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The President’s Message

By WAYNE SPENCE

Members taking a beating is NOT OK

In the six weeks since the PEF convention, we have been faced with a grim reminder – workplace violence is at crisis levels and New York state is failing to keep us safe. Lives are at stake and we believe it’s past time for a change.

What we are seeing is that not only is workplace violence increasingly common in those workplaces where violence is expected -- for example, corrections, law enforcement and mental health -- but in almost every occupation that deals with the public.

In recent weeks we have seen:
• Assaults on three PEF nurses;
• Assaults on six parole officers;
• Resignations from members who were either assaulted or in fear of being assaulted;
• Multiple lockdowns at correctional facilities;
• And six months ago, a brutal attack on a member walking to her car at the end of the workday.

This month’s eCommunicator features the first story in a series of stories on this epidemic and focuses on the assaults that have occurred in recent weeks.

Though there are many factors that could contribute to workplace violence, we have identified predictors of trouble to come:
• Low staffing levels;
• Working alone;
• Working with prescription drugs;
• Working late at night or early in the morning;
• Working in a correctional facility or facility for the mentally or developmentally disabled, without proper training in violence avoidance or self-defense, to name just a few of the working conditions associated with increased workplace violence.

We believe many incidents are predictable, some are even preventable. And like any other workplace hazard, we believe it is the responsibility of the employer to take reasonable measures to minimize the likelihood of workplace violence.

Since the state has failed to keep us safe, as we continue our contract negotiations, we will be pushing for inclusion of contract language that covers workplace violence issues.

We all want monetary gains in a new contract, but across the board raises are not ALL that a contract is about. I ask you, what good is a contract if you don’t come home at the end of your workday or you come home permanently disabled or disfigured because you have been a victim of workplace violence?

To help us at the negotiating table we ask that you let us know if you were assaulted or threatened at work. Your story could be a vital part of the documentation needed for effective workplace violence prevention programs and contract language to ensure the safety of our members. You can remain anonymous, but please send us all the details of the incident, what could have been done to prevent it, and the type of support you received.

Please share this eCommunicator with your co-workers, family and friends on social media and elsewhere, to let the governor know: “Enough is enough.” Workplace violence is NOT part of the job! Injuries or worse, related to workplace violence, will not be tolerated by PEF.

Together, we are union strong!
PEF to NYS: Stop Workplace Violence

By SHERRY HALBROOK

Of all the important terms and conditions of employment that PEF works to advance for its members, nothing tops keeping them safe from danger at work.

“I am alarmed, angry and very frustrated by the news I have been receiving day after day in the last few weeks,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “One after another of our members is being assaulted on their jobs and it is just not acceptable. The state cannot expect to hold on to its employees when it fails to keep them safe on the job. This must stop!”

What began with news of a nurse resigning because she felt “unsafe” at her job in a state facility, was soon followed by reports from all over the state of members being attacked at work.

“I was notified that a nurse in Region 9 was slashed by a patient with a weapon made from contraband. Then I heard of nurses in Region 2 who were attacked by clients throwing their bodily fluid on them. Then we began to hear of attacks on six parole officers, including an officer in Region 1 and five more in Region 12 who were injured on the job in recent weeks,” Spence said. “There have been multiple prisons locked down because of heightened danger. Earlier this year, a Region 8 office worker was brutally attacked and seriously injured walking to her car in a state parking lot right across the street from the office building where she works in Albany.

“This cannot stand. We will not and must not accept this as ‘business as usual.’ No one benefits from this! The state agencies where this happens are already critically understaffed, and these injuries and attacks only put scarce and valuable staff out on workers’ comp or sick leave. So, it costs the taxpayers money and it impairs services to New Yorkers. But, most of all, PEF members are injured, terrorized and traumatized.

“We will not tolerate this!”

To get an idea of how horrific and traumatic these incidents are for the PEF members experiencing them, consider what happened to PEF Executive Board member Carl Ankrah, a psychiatric nurse practitioner at Rockland Psychiatric Center in Orangeburg.

Ankrah, who has worked for the state since 2013, said he was in his office on a late October morning when he heard a knock on the door. He asked who it was and was told that it was a patient, who had just come on the ward the previous day.

“He said that he wanted to come in to talk to me about going home. I said that we had not been able to get an answer at the phone number he had given us of a friend or family member who could come and pick him up. I said that I would need to get a different phone number from him and that I would come out and talk to him when I finished what I was doing,” Ankrah said.

A few minutes later said he walked down the hall accompanied by a nursing student and knocked on the door to the patient’s room. The patient opened the door and asked Ankrah to come inside without the student so that they could speak privately about something personal.

“I told the patient, ‘No. The student is approved to be here. The patient told me a phone number to call and when I lowered my head eyes as I started to write it down, I realized that I was bleeding. I didn’t feel the cut before I sensed the bleeding,” Ankrah said.

A struggle immediately began as the patient kept slashing
at Ankrah’s head and neck with what the PEF member later learned was a weapon made from the razor head from a shaver and nails that had all been bound together with linen to a pen he was using as a handle.”

The student summoned other staff to help Ankrah who said, “I was trying to run to the nurses’ station, and the patient was chasing me. He just wouldn’t stop attacking me! I think another staff person was hurt before they were able to subdue him.”

Ankrah suffered a long narrow gash from the corner of his eye, across his temple and his ear from the first slash. He also had cuts on the other side of his face and the back of his neck, among others.

Looking back on it, Ankrah said he now realizes that the attack was premeditated.

“The patient must have smuggled that razor and nails into the center. He should have been searched when he arrived in Triage, but he still had them,” Ankrah said.

Why this patient that Ankrah had barely met chose to attack him, is unknown.

“Thank, God, I didn’t answer my door and let him into my office when he knocked or I would probably be dead. He was trying to get me where there was no one else around. And I was saved again, when I didn’t let him get me alone in his room. He would have seriously damaged me if he got me alone!”

The shock of this totally unexpected attack has left a wound on Ankrah’s psyche even more painful and deep than the cuts to his skin.

“One time is more than enough!” Ankrah said.

Spence and PEF Region 10 Coordinator Darlene Williams who is both the PEF co-chair of the Joint Health and Safety Committee and the chair of PEF’s PS&T Contract Team, said these attacks on members give those negotiations with the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations a deeper dimension of seriousness and urgency.

“We shouldn’t have to come to the bargaining table braced for word that could come at any minute of another attack. Members are just quitting their jobs rather than risk serious injury or even being killed for trying to give New Yorkers the highest quality public services they can,” Spence said.

“Our members have invested long years and a big share of their income in obtaining the college degrees and specialized training and experience required to be in these Professional, Scientific and Technical unit positions,” Williams said. “It’s horrifying to think that any member could lose their life doing their job while we are still butting heads with state negotiators. That possibility is horrifying, but we just can’t duck it. The evidence of this danger and risk is staring us in the face.”

The union is working hard on many levels, from training to labor-management, to lobbying for stronger legal protections to counter these dangers. Watch for more news and information about this in future issues of The eCommunicator.
State extends contractual benefits set to sunset

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The next round of main table PS&T negotiations with the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) are set for Nov. 12 and 13. But, in the meantime, a few contractual benefits that could have ended after the contract expired in April have been extended.

The Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP) benefit, which allows eligible PS&T unit members to cash out vacation time and/or personal leave in return for credits toward the employee share of health insurance premiums, was extended for 2020.

Credit values for the program will remain the same — full-time employees in salary grades up to SG 17 can forfeit three or six days and those in salary grades SG 18 to SG 24 can forfeit two or four days for credit of $500 or $1,000, respectively.

Approximately 5,000 PEF members participate in the PEP program currently. Open enrollment for this program is through Nov. 19. Click here for the bulletin about PEP in 2020 and click here for the PEP MOU and the Teachers’ PEP MOU.

The state also extended the Dependent Care Advantage Account program for 2020.

“The state could have allowed these benefits to sunset,” Contract Team Chair Darlene Williams said. “Instead, they extended them through the 2020 benefit year. For our members who depend on these programs, this is welcome news.”

Negotiations at the main table will continue this month, as well as dates in December, Williams said.

Recognizing that communication is crucial, the contract team strives to keep members as informed as possible, without tipping their hand. To that end, they recorded a video that touches on major issues the team is fighting for, such as improved dental benefits; increases to longevity, Mid-Hudson and Downstate adjustments; changes in on-call and overtime compensation; the grievance process; and work-life balance. The video update sheds light on the current atmosphere at the bargaining table and what your contract team members are committed to achieving in a new contract. More video updates will follow, Williams said.

To view the video, click here.

“We’re going to be asking members to step up and continue to show their support on social media,” Williams said. “Keep checking the PEF website, Facebook and Twitter pages because we plan to roll out the next phase of the Hashtag Fridays campaign and we encourage everyone to get involved.”
RECOMMIT TODAY!

NEW + EXISTING PEF MEMBERS

SIGN NOW!
Thanks, PEF, for good work

To the Editor:
Thanks very much for keeping me up-to-date on PEF.

PEF has always done a great job in representing the best interests of its members.

I am now retired, but am still a proud member of PEF Retirees. Thank you, and keep up the good work!

JOHN J. TIMMEL
BEDFORD

How long do new contract deals take?

To the Editor:
OK, thanks for you efforts, but we’ve been working without a contract for more than six months. What’s the timeline for a tentative agreement and a vote?

MARY ROGERS
DELMAR

Editor’s Note:
There is no way to know how long it will take to reach tentative agreement on a PS&T contract. Negotiations cover 50 contract articles affecting members on many levels. Pay raises are just one of the issues. Negotiations of previous contracts have taken months and often they have taken years. It is exhausting, frustrating work. But nothing moves the bargaining forward in a positive direction better than unbending unity among the members in support of their bargaining team.

Raise the bar for PEF delegates

To the Editor:
I take strong exception to the sentiments in the October issue of The eCommunicator, saying, “Showing up is one of the most important things union members can do.”

Really? Just “showing up” is all you expect of the delegates to the PEF Convention? Here’s a reality check: It’s not a key virtue, but an obligation. PEF pays the delegates to be there. That’s not a virtue. It’s simply the right thing to do.

What is a key virtue is participation. How about raising the bar for PEF delegates, and making participation – getting up to the mic, writing and defending resolutions in committee and on the floor, and otherwise doing what they’re elected to do – the new expectation?

JAMES CLOSE
MECHANICVILLE
Credentialing issue haunts retiree

To the Editor:
It amazes me that, after 29-plus years with the criminal investigation unit (at the state Department of Taxation and Finance) as a criminal investigator with police status, we, who have retired, were never issued police credentials as our predecessors were.

All of this changed when one director came in and changed our identifications. So why is it that, prior to that, investigators who retired received their police credentials, and thereafter no more police credentials? We made arrests, conducted search warrants and much more, yet it seems that we are not entitled to our police credentials.

As a retired criminal investigator/police officer, I feel cheated, as do many of my former co-workers who have devoted and given so much of themselves to the NYS Dept. of Taxation and Finance criminal investigation unit.

Our union has failed us.

ANGELIQUE APONTE
THE BRONX

Editor’s Note:

As the writer points out, the change in credentialing resulted from an upper management decision. As a public employee union in New York state, PEF is prohibited by state law from negotiating with the state on behalf of its retired members.
Men’s sick leave credit 15% too low

To the Editor:
One of the key inputs used by the state formula for calculating the monetary value of a (retiring) employee’s sick leave accrual is one’s life expectancy. The longer one is expected to live, the lower the monthly sick-leave credit available to offset the cost of one’s insurance premium. This makes sense since the value of the accrued leave must be stretched out to cover a person’s full life expectancy.

Women, on average, live longer than men. Therefore, if a man and woman retire at the same age with the same sick leave accrual, the man’s monthly sick leave credit should be higher than the woman’s. However, this is not the case.

The state uses a “uniform” life-expectancy table that does not take gender into account and, instead, uses the same life expectancy for both men and women.

So, to be fair, one might expect that table to be based on a blended life expectancy of men and women. Not so! The state only uses the longer life expectancy of females, thus shortchanging the monthly sick-leave credit for men.

Does this really matter? Damn straight it does!

Take a look at NYS’ Self-Help Guide to Pre-Retirement Planning. The beginning of Chapter 6 contains a Life Expectancy Chart. According to the chart, a 65-year-old man is expected to live 17.75 more years; while a woman of the same age is expected to live 20.32 more years. In other words, a 65-year-old woman is expected to live almost 15 percent longer than a man of the same age. In monetary terms, it means that when it comes to their monthly sick-leave credit men are short-changed to the tune of 15 percent. This is plain out discrimination.

Did this happen by accident? More to the point, does PEF know about this? If so, what is PEF doing about it?

STEVEN GILBERT
TEANECK, NJ

Editor’s Note:

PEF appreciates members bringing work-related issues to its attention. It will look into any unwarranted and unfair disparity.
Just get us a contract

To the Editor:
The lack of a contract is bewildering. The transparency of the contract negotiations is black as night. I have lost faith in the leadership.

When a contract is agreed to, it has to go out to vote, mailings, etc. This is truly a waste of time, money and other valuable resources.

I am starting to question why I keep paying my dues. Just get a deal done so we can move on.

CHASE CHASKEY
DELMAR

Editor’s Note:

Money is not the only issue in the contract that matters. Take a look at the lead story in this issue of your eCommunicator to understand that workplace safety is one of many issues that are fundamentally important to PEF members every day they go to work and that can not be achieved by pay raises alone. Job security is another overarching issue that is just as important as pay hikes.

The union is obligated to negotiate the best agreement it can for its members and if the PEF Executive Board feels a tentative agreement that is reached with the state provides sufficient benefit to the members it would vote to send that to members for their votes. Not all unions allow their members to personally vote on their contracts, but PEF has always been wholly committed to letting members make that choice.

Members have not always ratified the tentative agreements PEF has sent to them. If the members reject a tentative agreement, the union’s and the governor’s negotiators must return to the bargaining table and try again to reach terms that members will accept.

Email your letters to: thecommunicator@pef.org
A call for change at SED following long-time member’s death

By KATE MOSTACCIO

The days leading up to Charles “Charlie” McCarthy’s death at age 87 were a whirlwind of unexpected administrative leave, being turned away at the door of his workplace, confusion, and distress for the longtime PEF member.

RELATED: Colleagues share memories of 50-year NYSED member who died suddenly

One day in September, McCarthy reported to work as he had many times — only to be turned away at the door and informed he had been placed on administrative leave and could not enter the building.

A PEF field representative said McCarthy contacted her after he had been locked out, confused and distraught, having no idea why he had been placed on leave.

The day after McCarthy spoke with the field rep, he was found at his residence, unresponsive and in critical condition. He was transported to Ellis Hospital in Schenectady but sadly, on September 28, McCarthy died of a massive stroke after suffering a severe brain bleed. He had never regained consciousness.

PEF requested information about the administrative leave at his family’s request.

“I can advise that this action was taken by the agency to address a situation where sanitation standards/protocol were potentially compromised,” an SED Bureau of Labor Relations representative stated in an email to the field rep.

PEF Division 194 Council Leader Annette Chambers said in a letter to Chancellor Betty A. Rosa that she had been attending the PEF Convention in Albany when McCarthy was placed on leave, and the timing, she thought, was intentional and unfair. “I understand that these things do happen; but why was it necessary for HR to put Charlie out on administrative leave?” Chambers wrote. “Is it possible for you to look into this case and see why this most senior professional staff member was treated this way?”

She also called for Rosa to look into the HR practices at SED, stating the department “calls for termination of almost all of our members that are brought up on suspected charges, or they are put out on suspension without pay.

“They often take actions because the ‘contract allows them to do so,’ but with little to no regard for an employee’s wellbeing,” she added. “An example: putting employees out on suspension without pay, could you live for 10 months without your salary?”

She said there is an assumption of guilt and these suspensions happen before employees are given a chance to prove their case.

“Just because they ‘can,’ does not necessarily mean they ‘should,’” she said. “Many of our members who have experienced this behavior are older members who have dedicated many years to SED and have never had an issue. I would truly like to see the seasoned/dedicated employees be treated with more kindness and dignity.”

The SED email stated that lockout was standard procedure for staff placed on administrative leave. The representative stated that “significant efforts” were made to contact McCarthy prior to his arrival at the SED building, including multiple phone messages.

“OHRM extends our sincere condolences to Mr. McCarthy’s family. A number of our staff who knew or had dealings with Mr. McCarthy were very saddened to hear of his passing, myself included,” Benjamin Gifford, director of SED’s Bureau of Labor Relations, stated in an email.
Sign up today for the eCommunicator

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www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/
Colleagues share memories of 50-year NYSED member who died suddenly

By KATE MOSTACCIO

For 50 years, PEF member Charles “Charlie” McCarthy dedicated his life to serving New York as an Education Credentials Specialist II at the Department of Education (SED), assisting those who applied for teacher certificates, administrative and other certificates.

At the time of his death, at age 87, McCarthy was still working full time but had been unexpectedly placed on administrative leave in the days leading up to his passing. He was turned away from his long-time workplace October 25, unaware of the administrative action. He was reportedly confused and distraught. On October 28, he died after a massive stroke.

Besides being a talented and dedicated professional, McCarthy also went out of his way to boost workplace morale. His bread treats were a fondly remembered favorite among many colleagues, as was his willingness to help others.

“Charlie often made a point of bringing a birthday card and a cupcake for the birthday person to enjoy,” Chambers said. “He also provided bread and other goodies on nearly a daily basis to his colleagues.”

SED colleague Pat Whalen said McCarthy was friendly to all those he interacted with, regardless of which department they worked in.

“The thing I remember most about him is how warm and collegial he always was, whether you were someone who worked with him or someone from a completely different department,” Whalen said. “He would often stop at the front desk and visit with those of us who worked there, and he would frequently bring in breads from various bakeries in the area and share some of it with us.”

A recent hire, Kathy Ophardt, said McCarthy made her feel welcome.

“What I remember most about him is that he would buy loaves of bread every morning from Perreca’s bakery in Scotia that he would distribute to his colleagues later in the day,” she said. “I was personally the recipient of the bread three to four times in the four months I have been here. He used to tell me it was for my kids to enjoy at dinner.

“To me, personally, this was Charlie’s way of saying, ‘Welcome to the NYSED family!’” she said. “He made me feel very welcome. My children did enjoy the bread, too!”
Mail and File Unit Supervisor Rich Parks said, “Whenever I see that green and red bag, I'll think of Charlie. He was a great help to me when I first started.”

Division 194 Steward Mary Sapp also highlighted McCarthy’s energy and selflessness.

“He always said hello in the halls,” she said. “He was always friendly with a smile. He was an accomplished person who worked for so long at SED.”

His knowledge helped many of his coworkers through the years.

“Charlie was always willing to help colleagues with certification questions,” Amy Heebner said. “He was also very generous in bringing in treats for people in the office. I was the recipient of many loaves of bread from Perreca’s, raspberry cookies and Crabtree and Evelyn bars of soap (which he gave as birthday presents).”

Lori Kane said McCarthy’s spirit was inspiring.

“I will always remember my first day at State Ed almost 20 years ago,” she said. “Charlie was hurdling over the ramp in Teacher’s Certification and I thought, ‘Wow, this older man has so much energy and is so happy.’

“Over the years, I realized, he was so much more,” she continued. “Charlie was kind, caring, smart, sweet and a perfect gentleman. I will forever miss him and feel that we should all be more like Charlie.”

Richard Jackson, who met McCarthy in 2001 and sat next to him for eight years, will remember the unique things McCarthy would say.

“He was always the last one to leave the office (using the quiet time to complete work accumulated from his many phone calls),” Jackson said. “I would say, ‘See you later, Charlie’ and he always responded, ‘Hope so.’

“That, and his phone conversation closing, ‘It is always nice to speak to a noble colleague,’ still rings in my ears,” he continued. “Charlie also provided many lessons in history, religion, music, comedy, and of course, institutional knowledge of the New York State Education Department, that can only be known to individuals that work there.”

S. J. Finnessey, director of the Office of School Personnel Review and Accountability, remembers fondly his interactions with McCarthy.

“Much to our mutual laughter, Charlie and I exchanged greetings every time we passed each other in the hallways,” Finnessey said. “He would often greet me with ‘Counselor’, ‘CIA’, or ‘Celebrity’, and I would greet him with ‘General’, ‘Admiral’, or ‘Commander’. That was our special way of saying hello to each other.”

“He was truly a friend to all and is dearly missed,” Chambers said.

Coworker Angela Zema crafted a poetic remembrance of her coworker.

“Gentle Charlie — still larger than life, distinctively enduring, of legendary archival knowledge. With a skip in his step, knapsack of bread, we still feel as if we can see him rounding the corner, sitting near us, telling of his drive or kitty companions — often the best kind. CFM we wish you peace and love, beauty, kindness — what you appreciated and dearly deserve.”

Members of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) union were also fond of McCarthy.

Donna Ross, a retired CSEA member who worked at the New York State Museum for 30 years, had the pleasure of McCarthy assisting her with teacher certification. He made a lasting impression on her.

“I met Charlie in the early 90s when I met with him about applying for teacher certification,” Ross said. “I was in a graduate program for Liberal Studies at SUNY Albany and decided I wanted to add Reading Teacher to my program. Charlie was very sweet and very professional,” she recalled. “He gave me excellent advice and guidance and beyond that was a mentor to me.”

Ross said she would sometimes run into McCarthy on the second floor of the museum where she tutored kids in the Museum Club and he would pass through on the way to his car. And like many others, she looked forward to his bread offerings. “He also very generously brought the Visitor Services Staff fresh Italian bread from Perreca’s bakery about once a week and we all looked forward to that wonderful treat,” Ross said. “I will always have fond memories of Charlie.”

Current CSEA member Robert Hart also passed along condolences: “Charlie, rest in God’s peace.”

Prior to working for SED, McCarthy, fluent in Russian, served as a translator with the United Nations in New York City. Born in Schenectady on April 18, 1932, he lived in Scotia most of his life. McCarthy is predeceased by three siblings, Barbara, Marie, and John, and is survived by several nieces and nephews.
Unions are not built in “a” day. They are built every day.

The approximately 54,000 people represented by PEF, mostly state professional, scientific and technical (PS&T) employees of New York state, constitute a fluid group. Employees enter and leave the bargaining unit every day, and that can create gaps in the union structure of leadership and services especially at the local or PEF division level.

“Our members’ needs are constantly shifting and changing and we need to be constantly building and rebuilding to meet those needs,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “We are always in transition.”

That’s why the union’s statewide leaders have come to recognize the need to be constantly helping members maintain their local union structure and send them experts to give that support where and when it’s needed.

Since April, PEF staffers Kristie Furman and Dan Carpenter have traveled to more than 50 worksites and PEF events to meet with members and help them learn how to fill gaps and build their capacity to meet their needs and provide effective union services.

“Members must be active and informed,” said PEF Vice President Randi DiAntonio, who heads PEF’s membership engagement efforts. “That’s what it takes for this union to be effective in meeting their needs. Members need to know what it means to be in the union, they need to know what their benefits are and who are their local leaders. They need to know who to contact for information and help, and they need to know how to reach those people. We want to be able to share valuable information with every member and we need to hear the valuable information they want to share with us.”

“PEF isn’t just a few elected people and some staff in Albany,” Spence said. “The union is every member, and we know that we are only as strong and effective in meeting our needs as our common purpose and efforts allow. You need to know who to turn to when you have an issue. You need to receive the valuable information we have to give you about your contract, your benefits, your legal rights, your educational opportunities, and lots of ways to make your working life safer and more productive.”

PEF depends on effective organization and communication throughout every level, including each member whose work requires them to travel, and every member at every facility, office, laboratory, hospital and other worksite.

“Our strength depends on the whole union being able to respond and put its strength behind each person who is injured, denied their rights, or encountering other serious workplace challenges and issues,” Spence said. “And that means work and maintenance on our internal structure has to go on continuously. So, that’s what we are doing.”

Furman, who is PEF assistant director of divisions, and Carpenter, PEF’s assistant director of field service organizing, are the core staff members addressing this need, and that has meant responding by phone and email to division officers, stewards and members asking for information and help. And often it means one or both of them go to you and they bring the knowledge and tools you need to be the functioning and productive part of PEF that you need to be. While they are the point persons currently working on this, they have support from a wide range of PEF’s elected leaders and staff.

When members retire, transfer or are promoted out of the PS&T bargaining unit, it can leave big gaps in the division’s leadership structure.

“You may be missing stewards, a division leader, assistant division leader, treasurer or secretary or all of them,” Furman said. “You may not know how to rebuild your division leadership. You need to know how to hold an election and get up-to-date information about your division membership. We are here to help you. And once you get people elected, they may need training to understand how to fulfill their new responsibilities. We don’t recruit or support candidates, but we answer questions and make sure division members know how to conduct these elections.

“It’s more than just getting the elected offices filled. We make sure they get steward training, and division officer training,” Furman said. “We need to help them get all of their committees in place and working. That includes labor-management, health and safety, audit, membership and especially new-member orientation.”

Is this effort working? Yes.

DiAntonio reported at the PEF 2019 convention in September that the PEF elections had filled approximately 375 offices – from steward to Executive Board – in the 12 months since the 2018 convention. The percentage of offices that are filled has grown and it is more than three-quarters of all the potential offices, statewide. It’s good news, but the work must continue, DiAntonio said.

“The people who step up and take on these responsibilities may not know how to call a meeting, how to communicate with their members, how to create fliers to announce and invite people to meetings and activities,” Carpenter said. “I bring them a kit for setting up their PEF bulleting board and help teach them how to use it. Some people want to know more about how to create and distribute news to members on paper or electronically. In fact, I’m teaching a workshop at the joint leadership conference for PEF Regions 9 and 10 (held November 1-3), on how to use Twitter to communicate effectively with members. I help them learn about...
those things, while Kristie is teaching them about how to conduct elections and meet their financial management and reporting obligations.”

Furman emphasized that, while they haven’t done a great many repeat visits yet, they are not turning their backs on the divisions and people they are helping. “We’ve promised to come back when they need us and to give them the tools they need to be successful in addressing their members’ needs,” she said. “We want them to grow strong and be able to function effectively and efficiently on their own and learn to draw on all of the PEF resources around them, such as their PEF field staff and their regional coordinators.”

You don’t have to have gaps in your division structure to encounter Carpenter and Furman. They are constantly meeting and engaging members at a wide range of events, such as Labor Day parades, the State Fair and the Family Fun days offered by the Membership Benefits Program, as well as conferences membership meetings, trainings and other programs.

Take a look at the map and the list of visits and local PEF activities where Furman and Carpenter have been present in the last seven months, and you will see the many ways they are constantly reaching out to meet you and to help you.

“Communication is crucial. Regional coordinators tell me they want to know more about division activities so they can support them. I and the other statewide officers also want to hear from you and be responsive and supportive,” Spence said. “The union functions best when we are all working hard to communicate and keep each other in the loop. You want to know what’s going on, and so do we. We’ve learned that sharing is key to being effective. If you want me or other elected leaders to attend a meeting or other event at your division, email or call us and let us know.”

Right now, PEF is focused on building unity among members to support the unions’ P&T contract team. And members are hungry for information about how those negotiations are going.

“We are doing our best to inform members and to answer their questions about negotiations, but those talks are fluid and nothing is really firm until a tentative agreement is reached on the entire document that currently includes 50 articles covering many different issues that directly affect our members’ terms and conditions of employment,” Carpenter said.

“We are building strength to go long past when this contract is settled,” Furman added.

“Without enforcement, a contract is just an expectation,” Spence said. “We need well trained stewards and division officers who understand their members rights and know how to defend them and advocate for them. They are on the front lines, and we have great staff to back them up.”

“This work that Kristie and Dan are doing is vital to the future of our union,” DiAntonio said. “When we are all informed and working actively together to achieve our goals, we can win. We are building our collective power to meet the needs of each one of us. Together we can influence public policy, workplace issues and respond effectively in emergencies.”

“We feel this effort is critical,” Spence said. “No one can really comprehend the tremendous professional knowledge, skills, creativity, talents and technical expertise that we hold in this membership. It is vast and so impressive. When we focus all of that intelligence and resource to support every member every day, the potential is overwhelming. Structure, communications and unity of purpose is what it takes. And together we win!”

Numbers of PEF Member Engagement Visits

![Map of PEF Member Engagement Visits](image-url)
Think you know your MBP savings ops?
Are you sure?

By SHERRY HALBROOK

How in tune are you with the many dozens of valuable benefits available to you through the Membership Benefits Program?

Try your luck with this quiz! And if you are a PEF member or a PEF Retiree you should be able to ace this. After all, there are only a few questions:

1. How many of the PEF Membership Benefits Program benefits can you name?
2. Are any of them entirely free to you?
3. What are the three ways you can access your MBP benefits?
4. How many different MBP benefits have you used?
5. How much money have you saved?

ANSWERS KEY

1. Think fun!

Some of the most popular benefits are discounts for entertainment and recreation. If you couldn’t even think of movie tickets, you need to get out more. MBP sold 195,000 discounted movie tickets in 2018.

But don’t stop there. You can buy discounted ski lift tickets, and choose from a wide variety of discounted tickets to Disney, theme parks and water parks, theatrical events, concerts, baseball games and other pro sports such as basketball and football games, hockey, soccer and golf.

Do you enjoy museums? Zoos? Aquariums? MBP has you covered. How about steamship or gondola rides? How about the state fair? MBP has discounted tickets for these and more.

If these are things you enjoy, don’t miss out. MBP sold 30,000 amusement park tickets and 20,000 ski lift tickets. Clearly your coworkers and fellow members are on top of these great discounts.

How about Family Fun Days? Tickets for these warm weather events are extremely popular and sell out fast. Keep checking the MBP website because they will announce the 2020 events soon.

And discounted gift cards? That’s another super popular benefit that keeps expanding to offer more choices. And with the holidays barely over a month away, this is one benefit you definitely want to keep in mind.

Fun can be healthy, so MBP offers discounts on gym and fitness memberships. And working out can make you hungry, so there are also coupons books and discounts and for many restaurants.

Get serious (and free)!

So you thought of some of the ticket discounts and maybe the Fun Days and gift cards, too. But what about some of the really valuable benefits that don’t cost you anything? No, your dues don’t pay for them either. MBP is not-for-profit, so it just reinvests the money it earns into improving and expanding benefits for you.

Surely you thought of free financial planning and credit counseling, right? Or the free college benefit that lets you or your family member get a two-year college degree at no cost for your books or tuition? How could you forget that! Hundreds of members are already using the free college benefit that was just rolled out in March 2018.

PEF and MBP want to be there when you suddenly need help. So, barely a decade after PEF was formed, it made national news by insuring its members against being criminally assaulted and injured or held captive while they are on the job. Called ATAC Insurance, this free benefit provides some financial help to members and their families to help them get through some shocking and scary times.

Recognizing the many upsetting and serious issues that sometimes arise for PEF members on their jobs, MBP provides three different free benefits for help with legal defenses to work-related charges that range from criminal offenses, discharge of an official weapon and charges brought by the state Justice Center. If you’ve never needed these benefits it’s understandable that they might not have come to mind as responses to this quiz, but you never know if the time might come when you would be very glad to remember and access them.
Get practical!

You can attend free educational seminars on such practical subjects as college planning, retirement planning, elder law planning, tax planning and investment planning. Did you know that? These seminars are offered in regions across the state and they are conducted by experts who will not sell you any products. They are just going to give you information to help you make the best choices you can. MBP is working on adding webinars to this benefit for those of you who prefer to just go online to learn.

Another super popular benefit that you may have thought of because you use it, is the reimbursement of your civil service exam fees, for both open-competitive and promotional exams.

Here’s one you should be thinking about with holiday gift-giving coming right up: discounts on Apple and Dell computers! And while we’re thinking about buying things for yourself or as gifts for others, how about discounted memberships for sports and recreation retailers, wholesale clubs, and other local retailers including a florist and a furniture store.

Did you think of deeply discounted online Defensive Driving seminars? They are not free, but they can save you money beyond the up-front discount, by reducing any points against your driver’s license and qualifying you for a discount on your car insurance.

And speaking of driving, here’s a discount expansion that’s still in the works (So, no, you aren’t likely to have thought of it.. We’re expanding offerings. Did you know that? These can come in handy for so many things, especially if you live in New York City and rely on public transportation, instead of owning a vehicle.

They may not be free, but there are more valuable discounts that you might not realize you can access through MBP. For instance, did you know there are home heating discounts? They could come in very handy with chilly fall weather breathing down our necks again in New York. What about saving money on electrical costs year-round with solar panels? Did you think of that? Did you even know about it? This one can not only save you money on your energy bills well into the future, it’s an important step toward reducing our carbon footprint and fighting climate change.

You don’t have to be accused of breaking laws or rules to need legal advice. So you must have thought of the discounted Legal Services Plan that you can subscribe to for advice on planning your estate, family law, real estate purchases or sales, and other matters. This is one of the MBP benefits that’s been offered for years and is very popular with members. Did you think to put it on your list?

Protect yourself!

OK. If you didn’t think of the many discounted insurance plans that MBP offers, you must be one of the union’s newer members and this is a great time to become aware of these key benefits that are among the very first that were offered.

These include short-term disability insurance, long-term disability insurance, and group term life insurance. They can come in really handy when you are too ill or injured to work, or if you are no longer living and available to support your family.

Just about everybody can benefit from discounts on their auto insurance and their homeowners insurance or renters insurance. And, again, these opportunities to save go way back to MBP’s earliest days.

Did you think of AFLAC insurance that can give you an extra level of benefits for medical care for injuries sustained in an accident? Even if you thought of AFLAC coverage for accident-related injuries, did you realize you can also get it for a welcome extra layer of coverage when you are diagnosed with a covered cancer?

But how about discounts on pet insurance? That’s one that can save you a lot of money on unexpected vet bills. If you had this one on your list, bravo! It means you are paying pretty good attention to the opportunities for savings available to you because you are a PEF member or a member of PEF Retirees.

1. Did you read the “Get serious (and free)!” section above, you already know about the many entirely free benefits you may access through MBP.

2. If you read the “Get serious (and free)!” section above, you already know about the many entirely free benefits you may access through MBP.

3. YES!! You absolutely can get there from here, wherever that might be. That’s because you may access MBP benefits:
   • Online at buymbp.com;
   • By phone at 800-342-4306, X 243, or 518-785-1900, X 243; or
   • In person at the MBP offices, located at 10 Airline Drive, Suite 101, Albany, NY 12205.

Business hours are weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

4. and 5.

These are the most important questions, but only you know the answers to how many valuable benefits you have used and how much you have saved.

“We really hope you’ve enjoyed this quiz to help you think about the benefits you know about and possibly some surprises you did not recall or never knew we offer at MBP,” said MBP Administrator Scott Harms. “These plans, discounts and programs are a broad array of value-added opportunities for you as a PEF member or as a member of PEF Retirees. Many of them, such as the free college benefit, are things you can share with your spouse, your partner, your children and even your grandchildren.

“Whether you are single or the bread-winner for your family, PEF and MBP want to help you stretch your hard earned paycheck or pension check as far as possible, because you are part of the PEF family.”

Harms added that he and the MBP trustees – Chair Stephanie McLean Beathley, PEF President Wayne Spence, PEF Secretary-Treasurer Kay Alison Wilkie, Barbara Corse-Johnson and Joe Donahue – welcome your comments and suggestions for new benefits you would like for MBP to consider adding to its ever expanding offerings.

“We are always thinking about ways to expand and improve, but you might think of something we are entirely missing,” Harms said. “So, send your ideas along to mbwebrequests@pef.org. We are looking forward to seeing what you come up with.”
What’s new from AFT Member Benefits? A Lot!

Hilton Hotels
Thanks to our affiliation with the AFL-CIO, we now have access to a 12% discount on all global Hilton hotels (subject to availability).
https://www.aft.org/member-benefits/aft-travelentertainment/hotel-discounts

Office Depot/Office Max
Up to 55% discounts on core office and school products and office services. This is a members only discount and requires registration.
https://www.aft.org/members-only

Google Certified Educator
60% discount on level 1 exam, 75% discount on level 2 exam. This is a members only discount and requires registration.
https://www.aft.org/members-only

Identity Theft – FREE FOR ALL MEMBERS WHO ARE REGISTERED
All members are covered FREE for ID Protection – coverage includes 24/7 SSN monitoring, 24/7 high risk transaction monitoring, a breach search tool, and more. Members need to register for the free program so they can use the tools.
https://www.clcidprotect.net/co/home/aft/

Union Plus Legal Program
Basic: free consultation for members with 25% discount off rates for additional services. Premium pre-paid legal program at $19.95 a month
http://www.unionplus.org/legal

Note: New York State United Teachers members have a legal services program through NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. NYSUT members can call 800-626-8101 for more information.

Southwest Airlines
SWA is offering an 8% discount off Business Select® fares, 6% discount off Anytime fares and a 3% discount off select Wanna Get Away® fares for travel, along with other benefits. This is a members only discount and requires registration.
https://www.aft.org/members-only

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Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your mobile device or home computer monthly.  www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/
PEF scientists at the forefront of vaping-associated lung illness investigation

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Severe pulmonary disease among patients who reported recent use of vape products continues to rise, with 146 patients reported statewide as of October 22, according to the state Department of Health (DOH) website.

Nine PEF scientists in the medical marijuana lab at DOH’s Wadsworth Center have all been hard at work to discover what is causing the pulmonary illness. Their experience and skills working to ensure the quality of medical marijuana has them well positioned to take on the task.

“We routinely analyze samples for the Medical Marijuana Program,” said 35-year PEF member David Spink, a research scientist 5 and chief of the Laboratory of Organic Analytical Chemistry at Wadsworth. “We use many of the same tests and techniques to analyze the black market products that are associated with these cases.”

Black market vaping products are looking to be a likely culprit behind the pulmonary illnesses, he said.

“They appear to be black market vaporizer cartridges containing cannabis oil and other additives,” Spink said of the samples linked to affected patients. “Although no one specific cause of these illnesses has been identified, there is a strong association with additives that are used to dilute or cut the oil in these illegal pens. We’ve been working very hard on characterizing those.”

“Our lab was the first to report the vitamin E acetate in the vapor oils that might be contributing to the problem,” Spink said.

Spink explained that vitamin E acetate is a heavy oil, a pro-vitamin, that is often used in health care products. And, while the vitamin in the name might make it seem harmless, it’s dependent on its form and how it is applied or consumed. “It’s not recommended for vaping or inhaling,” Spink said.
Wadsworth receives samples associated with pulmonary illness cases primarily from Poison Control Centers or from hospitals. “We only need a small amount,” Spink said. “If you were to dab it on the head of a pin that would be enough for us to do most of our analysis.”

Even if a vape cartridge seems empty, there is a good chance that Wadsworth scientists can extract something to test.

“It’s a very sticky oil,” Spink said. “We take the mouth piece off and put the whole cartridge into a centrifuge tube.” A centrifuge can spin the cartridge at high speed, creating enough force to eject the oil into the centrifuge tube.

So far, Wadsworth has received approximately 200 samples. “Some have been empty, and we can’t do anything with them,” Spink said. “But we’ve analyzed 170 samples from 41 different NYS cases of this vaping-associated pulmonary illness.”

In addition to the medical marijuana quality testing, PEF scientists at Wadsworth’s organic analytical labs generally perform environmental chemistry related to issues such as water quality and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) testing. This vaping health crisis has again thrust them into the spotlight.

“‘It’s very interesting,’” Spink said. “And, a little more stressful. Because we had the medical marijuana program set up, we had the expertise to handle this problem in the laboratory. Our group has done an excellent job. They’ve done outstanding work and have worked very hard on this problem.”

In New York, the cases of vaping-associated pulmonary illness have hit patients ranging from 14 to 69 years old, and it is hard to pinpoint which products are to blame.

There is no question the illness is severe. An overwhelming majority (96%) of patients in New York have ultimately required hospitalizations, according to the DOH. At least five patients have required intubation and there has been one death in New York attributed to vaping.

DOH press releases advise New Yorkers to stop using the products and further urge those who switched to vaping in place of smoking combustible cigarettes to refrain from returning to the latter habit.

“Neither smoking nor vaping is safe,” the advisory stated. “E-cigarettes are not safe for youth, pregnant women, or adults who do not currently use tobacco products. ... [R]obust and ongoing evidence-based studies of these products has identified numerous risks and harms from both the nicotine-laced e-liquids and the devices themselves.”

Spink’s advice to vape users? Stop vaping.

“Certainly you shouldn’t use any of these black market products” he said. “But it’s best that you don’t vape at all until the reason for the pulmonary illness is determined.”

For more information about the outbreak of vaping-associated illnesses, visit: https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/tobacco_control/campaign/e-cigarettes/.
PEF investigators take part in DOL’s ‘largest single wage recovery’ in 115-year history

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Nearly 500 welders and ironworkers employed by AGL Industries in Maspeth, Queens County, will see the return of approximately $6 million in stolen wages following a plea agreement that resulted from a joint investigation by the state Department of Labor (DOL) and the Manhattan District Attorney’s Construction Fraud Task Force.

DOL The amount of pay the workers will receive under the agreement was calculated by PEF members and all of the behind-the-scenes DOL investigative work was done by PEF members.

“It was a lot of work, and all that work was done by PEF members. The case took a year,” a PEF member with knowledge of the case said. “They did all the computations on the case and figured out how much was owed to each person.”

The case began when the Iron Workers Local 361 and the Manhattan DA made a referral to the state in February of 2018. The DOL investigation uncovered that AGL Industries had “cheated workers out of overtime pay and wages owed and reported fraudulent financial information to the state,” according to a press release from the governor’s office.

“When workers brought concerns about underpayment to the company, they were told that there was nothing they could do to receive their proper wages,” the member said.

PEF DOL members were an integral part of the investigation process, conducting interviews, reviewing time cards and payroll, and scouring records.

“This is what we do day in and day out,” the member said. “The complaint came in and we realized it was a huge case. It was a massive amount of work.”

AGL admitted to third-degree grand larceny and will pay back the money over a five-year plan. They were ordered to make the first payment of $1.5 million August 13, according to the press release. In addition, company official, Dominic Lofaso, also pleaded guilty to a class D felony for grand larceny.

In total, AGL will pay $6.25 million in restitution, which includes $260,855 in contributions to the state’s Unemployment Insurance Fund.

“It is our job as labor leaders to assist all workers when they are being wronged,” stated Matthew Chartrand, business manager for the Ironworker’s Local 361 in the Governor’s release. “Through the efforts of the Construction Fraud Task Force, as well as the great team at the Department of Labor, one of the bad players in the construction field is being brought to justice. Thanks to all — this is a great job for the benefit of workers.”

State DOL Commissioner Roberta Reardon commended her staff and the DA.

“Wage theft and fraud have no place in New York, and unscrupulous companies who break the law will be held accountable,” she stated in the governor’s release. “I thank our diligent investigators and Manhattan prosecutors, as well as the heads-up from Local 361 that helped expose these crooks and bring them to justice.”
Working together: Fire protection specialists teach OPWDD staff safety survey skills

By KATE MOSTACCIO

PEF members from different agencies recently came together to improve the safety of some of New York’s most vulnerable population.

Fire protection specialists from PEF Division 179 conducted a specialized training for personnel from both the Fire and Life Safety Branch of the Office of Fire Protection and Control (OFPC), and for standards compliance analysts from the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).

“Following a fatal fire in a group home in 2009, where four individuals perished, fire protection specialists and OPWDD have partnered to conduct life safety surveys at certified group homes,” said Division 179 Steward John Buttino, a fire protection specialist 1.

The 2009 fire occurred at the Riverview Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA), operated by the Sunmount Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO) and administered by OPWDD. In addition to the deaths, one resident and two staff members were injured.

In response to the tragedy, OPWDD requested OPFC conduct an independent review of the design, construction, code applicability and operational features of the IRA to ensure it met applicable fire and life-safety codes and to verify operation of fire protection systems.

The collaborative training program grew out of that incident.

“We conduct trainings for those that go out and do life-safety surveys,” he said, “both within the OFPC and other agencies, including OPWDD. The training prepares inspectors for surveys at OPWDD group home facilities throughout New York state.

“We develop the curriculum with guidance and approval from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services,” he said. “Our instructors are trained and they deliver the programs.”

Buttino, who has done hundreds of group home inspections, said life safety is crucial. “It’s something that’s very important to our mission and what we do,” he said.

The statewide training program is offered as needed, Buttino said. A large class was just held due to an influx of new hires.
It's time to continue or change your health benefit choices for 2020.

Watch your mailbox for the Rates & Deadlines for 2020 flyer, which will likely arrive in November and provide the biweekly premium rates. It also will include the deadline for changing health plan options, and other important dates, such as payroll deduction dates.

In late September, the Planning for Option Transfer flyer was mailed to active employees enrolled in the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP). This flyer describes the requirements and enrollment procedures for several benefits and programs, including NYSHIP health benefits, the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP), the Pre-Tax Contribution Program (PTCP), and the Opt-Out Program.

If you are considering changing your health insurance option for 2020 or wish to review your current option, ask your health benefits administrator, usually located in your personnel office or the NYS Business Services Center for a copy of Health Insurance Choices for 2020, your guide to NYSHIP options.

Or, find Choices and other option-transfer publications on NYSHIP Online at www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits. Select your group and plan, if prompted. On the NYSHIP Online home page, select “Health Benefits & Option Transfer” and then “Rates and Health Plan Choices” for the most up-to-date Option Transfer Period information.

Missing the Option Transfer Period deadlines can be very costly. Mark your calendars or set reminders for these important deadlines.

Nov. 8 – Health Care Spending Account (HCSAccount)

The HCSAccount could reduce your 2020 income taxes (payable in 2021) by allowing you to set aside pre-tax salary earned in 2020 to pay for health, dental and vision care expenses that are not reimbursed by your health insurance or other benefit plans. Visit www.flexspend.ny.gov to enroll online, or call 1-800-358-7202 for more information or to enroll by telephone. If you are currently enrolled in the HCSAccount, you must re-enroll to continue your participation in 2020.

Nov. 19 – Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP)

PEP allows eligible full- and part-time employees in a job title at or below grade 24 to exchange previously accrued annual leave and/or personal leave in return for a credit which reduces their share of the NYSHIP premium on a biweekly basis. If you are currently enrolled in PEP, you must re-enroll to continue in 2020.

Deadline date to be announced – Option Transfer Period

Dates will be announced once the 2020 premium rates have been approved. During the Option Transfer Period, you may change your NYSHIP health plan option, including enrolling in the Opt-out Program if eligible. If you are currently enrolled in the Opt-out Program, it is no longer necessary to re-enroll in the Opt-out Program each year. No action is required for current Opt-out enrollees who are still eligible and wish to remain in the program for 2020.

Deadline date to be announced – Pre-Tax Contribution Program (PTCP)

The PTCP Election Period will now run concurrently with the Option Transfer Period. Under the PTCP, your share of the health insurance premium is deducted from your wages before taxes are withheld, which may lower your tax liability. In exchange for this reduction in your tax liability, you agree to maintain the same pre-tax health insurance deduction for the entire plan year, unless you provide timely notification (within 30 days) of a qualifying event, which would allow you to make a change or cancel your coverage.

If you are enrolled in PTCP, you can make the following changes during the Option Transfer Period:

1. Change your PTCP election;
2. Change from family to individual coverage, while your dependents are still eligible, when there is no qualifying event;
3. Change from individual to family coverage without a qualifying event (late enrollment provisions will apply); and
4. Voluntarily cancel your coverage, while you are still eligible for coverage, when there is no qualifying event. Requests made during the PTCP Election Period are effective beginning the 2020 plan year.

Deadline date to be announced – Young Adult Option (YAO) Enrollment

The YAO provides coverage to children of NYSHIP enrollees up to age 30. The open enrollment period for the YAO will run concurrently with the Option Transfer Period. During this time, eligible adult children of NYSHIP enrollees may enroll or switch plans. For more information, visit www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits/young-adult-option/.

For the latest health benefits information for PS&T members, visit the PEF website.
You have through Tuesday, November 19, to enroll in state’s Productivity Enhancement Program for 2020.

PEP allows eligible PS&T Unit members to cash out vacation time and/or personal leave in return for credits toward their employee share of their health insurance premiums.

The negotiated terms of the program are contained in the PEP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Teachers’ PEP MOU, which can be found on pages 120-123 of the 2016-2019 PS&T Contract. Although these MOUs expire on December 31, 2019, the state has agreed to extend the program for 2020 in accordance with the cash out rates set forth in these MOUs.


For the latest health benefits information for PS&T members, visit the PEF website.
Region 11 leaders get 2020 Census info

By SHERRY HALBROOK

At first glance, counting all of the people in every part of this country might seem like a waste of time and money. However on a closer look, it’s clear the U.S. Census is actually very important because it helps the country figure out how the population is shifting from one decade to the next and how to shift resources and federal aid to follow those people.

Not only does the census data determine how much federal aid each state and local government within it will receive for the next 10 years, it also updates the number of seats each state has to represent their residents in the U.S. House of Representatives. State Senate, Assembly and congressional districts are redrawn based on that data. And every layer of government – national, state, regional, county, city, village, town and school district – depends on it to plan for service needs.

Businesses locate depend on it to help decide where to locate their facilities and services and that can affect whether your community gains or loses jobs.

When the census comes to town, as it will next year, it’s in your best interest to make sure you and everyone else gets counted.

That’s why PEF Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O’Connor led a group of PEF division leaders and a steward October 1 in attending an informational program about the 2020 Census presented by state Sen. Zellnor Myrie who represents SD 20 in Brooklyn.

“**This event was very important for us as union representatives, because everyone counts when coming to New York City and for the community funding where we all live,**” O’Connor said.

O’Connor said the union must help “inform our PEF brothers and sisters and members of the public about why it is so important that all of us be counted for the 2020 Census.”

Attending the event with O’Connor were: PEF Division 244 Leader Carrie Saunders; PEF Division 198 Leader Joan Rosegreen; and Division 198 steward Joy Fletcher. They were invited by Sen. Myrie to attend the event that he dubbed “Community Census 101: What You Need to Know for the 2020 Census and Everyone Counts.”

In addition to Myrie, those presenting information were: U.S. Rep. Yvette Clarke; state Assemblywoman Latrice Monique Walker; New York Regional Census Center representatives Katrine Daniel and James C. Tillmon.
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DEC educator works with STEM master teachers, bringing the environment into the classroom

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Collaborating with some of the state’s top teachers, PEF member Drew Hopkins at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar is working to create curriculums that will resonate with schoolchildren and add environmental themes into New York science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) classrooms.

Hopkins, an environmental educator with the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), worked as a middle school science teacher and an administrator for a decade before he joined DEC in 2016.

“That’s part of the reason they brought me in,” Hopkins said, referring to his experience in the school setting. “We thought it would be a good idea to work with the SUNY Master Teachers Program. These are the best of the best. STEM teachers have to be selected for the program and we thought we could amplify our programs by getting them involved.”

The New York State Master Teacher Program is a network of more than 800 public school teachers throughout the state who “share a passion for their own STEM learning and for collaborating with colleagues to inspire the next generation of STEM leaders,” according to the state Education Department website.

Hopkins said DEC began with Capital Region teachers, holding curriculum workshops and working with master teachers to create lesson plans that conform to the state’s Common Core standards and simultaneously educate the students about the environment around them.

“This is something that hasn’t been done before,” Hopkins said of the collaboration with the Master Teachers Program. “It’s somewhat new for DEC and we’re really excited. These master teachers are training to become teacher leaders. They are going to bring these lessons back into their schools.

“It will amplify our impact,” Hopkins said.

To get an idea what these specialized curriculums entail, Hopkins said one of their working titles is “Forest Math.”

“All have environmental components,” Hopkins said. “They are hands-on, connect other disciplines to STEM courses, and all are standards based.”

The curriculums developed with the master teachers seek to engage students by having them develop ideas and come to conclusions based on their own experiences, versus a lecture methodology.

“Students are going through experiences,” Hopkins said. “It helps them connect and in the end they get to their answer. It’s a more personal way for the students to learn.”

The DEC’s workshops are also certified Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) courses, giving teachers a chance to count them as professional development.

“State Ed started deciding what professional development was high quality enough about four years ago,” Hopkins said. “I suggested to the [DEC] Bureau [of Education] that we get certified.”

Hopkins is also co-coordinator of the Project WET and Project WILD programs.

Project WET, which stands for Water Education for Teachers, is a collection of water-related activities that are hands-on,
easy to use and fun for students. It focuses on water’s physical properties, water quality and what impacts it, and peoples’ relationship to water throughout their lives.

Project WILD is an award-winning program focusing on wildlife. The lesson guides help students learn basic concepts about wildlife and their needs through problem-solving skills and exploring responsible human actions toward wildlife and the environment.

Both are CTLE certified and are intended for teachers and non-formal educators working with students in kindergarten through 12th grade, Hopkins said.

“We have a core group of PEF members doing great things,” Hopkins said. “Mary Ronan and I wrote the CTLE application and State Ed accepted it. Mary does education programs at Reinstein Woods in Buffalo.”

Five Rivers, the National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Hudson River Estuary Program, and Cornell University also coordinated Living Environment Institutes during the summer where elementary and middle school teachers learn about incorporating nature and the environment into their classrooms.

This summer, master teachers participated in the institute at Five Rivers.

“The teachers were very complimentary about the institute,” Hopkins said. “We’re bringing a lot of people into the fold. We’re bringing experts in education and science together.” Hopkins was recently recognized by the New York State Outdoor Education Association (NYSOEA) and received the Outdoor Educator Award.

“This honor recognizes the outstanding classroom teacher, environmental educator or interpreter in the association who has used the outdoors to enrich curriculum and/or interpret the natural world in a way that has expanded the environmental appreciation of children or adults,” the NYSOEA stated on its awards page.

Collaborating with New York master teachers has been rewarding.

“It’s been amazing,” Hopkins said. “It started off as conversations, then meetings, and now we’ve been invited to talk to 100 local master teachers. The master teachers are excited about it, too. As we roll this out, the intention is that this is going to go statewide. Every teacher in the state should have access to these programs.”
O’Connor honored for community service

By SHERRY HALBROOK

PEF Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O’Connor was recently named a “Woman of Distinction” by the Caiden Cathedral of Praise and Worship in Brooklyn.

O’Connor, who received the honor September 26, expressed her gratitude for the award that cited her “stellar” and “monumental” contributions to the lives of everyone in the community she serves as well as to her PEF union brothers and sisters that “I fight for every day.”

O’Connor said she was also grateful for citations proclaiming her exemplary service that were sent by Brooklyn Borough President Erick Adams, state Assemblywoman Latrice M. Walker and NYC Councilmember Robert E. Carney who represents the 36th District in Brooklyn.

“I want to thank Bishop-elect Dr. Kevin Bond, his entire staff and the Citadel Cathedral of Praise and Worship” O’Connor said. “I also would like to thank my Number One supporter, my husband and family, for allowing me to do the work.”

O’Connor said she also appreciated “PEF President Wayne Spence, Leah Gonzalez, who is PEF’s downstate political director, and all of my Region 11 members who came out to support me on this wonderful occasion.”
Commenting on civil service classification standards, jurisdictional classifications

Over the last few months, the PEF Civil Service Enforcement/Research (CSE/R) Department has worked to meet member engagement and education needs, and has increased available resources, which are related to the work of the department, on the PEF website (via the Member Resources tab).

The resources are comprised of four sections, including a repository of guides on topics that can be easily accessed, shared, and downloaded. These Frequently Asked Questions cover a variety of topics, and include previous Communicator columns, and memos distributed by CSE/R.

This November 2019 column addresses the comment solicitation processes related to Tentative Classification Standards, and Jurisdictional Classification Standards, respectively. In discussions with PEF leadership, members, and field representatives, a recurring issue has been confusion surrounding the solicitation and submission of comments for: Tentative Classification Standards (TCS) and Jurisdictional Classification (JC) requests.

In response, PEF CSE/R has revised the memoranda that will be sent out with the reviews, designed to clarify the purpose and process of comment solicitation facilitated by PEF CSE/R. As you will see, the processes of TCS and JC comment solicitation, submission (content & format), and review are set forth by the state Department of Civil Service. The complete PEF CSE/R memo can be found via the Responding to a Request for Comments Solicitation, a review of which is highly recommended.

Members have demonstrated an interest in understanding the purpose and process for these comment periods, so hopefully information provided here will improve understanding of the comment solicitation and submission process.

Tentative Classification Standards

The DCS Division of Classification and Compensation (C&C) shares tentative title classification information with PEF through CSE/R mainly as a courtesy. The purpose of distribution is largely informational, and C&C is not in any way required to incorporate, or respond, to comments or revisions submitted by PEF.

Background:
PEF CSE/R routinely receives notification from the C&C, informing PEF of the establishment of new classification standards, or the revision of existing standards.

A Classification Standard is an official document that provides detailed collective information describing a class of positions. They are descriptive, not restrictive; their purpose being to portray, for each class of positions, the duties and responsibilities which, if present in an individual position, will cause the position to fall in that class. Classification Standards are used for recruitment, selection and training of employees, the assignment of positions to negotiating units, performance evaluations, and the resolution of out-of-title-work grievances.

Solicitation and submission of comments:
CSE/R facilitates the solicitation process designed by the C&C. The guidelines for acceptable submission content and format set forth by C&C will always be included in any request for comment circulated by CSE/R.

Jurisdictional Classification Requests

CS/R routinely receives JC requests from the state Civil Service Commission (CSC), concerning exempt and/or non-competitive classification as requested by an agency. The CSC considers PEF’s submitted comments when the agenda item is before them at their monthly meeting. While the CSC considers PEF’s submission, the CSC is not required to incorporate, or respond, to PEF’s comments.

Background:
Article V, Section 6 of the NYS Constitution states, in part: “Appointments and promotions in the civil service of the state and all of the civil divisions thereof, including cities and villages, shall be made according to merit and fitness to be ascertained, as far as practicable, by examination which, as far as practicable, shall be competitive.”

By law, classified service positions are in the competitive jurisdictional class, unless the commission acts to approve placement outside of the competitive class. Agencies may request the commission to place existing jobs, or create new job titles, within the exempt, non-competitive or labor classes. Positions in these three jurisdictional classes may be filled outside of the normal competitive examination process.

Agencies must petition the commission to have positions removed from the competitive jurisdictional class. The agencies are required to provide descriptions of the duties for each job and state their justifications for removing the positions from the competitive class. The commission obtains supporting materials and analyses from the DCS Division of Staffing Services and the C&C.

Solicitation and submission of comments:
PEF CSE/R facilitates the solicitation process designed by the CSC. The guidelines for acceptable submission content and format set forth by CSC will always be included in any request for comment circulated by the PEF CSE/R.
Retirees in Action: A message from PEF Retirees President Jim Carr

Get informed, vaccinated now for 2020

Fall is here and it is the time of year for transitions like weather changes and the leaves turning color and covering our lawns. And it is the key time to prepare and budget for the challenges ahead in 2020.

Fall brings the Medicare open enrollment and announcements of COLAs (annual cost-of-living adjustments) for our pensions and Social Security benefits for next year. That’s information we need to budget and plan for the coming year.

You should have recently received a notice from the state comptroller informing you about the 2020 pension COLA. You also should have received a copy of the Medicare & You Handbook for 2020.

Since you receive lots of information at this time, it can be overwhelming. Nevertheless, it is important that you carefully read the information provided to you from NYSHIP (New York State Health Insurance Program), Medicare, Social Security and the state comptroller’s office.

Fall is also the best time to get vaccinated against the flu, and check with your doctor to make sure your vaccinations to prevent shingles and pneumonia. These vaccinations are highly recommended for seniors especially if you have a compromised immune system.

Medicare Part D covers flu shots if they are at least one year apart. There are actually two different types of flu shots available to people age 65 and older. These FDA-approved vaccines are designed to offer extra protection beyond what the standard flu shot provides, which is important for older adults who have weaker immune defenses and have a higher risk of developing flu complications.

The center for disease control and prevention estimates that during the 2018/2019 flu season, up to 647,000 people were hospitalized and 61,200 died because of the flu-most of whom were seniors.

You also need to be aware that the senior-specific flu shots cannot guarantee that you won’t get the flu this season, but they will lower your risk. And if you do happen to get sick, you probably won’t be as ill as you would be without the vaccination.

Two other important vaccinations the CDC recommends for seniors, especially at this time of year, are the pneumococcal vaccines for pneumonia. Around 1 million Americans are hospitalized with pneumonia each year, and about 50,000 people die from it.

The CDC recommends that all seniors, 65 and older, get two vaccinations Prevnar 13 and Pneumovax 23. Both vaccines, which are administered at different times, protect against strains of the pneumococcal bacteria to provide maximum protection. Medicare Part B covers both shots, if they are taken one year apart.

Just like we need to educate ourselves about vaccinations and our medical health, we also need to pay attention to our earned benefits such as our pension, Social Security, NYSHIP and Medicare.

According to a recent published report from the Associated Press about COLA for Social Security benefits in 2020, we will receive a 1.6 percent boost, which add about $24/month to the benefit for the average retired worker, for an estimated monthly benefit of about $1,500.

If you have them deduct federal income taxes, the check you receive is even smaller. And some of the COLA will be offset if there is an increase in Medicare’s “Part B” premium for outpatient care, which hasn’t been announced yet.

As retirees, we are all old enough to remember when the prices for just about everything were a lot lower when we were earning regular paychecks. So we are very aware of how important COLA boosts to our pensions and Social Security are for us now.
Saluting members **on**
their retirements

By SHERRY HALBROOK

PEF’s gratitude and best wishes go out to its members who are retiring and moving on to the next chapter of their lives.

The union hopes they will join PEF Retirees and remain active and valued participants in the PEF family.

This month, we salute:

  • William Ellsworth, PEF Division 275, state Department of Agriculture and Markets;
  • Dianne Morrison, PEF Division 339, state Department of Motor Vehicles;
  • Dave Porter, PEF Division 299, Auburn Correctional Facility; and
  • Marjorie Warner, PEF Division 167, Western NY Children’s Psychiatric Center.

Are you or PEF members you know retiring? Please send information for this column to thecommunicator@pef.org.
Retirement tips for PS&T employees

By SHERRY HALBROOK

If you’re planning to retire in the near future, here are some questions that you may need to start thinking about:

• Can I continue my NYSHIP coverage in retirement?
• Will I be able to stay in the same plan I have now if I move out of New York state?
• When do I need to enroll in Medicare?
• What will happen to my dental and vision care coverage when I retire?
• Will I be able to use my sick leave to offset the cost of my coverage as a retiree?

For answers to these and other questions regarding your health, dental and vision care coverage in retirement, start by visiting NYSHIP Online at http://www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits. Next, select your group (PEF) and plan, if prompted, and then “Planning to Retire?” This section includes publications, videos, contact information and links to important resources that will help you prepare for retirement. You can also order a Planning for Retirement package that includes a helpful booklet, companion DVD, and a benefits checklist that indicates what you need to do before and after retiring. This package is also available from your agency’s health benefits administrator (HBA) in Human Resources or the Business Service Center.

As an active employee, your source for benefit information is your HBA. Before retiring, you will need to meet with your HBA to discuss all of the information you need regarding health insurance in retirement. This includes the eligibility requirements for continuing health insurance coverage as a retiree and whether you meet them, whether your current health insurance plan will meet your needs in retirement, when you must enroll in Medicare, whether you may continue your dental and vision coverage, and calculating the value of your sick leave credit.

You may also want to visit the NYS Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) website. GOER offers Pre-Retirement Planning Information that can be found here: https://goer.ny.gov/pre-retirement-planning-information.

Frequent questions and answers

Will I be able to stay in the same plan I have now if I move out of NYS?

If you are enrolled in a NYSHIP HMO and move out of this state, you must change to the Empire Plan. The Empire Plan is available to all NYSHIP enrollees regardless of where they live or work in retirement. Coverage is worldwide. However, you should carefully review the list of network providers in the area in which you plan to retire as the Empire Plan does not offer in-network providers in all 50 states. If you move to another state, there may be no in-network providers within a reasonable distance of you.

NYSHIP enrollees with retiree benefits are permitted to change health plan options once in any 12-month period. This offers greater flexibility than the Option Transfer Period for active employees, which is held each year in the fall.

When do I need to enroll in Medicare?

Three months prior to your 65th birthday, the Employee Benefits Division (EBD) of the NYS Department of Civil Service will send you a letter with information regarding Medicare works with NYSHIP, along with the booklet, Medicare & NYSHIP. This booklet explains when Medicare eligibility begins; when Medicare becomes primary (pays first) to NYSHIP; and when you must have Medicare Parts A and B coverage in effect to avoid a reduction in your overall benefits. You will receive this letter even if you are still an active employee.

As an active employee, if you or your dependents are eligible for Medicare, it is usually secondary to (pays after) NYSHIP coverage. Although you are not required to enroll in Medicare, EBD recommends that all individuals enroll in Part A when first eligible because there is typically no premium cost for Part A and timely enrollment should prevent the individual from incurring the Medicare late enrollment penalty. EBD further recommends that these individuals defer enrolling in Part B when first eligible because there is a premium cost for Part B.

Under NYSHIP rules, you and your dependents must be enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B when first eligible for Medicare coverage that is primary (pays first) to NYSHIP. For most enrollees and dependents who are already 65 at the time of their retirement, Medicare will become the primary
coverage on the first day of the month following the end of the 28-day run-out period for coverage as an active employee. Check with your HBA to find out the exact date that your active employee coverage ends.

It is important to enroll in Medicare on a timely basis. For more information, see Medicare and NYSHIP.

What will happen to my dental and vision benefits?

The state does not provide dental and vision benefits to retirees. Depending on your Medicare eligibility, you may be able to continue them through COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act). An individual who is already enrolled in at least one part of Medicare (e.g., Medicare Part A) at the time of retirement may enroll in COBRA for up to 36 months. An individual who first enrolls in COBRA and later enrolls in Medicare for the first time loses his or her COBRA eligibility.

You will also have the option of converting to a direct-pay dental plan administered by EmblemHealth. The benefits offered under this plan are not the same benefits offered under the Preferred Dental Plan for active employees or the COBRA Plan offered to retirees. You should automatically receive an enrollment form and summary of benefits after you retire.

Finally, if you join the PEF Retirees Organization, you will have the option of enrolling in their dental and/or vision plans.


Will I be able to use my sick leave to offset the cost of my coverage as a retiree?

You may be able to use the value of your unused sick leave to pay for all or part of the cost of your health insurance during retirement. The actuarial value of your sick leave hours is converted to a monthly dollar value. The result is a lifetime monthly sick leave credit used to reduce your share of the monthly NYSHIP premium for as long as you are enrolled in NYSHIP.

You are only eligible for the sick leave credit if you retire directly from active employment, Leave Without Pay status, Preferred List coverage or if you are approved for disability retirement retroactive to your last date of employment. This credit will not apply if you are in vested status or after retiring from vested status.

To obtain an estimate of your sick leave credit, visit NYSHIP Online at http://www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits and select “Planning to Retire?”
Ailing members
need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury.

Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave to a specific person listed below, call the number after their name.

- Sharon Audain is a developmental disabilities program specialist 1 at Brooklyn Developmental Disabilities Regional Office. Call 718-642-6310;
- Stephanie Baran is an instructor at the NYS School for the Deaf in Rome, NY. Call 315-337-8400;
- Marco Cardenas is a parole officer at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision parole office in Peekskill. Call 914-654-8690.
- Brooke Dimare is a social work supervisor 1 at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. Call 315-738-4424.
- Ruthanne Duckworth is a licensed master social worker 2 at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica. Call 315-738-4424;
- Margaret Lagonegro-Coar is a nurse 2 at Hudson Valley Developmental Disabilities Services Office. Call 845-947-6226;
- Michael Mansky is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility in Coxsackie. Call 518-731-2741;
- Julie Melancon is an environmental program specialist 2 at the state Department of Environmental Conservation in Syracuse. Call 518-402-9273;
- Tracy O’Bryan is a project assistant at the state Department of Audit and Control in Albany. Call 518-474-1924;
- Joseph Ryan is a senior business management assistant at the state Gaming Commission in Schenectady. Call 518-457-4272;
- Mandi Schultz is a supervisor of the inmates’ grievance program at Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus. Call 607-869-5111;

The rules for making and receiving leave donations (such as leave recipients may not have had any disciplinary actions or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of state employment) are set forth on pages 181 and 182 of the 2016-19 PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, need 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.
Region 11 awards scholarships to 14 students

By KATE MOSTACCIO

This year’s Region 11 Fundraising Scholarship Awards will help 14 students with college costs in the fall.

“This year it was very challenging,” said Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O’Connor. “The applicants were very successful and the challenges were set very high due to the excellent work of the applicants.”

O’Connor was grateful for the scholarship committee. “I would like to thank all of them for their hard work in making this scholarship a success,” she said. “And I would also like to thank Charles Roland for helping coordinate the scholarships.”

The committee members this year were Joan Rosegreen, Charles Roland, Jasmine Lafonte, Carrie Saunders, Joy Fletcher, Vivian Falto, Leslie Williamson and Robin Hamilton-Browne.

“The committee reviewed the applicants very carefully,” O’Connor said. “We asked them for a current transcript, proof of acceptance into a college in the fall, and a minimum 250-word essay telling us about their community service and their service to their school.”

The students, entering their first or second year of college, also needed a letter of recommendation from a teacher and their parent or guardian had to be a PEF Region 11 member in order to qualify for consideration.

Acquired by fundraising, a pool of $5,550 was distributed among the students, with the top scholarships totaling $500.

“We fundraise and then we put part of that money into the scholarship awards,” O’Connor said. Fliers will go out next year to council leaders in Region 11 announcing the next round of scholarships. This year’s scholarship applications had to be postmarked by July 8.

The following students received this year’s scholarships:

• Elizabeth Banat
• Alyssa De Guzman
• Kieara Fagan
• Richard Guang
• Fiona Fernandez
• Nia James
• Anthony Mottola
• Jonathan Mottola
• Sylene Pabon
• Roshni Patel
• Sulan Pathiranage
• Christine Tucco
• Iyinoluwa Tugbobo
• Tori Williams

Scholarships were awarded during a ceremony August 14 at the PEF NYC Regional Office.
Learn about the year New York teams dominated during a rapidly changing world

By KATE MOSTACCIO

In July of 1969, Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made history by taking mankind’s first steps on the surface of the moon. In August of that year, more than 400,000 people gathered on a farm in Bethel for what would become known as Woodstock — another historic moment.

Perhaps lesser known but no less important, 1969 was also a banner year for the New York Jets, Mets and Knicks, according to New York State Museum Sports History Curator Stephen Loughman, a PEF member who works with the state Education Department’s Office of Cultural Education.

“Perhaps lesser known but no less important, 1969 was also a banner year for the New York Jets, Mets and Knicks,” Loughman said. “It was an important year for New York sports.”

Super Bowl III, played Jan. 12, 1969, was the third American Football League–National Football League championship game in professional American football, and the first to use the official Super Bowl name. The game is regarded as one of the greatest upsets in American football history, with the underdog AFL New York Jets beating the NFL Baltimore Colts, 16-7.

“The Jets were from a rival league of the NFL,” Loughman said. “This win helped to solidify their league.”

For nearly 50 years, Major League Baseball’s team lineup remained the same. Over the years, some teams relocated out of New York City as populations shifted south and west — including New York’s two teams, the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers. It wasn’t until 1960 that the MLB announced it would expand and another New York team — the Mets — was born.

After a slow start, riddled with losses, the Mets gained steam and in 1969 cinched the World Series title.

“The Mets were the first expansion team to win a World Series,” Loughman said.

As for the New York Knicks, to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the NBA, the league chose the 1969-70 Knicks as one of the Top 10 greatest teams in its history.

“It was the glory year of the Knicks. New York City is a basketball mecca. This put them on the map as ‘The Knicks,’” Loughman said.

“Fifty years ago this year, Tom Seaver, Joe Namath, and Willis Reed delivered one of the most iconic years in New York sports history,” he said.
Loughman graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh with a degree in history and museum management. He worked as an art handler and installer before moving on to the State Museum’s history department four years ago. In addition to his position as sports history curator, Loughman manages the Rotterdam warehouse for the museum.

If you tour the New York State Museum, you can find some sports memorabilia in the Harlem section. But the New York sports history collection has a lot of room to grow — and Loughman is working to add to the collection.

“Sports are a vibrant part of the history and culture of New York state,” a flyer he worked on proclaims. “New York is home to some of the most famous teams and venues in the nation, including Madison Square Garden, the Buffalo Bills, Watkins Glen International and so many more.”

The museum welcomes stories, objects or photographs relating to New York sports, whether it’s the New York Yankees, soap box derby racing, or college sports.

“We recently received some donations highlighting winter sports in Lake Placid,” Loughman said. The collection also includes items from the Rochester Red Wings, the Tri-City ValleyCats, and the Buffalo Bills. “We’re trying to cover the whole state.”

The Brainfood for the Curious event will be from 12:10 to 12:40 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 19 in the State Museum’s Huxley Theater. It’s free to attend. There will be a short question and answer period following the presentation. If you can’t make it to that event, Loughman will also give his presentation during a free History Café from 6 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 19 at The Hollow Bar + Kitchen on North Pearl Street in Albany.

And, if you have New York sports memorabilia, photos, or other artifacts you wish to donate, contact Loughman at stephen.loughman@nysed.gov.

“Outright donations are preferable, but in certain circumstances we do accept loans,” Loughman said. “Donations to the museum are also tax deductible.”
PEF members Division 301, Hutchings Psychiatric Center support their Contract Team!!

PEF members join CWA District 1 & NYSNA NYC Headquarters Safe Staffing Rally yesterday in NYC with Region 10 Coordinator and Contract Chair Darlene Williams, Region 11 Coordinator Bernadette O’Connor and NYC Comptroller Scott M. Stringer with NYC Council member Carlina Rivera to stand with nurses for safe staffing!! Bernadette O’Connor also spoke at the rally.
PEF NYSIF Members Division 240 are #UnionStrong!!
PEF DEC members are showing contract support!