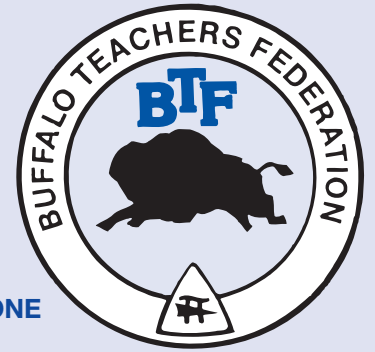


# PROVOCATOR

December 2024

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 55/NUMBER 2

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## SBF Benefits Set to Increase Again

Increases to the dental and optical benefits teachers receive through the BTF Supplemental Benefit Fund have been approved unanimously by the SBF Trustees.

This follows the significant increases that were approved last year and took effect February 1, 2024. The new increases will become effective January 1, 2025.

BTF President Rich Nigro, one of the five trustees, proposed the benefit increases after conducting an analysis of the fund's income and expenses. The analysis found coverage for some routine services were low and that teachers would benefit from an enhancement.

President Nigro made a motion to approve benefit increases and the other trustees, Sam Fritz, Jesse McVerby, Sue Raichilson, and Ruyvette Townsend, agreed.

So how will this help our members and their dependents?

### Dental

The analysis of benefits being paid revealed that while many of the preventative dental measures were being funded nearly in full, one area was falling a little short. Dental prophylaxes (cleanings) had a higher co-pay than other routine procedures. The allowance on all cleanings (adult, child, in-network, and out-of-network) will increase by \$4 per service effective January 1, 2025. This is a widely-used procedure and, while expensive to the SBF, the increase will help our members.

### Optical

Effective January 1, 2025, optical benefits will see fixed increases ranging from \$5 to \$15 for certain covered services. The benefit analysis commissioned by President Nigro found that our allowances were low on certain services. These are used by many of our members and

the increase is much-needed. As a result, the following services will see increases in allowances:

- Frames (member and dependent)  
Increase by \$15
- Progressive Lenses  
Increase by \$10
- Anti-Reflective Lenses  
Increase by \$5
- Transition Lenses  
Increase by \$5
- Blue Light Lenses  
Increase by \$5

### Death Benefit

When an active teacher passes, the BTF Supplemental Benefit Fund pays a small death benefit to the beneficiary of record. That benefit will increase from \$1,500 to \$2,000 effective January 1, 2025.

While these increases are expected to make a difference for teachers, more changes are expected. President Nigro and the other trustees will continue to look at ways to improve the benefits for our members for 2026.

## Get the BTF App

If you haven't already, please consider getting the BTF app for your phone. This is for BTF members only and we hope to establish more effective ways to communicate with our members through the app. To download the app on either the Apple App Store or on Google Play, please visit <https://btfny.app/launch.html> or scan the QR code below.



## Save the Date

**December 21 - January 1**

Winter Break

**December 30**

BTF Sledding Day

10 AM - 4 PM

Chestnut Ridge Park Casino

**January 9**

Council of Delegates Meeting

7:00 PM

Grapevine Banquets

333 Dick Road, Depew

**January 14**

When the Principal Calls Training

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

BTF Office, 271 Porter Avenue

**January 21**

Building Committee Training

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

BTF Office, 271 Porter Avenue

**January 27 & 28**

Delegate 101 Training

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

BTF Office, 271 Porter Avenue

**February 1**

Buffalo Bandits Game

7:30 PM

Key Bank Center

**February 5**

Taylor Law Training

4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

BTF Office, 271 Porter Avenue

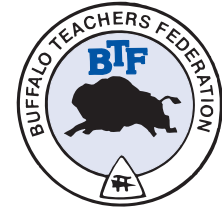
**February 13**

Council of Delegates Meeting

7:00 PM

Grapevine Banquets

333 Dick Road, Depew



## BTF at a Glance

### **BTF President**

Rich Nigro

### **BTF Vice President**

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan

### **BTF Treasurer**

Joseph Montante

### **BTF Secretary**

Mark Mecca

### **BTF Executive Committee Members**

#### **Pre-K-6**

Rachel Binda-Lis, April Hall,  
Kim Parzymieso, Tara Rosa,  
Janine Schuster, Chris Stephens

#### **7-12**

Tom Anthony, Dennis Brancato, Sam  
Fritz, Mike Jeffers, Rich Pyszczek, Eve  
Shippens, M. Sue Raichilson

#### **K-12**

Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes,  
Melinda CuvIELLO, Amy Flynn, Mel Holden,  
Karen Kane, Ellen Malone, Gregory Sawicki

#### **At Large**

Nicole Herkey, Brian Meyer, David  
Stephens

#### **BTF Headquarters Staff**

Rich Nigro, *President*  
Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, *Presidential  
Assistant*  
Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*  
Nicole Herkey, *Member Relations Officer*  
Jenna Burke, *NYSUT Counsel*  
Devon Gawley, *NYSUT Labor Relations  
Specialist*  
Robert Mueller, *NYSUT  
Labor Relations Specialist*  
Jennifer Rhee, *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 six times during the 2024-2025 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.

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

December 2024  
Volume 55, No. 2  
Circulation 4400

We are ending 2024 with celebration for what we have accomplished this year. The Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustees have approved another increase to member benefits, which will go into effect January 1, 2025!

Our new member information software that is being developed is nearing completion. This software, which is replacing the program we have used for the last 25 years, will increase data security, improve efficiency, and (as we build out its capabilities) will eventually allow members to access and update their personal information online via the new BTF website (which will soon be under development).

Also on the horizon is a new VoIP phone system that will replace our current analog phones. The new system provides tools such as a direct link to our new software, providing us with instant access to member information and voicemail to text email transcriptions.

There are, of course, challenges in front of us. There always will be. And it is important to address them as they come up. But it's easy sometimes for those things to steal our focus. If there is one thing I've learned in my almost 52 years on this planet, it's the importance of a balanced life. We will always talk when we need to and fight when we have to. But we can't lose sight of the good things in life and recognize what's working.

This makes me think of a quote by the renowned Dr. Seuss, "Sometimes, you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory." So, this holiday season, make the most of every moment. Put down the pencil and detach from the data. Enjoy your time and create some memories this winter recess!

From all of us at the BTF office, we wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with food, family, and friends, and a Happy New Year filled with all the good things in life.

# Letters to the Editor

## Cancer Society Thanks BTF

Thank you for your support. Because of supporters like you, we are raising awareness about breast cancer and taking action to end this disease as we know it, for everyone.

We are so grateful for your support.

Your contributions help by:

- Funding critical research into new treatments and cures
- Providing vital information and support for those diagnosed and their families
- Giving people in every community information about ways to reduce their breast cancer risk, or find it early when it's most treatable

Together, we have come so far. Your gift makes all the difference. With your help, we are making breakthroughs against breast cancer. Your support helps us fund vital research, which is our best shot at ending this terrible disease. Your part in Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is so important and appreciated!

Thank you again for helping us improve the lives of people facing cancer.

We sincerely appreciate your generosity. Thank you for supporting the American Cancer Society's vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone.

Warm regards,

**William L. Dahut, MD**

Chief Scientific Officer,  
American Cancer Society

## BPTO Thanks BTF For Continued Support

Thank you for your generous donation to the 2024 Back to School Backpack giveaway co-sponsored by the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization (BPTO).

Donors like you are vital to the continued success of our mission to support the education of children in Buffalo Public Schools by fostering relationships among parents, administrators, all school staff and community members, and we are grateful for your support.

Thank you again for your generous donation and your dedication to Buffalo Public School students and the mission of the BPTO.

Sincerely,

**BPTO Executive Committee**

## BTF Buys Water Bottles for School #53

Thank you for buying water bottles for our partnering school, Community P.S. #53. Your donation was extremely generous.

Again, thank you on behalf of the Christian Education Board of Calvary C.M.E. Church.

**Yvonne Patterson**

BOCE Director

**Rev. Charles Hudson**

Pastor

## BTF Donates to Explore Buffalo

On behalf of all of us at Explore Buffalo, thank you so very much for the incredibly generous donation from the Buffalo Teachers Federation! We are honored and deeply grateful for this gift to support our annual educational programs.

Thank you for helping us realize our mission to promote Buffalo and WNY architecture, history, and neighborhoods through quality educational programs for learners of all ages.

With gratitude for your support,  
**Brad Hahn, Executive Director**

## Amnesty Leadership Group Receives \$500

Thank you for being a member of the Amnesty Leadership Group and for your recent contribution of \$500. I want you to know that you just did something really important for human rights.

Living in a period when attacks on human rights are having such a devastating impact on people's lives around the world is truly heartbreaking. Yet your sustained commitment sends the message that no one has to fight this fight alone. When confronted with hate and abuse, you continue to show up to protect everybody's human rights.

Yours is an act of courage that is desperately needed in the world today.

Friend, it is thanks to your ongoing support that Amnesty International is able to make a real difference in people's lives. Your gift today will be put to work to support our Urgent Action Network, which mobilizes

## BTF Donates Self-Care Products

Thank you for your generous gift of self-care products and toys to Child and Family Services made in December. This year, Child and Family Services is celebrating its 150th Anniversary, and your support has made this incredible milestone possible.

Every donation received allows the Agency to continue providing counseling and shelter for women, men, and children seeking haven from domestic violence. Donors, like you, help the Agency find homes for children in foster care looking for a family to be placed with forever. With your support, the Agency furthers its advocacy work to help child welfare programming and students who need special education services such as those who come to our Stanley G. Falk School.

Child and Family Services is excited to celebrate 150 years. Together, with the help from our community, we will nurture a healthy and more equitable Western New York for the benefit of current and future generations.

Sincerely,

**Mary Czopp**, Chief Communications & Development Officer

**Elizabeth McPartland**, President & CEO

activists around the globe to defend people under immediate threat of grave human rights abuses.

Your support also provides us with the resources needed to dispatch our Crisis Investigation teams when human rights emergencies occur. We go where others don't, to investigate and expose human rights violations; document the stories of people whose lives have been shattered; and demand justice for those whose human rights have been denied.

You, my friend, are Amnesty International, and I hope you will use your voice to influence our policy decisions and set our organizational priorities. Because without members like you, Amnesty could not continue to protect and defend human rights around the world—it's that simple. Thank you for helping to create a more humane world.

For justice and peace,

**Paul O'Brien**

Executive Director

# 28th Annual BTF Thanksgiving Food Drive Provides Dinner for 120 Families

Once again, more than 120 area families enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner this year through the generosity of the Buffalo Teachers Federation and its members.

For the 28th consecutive year, cash and food donations were collected to ensure that needy families would enjoy the holiday with a traditional feast.

Thousands of dollars in food and gift certificates were donated by BTF members and were distributed through several charitable and nonprofit groups. It is estimated that more than 3,500 families have benefited from the BTF Thanksgiving Food Drive throughout the years.

After the food was collected at each of the schools and the BTF office, volunteers met at 271 Porter Avenue to stuff shopping bags with all the traditional foods for a Thanksgiving

feast. The bags included corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, stuffing mix, and a \$15 gift card for Tops Supermarkets to purchase a turkey.

The McKinley High School JROTC boys and girls helped pack the bags of food for distribution under the direction of Colonel Mark Ricchiazzi and Master Sergeant Joseph Dugan. They worked hard and were treated to pizza afterwards.

Dozens of boxes of food items were also packed and distributed to area nonprofit organizations for delivery to the needy. The agencies distributing the food and gift certificates were: Gloria Parks Community Center, Native American Community Services, Jericho Road Community Health Center, Community Action Organization, Friends for a Better Buffalo, and Fulgham Family Foundation.



1. Grateful for the donation of Thanksgiving meals, volunteers from the Gloria Parks Community Center pose with the BTF officers.

2. With his students listening carefully, Master Sergeant Joseph Dugan outlines how the bag packing will work.

3. Before beginning the packing, McKinley's JROTC students take direction from Colonel Mark Ricchiazzi.

4. With the BTF conference table full of canned goods, the student assembly line made light work of a big job.

5. With help from Rich Nigro, Joseph Montante, and Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, the Native American Community Services volunteers were able to take a lot of donated canned goods to stock their pantry.



# Welcome New Members

The following 31 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last issue of the *Provocator*. Welcome to the union!

- Colette Carse
- Jennifer Casillas
- Megan Cloen
- Julie Clonan
- Olivia Dempsey
- Rebecca Farszmil
- Nina Garrett
- Adonai Helm
- Dierra Jenkins
- Ariana Jones
- Melanie Leary
- Dana Lesinski
- Ebony Little
- Samir Lokhat
- Emily Mahoney
- Robert Magill
- Kalene Moran
- Stacey Ortnor
- Rebecca Pease
- Coleman Pettway
- Erin Richeal
- Andrew Rose
- Elmer Santos
- Montaka Shad
- Jillian Szymanski
- Gabrielle Turri
- Haylee Valentine-Kuziora
- Magdeline Vasatka
- Melissa Vasile
- Phillip Weeks
- Sara Weinman



1. After a job well done, all of the volunteers pose for a photo with President Nigro.
2. With bags already loaded into her car, a volunteer takes foodstuffs back to the Fulgham Family Foundation.
3. Happy to lend a hand, Executive Committee members Nicole Herkey and Amy Flynn ready the Tops bags for packing.
4. With the job nearly complete, the Cadets begin a quality control inspection.

# BTF Backs Striking Milk-Bone Workers

On October 28th, after management failed to reach an agreement with the union, workers at the Milk-Bone factory on Urban Street went on strike. The workers are represented by the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM Local 36G). Milk-Bone's parent company, J.M. Smucker, is a multi-billion dollar company and has boasted of profits in excess of \$8 billion this year.

The main issue for these workers is affordable healthcare and a reasonable cost of living increase. With no other options after their contract expired in September, workers were forced to go on strike. These are everyday, blue collar employees who work hard and do their best to provide for their families.

On November 25th, BTF members showed up to picket with the striking employees. President Rich Nigro brought a truckload of firewood along with snacks for the workers. Strike headquarters is a tent outside the plant and the picketers keep warm by occasionally standing near the 55-gallon drum that burns donated firewood.

"We certainly know what it's like to be at loggerheads with your employer", said President Nigro. "Being on strike for two days in September 2000 was not pleasant, and very expensive for us. We have a great deal of empathy for these workers and their families", he added.

As this issue was going to publication, we learned that the nearly 8-week strike came to an end and the members of BCTGM Local 36G have voted to ratify a new collective bargaining agreement with Milk-Bone. Congratulations to our union brothers and sisters at Milk-Bone for their perseverance and tenacity in pursuance of a new and fair contract.

## Did You Know...?

That upon request, the Board shall make available to the Federation any and all information, statistics, and records relevant to negotiations, or necessary for the proper administration or enforcement of our Contract? This means that if we need certain information from the District to pursue a grievance, they must provide it.

This important provision can be found in Article VII. A (page 11) of our collective bargaining agreement.



1. On a chilly November day, BTF came out to support the striking workers.  
2. Shortly after the strike was called, VP Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan and President Rich Nigro joined the picket line on a sunny Tuesday in October.



# Buffalo Talent Shines on *The Voice*

Sydney Sterlace recently finished third in *The Voice*, a television competition that aims to find unsigned talent through a contest of aspiring singers. Her mother, Stefanie Sterlace, is a Speech teacher at South Park High School and couldn't be prouder.

Sydney has been singing since she was three years old and is a student at the Bella Voice Studio. She also plays guitar and piano. Sydney attends West Seneca West High School and, at age 16, has a great credit to add to her résumé. The BTF congratulates Sydney and her mother on this remarkable accomplishment.



1. With the competition becoming intense, Sydney Sterlace belts out a song on *The Voice*.  
2. Pictured with her daughter, teacher Stefanie Sterlace could not be prouder.

# Common Ground over Chaos Bus Stops in Buffalo

The official NYSUT bus rolled through communities all across New York State during the month of October. Dubbed the “Common Ground over Chaos” tour, the purpose was to create a dialog between NYSUT members and the candidates we endorse for political office.

During the roundtables on board, educators shared personal stories about their classrooms, students, and communities. They explained why we need funding for mental health supports, hands-on learning opportunities for kids, and professional development for staff. They relayed the burden of high-stakes testing through students’ perspectives and their own

experiences.

“Our educators are leading the way by showing students how to engage in civil discussions. We are asking politicians to follow this example, rise above divisive rhetoric, and demonstrate the same civility, respect and collaboration we see in New York’s public schools every day”, said NYSUT President Melinda Person.

On the October 28th visit to Buffalo, President Rich Nigro was in attendance along with several other local union presidents and Congressman Tim Kennedy. Most of the candidates endorsed by NYSUT and the BTF were successful in the November election.



**ABOVE:** As part of the bus tour, BTF President Rich Nigro and other local union presidents met with NYSUT President Melinda Person and Congressman Tim Kennedy.

# BPTO to Host Implicit Bias Workshop Feb. 1

Social Justice, including minority rights, women’s rights, and equality for all, is at the forefront of many people’s minds these days.

To address these issues, the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization (BPTO) will present NYSUT’s Implicit Bias workshop in place of its regular February meeting.

The three-hour workshop will be conducted virtually on Saturday, February 1, from 9 AM to noon. For more information, or to register for the workshop, visit the BPTO website, [www.buffalopto.org](http://www.buffalopto.org)

# BTF Donates to Breast Cancer Research

On a pleasant Saturday in October, Buffalo teachers stepped up to help beat breast cancer by participating in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.

The annual event was held October 19 at the Outer Harbor and Buffalo teachers, as always, were there to help.

The donation to this worthy cause from Buffalo teachers and the BTF totaled \$3,689. The money was raised through donations, participation fees, and a drawing for box seats at a Buffalo Sabres hockey game.

In addition, many teachers donated baskets for a raffle during the October Council of Delegates meeting. The raffle and a split club drawing brought in nearly \$300 for breast cancer research.



1. Before the start of the walk, BTF officers and several members pose with At-Large Board member Terrance Heard.

2. Along with Member Relations Officer Nicole Herkey, many teachers from Southside Elementary turned out to walk.



# New Training Empowers Building Committees

A new training, developed by the LRS staff assigned to the BTF, was held on two different dates and received rave reviews. The new training, titled *Effective Advocacy in Building Committee*, was held on October 22nd and again on November 13th. The two sessions were at maximum capacity with about 25 participants in each. During the training, participants learned that the existence of a school Building Committee, and the ability to meet with the principal at least monthly, is a right guaranteed by our contract and something that the BTF bargained many years ago.

There are some principals who feel it is their prerogative to run the Building Committee meeting and to dictate the agenda. Some others have told

Building Committee members that only contractual issues can be discussed at meetings. Neither of these is true.

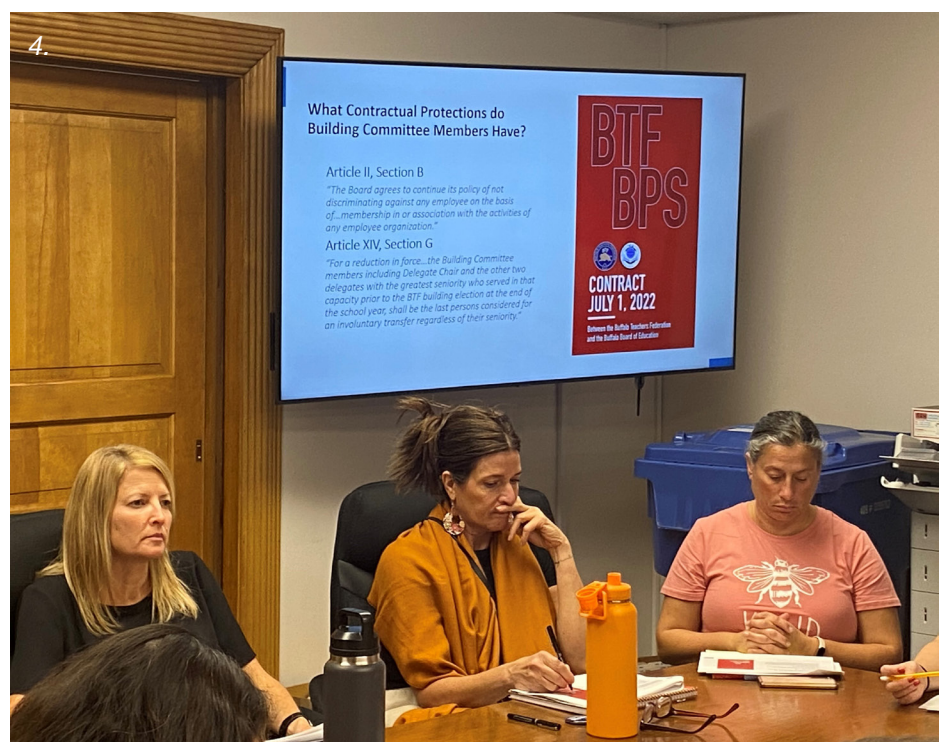
The language of Article VI, Paragraph D of the Contract is clear where it states “The principal of each school shall meet at least once a month with the Federation Building Committee at its request to discuss school operations and questions relating to the implementation of this Contract”.

At the training, participants learned best practices for creating a workable agenda and ways to advocate for their members, all while maintaining the confidentiality of the individuals raising the concerns. One thing that surprised some of the participants was the “Equality Principle”, which is the concept of teachers standing on equal

footing with administrators when acting in their capacity as unionists.

If members of your Building Committee missed this training, it will be repeated on January 21, 2025 at the BTF office. Several other trainings will be provided during January and February. Please see the “Save the Date” section in this issue of the *Provocator*.

Since Rich Nigro and Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan were elected, four new trainings have been created and offered to unionists during several sessions going back to August 2023. The BTF leadership wants to see all union representatives empowered and able to effectively advocate for the teachers in their buildings.



1. During introductions, Sarah Gallien and Jeremy Lyman ready themselves for the two hours ahead.
2. As the October 22 training begins, Labor Relations Specialists Devon Gawley and Jennifer Rhee review the handouts while Rob Mueller (not pictured) goes over the agenda.
3. Striking a pensive pose, Delegate Chair Mitch Baehre considers best practices for Building Committee meetings at School 45.
4. As Delegate Chair at School 53, Andrea Manna is always eager to learn more about advocacy.



*Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles outlining the history of the BTF from its beginning in 1920 through the present. The information contained herein is supported by historical documents stored at the BTF office.*

# The History of The Buffalo Teachers Federation

## Part 2: The Fight for a Salary Bill

by Joseph Montante

The year was 1920 and several of Buffalo's educational organizations had come together in support of a bill to standardize teacher salaries in New York State. A meeting was scheduled for 7 PM on March 3, 1920 at Hutchinson High School. That morning, the principal of School 16, Edwin Howe, made a telephone call to David H. Childs, principal of Hutchinson High School, and asked if Room 140 could be reserved for a different meeting at 4 PM.

The 4 PM meeting had representatives from each educational organization except the Teachers' Educational League (T.E.L.), the group that Superintendent Ernest Hartwell wanted to "clean up". A motion was made and passed that it would not be desirable to work with the T.E.L. and that after the 7 PM meeting, they be excluded from future advocacy.

At the 7 PM meeting, Thomas McGreevy, principal of School 39, took the floor and in a most emphatic manner, explained that the other delegates had decided they could not work with the representatives of the T.E.L. The non-T.E.L. representatives then gathered their hats and coats and abruptly left the school auditorium and adjourned to Room 140. The T.E.L. delegates were stunned and sat speechless as the other delegates left the auditorium. The business of supporting the teacher salary bill continued in Room 140 without any representatives of the T.E.L.

Since Rochester and Buffalo were so similar in size, it was imperative that their ideas coincide. Rochester teachers were already earning more than Buffalo teachers, but they needed to advocate together. New York City obviously was larger and had a higher cost of living so their teachers earned even more. Syracuse, Albany, and Yonkers were considered cities in the "second class" and cities smaller than these were considered "third class".

A meeting was held in the Hotel Rochester that included Edwin Howe, Thomas McGreevy, David Childs, Ethyl Coan, Mary Van Arsdale, and several representatives from Rochester. The salary desired by the Rochester teachers seemed to be out of reach for the Buffalo teachers. After much discussion, Childs proposed that rather

than a standardized salary bill, the groups push for \$400 (worth \$6,300 today) to be added to the annual salary of every teacher in both cities. That idea was unanimously approved. NY City teachers would press to have \$450 added. Teachers from the "second class" cities would ask for an increase of \$350 while "third class" cities and "union free"\* schools would push for between \$250 and \$300 in additional compensation.

Within a few days, Superintendent Hartwell called a few delegates into his office to discuss plans to support the bill. The stumbling block seemed to be that Buffalo had at least a dozen independent educational organizations. David Childs made two suggestions. First was that the numerous organizations form a federation and second was that Principal Harry Smallenburg be its first president. Childs later said that he regretted his second suggestion because Smallenburg died of pneumonia during his first year as president.

The following week, Hartwell sent McGreevy and Childs to Albany to lobby alongside Judson Wright, the president of the New York State Teachers' Association, and representatives from Rochester. They were to remain in Albany until the bill passed. Meanwhile, the Board of Education allowed Mary O'Connor, president of the T.E.L., along with another T.E.L. member to travel to Albany to represent the Teachers' Educational League. Hartwell insisted that Childs and McGreevy remain in Albany to prevent the T.E.L. from taking credit should the bill be passed.

The discussions in Albany became intense. One day, two trainloads of teachers and parents came from NY City and marched up State Street to the Capitol. Senator Sage, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said "The passage of this bill would mean a direct tax on real estate. If it passes, it has to go over my dead body". The battle lasted for over five weeks.

Every Saturday, a meeting was held at the Hotel Iroquois. Scores of Buffalo teachers attended as the weeks went on. One Saturday, Senator Lockwood attended and agreed to introduce the bill into the Senate. Assemblyman Donahue agreed to introduce a similar

bill into the Assembly. Trunks full of petitions signed by taxpayers were gathered and deposited on Chairman Sage's desk. Finally, during the closing week of the Legislature's session, both houses passed the teacher salary bill and Governor Alfred Smith signed it. It was a huge victory!

During the battle to get the bill passed, the officers of the T.E.L. issued a scurrilous pamphlet denigrating the Board of Education (even though the Board allowed the T.E.L. to advocate in Albany). The Board put the officers of the T.E.L. on trial, had them convicted, and suspended them from their positions. Since something called the Taylor Law and tenure would not come about for decades, the suspended officers were forced to secure jobs in suburban areas.

With the passage of the salary bill through the successful advocacy of a federation of the educational organizations of Buffalo, the wheels were in motion for something permanent. The creation of the Buffalo Federation of Educational Organizations was in the works!

So what were things like for this new Federation? Were administrators part of it? Did the T.E.L. leaders retreat quietly after being sacked? These questions and more will be taken up in the next issue of the *Provocator*.

\*A "union free" school district is generally formed from one or more common school districts to operate a high school program, which common school districts could not do. Today, some districts, such as KenTon and East Aurora, still use that term and it has nothing to do with the absence of labor unions.



## Reimbursement for Rx Co-Pay Starts Soon

Each year, the Supplemental Benefit Fund will reimburse you \$2 per prescription purchased during the year for yourself and for the dependents you have on file with the SBF, up to \$100 per person.

Starting in January, you can obtain a computer-generated roster from your pharmacist for all the prescriptions purchased during 2024 under your insurance. This roster, and a completed Rx Co-Pay Claim Form, must be submitted for reimbursement. The Claim Form is available from your building delegate, the SBF Office, or from our website, [www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org). Look under Member Benefits. This form will have the mailing information.

The deadline for submitting the information is Friday, March 7 at 5:00 PM.

## Scholarships Available for Teachers' Children

Scholarships, funded by a BTF settlement and earmarked for the children of Buffalo teachers first, are being administered by The Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo.

Scholarships for the 2025-26 academic year will be awarded in the spring.

Students who are currently high school seniors or are already enrolled in an accredited program,


are encouraged to apply.


Awards range from \$1000-\$6000 and the funds are allocated to the children of Buffalo teachers before other applicants.

The application process opens on January 1 and closes May 1.


To apply, visit [www.cfgb.org](http://www.cfgb.org) and click on the 'Scholarships' tab under Community Change. You also may call the CFGB at 852-2857.







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*Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina*

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