

# FOCUS



***Volume XXIV, Issue 5, January 2011***

## Nichols' News

There is a Chinese curse that goes something like this: "May you live in interesting times." Well, we certainly are. I could use a little less interesting times myself...

At this writing, we have already had President Obama's State of the Union Address. He did speak in support of education, but that support was a lot of praise for Race To The Top. RTTT is money that is competitive. Your school makes the changes we want, and maybe we will give you some money. We cannot hang our hat on that as an income stream.

We are holding our breath as we await the Governor's budget. In the past, Albany has leaked a lot of information about the executive budget plan, so most districts were not surprised when they got the news. This year is different. None of our sources have any news for us. To me, that is like the movie that isn't reviewed by the critics because the studio knows it is a stinker. This budget is going to be a stinker for public education.

You already know that between ARRA (Stimulus) money drying up, the loss of tax revenue from industry downsizing and Onondaga County cutting our allocation, and increased costs for both Health Care and Retirement Benefits, ESM faces a budget shortfall. That deficit is approximately \$5 million before the new state budget comes out. Traditionally ESM has always used the Governor's numbers. That way we can only do better when the Legislature puts money back into education. 2011 may be the year when this is not the case. We fully expect Governor Cuomo to put a 2% tax cap into place with the support of both the Senate and the Assembly. While ESM has stayed under that number in recent years, it still is stifling.

So what does this mean for us here at ESM? We are now, and always have been, in better shape than most districts. When others were actively laying off faculty and staff, ESM tightened its belt, cut some costs and didn't fill some positions due to attrition. Our district has

always had a conservative savings pattern, so we had money in reserve to offset some of our increased costs and diminished aid.

In addition, our superintendent, Dr. Donna DeSiato has always said that students, and by extension people and programs come before other budgetary considerations. However, with that being said, reserves don't last forever. Dr. DeSiato gathered all of our ESM Bargaining Unit Presidents together. She presented the facts as we have stated them above. She and the district politely and respectfully asked us to open our contracts with the idea of saving money.

What would that process mean? Just like this past negotiations for the current contract, your negotiations team would meet. We have already been gathering information and formulating questions. Some of this we have already shared with you by email. Our team will meet with the District and talk. If our team feels that we can go forward, we will come up with a plan. That plan would then be presented to the ESM United Teachers Board of

Directors. If that body approves it, we would bring it to all bargaining unit members for ratification. You would vote by secret ballot.

There have been no promises made along the way. However, if the last round of contract negotiations is any kind of an indicator, the talks will be collaborative and congenial. Both sides understand that we need to help each other to solve this problem.

ESM United Teachers is under no obligation to open our contract a year early. The district has assured us that they will abide by the current agreement. We will consult with our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialists as we go along. We will also continue to attend meetings in both Onondaga and Madison County with other local leaders with the goal of gathering information about what they are doing about their respective deficits.

Several people have asked about a "seniority list." This kind of list is very complicated to create and keep, so the district is being meticulous about it. The simple equation takes your time in your tenure area and subtracts out unpaid leave. But some people have had several tenure areas, and have grown seniority in multiple places. Some people have worked both part time and full time. Some people worked as a sub before they

were appointed by the Board of Education. Also some leave was paid, and some was not. It is complicated! Once the district gets their part sorted out you would each get your information and would check it against your own records. We want to make sure all the information is as accurate as possible.

The final list would not be posted on bulletin boards. Your information is personal and private. In the event that you were in an area where there would be a potential reduction in staff, then you would see where you stood on the seniority list on a case-by-case basis. You would see the list if there were cuts in your area. So, ideally, you don't want to see the list!

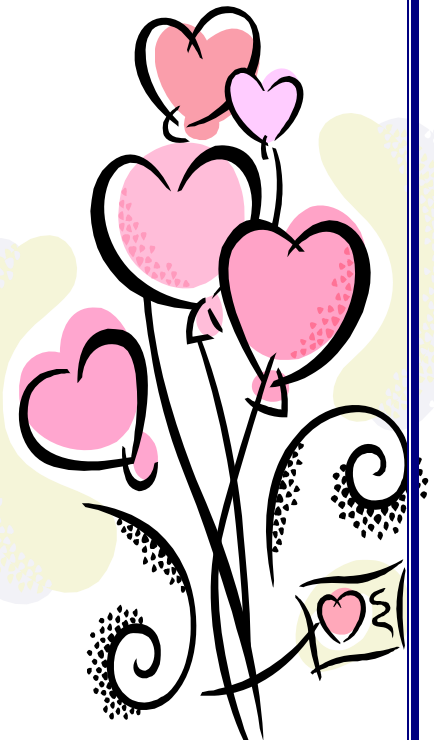
Many of you have great ideas about saving money. Some save a lot, some a little. Send them all to us. We will share your ideas with the district, but we won't tell them to cut other people's jobs. As Dr. DeSiato always says, "We don't want to circle the wagons and then shoot inwards!"

We will keep you posted as best we can along the way. This process will go fast due to the school budget timeline. So stay tuned and hang in there!

*-John*



Please submit any items you have for the next issue of FOCUS to Jami Mock at [jmock@esmschools.org](mailto:jmock@esmschools.org)





The Foreign Language Department will be performing ethnic dances this spring. One of our TA's will be making the skirts that the students will be wearing. In order to keep costs low, any bright, colorful fabric donations would be greatly appreciated. As seen in the pictures these skirts require intense, vibrant, pulsating colored fabrics. While unpacking Christmas decorations I found an old red satin sheet, this will work perfectly for the skirts. So if any of you have some suitable fabric that you would be willing to donate for this school project please contact: Susan Lojewski, Barb Espinoza or Laura Rivers. Thank you.

## ESM Retiree Luncheon

Spring 2011 Dates: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, and  
May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Rico's Ristorante (Rt 290)

Social Hour: 12:00-1:00 pm

Lunch: 1:00 pm

Please contact Larry Loudis  
with any questions at 656-3934.



## Presidential Trivia-

*How well do you know  
your Presidents?*

1. **Who was the only bachelor president?**
2. **Who was the heaviest president?**
3. **Who was the oldest elected president?**
4. **Which president was the youngest person to become president?**
5. **Which president served the shortest time as president?**

Answers page 7

~ One kind word can warm three winter months. ~

Japanese proverb



## **Delegate News**

*Issue No. 2010-12*

*December 2010*

The following information was recently provided to NYSTRS participating employers. As a Retirement System delegate, it is important that you are aware of these issues.

### **Winter/Spring 2011 Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)**

No matter how far along you are in your career, careful financial and retirement planning are critical. NYSTRS' **Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)** is designed to help members of all ages accomplish that. Members can tailor PREP to fit their needs by staying for the entire seminar (from 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.) or just those modules that help them the most: NYSTRS benefits; financial planning; Social Security; estate planning; adjusting to your new life; filing for retirement; and, retirement income.

PREP seminars are free, and sessions are held throughout the year and across the state. Instructions for making reservations, which will be accepted in the order they are received, are included on the enclosed seminar schedule. PREP information is also available through the Retirement Planning page of our Web site at [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org).

**Please copy the enclosed PREP schedule for winter/spring 2011, and post the schedules in locations frequented by staff.** We ask you to post this material as soon as possible, so those wishing to attend can register before slots are filled.

Thank you for your assistance in spreading the word about this important member program.

Enclosures

*Delegate News dating from 2000 to the present are available on our Web site at [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org). Select the Delegates tab and visit the Delegate News page.*



## New York State Teachers' Retirement System

10 Corporate Woods Drive  
Albany, New York 12211-2395

(800) 356-3128 or (518) 447-2666

Web Site: [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org)

## Pension & Retirement Education Program (PREP)

No matter how far along you are in your career, careful financial and retirement planning are critical, and NYSTRS' PREP seminar can help members of all ages. Tailor the program to fit your needs! Stay the full day or just attend the modules that help you most: NYSTRS benefits, financial planning, Social Security, estate planning, adjusting to your new life, filing for retirement, and retirement income. Seminars run 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; registration begins at 8 a.m. There is no fee to attend and your spouse/companion is welcome too, but you must make a reservation in advance. (Note: *Seminars are not designed for one-on-one retirement counseling.*)

### 2011 Winter/Spring Schedule

Make reservations at [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org) using the "My Tools" tab on your MyNYSTRS account or by calling (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6180, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

#### ALBANY

**February 9** (Wednesday)  
**March 18** (Friday)  
**April 8** (Friday)  
NYSTRS Headquarters  
10 Corporate Woods Drive

#### ITHACA

**May 13** (Friday)  
The Clarion  
Triphammer Road &  
Route 13

#### L.I.-UNIONDALE

**January 28** (Friday)  
**April 28** (Thursday)  
Long Island Marriott  
101 James Doolittle Blvd

#### ROCHESTER

**January 21** (Friday)  
**February 23** (Wednesday)  
Radisson Hotel Airport  
175 Jefferson Road  
Henrietta

#### BUFFALO

**January 22** (Saturday)  
**March 3** (Thursday)  
Buffalo Marriott Niagara  
1340 Millersport Highway  
Amherst

#### L.I.-HAUPPAUGE

**January 29** (Saturday)  
**February 11** (Friday)  
Islandia Marriott Long Island  
3635 Express Drive North  
Exit 58, LIE

#### MOUNT KISCO

**March 11** (Friday)  
**April 29** (Friday)  
Holiday Inn  
1 Holiday Inn Drive  
Exit 37, Saw Mill River  
Parkway

#### SYRACUSE

**February 25** (Friday)  
**May 12** (Thursday)  
Holiday Inn  
441 Electronics Parkway  
Liverpool  
Exit 37, NYS Thruway

#### BUFFALO

**April 6** (Wednesday)  
Millennium Airport Hotel  
2040 Walden Avenue  
Cheektowaga

#### L.I.-MELVILLE

**February 12** (Saturday)  
**April 27** (Wednesday)  
Melville Marriott  
1350 Old Walt Whitman Rd.  
Exit 49N, LIE

#### OWEGO

**May 11** (Wednesday)  
Owego Treadway Inn  
and Conference Center  
1100 State Route 17C

#### UTICA

**February 24** (Thursday)  
Radisson Hotel  
200 Genesee Street

#### FISHKILL

**March 25** (Friday)  
**Hudson Hotel and  
Conference Center\***  
Route 9  
Exit 13, I-84

#### L.I.-RONKONKOMA

**March 24** (Thursday)  
Courtyard by Marriott  
5000 Express Drive South  
Exit 60, LIE

#### ROCHESTER

**April 7** (Thursday)  
Rochester Marriott  
Airport Hotel  
1890 Ridge Road West

*\*This hotel, for many years a Holiday Inn property, may be under a different franchise by the time of the seminar, but will still host this meeting.*

**RESERVATIONS:** When calling, you must provide your EmplID or Social Security number, address, and home phone number (and the same information for your spouse/companion if (s)he is a member and will attend too). Please bring your latest *Benefit Profile* with you to the seminar. If you make a reservation but cannot attend, please call the number above to cancel, so we can offer this reservation to another member.



ESM  
PROM FASHION SHOW

February 17, 2011

at 7 pm

Proceeds benefit Make-A-Wish Foundation

Tickets: \$4 in advance

\$5 at door

There will be

door prizes,

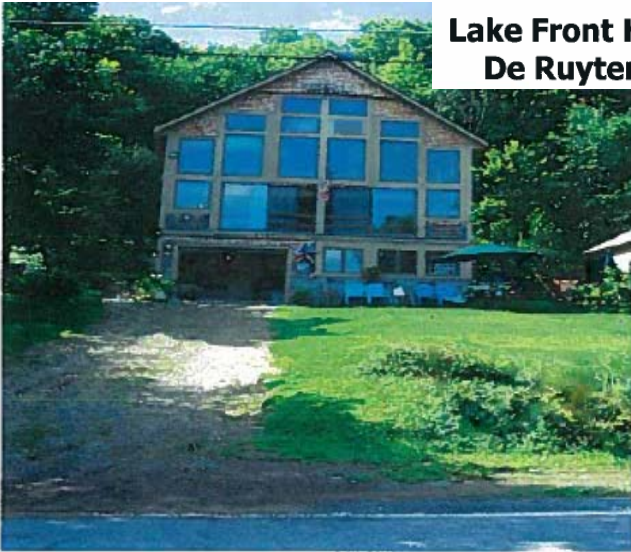
raffles

and more!

MAKE A WISH



## Lake Front House Rental De Ruyter Reservoir



### PERFECT GETAWAY for FAMILIES

~ Beautiful New Lake House

~ONLY 40 min from Syracuse, 15 min from Cazenovia, 15 to Cortland. Minutes from Highland Forest

~ALL SEASON Weekly Rentals, Off Season Short Term!!

#### LAKE HOUSE:

Walkout Kitchen: fully equipped- gas grill!

3 BEDROOMS- lots of beds,

2 ½ Baths, Washer and Dryer

Large Living Room- TV w dvd, Phone

#### WATERFRONT: Crystal Clear Water

Jump in or Walk-in Lake Water!

Long L Dock, Floating Dock with Water Slide!

Fire Pit for Campfires! Wood provided.

#### ACTIVITES: Boating, Canoeing, Swimming,

Run/Walk Around Lake 6 miles. 2 Bicycles provided,

Campfires, Snowmobiles, Ice Fishing

#### CONTACT INFO: Call for price info. Please refer to this ad.

Lois Harmatuk -Home- 315-492-2640

Loloa1230@aol.com



### Answers to Presidential Trivia:

1. 15<sup>th</sup> President James Buchanan was the Bachelor.
2. 27<sup>th</sup> President William Taft weighed 300-340 lbs
3. 40<sup>th</sup> President Ronald Reagan was 69 when he took office.
4. Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President, was 42 when he took office after McKinley was shot. However, John F Kennedy, the 35<sup>th</sup>, was the youngest Elected President at age 43.
5. 9<sup>th</sup> President William Harrison died one month after taking office.

## Are you up to the challenge?

If you're like most people, you make New Year's resolutions only to break them soon after. NYSUT Member Benefits challenges all NYSUT members to make and keep this one resolution: I resolve to draw up (or update) my will.

The importance of having a will to protect your loved ones and your wishes cannot be stressed enough. This is especially true if you have children under the age of 18. A will allows you to name a legal guardian(s) for your children. It also ensures that your estate will be distributed according to your desires. Without a valid will, these very important, personal decisions are made by the state.

The Legal Service Plan endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is a convenient vehicle to help you meet this challenge. It provides one simple will or update, free. A simple will provides for the proceeds of one's estate to be distributed to specifically named beneficiary(ies), with an alternate distribution plan in the event the primary beneficiary predeceases the writer of the will. With a simple will, proceeds are to be distributed outright with no conditions attached. Placing a condition on a bequest requires a trust, which can be obtained from the Legal Plan for a fee.

In addition to the simple will, you'll receive a durable power of attorney, living will and health care proxy, all important documents to have in place *before* the need for them arises.

The plan also gives you access to unlimited, toll-free legal advice from plan attorneys. These attorneys will make phone calls and write



third-party correspondence, at no charge, to resolve personal legal situations on your behalf before they become major problems. In addition, when you enroll in this plan, you receive two coupons for free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney.

Is there a real estate transaction coming up in your near future? Do you have any traffic violations? You can receive legal assistance on a variety of personal legal matters when you enroll in the Legal Service Plan. If the matter can't be resolved over the phone or with a letter, you will be referred to a plan attorney in your area, who will charge you \$200 an hour or 40 percent off the usual hourly rate, whichever is lower. Optional riders for Elder Law services and for business protection can be added to your legal plan coverage.

Don't put it off any longer! Draw up your will. Enroll in the Legal Service Plan and use its service to help you, or do it another way, but just do it! The peace of mind you'll have once you know you have taken care of your loved ones far outweighs any unpleasantness associated with making up your will.

If you happen to belong to a local association that provides a group legal service plan to you through the local or its benefit fund, remember to take advantage of the plan's benefits.

If not, you can enroll in the voluntary plan online at [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), or view and print a descriptive brochure and enrollment form online. You can also call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101.



*The Legal Service Plan provided through Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 33.33% of annual participation fees received for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.*