

PROVOCATOR

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DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



BTF Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive Brings in Record Number of Donations

A record amount of food was donated this year for the BTF's 22nd Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive.

Approximately 60 boxes and 30 bags of food were collected by teachers and students in the Buffalo Public School District. The non-perishable items will be used to stock food pantries of the agencies in the community.

"As we do each year, this bounty of food before us was donated by Buffalo teachers and students who want to do their part to make sure families, who might otherwise go without, would enjoy their Thanksgiving Day meal", President Phil Rumore said.

"This is our 22nd Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive where canned and packaged goods and monetary donations were made by Buffalo teachers. This is a wonderful way for all of us to give thanks for what we have. After all, isn't that what Thanksgiving is all about?"

He said more than 3,500 families have benefited from the BTF food drive throughout the years.

In addition to the abundant food items collected, the BTF packed 120 bags with all the traditional foods for a Thanksgiving feast: corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, stuffing mix, and a \$10 gift card for Tops Supermarkets to purchase a turkey.

The bags were packed for distribution by a small army of volunteers, including Phil Rumore, BTF Treasurer Joseph Montante and Executive Committee members Lynn Garcia, Liz Spiro Carman, and Ruyvette Townsend.

Jeffrey Cipolla, the JROTC teacher at Hutch Tech, and his students were on hand for two days to pack the bags and help the distribution agencies load the food into their vehicles. Keith Panek was also on hand to help.

After the bags were prepared, the food was distributed to service agencies for distribution in the community.

The agencies that received the food were: City Mission, Community Action Organization, Gloria Parks Community Center, Native American Community Services, Women for Human Rights and Dignity, and Fulgham Family Foundation.

The schools that contributed to the food drive were: BEST #6, Central Processing Center #12, Bilingual Center #33, Adult Learning Center #46, Olmsted School 64, Discovery School #67, Houghton Academy #69, Lorraine Elementary #72, Herman Badillo #76, Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School #79, Southside #93, Hutch Tech #304, and Middle Early College #335.

In a thank you memo to teachers, Rumore praised them for their generosity.

"A very special thank you on behalf of the hundreds of families who, but for you and our students' kindness, would not have had a Thanksgiving meal", he told teachers.

"In answer to our annual call for food donations, you filled our office with hundreds and hundreds of food products for distribution to local charities. Every organization that came to BTF headquarters asked that we thank you for your kindness", Rumore wrote.



2.



3.



4.



1.

1. With the agencies' trucks waiting outside, President Phil Rumore helps carry out bags of food.

2. Representatives from the six agencies pose for a group photo.

3. With two of his JROTC helpers, Colonel Jeffrey Cipolla assists in packing bags for families.

4. After much effort, all 120 bags, each containing a complete Thanksgiving meal, await pickup at the BTF office.

Hardly one day goes by that you, probably one of the most important people in your students' lives, don't give gifts more precious and more important than many they will receive — you in your own way shape knowledge and provide encouragement. Indeed, through your caring, you become an important part of your children's lives. Everyone of us can remember an important teacher in our life. That important teacher is and will be you for someone. On behalf of the Buffalo Teachers Federation and Staff, may the precious gifts that you give so freely enrich your lives and be returned to you one hundred fold during this holiday season and throughout the New Year.



No Greater Gift

by Phil Rumore

Though a month away, Don and Julie's excitement about the upcoming holiday easily reflected that of "their kids." "Yes, even though their students sometimes seemed intent upon exhausting the last remnants of their patience and sanity, they were still "their kids."

The winter holiday break was Don and Julie's special time together. This year they would once again wing their way across the country to the West Coast to have their Christmas dinner in the warmth of the old hotel with the giant Christmas tree. After dinner, the voices of the boys' choir would fill the air with songs of the holiday season.

They had been married there, and every year since then had scrimped and saved so they could return to the wonderful old hotel they accidentally discovered. Each year it brought them closer together. Each year's visit became ever more special. It had been "one of those years." Once in a while, either Julie or Don would get what they would jokingly call "a class from the dark side." Each student, by themselves, was fine; but all in one class — that school bus never looked so good at the end of the day!

This year, they both had "classes from the dark side." "I know it's the ghost of my third grade teacher getting back at me for hitting her smack in the middle of the forehead with a spitball," Don said. "How was I supposed to know that Carl was going to put his head down on his desk at the exact moment I shot it. I know it must be her. There's no other answer," Don sighed. "You know that's it. The ghost of one of our old teachers is getting back at us. There's no other answer," Julie said as they both laughed.

The catalyst in each of their classes seemed to be Nicole and Michael Warren. Nicole was in Julie's

fourth grade class and Michael was in Don's sixth grade class. The Warren children weren't bad kids. They were bright, friendly and motivated to learn. They just had that touch of the dark side that made each of their classes bubble beneath the surface, only to bubble over when you least expected it. Of course, the anticipation of the holiday season stirred the pot even more.

The holiday season always found Don and Julie having students discuss their own holiday and how they would observe it. They talked of Kwanzaa, Chanukah, Christmas and all the holidays each one observed. They remembered how they always seemed to learn something new from one of the kids.

Of course, their students knew about Julie and Don's yearly pilgrimage. "What do you do in a plane for that long?" "Do you have to bring food on the plane?" "How big is the Christmas tree?" "How come there are only boys in the choir?" were but a few of the endless questions that each day came out of nowhere.

"Do they stay up nights thinking of these questions?" Don asked Julie one day at lunch.

"They must stay up nights thinking about our trip," Julie said as she smiled and shook her head. They agreed that they would tell their classes that they would bring back pictures of the old hotel, the giant Christmas tree and the boys' choir.

One evening as they were making final flight and hotel arrangements, Don mentioned that his class had been quiet with Michael out. The kids said that he had the flu.

"Is Nicole in school?" Don asked.

"Yes, but she must be getting something, too. She's been very quiet," Julie answered.

"I think I'll give the Warrens a call to see how Michael is doing and find out when he'll be back. You know — I'll deny I said this — but we sort of miss him," Don said shaking his head as if he couldn't believe what he had just said.

When Don came back into the room, Julie knew something was wrong.

"Michael... Michael... has leukemia. He has leukemia," Don said as he sank into the chair.

He put his head back, closed his eyes, and could say no more. Michael needed an immediate bone marrow transplant and the only hospital that had perfected this procedure was the San Diego Medical Center. But since the Warrens couldn't afford the expense, Michael was to begin a promising chemo treatment at one of the local cancer treatment centers. The doctors gave no guarantees, but the treatment had shown promise.

Soon, everyone at school knew Michael was sick, very sick. During the week before the winter break, Michael was in everyone's thoughts. Somehow the family had put together enough money to fly Michael, his mom and sister to San Diego and back (as well as pay for a place to stay). Michael recovered completely. It seems that his sister's marrow was a perfect match.

Michael, that holiday season, and the sense of

being one family would long be remembered by the East Rockaway Elementary School students and staff. All of their individual trials and tribulations faded from view and became so very trivial.

It was a lesson that was not, but was — one that each in his own way did not learn, but understood. That made it all the more important.

Now, 25 years later, this was to be Julie and Don's last winter holiday season as teachers. In all, they had only missed one visit to the old hotel. Their retirement was set for June. The anticipation of their annual visit to the old hotel still was there — still very special. They were getting ready to leave on the last day before the break, when the always-too-loud intercom blared out "Don and Julie Adams to the office please."

Upon reaching the office, the clerk advised that a Dr. Anderson and a lawyer were there to see them. Don and Julie looked at each other wondering what had happened.

"Mr. and Mrs. Adams?" "Yes," Don and Julie replied hesitantly. "We came to thank you," said the young woman, tears welling in her eyes.

"Thank us for what?" replied Don.

"I'm Michael Warren, the boy whose life you saved," the young man said, his voice almost breaking.

"I'm Dr. Anderson, Nicole Anderson. It used to be Nicole Warren, Michael's sister," the woman explained.

The young man stepped forward, tears continuing to well in his eyes. "Mom passed away last month; but before she died, she told us that you had made her promise that she would never tell us that you — our teachers, had given us the tickets and money to go to the hospital in San Diego," he said.

Nicole, unable to contain her emotions any longer, threw her arms around Don and Julie, as did Michael. It was one of those moments when no words need be spoken — when no words could be spoken, but so much was said.

Nicole had become a doctor. Her specialty was pediatric oncology.

Michael, while a lawyer, had returned to school a year ago. It seems that he had long wanted to be a teacher. Student teaching would begin next September. They both had families and were doing well.

"We have always wanted so much to see you again to tell you how much you both meant to us even before we knew what you had done. You were our favorite teachers," Michael explained.

"We wanted to give you something you missed," Nicole said softly.

In the card Michael handed Julie were two tickets to San Diego and a certificate for a week at the old hotel.

"It's funny the things you remember from your childhood, but both Nicole and I remembered, as if it were yesterday, where you both went every winter holiday," Michael said.

Don, Julie, Michael and Nicole spent the rest of the day as if they were family. And although they had not seen each other for years, it seemed as though they had been together forever, and always would be.

That year, as Julie and Don looked up at the giant Christmas tree, listening to the voices of the boys' choir enveloping them, they thought of all the Michaels and Nicoles whose lives were intertwined with theirs, and how, on this special night, somehow they were all together.

Each light on the giant tree was one of "their kids."

Yes, there had been some very tough times, but they wouldn't trade places with anyone. They had meant something to thousands of lives. It was they who had been touched. They who were blessed. They were teachers.

Letters to the Editor

Crisis Services Helps Thousands in Need with Funds

On behalf of the Board of Directors, management, staff and volunteers, I want to thank you very much for your generous gift of \$100 in honor of Crisis Services' 50th year of service to our community. When organizations like yours choose to give your money to Crisis Services, we want your entire team to know that we truly value your investment in our mission. Your support is really making a difference.

Our crisis first responders help approximately 100,000 residents of our community each year when impacted by a crisis-any type of crisis-24-hours a day. In 2017 we responded to 77,919 crisis calls, 12,165 NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence hotline and Erie County Domestic Violence Helpline calls, 2,990 Addiction Hotline calls, conducted 2,286 mental health emergency outreach visits, and provided intervention and support to 1,211 domestic and sexual violence victims at our area hospitals. We could not continue to provide these valuable services to our community without the support of folks like you!

For information about our upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and more on how your donation is helping to make a difference in the lives of so many, we invite you to visit our website at www.crisisservice.org. We also encourage you to follow us on Facebook (@crisisservices), Twitter (@crisis_services), and Instagram (@crisisservices) to see firsthand the work of our Crisis First Responders. Be sure to search the hashtag #50YearsofHelpandHope to check out how we are celebrating Crisis Services

Mount Mercy Thanks BTF for Race Donation

On behalf of Mount Mercy Academy, I want to thank you for your \$100 donation towards the 2018 MM 5K race. It is thanks to the support of alumnae, parents, and friends like you that this event continues to be a success. All proceeds from the MM 5K directly benefit the students of Mount Mercy Academy and the Alumnae Scholarship Fund.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Redanz Teal '11

Coordinator

Special Events/Communications

50th anniversary as well.

Thank you again for your generous contribution to Crisis Services. We sincerely appreciate your very meaningful investment in our mission, and we look forward to your continued support.

Thank you to your entire team! We appreciate your past and present support of our mission.

With gratitude,

Jessica C. Pirro

Chief Executive Officer

BTF Supports Uncrowned Queens Institute

Thank you for contributing to the Uncrowned Queens Institute. Through its digital repository (uncrownedcommunitybuilders.com) and numerous other educational programs, the Institute has established a unique model to preserve the histories, including their contributions and achievements, of African American women and men in the Western New York region. The Institute makes historical resources available to educators, students, family historians and others in the community who understand the importance of collecting and maintaining the rich history of Buffalo/WNY's African American community. We count you among those individuals, organizations and companies.

In September, the Institute will launch an initiative to recognize young people who are "Emerging Community Builders". A scholarship will be established as part of this initiative. The scholarship is named in honor of Mrs. Mary Crosby Chappelle, a former Buffalo educator. Your donation to fund 20 tickets to the event, valued at \$400, will help us to kick off the scholarship fund. We will recognize your contribution in any publicity related to an event during which we also recognized Derrick M. Byrd, Christine Parker and Jennifer Parker as "Culture Keepers."

We also thank you for your support of our Haitian Art Film Project. We will share the history and examples of the beautiful art of Haiti with students thanks to the three videos that you are funding (\$600) to share with Buffalo school students.

Your recognition of the significance of the Institute's programs and their value to the community is appreciated. You are to be commended for the "investment" you've made in supporting the preservation of African American regional history. Again,

BTF Supports Kid in a Park Program

Thanks to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the National Parks Foundation, and the Buffalo Teachers Federation for their help in the 2017-18 Every Kid in A Park Program.

In June, 270 Buffalo Public School students from three schools visited the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural site for an educational park experience during seven sessions.

Thank you for your help making it all possible. We hope to be able to welcome more Buffalo students next year!

Sincerely,

Mark Lozo

Education Director/Chief of Interpretation

we thank you for your contribution in support of the Uncrowned Queens Institute and its Uncrowned Community Builders' programs.

Sincerely,

Peggy Brooks-Bertram, PhD, D.P.H.

Co-founder

Young Audiences of WNY Thanks BTF

Thank you for the generous support of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

Nothing is more satisfying than knowing your gift is making a difference.

With your help we are changing lives. Your gift to us is at a level that makes a clear impact. Your contribution of \$1,000 in October helps us sustain and grow the quantity and quality of our arts programs for youth and our services in schools.

Your dollars are helping to cultivate a love of learning in our young people. Thank you for making creative arts experiences possible for all youth living in and around our communities. We are expanding our efforts to create opportunities for more young people to experience this deeply enriching, long-term arts engagement. Our future is a bright one, and we are happy to have you as one of our supporters.

We will keep you up to date via our website, www.yawny.org, our newsletters, and our annual reports.

Sincerely,

Michael Wiedrich, MBA BFA

Executive Director

Beth Ireland, Director

Development & Marketing

BTF Raises Funds for Breast Cancer Research

Once again, Buffalo teachers stepped up to help beat breast cancer by donating to the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk held in October.

On behalf of the teachers, the BTF donated \$2,518 to this worthy cause.

The money was raised through donations, participation in the walk along the canal front, and tickets sold during the Council of Delegates for a

basket raffle and 50/50 raffle.

The baskets for the raffle were donated by members of BTF.

Among the schools donating to the event were Schools 3, 64, 65, and 95. A number of online donations were also made.

Ruyvette Townsend and Rachel Lis served as co-chairpersons for the event.



BTF members at the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk

BTF Co-Sponsors Reception for DiNapoli

A literal Who's Who of local and State Democratic political powerhouses attended a labor roundtable in Buffalo, just prior to the November 6th elections.

Labor Roundtable was a reception for NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli. It was sponsored by the BTF, Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), The Communication Workers of America (CWA), Local 1122 and The Western New York Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO. It took place at the Buffalo Irish Center, 245 Abbott Road.

A number of people attending the event spoke highly of DiNapoli, including BTF President Philip Rumore, Richard Lipsitz, president of the WNY Area Labor Federation, AFL-CIO, Buffalo City Comptroller Mark J. F. Schroeder, and State Senator Tim Kennedy.

"Unlike a lot of the state politicians, Tom is a man of integrity", Rumore said of DiNapoli. "When he says he is going to do something, you can believe it. He's a friend to all of us."

He said it was DiNapoli who pushed

the state to share lottery proceeds with schools.

"I don't know where we would be without him", Rumore continued. "Thanks for all you've done for us and for being our friend."

DiNapoli, who breezed to re-election, is serving his 12th year as state comptroller. He praised the unions for their work and assured everyone that the New York State Retirement System is in good shape and earning money through its investments.

Among the estimated 100 guests were former Buffalo Mayor Anthony Masiello, Erie County Democratic Chairman Jeremy Zellner, Assembly Member Sean Ryan, CSEA President Denise Szymura, Amherst Town Board member Jacqui Berger, and recently elected Assemblyman Patrick Burke.

Also attending the event were BTF Vice President Rebecca Pordum, Secretary Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan and BTF Executive Committee members Dennis Brancato, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman, Lynn Garcia, Nicole Herkey, Melissa Kenney, Trish Rosokoff, and Chris Salamone.



BTF President Phil Rumore, Public Relations Co-chair Ruyvette Townsend, BTF VP Becky Pordum

Time for Cancer Checks

Public employees are now eligible for a paid leave, not to exceed 4 hours of absence, for cancer screening of any kind.

An amendment was passed that expanded the existing Civil Service Law which previously covered breast and prostate screenings only.

The law allows each employee to take two 4-hour leaves per year, for a total of 8 hours.

The Cancer Screening Verification Form, available on the district's website, must be completed by the medical provider and turned in to the school clerk.

Scholarships Available

Scholarships, some earmarked specifically for the children of Buffalo teachers, are being offered by The Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo.

The Foundation will be awarding scholarships for the 2019-20 academic year in the spring. Students who currently are high school seniors or are already enrolled in an accredited program are encouraged to apply.

Applications are accepted from students all over Western New York and some money is allocated specifically for the children of Buffalo Teachers.

Awards range from \$1000-\$6000. The application process opens on January 1st and closes April 1st. To apply, visit www.cfgb.org and click on the For Scholarships tab. You also may call the CFGB at 852-2857.



BTF members pose with state and local representatives

BTF-Endorsed Candidates Succeed

Many of the candidates backed by the Buffalo Teachers Federation were successful in the November elections, in part because of the efforts of our members.

BTF members helped the candidates by volunteering to make phone calls and knocking on doors. Phone banks were conducted at the BTF and NYSUT offices as well as during the Council of Delegates meeting.

The winning candidates, endorsed by the BTF were:

Thomas DiNapoli - NYS Comptroller
 Timothy Kennedy - 63rd NYS Senate
 Patrick Burke - 142nd NYS Assembly
 Monica Wallace - 143rd NYS Assembly
 Karen McMahon - 146th NYS Assembly

Judicial Candidates:

Honorable John Curran
 Honorable James McLeod
 Honorable Lisa Bloch Rodwin
 Susan Maxwell Barnes

The endorsements for judicial positions were based on the ratings of the American Bar Association.

The other candidates were interviewed by a panel of members from the BTF Political Action Committee.

After interviewing and discussing the candidates, the panel made a recommendation to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee, in turn, made a recommendation to the Council of Delegates and their vote was the deciding factor in which candidates would be endorsed by the BTF.

Did You Know...

That employees who have served for a period of 10 years or more, and have exhausted all their sick time, can apply for an additional 30 days of sick leave at full pay?

And, when that 30 days of sick leave has been exhausted, a teacher may apply for and be granted a second 30 days of additional sick time allowance at full pay!

If you didn't know these two 30-day sick leave extensions were available, you should be aware that the BTF negotiated this benefit for the teachers in its collective bargaining agreement.

For more information, see Article XXVIII, (A)(1)(d) of the collective bargaining agreement.

What Exactly Do Those Pay Codes Mean?

Ever wonder what you are being paid for when you receive your biweekly check? And what are deductions you are being charged? Below is a list of some of the common compensation and deduction codes that appear on teachers' paystubs. You might want to save these for future reference.

Compensation

Code	Description
SUMSH1	Summer School Hourly, 1st Year
SUMSH2	Summer School Hourly, 2nd Year
SUMSCH	Summer School Daily Teacher
SET UP	Set Up – Class Schedule
DAYTCH	Daily Teacher Rate
HOMEIN1	Home Instruction, 1st Year
HOMEIN2	Home Instruction, 2nd Year
AFSH1	After School Teacher, 1st Year
AFSH2	After School Teacher, 2nd Year
I DISL	In-service Teacher Discussion Leader
I-TES	In-service Teacher-Student
I CHAI	In-service Teacher Committee Chair
I COMM	In-service Teacher Committee Member

ATHL SUP	Athletic Supervisor
C PAL	Athletic Coach
CLUB ADVIS	Club Advisor

Deductions

Code	Description
BTF FULL	BTF Union Dues Full-Time
BTF PART	BTF Union Dues Part-Time
VTCOPE	VOTE COPE Contribution
BTF EX	Extended Pay Plan
UNITED	United Way Fund
CBSBTF	Community Blue Single
CBFBTF	Community Blue Family
HCPBTF	Health Care Plan Single
HCPFBTF	Health Care Plan Family
IHSBTF	Independent Health Single
IHFbTF	Independent Health Family
TRADS	Traditional Plan Single
TRADS	Traditional Plan Family

United Way Sponsors Event for BPS Girls

In October, more than 200 Buffalo Public School girls participated in the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County's semi-annual WNY Girls in Sports Event.

The students, 8-12 years old, came from the following schools:

- Discovery School #67
- Highgate Heights #80
- Southside Elementary #93
- Bennett Park Montessori #32
- Lorraine Academy #72
- Harvey Austin School #97
- International Prep #198
- BEST #6
- Dr. Antonia Pantoja Community School of Excellence #18
- Bilingual Center #33
- West Hertel Academy #94

The girls started with a Zumba warm-up before moving through seven stations that introduced them to sports and different physical activities.

From tennis to lacrosse to yoga, these girls experienced the joy of sports and left empowered to take on the world. Sports not only keep young women physically fit, but make them stronger students, friends, and classmates.

The girls were also able to interact with high school and college athletes, including the UB Bulls Women's

Basketball team.

During their break, special athlete guest speakers participated in a Q&A with the girls and told their personal stories.

The program was made possible through funding from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation which makes this program possible and gives hundreds of girls in our community the chance to participate in this incredible experience.

All schools are welcome to participate in this event, so be on the lookout for information coming on the spring event!



BPS students pose for a photo after participating in the WNY Girls in Sports Event.

The Political Landscape and Your Pension

One of the best benefits to being a public school teacher in New York State is membership in NYSTRS, the New York State Teachers' Retirement System. It is, almost without question, the finest public retirement system in the country.

With about \$120 billion in assets, the system is exceptionally well funded. The funding ratio ranges between 99% and 101% depending on what measure is used.

What makes NYSTRS so good? A combination of things. First, pensions of public employees are guaranteed by the NYS Constitution and "shall not be diminished or impaired". Let us not forget how hard we all worked to defeat the Constitutional Convention last year to protect that guarantee.

Second, while other states have robbed from their public pension funds to balance their budgets and avoid raising taxes, that has not happened in NY State. Our state budget is completely separate from NYSTRS. And although several administrations in the past have attempted to "borrow" from the public pension funds (there are 8 in all) for various infrastructure projects, that has not been allowed to happen.

Third, thanks to what is known as the "State Aid Intercept", NYSTRS receives its required payments from employers out of the state aid that is earmarked for school districts. Therefore, no school district can "overlook" making its required payment to the system.

Finally, NYSTRS is extremely well managed. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thomas Lee, the assets of the fund have continued to grow and are very secure. In 2018, NYSTRS will pay out over \$7 billion to retirees or their beneficiaries and 85% of that money comes from investment income. Over 80% of these retirees are living in New York State and the economic boost they provide to local economies is significant and cannot be overlooked.

The NYSTRS Board of Trustees is made up of ten people, three of whom are active teachers, one retiree, two superintendents, two School Boards Association members, a bank executive, and a State Comptroller appointee. All of them are teacher advocates and have at least some familiarity with educational issues. Note that the governor does not have representation on the Board. Sadly, NYSTRS' success is not enjoyed by our colleagues across the country.

Other teachers' retirement systems are not faring as well. CalSTRS, California's teacher retirement system, used to be a model of excellence but now is only 63.7% funded. The Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund of New Jersey is just 47.0% funded thanks mostly to former Governor Chris Christie who helped put that system into a black hole from which it will be nearly impossible to recover.

The same thing is happening all over the country. Forty-eight states have

reduced the benefits of teachers who are currently working. In Rhode Island, a state with a constitutional pension guarantee, General Treasurer Gina Raimondo (now the governor) headed the effort to reduce the benefits of those currently in the system by 12% and of those already retired by 10%. The retirees ended up with a 3% reduction but imagine the impact on these people who gave so much to their careers for so long.

Twenty-eight states have reduced or eliminated their COLA (cost of living adjustment) and six states have discontinued their defined benefit plan and gone to either a defined contribution plan or a blended plan. Montana raised the employee contribution rate by 1%.

The list goes on and on of states that have reduced pension benefits for employees and/or are in serious financial difficulty. Illinois, another state with a constitutional guarantee to fund pensions, is just 29% funded and annual required contribution (ARC) payments to the system have been skipped recently. Kentucky teachers may be in the most precarious situation of all. Their future and current pensions are far from certain and the system is \$14.3 billion short of what will be needed over the next 30 years to fully fund pensions.

So how did so many states get into this pension mess? Much of it started when the bottom fell out of the dot-com industry between 2000 and 2002. The value of investments plummeted and states took to raiding public pension funds to balance budgets. Not making even one year's worth of required payments to a retirement system will almost certainly throw the long-term outlook into disarray. The problem was exacerbated by the recession that began in late 2008. The market value of assets dipped for every retirement system in the country. The assets of NYSTRS lost 20% of their value in 2009 alone. But while our system plans for inevitable bad times, other systems nearly collapsed. Most never recovered.

New York may seem like an island among all these states with insecure pension futures. Perhaps we are, but NYSTRS is something we must not take for granted. NYSUT is constantly advocating legislation to improve the retirement benefits for teachers. While benefits cannot be diminished or impaired, they can be improved! All such improvements, however, are the result of legislative action and not the decision of the Board of Trustees. At some point, NYSUT may be successful in getting the Tier 6 benefit structure improved. Unfortunately, neither a tier enhancement nor a state early retirement incentive is in the works this year.

But in the words of David Keefe, president of the NYSTRS Board and representative of the retirees, "The teachers in most states would give anything for a retirement system as good as Tier 6 in New York State."

Know Your NYSTRS Facts

As a teacher, you know knowledge is power. That is why you should arm yourself with the facts about your pension and the organization that administers your plan. Know the following information and you will be better able to respond to public pension critics.

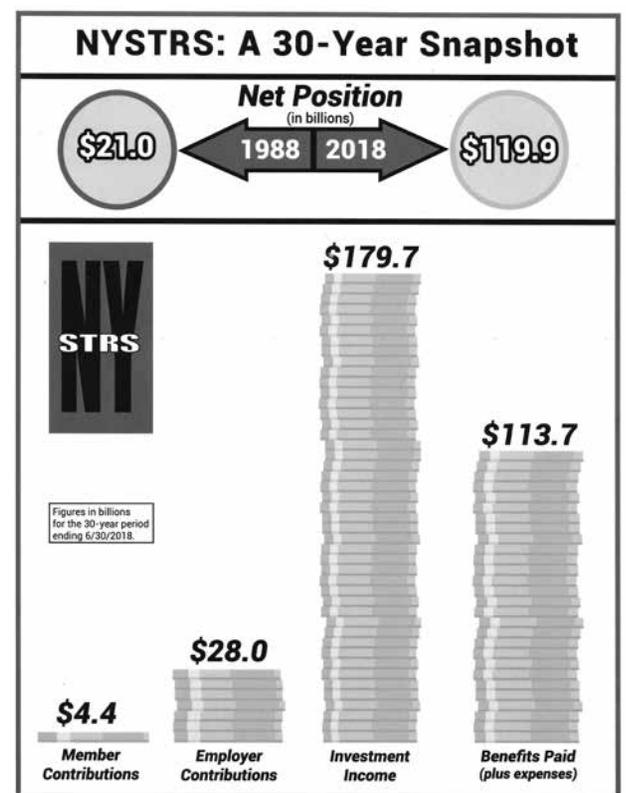
- NYSTRS is among the **best-funded plans in the nation**, in large part because it has received uninterrupted employer and employee contributions throughout its history.

- Over the past 30 years, NYSTRS' net position has increased **nearly six fold** despite paying out **about 4 times** as much in benefits as contributions collected from employers and members over the same period.

- Investment earnings have accounted for **85% of NYSTRS' income** over the past 30 years.

- For the 30-year period which ended 6/30/18, a period that included some of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression, **NYSTRS' rate of return was 9.2%**.

- NYSTRS' investment fees average **25 cents per \$100 managed**, compared to 60 cents or more to manage the same \$100 in a typical defined contribution plan.



RUMORE CONTROL
881-4818

BTF at a Glance

BTF President

Philip Rumore

BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



BTF Executive Committee Members

Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis,
Sophia Howard-Johnson,
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster
Christopher Stephens,
Ruyvette Townsend

7-12

Dennis Brancato, Patrick Foster,
Lynn Garcia, Melissa Kenney,
M. Sue Raichilson, Chris Salamone,
Eve Shippens-Nieves

K-12

Susan Marie Baker, Nicole Herkey,
Catherine Lipsitz, Mark Mecca,
Gregory Sawicki, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman

At Large

Marc Bruno, Tom Gattie, Mike Mecca

BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*

Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*

Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*

Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*

Deana Fox, *NYSUT Labor Relations
Specialist*

Dennis Licherelli, *NYSUT*

Labor Relations Specialist

Anna Geronimo, *NYSUT*

Labor Relations Specialist

Visit Our Updated Website
www.btfny.org

PROVOCATOR

BTF Provocator Staff

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*
Chris Salamone, *editor*

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BTF Reps Attend Annual Workshop

About 100 BTF building representatives spent a good portion of their weekend October 26-27, learning how to better serve our teachers.

The annual BTF Delegate/Leadership Workshop was attended by delegates, alternates and building committee members. It was held Friday evening and most of Saturday at the Millennium Hotel in Cheektowaga.

During the workshop, the representatives attended informational sessions conducted by President Phil Rumore as well as NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists Deana Fox, Anna Geronimo and Dennis Licherelli. In addition, a legal update was presented by NYSUT Attorney Clare Sellers.

The workshop got underway with a welcome from Rumore who thanked the delegates for coming.

"Thank you for coming and taking the time so you can help the teachers in your schools. That's something special", Rumore told the attendees.

The breakout sessions were divided into two tracks. Track I for new delegates included workshops on building committee information and grievance procedures.

Track II, for experienced delegates, included a mock arbitration and engaging members in the work of the union.

Rumore also went through the contract and BTF handbook with the delegates.

Some of the new delegates said they were happy to get information on the duties of the delegates and repeat attendees agreed there is always something new to be learned.

"I enjoyed meeting and mingling with new and former colleagues", said Maria Baker, a Business teacher at the Academy School 131@4. "It was interesting to find out how much is involved in an arbitration."

John MacDonald, from McKinley High School said he enjoyed learning about building committee and grievances and learned new skills to take back to his school. He added that it was informative to share experiences and common problems for the various schools represented.

