative tide from the media and politicians.

“We always try to copy and paste important issues and concerns on our Facebook page instantly,” said Ambuske. “We can also dispel myths about unions and our pensions.”

As a mother of two young children, she is also aware of the limitations some younger members have when it comes to personal matters.

“Many of us have young kids, so it may not be possible to attend evening meetings or participate in other events at times,” said Ambuske. “If we’re needed at certain events or activities, we need to have the means to make it happen.”

— David Galarza
RIVERHEAD — Animal Control Officer Lou Coronesi and Kennel Attendant Victoria Kane provide compassionate care to animals of all kinds at the Riverhead Animal Shelter.

But these Suffolk Municipal Employees Local members are the only public employees working at the shelter, as the town increasingly relies on part-time “volunteers” to handle daily functions in an apparent move toward privatization.

Unfair attacks
“Volunteers” from the RSVP Animal Rescue Group take every opportunity to demean Coronesi and Kane personally and detract attention from their good work at the shelter in pursuit of their goal, which seems to be full operational control of the facility.

Group leaders have regularly petitioned town officials at board meetings resulting in two efforts to solicit private ownership that curiously drew interest only from RSVP. There have also been efforts to follow Coronesi while on the job to detail any perceived mistake and to stake out his home to keep an eye on his activities after working hours.

But even Town Councilman James Wooten, an RSVP supporter, doubts they are up to the task of running the shelter. “I’m not sure they are organized enough to take this on,” he told a local newspaper. “And there has been so much contentiousness in the past that I don’t know if they can have a good working relationship with the town.”

Dedicated to care
Numerous and erroneous charges of animal mistreatment from RSVP have not stopped Coronesi and Kane from doing their jobs with only each other to count on. “We used to have another animal control officer and kennel attendant to help out, but both of those positions were eliminated,” said Kane.

The unfair attacks on Coronesi are particularly disturbing since he has done a great deal to safeguard humans and animals in Riverhead. He has lassoed loose horses and brought them back to their owners and caught up to many dogs and cats so they could be safely returned to their homes.

“Lou and Victoria are good people who deserve to make an honest living without being harassed by an outside interest pursuing their own agenda,” said Long Island Region President Nick LaMorte. “Town officials should know that CSEA will do everything in our power to protect our members and the public interest.”

— Rich Impagliazzo
WHITE PLAINS — Nearly 1,000 hourly and seasonal employees of Westchester County are steps closer to becoming a part of CSEA. The workers, who began organizing to join CSEA over a year ago, will likely be voting in a union representation election in early July. The campaign is called H.O.U.R. Westchester – Hourlies Organized and United for Respect.

The campaign began because Westchester County CSEA leaders saw the need to strengthen the union by organizing these unrepresented employee groups — some seasonal workers working at the county’s parks, pools, golf courses and an amusement park, some year-round employees who work on an hourly basis with no benefits.

“We saw the need to protect our work and strengthen our union by bringing together all Westchester County workers,” said CSEA Westchester County Unit President Karen Pecora.

Exceptional support
Seventy-five CSEA volunteer member organizers (VMOs) from the Westchester County Unit have joined Southern Region President Billy Riccaldo, Westchester Local President John Staino and Pecora in the campaign.

Recently, the CSEA Westchester County Unit again offered support to the seasonal and hourly workers by making them a part of the unit’s Playland Day in Rye. As CSEA members enjoyed a day at the amusement park, which is staffed by CSEA members, members and workers showed solidarity by wearing rubber bracelets with “H.O.U.R Westchester” printed on them and much of the day was spent hard at work talking to Playland workers and signing union cards.

“It has been great to see such great participation and coordination, members really stepping up to join in and grow and strengthen the union,” said Staino.

Just getting the word out to the seasonal and hourly employees has been a challenge.

A younger, more technologically savvy demographic and the seasonal and sometimes transitional nature of these jobs has organizers and workers doing things differently. Traditional face-to-face house calling and work site visits have been coupled with communicating through social and electronic media such as Facebook and text messaging.

Unanticipated delay
Throughout the last few months, the H.O.U.R Westchester campaign is retracing its steps, doing double duty to become part of CSEA. With nearly 60 percent of workers signing authorization cards, the union filed a petition seeking certification from the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) in August 2010.

The county’s failure to produce a proper employee list and other delays at PERB resulted in many of the cards originally signed during the campaign drive last summer becoming invalid. Now, those signed authorizations, many more than a year old, have expired — requiring employees to sign cards all over again, but with a much shorter deadline.

If a sufficient number of employees are able to re-sign in the time allowed, then PERB will certify the new union. If not, then the question of whether to form a union will be decided by a vote of all employees in the bargaining unit.

Barring any more unanticipated delays, the group will be able to complete the process by the beginning of August.

— Jill Asencio
CSEA fights Hudson River Psychiatric Center closure plan, loss of services

POUGHKEEPSIE — Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s shortsighted plan to close Hudson River Psychiatric Center means vulnerable mid-Hudson Valley residents in need of mental health treatment will slip through the cracks, CSEA President Danny Donohue told CSEA, PEF and community members at a recent demonstration.

Donohue, who was joined at the rally by Southern Region President Billy Riccaldo and Hudson River Psychiatric Center Local President Mary Casale and other local officers, said the cuts hurt the availability of mental health services in the area.

“The cuts undermine state mental health services at the same time the budget cuts funds for local government mental health care and private sector programs,” Donohue said.

Distance causes hardship

Rockland Psychiatric Center, which is in Orangeburg — more than one hour away from Poughkeepsie — will absorb some of Hudson River’s services and jobs, but Riccaldo said the distance will hurt patients and workers.

“Transferring residents to a facility over an hour away is a hardship to the residents themselves and the family members whose visits and support are an important part of treatment,” said Riccaldo.

“Contrary to what some people think, our members are not highly paid, so the expense of a long commute may force some members out of a job.”

While CSEA members are concerned about their jobs, they are most concerned about the patients. Sandy Marks, a longtime direct care worker, said news of the closure has been tough for the people in her care.

“The idea of being transferred to Rockland is upsetting many of the residents because it takes them out of their community,” said Riccaldo.

“Instead of giving tax breaks to millionaires, the governor should make sure these beds and this unit remains.”

At the Buffalo Psychiatric Center, one 27-bed living unit is slated for closure, resulting in the potential loss of about 35 jobs, about half of which are filled by CSEA members.

The unit’s closure may also result in people not receiving the care they need.

Without those beds, admissions to the center may be slowed, causing patient backlogs in local hospitals with psychiatric wards, said Buffalo Psychiatric Center local President Sharon Ivey.

Eliminating the beds also reduces a community safety net and increases the likelihood people without insurance will not receive essential, quality care.

— Lynn Miller

Proposed facility cuts jeopardize quality mental health care

ROCHESTER — State budget cuts may result in layoffs for some workers at the Buffalo and Rochester psychiatric centers.

At the Rochester Psychiatric Center, the 13-bed teen psychiatric unit is targeted for closure.

“If the unit closes, families will have to travel to Buffalo or Syracuse or even as far as Binghamton or New York City to visit their child,” said CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi. “Family involvement is critical to treatment. With the added distance, a lot of families might not be able to visit.”

Several parents of young people currently or previously receiving treatment at the center have spoken out against the closure. Families fear the impact the relocation would have on their loved ones.

Even state Office of Mental Health officials have conceded that plan doesn’t make much sense.”

“There are a lot of success stories in this unit, and it has strong ties to the community,” Rochester Psychiatric Center Local President Andre Medlock. “Instead of giving tax breaks to millionaires, the governor should make sure these beds and this unit remains.”

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— Jessica Ladlee
Unanswered questions kill Rockland nursing home deal

POMONA — After months of lobbying by CSEA members, Rockland County legislators put the brakes on a controversial plan to create a public benefit corporation to run Rockland County’s Summit Park Hospital & Nursing Care Center.

Late last year, Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef announced he’d hatched a plan to move the 700-plus workers at the county health complex under a to-be-formed public benefit corporation, estimating the move would allow the county to fill an $18 million deficit.

Vanderhoef’s proposal came despite the fact that Summit Park operates at a profit.

Covering fiscal mismanagement
In recent years, public benefit corporations were created to operate Westchester, Nassau and Erie County’s medical centers. All three facilities have faced serious financial woes since becoming public benefit corporations.

“The county executive thought unloading Summit Park would be a quick and easy way of cleaning up his years of fiscal mismanagement,” said Southern Region President Billy Riccaldo. “His habit of overestimating revenue in the last four county budgets has led the county down a disastrous financial road. It is unacceptable that the county executive thought he could just walk away from the residents and workers at Summit Park.”

Too many questions
State legislators from Rockland County introduced home rule legislation for a public benefit corporation in the Senate and Assembly, but later pulled support after a majority of Rockland County legislators said there were too many unanswered questions for the bill to go to a vote before the end of the legislative session.

“A PBC would not allow the county to guarantee the mission of the nursing home, which is to provide care for all regardless of financial status,” said Rockland County Unit President P.T. Thomas. “History has shown that the other PBCs required county subsidies, so there is no point in losing county control over a facility that has been self-sustaining. The Journal News even pointed this out in their coverage.”

The county approved an $18 million loan to cover the budget shortfall for this year and also approved the hiring of a consultant to study options for Summit Park. CSEA will continue to fight to keep Summit Park county-run.

In addition to housing the county nursing home, Summit Park is also home to the county Department of Mental Health and its inpatient and outpatient mental health services.

— Jessica Ladlee
CSEA members are your family, friends and neighbors

On the job, we’re school bus drivers, highway crews, nurses, librarians, social workers and more.

Whether working for the state, local government or in schools, CSEA members are proud to provide services the public relies on every day.

Off the job, CSEA members are part of our communities.

We’re Little League coaches, PTA members, volunteer firefighters, and more.

We care about our quality of life and making our communities the best they can be.

Above, CSEA members from the Oswego County Local take part in a Relay for Life to benefit the American Cancer Society.

Left, CSEA Erie County Local member Roderick McQuillan, right, signs in to the visiting member log at the union’s booth at the 2010 New York State Fair, as CSEA volunteers Cathy Barretta of the Utica State Employees Local, left, and Patricia Rourke of Hutchings Psychiatric Center Local, center, look on.

At right, Brooklyn Developmental Center Local activist Renee “Liz” Dargan rakes the grounds of the Corning Senior Center in Albany last year during the CSEA Annual Delegates Meeting’s community outreach day.

At top, CSEA members in the Town of Clarence who also serve as volunteer firefighters. They were among the first responders to a catastrophic airline crash two years ago.

Above, Broome Developmental Center Developmental Aide Dave Cohn, who volunteers for the Special Olympics.
Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by the bite of an infected deer tick. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2009, 95 percent of Lyme disease cases were reported from 12 states, including New York. Eastern and southern regions are at the highest risk, though the disease is prevalent throughout the state.

Contracting Lyme disease from a tick bite depends on the type of tick, where you are located, and how long it was attached to you.

Only black-legged ticks such as the deer tick can transmit Lyme disease. Lyme disease bacterium can live in mice, squirrels, and other small mammals and is transferred by ticks.

The longer the tick is attached, the higher the risk. This is why it’s so important to remove ticks promptly (within 24 hours) and to check your body daily if you spend any time outdoors, especially if you work outside.

To minimize risk

- **Avoid wooded** and bushy areas with high grass if possible.
- **Cover up**. If you do need to work in the areas stated above, wear a long-sleeve shirt, long pants and tuck your pants into your socks or boots. Light-colored clothing is also a good idea because it allows you to spot ticks more easily.
- **Use insect repellent** that contains 20 to 30 percent of the chemical DEET has been found to repel ticks.
- **Check yourself** for ticks after you've spent a lot of time outdoors — especially the lower part of your body. This is extremely important since the longer the tick is attached, the higher the risk for contracting Lyme disease.
- **Wash work clothes in hot** water and then a hot dryer to kill any ticks present.
- **Learn the symptoms** of Lyme Disease.

**Preventing Lyme disease**

Deer ticks live in shady, moist areas at ground level. They will cling to tall grass, brush and shrubs less than two feet from the ground. They also live in lawns and gardens, especially at the edges of woods and around old stone walls.

**On the job**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, outdoor workers are at risk of Lyme disease if they work at sites with infected ticks.

- **Work sites** with woods, bushes, high grass, or leaf litter are likely to have more ticks.
- **Outdoor workers** should be extra careful to protect themselves in the late spring and summer when young ticks are most active.
- **It is your employer’s responsibility to provide you with what you need to prevent tick bites, including repellents and an adequate uniform if one is required.**
- **CSEA urges all outdoor workers to check with their supervisor if they have questions about possible exposure to Lyme disease.**

**Removing a tick**

If you do find a tick, remove it as soon as possible. Use fine-tipped tweezers and grab the tick as close to the mouth as possible. Be sure to remove the entire tick, including the head. Place it in a small container of rubbing alcohol to kill it. Call your doctor if you notice any symptoms or if you are unable to remove the tick fully.

**Symptoms**

- If you develop any symptoms within a few weeks of a tick bite, see your doctor right away.

- Common symptoms of Lyme disease include a rash often called a “bullseye” because of the way it presents with red or purple rings, fever, body aches, flu-like symptoms, fatigue, headaches and arthritis-like joint pain.

- Ticks can also transmit other diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever, so it’s important to be alert for any symptoms that follow a tick bite.
CSEA calls for vigorous oversight of OPWDD operations

ALBANY — CSEA Statewide Secretary Denise Berkley recently told state lawmakers the majority of employees who care for people with developmental disabilities have been inaccurately portrayed in a series of New York Times articles alleging systemic abuse in the state developmental disabilities system.

Testifying at a June 13 hearing of the Assembly Standing Committee on Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Berkley, who has more than 30 years of experience in the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities system as a direct care worker, said CSEA represents 18,000 workers who care for nearly 40,000 individuals with developmental disabilities. She said only a tiny fraction of those employees have ever been brought up on disciplinary charges of any nature, let alone client abuse.

“Caring and dedicated”
“On behalf of all the compassionate and caring individuals who care for people with developmental disabilities here in New York, I am here to tell you that we are angry and saddened over the way we’ve been portrayed,” Berkley said. “Most state developmental disabilities employees are some of the most caring and dedicated professionals you will ever meet.”

Berkley told lawmakers it takes a very special individual to work with people with developmental disabilities. She said the jobs are challenging physically and emotionally because many of the people in care have multiple disabilities, medical and behavioral issues and a wide range of special needs.

She said despite the recent reforms to ensure quality care at all times, the agency charged with protecting people with developmental disabilities system as a direct care worker, said CSEA represents 18,000 workers who care for nearly 40,000 individuals with developmental disabilities.

— The Commission on Quality Care and Advocacy
for the Persons with Disabilities. Unfortunately, she said, that agency has been undermined by budget cuts and limited authority in recent years.

“The Commission on Quality of Care should be the agency that investigates and provides oversight on the care that is provided to consumers,” Berkley said. “Given that, it is crucial that the Commission on Quality of Care regain the authority and the funding it once had to do the job thoroughly.”

Berkley told lawmakers that CSEA has a proud history of working in partnership with New York to improve care for people with developmental disabilities and CSEA members remain committed to that goal.

“We all want better care for people with developmental disabilities,” she said. “That starts with recognizing that the system’s greatest assets are those thousands of individual employees who go to work and do the right thing every day.”

Newly installed OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke also testified and told lawmakers that the agency has undertaken a number of recent reforms to ensure quality care at all times.

The commissioner also stayed to listen to testimony from Berkley and many other individuals and representatives from organizations.

— Ed Molitor

CSEA fights for safe patient handling bill

Assemblyman Rory Lancman and state Sen. George Maziarz listen as CSEA Director of Occupational Safety and Health Janet Foley speaks to reporters at a press conference in the state Capitol about the benefits of safe patient handling programs. The Assembly Subcommittee on Workplace Safety recently released a report detailing the success of safe patient handling programs in health care facilities in New York and recommended passage of the Safe Patient Handling Act, sponsored by Lancman and Maziarz in their respective houses. Safe patient handling replaces manual lifting and moving tasks with machines and training to properly lift and move patients safely, without injury to the patient or the handler. The program has helped health care facilities dramatically reduce employee injuries, workers’ compensation costs and turnover rates. The Assembly passed the legislation, but at press time, the Senate had yet to take up the bill.
Take advantage of summer deals in your region

Special CSEA member benefits!
Take advantage of your CSEA membership for discounts to fun summer events and activities in your area and beyond.

There are great discounts for union members and their families.
• Click on “CSEA Regions” at www.csealocal1000.org;
• Choose your CSEA region, and;
• Begin having fun and saving today!

Visit the Member Benefits page at www.csealocal1000.org for even more savings on restaurants, entertainment, vacations, consumer goods and other offerings.
**CSEA couple saves teen’s life**

**WALLKILL** — It’s not uncommon to find longtime CSEA member Kim Kosteczko working in her garden on a summer afternoon. She has such a passion for the hobby that she spends her summers running a small nursery.

But Kim thinks it’s no accident that she and her husband Frank, a CSEA Wallkill Correctional Facility Local member, were both working outdoors July 1, 2010.

**Right place, right time**

Being in the right place at the right time was the difference between life and death for a Wallkill teen who was ejected from her car after it flipped in front of the Kosteczko’s house.

Kim and Frank Kosteczko saved her life. “I was outside in my garden when I saw the car flipping down toward my house and heard a girl screaming,” said Kim, a computer lab manager for the Wallkill School District Unit in Ulster County. “I pulled off my gardening gloves, ran into the house to grab my cell phone and dialed 911.”

**Quick action**

Running toward the overturned vehicle, Kim saw the girl’s arm was pinned under the frame of the car and she was bleeding heavily. Then she noticed gas and oil leaking out of the car. Despite knowing the dangers involved with moving an accident victim, Kim knew that getting the teen out from under the vehicle was the only option if she was to live.

Hearing his wife’s screams, Frank ran up to the car. He and another motorist tried to lift the car up so Kim could slide the victim’s arm out. It took three tries, but he succeeded. By that point, the Kosteczko’s nephew had also run up to the scene and assisted Kim, who realized she could use Frank’s shirt as a tourniquet.

“I was later told that had we waited another 20 seconds or so before getting that T-shirt wrapped around her arm, she might have bled out,” said Kim.

Kim held onto the tourniquet for 45 minutes, since an ambulance service had to travel from a neighboring town. Kim tried to keep the victim, a former student of hers, calm through the agonizing wait for help.

**Honored**

The Ulster County Police Chief’s Association recently recognized Kim Kosteczko for her quick-thinking with a Meritorious Citizenship Award. She also received honors from the New York State Assembly and Senate and Ulster County. Humble over the honors, Kim insisted that Frank, their nephew and the other driver deserved equal recognition.

Both Kim and Frank agreed that it bothered them that with so many drivers passing by on the busy road, only one stepped forward to help.

“I just thought, ‘this could have been our daughter,’” said Kim. “How could you not help?”

— **Jessica Ladlee**
Thinking about retiring? Read this NYSHIP information

Are you planning to retire from state service in the near future?

Congratulations! But you should be cautious if your retirement plans include a move outside New York state. You probably already know that the Empire Plan is the only option that offers worldwide coverage, but this does not mean that participating providers are available in every location.

The Empire Plan participating provider network is available through a contract with UnitedHealthcare (UHC). In six states outside of New York (Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, New Jersey, North Carolina and South Carolina) and Washington, D.C. and the adjoining states of Maryland and Virginia, the Empire Plan leases an enhanced network from UHC, referred to as the Participating Provider Organization listing, to provide enrollees in these areas access to a wider range of providers.

Large populations of Empire Plan retirees live in these regions of the country. The Empire Plan has national contracts with BlueCross/BlueShield for hospital expenses and OptumHealth Behavioral Solutions for mental health and substance abuse services. The majority of providers in most out-of-state directories (other than those mentioned above) will be from these networks.

If you live in an area of the country where participating providers are not available, you still have Empire Plan non-network coverage under the Basic Medical Program or the Basic Medical Provider Discount Program. Annual deductible and coinsurance apply. See your Empire Plan Certificate and Amendments for details.

If you are considering relocation after you retire, be sure to check the availability of participating providers in the new state as part of your planning process. You can do this by visiting https://www.cs.state.ny.us. From the NYSHIP Online home page, choose Find a Provider, then scroll down to the Medical/Surgical Program and click on the link for Empire Plan Medical/Surgical Directory. You will be directed to another site where you can customize your search by location.

If you prefer a printed directory, see your agency health benefits administrator or call the Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and choose the medical program option to request that a state directory be mailed to your home.

Attend a pre-retirement seminar

The Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) and the Office of the State Comptroller present the pre-retirement seminars. As part of the seminars, a representative from the Employee Benefits Division will explain the requirements to continue the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP).

Call your personnel office to learn if there is a seminar available in your area and to reserve your place. Be sure to bring your personal confirmation letter from GOER when you attend.

The state Department of Civil Service website, https://www.cs.state.ny.us, also has the seminar schedule. Click on Benefit Programs, select your group and benefit plan if prompted, and then on Calendar.

Because demand is greater than available seating at the seminars, you can also access helpful online pre-retirement resources at www.worklife.state.ny.us/preretirement/index.html or www.osc.state.ny.us/retire. There is also a helpful 25-minute DVD, Planning for Retirement, and a companion booklet that can be ordered online at https://www.cs.state.ny.us. Click on Benefit Programs, then NYSHIP Online and select “Planning to Retire?” for more information.

Save trees, go green! CSEA EBF documents are online

To reduce waste and our impact on the environment, the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund is doing its part to go green by placing all of your plan documents online at www.cseaebf.com.

Need a form, summary plan description or searching for a participating provider? No problem — the information is there. You can even communicate with one of our specialized customer service staff with Live Chat! No confusing logins — just the information you need. We still have hard copies available upon request.

Learn more about several of our convenient website tools on this page. Stop by and see what’s new today!

By clicking on our “Not Sure What Benefits You Have?” tool, you can access your specific plan documents for your benefits.

By clicking on our “Download Forms” tool, you can access and print universal enrollment forms, student proof forms, HIPAA release forms and much more!

By clicking on our “Provider Search” tool, you always have access to the latest listing. You can search by name, address, CSEA region or by specialty.
The State Fair – It’s Still A Value
Come to the New York State Fair on Sept. 3 and 4, 2011, during CSEA Weekend when CSEA members save $4.00 off admission.

The New York State Fair is at the Empire Expo Center located off Exit 7 of I-690, 3 miles west of Syracuse. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.

Clip one coupon at right for each CSEA member and family member and bring coupon(s) to any fair gate to get $4 off the price of admission on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 3 and 4, 2011, only.

Saturday, Sept. 3 and Sunday, Sept. 4, 2011, is CSEA WEEKEND at the New York State Fair in Syracuse. CSEA members and their family members will receive $4.00 off admission that weekend, compliments of CSEA and the New York State Fair.

Find CSEA and view our centennial display during the entire fair at our booth location along the front wall to the left of the center doors in the Americraft Center of Progress Building. Stop by and visit the CSEA booth any day, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The coupons for $4.00 off admission, however, are only good during CSEA weekend, Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 3 and 4, 2011.

Reproduced coupons will not be accepted. Additional coupons will be available at your CSEA region office.
Reclaim the future

The Alzheimer’s Association chapters of New York state invite CSEA members and their families to unite in a movement to reclaim the future for millions by participating in the Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s this September.

Walk to End Alzheimer’s is the nation’s largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer’s care, support and research. In New York state, the number of people ages 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease is more than 320,000, and growing.

As the nation’s sixth-leading cause of death, every 69 seconds someone develops Alzheimer’s disease. It is estimated 5.4 million Americans are living with Alzheimer’s disease. This disease will be the defining illness of the baby boomer generation.

The Alzheimer’s Association’s mission is to eliminate Alzheimer’s disease through the advancement of research, to provide and enhance care and support for all affected, and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

Please go to www.alz.org/walk to locate a walk near you.

The New York State chapters of the Alzheimer’s Association are: Central New York (Syracuse), Hudson Valley/Rockland/Westchester (Poughkeepsie), Long Island (Ronkonkoma), New York City, Northeastern New York (Albany), Rochester, and Western New York (Williamsville).

For information about Alzheimer’s disease or support, call the 24/7 Helpline at 800-272-3900.
Kraus is PEOPLE Recruiter of the Month

WASSAIC — Terri Kraus of the Taconic DDSO Local in the Southern Region is the PEOPLE Recruiter of the Month for May. She recruited 22 new PEOPLE MVP members and one new VIP PEOPLE member.

“I promote PEOPLE because I believe in it,” she said. “Look at today’s society. Look at what we as public workers are going through. We have to make the politicians realize we, as public workers, are not just there to back them up. We need to hold them accountable. PEOPLE is more important than ever right now because of the attacks we’re facing on our jobs and benefits. PEOPLE reminds our elected officials that it’s not just about money; we’re providing the jobs and services our communities count on.”

CSEA’s PEOPLE program protects and improves our jobs, benefits and pensions 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.

Buffalo Zoo honored for farm exhibit

BUFFALO — The Buffalo Zoo has received an honorable mention for the 2011 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence.

The zoo received the award for its Delta Sonic Heritage Farm, which opened in spring 2010.

The exhibit depicts life on a small family farm located on the banks of the Erie Canal in the mid-1800s. The exhibit features a historic barn originally located along the canal that was dismantled board by board and reconstructed on site. Heritage breeds of crops and farm animals, as well as landscaping with native plants, bring the farm to life.

CSEA represents many Buffalo Zoo workers, including animal handlers.

CSEA presents statewide scholarships

CSEA recently presented college scholarships to the children of union members from across the state. CSEA wishes the students good luck in their academic endeavors. To see this year’s recipients, visit:

www.csealocal1000.org/scholarship_winners.php

Stay up-to-date with your region

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You need your CSEA ID number to participate in the year 2012 elections

Your 10-digit CSEA ID Number was assigned to you in 2010 and is printed on your CSEA/AFSCME membership card. It is the only number you need when conducting CSEA business. This includes Union election-related business – running as a candidate, signing candidates’ nominating petitions, etc.

If you are unsure of your ID Number, you may contact your region office to request your CSEA ID Number. The numbers to CSEA’s region offices are:

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<th>Region</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Long Island Region</td>
<td>(631) 462-0030</td>
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<td>Metropolitan Region</td>
<td>(212) 406-2156</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southern Region</td>
<td>(800) 757-CSEA (2732)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Region</td>
<td>(800) 874-7344</td>
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<td>Central Region</td>
<td>(800) 559-7975</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>(866) 588-7766</td>
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If you have lost your card, you may request a replacement card by calling CSEA toll free at 1-800-342-4146 and asking for the Membership Department.
WHEN IS A NUMBER NOT JUST A NUMBER?

IT’S YOUR VOICE | IT’S YOUR POWER | IT’S YOUR ACCESS

When it’s your CSEA MEMBER ID NUMBER.

Unsure of your ID Number?
Call your CSEA region office.

Lost your Membership Card?
Request a replacement card by calling Toll Free 1-800-342-4146 and asking for the Membership Department.

Every member has a 10-digit CSEA ID Number which is printed on your CSEA/AFSCME membership card.

It’s the number you need when running as a candidate, signing candidates’ nominating petitions and voting, including contract ratifications.