



Update

Vol. 39 No. 7

March 2015

Re: A Note From a Retiree...

This week, a letter came to our retiree reps informing them of an address change for a member living in Florida. That, in and of itself, is not note-worthy. Most of our retirees want to stay in touch by receiving the *Newsbeat* and other communications from the SFT-Retiree chapter. And, like many of us, this place – Sewanhaka – has become a second home and a second family. So our retirees stay in touch, stay active and, on occasion, write very poignant words to us all. Below is this member's letter, (personal information having been omitted).

Dear Anna,

I need to inform you of my new address in Florida:

~~~~~  
~~~~~

When I received the latest Newsbeat, it was very disturbing, of course. Living in Florida, I know what New York teachers are facing... It is here, now, in Florida. There are no unions, and teachers have little to say regarding testing or anything else. The legislature decided on new testing this year but gave teachers no resources, no new materials, etc. Parents (like my daughter) have no idea what is going on, since by law, completed papers may not come home. Since her son has ADHD (the reason I moved here), she can receive copies of work through email; but other parents are not automatically given proof of what their children can or can not do. This is a nightmare scenario. Pressure on teachers and kids is extreme, but it comes with no help from above. I see the pressure on kids and their parents concerning which junior high to try to get into here; because depending on that, their high school choices may be limited. The children, teachers, and parents are all in one big pressure cooker. The concept of a community-based school is not the same here at all. You don't want any of this in New York.

I always give to Vote Cope, and I will certainly be increasing my donation. If you wish the donation to go through your organization, let me know.

Thank God for the unions and for those who have given their time to try and keep the education of our most important resource, the children, a sacred trust between student, parent, teacher and administrator, not politician.

*Yours in union solidarity,
Marjorie Harris*

Thank you, Marjorie, for taking the time to write and share with us an ill-fated picture that is currently being painted coast to coast across our nation. It should give us all pause.

WE MUST ALL VOTE

By Frank McHugh

Former SFT President and Elmont English teacher

When I was in the ninth grade and taking a math test with ten minutes left in the period, I put my pen down and started praying. After the bell rang, the teacher asked me to stay after class for a few minutes and told me this anecdote:

There was a man standing on a railroad track when he saw a train roaring down the track toward him, so he began praying for God to stop the train. Moments later, he is asking God why He didn't answer his prayers. Then, God asked him, "Why didn't you just get off the railroad track?"

The teacher then said, "I'm asking you, why didn't you just study for the test? Then, you could have thanked God for giving you the brains to ace the test."

What brought this back to my mind was that I was reading an article in Newsday stating that only 33% of eligible voters actually voted in the last election. I then heard from a NYSUT leader that, of the 600,000 NYSUT members, only 90,000 voted. That is just 15%. I understand why so few voted. Neither the Democratic nor Republican candidate for governor were friends of public education. So, you felt, why vote? Because whomever you vote for – you lose!

I would like to tell you why I feel you must vote.

In 2017 the New York State Constitution can be opened to examine articles in the Constitution. A major concern for all in-service and retired teachers is our pension. Years ago, teachers were heroes and treated with the respect they deserved. Today, teachers are looked at as the opposite. The 2% tax cap is living proof of this. When I was an officer of the SFT, we rarely negotiated a contract with less than a 3% raise. Today, the tax cap makes a 3% raise impossible. Unfortunately, that probably isn't going to change in the next few years. To add to that, another issue we have to look at if the New York State Constitution is opened is our pensions. Major corporations have already reduced pension benefits, and IBM and General Electric have done away with them altogether! If we don't vote, this could happen to us.

Remember, Medicare and Social Security are also under attack. Without your pension, or with major reductions to it, where are you going to be? Hopefully, you will not be on the railroad tracks waiting for the train to stop.

Get out and vote. None of us can afford not to.

Officers:

President: Rosanne Mamo (x5070)

Vice President: John Koscinski (x2681)

Treasurer: Bart Curcio (x9326)

Secretary: Jennifer Gordon-Tennant (x9223)

Building Reps:

ELM: Charles Burkett (x9232), Ana Mojocoa (x9226)

HFC: Pat Frino (x9431), Kathleen Muller (x9422)

SEW: Maryanne Contarino (x9639), John Reagan (x2680)

FPM: Tom Burke (x9332), Karen Caporale (x9308)

NHP: Joe Grossi (x9525), Kevin Kowalczyk (x9531)

Committee Chairpersons:

Coaching: Kevin Dolan (x9528)

Health & Safety: Chris Mayer (x9430)

Nurse Rep: Lenora Elliot (x9254)

Public Relations: Shirley Pincay (x9525)

T.A. Rep: Ruth Ehrlich (x9232)

Grievance: Christine Plackis (x9352)

Internal Communication: Chris Brustman (x2681)

Political Action: Craig Barbieri (x9562), Tom Cook

Retiree Reps: Maddy Maffetore, Anna Zurawinsky

Teacher Liaison/Vote-Cope: John Ferrara (x9523)