PCT PLEDGE

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HERE WE GO

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

This has been a busy summer, a harbinger of what I know will be an extremely full year for our union.

The National Education Association (NEA) Convention was both interesting and important. The convention adopted by a substantial majority a resolution that provides that members of a state affiliate automatically qualify for membership of the NEA. Here to fore, certain job categories like healthcare professional, librarian and others could not be members of the NEA. This giant step for the NEA removes one of the obstacles for the eventual merger of the NEA and American Federation of Teachers (AFT), a move that the PCT has long supported and something to which I've devoted a good deal of time and effort.

On that note, the NEAFT Merger Caucus which I chair has launched an e-petition calling upon the presidents of the NEA and AFT to get to work to build a merger of our two great national unions. I'm asking each member of the PCT to please go to http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/nea-and-aft-merger.html and sign the petition today. In my view, a national merger of NEA and AFT would begin the process of regrouping to fight back against the forces arrayed against those of us working in public education.

The NEA also adopted a new business item stating that our organization has no confidence in the Obama/Duncan Race to the Top approach to deal with the needs of public schools. It was gratifying to see us finally telling the emperors in Washington that they have no clothes on.

The AFT Convention adopted a complex resolution that attempts to establish a policy to answer the critics of public education who would blame many of the shortcomings of our schools on us. The resolution delineates the many factors both educational and social that contribute to the success of students. At the very least, it is a beginning of an answer to our critics.

Very disturbing to me and many of the AFT delegates was the presence of Bill Gates as a featured speaker. Why we would want to listen to what Gates has to say about the evaluation of teachers is beyond me, but in the United States having billions of dollars gives you a voice on any subject you care to speak about. It is scary the extent to which Gates money, funneled through his foundation, is financing what to me is a corporate attack on public education.

This summer also saw us working on our plans for the 50th anniversary celebration of the PCT. Some very ambitious plans may be finalized in the next few weeks. I know you will be excited when we announce them.

We've also begun to talk to the district about the new requirement that we develop a method of evaluating teachers, formally using measures of student accomplishment in the process of doing so (See the article below on APPR).

Negotiations will be on everyone's mind again this year. If it seems to you that we just finished negotiating, that's because we just finished negotiating. The Board's unwillingness to do a longer agreement means that come the New Year or thereabouts, we will have to begin the process again in a political and economic climate that has not improved and may have even gotten worse. While I certainly hope that we can avoid the problems of the last round of negotiations, you and I know that we must prepare for whichever way our negotiations go.

In closing, let me take this opportunity to wish each of you a professionally rewarding year. I'm looking forward to seeing you and engaging you in the work of the PCT.

APPR

Annual Professional Performance Review. Members of the Teacher Unit of the PCT will be hearing a good deal about that this year.

As a result of an agreement between NYSUT and the State Education Department, the law now demands that we negotiate a new procedure for the yearly evaluation of teachers, forty percent of which must be tied to the yearly progress of their students. Even more daunting is the fact that an APPR agreement with the district must be a part of the new contract we will have to negotiate for the 2011-12 year and beyond. The requirement is a four category rating system for teachers. Teachers will be rated yearly as either highly effective, effective, emerging or ineffective.

To avoid having the intricacies of APPR discussions get in the way of an agreement on economic and work rule issues, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld, Vice-President Nina Melzer and Secretary Judi Alexanderson have begun to meet with the administration to begin the arduous process of developing an agreement on a new APPR.

The officers discussions will have to be informed by the participation of the membership in the process. How does one determine the progress of a music teacher's students - or a guidance counselor's or special ed teacher? How does one tell the difference between a highly effective psychologist and an effective one?

Members can expect to have discussions of these and other related issues at their building SRC meetings. They can also expect to be asked to

serve on committees to advise the officers. Our plan is to have the Head SRC Reps be the negotiating committee for these discussions as they essentially are for the regular contract negotiations.

Stay tuned for much more on this subject throughout the year.

ATTENTION NEW EMPLOYEES

The PCT and PFT Welfare Fund will hold a meeting for new employees on Tuesday, September 7, 2010 at 3:30 P.M. in our office.

If you are new to our district, be sure to attend this meeting where you will be able to join our union and put in place a very valuable package of benefits.

WELFARE FUND DENTAL AND OPTICAL PLAN

Be aware! The Welfare Fund has had an increasing number of experiences with dentists who have agreed to belong to the Guardian Preferred Network but who try to extract money from our members that they are not entitled to.

If you use a dentist who has joined the Guardian Preferred Network, that provider has agreed to accept a reduced rate for services rendered that will be paid directly by Guardian. **These dentists are not entitled to any cash money from you** unless and until you have used up you $2000 yearly benefit. Unfortunately, numbers of these unscrupulous providers have been asking our members for additional fees, telling them that they are responsible for a deductible and other fees.

If you are asked by a dentist on the plan for additional money, tell that person to call the PFT Welfare Fund Office. Julie or Elyssa will be happy to set the dentist straight.

On another note**,** the Welfare Fund announces the beginning of a new optical benefit period September 1, 2010. All members and their dependents are again eligible for either a voucher good at a Vision Services store for an eyeglass package and examination worth approximately $300.00 or a $125.00 reimbursement upon presentation of a receipt for eyeglasses and/or examination.

Members needing a Vision Services voucher should call the Welfare Fund at 349-1312.

CLERICAL GRIEVANCE TO BE HEARD

Last year the PCT filed a grievance on behalf of a member of the Clerical Unit, and others similarly affected, who were charged for two (2) vacation days for days when school was not in session due to inclement weather.

This grievance was denied at all administrative levels and is now scheduled to be heard by a neutral arbitrator on September 20, 2010. The PCT should have the arbitrator's decision several weeks from that date.

INFORMATION CHANGES

If you have changed your home address, family status, e-mail address, phone number etc. over the summer, please let the PCT Office know immediately.

LANE CHANGES

PCT members are reminded that if they completed sufficient course work over the summer to advance a lane or more on the salary schedule, they need to inform Arthur Jonas' office before September 10, 2010. So long as this notification is made, payment on the new lane is assured as soon as the official university transcript is received by the district.

403b & 457 CHANGES

The start of a new school year is always a good time to think about changes you may want to make to either your 403b or 457 accounts. Members are reminded that they can take care of those changes online at Omni403b.com or at the webpage of the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan. (Google the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan. It's a very long URL).

UNITED HEALTH CARE CLASS ACTION

Members insured by United Health Care who used an out-of-network provider for themselves or their covered family members between March 15, 1994 and November 18, 2009 are eligible to participate in the proposed settlement of a class action suit which is the result of United Health Care's use of the flawed Ingenix Database which calculated reimbursement amounts incorrectly. **Proof of claim forms must be submitted by October 5, 2010**.

Questions regarding the class action settlement should be directed to:

United Health Care Class Action Litigation c/o Berdon Claims Administration
PO Box 1500 Jericho, New York 11853-0001
Toll-Free Phone 800-443-1073
Website www.berdonclaims.com
Email:unitedhealthcare@berdonclaimsllc.com

FOR RENT

One bedroom ground floor apartment for rent in Farmingdale. New, private entrance, carpeted. Lots of closets. Air conditioned. All utilities, including cable, included. Single person preferred. No pets, no smoking, no guns. $1275/month. Call 516.454.6813.