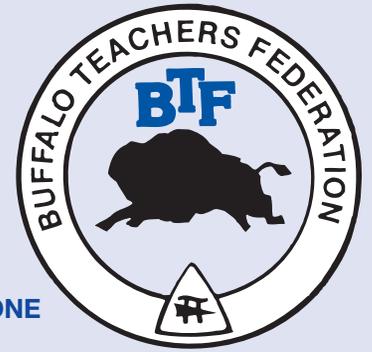


PROVOCATOR

June 2025

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 55/NUMBER 5

DEDICATION
SOLIDARITY
PROFESSIONALISM
PRIDE
SECOND TO NONE



Teachers Cast Vote of Approval as Incumbent Officers Secure Victory

BTF members overwhelmingly voted to give incumbent officers the opportunity to continue the work they began two years ago by re-electing President Rich Nigro, Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, and Treasurer Joseph Montante to another 2-year term.

The officers are joined in victory by newly-elected Secretary Nicole Herkey, the BTF Member Relations Officer. She replaces Mark Mecca as Secretary, who did not seek re-election.

Nigro and MacPherson-Sullivan won the election with nearly two-thirds of the vote over opponents Melissa Kenney and Mel Holden.

A total of 1,876 ballots were cast, about half of the 3790 BTF members eligible to vote in the election. The balloting was conducted electronically by a company specializing in elections.

The new officers will take their seats on July 1st and the official results of the elections are below.

President/Vice President: (One Team Elected)

Rich Nigro & Melinda MacPherson Sullivan: 1,158 votes (62.1%)

Melissa Kenney & Mel Holden: 706 votes (37.9%)

Secretary (One Elected)

Nicole Herkey: 1,108 votes (64.1%)

Ruyvette Townsend: 620 votes (35.9%)

Treasurer (One Elected)

Joseph Montante: 1,625 votes (100%)

Elementary PreK-6 (Six Elected)

Trish Rosokoff: 1,197 votes (77.3%)

Rachel M. Lis: 1,088 votes (70.3%)

Chris Stephens: 1,010 votes (65.2%)

Kim Parzymieso: 967 votes (62.5%)

Janine Schuster: 957 votes (61.8%)

Tara Rosa: 945 votes (61%)

Jamie Stevens: 935 votes (60.4%)

Secondary 7-12 (Seven Elected)

Sam Fritz: 1,059 votes (64.7%)

Tom Anthony: 1,016 votes (62.1%)

Eve Shippens: 995 votes (60.8%)

Dennis Brancato: 993 votes (60.7%)

Mike Jeffers: 893 votes (54.6%)

Jonathan Zasowski: 887 votes (54.2%)

M. Sue Raichilson: 780 votes (47.7%)

Tim Dorr: 772 votes (47.2%)

Ryan Bowers: 623 votes (38.1%)

K-12 (Seven Elected)

Mary Kiblin: 994 votes (64.5%)

Becky Moda: 947 votes (61.4%)

Ellen Malone: 920 votes (59.7%)

Amy Flynn: 897 votes (58.2%)

Daphne McNab: 889 votes (57.7%)

Gregory Sawicki: 876 votes (56.8%)

Andrea Manna: 820 votes (53.2%)

Desiree Breckenridge Barnes: 806 votes (52.3%)

Melissa Johnson: 776 votes (50.3%)

At-Large (Three Elected)

Brian Meyer: 960 votes (64.3%)

Danielle Harris: 927 votes (62.1%)

Tricia Andrzejewski: 923 votes (61.9%)

Jesse James Brace: 767 votes (51.4%)



1. As Chair of the Elections Committee, Mary Favata was tasked with reading the results at the May Council of Delegates meeting.

2. With much more work ahead of them, the incumbent executive officers, Rich Nigro, Melinda MacPherson Sullivan, and Joseph Montante, look forward to another term.



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

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 2024-2025 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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

June 2025
Volume 55, No. 5
Circulation 4400

Having been elected to our second term as your BTF President and Vice President, Melinda and I are grateful to have earned your trust and confidence! We began our tenure with an intent on accomplishing some very specific goals. And thanks to the hard work, input, and involvement of many of you and your colleagues, our union has made strides in decreasing the grievance backlog while increasing member voices and involvement. As we continue the work we've been engaged in, we have begun the work of tomorrow:

- Thousands of teachers have shared with us their suggestions, concerns, and ideas via the BTF Contract Survey last month. We are using this information as we create our proposals for contract negotiations in the coming school year.
- Our BTF Committees are being revamped so that members have greater decision-making authority which will enable us to accomplish more in our schools, our community, and our union.
- We will continue offering our member workshops as we have conducted in the past and will be offering new workshops in the coming months. Our goal is to create a path for future union leaders to emerge by providing opportunities for growth, awareness, and practice where union matters are concerned.

Life, especially union life, is not without its challenges. And union members, especially teachers, must keep a vigilant eye on what's happening locally, nationally, and globally. The work ahead will be demanding with things on the horizon such as contract negotiations, the hiring process for a new superintendent, elections for new Board of Education members, and the election of a new mayor. And as teachers and unionists, we will do as we have always done while navigating challenges and obstacles – persevere!

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do for our students and for your union sisters and brothers. Enjoy the warm days ahead!

Letters to the Editor

Thanks to BTF donation, SPCA Is Able to Provide Dental Care for 10-year-old Abandoned Dog

On behalf of the animals and staff at the SPCA Serving Erie County, I want to express our deepest gratitude for your generous gift. Your support makes a difference in the lives of vulnerable animals like Papi, an eight-year-old, 10-pound Chihuahua whose story I want to share with you.

Though small in stature, Papi's heart was immense, and his heartbreak upon arriving at the SPCA was palpable. His world was turned upside down when his owners were being evicted from their home, and sadly, no one could take him in. Imagine the confusion and fear this tiny dog must have felt, losing the only family he'd ever known.

When Papi first arrived at the SPCA, he was understandably anxious and scared. It was clear he was having a difficult time understanding what was happening and he showed signs of fear when our behavior team worked with him. Our team patiently worked with Papi, and thankfully, he began to make progress.

Your generosity allowed us to provide Papi with the time, patience, and specialized veterinary care he so desperately needed. This included extensive dental work as his teeth were in terrible condition. He needed surgery to address numerous problems including broken and missing teeth and necessary root canals. While he was under anesthesia, Papi was neutered. We also performed bloodwork to ensure he's healthy and ready to find his new home.

We're so hopeful that Papi will find his perfect match soon! Your support makes happy endings like the one he deserves possible for so many animals in need, and for that we are deeply grateful. Thank you again for your compassion and generosity!

Sincerely,
Phillip Weiss, associate director
SPCA Corporate & Individual Giving

Counselors Thank BTF for \$50 Gift Card

Thank you so much for your generous support of Buffalo Public School Counselors during the National School Counseling Week 2025.

Our School Counselor professional development and recognition event on Feb. 5 was a great success and it was certainly greatly enhanced by your kind contribution. The excitement for the awesome prize of the American Express \$50 gift card donated by BTF was through the roof. The raffle prize winner, Rachel Fuller, the counselor at Olmsted 64, could not stop smiling when her name was called.

Please see the photo of the slide we used every time we did a raffle, with BTF listed as our supporter. (That was the most exciting part of the counselors' day, lol)

Thank you again for your generous contribution!

Anna Kleyman,
School Counselor Coordinator
On Behalf of all Buffalo School Counselors.

BTF Donates \$500 for Food and Toys in 2024

We would like to thank you for your contribution to Madonna of the Streets, Inc. d/b/a St. Luke's Mission of Mercy and Our Lady of Hope Child Services. Your generosity has helped us to serve the needy in Western New York.

This year, through your generosity, we were able to provide almost 624,000 grab & go meals, 3,800 Holiday Food Bags, Toys for over 2,000 children and 800 Thanksgiving & Christmas dinners served in our newly reopened dining room, along with many other needed services. This would not be possible without you!

Your total contribution of \$500 was received during 2024.

May God bless you,
Amy Betros, president & co-founder
Madonna of the Streets, Inc.

Salvation Army Grateful for Donations

I want to express our heartfelt gratitude for the BTF's gift to our organization during the Christmas holiday season.

The holidays are a time of celebration – however, they can also be a season of hard decisions and sadness. Thanks to the ongoing support of our wonderful donors, The Salvation Army ministers to the physical and emotional needs of every family who comes through our door.

The Buffalo Teachers Federation's support means so much to the families we serve. Thanks to your kindness, we can provide warm meals and gifts of warmth from our canteen during Street Feed, invite parents to hand-select toys during Toy Shoppe for their children to open on Christmas morning, provide our clients with comprehensive job readiness services, and so much more.

Moreover, your generosity reminds us of the true spirit of the holidays – giving, caring, and sharing kindness with those around us.

On behalf of all those we serve, thank you!

Laurel Hopkins
Donor Relations Associate
The Salvation Army, Buffalo Area

\$200 Donated to African American History Museum

Thank you for your gift of \$200 to the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. Your gift was received in January, and made an immediate impact on the Museum.

We send supporter invitations and exclusive news by email. If you are not receiving updates, please sign up for e-news at nmaahc.si.edu/emails/signup. You can also connect with African American history and culture every day by following us on your favorite social media platforms.

This is an exciting time for the Museum, and I am thrilled that you are staying with us. We have so much more to do together!

Sincerely,
Kevin Young
Andrew W. Mellon, Director

32 Teachers, Clocking over 900 Total Years of Service, Honored May 20 During BTF's Annual Retirement Dinner

Thirty-three teachers, with a total of 965.6 cumulative years teaching in the Buffalo Public School District, attended the annual BTF Retirement Dinner following a brief Council of Delegates meeting May 20 at Salvatore's Italian Gardens in Depew.

The retiring teachers had careers ranging in service from 13 to 42 years in Buffalo Public Schools. Prior service in other school districts was not part of the calculations.

Among the retirees were two long-time members of the BTF Executive Committee. Sophia Howard Johnson, who retired with 28 years in the district, was also part of the negotiating team for the current contract. Michael Mecca, who retired with 30.3 years, was an At-Large member of the Executive Committee before stepping down last August.

The annual dinner, a long-standing tradition for retiring teachers who wish to attend, was started by the BTF as a way to honor teachers for their dedication and service. Each participant receives a complimentary dinner and a framed certificate for their service. The dinner follows a brief meeting of the Council of Delegates.

BTF President Rich Nigro and Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan presented the certificates.

MacPherson-Sullivan also emceed the event. In opening remarks, President Nigro told the retirees they will always be part of the BTF and can call with their questions and concerns.

The retirees and the number of years they served are:

RETIREE	YEARS
Sherry Moore Cruz	42
Marilyn Diina	37.5
Linda Greenan	36.5
Barbara Bogdan	35
Michelle Clark	35
Cynthia Gandy	35
Karen Ransom	35
Colleen Healy	32.5
Melissa Bonaffini	32
Jennifer Wells	32
Kristen Mendoza	30.8
Michael Mecca	30.3
Daisy Balaguer	30
John Barberio	30
Joseph Daity	30
Melinda Kavanaugh	30
Bill Laurie	30
Robin Merrill	30
Dawn Pasquale	30
Rosary Ann Cancilla	28
James Gough	28
Sophia Howard-Johnson	28
Debbie Latchford	28
Jennifer Panzica	28
Betty Bartholomew-Williams	27
Cheryl Jackson	25
Audrey E. Janowsky	25
Jennifer Case	23
Sabrina Vircillo Franke	23
Mitzi Standard	23
Cynthia Manarina	22
Kay A. Gibson	21
Sandra Nesbitt	13



Welcome to NYSUT Retiree Council #44



Congratulations to our new retirees! As you conclude your time as an active teacher and BTF member, be assured that you are still a union member in NYSUT and AFT. You are **Union for Life**.

NYSUT Retiree Councils, established in 1991, are a powerful voice for retirees, who continue to support the values and work of our union.

BTF members, upon retirement, become members of **NYSUT Retiree Council #44** and join more than 260,000 NYSUT retirees. As a retiree, you can stay involved and take advantage of the many benefits that NYSUT offers its members.

Retired members serve as delegates to the NYSUT, NEA, and AFT conventions where they represent the interests of their retired colleagues as well as support the issues important to active teachers.

RC #44 partners with retirees from Western New York (Retiree Councils #1, #2, and #3) to plan activities for its members.

Traditionally, there is fall luncheon (Monday, October 20, 2025) to welcome new retirees as well as a holiday luncheon (Tuesday, December 9, 2025), and a retiree conference (Tuesday, May 19, 2026) in the spring. These events provide members the opportunity to network with retirees as well as to keep up to date on member benefits, legislation, and issues pertinent to retirees.

There are a variety of activities that retirees can engage in. RC #44 members volunteer at The Teacher's Desk on a weekly basis from September through May. We participate in the Making Strides Walk, Western New York Women's Committee, and participate in political action activities to support NYSUT endorsed candidates, to name a few. We are a 2025 recipient of the NYSUT Local Community Service Award and the Ken Kurzweil Social Justice Award. Our retiree council is active and involved!

Members can also participate in workshops and trips. You can keep informed of all of our events through our RC #44 newsletter and by following us on our Facebook page (NYSUT Retiree Council #44) and our website <http://rcwest.ny.aft.org>.

Retirees do not pay dues to belong to NYSUT. RC #44 has a voluntary participation fee that is collected each year. We encourage our members to continue to contribute to NYSUT's political action fund VOTE-COPE.

Upon retirement, you are no longer an NEA member unless you join as a lifetime member. This will enable you to continue to enjoy all the benefits of NEA membership.

We look forward to welcoming you into our organization and encourage you to become an active member!

If you have any questions, please contact Sara Rodland, president of RC #44 at 689-9561 or by email sarasarasara2008@live.com.

Retirees Can Remain Active, if They Want To....

You don't have to say goodbye to your friends and colleagues when you retire. The Buffalo Retired Teachers Association (BRTA) will keep you busy and in touch.

The BRTA is open to all Buffalo teachers and administrators who are retiring. The BRTA hosts four luncheons during the school year, including the Fall Luncheon on the first day of school in September, Holiday Luncheon in December, Winter Luncheon in February, and the Spring Luncheon, held in May.

During June, BRTA men and women participate in an Annual Golf Tournament. Travel excursions are sponsored by the BRTA throughout the year, including international vacations, day trips to various locations within a 100-mile radius, overnight trips outside New York State, and theater trips to Shea's Buffalo Theatre.

The BRTA newsletter keeps members informed of all important issues. And, although retired, members of the BRTA don't forget the students. Each year, three \$1,500 scholarships are awarded to graduating seniors of the Buffalo Public Schools.

Life membership in the BRTA is \$150 and must be paid in full. Annual membership is \$15 per year.

For more information contact Linda Parada, membership secretary, at 875-3392 or online at www.BRTA.biz.

The History of The Buffalo Teachers Federation

Part 4: The Early Years / An Apostrophe Goes Missing

by Joseph Montante

This is the fourth 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 in the BTF office.

Eleven groups had coalesced to form the Buffalo Federation of Educational Organizations in the spring of 1920. Each organization was entitled to one delegate per 100 members and paid fifty cents per member as dues. A Council of Delegates, composed of the 21 elected delegates, was the legislative body of the Federation.

The Council of Delegates elected five officers: president, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary, and treasurer for a one-year term. The practice of the Council electing the executive officers would continue for many decades.

The agenda of the Federation and representative activities were conducted by the Executive Committee, composed of the officers and the chairs of the two standing committees. These were the salary and legislative committees, each of which had five members.

In 1921-22, the number of meetings of the Council of Delegates was fixed at four throughout the school year. The following year, the president of each affiliated organization was added as a delegate and the dues were reduced to twenty-five cents per member.

During the 1920s, some of the original eleven organizations ceased to exist and others were added to the Federation. By 1929, the Administrative Women in Education, the Science Teachers' Association, and the Women Principals' Council had disbanded. The Association of High School Department Heads, which joined in 1925, stopped activities and withdrew in 1934.

In contrast, the High School Teachers' Association and the Night School Teachers' Association joined in 1924. Furthermore, the High School Assistant Principals' Association, the Public School Physical Education Teachers' Association, the Elementary Assistant Principals' Association, and the Western New York Home Economics Association joined in 1925, 1928, 1929, and 1934, respectively. This brought the total number of educational organizations belonging to the Federation to fourteen by 1934.

The Federation banquet of February 23, 1924 at the Hotel Statler was the first general get-together and was made an annual affair. In the spring of that same year, the Federation supported the kindergarten teachers in their successful attempt to increase their annual salaries by \$200 and bring them in line with the other elementary teachers.

The following year, the Federation took a stance for the "good of all" by opposing the Fitzpatrick Bill, which would have granted the pension of the deceased Elizabeth Fitzpatrick to her sister, though Fitzpatrick had died thirty days before her retirement became effective. The Federation felt that to grant this exception would have set a precedent for similar bills which would eventually undermine the pension fund.

Meanwhile, the Federation had been ardently working in cooperation with groups from other cities to organize the New York State Teachers' Association (NYSTA). In the fall of 1924, delegates were sent to the first meeting of the House of Delegates of the Association. The first Western Zone meeting of the state group was sponsored by the Federation. In the 1927-28 school year, Buffalo Superintendent Ernest Hartwell was elected president of NYSTA and a procedure for nominating delegates based on membership was begun.

The Federation Bulletin made its first appearance in the 1928-29 school year and published news about a new salary schedule for teachers. A salary committee had been working for a year, in cooperation with Superintendent Hartwell, on the new schedule. This was approved by the teachers and adopted by the Board of Education as well as the City Council. While almost unthinkable today, after a careful study of the Legislative Committee and a vote of approval by the Council of Delegates, the proposal for mandatory retirement of educators at the age of 70 was successfully adopted.

In the fall of 1931, a major change occurred in the Federation. Membership was changed so that individual teachers would henceforth be enrolled directly and a delegate from each school was elected to represent those teachers. Now, teachers as well as organizations were affiliated with the Federation and 98 delegates were added to the Council of Delegates! This revision was deemed necessary so all the teachers could be better

informed about the activities of the Federation and could experience a direct role in its agenda.

The second important change was made on May 10, 1934, when a new constitution was adopted and the name became the Buffalo Teachers' Federation (note the apostrophe)*. After a year-long study, a special committee had consolidated and revised the amendments which had been made to the original constitution. There would now be four officers – president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The Executive Committee would include these officers as well as the "retiring" president, and one of the delegates from each of the affiliated organizations. In addition, there would now be four standing committees, Legislative, Salary, Publicity, and Research, each of which would have six members elected for a three-year term. The elections were staggered so that only two seats were up each year per committee.

Until the spring of 1934, most of the Federation's meetings were held at the Chapter House on Johnson Park. An occasional luncheon meeting would also be held at Gandy's Restaurant or the Hotel Lafayette. But in 1934, permanent headquarters, with an office and a large reception room, were established at 1835 Hotel Statler.

By 1934, the Buffalo Teachers' Federation now had a new name, new constitution, and a permanent office. But what else was happening? Who were the individuals who served one-year terms as president? Did the Federation have employees? Was there other legislation in the works? And how did this economic downturn that we now call the Great Depression affect the salary of teachers? These questions and more will be taken up in the next issue of the Provocator.

*The official name of the BTF is the Buffalo Teachers' Federation, Inc. as per our certificate of incorporation in New York State dated October 16, 1935. The disappearance of the apostrophe is a bit of a mystery but probably happened accidentally. The Federation does, after all, belong to the teachers. It's OUR union! We'd like to hear your thoughts on this? Should we return the apostrophe to our name as it's listed on the certificate of incorporation?

NYSUT RA Addresses Cellphones and Importance of Playing in Public Schools

Equity, Progress, and Play was the theme of the 53rd Annual NYSUT Representative Assembly May 2-3 in Rochester, NY.

Panel discussions on all three themes were presented to presidents of locals attending the convention during a presidents' conference attended by BTF President Rich Nigro. Education and union experts discussed the topics and answered questions.

After a long day of business, participants of the RA were treated to a few hours of fun at the Rochester Strong Museum of Play. Adults of all ages were able to unwind by being a child again.

BTF Lobbies State Reps

More than 700 NYSUT members, including six from the BTF, went to Albany March 2-4 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 Rich Nigro, Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Teacher Center Director Molly Eldridge, Teacher Center Policy Board Chair Kim McCullough Gabel, and teacher advocate Tammy Curry.

The BTF representatives met with Western New York lawmakers to urge more funding for Buffalo Schools, encourage the legislators to pass the bell-to-bell cell phone policy, and push for the state to continue to fully fund Foundation Aid.



During the 2-day convention, 44 resolutions were reviewed, discussed and voted on. Resolutions to increase funding for Special Education, ban cellphones from classrooms, provide safety, supervision and funding for CTE programs, and funding for students with disabilities to participate in after-school activities were a few of those approved.

Besides Rich Nigro, BTF delegates who attended the RA were: Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, Treasurer Joseph Montante, Nicole Herkey, Tricia Andrzejewski, Daphne McNab, Dennis Brancato, Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, Olga Camacho, Gregory Conley, Amy Flynn, Danielle Harris, Michael Jeffers, Melissa Kenney, Michael Mecca, Brian Meyer, Sue Raichilson, Tara Rosa, Trisha Rosokoff, Gregory Sawicki, Janine Schuster, Eve Shippens, Ruyvette Townsend, and Jennifer Yund.

BTF Gets NYSUT Community Service Award at RA

Every year, the BTF goes above and beyond what is expected when giving back to the community and fighting for what's right.

For these extraordinary contributions, the BTF received an award during the annual NYSUT Representative Assembly, held May 2-3 in Rochester.

The BTF received the Community Service Award because it "consistently evidences a belief in community service."

In 2024, the BTF demonstrated this by:

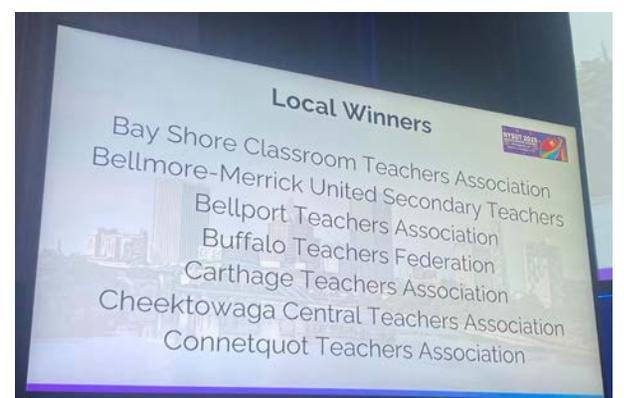
- Participating in the Variety Club Telethon, Making Strides Breast Cancer Walk, and a Thanksgiving food drive
- Contributing over \$50,000 to local charities
- Awarding \$3,000 in scholarships to Say Yes Buffalo, the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, and the Teachers College Fund
- Sponsoring a personal care items drive for women in need

BELOW: Shocked at the price of eggs, NYSUT President Melinda Person shows surprise along with BTF delegates Trish Andrzejewski, Tara Rosa, and Joseph Montante at the Strong Museum of Play.



Grabiarz Drumline Wows Crowd at RA

The drum corps at Grabiarz School 79 performed at the Rochester RA and impressed the crowd beyond belief. Led by band teacher Anne Landey, the crew of 21 talented musicians played at the opening of the Representative Assembly in Rochester on May 2. About 1,300 delegates were in attendance to enjoy the performance.



Fix Tier 6 Rally Draws Large Crowd

A rally was held on May 6 to protest the inequities of Tiers 5 and 6 compared to Tier 4. Several hundred NYSUT members from across Western New York were in attendance on this sunny Tuesday in Niagara Square, including several Buffalo teachers.

Tier 5 was instituted effective January 1, 2010. It raised the minimum retirement age to 57, increased member contributions, and changed the service factor calculation for retirees. Then

came Tier 6 at the urging of former NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo. Tier 6 went even further in diminishing benefits for future retirees.

BTF and NYSUT have been pushing for enhancements to Tiers 5 and 6 for several years. And while there have been some positive changes, there is much more work to be done. We would like every teacher in every tier to help. Please visit www.fixtier6.org and click on Join the Team.

BTF Endorses 4 for Board of Education

Four candidates for the Buffalo Board of Education were endorsed by the BTF June 10 during the Council of Delegates meeting.

Jennifer Mecozzi and Cindi McEachon, both incumbents seeking re-election in the West and North Districts, respectively, were overwhelmingly endorsed. Newcomers Stephon Wright, Ferry District, and Erik Bohlen, Park District, were endorsed as well. Wright is a community advocate who served as the first student representative on the Buffalo Board of Ed and Bohlen is a former BTF member who taught Special Education in Buffalo for 13 years.

The endorsements were recommended by the BTF Political Action Committee after interviewing all candidates requesting BTF endorsement.

The committee, chaired by BTF Vice President Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan, also includes Treasurer Joseph Montante, Secretary-Elect Nicole Herkey Dennis Brancato, Amy Flynn, Eve Shippens, Sam Fritz, and Ruyvette Townsend.



1. Always eager to support a good cause, Axel Hayes, Amber Nigro, and Marcia Nigro were in attendance to help bring about change.

2. Along with Board of Ed member Jen Mecozzi, President Rich Nigro and other Buffalo teachers show their support for teachers in Tiers 5 and 6.

3. Carrying signs of support, Executive Committee members Greg Sawicki, Sue Raichilson, Chris Stephens, Nicole Herkey, Joseph Montante, and Amy Flynn have long advocated for tier parity.

4. Packed into Niagara Square, a crowd of several hundred NYSUT members called attention to tier equity within the retirement system.

5. Addressing the crowd, NYSUT Secretary/Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham made the trip from Albany to Buffalo for the event.

BTF Attends NAACP Dinner

The Annual Medgar Evers Awards Gala was held on Saturday, June 21 at the Buffalo Convention Center. The BTF was represented at the 57th annual gala which featured Senator Raphael Warnock, a U.S. Senator from Georgia, as the keynote speaker.



ABOVE: Orlando Hill, Olga Camacho, Kelly Cooper, Eve Shippens, Daphne McNab, Desiree Breckenridge Barnes, Marcia Nigro, Rich Nigro, Ruyvette Townsend, Tammy Curry, and Jen Mecozzi.

Welcome New Members

The following 25 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last issue of the Provocator. Welcome to the union!

- Stephanie Atzrott
- Elizabeth Badger
- Cheryl Banko
- Kathryn Barlow
- Emma Daley
- Michelle DePasquale
- Nikia Graves
- Kelsey Janas
- Mariah Kramer
- Roman Kulik
- Meredith Lafferty
- Whitney Miller
- Zola Mitchell
- Adam Myers
- Clare Overturf
- Heather Polowy
- Arafat Rahman
- Sarah Richardson
- Andrea Root
- Viana Saez-Acevedo
- Abigail Sakowski
- Carilena Schreder
- Shane Small
- Carla Stumpo
- Kendall Ullman



Sean Ryan Wins Democratic Primary

On Tuesday, June 24, the voters of Buffalo made their choice in the Democratic Primary. BTF-backed candidate Sean Ryan came out on top over acting mayor Chris Scanlon as well as challengers Garnell Whitfield, Rasheed Wyatt, and Anthony Tyson-Thompson.

Ryan was endorsed by the BTF Council of Delegates because of his long-standing dedication to educational issues. He has been on our side at every turn and, should he be successful in the November General Election, will be a fantastic advocate for Buffalo Public Schools.

Now that challenger Chris Scanlon has dropped out of the mayoral race, Ryan must defeat Republican candidate James Gardner on November 4.



ABOVE: Standing between Vice President Melinda MacPherson Sullivan and President Rich Nigro, Sean Ryan was pleased to receive the support of the BTF and most other local labor unions.

BTF Represented at Juneteenth

Several members of the BTF Social Justice, Ethnic Minority Involvement, Women's, and Community Engagement Committees came together to ensure that the BTF was represented at the Juneteenth parade and festivities.

Volunteers passed out water and free books to children at the annual event, which took place at MLK Park on Saturday, June 14.



An Evening of Trivia Is a Crowd Pleaser

A group of 32 teachers and guests came to the Buffalo Olde Brewery on April 29th for BTF's second Evening of Trivia. The event was organized by the BTF's Social Committee, chaired by Nicole Herkey.



Executive Committee member and trivia master Brian Meyer wrote the questions and served as the emcee for the evening. In the end, the team called the 79ers (from the William Grabiarsz School #79, naturally) took the top prize away from team Four Jacks and a Jill. Four Jacks and a Jill had led the whole evening but missed the final question.



BTF Marches in Pride Parade Once Again

On Sunday, June 1st, several teachers marched in the Pride Parade for the first time since 2019. The participants gathered at a parking lot at Buffalo State University. After waiting for our turn to line up, the parade officially started at Elmwood and Forest Avenues and concluded at Allen Street.

About 30 teachers marched the approximately 2-mile parade route in support of the LGBTQAI+ community. The Social Justice Committee organized the event and designed t-shirts for all participants. If you couldn't make it this year, please consider joining us for this event next June.



1. Just ahead of lining up, the BTF officers pose for a photo with several other teachers.

2. As a member of the Social Justice Committee, Tammy Curry helped to organize BTF's participation in the parade.

3. Festooned with the colors of the rainbow, Olga Camacho holds up a large, inflatable pencil.

4. Along with friend Karissa Farrell, Marcia Nigro has been an LGBTQAI+ advocate for many years.

Solidarity Cruise aboard the Miss Buffalo Provides Fun Time for All

Over 80 BTF members, their friends and families embarked June 22 on a Solidarity Cruise aboard the Miss Buffalo.

While temps inland were well into the 80s, a fresh breeze from Lake Erie kept conditions comfortable and pleasant on this sunny Sunday.

Arranged by Nicole Herkey, chairperson of the Social Committee, the two-hour cruise along the Buffalo Harbor included an array of hot and cold appetizers and a cash bar. Participants paid \$10 each for the event.





BTF Releases Auditor's Report

2023-2024

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Balance Sheets

August 31,	2024	2023
Assets		
Current assets:		
Cash	\$ 1,037,412	\$ 634,915
Receivables, net (Note 2)	112,456	214,914
Prepaid expenses	34,990	29,832
Investments (Note 3)	5,918,354	4,962,638
	<u>7,103,212</u>	<u>5,842,299</u>
Property and equipment, net (Note 4)	120,652	133,104
	<u>\$ 7,223,864</u>	<u>\$ 5,975,403</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities:		
Current portion of accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	\$ 23,700	\$ 39,700
Accounts payable	-	5,482
Accrued expenses	30,957	24,986
	<u>54,657</u>	<u>70,168</u>
Accrued post-retirement health care benefits (Note 7)	711,653	1,153,382
Net assets without donor restrictions	<u>6,457,554</u>	<u>4,751,853</u>
	<u>\$ 7,223,864</u>	<u>\$ 5,975,403</u>

See accompanying notes.

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BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Statements of Cash Flows

For the years ended August 31,	2024	2023
Operating activities:		
Change in net assets	\$ 1,705,701	\$ 849,760
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash flows from operating activities:		
Depreciation	17,888	32,213
Net gain on investments	(602,621)	(331,781)
Changes in other operating assets and liabilities:		
Receivables	102,458	9,133
Prepaid expenses	(5,158)	(2,437)
Accounts payable	(5,482)	(9,318)
Accrued expenses	5,971	(97,401)
Accrued postretirement health care benefits	(457,729)	(279,201)
Net operating activities	<u>761,028</u>	<u>170,968</u>
Investing activities:		
Purchase of property and equipment	(5,436)	(72,959)
Purchase of investments	(7,547,719)	(10,578,059)
Proceeds from sale of investments	7,194,624	10,406,047
Net investing activities	<u>(358,531)</u>	<u>(244,971)</u>
Net change in cash	402,497	(74,003)
Cash - beginning	634,915	708,918
Cash - ending	<u>\$ 1,037,412</u>	<u>\$ 634,915</u>

See accompanying notes.

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BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Statements of Activities

For the years ended August 31,	2024	2023
Revenue:		
Member dues	\$ 3,709,611	\$ 3,442,517
Investment income (Note 3)	1,053,523	585,133
Rent	114,424	143,361
Other	20,699	4,115
Total revenue	<u>4,898,257</u>	<u>4,175,126</u>
Expenses:		
Program	3,034,567	3,194,541
Management and general	470,400	426,720
Total expenses	<u>3,504,967</u>	<u>3,621,261</u>
Excess of revenue over expenses	1,393,290	553,865
Post-retirement health care benefit obligation (Note 7)	312,411	295,895
Change in net assets	1,705,701	849,760
Net assets - beginning	4,751,853	3,902,093
Net assets - ending	<u>\$ 6,457,554</u>	<u>\$ 4,751,853</u>

See accompanying notes.

4

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION, INC.

Notes to Financial Statements

1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Organization

Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. (the Federation) is the bargaining unit for teachers employed by the City of Buffalo Board of Education (the Board of Education).

Cash

At various times, cash in financial institutions may exceed federally insured limits and subject the Federation to concentrations of credit risk.

Receivables

Receivables from the Federation's affiliate and national and state organizations are stated at the amount management expects to collect from outstanding balances. An allowance for estimated credit losses is recorded based on management's assessment of the collectability of individual account balances, historical trends, and forecasted economic conditions. Amounts outstanding after management has used reasonable collection efforts are written off through a charge to the allowance and a credit to receivables. Management has determined an allowance for estimated credit losses is not necessary as of August 31, 2024 and 2023.

Investments

Investments are stated at fair value based on quoted prices in active markets.

Property and Equipment

Property and equipment is stated at cost, net of accumulated depreciation. Depreciation is provided over estimated useful lives using the straight-line method.

Income Taxes

The Federation is a 501(c)(5) organization exempt from taxation under Section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Functional Expense Allocation

The financial statements report certain categories of expenses that are attributable to program and supporting functions. Some expenses require allocation on a reasonable basis that is consistently applied. The allocated expenses include personnel and related benefits, occupancy and office, public relations, and professional fees, which are allocated based on employee responsibilities and occupancy.

Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. Actual results may differ from those estimates.

Revenue Recognition

The Federation represents contract, probationary, and temporary teachers of the Buffalo Public Schools and provides a variety of benefits to its members including legal representation and financial assistance. The Federation's main source of receipts is dues collected from its members by their employer, the Board of Education, on a bi-weekly basis from the end of September through July. Dues revenue is generally recognized and collected during the service period.

Subsequent Events

Management has evaluated events and transactions for potential recognition or disclosure in the financial statements through April 7, 2025, the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

2. Receivables

	2024	2023
Affiliate (Note 6)	\$ 60,351	\$ 156,738
National and State Organizations	50,605	55,225
Interest and other	1,500	2,951
	<u>\$ 112,456</u>	<u>\$ 214,914</u>

3. Investments

	2024	2023
U.S. Government securities	\$ 195,537	\$ 277,894
Common stock	1,931,761	1,460,076
Mutual funds	1,897,664	1,699,799
Corporate bonds	327,342	292,448
Certificates of deposit	534,335	424,059
Money market	1,031,715	808,362
	\$ 5,918,354	\$ 4,962,638

Investment income is as follows:

	2024	2023
Interest and dividends	\$ 450,902	\$ 253,352
Net gains	602,621	331,781
	\$ 1,053,523	\$ 585,133

4. Property and Equipment

	2024	2023
Land	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,000
Buildings and improvements	490,640	490,640
Office furniture and equipment	174,939	172,072
Computer equipment	86,385	83,816
	776,964	771,528
Less accumulated depreciation	656,312	638,424
	\$ 120,652	\$ 133,104

5. Short-Term Borrowings

In prior years, the Federation had available a \$100,000 bank demand line of credit with interest payable at prime plus 3.5%, secured by substantially all assets of the Federation. The line was subject to the usual terms and conditions applied by the bank for working capital financing, and was subject to review annually. In the fiscal year ending August 31, 2024, the Federation closed the line of credit.

6. Transactions with Affiliate

The Federation receives rent (for the use of a portion of its building) from Buffalo Teachers Federation, Inc. Supplemental Benefit Fund (SBF), a tax-exempt, health and welfare organization. This rent totaled \$17,000 for each of the years ended August 31, 2024 and 2023.

The Federation also remits payment of certain SBF personnel and other expenses for which it is reimbursed. Amounts owed to the Federation from SBF at August 31, 2024 and 2023 included in receivables were \$60,351 and \$156,738.

7. Post-Retirement Health Care Benefits

The Federation provides postretirement health care benefits to all retirees who attain age 55 with fifteen years of service. Employees who retire after September 1, 2016 contribute annual amounts ranging from \$360 to \$900 depending on insurance coverage. It is the Federation's practice to fund these benefits as incurred. The measurement date used to determine the benefit obligation is August 31st of each year.

The status of the postretirement health benefit plan at and for the years ended August 31, 2024 and 2023 is as follows:

	2024	2023
Accumulated postretirement benefit obligation (APBO)	\$ 735,353	\$ 1,193,082
Accrued postretirement benefit obligation (benefit liability)	735,353	1,193,082
Accumulated adjustment to net assets without donor restrictions	1,742,220	1,429,809
Benefit cost	(138,578)	26,478
Benefits paid	6,740	9,784

At August 31, 2024 and 2023, the following items included as adjustments to net assets available for benefits had not yet been recognized as components to benefit cost:

	2024	2023
Net gain	\$ 1,742,220	\$ 1,429,809

	2024	2023
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine benefit liability:		
Yearly health care premium increases	6.00%	6.00%
Discount rate	4.75%	5.00%
Yearly retiree contribution increase	3.00%	3.00%
Weighted-average assumptions used to determine net periodic benefit cost:		
Discount rate	4.90%	4.50%

Expected future annual benefit payments:

2025	\$ 23,700
2026	24,300
2027	24,800
2028	25,300
2029	25,700
2030 - 2034	142,700
	\$ 266,500

8. Retirement Plan

The Federation has a qualified contributory defined contribution 401(k) plan covering essentially all full-time employees. The Federation made no contributions to the plan for the years ended August 31, 2024 and 2023.

9. Financial Assets Available for Operations

The Federation's primary source of financial assets are member dues, rental income, and investment income, which are acquired throughout the year to help meet the Federation's cash needs for general expenditures.

The Federation's financial assets available within one year of the balance sheet date to meet cash needs for general expenditures consist of the following at August 31, 2024 and 2023:

	2024	2023
Cash	\$ 1,037,412	\$ 634,915
Receivables	112,456	214,914
Investments	5,918,354	4,962,638
	\$ 7,068,222	\$ 5,812,467

10. Expenses by Nature and Function

	2024	Program	Management and General	Total
Per capita dues	\$ 2,400,204	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,400,204
Personnel	397,223	325,001	72,222	722,224
Occupancy	46,785	20,050	26,735	66,835
Office supplies and expenses	45,952	22,378	23,574	68,330
Public relations and contract enforcement	52,600	-	-	52,600
Professional fees	-	90,112	90,112	90,112
Other	91,803	12,859	78,944	104,662
	\$ 3,034,567	\$ 470,400	\$ 3,504,967	

	2023	Program	Management and General	Total
Per capita dues	\$ 2,296,486	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,296,486
Personnel	570,113	293,697	276,416	863,810
Occupancy	51,561	22,097	29,464	73,658
Office supplies and expenses	58,005	33,371	24,680	91,376
Contributions	39,995	-	-	39,995
Public relations and contract enforcement	70,648	-	-	70,648
Professional fees	-	65,176	65,176	65,176
Other	107,733	12,379	95,354	120,112
	\$ 3,194,541	\$ 426,720	\$ 3,621,261	



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Extended Pay Plan Questions & Answers For the 2025-2026 School Year

The Extended Pay Plan is a form of a savings plan for teachers who want to be assured they have budgeted monies for the summer following the school year. Interest monies are used to help defray the BTF's operational expenses and thereby keep dues costs down.

The program is optional for any Buffalo teacher who wishes to participate. Any teacher who wishes to participate in the Extended Pay Plan for the summer of 2026 should be aware of all the information that follows.

Q. How much money do I receive during the summer?

A. You decide how much you want to receive during the summer of 2026. Assuming there are no difficulties, payroll deductions occur from 20 paychecks during the 2025-26 school year. The amount you receive will depend on how much you have deducted from each check.

Q. How do I receive my summer payments?

A. You must receive your summer payments as direct deposits. (Please see the Direct Deposit Section.)

Q. How much money will come out of each check?

A. The exact amount of deduction is determined by you and will be withheld from 20 of your 22 paychecks. The minimum deduction per paycheck allowable is \$40. You may increase this amount in \$5 units (i.e. \$45, \$50, \$55, \$60, etc.).

Option 1: One direct deposit issued during the summer recess. Formula: to determine the exact amount of the summer direct deposit under Option 1, multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times 20. **Example:** \$100 withheld per paycheck times 20 equals \$2,000. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected **Option 1**, your one summer direct deposit would total exactly \$2,000.

Option 2: Two direct deposits issued during the summer recess. Formula: to determine the amount per deposit under Option 2, multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times 20 and divide by 2. **Example:** \$100 withheld each paycheck times 20 equals \$2,000 divided by 2 equals \$1,000. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected Option 2, your two summer direct deposits would each total exactly \$1,000.

Option 3: Four direct deposits are issued at two-week intervals during the summer recess. **Formula:** To determine the amount per direct deposit under Option 3, multiply the amount deducted each paycheck times 20 and divide

by 4. **Example:** \$100 deducted per paycheck times 20 is \$2,000 divided by 4 equals \$500. If you saved \$100 per paycheck and selected Option 3, your four summer direct deposits would each total exactly \$500.

Q. Are there other teachers participating in the BTF Extended Pay Plan?

A. Currently more than 2,000 teachers are participating.

Q. How do I sign up?

A. You must complete an Extended Pay Plan card. The Extended Pay Plan card is divided into 3 cards. Be sure to complete the top two cards as instructed. Be sure the amount that you would like to have deducted from each paycheck is listed. The third card is for direct deposit (please see the direct deposit section below). Cards are **not** available online. Contact your building delegate for an application form or call Joseph Montante or his assistant, Jackie Newton, at the BTF Office (881-5400). **ALL CARDS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE BTF OFFICE.**

Q. When should I sign up for the Extended Pay Plan?

A. Submit your form during the months of May, June, and July for the following September. New teachers may enroll when they receive their New Membership Packet.

Q. What is an advance withdrawal?

A. An advance withdrawal is available to you should you need funds before the summer. One withdrawal per school year is allowed. Call the BTF and ask to speak with either Joseph Montante or Jackie Newton and they will take the necessary information over the telephone. Please be advised that it may take three to five days to process a check.

Q. Am I allowed a second withdrawal?

A. Yes, however, if a second withdrawal is taken, you will be asked to discontinue your paycheck deductions for the remainder of the school year.

Q. Will I be able to have my summer disbursement before the scheduled payments?

A. No. To keep our records accurate, up to date and provide sufficient time for our accountants to review the accounts, there will be no withdrawals after June 1st of each school year unless there is an extraordinary circumstance, which we will ask be accompanied by appropriate documentation.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

The BTF/Extended Pay Plan Program

reached an agreement with Northwest Savings Bank for **DIRECT DEPOSIT** of your Extended Pay Plan checks. Listed below are ways that Direct Deposit can make your summer checks efficient and safe:

- 100% of the funds are available when the funds are deposited to your account.
- Funds are in your account when you are sick or on vacation.
- No worries if the mail is late or lost. The best way to ensure the accuracy of your banking information is to include a voided check for the account that you would like to have the funds deposited into.
- Northwest Bank will have your Extended Pay Plan funds electronically deposited during summer into the bank of your choice. You DO NOT need to have an account at Northwest Bank.
- Please remember that if you make any changes to the account that your Extended Pay Plan funds are deposited in, **YOU MUST** notify the BTF before June 1st to be sure that your summer payments are deposited into the correct account.

Paper checks are no longer an option for the summer, and you will need to complete the third card of the Extended Pay Plan card. If you need an advance during the year, that will still be via paper check.

Extended Pay Plan Dates Set

Extended Pay Plan disbursement dates for the summer are:

- July 18
- August 1
- August 15
- August 29

The number of disbursements you will receive has been pre-selected by you. If you have questions, please call the BTF.

