STEPS UP TO HISTORIC LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PAROLE OFFICER JOB DUTY CLARIFICATION
COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS • PAROLE PARITY BILL
VETERANS BUYBACK BILL
PEF “PAYBILL”
We’ve come a long way in a year

By WAYNE SPENCE

I t’s been one year since I was sworn into office as president of the Public Employees Federation. I am humbled daily by this honor and by the trust you’ve placed in me, for it is you, the state’s professional workforce, who provide the quality services New Yorkers need and deserve.

Meeting with you at our town hall and contract team meetings in your regions, I have learned so much about the many ways you all contribute, not only on the job, but in the communities where we work and live. Thank you, once again, for the work you do.

I’d like to take a moment now to look back and highlight some of the progress we’ve made over the past year:

• When I was sworn into office last August, I vowed to change the tenor of our discourse – to be strong, but to be respectful in exchanges with one another and with the governor. This paid off immediately, beginning with a congratulatory message from the governor in which he said he appreciated this stated change.

• Our contract team, led by Region 11 Coordinator Jemma Marie-Hanson was joined by professional negotiator Mark Richard.

• PEF’s 37th Annual Convention was, by all accounts, the most successful PEF convention in years. Working together, PEF delegates put the union first, and were able to complete all the work before them. I am so proud to have been a part of this historic convention.

• Extension of the Productivity Enhancement Program and a reinstatement of the tuition reimbursement program for our members before its scheduled sunset at the end of 2015.

• Agreement on a one-year, retroactive contract that includes a 2 percent salary increase.

• Launch of a contract ratification campaign that saw 92 meetings in PEF regions around the state that resulted in a voter-participation rate of nearly 63 percent with 97 percent of those votes cast being YES votes.

• Partnership with PEF Membership Benefits to offer free legal service to PEF members being investigated by the Justice Center for the Protection of Persons with Special Needs.

• Completion of an historic legislative session for PEF, with many bills important to our membership passed in one or both houses of the Legislature and the Veterans Buyback bill signed into law by Gov. Andrew Cuomo after being vetoed twice in recent years. (See page 4, for a full legislative wrap-up.)

• Renewal of relationships with other unions and taking advantage of valuable trainings offered by our parent unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the Service Employees International Union. These renewed relationships result in union strength at the bargaining table and with our elected officials.

• Strategic changes within PEF that have resulted in better services to you, our members.

PEF members, this has been a long year, but a fast one. And while we may still have many challenges ahead of us, I am confident that together we will have the courage and determination to meet them all.

WAYNE SPENCE, PEF PRESIDENT

— Photo by Deborah A. Miles
Why no two-person option?

To the Editor:

The two-person health insurance option doesn't have to apply just to retirees, it could apply to a young couple in their twenties who don't have children.

Why should anyone have to pay for family coverage when their only dependent is their spouse? Many private companies offer individual coverage with only spouse, or family coverage.

Why do retirees pay the same for family coverage in the Empire Plan when Medicare is primary and, at best, the Empire Plan is only responsible for 20 percent? There should be a big drop in the insurance premium based on that fact.

I'm in my 47th year with the state Transportation Department and I guess the old saying still goes, "Because that's the way it is and always was."

JOHN CUMMINS
Fishkill

Editor’s Note: PEF’s PS&T Contract Team is aware of all these factors and members’ concerns and has sought information from the state about the actual usage and costs associated with them. Health benefits are a particularly challenging subject of negotiation, and are a major focus as the team strives to negotiate the best overall contract it can achieve.

Leave disparity clarified

To the Editor:

Your response to “Is there leave disparity?” in the June 2016 Communicator is incorrect.

Both MC (the Management/Confidential Unit of New York state employees) and the ASU (Administrative Services Unit) receive more additional vacation days than PEF.

ASU starts receiving an additional vacation day after 15 years of service. M/C receives one more day annually beginning with 30 years of service.

JOHN FOGARTY
Troy

Editor’s Note: We stand corrected. Thanks to this writer and to Barbara Rudzinski and Paul Kennedy, who all wrote to inform us of the error.

Appreciates Lose To Win

To the Editor:

I want to thank Linda Baker and the whole PEF Region 8 Lose to Win team for organizing and leading the PEF Lose to Win Challenge.

As a brand new employee with the state, I was already in the midst of making big life changes. This program helped to give me extra motivation to make some changes surrounding my own health. It provided me with an opportunity to meet new people, get information and support and meet my initial health improvement goals. If I had lost just one pound in the six weeks, it would have been worth it!

Thank you for making this program available to everyone.

I hope to see some of the same people in the fall when the “Turtles” weigh in and the next challenge program begins.

KAREN DWYER
Cohoes

Recreation Month is July

To the Editor:

You did a nice job celebrating National Nurses Week as well as celebrating National Social Work Month. The Communicator needs to address National Recreation Month in July. There are many recreation therapists and recreation staff who work in facilities and parks throughout the state. There are just as many recreation staff as social workers.

JEAN ELLIOTT
East Islip

Editor’s Note: A story in this issue highlights the service of PEF members at the state Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. However, it is impossible to honor every job title in the 10 issues of The Communicator that are published annually. PEF represents thousands of different job titles and values every member in every one of them.

Sees cancer screening issue

To the Editor:

Is the issue with the inequity in cancer screening leave for men and women being addressed by PEF?

It’s incomprehensible that for several years now, men have been afforded four hours of paid leave for prostate cancer screening and four hours of leave for breast cancer screening and yet women are only given four hours for breast cancer screening? It would appear to be blatant discrimination.

Why would women not also be given four hours for ovarian/cervical cancer screening? Or, better yet, everyone should be given eight hours for general cancer screening, rather than specifying the type of screening.

KIM LEFFLER
Scotia

Editor’s note: The issue of leave for cancer screening has been raised during PS&T Contract negotiation.

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Cover graphic by Mario Bruni

1979-2016

• OVER THREE DECADES OF COMMITMENT •
• TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PROFESSIONALS •
• SERVING MILLIONS OF NEW YORKERS •

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The Communicator July-August 2016 — Page 3
Unified PEF effort brings legislative success

Story and photos by SHERRY HALBROOK

As the state Legislature’s 2016 session ground to a halt in mid-June with its usual blaze of frenetic bill passing in the final hours, the tally of PEF successes rapidly mounted.

Topping PEF’s list was the bill to pay 2 percent retroactive salary increases for the state’s PS&T employees. Passage of this bill means those PEF members can receive their retroactive pay for April 2, 2015, through April 1, 2016, later this summer. The measure, which was introduced by Assembly Member Peter Abbate Jr. and Sen. George Amedore, made it through both houses in just three days.

The union also scored important legislative wins for its veterans, parole officers, and hospital workers. And the union advanced other bills through the Senate or the Assembly in the long term effort it often takes to achieve the most important legislative goals.

PEF President Wayne Spence thanked and congratulated all of PEF’s members and legislative staff who worked very hard to make this a banner year for improving the lives of both members and the public.

“We can be proud of our voice in Albany,” Spence said. “Too often, we contact legislators only when we oppose legislation. We should all be grateful to the individual lawmakers who listened to our insights and concerns and sponsored these bills. I encourage each of you to contact the legislators who sponsored PEF legislation and personally thank them for addressing our concerns. (For contact information go to https://www.nysenate.gov/ and to http://nyassembly.gov/ mem/.)"

WE DID IT! — NYS Sen. Bill Larkin and Assembly Member Amy Paulin display signed copies of the Veterans Buyback bill that they sponsored. They are flanked by PEF Legislative Director Greg Amorosi, PEF Veterans Committee chair (inset) Bruce Jagroop, PEF Veterans Committee member Jerry Jobson, PEF Chief of Staff Chris Leo and PEF lobbyist Scott Lorey.

“Topping PEF’s list was the bill to pay the 2 percent retroactive salary increases for the state’s PS&T employees,” Spence said.

“Not only did both the Senate and Assembly pass the Veterans Buyback Bill this year. Gov. Andrew Cuomo promptly signed it into law, a sharp but very welcome break from his pattern of vetoing it twice in recent years.”

The bill was sponsored by two lawmakers from the lower Hudson valley, Sen. Bill Larkin and Assembly Member Amy Paulin, who worked steadfastly for its passage and to get the governor’s signature. The PEF Veterans Committee members were equally determined and led the grassroots effort that achieved the goal they had sought for many years.

This law allows honorably discharged service members, who are public employees (not already retired) in the state retirement system and who have five years of existing public pension credit, to purchase three years of additional pension credit for their military service. Previously this option was restricted to veterans who served in certain conflicts. (See box below for details on applying for pension credits.)

Parole

PEF scored twice for parole officers.

(Continued on next page)

How to apply for military service credits

Military service credit legislation amending Article 20 of the Retirement and Social Security Law was signed into law May 31, 2016. This legislation allows public employees (not retired) who were honorably discharged from active military service to purchase up to three years of retirement service credit in the state pension system, providing they already have earned at least five years of service credit with NYSLRS, and have not received credit for this military service in any other public retirement system in New York state.

There is a cost for this service credit. Information about how to apply, eligibility and the cost to receive retirement service credit for time served in the military is available on the NYS Comptroller’s Military Service Credit web page.

To apply and find out how much purchasing military service credit will cost you, use one of the following three options:

1. Scan and email your Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty papers (DD-214) to: msunit@osc.state.ny.us and include your name and contact information. You’ll receive an email acknowledging that your request was received; or
2. Fax your name, contact information and a copy of your DD-214 to 518-402-7799; or
3. Mail your name, contact information and a copy of your DD-214 to:
   Military Service Unit
   110 State Street
   Albany, NY 12244-0001.

You’ll receive an acknowledgement letter in the mail once your request is being processed. If you have questions, email the Office of the NYS Comptroller at msunit@osc.state.ny.us.

Full-time state employees, may use the following formula to estimate their cost:

• Tiers 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5: The cost will be 3 percent of the compensation you earned during the 12 months of credited service immediately prior to the receipt of your request, times the number of years of military service being claimed.

• Tier 6: The cost will be 6 percent of the compensation you earned during the 12 months of credited service immediately prior to the receipt of your request, times the number of years of military service being claimed.

• Tier 7: The cost will be 8 percent of the compensation you earned during the 12 months of credited service immediately prior to the receipt of your request, times the number of years of military service being claimed.
Hot talks at the table, negotiations are sizzling

By DEBORAH A. MILES

While most PEF members anticipate receiving the check for the 2 percent retroactive raise for the one-year successor PS&T Agreement by the end of summer, the contract team and representatives from the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) have been focused on negotiating a longer-term contract.

Jemma Marie-Hanson, chair of PEF’s contract team, said the two teams met June 28 and continued to exchange proposals. Although the talks that day did not result in agreement, both teams had productive discussions and continued to work through their differences.

“Our goal is to achieve a mutual agreement, so we will meet during the summer, not with the full teams, but what we refer to as small-table discussions where the article experts can attempt to hash out a compromise,” Marie-Hanson said.

Those meetings are scheduled for July 27, 28 and August 1, 2. Marie-Hanson said those meetings will be devoted to six different articles. The full teams will resume negotiations in late September and mid-October.

“I am optimistic we can work through some of our difficult proposals during the small-table talks. It is an opportunity to mediate the differences. If we accomplish our goals, we will be able to resolve more of the articles at the full-table discussions scheduled in the fall,” Marie-Hanson said.

She also said both teams have accomplished a lot in a short period of time. But Marie-Hanson cautioned that obtaining a complete successor agreement may be a long and arduous process and the coming months may not be easy.

“We are all devoted to working hard to accomplish a full successor agreement that will be welcomed by all the members. We may have to engage the help of the membership if the need arises for calls of action. I ask our members to be prepared to help. We already have accomplished milestones and want to continue on that path.”

The milestones Marie-Hanson referred to include the 2 percent retroactive one-year raise.

(Continued from previous page)

Assembly only

The Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act that was sponsored by Assembly Member Aileen Gunther and Hannon made it halfway through the legislative gauntlet, passing in the Assembly. This bill, which would establish minimum direct-care nurse-to-patient ratios in health care facilities, did not make it out of committee in the Senate in spite of strong efforts by PEF nurses who worked with health care members from other unions to educate lawmakers about its importance.

Sen. Robach and Assembly Member Harry Bronson sponsored PEF’s Cost-Benefit Analysis bill that passed in the Assembly, but fell short in the Senate. The bill would require the state to conduct a cost-benefit analysis for any contract of $750,000 or more to determine whether state employees could do the job for less.

The bill also would require an in-depth business plan by the state agency and a review by the state comptroller.

Senate only

It was the Senate that gave a thumbs up to the OMH, OPWDD, OCFS Facility Closures bill sponsored by Gunther and Sen. Frederick Akshar. This bill would require legislative approval before the state could close certain facilities operated by the offices of or for: Mental Health; People with Developmental Disabilities; or Children and Family Services.

“We worked very hard on all of these bills and appreciate the support they received in the Legislature,” Spence said.

“We are grateful to the lawmakers who sponsored them and to the sponsors of other bills we promoted, such as the Information Technology bill that would have rewarded the state’s IT professionals who complete an approved training course with a 2 percent (of base pay) lump-sum payment.”

This bill, which was sponsored by Abbate and Amedore, also would have given permanent employees in state service precedence for any term-position appointment.

Spence also cited the Psychiatric Evaluations bill that would require the state, rather than counties, to pay for the psychiatric examinations of criminal defendants. Gunther teamed with Sen. Robert Ortin sponsoring it.

PEF and GOER also agreed to restore funding for the Workshop and Seminar Reimbursement program (WSR), Nurses Enhanced Workshop and Seminar Reimbursement program (NEWSR), and the Certification and License Exam Fee Reimbursement program (CLEFR).

And if you are looking to take up to two qualifying courses at any accredited college or university and successfully complete them by December 31, 2016, you may apply for full or partial reimbursement under the College Tuition Reimbursement program (CTR).

Eligible nurses may also use additional CTR reimbursement toward extra courses, or they may apply for an enhanced CTR reimbursement to a single qualifying course where the cost of tuition exceeds the maximum value of the regular CTR program, also through December 31.

The restoration of these benefits through 2016 is just one of the results of your team at work.

Stay tuned for more contract news by visiting the PEF website, Facebook and Twitter pages on a regular basis.
Conference provides tips on training, grants

Timely topics inspire health and safety advocates

Story and photos by DEBORAH A. MILES

In mid-June, health and safety chairs gathered in Latham at a statewide training conference to learn how to take proactive measures to help eliminate on-the-job injuries and illnesses.

Several topics were discussed including Safety and Health Initiative Programs (SHIP) grants, safe patient handling, the importance of reviewing injury and illness logs, preventing workplace violence and bullying, and averting trips, slips and falls at worksites.

The conference also focused on topics relevant to the times, such as how to develop a response training program for employees in the event a mass shooting occurs in the workplace.

Leah Cooper described the conference as “very informative.” She is an auditor at the state Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) located in Gertz Plaza in Jamaica, Queens, and PEF chair of the OTDA Health and Safety Committee.

Cooper said the active shooter training would benefit all her co-workers, as well as the training opportunities provided through SHIP grants.

“I did not realize these resources were available,” she said. “Training is very important and I would like to see more of this information being offered to all employees. It is interesting to learn about Article 18 and that we are entitled to certain reports that can help us determine problem areas and how to solve them. It’s all about promoting safety.”

Lindsay Bonanza, a member of the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) Health and Safety Committee, and a teacher 4 at Mohawk Correctional Facility, agreed the conference provided a wealth of information and inspiration.

Bonanza said, “Randy Mainello, who is chair of the DOCCS committee, and I have come up with some good talking points for our next local labor-management and health and safety meetings. This conference motivated us to create a proper agenda for meetings, and to include specific things such as the SHIP grants and the training available to staff. Most people are unaware of these opportunities.”

John Gee, a new health and safety committee chair who works as a program manager at Empire State Development Division of Science, Technology and Innovation, said it was important for him to attend the conference.

“As a new chair, I want to learn all the basics so I can be effective and an active partner in the labor-management community.”

“I am impressed with this conference. All the information is striking a cord with me and I am learning very interesting things. It has enlightened me into a space I was unfamiliar with.” Gee said.

“I would encourage all our members to engage in health and safety committees for the sole purpose of ensuring a safe and secure worksite, so people can return home to their families every day without injury. People should enjoy working and not be fearful of being injured.”

Darlene Williams and Michael Blue, PEF co-chairs of the Article 18 statewide Health and Safety Committee, encouraged the participants to be the best advocates for the union’s commitment to workplace wellness, and urged them to pass on the information to help empower their individual committees.

The other presenters included Ed Cottrell from the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations; PEF Occupational Health and Safety Department specialists Shawn Bobb and Geraldine Stella; and speakers, Eileen Franko, director of the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) at the state Department of Labor, and Joe Fuller, Albany area supervisor at DOSH.

If you would like information about training at your agency or facility, or a SHIP grant application, call 800-342-4306 ext. 254 or email healthandsafety@pef.org.

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November vote on NYS constitutional convention threatens pensions, rights

By SHERRY HALBROOK

If you haven’t already heard about the possibility of a New York State Constitutional Convention, you soon will. It’s a matter of deep concern for public employee unions and retired public employees.

Every 20 years, the state’s constitution requires that New York voters decide whether to hold a convention to review and possibly rewrite this document that forms the bedrock underlying all of the state’s laws and regulations. Next year, voters must make that choice at the polls in the November general election.

What’s at stake?

The state constitution is the foundation that supports and protects many of the assumptions on which you have built your life and retirement dreams. A constitutional convention would expose key provisions to attack.

The “jewel in the crown” of NYS constitutional protections for public employees and retired public employees is found in Article 5, section 7, which states in part: “Membership in any pension or retirement system of the state or of a civil division thereof shall be a contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired.”

It’s those last 10 words that are the treasure anti-government and anti-labor forces are expected to attack. They’ve already gutted similar protections in other states.

While some rights are also protected in the U.S. Constitution, New York’s state constitution is more specific and in some cases establishes a level of rights for public employees exceeding the level provided for private-sector employees. For example, New York’s constitution provides automatic immunity from criminal prosecution for public employees who are compelled to answer questions during disciplinary investigations. Your answers or refusal to answer could get you fired, but cannot be used in court to prosecute you on criminal charges.

Some of your other constitutional treasures that would be ripe for looting include:

* Collective bargaining rights;
* Workers Comp;
* Merit and fitness competitive standards in civil service; and
* Public education.

How would it work?

If voters in 2017 vote to hold a constitutional convention, then in 2018 they would vote on 204 delegates to that convention, which would be held in early 2019.

If history is any indication, those delegates would likely include many of the same people serving in the state Assembly and Senate as well as lobbyists and other politically connected individuals.

The voters may not choose or limit which parts of the constitution would be open to change. Nor may voters decide or propose what those changes would be. That would be left to the delegates.

Any constitutional changes the delegates voted to make (adopted) would still require the subsequent approval of voters in the November 2019 general election. Since New York has switched from lever-machine voting, such propositions are now printed on the back of the paper ballots that list candidates for office on the front.

New Yorkers will soon get messages urging them to vote for a constitutional convention. Indeed, some conservative news media and talk-radio programs began promoting such a convention last year.

“We are alert to this issue and will keep you informed,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “Watch the PEF website and Facebook page for information and any necessary calls for action.”

HAPPY OCCASION – PEF Region 7 holds its first training in its new office and training center in Potsdam. The June 4 training was conducted by PEF training specialist Tamara Carney, field representative Martin Blair and Director of Legislation Greg Amorosi. Shown are: (back row) Region 7 Coordinator Ed Snow, Jeff Knowlton, Matt Flynn, Cathie Seguin and Gini Davey; (middle row); Stephanie Champagne, Marla Travers, Brenda Brue, Dr. Arina Kirkby, Kim Holmes and Ed Miron; (front row) Fritz Aldinger, Aaron Ziemann, Milton Adams and Jill Kennedy.
PEF delegates help SEIU set bold agenda of justice, fairness for all workers

By SHERRY HALBROOK

PEF President Wayne Spence led the union’s 25-member delegation to the Service Employees International Union convention in Detroit that was held May 22-24.

PEF is represented at the convention because SEIU is one of PEF’s two international union affiliates. The other affiliate is the American Federation of Teachers.

SEIU holds its conventions every four years, and at this event the delegates re-elected Mary Kay Henry SEIU president.

“I felt the honor and the responsibility of leading PEF’s delegation to take part in this great gathering of union members who understand how important it is to protect and advance the union movement in New York and throughout the entire country,” Spence said. “We are at a pivotal point in history, especially for the future of organized labor, and this event gave us all a real sense of that.”

Henry said, “SEIU members’ unstoppable movement for change has led the way in shifting the debate in this country on inequality and penetrated the national consciousness. I am honored that the 2 million hard-working service and care workers of SEIU have chosen me, Gerry Hudson, and our executive vice presidents to serve them as we continue to build strength and a voice in our economy and democracy for working families across North America.”

Hudson, who was previously an executive vice president, was elected international secretary-treasurer. Valarie Long and Rocio Saenz were re-elected executive vice presidents, and Neal Bisco, Luisa Blue, Heather Conroy, Scott Courtney and Leslie Fran were elected vice presidents.

“Justice and fairness was the overarching theme of the convention,” said PEF Region 8 Coordinator Michael Blue, who was one of PEF’s delegates. He reports that among the many resolutions passed by the delegates were those addressing racial and economic justice, ending discrimination against any group, organizing to build power, innovating to make better use of technology, and making better use of retirees to further member engagement. Still other resolutions called for supporting retirement security, single-payer health insurance, resolving the student debt crisis, and getting maximum benefit from SEIU’s political power.

“It’s impossible to attend such a huge gathering of union members without feeling the potential power and force of common will, and this event was no different.

“It was a very powerful and moving sight to see 2,000 members of our international union all stand up to support justice and fairness, particularly in regard to ending discrimination against the LGBTQIQ communities, committing to fight to see the end of systemic racism and committing to the fight for immigrant justice,” Blue said. “The delegates were equally passionate in agreeing to fight to prevent environmental tragedies such as the lead-contamination of the public water supply in Flint, MI, to fight for a secure retirement and health care for all, and for social and economic justice for Puerto Rico and for all working people.”

Blue said he was struck by “our international union’s commitment to helping all working people, from the lowest wage workers fighting to eke out a living to the middle class wage earners in professional titles such as ours in PEF.”

“Together at this convention we resolved to fight to help every worker, whether union or not, enjoy a better life with more rights and more fairness. If they fail, then so have we.”

TACKLING LABOR’S CHALLENGES TOGETHER! – Service Employees International Union President Mary Kay Henry is flanked by PEF delegates Ray Moroz, PEF President Wayne Spence and Bill Cruz at the SEIU Convention in May.
— Photos by Maddie Shannon-Roberts
THE VALUE OF THE UNION

When a union has your back, back your union

By DEBORAH A. MILES

Milagio Plumey has been a New York state parole officer for 27 years, working in Manhattan. She has had caseloads of up to 110 parolees, and is now supervising 25 level 1 parolees, those who have the potential to create more risk in the community.

Retirement is on the horizon, for Plumey, but as she reflects upon all her years of public service, one thing stands out in her mind: A time in 1997 when there were some problems at what was then known as the Division of Parole, and she was given a year and a half suspension.

“PEF saved my career and fought aggressively for me. The union supported me through 30 hearings, and at arbitration with the Public Employment Relations Board. I’m also grateful for its assistance relating to human rights issues. My job was not only saved, but my career. Because of the hard and professional work of PEF’s field representative and lawyers, today I can happily say in a few months I will retire with a decent pension. And restoring my career allowed me to raise my three children who are now productive members of society.

“If PEF did not help to save my career, who knows what the outcome would have been,” Plumey said.

“I also have to give credit to the arbitrators. I went to three arbitrators in a row and they saved my job. They saw through the smoke screen, and I must say they were very fair. At the end, I received all my back pay,” Plumey said. “Everything worked out. There were a lot of things not being addressed in the work environment such as civil rights issues and all that has changed.”

Prior to moving to New York and becoming a PO, Plumey worked as a parole officer in Florida. She described the experience as eye-opening because there are no unions in that state to represent POs. “I was fortunate to come to New York where I had a union that represented me in my time of need,” Plumey said.

Throughout the years, she noted many co-workers received a suspension or some sort of disciplinary action, and PEF has always been there to find a fair remedy.

Plumey’s appreciation for her union has spurred her to become an activist. She became a steward because of her passion to assist others and is also the assistant council leader for Division 236.

“Sometimes I think back to the times when our forefathers fought and died to have the right to unionize. The labor movement has always had its challenges. We all need to stand up and support our union today. Among the slogan campaigns within PEF, I like ‘Get Your Union On.”

“I wish all the membership would do that because it is important to the labor movement, our jobs and for our children,” Plumey said. “Every little bit that every member does helps to make the union stronger. You can do little things like attend meetings, support co-workers in their time of need, and vote when there is an election or to ratify the contract.

“I encourage members to become activists. In doing so, we all stand to win when we are united.”

WINNERS (AND LOSERS) ALL! – Competition was tight at the final summer weigh in for the PEF Region 8 Lose to Win program at PEF headquarters June 23. The first-place winner, Karen Dwyer, and the second-place winner, Pamela Matthews, each lost more than 6 percent of their weight in just six weeks. Susan Rehder, the third-place winner lost more than 5 percent of her weight. The three lost a combined total of 42.2 pounds, and the total for all 10 participants at the June weigh in was 71.8 pounds. Pictured are: (back row) Rehder, Kim Evans McGee, Tracy Mann, Mary Eileen Barret, Matthews, Linda Carignan and Debi Chowdhury; (front row) Maureen Kozakiewicz, Bill Wurster, Janet Smith, Dwyer, Jane Thapa and Linda Baker. The next (Holiday) Lose to Win program will begin in October and run through mid-December.

— Photo by Sherry Halbrook
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A message from PEF Retirees President Jim Carr

Politics isn’t just ‘local,’ it’s personal

Do you know who your real friends in Washington are?

We, the voters, need to hold our elected representatives accountable for what they say about important issues that doesn’t match how they vote on those issues!

Many elected officials promote themselves as supporting senior citizens, lowering college costs, and supporting sexual assault victims, the environment, cancer survivors and education. But when we check their votes, we find they voted for bills that would negatively affect those people and issues.

In 2016, Congress continues its unproductive ways going back to 2008. As more Americans reach retirement age, Congress is allowing issues such as retirement security, the declining availability of guaranteed pensions and threats to Social Security and Medicare systems to continue.

Many in Congress voted to pass fast-track trade authority, which extinguishes the ability to scrutinize and amend trade agreements, apparently not learning the lesson of 2013 when they voted for the shutdown of our government that cost taxpayers $24 billion. Our nation deserves better!

Many in Congress continue to attack our core retiree programs of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid as well as the pro-retiree provisions of the Affordable Care Act. Many voted more than once to privatize Medicare and create a voucher-like system that would have cost us more for the health care we must have.

Key federal positions, such as the commissioner of Social Security, remain without a confirmed nominee in office because of party line obstructionism and a broken Congress.

In contrast, while attacks on core retiree programs continue, income inequality grows larger. Proposals to raise the minimum wage have failed in Congress thanks to party-line votes. For more than a decade, the wealthiest Americans have received trillions of dollars in tax breaks, while older Americans have faced rising costs for their drugs, health care, food and energy.

It doesn’t matter whether you are a Republican, Democrat, Liberal, Conservative, or not affiliated with any political party. You need to vote as a senior for the candidates who have proved they will vote in your interest on senior issues!

The candidate’s voting record reflects how committed he or she is to retirees and older Americans. Go online to the Alliance for Retired Americans website to learn where your federal elected representatives really stand on the issues that directly affect you.

Get active today and help create an America that protects the health and economic security of seniors, strengthens families and builds safe and thriving communities.

The Alliance for Retired Americans tracks the voting record on senior issues of every U.S. senator and congressional representative. For the full report, go to www.retiredamericans.org.

HEAR BETTER. LIVE BETTER.

EarWorksAudiology.com
Conference provides dialogue to improve state prison system

By DEBORAH A. MILES

The annual Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS)-PEF spring labor-management conference held in Lake Placid has earned a reputation of being one of the best among New York state agencies.

Once again this year, most of the 135 participants left the three-day June event satisfied with the opportunity to network and discuss their concerns with the top brass at DOCCS.

Steve Drake, PEF chair of the DOCCS L-M Committee, said DOCCS employees attended from almost every correctional facility in the state along with parole officers. They aired their issues in an open forum directly to DOCCS Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci, as well as to deputy commissioners at committee meetings.

“The commissioner’s open forum went well,” Drake said. “This format is above and beyond what we can accomplish at our local labor-management meetings.

“DOCCS management responded positively to some of the open-ended items we raised such as the need for updated personal alarms. We were told DOCCS is working with a Massachusetts company with new updated technology for a potential-use product.

“DOCCS is also looking into available space for community supervision officers in several areas of the North County, and resolving the shortage of teaching staff at Upstate Correctional Facility where there are an overwhelming number of inmates under 21-years old,” Drake said.

When the state merged the facility parole officer title with a counselor in 2013 and called the position an offender rehabilitation coordinator (ORC), it also introduced COMPAS, a risk-assessment tool used to help predict an inmate’s level of needed supervision after release from prison. DOCCS employees have cited flaws with this tool, and at the conference, DOCCS management recognized the need to improve COMPAS.

Anthony Pace, an ORC at Fishkill Correctional Facility, said, “We tried to break some barriers concerning the amount of work an ORC position is required to do. I think management finally got it that we need to spend more time with inmates and not just treat them like a number. Often we have to pull an inmate’s case file, because the computer information (COMPAS) is not enough.

“When we addressed personal safety and workplace issues, the commissioner said he takes it very seriously when learning of any employee being harassed at work, and said DOCCS would address this issue.

“This conference also gave us a platform to bring up issues that do not get resolved at local labor-management meetings or get brushed aside. Some of the issues we keep bringing back year after year,” Pace said.

Short staffing, especially with nurses in correctional facilities, has been one of the issues where PEF members have been repeatedly beating the drum since cuts were made to DOCCS three years ago.

Timothy Quain, a nurse 2 at Clinton Correctional Facility and PEF chair of the PEF-DOCCS Nurses Committee, said, “We have been bringing up the issue of short staffing and it has not been addressed. We didn’t have the proper staffing levels to begin with in 2013, and now nurses are working double shifts, doing mandatory overtime which is against the law, and having one or two nurses caring for dozens of people.

“DOCCS seems sincere about correcting the workplace violence issues in all the prisons, but until other issues such as staffing are addressed, workplace violence will only get worse.

“This conference helped us highlight some of our serious concerns, and address things that are not done according to policy,” Quain said. “It allowed people to realize we are in this together.”

DOCCS staff respond with generosity and support for crime victim

The participants who attended the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) conference in Lake Placid took to heart a very special cause.

Collectively, they donated nearly $1,000 to the Ashley Kern fund. She is the granddaughter of Patty McFadden, one of the founding members of the PEF-DOCCS labor-management team and a previous council leader at Cape Vincent Correctional Facility.

On March 12, Kern was an innocent bystander when she was shot during a violent crime. She suffered a collapsed lung, internal bleeding, broken teeth and was left with no feeling from the chest down.

Her family enrolled her in Project Walk New Jersey, and in early July she was able to lift her legs. The treatments are not covered by insurance.

“The outpouring of support for Ashley at the conference was amazing and heartwarming from my fellow union members,” McFadden said. “She is making progress but has a long way to go.”

For updates on Kern or to contribute to her Fund Me site, visit https://www.facebook.com/TeamAshley2016.

— Deborah Miles
Sickle cell advocate takes effort national

By SHERRY HALBROOK

While we’ve all heard, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade,” most people find it’s easier said than done.

PEF member Shakir Cannon, 33, an information technology specialist 2 at the state Health Department, is one of those who has mastered lemonade making. Life gave him sickle cell disease, and he has risen above the chronic pain and fatigue to confront the ailment head on, not just for himself, but for the other 100,000 Americans who also have this inherited disease of the blood.

That effort and his personal motto, “Any day without pain is a good day!” have put him in touch with more than 5,000 people and taken him to Washington, where, in February, he was invited to attend the White House Precision Medicine Initiative Summit to find new, more precise ways to address health care research.

Cannon said he and the Sickle Internal Family Coalition (SIFC) assembled a national sickle cell task force before that summit to consider and prioritize the issues they want addressed. The task force decided to advocate for improving emergency room response to patients experiencing extremely painful sickle cell crises.

“It requires immediate treatment with analgesics and opioids for the pain,” Cannon said.

Unlike someone who comes to an emergency room with a broken bone, fever, cough or other obvious symptoms, Cannon said he and other persons with sickle cell disease arrive at the hospital complaining of extreme pain, but without any obvious cause of that pain.

And because of the current concern over widespread prescription opioid addiction, medical personnel are reluctant to prescribe the painkillers. So, the patient may be left for hours in the waiting room untreated and even being viewed by the medical staff with suspicion.

“People think we aren’t even in pain

What is Sickle Cell Disease?

By SHERRY HALBROOK

Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) comprises a group of inherited disorders that negatively affect red blood cells and cause abnormal hemoglobin (a protein) in those cells.

We all need healthy hemoglobin to continuously carry oxygen from our lungs to the cells in tissues throughout our bodies. Sickle cell disease deforms hemoglobin into hard, stiff rods that cause the soft, flexible, disc-shaped red blood cells to take on a crescent shape that cannot easily move through small blood vessels. They can clog blood vessels and if they block blood flow to the brain, it can cause a stroke.

Because of reduced blood flow, tissues receive reduced levels of vital oxygen and that can trigger severe pain that reaches crisis level and may require hospital care.

While children with sickle cell disease are usually pain free between crises, pain may become chronic or continuous in adolescence and adulthood. The body’s organs can be seriously damaged by repeated oxygen deprivation. In addition to pain, persons with sickle cell disease may often feel exhausted.

Red blood cells with deformed hemoglobin may burst (hemolyze) and die faster than the body can replace them, requiring blood transfusions.

Sickle cell disease is passed by genes from parents to their children. It is not contagious. Persons with sickle cell disease have inherited two abnormal hemoglobin genes, one from each parent. At least one of the two abnormal genes causes the body to make hemoglobin S. That is called sickle cell trait.

When a person has two hemoglobin S genes, hemoglobin SS, the disease is called sickle cell anemia. This is the most common and often most severe kind of SCD.

Currently, stem cell transplantation is the only cure and for that to succeed, the recipient must be relatively young and strong and the stem cells must come from a well matched donor, usually a close relative.

Some effective treatments have been developed that can reduce symptoms and prolong life, especially when combined with early diagnosis and regular medical care to prevent complications. Life expectancy for sickle cell patients in the U.S. have gone from just 14 years in 1973, to 40-60 years today.

In this country, most people with sickle cell disease (SCD) are of African ancestry or identify themselves as black. An estimated 100,000 Americans have SCD and about 1 in 13 African American babies is born with sickle cell trait (just one sickle cell gene). Approximately one in every 365 black children has sickle cell disease (two sickle cell genes).

However, SCD does not exclusively affect people of African descent. It also is found among people who come from Hispanic, southern European, Middle Eastern, and Asian Indian backgrounds.
and we just want the opioids,” said Cannon, who gave this example: “If I try to distract myself from the pain by looking at something on my cell phone, they say that means I’m not truly in pain.”

At the summit, Cannon and others in the SIFC urged better education for medical professionals about SCD and more research on the many dangerous ways it can affect important organs.

“We are working to develop a one-page protocol for medical professionals to use that outlines the triage and specifies the kind of opioid and amount that should be given,” Cannon said.

“The transition into adult care is the second biggest challenge for people with SCD, because once you reach age 18, your health care crumbles. It’s partly because you may no longer have health insurance coverage and it’s partly because so many medical professionals in adult care don’t know enough about SCD and how to treat it.”

Cannon said he has been amazed and encouraged by how ready and open federal leaders, health care experts and scientists have been to work with him and other SCD advocates.

“We asked U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Matthews Burwell to help get a national effort led by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health),” Cannon said. “We definitely have the support from her and so many federal agencies, such as the national Centers for Disease Control and the Office of Minority Health.

“Some of the other organizations and institutions that are investigating or advocating for SCD include the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Foundation for Sickle Cell Disease Research, and the Minority Coalition for Precision Medicine (MCPM). The White House Precision Medicine Initiative also addresses SCD and other issues involving many organizations and individuals.

Cannon has established very popular Facebook and Twitter accounts that have put him in touch with thousands of people throughout the country and the world. You can follow him on Twitter at @BLO0DB0RN (use zeros for the uppercase Os). He also was interviewed by journalist Benita Zahn on WNYT TV in Albany.

Cannon credits his mother’s advocacy and encouragement as his first inspiration for going beyond merely accepting his condition. Now, as a husband and the father of a 4-year-old daughter, he recognizes that by pushing for improvements in the understanding and treatment of SCD today, he will improve the lives of future generations who inherit the sickle cell gene.

“My daughter is my motivation for everything I do. Thankfully, she does not have SCD, but my future grandchildren could.”

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**Leader in quality, service, caring, and satisfaction**
Wellness program gains popularity, provides team building benefits

By DEBORAH A. MILES

PEF members who work at the state Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) in the Finger Lakes region have decided to take an active role in staying healthy by forming a WELL U program.

It was launched in March when PEF Division 259, 201 and 246 stewards and council members had a discussion on how to engage their co-workers in an informal way to promote team building. And the common denominator was something that concerns the majority of people, healthy living.

From that local meeting, the idea for a wellness program not only took hold, but spawned interest from Kathy Button, president of Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) Local 436 and management, as well as a helping hand from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) coordinator.

“There are 150 worksites throughout the Finger Lakes region, and it was difficult to get people involved because our members are so spread out,” said Randi DiAntonio, acting Region 3 coordinator.

“Our first step was to identify interested groups. We enlisted the EAP coordinator, management team leaders, employee health nurses, and members with expertise in health issues such as physical therapists and dietitians to form a wellness program committee.”

Off and running

Patrick Grace, a developmental disabilities program specialist, chairs the WELL U committee and applauds its members for their activism in getting the program off the ground and implementing creative ways to attract more people.

“Management provided the clerical support to help get the message out to the team leaders and group homes. It has been very supportive as we cover 10 counties,” DiAntonio added. “The WELL U committee sent out newsletters, emails and information about upcoming events.”

The committee developed a “Lunch and Learn” event with different themes. A recent event, a “salad in a Mason jar” demonstration was a big hit among members as these salads can be prepared on a Sunday and last all week, according to Susan Jason, a registered dietitian.

DiAntonio and Grace agreed the wealth of in-house expertise propels new ideas and themes for the “Lunch and Learn” programs. On the horizon is a smoothie demonstration with a Nutri Ninja blender, and one was given to each of 13 OPWDD day-treatment program sites.

“CSEA Local 436 received a grant through the New York State Partnership to purchase the blenders and also 300 water bottles for those in the WELL U program,” DiAntonio said. “The PEF divisions in the Finger Lakes region are purchasing the supplies.”

Fostering unity

Along with the nutrition aspect of wellness, exercise plays a paramount role in getting and keeping in good shape. As a result of WELL U, employees who participate in walking groups are benefiting in more than one way.

“I find the team building that has occurred to be incredible. People are walking together who did not know each other before, even though some have worked here for years. This activity encourages solidarity and a better and healthier working environment,” DiAntonio said.

Molly LaPrade, a registered dietitian, is encouraging co-workers to train for a 5K run to be held in Rochester in September.

“My hope is that staff will participate in these WELL U activities and strive to be healthy. We need to be role models for the individuals in our care,” LaPrade said.

Reaching out

Maureen Doyle, a nutrition service administrator, reiterated the importance to be healthy not only for yourself, but to have the physical and mental strength to care for individuals at OPWDD.

She mentioned the WELL U committee is planning a health fair in October in conjunction with the annual State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA) campaign.

Doyle also said another goal is to reach members who work in outlying areas. One way this is being done is through an online survey tool to determine the level of interest in other wellness programs such as Weight Watchers and fitness classes.

Workplaces with an effective wellness program see a 28 percent reduction in workers’ compensation claims; a reduction of 10 percent in sick days; 26 percent reduction in health care costs; a 30 percent reduction in workers’ compensation claims; a reduction in injuries on the job; improved employee morale; less stress and increased energy on and off the job.

“We all need to recognize the importance of being well and healthy,” Di Antonio said. “I hope other agencies and facilities follow our lead and encourage their employees to live well and work well.”
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The professional challenges and issues you face on the job in New York may be shared by professional employees working for other states. That’s why PEF sponsored four of its members at the state Transportation Department (NYSDOT) and a staffer from the union’s legislative department to attend the annual three-day conference of the National Association of State Highway and Transportation Unions.

The 17th Annual NASHTU Conference was held in Washington in May. Attending from PEF were members Karen Patterson, Ruth Hart, Angelina Foster and Tom Lutz, as well as lobbyist Indira Bokobza. Hart is a landscape architect and Patterson is a civil engineer. Both work in Hornell. Foster is an associate transportation analyst based in New York City and Lutz works in Syracuse as a principle drafting technician, general. Bokobza is PEF’s legislative staffer focused on federal funding and legislation.

PEF’s DOT labor-management committee selected the union’s conference attendees.

Although state transportation departments provide the direct services to the American public, most of the money, laws and design and construction standards come from the federal government, which puts Congress and the USDOT in the driver’s seat. That’s why the conference focused heavily on national transportation policy and funding, and face-to-face interactions with key members of Congress and USDOT officials.

Among the guest speakers were Federal Highway (FHWA) Administrator Greg Nadeau, former U.S. DOT Deputy Secretary John Porcari, and two members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Reps. Elizabeth Esty (D-CT) and John Garamendi (D-CA).

Ed Wytkind, president of the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department, updated the conference on federal legislative battles that affect transportation workers.

The conference also featured panel discussions on the long-term surface transportation authorization (FAST Act) and the recent Friedrichs v. CTA Supreme Court ruling that dealt with the right of public employee unions to collect fees from employees they represent, but who decline to join their membership. Participants also heard about In the Public Interest’s efforts to expose the biased analyses used to advance public-private partnership proposals, and a presentation from the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) about the failure of the U.S. to adequately fund transportation infrastructure.

Marc Korman, a member of the Delaware General Assembly, spoke on “A New Transparent Way of Prioritizing Transportation Project Selection.”

The NASHTU members took time to visit their members of Congress and advocate for their issues. They urged the lawmakers to support HR 1692, which would require public employees to perform the construction inspection on federally funded transportation projects. They also advocated for a requirement to perform cost comparisons prior to outsourcing and additional transportation funding. And they told their representatives to oppose language in upcoming bills that would require states to outsource transportation work.

After the in-office visits, the conference had an opportunity to speak with more lawmakers and their staff members at a NASHTU congressional reception, held in the Rayburn House Office Building.
Bayard Rustin, an activist driven by passion for equality

By DEBORAH A. MILES

There are many labor leaders whose names have remained under the radar. Often, their activism coupled with their own personal philosophy was not popular with the mainstream labor movement of their time. Yet, these men and women were instrumental in making positive change for future generations.

Bayard Rustin was one of the movers and shakers who is now remembered as a brilliant theorist and organizer. He formed a coalition of labor, liberal and religious leaders who supported passage of the civil rights and anti-poverty legislation of the 1960s. He was also the first executive director of the AFL-CIO’s A. Philip Randolph Institute (APRI), where he worked closely with the labor movement to ensure the rights of African Americans.

Rustin first met Randolph as a youth organizer at a March on Washington movement to end racial discrimination in the nation’s defense industries. Soon after the 1947 Freedom Rides, Rustin was appointed director of Randolph’s Committee Against Discrimination in the Armed Forces which helped convince President Harry S. Truman to desegregate the armed forces in 1948.

During the Second World War, Rustin spent two years in jail when he refused to register for the draft. He was later arrested in North Carolina and sentenced to work on a chain gang for several weeks because he took part in protests against the segregated public transit system. He wrote a story about his ordeal which was published in The New York Post and it resulted in prison reform in Alabama and led to the abolition of the convict labor system.

In 1953, he was arrested on a morals charge for being an openly gay man and was incarcerated for 60 days. Rustin remained comfortable about his homosexuality throughout his career, despite criticism.

One of his most significant contributions to the civil rights movement was when Rustin served as the chief tactician, working with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He organized successful boycotts against the Montgomery, AL segregated bus system. For the next five years, he remained King’s special assistant and close advisor.

In 1963, Rustin was the main organizer of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom to mark the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. That massive gathering is remembered as the setting for King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech. The event also helped secure passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1963 and the Voting Rights Act of 1964.

The following year, Rustin and Randolph co-founded APRI, a labor organization for African-American trade union members. His mission was to forge an interracial coalition to promote racial justice and secure jobs and freedom for all Americans. He served as APRI’s executive director from 1965 to 1972, and as its honorary president until his death in 1987. Under Rustin’s leadership, APRI announced a “Freedom Budget” that proposed to eliminate poverty in 10 years. He also spearheaded national voter registration campaigns and implemented a successful program to prepare people of color for apprenticeships in the building trades.

Despite the respect he earned from other civil rights and labor activists, he remained a target among the more conservative members, mostly for his homosexuality and their jealousy. He was in demand as a public speaker.

Three years prior to his death, Rustin was again arrested in 1984 for participating in a silent demonstration to support pay equity for striking clerical workers at Yale University. This man, who grew up in West Chester, PA and excelled in academics and was high school senior class valedictorian and graduate of City College in New York, received numerous awards and honorary degrees throughout his life. His writings about civil rights were published in the collection Down The Line in 1971, and in Strategies For Freedom in 1976.

Rustin died of a misdiagnosed perforated appendix at the age of 75 in New York City.

Region 5 drawing benefits PEF and members

Lori Mocniak, a supervising labor services representative at the Glendale Claims Center in Endicott, is the winner of a drawing held by PEF Region 5.

Mocniak, who is the treasurer of PEF Division 281, won an iPad in the drawing the region held for members who sent in their personal email addresses. Mocniak’s name was drawn at the Region 5 stewards meeting June 3.

“We really appreciate the great response from our members,” said PEF Region 5 Coordinator David Dubofsky. “It’s important for PEF to constantly update its database of member information, so we can alert members quickly when something important is happening that requires timely notice or a response. We are barred from contacting members via their work email, and this was a fun way to gather the personal email addresses. I want to thank all of the members who responded.” — Sherry Halbrook

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU WON! – PEF Region 5 Coordinator David Dubofsky presents a new iPad to Region 5 member Lori Mocniak. — Photo by Judson Wallis
Thousands of visitors have made the trek to New York’s Rock Island Lighthouse, a truly inspiring and magical landmark brimming with history since its restoration three years ago.

This incredible white iron beacon that stands 50 feet tall has guided sea vessels on the St. Lawrence River, halfway between the United States and Canada, since 1848.

It has undergone many transformations, from being atop the keeper’s residence, then moved and heightened throughout the years.

Its latest $1.5 million makeover was unveiled in 2013, and PEF members played integral roles in preserving the integrity of the tower, as well as the buildings on the four-acre island. They include the keeper’s house and generator building, an 1882 carpentry shop, a 1920 boathouse and an 1847 fieldstone smokehouse, making it the most intact former U.S. light station on the St. Lawrence River.

Daniel Pease, a landscape architect at the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), was the project manager and go-to man for maintenance crews, contractors, historic preservation consultants, engineers, material vendors and the on-site inspector of the Rock Island Station renovation and museum.

Pease said in 2001, the project suffered from a lack of funding, but it moved full steam ahead in 2009 with grant money from the U.S. Federal Highway Administration and state Department of Transportation.

Then his daily ritual began with a boat ride from Grass Point State Park to Rock Island, which Pease described as “the best part of the day.”

“Before that, each morning started with emails and phone conversations about ordering materials and following up on schedules. Inspection and communication with the crews and contractors was the job of the hour.

“And there was always the proverbial ‘putting out of fires,’” he said.

Challenges on the job

One “fire” was a design change when Pease worked with a contractor to install a half-mile underwater forced sewer line from the island to the mainland via the St. Lawrence River.

“Working with the contractor to properly sink and weight this plastic pipe to the river floor in December and January was a bit challenging. The plan looked good on paper but the environment has its own set of rules,” Pease said.

Joe Mungillo, an engineer at OPRHP and PEF steward for the Thousand Island region, agreed. He performed daily inspections of the multiple on-going contracts and referred to himself as “the eyes and ears for Dan Pease.”

Mungillo’s first day working on the Rock Island Lighthouse project coincided with the day they started to install the sewer line.

“It was an extremely long day, and things in the beginning went awry. It started out being an installation mess, but ended up being quite an operation. I had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be on a 100-foot barge called Thor’s
Hammer which hauled the concrete anchors that were used to sink the line to the river floor,” Mungillo said.

Mungillo was selected to be a part of the project for his boating expertise on the St. Lawrence River, and for his nearly 36 years of experience in construction inspection.

“This was an important project for me in many ways. To help protect and restore a part of history and make it available to the public has been very rewarding.”

All said and done
The many challenges of a project, no matter how great or small, lead to satisfaction when the project is completed, Pease noted.

“Ultimately, to see the project end successfully and as near to the original version of the design plan is very rewarding.”

Pease has worked at OPRHP for nearly 19 years and has worn many different hats in his job in the Resource Development Office. Some of his other accomplishments include a rails-to-trails project, the construction of a 4.5 mile paved path, a region-wide playground installation program, golf course irrigation, tree planting programs and dock and boat launch design.

But the Rock Island Lighthouse project was a truly unique experience for all who worked on it.

Pease said, “Most of us probably see historical preservation as preserving an object, such as an antique or archaeological find. It is so much more. It includes traditions, family recipes, cultures, neighborhoods.

“In the case of the Rock Island project, several of these things were included. We kept alive the local river culture, nautical transportation, landscape, as well as the actual structures located on the island.

“History books are a starting point of explaining the past, but being on-site at an historical place and experiencing a part of history is much richer. In such a fast-paced, high-tech world, it is very important to preserve essential pieces of history, so we can pass on the experience to future generations.”

The Rock Island Lighthouse is open to visitors from June through Labor Day, and then on weekends through Columbus Day. The cost of admission to the buildings is $3 per person. For more information, visit http://nysparks.com/parks/188/details.aspx.
Fond farewells

By SHERRY HALBROOK

PEF’s gratitude and best wishes go out to the following members who are retiring:

- **Elaine Arnold**, PEF Division 179, state Division of Homeland Security;
- **Loretta Belmonte**, PEF Division 363, state Workers’ Compensation Board;
- **Mary Bobersky**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Daria Britt**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **David Bourque**, PEF Division 357, state Office of Information Technology Services;
- **William K. Callahan**, PEF Division 236, state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision;
- **Noreen Carlson**, PEF Division 339, state Department of Motor Vehicles;
- **Cynthia Davis**, PEF Division 189, Central NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Kathryn Eastman**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Mary Field**, PEF Division 167, Western NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Leon Flanagan Sr.**, PEF Division 236, state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision;
- **Robert J. Giblin Jr.**, PEF Division 256, state Department of Transportation;
- **Joseph Heckley**, PEF Division 183, Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center;
- **Victoria Hunter**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Lynn Ingham**, PEF Division 189, Central NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Paul Kolakowski**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Renee Lee**, PEF Division 189, Central NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Piper Lutbak**, PEF Division 355, state Higher Educational Services Corp;
- **Richard Malaczynski**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Susan Matice**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Jean McAvoiy**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Lisa McSweeney**, PEF Division 183, Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center;
- **John Morelli**, PEF Division 179, state Office of General Services;
- **Michael Murphy**, PEF Division 236, state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision;
- **Brian O’Reilly**, PEF Division 270, Highland Residential Center;
- **Joseph Parzych**, PEF Division 189, Central NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Gregory Playford**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Susan Rider**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Francis Riedy**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Jacqueline Rybak**, PEF Division 167, state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities;
- **Carol Seniw**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Jill Snell**, PEF Division 189, Central NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office;
- **Timothy Stetson**, PEF Division 202, state Labor Department;
- **Denise Strothers**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Bruce Terbush**, PEF Division 169, state Department of Environmental Conservation;
- **Denise Vincent**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Elaine Wallace**, PEF Division 190, state Department of Taxation and Finance;
- **Mark Watson**, PEF Division 320, state University of NY Upstate (Golisano Children’s Hospital); and
- **William Wilkins**, PEF Division 179, state Office of General Services.

Are you or PEF members you know retiring? Please send information for this column to thecommunicator@pef.org.

Last call to sign-up for the Matrazzo golf tournament

The deadline to sign-up for the PEF Region 8 Lou Matrazzo golf tournament is Monday, July 25, so time is running out to get your check in the mail.

This annual event that attracts PEF members from around the state is being held at the Normanside County Club Monday, August 8.

The cost is $125 and the entrance fee includes breakfast at 8 a.m., refreshments on the course, green fees, golf cart and a buffet dinner featuring the awards. To attend only the dinner, the cost is $45 per person.

If you would like to join in the fun and camaraderie, please mail a completed registration form and a check for the full amount to “Region 8 Golf Tournament.”

The form and check should be mailed to Andrea Coton, PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414. If you have any questions, email acoton@pef.org or call 800-342-4306 ext. 215.

The proceeds from the 2016 tournament will benefit Capital Roots, a community service project that provides residents in Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Southern Saratoga Counties with fresh, affordable healthy food by organizing community gardens and providing information on nutrition and horticulture to residents.

The tournament will be held rain or shine, and remember to wear soft spikes.

It will begin with a four-person scramble shotgun start at 9 a.m. There must be at least one PEF member per foursome.

The Normanside Country Club at 150 Salisbury Road in Delmar.

— Deborah Miles
ATTENTION PEF MEMBERS SUFFERING SILENTLY WITH NECK AND LOWER BACK PAIN

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Functional Movement Evaluation
Via Suspension Therapy, you will be evaluated for muscle imbalances and weaknesses

WEEK #2 - EAST MEETS WEST
Trigger Point Acupuncture
Acupuncture is used to alleviate muscle spasms and increases mobility and is immediately followed by a strengthening program to lock results in place

WEEK #3 - FUNCTIONAL MEDICINE
Collaborative, Holistic Rehabilitation
We work with leading professionals to administer care without the use of prescriptive medications

WEEK #4 - NEUROMUSCULAR RE-EDUCATION
Muscle Memory
Movement patterns will be corrected with suspension therapy and functional exercise to balance and strengthen key muscle chains

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Supervisors involved in attempting to persuade workers to be exercise their labor rights. Conversely, consultants who coached supervisors on how to influence employees, so consultants didn’t act directly with employees. The new rule will require employers to disclose in government filings any consultant they hire to develop plans or policies for supervisors involved in attempting to persuade workers to be anti-union. Employers will also be required to disclose the fees involved. The consultants must disclose the relationships and fees in a filing of their own.

Under the original 1959 law, labor unions must disclose spending related to workplace organizing campaigns.

The U.S. Labor Department took action on this in March. It released the final version of a rule requiring employers to disclose relationships with consultants they hire to help persuade workers not to form a union or support a union’s collective bargaining position.

The rule applies to agreements made after July 1. The department said it is necessary because workers are frequently in the dark about who is trying to sway the employees when they exercise their labor rights.

There is a 1959 law on which the regulations are based that requires employers to disclose the hiring of such consultants. But the Labor Department had allowed an enormous loophole that effectively exempted consultants who coached supervisors on how to influence employees, so consultants didn’t act directly with employees.

The new rule will require employers to disclose in government filings any consultant they hire to develop plans or policies for supervisors involved in attempting to persuade workers to be

Verify covered dependents’ eligibility now

By DEBORAH STAYMAN

If you are covered through the state Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) and have family coverage, you will receive an important letter from the state Department of Civil Service (DCS) in July that requires your prompt attention and response by August 19. The deadline for retirees in NYSHIP was June 19.

Don’t put it off, because failure to respond by August 19 could make you liable to repay the state for some benefits.

In December 2015, DCS began conducting a Dependent Eligibility Verification Project (DEVP), similar to the audit conducted in 2009, to ensure every participant who receives benefits through NYSHIP is entitled to those benefits.

The State Division of Budget estimates that removal of ineligible dependents, such as ex-spouses, from NYSHIP could save the state $13 million annually or more (if savings from public authorities and local governments are included). DCS has contracted with Health Management Systems Inc. (HMS) to conduct the current audit.

The first phase of the DEVP was the special amnesty period that began December 1, 2015, and ended January 29, 2016. Enrollees who voluntarily removed ineligible dependents from coverage during the amnesty period will be held harmless and will not be liable for repayment of claims paid on behalf of these reported dependents.

The second phase of the DEVP, the verification phase, for active state employees is from July 5 to August 19, 2016. (It was May 2 through June 17 for retired state employees.) During this verification phase, enrollees will receive a customized letter that identifies their dependent(s) for whom eligibility must be verified, the NYSHIP requirements for dependent eligibility, and the documentation that must be submitted to HMS.

All employees who receive such a customized letter must follow its instructions to preserve the eligibility of their dependent(s). If you fail to provide the required documentation by the deadline, you could be liable to repay all benefits NYSHIP paid for the dependent during any period of ineligibility. You also could be subject to related civil, criminal and/or disciplinary action.

Watch your mail in early July for your verification letter. The letter will include a toll-free number for HMS, which is open 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

Have You Heard?

Labor News Briefs

Labor rule to restore balance between labor and management

The use of state agencies hiring consultants has plagued PEF for years. On a national level, the use of consultants has proliferated since the 1970s, and the techniques they deploy to discourage workers from forming unions have become progressively more sophisticated.

Many employers spend a lot of money on “persuaders” to intimidate their employees and keep unions out of the workplace.

The U.S. Labor Department took action on this in March. It released the final version of a rule requiring employers to disclose relationships with consultants they hire to help persuade workers not to form a union or support a union’s collective bargaining position.

The rule applies to agreements made after July 1. The department said it is necessary because workers are frequently in the dark about who is trying to sway the employees when they exercise their labor rights.

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Teamsters making headlines about new pension plan

Teamsters who work at Costco in New York, New Jersey and Maryland have overwhelmingly ratified an agreement under which they will be covered by the Western Conference of Teamsters pension plan for the first time in the history of their membership.

The Western Conference is the largest Taft-Hartley defined-benefit pension plan in the nation. The 4,000 Costco Teamsters in the East now have joined the 12,000 Costco Teamsters in California as members of this defined-benefit plan.

After the members rejected a previous company offer in March, Costco and the Teamsters met to correct the areas that caused the rejection – the attainment of the pension plan in the East. Costco agreed to allow members in the East to decide by a separate vote as to whether they wanted to enter the pension plan. Based largely on this change, the California agreement was ratified overwhelmingly in May. The East Coast teamsters ratified their contract in a vote count June 22.

— Deborah Miles
Aflac for PEF Members

PEF is now making the following Aflac insurance policies available to its members:

1. **Accident**
   - For a covered accident, Aflac policyholders receive cash benefits for use as they see fit. This plan helps provide a financial cushion if an accident occurs.
   - Policy NYR35100, NYR35200, NYR35300, NYR35400, NY35B24, NY35B0F, NYR35500, NYR35600, NYR35700, NYR35800, NY35W24, NY35WOF

2. **Cancer/Specified-Disease**
   - Aflac’s cancer/specified-disease insurance policies are designed to pay cash benefits that can be used to help with cancer-related expenses and to help with a variety of daily living expenses.
   - Policy NY78100, NY78200, NY78300, NY78400

---

**Aflac for PEF Members:**

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- Aflac pays you cash benefits, unless assigned, to use as you see fit.
- Aflac benefits can help with unexpected expenses.
- Aflac insurance policies belong to you—not PEF.
- Aflac offers competitive rates.
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For more information about policy benefits, limitations, and exclusions, please enroll over the phone at 1.877.433.4816 or email stash_wojeski@us.aflac.com.

This is a brief product overview only. Plans may not be available in all states. Benefits are determined by situs state and plan level selected.
**Ailing members need your leave donations**

By SHERRY HALBROOK

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations:

- **Mohammad Abdelfadeel (Imam Fadale)** is a chaplain at Collins Correctional Facility who has been on sick leave since August 2015. To donate leave to him, call 716-532-4588.
- **Noreen Campbell (Cotov)** is a parole hearing officer at Rikers Island Correctional Facility. To donate leave to her, contact the human resources office at 518-457-6692.
- **Helen Crane** is a principal health care manager at the state Health Department in Albany. She is being treated for late-stage Lyme disease. To donate leave, call 518-457-4272.
- **Catherine Giblin** is a licensed master social worker 2 at South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island. She is undergoing a series of surgeries. To donate leave, call 718-667-2741.
- **Wanda Gonzalez (Rosado)** is a standards compliance analyst 1 for the Department of Quality Improvement at the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities. She is recovering from surgery related to bone cancer. To donate leave, call 518-402-4677.
- **William (BJ) Johnson** is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility who is recovering from emergency surgery following a heart attack on the job in February. To donate leave to him, call 518-731-2741.
- **Theresa Lacey** is an alcohol and substance abuse treatment program assistant at Sing Sing Correctional Facility who was hospitalized in January for worsening medical issues. To donate leave to her, call 914-941-0108.
- **Danielle Mazzeo** is a psychologist 2 for Metro NY Developmental Disabilities Services Office. She is recovering from hip-replacement surgery following complications to the original surgery. To donate leave, call 718-430-0784.
- **Pauline Merakis** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. She has liver failure and needs a transplant. To donate leave, call 315-464-4943.
- **Julie Russell** is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate University Hospital in Syracuse. She has a back injury following absences to care for seriously ill family members. To donate leave, call 315-464-4943.
- **Carmen Slaughter** is a senior administrative analyst at the state Department of Financial Services in Albany. She is recuperating from surgery and dealing with serious, ongoing medical issues. To donate leave to Slaughter, call 518-486-1774.
- **Philip Ward** is an addictions program specialist 2 at the state Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services in Albany. He is recovering from a head injury and multiple fractures sustained in a fall. To donate leave to him, email bscbenefitsadmin@ogs.ny.gov.
- **Ruth Warner** is a social worker assistant 3 at Taconic Developmental Disabilities Services Office in Kingston. She is being treated for recurring cancer. To donate leave, call 845-877-6821, ext. 3284.
- **Mary Wesley-Bullock** is a senior administrative analyst at the state Office of Children and Family Services in Rensselaer. She has a chronic condition that requires frequent absences from work for medical care. To donate leave, call 518-408-3510.

The rules for making and receiving leave donations are set forth on page 72 of the PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, needs leave donations because of a medical issue, you may contact The Communicator to request publication of that need. Send requests to thecommunicator@pef.org, or call 800-342-4306, ext. 271. Be sure to provide your contact information.

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Region 8: Nominate a great union sister!

Do you know a great PEF union sister in Region 8? Does she deserve some applause for all that she does for PEF, her union family or her community?

Nominate her for the Region 8 Women of Merit recognition. The deadline for submitting nominations has been extended to Friday, August 8.

Region 8 will salute these terrific women at a champagne and chocolate reception Thursday, September 15.

Here are three easy options to submit your nomination/s:

1. Email your nominations (200 words or fewer) to Linda Baker, who chairs the Region 8 Women Program, at activitysignup@yahoo.com;
2. Call Andrea Coton in the Region 8 field office at 518-785-1900, ext. 215; or
3. Leave your entry at the field office for Region 8 Coordinator Michael Blue. The field office is in PEF headquarters at 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham.

— Sherry Halbrook

Committee seeks input for LGBTQ concerns

Have you ever wished there was a committee or group in PEF that focused on the concerns and needs of the union’s members who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning?

If you have, now is definitely the time to speak up.

The PEF Women’s Committee is helping to form a new PEF LGBTQ Committee and would like to assess the level of interest from members throughout the state. The committee would love to hear from you.

Please share your thoughts, ideas and suggestions. Send them to activitysignup@yahoo.com.

— Sherry Halbrook
Nassau County

Levittown
3601 Hempstead Tpke
(516) 579-7577

Massapequa
5454 Merrick Road
(516) 798-3300

Valley Stream
417 West Merrick Road
(516) 568-0448

Suffolk County

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400 West Main Street
(631) 422-6066

Hauppauge
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Suffolk: 646 Main St., Pt. Jefferson
Tel. 631-249-1342

Bronx: 305 E. 149th St. (2nd floor)
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**EVENTS**

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<td>Martin’s Fantasy Island</td>
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<td>Sterling Renaissance Festival</td>
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<td>Tri-City Valley Cats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six Flags Great Adventure</td>
<td>August 6</td>
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<td>Seabreeze PEF Week</td>
<td>Aug. 22-28</td>
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<td>Cirque du Soleil: TORUK</td>
<td>Sept. 10</td>
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- Avoid a possible court appearance
- Keep insurance rates as low as possible
- Avoid possible license suspension

**VENUE**

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<tr>
<td>Four Pack Day Passes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid for up to four (4), one-day passes to the waterpark. Must be redeemed on the same day and passes will only be issued to guests present at the time of redemption.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporate May-November:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valid for one (1) full-day admission. May through November.</td>
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**BASEBALL TEAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baseball Team</th>
<th>Discount Price**</th>
<th>Member Price*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batavia Muckdogs</td>
<td>$5</td>
<td>$4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Binghamton Mets</td>
<td>$7</td>
<td>$6</td>
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<td>Buffalo Bisons</td>
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<td>Rochester Red Wings</td>
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<td>Syracuse Chiefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tri-City Valley Cats</td>
<td>$8.25</td>
<td>$7</td>
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</table>
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SUMMER TICKETS

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<td>Adv. Park (full day)</td>
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<td>$24</td>
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<td>Canada's Wonderland</td>
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<td>Adult</td>
<td>$32.31</td>
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<td>Cedar Point</td>
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<td>$49</td>
<td>$40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Darien Lake</td>
<td>Darien Center, NY</td>
<td>General Use 2-Day Ride &amp; Slide</td>
<td>$27.99</td>
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<td>Dorney Park</td>
<td>Allentown, PA</td>
<td>Adult</td>
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<td>Dutch Wonderland</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Fun Spot</td>
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<td>Great Escape</td>
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<td>Jackson, NJ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jiminy Peak Mt. Adventure</td>
<td>Hancock, MA</td>
<td>All Park Pass (48&quot;) Mt. Adv. Pass (38&quot;)</td>
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<td>Kennywood</td>
<td>West Mifflin, PA</td>
<td>General Use</td>
<td>$28.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>King's Dominion</td>
<td>Doswell, VA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin's Fantasy Island</td>
<td>Grand Island, NY</td>
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<td>$18</td>
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<td>Mountain Creek Action Park</td>
<td>Vernon, NJ</td>
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<td>$30.99</td>
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<td>Santa's Workshop</td>
<td>North Pole, NY</td>
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<td>$20.99</td>
<td>$17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seabreeze</td>
<td>Rochester, NY</td>
<td>Adult</td>
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<td>Six Flags Great Adventure</td>
<td>Jackson, NJ</td>
<td>General Use Parking</td>
<td>$42.79</td>
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<td>Agawam, MA</td>
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<td>$28</td>
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<td>Sandusky, OH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Splash Zone</td>
<td>Wildwood, NJ</td>
<td>Adult Jr.</td>
<td>$25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Splish Splash</td>
<td>Calverton, NY</td>
<td>Adult Jr./Sr.</td>
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<td>$27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Slide World</td>
<td>Lake George, NY</td>
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<td>$23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoom Flume</td>
<td>East Durham, NY</td>
<td>Adult Child</td>
<td>$20.99</td>
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</table>

*Members can purchase 10 per type at the Member Price. **Members can purchase an additional 10 per type at the Discount Price.

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Present your PEF ID at the following venues to receive a discount.

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SPAC—Saratoga, NY. Save $5 per ticket on performances of: New York City Ballet, National Ballet of China, Modern Dance, The Philadelphia Orchestra (excludes Matinees, Ballet Gala, Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and premium-priced performances of the Philadelphia Orchestra). Discount applies to all lawn and amphitheater seating.

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- High Falls Gorge
- Idlewild and Soak Zone (Ligonier, PA)
- Morey's Pier
- Sandcastle Waterpark
- Shawnee Mountain
- Splash Lagoon NEW!
- Staten Island Yankees
- Watkins Glen International
- Wildwater Kingdom (Aurora, OH)
- WonderWorks Destiny USA

Visit Membership Benefits at www.pef.org for full details on these offers.

Check out our insurance benefits.

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Benefits available to active, dues-paying PEF members & PEF retirees. | You must have your Membership Identification Number (MIN) to purchase tickets.

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