

# PROVOCATOR

April 2018

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 48/NUMBER 4

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## BTF Supports Students at March for Our Lives

Several BTF members were among thousands of marchers supporting our students at the “March for Our Lives” rally March 24th in Lafayette Square.

Buffalo students from City Honors and International Prep at Lafayette, were among the students from districts across Western New York who spoke at the rally.

The rally coincided with the march in Washington, D.C. for which the BTF contributed \$500 for one of the buses. That march was organized in the wake of the Florida school shooting that left 17 dead.

“Let’s show our support and pride for the students who have mobilized to ensure that our schools and neighborhoods are safe,” BTF President Phil Rumore said.

Rumore was on hand to see students from East Community High School board one of the Washington bound buses when they departed around midnight March 23.

He also attended the Buffalo rally and was asked to speak. He declined the offer he said, because the rally was the time and place for the students to speak and the adults to listen.

Student after student addressed the crowd and pleaded with state and national representatives to change gun laws to protect students. Many of these students will have turned 18 and be eligible to vote in the November elections.

Although the speakers were from different schools throughout the area, they all had the same message:

- Vote for people who want stricter gun laws
- Students should not have to be afraid of being shot at school
- Teachers should not carry guns
- Schools should employ more student support personnel, such as counselors and psychologists to help students with emotional or mental health issues

Participants were urged to take part in the National School Walkout on April 20, the 19th anniversary of the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado.

“We must all work together and not stop until those in power have taken meaningful actions to ensure that we have safe schools and neighborhoods,” Phil said.

## BTF Calls for Action on School Violence

Actions to bring attention to school safety for students and school personnel have been requested by the BTF on state-wide and national levels.

In a resolution approved unanimously by the Council of Delegates, the BTF is asking all organizations, schools and school districts to join with us and fly their flags at half-staff until they are “convinced that sufficient actions (laws, regulations, programs, etc.) have been enacted to provide a safe environment in our schools for our students and school personnel.”

“Flying our flags at half-staff will provide that constant reminder – Act now to protect our students and school personnel. If not, we will remember in the next election,” BTF President Phil Rumore said.

In a resolution, unanimously passed at the March Council of Delegates meeting, the BTF recommended the following:

- Separate and additional funding for School districts to employ at least one school resource officer in each school who is a trained law enforcement officer who will work with students, school personnel and the community.
- Separate and additional funding for school counselors (Guidance Counselors), school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers and similar student support personnel to help diagnose, treat and refer students identified as having possible serious emotional problems.
- Institute a statewide crisis tapeline/app that provides students with access to crisis counselors and a confidential means of reporting bullying, violence and threats.
- Funding for school districts to provide a system for training school personnel and parents to detect the early warning signs that a student may become violent if the student exhibits one or more of the following signs. ([www.greatschools.org](http://www.greatschools.org))
  - Difficulty eating or sleeping
  - Abuse of animals
  - Unusual attraction to violent entertainment
  - Withdrawal from social interaction
  - Feelings of rejection and/or persecution
  - Unusually intense or frequent violent content in personal writings or artwork
  - A pattern of bullying
  - Intolerance or prejudice against certain groups of people

- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Membership in a gang
- Threats of serious violence

In addition, the BTF is calling for state and federal statutes that:

- Ban assault weapons similar to the AR-15 and high capacity magazines
- Mandate comprehensive background checks to prevent those found guilty of violent crimes and domestic violence from purchasing or having possession of a gun
- Allow seven days to conduct background checks
- Raise the minimum age to own a handgun to 21, unless a member of the military or a law enforcement officer
- Prohibit the sale of kits that can be used to make/modify guns

The BTF also is on record opposing arming teachers in schools.

“Our schools should not be part of an arms race to see who will have more firepower nor where the gunfight at O.K. Corral takes place”, Phil explained. “We must ensure that we identify those with emotional problems, provide them with support and services, and ensure that they do not have access to firearms.”



**ABOVE:** As a constant reminder that action must be taken, the flag flies at half-staff outside BTF Headquarters on Porter Avenue.



The below, as you may know, is a copy of the letter we have had printed in some of our local newsletters.

The issue is not just about guns as the resolution passed by the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates points out (see, *BTF Calls for Action on School Violence* on page 1). The issue is how to end gun violence.

We need to be able to identify those who show signs of possible violent tendencies and provide them with the help, while making sure that those who should not have a gun are prevented from having one.

Some of our colleagues disagree with our position. As teachers, we teach to be open to another point of view, and as one of the students said, discuss rather than argue our respective points of view.

This student statement shows how much we can learn from our students and why we should be proud of them.

These students do indeed, I believe, give us hope. Let's use them as role models for our students to counteract the negative role models they see.



### **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,  
Isabella Keegan, 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](http://www.btfny.org)

## **PROVOCATOR**

#### **BTF Provocator Staff**

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

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published five times during the 2017-2018 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

**Postmaster**, send address changes to:  
BTF Provocator, 271 Porter Avenue,  
Buffalo, New York 14201.

**Advertising:** Rates and anticipated publishing schedule may be requested from the BTF, 716-881-5400, FAX 716-881-6678. Although advertising is screened, advertising does not imply BTF endorsement of the product, service or the views expressed. Your patronage of our advertisers is appreciated.

The **BTF** is an affiliate of **NYSUT**, **AFT** and **NEA**.

April 2018  
Volume 48, No. 4  
Circulation 4400

### **An Open Letter to Our Students...**

#### **You Give Us Hope**



*Thousands are murdered with guns each year. Since Sandy Hook, there have been 239 school shootings with 438 people shot and 138 murdered in our schools. The most recent being the 17 students, teachers and staff murdered at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.*

*The adults, who are relentlessly fighting to end this carnage and provide you with safe neighborhoods and schools, have been shunned and ignored by those in power.*

*You, the students of Buffalo, Western New York and the Country have done what we adults have been unable to do - create a National movement and awareness focused on safe neighborhoods and schools.*

*You have come together, organized, demonstrated and forced those, who have refused to listen and act, to realize that you will not and cannot stop until you have safe neighborhoods and schools.*

*You have learned your lessons well. Those in power are now on notice that you expect them to learn from you, act now, and that you will be grading them in the next elections.*

*We, your teachers in Buffalo and across the Country, are so very proud of you. You give us hope for the future.*

**Don't give up. We are with you.**

**Your Teachers**



# Letters to the Editor

## Junior Achievement Thanks BTF For \$250 Donation

On behalf of Junior Achievement of WNY's board, staff, volunteers, and, most importantly, the 13,928 K-12 JA students we serve, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your commitment to JA. Your support is helping JA to educate Western New York students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs.

Your contribution of \$250 is providing young people with the real-world skills they want and need, like how to manage money, how to prepare for a career, and how to open and run a business. In the process, students are connecting classroom learning to the real world, which is allowing them to recognize the value of staying in school, increasing the likelihood they will graduate. Because

of your generosity, more students are receiving life-changing financial literacy, work readiness and entrepreneurship education.

Thank you again for investing in JA's young people, helping us teach them about money management and how business works. This education will allow them to compete in the workforce and become successful professionals, which will strengthen the economic health of our community and nation. Truly, we believe this is the most important investment that you will make all year. It is certainly the most appreciated.

We remain grateful for your gift and look forward to your continued partnership.

Sincerely,  
Laurie Mahoney, president

## Legislator Thanks BTF

Election night was two months ago, and it has taken me this long to gather my wits and get enough sleep to get back into the swing of things. I apologize for the delay in sending you my sincere thanks for your generous contribution to my campaign. Your belief in my candidacy was invaluable as we mounted a challenge against a well-connected opponent with deep pockets.

Although the outcome was not what we had hoped, with help from people like you, my chance of winning this important race grew stronger every day. I forced my opponent and his party to spend a great amount of money on his race, which drained resources from other candidates. In the end, this helped flip the County Legislature, giving Democrats the majority.

This is a unique time in the political history of our region and our nation. People are stepping forward to take political action against the elite politicians who look out for their own interests while ignoring the rest of us. As you know, I decided to run for Erie County Legislator because I knew that the need for working and middle class people to have a seat at the table is more critical than ever before. Restoring a Democratic majority in the Legislature will have ripple effects across Western New York and beyond.

I am truly grateful and humbled by the support I received in this campaign. My grassroots base was unwavering, and my support grew as I knocked on doors and met with voters every day.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Schoeneman

## BTF Helps Peace Center Support the Community

We at the WNY Peace Center couldn't be more grateful for your generous donation of \$125 during 2017. Your support is truly making a difference both to our local community as well as in the networks we are building regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Your donation has made possible the work of our nine taskforces, our outreach, rallies, marches, panels, workshops, film showings, and more. We #unitethestruggles to strengthen our community and help build a movement for real social change. We work pro-actively to reduce violence by working with children and families, individuals and groups. Please accept our thanks and appreciation for your faithful support and participation.

Sincerely,  
Victoria B. Ross

## Thirty-Six Things Unions Have Done for Teachers and Other Workers

1. Prep periods and duty free lunch
2. Paid vacation and snow days
3. Family and Medical Leave Act
4. Paid sick leave
5. Social Security
6. Minimum wage
7. Civil Rights Act/Title VII (Prohibits employer discrimination)
8. The Sick Leave Bank
9. Pay for extracurricular activities
10. Child labor laws
11. Occupational Safety & Health Act (OSHA)
12. Employer health care insurance
13. Healthcare for retirees
14. Workers' Compensation
15. Unemployment insurance
16. Pensions
17. Workplace safety standards and regulations
18. Collective bargaining rights for employees
19. Wrongful termination laws
20. Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967
21. Whistleblower protection laws
22. Employee Polygraph Protection Act
23. Veterans' Employment and Training Services (VETS)
24. Salaries and raises
25. Sexual harassment laws
26. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
27. Holiday pay
28. Employer-paid life insurance
29. Privacy rights
30. Pregnancy and parental leave
31. Military leave
32. A start and end time of your day
33. Public Education for Children
34. Equal Pay Acts of 1963 & 2011
35. Laws ending sweatshops in the United States
36. Supplemental Benefit Fund providing optical and dental care

## Committee of 100 Lobbies State Reps

More than 600 NYSUT members, including six from the BTF, went to Albany March 5-6 to lobby legislators for money for education as part of the annual Committee of 100 Advocacy Days.

The Committee of 100 is the largest of NYSUT's grassroots lobbying efforts. Each member local is expected to send at least one representative to the event.

Participants from the BTF included President Phillip Rumore, Vice President Rebecca Pordum, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Secretary and Director of the Teacher Center, Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Thomas Gattie, and Ruyvette Townsend, Executive Committee members.

The BTF representatives met with Western New York lawmakers to urge more funding for Buffalo Schools, continued funding for Teacher Centers and changes in legislation affecting teachers.

The BTF urges the Legislature to:

- Provide separate and additional funding for school districts to employ at least one school resource officer in each school who is a trained law enforcement officer who will work with students, school personnel and the community

- Provide separate and additional funds for school counselors (guidance counselors), school social workers, school psychologists, school attendance teachers and similar student support personnel to help diagnose, treat and refer students identified as having possible serious emotional problems.

- Initiate a statewide crisis tapeline/app that provides students with access to crisis counselors and a confidential means of reporting bullying, violence and threats.

- Provide funding for school districts to provide a system for training school personnel and parents to detect the early warning signs that a student may become violent.

- Enact statutory changes to the education law to return teacher evaluations back to local control with no state mandates

- Repeal the Receivership Law
- Restore funding for Teacher Centers to its 2008-2009 level

## BTF Members Sticking Together Eagerly Signing Membership Cards

With threats to dues collection looming on the horizon, more than 65 building representatives answered the call to be ambassadors for the Buffalo Teachers Federation Internal Card Campaign by attending a two-hour training.

The training was conducted March 1st by organizers of the New York State United Teachers at their Williamsville headquarters to prepare ambassadors in the event the Janus case succeeds in eliminating automatic dues deductions.

Janus vs. AFSCME, which calls for the end of mandatory union dues, was heard in Supreme Court on February 26th. A decision isn't expected to be rendered until sometime in June. If Janus is successful, the entire country will become a "Right to Work" environment which, in some states, has weakened the bargaining power of unions.

The Internal Card Campaign, being conducted in every school, asks building representatives to meet individually with each teacher in their buildings to discuss school concerns, the Janus case and its impact and member benefits.

The ambassadors were trained to:

- create structures in the worksites that build and maintain relationships with all members through one-on-one conversations

- provide opportunities for members to experience their union in their work place on a frequent basis

- connect our members to a movement that advocates for shared values and vision

Teachers are also being asked to sign cards indicating they will remain in the union. At this point, most of the building ambassadors have done an outstanding job of re-signing our members. Many schools are already at the 100% commitment rate.

During the training, the representatives learned to build relationships with their teachers to create an atmosphere of solidarity throughout the district.

The initial campaign continued through March. A follow-up campaign will be conducted in April to meet with the teachers who have not yet submitted a card.

## The Following Schools Have Re-Signed 100% of Their Members

School 6

School 42

School 59 Annex

School 93

School 131@4

School 131@18A

School 358

School 359

School 360

School 361

School 367



1. LRS Dennis Licherelli meets with a group of "ambassadors" and discusses talking points for the re-sign campaign. 2. BTF President Phil Rumore gives the opening remarks at the training and assures everyone that the union haters will not defeat us.

# Solidarity, Hard Work and Positive Vibes Present at 2018 Leadership Conference

Unions are under attack, but solidarity, perseverance, and preparation may lessen the blow. That was the message during the 2018 Winter Leadership Conference, sponsored by the New York State United Teachers.

“We have those people who are trying to destroy us and they’re not even subtle about it,” BTF Philip Rumore told NYSUT members. “We have to be stronger now than ever before so they don’t win. We need more members to be active.”

His remarks were made during the opening session of the conference, which was held March 9-10, in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Buffalo.

The conference, attended by NYSUT members from throughout Western New York, consisted of a number of workshops to improve union representation and information on how to proceed if the Janus vs. AFSCME case succeeds in eliminating automatic dues deductions.

David Hecker, Michigan AFT President, was the keynote speaker and told the attendees that his union membership grew by 52,000 after Michigan became a Right to Work state.

“They wanted to wipe us out, but we grew instead,” Hecker said. “With your commitment, your organization will win in the workplace. Screw Janus and screw the bad guys. Stay calm and you will not only be OK, you will have a stronger membership. Nobody is taking away the labor movement.”

NYSUT President Andy Pallotta told the audience that if union members work together, they will survive and reminded them of the movement to defeat the Constitutional Convention on the ballot last November.

He urged all members to contribute to Vote-Cope to enable NYSUT to financially support candidates who will promote educational issues.

Although participants of the conference were able to pick which workshops they wanted to attend, all of the BTF members attended a workshop on the Janus case, presented by BTF Labor Relations Specialists Deana Fox and Anna Geronimo.

The presentation went over the case, which was heard in Supreme Court on February 26th, labor law history, and steps being taken to have all BTF members sign pledge cards to

remain in the union if Janus wins the case.

The presentation included information to share with members reluctant to sign pledge cards and talking points aimed at keeping the membership intact.

Another workshop, Blame/Shame/Tame, went over the impact the Janus case will have on work relationships if it is successful. It dealt with trust, life without a union and reasons to maintain membership.

Other workshops included:

- Discipline for the Novice
- Education Law & Regulations
- Grievances
- Member Benefits
- Member Engagement through Collective Bargaining
- Political Action

A record-setting 450 members of the New York State United Teachers, including 22 from the BTF, attended the workshop. Besides the BTF, 85 local unions were represented from all nine counties represented by the Western New York Region of NYSUT.

In addition to President Rumore, BTF members who attended the conference were: Vice President Rebecca Pordum, and Treasurer Joseph Montante, Executive Board members Dennis Brancato Lynn Garcia, Tom Gattie, Nicole Herkey, Sophia Howard-Johnson, Melissa Kenney, Sue Raichilson, Trisha Rosokoff, Chris Salamone, Greg Sawicki, Janine Schuster, Eve Shippens, Elizabeth Spiro-Carman, and Ruyvette Townsend. Also attending were: Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, April Hall, Shawn King, Kim Nixon-Williams, and Temothye Peart.

*1. Realizing that unions are under attack, Executive Committee members Trish Rosokoff and Nicole Herkey listen to Andy Pallotta’s opening remarks. 2. After David Hecker’s keynote speech, Greg Sawicki leans over to discuss a topic point with Temothye Peart. 3. As Phil Rumore prepares for a meeting of local presidents after the workshop, Ruyvette Townsend, Shawn King, April Hall, and Sophia Howard-Johnson feel even more empowered.*



# Counseling Memos

A counseling memo is not discipline; nevertheless, no one likes to be told he/she is doing something incorrectly. Therefore, here are some things to keep in mind when dealing with the receipt of a counseling memo.

A counseling memo may be used by an administrator or supervisor for the limited purpose of making a teacher aware of a rule, policy, procedure, practice or expectation. The purpose of a counseling memo is to warn and instruct the teacher as well as discuss future conduct, expectations and areas for improvement. A counseling memo may not include any discipline or the threat of discipline, although whether a memo or letter to the file is a counseling memo or discipline in the nature of a letter of reprimand will depend on all of the facts and circumstances.

Even though a counseling memo is not discipline, a Buffalo Public School teacher should not receive a counseling memo without a union representative present. If the administration insists on issuing the counseling memo without a union representative present, against the wishes of the teacher, the teacher should state, "I believe I am entitled to representation so let's continue this meeting when representation is available" in response to administration's questions. After the meeting, the teacher should notify his/her union representative immediately about the meeting and denial of representation.

At the end of the meeting, the administration will ask the teacher to sign the counseling memo. It is each

teacher's choice whether or not to sign the counseling memo. If the teacher decides to sign, make sure to add the following language to the memo, "My signature acknowledges I have received this memo not that I agree with its contents."

In response to a counseling memo, a teacher has a right to provide a rebuttal. In the Buffalo City School District, there is no time limit as to when a Buffalo Public School teacher has to respond to a counseling memo. The most prudent course of action is for the teacher to request a copy of his/her counseling memo. The teacher should then prepare a rebuttal to the counseling memo. Prior to submitting the rebuttal, the teacher should provide the BTF with a copy of the counseling memo and draft rebuttal for review.

Once the BTF has reviewed and suggested possible changes, the teacher should provide the rebuttal to his/her administrator by email or in person with a request for a date stamped copy and request that the rebuttal be attached to the original memo and be placed in the teacher's personnel file. The teacher should keep a copy of the email or date stamped copy for his/her own records. See *Provocator*, "Keeping Records is a Must" (October 2017) for more information about which records to store.

*This article is for informational purposes only. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it establish an attorney-client relationship.*

## Did You Know...

That authorized absence may be granted to temporary, probationary, and permanent employees for **Death in the Immediate Family** for a period not to exceed five (5) working days at full pay, with no deduction from accumulated sick time allowance?

Note that immediate family shall include a parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent, husband, wife, parent of husband or wife, or any relative permanently residing in the personal household in which the employee resides.

Also note that the language does not say that the five days must be taken consecutively.

This information can be found in Article XXXI, Paragraph D of the collective bargaining agreement and was negotiated for you by the BTF.

## BTF Raises \$2,000 For Telethon

Once again Buffalo teachers and the BTF staff opened their hearts and donated more than \$2,000 to the Annual Variety Club Telethon to benefit the Oishei Children's hospital.

Donations were collected from Schools #3, #42, #45, and #93. Money was also raised from a 50/50 raffle during training of building representatives for the BTF card signing campaign.

The BTF was represented at the Variety Club Telethon by President Phil Rumore, Vice President Becky Pordum, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Tom Gattie, Sue Raichialson, Chris Salamone, Greg Sawicki, and Ruyvette Townsend.

### TEACHER PREPARATION AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS



Join us at our Graduate Education Programs Information Session

Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 4:30-6:30 p.m.  
E. H. Butler Library, Room 210

Register now at (716) 878-5601 or  
[graduateschool.buffalostate.edu](http://graduateschool.buffalostate.edu)  
APPLY NOW FOR SUMMER AND FALL



Greg Mucha  
Optician

Call Today for  
An Appointment  
With our  
Optometrist!

834-3511  
**Eyewear Unlimited**  
1480 Hertel Avenue @ Sterling Avenue

**100% Total Coverage\***

Complete Frame & Lens Coverage  
for BTF & Dependents

Single Vision or Flat-Top 28  
\* Plastic lenses power to ±.400 SPH. • with ±.200 CYC.  
Choose from a Special Selection of Frames.  
Tints extra. Not Good with other offers.

Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina



Joe Frandina  
Optician

Call Today for  
An Appointment  
With our  
Optometrist!

NEED THE LATEST INFORMATION  
CALL THE BTF AT

**881-5400**

OR VISIT THE WEB AT  
[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)

# Is Your Beneficiary Up to Date?

Recently, a call came into the BTF office from the life partner of a teacher. We'll refer to them as Donna and Tom. Unfortunately, Tom was under the care of Hospice and the end was near. We were asked if there was anything she needed to know as far as the BTF or the Board of Education.

The answer, of course, was YES. We advised Donna that she needed to contact the NYS Teachers' Retirement System and immediately file for a Disability Retirement and write the words "For Protection Only" on the application.

With this, NYSTRS holds the application in abeyance until the teacher passes and then considers the teacher retired before death. We were relatively certain that the Largest Lump Sum Option would be most beneficial but had her call NYSTRS to be certain.

The rep from NYSTRS walked her through all of the steps she would need to do, including sending the application by Certified Mail. By so doing, the application is considered RECEIVED as soon as the Post Office has it.

But we felt the need to follow up on the matter and contacted NYSTRS. It turned out that our suspicions were correct. The teacher did NOT have a beneficiary named for the In Service/ Post Retirement Death Benefit.

We called Donna back and advised her that there was one more form that needed to be completed and that it needed to be notarized. She thanked us and told us that another relative was a notary public and that he could stop by.

Sadly, Tom passed away later that day. Fortunately, the application had

been brought to the Post Office just hours earlier. And while money can't change the outcome, we were at least pleased that by filing for the Disability Retirement, the beneficiary was entitled to not only the Lump Sum benefit, but also the Post Retirement Death Benefit. In this case, that was 50% of three times Tom's final salary.

We later learned that the only reason Donna called the BTF was that one of her neighbors is a retired Buffalo teacher and suggested it to her. As a result, not only was a much higher benefit paid out, but Donna did not have the added stress of how all of this would play out in court because Tom did not have a will.

The lesson to take away from this is to update your beneficiary with the NYS Teachers' Retirement System. Your Benefit Profile, mailed to you back in November, contains your current beneficiary. In some cases, that may be an ex-spouse, a deceased parent, or someone else you would not want to receive your death benefit.

You can download a Designation of Beneficiary form (form NET-11.4) at nystrs.org. It's under FORMS and then Active Member Forms. It needs to be notarized and sent directly to NYSTRS.

While you're at it, the BTF Supplemental Benefit Fund pays out a small death benefit as does the Buffalo Board of Education. You may want to check that those are up to date.

And while calls like this are heart-breaking, teachers need to know that the BTF is here to help. It's what we do and will continue to do.

## Union Member **BENEFITS**

Did YOU know ?

### NYSUT Member Benefits

Your membership in the union (BTF and NYSUT) entitles you to MANY benefits (besides a Collective Bargaining Agreement). NYSUT has secured many of these benefits in different areas that, due to our large group size, get a sizeable discount. Things like : Term insurance policies, Travel discounts, Purchase discounts, Legal services and many more. Please contact our NYSUT regional coordinator of benefits Mr. Don Colligan (716) 634-7132, ext 38 to discuss your questions on utilizing these benefits OR ask Don to schedule a day to come to your school and meet with teachers during their free time before, during or after the school day.



## Nadia Shahram, Esq. An Attorney With Purpose



*"I cannot save your marriage, but I can save your family."*

*"She is a miracle worker. It was emotional and rough, but we are glad that we chose Nadia - we have a clear and fair agreement and a better relationship as exes than we ever expected."*

- Suzanna C.G.

If you are certain or just looking at your options for a separation or divorce, I invite you to consider the many advantages of mediation with Nadia.



Convenient locations in  
Williamsville, Youngstown and Orchard Park

[www.buffalomediation.com](http://www.buffalomediation.com)

attorneynadia@gmail.com | (716) 565-1299



## BTF Members Save with *Select* Benefits !

**westherr***Select.com*

No hassles. No sales pressure. No gimmicks.

**"Get a Select Vehicle Price"**

BTF Members & Family also receive ... **5 Free NYS Inspection Fees** with each *Select* purchase/lease. Repair costs extra.



**17 New Vehicle Brands | Over 1,600 Used Vehicles | Special Financing!**  
Including Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Sprinter in Rochester, N.Y.



Charles San George



EST. 1985



Charles San George II O.D.

**Sheridan / Delaware Plaza Across From Tops**  
874-4600  
Convenient Parking

**100% Coverage for Teachers and Dependents**

Monday through Fri: 9:30AM - 6:00PM We Supply and Submit Your Forms

Saturdays: 9:30AM - 2:00PM

**Eye Examinations by Appointment - Evenings Available**

## Proudly Helping Buffalo School Employees Since 1972



## You Can Retire Financially Independent

### Account Benefits:

- Professional local guidance
- Wide fund selection available
- Simple quarterly statements
- Free online access
- Easy Access Loans
- Low investment threshold
- No load funds
- No per fund ticket fee
- Minimal management & annual fees



## Plan...Protect...Invest...

**It's your TSA/403b...We can help.**

**Sgroi Financial, LLC**

965 Union Road, West Seneca, NY 14224 **716-674-6700** [www.sgroifinancial.com](http://www.sgroifinancial.com)

Securities offered through Cadaret, Grant & Co., Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. Sgroi Financial and Cadaret, Grant & Co., Inc. are separate entities.

*Below: Recognized for 8 years of service to her country, Julia Tomaka enjoys a Buffalo Sabres game with her husband, Kevin and son, Ryan.*



## Teacher Recognized for Service to Country

Julia Tomaka, an elementary education teacher at School #33, was honored for serving her country through the "Tickets for Troops" program, sponsored by the Buffalo Sabres.

During the home game on March 19th, Mrs. Tomaka and her family were given special seats in the 100 level of Key Bank Center and Mrs. Tomaka was called out on the Jumbotron as the honoree for the evening.

Julia Tomaka served in the US Navy for eight years prior to coming to work for Buffalo Public Schools.

## School Grants Offered

The Western Zone of the NYS Retired Teachers Association is offering cash grants to provide funding assistance for teacher-generated classroom activity and/or an out-of-classroom cultural presentation by students. Applications are available for a grant of \$500 in either of two categories:

1) A creative classroom-related project for which a teacher or team of teachers may submit a proposal summarizing an activity designed to enhance and support student learning in a particular subject or two or more related subject areas.

2) A cultural presentation for which a teacher(s) or department describes a planned activity involving student participation/ performance before an audience.

The application is for activities to be planned for the 2018-19 academic year. Application guidelines are available on the Western Zone website: [www.wzretiredteachers.org](http://www.wzretiredteachers.org). All applications must be submitted by Thursday, May 10, 2018.

# PROVOCATOR

**BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION  
271 PORTER AVENUE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14201  
716-881-5400**



**Address Service Requested**

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 824  
Buffalo, NY

## Notice to All Non-Union Members

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that employees who are not members but who are represented exclusively by a union may be compelled to contribute their fair share of the cost of that representation. This payment is called an agency fee. In August 1992, the New York State Civil Service Law was amended making agency fee deductions mandatory for public employees. The amount of the agency fee is the equivalent to the amount of union dues.

As an agency fee payer (non-union member) you have certain legal rights, including the ability to object to paying the entire agency fee and obtain a rebate of the amount of the agency fee that goes toward political and ideological activities that are not related to collective bargaining. Such amount is called the non-changeable amount and the remainder of the agency fee is called the chargeable amount.

For the 2016-17 fiscal year, with respect to agency fee payers in the bargaining unit represented by the Buffalo Teachers Federation, the chargeable amount is \$266 and the non-changeable amount, or the amount of the rebate, is \$14.

For the 2016-17 fiscal year, your objections shall be made, if at all, by individually notifying the union president by mail during the one-month period between May 15 and June 15, 2018. No reduction will be made until the objection period has closed.

At the close of the union's fiscal year, as soon as available, the union will provide you with a copy of the audited financial statements, including

the final refund determination covering the fiscal year for which your objection was made.

As a non-member, you have precluded your involvement in the organizational life of our association. You are unable to have a voice in establishing policies, running for union office, or electing leadership at local, state and national levels. Non-members are urged to join their colleagues in membership. If you are unsure about your membership status, please contact your delegate chair or the BTF office.

As an association, which democratically elects its leaders and establishes its policies, we can only be as good and effective as our members make us. While the desire for increased compensation is a given, this represents a very small part of what we're about. Many of the other goals, and the energy and resources we commit to those goals, are shaped and delineated by the policies adopted by our members.

If you are newly employed in this field or to this district, take the time to seek out our elected leadership and learn more about us. If you feel any reason not to join us, please, talk to us about it. We need your help to make this organization the best it can be.

