

The Communicator

The Official Publication of the NYS Public Employees Federation www.thecomunicator.org Dec. 2007/Jan. 2008



***Two rallies.
Two locations.***

ONE ME\$\$\$AGE!

Tiers 3, 4 take double hit

To the Editor:

We read in the November issue of *The Communicator* about seeking enactment of S.4554/A.7128 and making it one of the highest priorities. It further illustrates the disparity between Tiers 1 and 2, and 3 and 4. We hope your efforts are actualized.

Members of Tiers 3 and 4 also must wait six years for their first cost-of-living pension increment. If you factor in the actual cost of living in the real world, these same tier members have witnessed their incomes decline by at least 20 percent to 25 percent.

**RICHARD TOMASUOLO and
EVELYN CANCELA**

4-day workweek = less pollution

To the Editor:

I work for the state Department of Transportation (DOT) in its Region 7 local programs unit and am mostly unsupervised in my duties. I travel a considerable distance to and from work, consuming fossil fuels and emitting pollutants into the fragile environment.

I have suggested to my supervisor that those of us who could be allowed to work a four-day workweek, should be allowed to do so.

Since it isn't happening at my suggestion, then I can only wonder why the state would not embrace the idea of reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and contributing to cleaning up the environment by allowing as many employees as possible to park their fossil-fuel-consuming and environment-polluting vehicles one day a week.

Of course, I also would experience a considerable savings in terms of dollars and cents if I didn't have to fuel that vehicle one day a week.

Constructive comments as to the legalities of such a policy are desired and welcomed.

**CHARLES ROY
Lowville**

Editor's note: The writer is seeking a compressed workweek, a form of alternative work schedule under PS&T contract article 32.7. Such programs can be developed at state agencies or worksites through their joint labor-management committees.

Members may contact their PEF council leader or field representative for information about alternative work schedules at their agency or site.

This letter has been forwarded to the PEF chair of the Joint Labor-Management Committee at DOT.

You Said It: Letters to the Editor



thecomunicator@pef.org



Have a Hand in History

VOLUNTEER NOW FOR CAMPAIGN 2008

Contact your PEF regional coordinator or PAC chair, or call the PEF Legislative Office at **1-800-724-4997** and tell them you want to have a hand in shaping America's history.



ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVE — Cindy Schulte, a public health program nurse and PEF Division 205 member, places pressure on the injection site after administering a vaccination to Madonna Zarvis at a public health drill held at the Empire State Plaza in November. More than 1,256 adults received flu shots that day.

— Photo by John Epting

Want to help hospital win an MRI?

PEF members at Lockport Memorial Hospital are trying to help the facility win a new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine worth between \$800,000 and \$900,000.

The machine is the prize in a contest sponsored by Siemens, which makes and sells the equipment. Neither Lockport nor its affiliate, Inter-Community Memorial Hospital, has an MRI. Lockport and the other contestant hospitals have submitted non-professional videos which Siemens has posted online at www.winanmri.com. Lockport's entry is called "Is It Here Yet?"

If you would like to help Lockport win, go to the Web site and vote. You can vote once a day, every day until December 31. — Sherry Halbrook

ON THE COVER — Rally photos by Jonathan Gittens, Long Island and Richard Dillard, Manhattan. Graphic by Mario Bruni.

THE COMMUNICATOR

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FEATURES



Money Talks
4



Stony Brook ER
14



Plaza's Main Man
26



UNION MATTERS

<i>Get the vote out</i>	2	<i>2008 Calendar</i>	16
<i>Hospital needs your help</i>	2	<i>Scholarships available</i>	18
<i>PS&T Contract update</i>	5	<i>Pride at work</i>	20
<i>Senate hearing</i>	8	<i>Agency Fee procedure</i>	23
<i>Go Public</i>	11	<i>Women's Committee</i>	24
<i>Plan for retirement</i>	11	<i>PEF special elections</i>	24
<i>DOCS nurses</i>	14		

DEPARTMENTS

<i>You Said It</i>	2
<i>President's Message</i>	7
<i>Member Mobilization</i>	6
<i>Retirees in Action</i>	9
<i>Health & Safety</i>	9
<i>Legislative Action</i>	10
<i>Getting to Know PEF</i>	12
<i>Health Notes</i>	15
<i>Membership Benefits</i>	30



Read it online
www.thecomunicator.org

PEF members gather in Hauppauge and Manhattan

Hundreds rally for cos

By **DARCY WELLS**

The rallies were two weeks apart in two different locations, but had one message; it's time for cost-of-living (COLA) pay increases that keep pace with high-cost areas of the state.

Engineers, accountants, health care providers and others from PEF, the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) and the United University Professions, (UUP) gathered outside the Hauppauge State Office Building on October 17 and again in City Hall Park in Manhattan on October 30.

PEF Vice President Joe Fox revved up the crowd in Hauppauge, getting the hundreds in attendance to raise their fists in the air, shouting, "COLA! COLA! COLA!"

They spent their lunch break

shouting, sharing stories and making demands.

"We need, we demand, we deserve recognition of the fact that the cost of living down here is far greater than upstate," said PEF President Ken Brynien.

"We need our salaries to reflect that and we need that COLA now."

Contract issue

Locality pay has been a key issue in contract talks between PEF and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER), according to PEF Vice President and Contract Chair Lou Matrizzo who also noted the importance of having the three unions — PEF, CSEA and UUP — united in the fight.

"Cost-of-living pay increases simply

have not kept pace with high housing and other costs, forcing many of our members to consider abandoning their communities in search of more favorable economic climates elsewhere," Matrizzo said.

"It's imperative that economic relief is included in our next contract."



FITZGERALD

David Fitzgerald works for the state Department of Taxation and Finance and is Division 186 council leader and Region 12 treasurer.

He recently refinanced his home in order to send his daughter to college.

"I'm born and raised on Long Island," Fitzgerald said.



"A lot of people say, if you can't afford to live downstate, move out. Why should people uproot themselves? And imagine what that would do to the economy on Long Island."

Debra Konstantakis
DMV
Supervising Motor Vehicle Representative 2

"Cost of living is off the charts on Long Island. Several of my friends are trying to transfer upstate. They just can't afford it anymore."

Bill Holthausen DOT
Civil Engineer I
Contract Team



"In the Department of Environmental Conservation, we've got members who are married and both work for the state and they still can't afford a home on Long Island."

David Gibb
DEC
Environmental Engineer 2

PEF MEMBERS IN THE CROWD REPORT



Cost-of-living adjustment

"I've been working for the state 31 years and it gets more and more difficult every year."

Region 12 Coordinator Doris Dodson told the crowd, "We cannot afford to buy homes."

Just seven years ago, 60 percent of the homes sold on Long Island could be classified as affordable for families with incomes of up to \$100,000 per year. Last year, that figure dwindled to just 2 percent.

"State employees are being crushed by economic conditions and costs beyond their control," Dodson said.

"The vast majority of state employees living in this region earn far less than \$100,000, making the goal of home ownership even more elusive," she added.

Ditto in Manhattan

At the Manhattan rally, PEF Region 11 Coordinator Jemma Marie-Hanson shouted to the hundreds who gathered that the current locality pay system doesn't work.

"The federal model is the better solution," she said. "We need the federal COLA because it's an objective

pay system that accounts for regional cost-of-living differences in New York state."

PEF Region 10 Coordinator Vernetta Chesimard fired up the crowd telling them they work hard for their money and they deserve a COLA.

"It's a proven fact, living downstate is more expensive and our members are struggling, now more than ever, trying to make ends meet," she said.

PEF Vice President Pat Baker told those gathered, "I don't have to tell you what the cost-of-living is in Long Island, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan, and the Bronx. You're living it."

Gladys Francis, a social worker assistant 2 at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center in Brooklyn, said, for her, the American dream of owning a home is still just that, a dream.

"In the past year, I attempted to buy a home and was very disappointed that after working for the state for 25 years and being a resident of Brooklyn for 30 years, I could not afford to buy a house in the area in which I work."

"In fact, it's a struggle just to rent a two-bedroom apartment," she added.

City Councilman Bob Jackson and New York Central Labor Council President Edward Ott also spoke at the Manhattan rally.

Answering a question from a Long Island television reporter on how confident PEF is it will get a COLA, Brynien looked directly into the camera and replied, "There will be something done in our contract. We are convinced of that."



FRANCIS



— Photo by Johnathan Gittens

CONTRACT TALKS UPDATE

AS WE GO TO PRESS:

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) came to a tentative contract agreement with negotiators from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) in October.

Since the CSEA settlement was announced, negotiations between PEF and GOER have intensified. PEF negotiators remain dedicated to crafting an agreement that meets the members' needs.

To learn the latest news and the highlights of the tentative agreement if a deal is struck, visit the PEF Web site and click on the "contract button." You may also sign-up and read the Active Informed Member (AIM) electronic bulletins or call the weekly PEF Information Line.

Allegany County employees join PEF

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF has approximately 55 new members who work for Allegany County in PEF Region 2.

The new bargaining unit is one of several groups of non-state employees PEF represents, such as those at the Albany Housing Authority, and the Albany County Probation Department.

The group of Allegany County employees who are joining PEF are mostly in supervisory, professional and technical positions.

They have titles such as county engineer, director of patient services, supervising public health nurse, probation supervisor, senior engineering technician, accountant and principal social welfare examiner, to name a few.

"We're delighted to welcome these new members to PEF," said PEF President Ken Brynien. "It's important to extend the opportunity to bargain collectively for their terms and conditions of employment to employees who want and deserve that opportunity. They will be stronger and so will PEF."

"We are looking for job security and to secure our benefits," said Pam Cockle, an accountant for the



Pam Cockle addresses the PEF Executive Board in November.

— Photo by Richard Dillard

Allegany County Health Department. She said the workers knew they needed a union when management pointed out it could take away their benefits "with the swipe of a pen."

"They reached out to another union first," said PEF Region 2 Coordinator Dan Connors, "but then they contacted us. We checked with the other union and was told it didn't object if we organized them."

PEF sent Margaret Messer, PEF's director of member mobilizing, and

Tom Privitere, director of field services in western New York, to talk to the employees.

Cockle said the employees chose PEF because, "We were impressed with everything they said. Margaret and Tom were so very honest about what PEF could and could not do for us. We really appreciated that."

Most of the employees signed cards selecting PEF as their preferred bargaining agent, and in October the county Legislature voted to voluntarily recognize PEF as the bargaining agent.

PEF has sent the county a request to begin contract negotiations.

Among the issues the new members want to include are securing the right to continue their existing benefits such as vacation and sick leave and the right to sell unused leave back to the county. They also want to establish protections for discipline and layoffs, and address the compression of their salaries with those of lower level positions.

Meanwhile, Messer said she will work with the new members to help them organize a PEF division, develop bylaws and hold elections.

Honor, support flow to member's

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

When PEF member Tom Yarosh and Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) member Sherry Yarosh's son Rick went to Iraq, their co-workers at the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance office in Glendale rallied around them, sending the soldier cards and small things to make the harsh life there more bearable.

When the young soldier was very seriously injured September 1, 2006, by an improvised explosive device (IED), he and his family were embraced by their entire community of Windsor in Broome County.

Division 399 and the PEF Veterans' Committee chair Richard Fletcher have led PEF's efforts on behalf of the family.

"They are a really good group. Everybody in this facility has been so supportive," Tom Yarosh said of his co-workers. "The whole community of Windsor has been great."

His son is doing well, Yarosh said, and "his morale is really good."



TEAM WORK — PEF Division 399 members play in a baseball tournament to benefit Rick Yarosh, an injured soldier and the son of a division member.

— Photo by Kathy D'Arminio

That's saying a great deal when you consider how badly he was hurt and how much he is trying to overcome.

Riding in the machine gun turret of a Bradley armored vehicle when it struck the IED, Yarosh suffered a shattered right leg and severed artery. He was severely burned over all of his body, except his back and chest. His ears and nose were burned off. Although he was able to extinguish the fire by rolling into a canal, he caught cholera and a

skin fungus from the polluted water.

The young man, who is now just 25, has undergone dozens of surgeries and spent a year receiving intensive rehabilitative therapy at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas.

"He was in the intensive care unit for four months. In fact, it was three months before he even realized his right leg was gone (amputated just below the knee)," Tom Yarosh said. The soldier is struggling to regain some use of his badly burned hands.

Holding keys to a good contract

By **KENNETH BRYNIEN**

As most of you have heard, the Civil Service Employees Association has negotiated a tentative agreement with the state. As I write this, we appear to be in the final phase of bargaining for a PS&T contract, working to get every last cent we can for our members.

Like it, or not, pattern bargaining is a fact of life when negotiating with New York state, and the state will work to impose the parameters of its initial agreement on all of the unions with which it negotiates. However, with each successive contract negotiation, we become better prepared to deal with and succeed in this environment.

The key is to try to shape the pattern before it is established. In preparation for the current negotiation, PEF has worked to build coalitions around our issues and convince other unions and their members of the importance of holding the line and remaining united in negotiation. We have worked to improve communications among the negotiating teams so we can all effectively bargain together.

Equally important is our ability to



MAKING A POINT — PEF President Ken Brynien addresses members at a rally in Manhattan in October, calling for cost-of-living adjustments. — Photo by Richard Dillard

use these coalitions to put people in the streets to emphasize our issues, as well as fight against the imposition of bad patterns. All of these efforts have helped thwart major cost shifts for health benefits and forced the state to begin addressing cost-of-living issues in the costliest areas of the state. These are just a few of the issues on which we have focused and influenced the state's bargaining pattern.

While no pattern or agreement is perfect, our efforts have shifted the

positions of the state and other unions, enabling progress on our goals and issues; we still have much work to do.

Our job isn't done yet. As I write this, PEF doesn't have a tentative agreement and there are no guarantees in negotiations. The only guarantee I can give you is that PEF will work to get the best possible agreement that meets the needs of our members.

son severely injured in Iraq

His mother has remained in Texas with him, the two returning to Windsor for visits.

"They were here for a while in September and October and they are coming back for Thanksgiving," Tom Yarosh said.

The people of Windsor have used every visit as an opportunity to honor their hometown hero. On September 12, he was met at the airport in Binghamton by an American Legion motorcycle unit that escorted him home as hundreds of residents lined the streets and waved flags to welcome him back. Three days later Rick was grand marshal of the town's bicentennial parade.

Although he is still severely scarred and disfigured, Rick does not try to hide from public view.

"He wants people to get used to seeing people who have been injured or who have disabilities," Tom Yarosh said of his son.

His courage has sparked an outpouring of generosity. A Long Island teenager, whose family spends summers in Windsor, raised

PAINFUL HEALING — Rick Yarosh receives physical therapy from Matt McMahon.

— Photo by Chuck Haupt, courtesy of Press & Sun Bulletin



more than \$34,000 for Yarosh. The community held a spaghetti dinner and Chinese auction to benefit the injured soldier.

And PEF Division 399 members played in a baseball tournament to benefit the Yarosh family.

"They did all these things without even telling us about it," Tom Yarosh said. "I have put every penny they've raised into a special account for Rick. He told me, 'Dad, you know I don't have any money.' But I told him this money is there for him when he needs it. That was a relief for him."

Even more than the money, the love and support of their co-workers and the community have comforted and lifted the spirits of the entire family, Tom Yarosh said.

"People have done some pretty inspirational things. One unit at work sent us a card every week for more than a year, and everyone in that unit signed those cards. One of the supervisors who went to Texas, took time to go to San Antonio and visit Rick. We have felt a constant flow of support and prayers."



Battle to end short staffing, mandatory overtime forges ahead at Senate hearing

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
DEBORAH A. MILES**

Short staffing is the biggest challenge facing state services to the mentally ill and other New Yorkers with complex needs.

That's the message PEF told lawmakers in October at a state Senate hearing in Albany that was held to address workforce issues for those serving children and individuals with disabilities in residential facilities.

State Senators George Maziarz, Thomas P. Morahan, and Carl Kruger held the hearing to review issues such as staffing, overtime, recruitment and retention before the next legislative session begins in January.

PEF Vice President Pat Baker, who testified, said the main challenge facing the state Office of Mental Health (OMH) workforce is short staffing.

"It leads to an unsafe work environment for employees and can have tragic consequences," Baker said.

"Research proves nurses who work overtime because of staffing issues are much more likely to make medical errors.

"We don't want to hear about tragic incidents such as the developmental aide who was convicted of manslaughter in the death of Jonathan Carey because he worked a string of double shifts before causing the young boy's death from a restraint.

While the aide was not a PEF member, many of our members experience the same overtime issues.

"We ask you to support bills that will require proper staffing and the Mandatory Overtime legislation to help tragedies like this come to an end," Baker said.

Understaffing at OCFS

"PEF has repeatedly sounded the



DETERMINED AND ENCOURAGED — (Above L-R) Paula Hennessy, Patricia Smith and Pat Baker listen to the response of Senators Morahan, Maziarz and Kruger after testifying about short-staffing issues and the complex needs of children and individuals with disabilities at a hearing in Albany in October.

alarm about the dangers of understaffing in our facilities," said Paula Hennessy, PEF Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) labor-management chair.

She spoke about the complexity of youth needs and the importance of correctly identifying whether a problem is a conduct disorder or more serious such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

"There is a particular need for specialized training for staff working with youth who are mentally ill, substance abusers and sexual offenders," Hennessy said.

"Currently, there is no statewide or industry-wide standard or certification for voluntary agency direct-care workers, other than licensed social workers. There are no uniform educational or training requirements. There is no uniform pay scale."

Enhanced staffing in demand

Patricia Smith, PEF labor-management chair at the state Office of

Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), echoed the need for more specialized staffing.

"OMRDD has difficulty hiring psychologists and occupational, physical and speech therapists whose services are important to meet the needs of the complex consumer population," Smith said.

"We have found that behaviorally complex consumers have greatest success in specialized residences that have enhanced staffing," she said.

Smith asked the senators to support enhanced staffing, training resources and to end mandatory overtime.

"We are hopeful this discussion will have an impact when the Legislature reconvenes in January," Baker said. "The battle to end mandatory overtime and convince the state to add staffing has been a long one. We hope 2008 will be the year decision makers do the right thing to ensure quality care for all New Yorkers, and especially these children and individuals with disabilities."

Time for state to boost pension COLA

We've all heard of "fuzzy math," "voodoo economics," and financial "smoke and mirrors," but it remains totally confusing when our government reports the increased cost of living entitles us to just a 2.3 percent raise in our Social Security benefits.

It's absurd to consider that an average boost of just \$24 per month will make a significant difference to seniors on fixed incomes.

That federal announcement came shortly after the state comptroller's office published its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The good news is our pension system is fully funded and grew by 12.58 percent from April 1, 2006 through March 31, 2007. The net assets of the fund reached \$156.6 billion. Benefit payments to beneficiaries was \$6.4 billion, 4.09 percent of total assets.

However, once again, the computation of our annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is amazing. Supposedly, these numbers are based on "core"



MUSCARELLA

inflation, but that doesn't include the rising cost of energy and food. What could be more core than energy and food?

Our COLA rate is half the Consumer Price Index up to 6 percent and only applies to the first \$18,000 of our pensions. The

result: we will receive a maximum boost of \$21 per month in 2008.

When our defined-benefit pension was written into state law, legislators intended it to provide us a livable income in retirement. That implies maintaining a constant level of purchasing power. Instead, for the past 20 years, our dollars have bought about 3 percent less each year than the year before.

The lawmakers didn't go far enough to offset inflation. An insufficient COLA is breaking faith with all of us who worked our

entire careers in public service. We accepted lower pay than the private sector, in exchange for our pensions.

Another unsettling aspect of the report is state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli's statement the state and local governments' contributions to the pension system are being modified.

How does that conform to the court's ruling the retirement fund "must be managed for the benefit of the members of the fund"?

Now is the time to enhance our COLA. The funds are available; the benefits are well deserved; it would provide broad economic stimulation throughout our state; it would relieve our serious financial hardships; and it's necessary to keep up with inflation.

Write the governor and your state legislators and express your concerns. Ask them to recognize the essential public services we provided by taking a serious interest in our deteriorating economic predicament.

SIF/PEF salute member for health and safety efforts

Patricia Mason, a medical care representative and the PEF Division 240 assistant council leader, was honored in October for her dedication and efforts to improving the health and safety of her co-workers at the state Insurance Fund (SIF) in Albany.

Mason received the 2007 Health and Safety Committee Award for her role at the SIF when the office moved to One Watervliet Ave. Ext. last year where construction and renovations caused some less than desirable working conditions.

"There was a lot of construction and abnormal debris falling out of the air vents," Mason said.

To resolve the issue, Mason met with PEF health and safety staff and, through a cooperative and amicable meeting with SIF managers, the ventilation system was thoroughly cleaned.

Mason has done a lot more in the area of health and safety, such as coordinating the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training, maintaining the equipment and posting a current list of first responders. She has also helped develop and implement a fire evacuation plan and ensured all building fire extinguishers were placed in accessible locations.

"I'm a nurse and it's in my nature to look out for people," Mason said. "I was very proud to be honored by the committee."

— Deborah A. Miles



TAKE A BOW — PEF President Ken Brynien (L) presents PEF Division 240 Assistant Council Leader Patricia Mason the 2007 Health and Safety Award. At right is Herbert Hennings, Division 240 statewide labor-management chair and Executive Board member.

— Photo by Radharkrishna Mohan

PEF supports single-payer health plan

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

The national health care crisis is one of the most contentious issues confronting the country.

However, that did not deter delegates to the 29th Annual PEF Convention in September from

“**U**niversal health care is the single, most powerful tool that Congress can provide to improve America and build a better, healthier, fairer, more just society. I am proud PEF is supporting HR.676.”

– Karl Berger,
PEF Convention Delegate



staking out a position in favor of “single-payer” health care.

The delegates approved the PEF Federal Legislative Agenda for 2007-08 with a new paragraph which states:

“PEF supports the expansion of Medicare described in Bill HR.676 — The United States National Health Insurance Act. This legislation would provide not-for-profit, single-payer health care to all Americans.”

Delegate Karl Berger, who proposed the addition, said, “Universal health care is the single, most powerful tool that Congress can provide to improve America and build a better, healthier, fairer, more just society. I am proud PEF is supporting HR.676.”

The bill would provide everyone residing in the U.S. and its territories with free medically necessary care, such as primary care and prevention, prescription drugs, emergency care, and mental health services.

Patients could choose from participating physicians and not-for-profit institutions.

The program would be financed with money from: existing sources of government revenues for health care; higher income taxes on the top 5 percent of income earners; a new progressive excise tax on payroll and self-employment income; and a new small tax on stock and bond transactions.

At the PEF convention, Kevin Jones opposed adding support for single-payer health insurance to PEF’s federal legislative agenda, saying PEF members might receive reduced benefits under it.

In early 2007, HR.676 was referred to several House committees and subcommittees, where it remains. Among the bill’s 85 co-sponsors are 11 from New York and presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich of Ohio.

A second addition to PEF’s federal agenda supports “public highway construction projects being inspected by engineers and technicians employed by the same agencies paying for the projects,” and full funding of the Highway Trust Fund “to ensure timely inspection, regular maintenance and reconstruction of the nation’s transportation infrastructure.”

Find PEF’s entire federal and state legislative agendas online at www.pef.org under Political Action.

Congress trying to boost federal aid for state services

By **JOHN MURPHY and SHERRY HALBROOK**

While the race for nominees to succeed President Bush grabs the spotlight, fierce fighting over federal spending priorities is raging between Democrats in Congress and the president.

They want to spend money on domestic programs and he wants to put those dollars into the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

PEF is pushing for adequate federal funding for the state and local public services its members provide.

Labor, HHS and Education

On November 15, the House of Representatives failed to override President George Bush’s veto of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education spending bill (HR. 3043) for federal Fiscal Year 2008, which began October 1. The Senate had stripped funding for military construction and the Veterans’ Administration.

The bill contained \$9.8 billion more in spending for labor, human services, health care, and education programs than Bush proposed in his budget. PEF supports the increased funding.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid is seeking a compromise with Bush.

HUD-Transportation funding

House and Senate negotiators have agreed on a Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) spending bill for FY 2008, and both chambers are expected to approve the compromise legislation. However, President Bush has already threatened to veto it.

Bush wants to cut the program by \$822 million, but the compromise bill adds \$3.79 billion for Community Development Block Grants.

The agreement also funds \$4.2 billion for the Public Housing Operating Fund, \$200 million more than Bush’s request and \$336 million above current spending. However, HUD’s data shows Public Housing Authorities (PHA) need \$5 billion this year, so even the enhanced funding would not meet that need.

The bill reportedly would address that shortfall by permitting PHAs with less than 400 public housing units to opt out of HUD’s asset management requirements and would allow the PHAs flexible use of capital funds.

Big pay disparities between consultants, PEF members

Contract Disclosure Law reveals waste

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

The Contract Disclosure Law is now bearing fruit with the first annual reports by state agencies of the number and cost of their private contractors.

The law was passed and signed in 2005, following years of effort by PEF to get a state law requiring that disclosure.

The Office of the State Comptroller has issued a report based on actual contract expenditures over the last three quarters of the state fiscal year 2006-07.

"This data shows clearly which agencies are the big spenders when it comes to private contracts and it provides a window for all New Yorkers to see just how many people are working under those contracts and how much that's costing on average per hour," said PEF President Ken Brynien. "It's also clear these private consultants are no bargain for New York taxpayers.

"PEF members made a big investment of their own in our **Go Public** campaign to get this law and other accountability legislation passed," Brynien added. "We should all take satisfaction in seeing this data and knowing that it would still be

unreported if our members and leaders had not been willing to fight for it."

According to Tom Cetrino, director of PEF's Department of Civil Service Enforcement which reviewed the reported data, much of the contracting was for information technology services – services that usually could be provided in-house at far less cost by PEF members, either at the state Office for Technology or at the individual agencies awarding the contracts.

"Those services would cost taxpayers an average of \$55 to \$70 per hour, all benefits included, if the work were done by state employees," Cetrino said. "State agencies have been paying contractors two to three times more than that.

"Our review of the data (eliminating the state Division of Budget, Governor's Office of Employee Relations and the Department of Civil Service where PEF has no members) shows the following top 10 spenders by average hourly cost:"

- 1. Insurance Department: \$184.29**
- 2. Alcoholic Beverage Control: \$173.88**
- 3. Real Property Services: \$169.55**

- 4. Department of State: \$167.83**
- 5. Regulatory Reform: \$161.03**
- 6. Public Service Department: \$140.97**
- 7. Higher Educational Services Corp: \$132.52**
- 8. Workers' Compensation Board: \$111.32**
- 9. Criminal Justice Services: \$110.27 and**
- 10. Temporary and Disability Assistance: \$95.23.**

"The comptroller and the state Department of Civil Service have also issued two additional public reports on the use of contractors," Cetrino said. "We are reviewing that data too and will continue to announce what we find."

"PEF will watch closely to see if the new state administration is able to shift away from this high cost habit of dependence on private consultants as the existing contracts run out over the next few years," Brynien said.



GO PUBLIC

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Slam a lid on state waste

Is your state agency wasting money on private consultants/contractors? If it is, get the facts and share them with PEF. Contact the PEF Department of Civil Service Enforcement at (518) 785-1900 or (800) 342-4306, ext. 280. So far, PEF and the NYS Fiscal Policy Institute have identified more than \$500 million wasted

annually by the state on "deals" with private contractors for work that could be done better and for substantially less by state employees.

Retirement reform

Thinking about retirement? You should be

By **DENNIS E. ANDERSON**

From time to time, *The Communicator* will report news and information from PEF's Retirement Reform Committee, including answers to questions from members and retirees.

Also, you may be urged to support PEF's efforts to protect and improve post-employment benefits.

If you have concerns about retirement, e-mail your questions to retirementquestions@pef.org or mail them to PEF Retirement Reform Committee, PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414.

General questions will be selected and answers will be provided in our column as well as any contact

information so you can ask individual-specific questions directly to the NYS Retirement System and the NYS Department of Civil Service (DCS).

Among the things that change when you retire is the DCS becomes your health benefits administrator. Another change is your biweekly paycheck is replaced by a monthly estimated pension check until your retirement has been calculated and the final monthly amount confirmed.

Depending upon your projected retirement benefit, you could experience a substantial reduction in income when you retire.

No one plans to fail, but most failures occur from lack of planning. There is a lot more to preparing for a

successful retirement than just finding out the amount of your projected retirement check.

It takes a well conceived and well executed, detailed financial plan to truly have confidence that you can live comfortably after you retire.

It is never too late to start planning. Of course, those with more time before they intend to retire will be able to achieve more than those with only a short time.

PEF Membership Benefits pays Stacey Braun Associates Inc. to provide PEF members a free yearly financial counseling session. Start to prepare for your retirement now. Call (212) 226-7707 to request your free session with a chartered financial planner.



Region 1 Buffalo



Region 2 Elmira/Hornell



Region 3 Rochester



Region 4 Syracuse



Region 5 Binghamton



Region 6 Utica



Region 7 Malone



Field reps enforce

By **DEBORAH A. MILES**

Field Services is a PEF department that spans the state with offices in each region and works under the umbrella of PEF's Labor Relations Department.

The 30 field representatives advocate on behalf of members who face problems in the workplace. The field reps are experts at enforcing the PS&T contract, and responsible for negotiating six other contracts, and are quite savvy when dealing with managers, lawyers and decision makers.

Field reps have a special calling. They are a breed of people devoted to enforcing justice and helping others.

Depending on the day's assignment, they could be talking to an employee who is facing a disciplinary problem, filing a grievance for someone who isn't getting overtime pay, or filing an improper practice charge with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) for members facing discrimination because of their union activity.

"They are the table-pounding, yet wise, labor-relations advocates for our members," said PEF Director of Labor Relations Roger Scales. "When a PEF field rep walks into a room, he or she is the president's designee. They are expected to be an equal leader with anyone at any level of state



SCALES

government. "In order to defend our members, a field rep cannot be shy. They are insubordinate in nature, confrontational in a productive way, and have a secure personality in order to get business done," Scales said.

Although the traits of strength may be similar among PEF's field reps, their assignments are "significantly different" depending on their location.

In Albany, where five field reps represent nearly 17,000 members, the cases are typically labor-management oriented. In New York City, the cases



Region 8 Albany



Region 11
Brooklyn
Queens
Staten Island



Region 9
Poughkeepsie



Region 10 Manhattan/Bronx



Region 12 Long Island

justice for members

tend to be more discipline oriented.

"The workload of a field rep is different in the North Country," Scales said. "Our members work in institutions, psychiatric centers and developmental disability centers. There is ungodly travel. In other areas, it seems to have more of a family atmosphere. Everyone knows each other and work is done through a different process. It's less bureaucratic.

"Each region is unique and the field reps have their own ways of getting the job done," Scales said.

Some of the field reps are former PEF leaders, some have master's degrees, some are lawyers and there's one who was a mental health therapy aide. They

work closely with stewards, help divisions become fully mobilized, and work with other PEF staff in campaigns to prevent layoffs and closures.

The Field Services supervisors are:

PEF Regions 1-4 — Tom Privitere. Field reps: Frederick Becker, Bob Beckwith, Peter Costello, Arthur Munson, Bruce Smith, Bob Tompkins, Lynn Tucker, and Peter Yurkewicz.

PEF Regions 5, 7, 9 — James Kemenash. Field reps: Frank Greco, Dominick Mannino, Barbara Nectow, Bill Noonan, John Pietaro, and Paul West.

PEF Regions 6, 8 — Roger Scales. Field Reps: Tom Capone, Edward Bradley, Jim Hair, Randy Harris, Kurt

Minersagen (*not shown*), Ed Ray, and Susan Radosh.

PEF Regions 10-12 — Marvin Moschel. Field reps: Carlos Arroyo, Jacqueline Cataldo, Dora Kearsley, Warren Lew, Leonard Mangano, Priscilla Marco, Barry Markman, Richard Nsiah-Yeboah, Michele Routi, and Jane Schwarz.

The administrative support staff includes: Susan Brocker, Carol Chonka, Sara Dempsey, Joyce Ford, Christine Henderson, Sandi Hunt, Liz Kinne, Joan Klug, Darlene Musson (*not shown*), Dawn Owens, Josephine Rice, Lorraine Rizzo, Pat Sante, Wendy Seeger, Pamela Skeete, Lois Thompson, and Margaret Wexler.

Stony Brook ER frontrunner in overcrowding solutions

By **DEBORAH A. MILES**

In early October, NBC Nightly News ran a special segment on overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms. When ER's have nowhere to put patients, it's called "boarding." They end up in hallways, cubicles, anywhere there is space. Some even die because they are not seen in time.

But Stony Brook University Medical Center on Long Island stood out among the crowd.

The segment ended with hope, showing how Stony Brook has reduced the ER waiting room burden by transporting patients directly to certain floors where their medical needs can be met.

Valerie Sayage, an ER nurse at Stony Brook and PEF Division 225 member, is well aware of the increase of patients and the problems that poses.

"Our ER sees about 220 people per day," Sayage said. "That average is trending up."

Having a program in place in the ER to safely move patients to another floor using specific guidelines gives the patient increased accessibility to physicians and nurses, continuity of care and privacy,



(L-R) Nanci McLaughlin, Jennifer Toscano and Valerie Sayage.

according to Sayage.

Unlike the emergency rooms shown on the NBC broadcast where a 49-year-old woman was brought to a Chicago hospital with chest pains and, after waiting two hours to be seen, died of a heart attack, Sayage said that scenario is unlikely to happen at the Stony Brook ER.

"In our ER, patients who are very sick,

who are dying, who have had a stroke or worse are seen immediately. These patients don't wait," she said. "Other patients who are less ill are seen as timely as humanly possible."

Moving to another floor

"We take patients from the ER," said Jennifer Toscano, a floor nurse at Stony Brook on 16th North.

"We have been getting more and more hallway patients in order to move patients out of the emergency room. Instead of sitting in the ER, they have a home.

"They also have a nurse who is not transitioning every four hours, so the experience of being on a regular floor brings a level of stability," Toscano said.

On the 16th floor, which is known as a "medicine floor," all types of patients are accepted.

"We take patients with gastrointestinal, neurological and respiratory issues. There's no special criteria they have to meet. Patients are placed based on acuity," Toscano said.

"On a medicine floor, one nurse has six or seven patients, whereas on other floors, there are fewer patients per nurse."

Nanci McLaughlin, another nurse and PEF member at Stony Brook, said the system is in place to move patients out of the ER quickly.

"ER is always busy, and patients just feel better getting out of there. We've had some hallway patients on our floor. The physicians are more accessible to them and they have nursing staff readily available," McLaughlin said.

Hallway patients are provided with call bells and also have privacy screens.

The bigger picture

"The bigger problem is more and more people are getting sick, I mean really sick and unable to be safely discharged back to their own homes," Sayage said. "This results in longer hospital stays and less bed availability.

"We are the only tertiary care facility in Suffolk County. We are seeing a higher acuity of patients and a higher volume of patients. It would be ideal for more beds to be created," Sayage said.

"As far as the nationwide problem, that's another nut to crack."

DOCS nurses in western NY recharge and mobilize

PEF nurses who work at the state Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) facilities in western New York have united to fight for more staffing, an end to mandatory overtime and to achieve a geographic salary differential.

PEF Division 289 Council Leader Donna Baker has been the driving force behind the mobilization effort and has worked diligently to motivate the DOCS nurses to form an advocacy network, according to Tom Donahue, PEF labor-management chair for DOCS and Executive Board member.

"We are not going to wait any longer for DOCS managers to address these nursing issues," Baker said. "These are issues nurses are passionate about, and already I've seen a renewal of energy, commitment and determination among some of the

DOCS nurses."

Nancy Wolff, PEF nurse organizer, said the mobilization effort among western NY DOCS nurses may play a big role when it comes to getting bills passed to create safe staffing levels in all facilities and to end mandatory overtime.

"Although PEF holds a nurses' rally in the spring, it's not too soon to start building momentum. Every year, the rally grows in numbers. With the support of more nurses in western New York, this could be the year we have our voices heard and see results."

If you would like to join the DOCS network of nurses and help mobilize members, send an e-mail to nwolff@pef.org, or contact your regional coordinator.

Dec. 14 deadline to switch health plans

By **LORRAINE SIMPKINS**

The state has approved the 2008 Empire Plan and HMO premium rates, which means you have until December 14 to change your health plan option for next year.

If you change your health plan, coverage for the new plan will begin January 3 if you are on the state's institution payroll, or December 27 if you are on the administration payroll.

Institution-payroll employees will see not see a deduction change before their January 3 paycheck.

Administration-payroll employees will not see a deduction change before their December 26 check.

You should have received your 2008 rate flyer in your mail at home by now. In addition to the new rate schedule, the flyer gives the deadline for changing options and other important dates, such as payroll deduction dates. The rates are also posted online at www.pef.org.

The three state agencies responsible for administering the state Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) – the state Department of Civil Service, Governor's Office of Employee Relations and Division of Budget – negotiated the Empire Plan premium



rates with the insurers.

PEF and the other state-employee unions do not have authority to negotiate premium rates or reject the rates negotiated by the state.

Empire Plan premiums are adjusted annually based on plan experience, which is the actual cost of providing health care to individuals enrolled in the Empire Plan for a given period of time. As health care costs rise, so do the premiums.

Empire Plan rates going up

Empire Plan premium rates for both individual and family coverage are increasing.

The biweekly paycheck deduction for individual coverage is increasing by 4.2 percent, from \$21.30 to \$22.19. The biweekly paycheck deduction for family coverage is increasing by 6.2 percent, from \$89.59 to \$95.10.

HMO rates vary by plan

Some PEF members who enroll in an HMO will see an increase in their biweekly premium deduction for their coverage in 2008, while others will pay less than they did this year. Check the new rates for your plan now to avoid "sticker shock" when they take effect.

One HMO, Aetna, will have a biweekly deduction of more than \$300 for family coverage.

Three HMO options – Empire BCBS HMO in both the Mid-Hudson and Downstate Regions, and Univera – will have a biweekly deduction topping \$200 for family coverage.

Fourteen of the 20 HMO options will have biweekly premium deductions of more than \$100 for family coverage.

On the flip side, six of the HMO options have lowered their premiums for individual coverage and seven have lowered premiums for family coverage.

Neither PEF nor the state has the authority to negotiate HMO premiums, which are community rated. Community rating means all enrollees (including those who don't work for the state) in an HMO are pooled and charged the same premium for the same benefits.

The HMO premium cap limits the state's contribution to HMO premiums to an amount no greater than the cost of Empire Plan hospital/medical/mental health and substance abuse premiums. Any amount of HMO premium greater than the Empire Plan's for these components must be paid in full by the enrollee.

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PTF 2008 Calendar

Paid Holidays: Jan. 1 New Year's Day; Jan. 21 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; Feb. 12* Lincoln's Birthday; Feb. 18 Washington's Birthday (President's Day); May 26 Memorial Day; July 4 Independence Day; Sept. 1 Labor Day; Oct. 13 Columbus Day; Nov. 11 Veterans' Day; Nov. 27 Thanksgiving Day; Dec. 25 Christmas Day. * Feb. 12 The State has designated Lincoln's Birthday as a floating holiday for state employees in certain bargaining units. ** Nov. 4 Election Day has not yet been designated as a floating holiday.

DATE LEGEND:

- BLUE- Paid Holidays
- GREEN- Institutional Paydays
- RED - Administrative Paydays

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

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for more information or to schedule your appointment.

Scholarships available to ease the

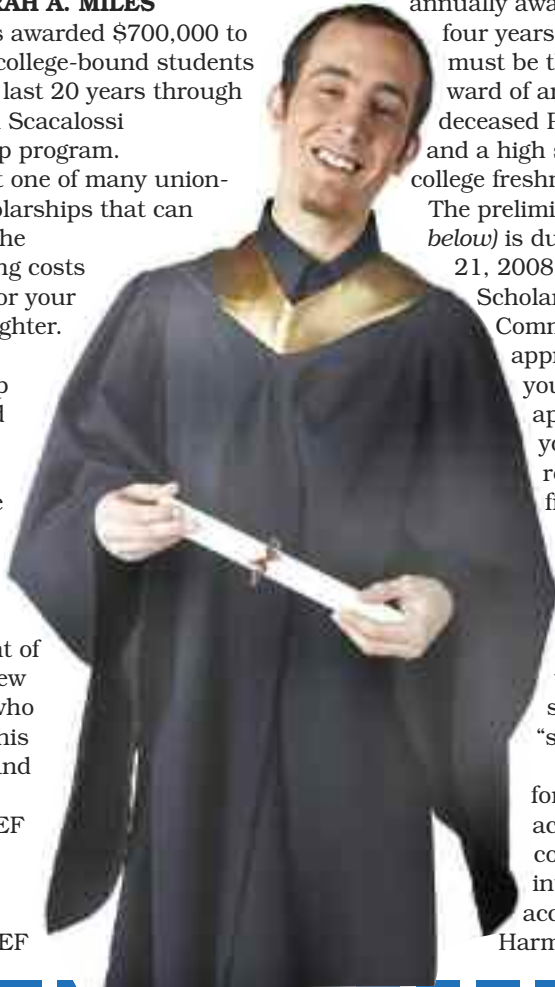
By **DEBORAH A. MILES**

PEF has awarded \$700,000 to top-notch college-bound students during the last 20 years through the Joseph Scacalossi Scholarship program.

It is just one of many union-based scholarships that can help ease the skyrocketing costs of college for your son or daughter.

The scholarship was named for Scacalossi because he was a PEF council leader at the state Department of Labor in New York City who fought for his members and helped organize PEF in its early years.

In his memory, PEF



annually awards \$1,000 a year for four years to 10 students. You must be the child, stepchild or ward of any active, retired or deceased PEF member to apply, and a high school senior or college freshman.

The preliminary application (see below) is due by Friday, March 21, 2008. If the PEF

Scholarship Committee approves your application, you will receive a

final application that is due back at PEF headquarters by Friday, April 25. You can also complete an online application by visiting the PEF Web site and clicking on "scholarships."

Winners are selected for their academic achievements, community service, interests and hobbies, according to Robert Harms, committee chair.

AFT scholarship

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) offers the Robert G. Porter Scholars Program that provides \$8,000 over four years to college-bound high school seniors who are pursuing a career in labor, education, health care or government service.

This scholarship is solely merit-based, centering on academic

excellence, volunteerism, and activism in the school and community.

Applications are available

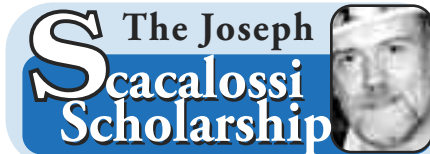
online at www.aft.org or send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Robert G. Porter Scholars Programs, AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001.

Completed applications must be received by Monday, March 31.

Union Plus

The Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$1.8 million to students of working families who want to begin or continue their secondary education.

The program is open to members, spouses and dependent children of PEF



PEF SCHOLARSHIP & STUDENT FINANCIAL AID MAIL-IN FORM

NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO

The Joseph Scacalossi Scholarship Fund Preliminary Application — 2008

Please complete this form legibly and return promptly. Preliminary application for scholarship will not be accepted if received after 5 p.m. March 21, 2008. (Received means "at PEF headquarters," not mailed or postmarked.) Mail to PEF Scholarship Program, 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Road, P.O. 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414.

Scholarships from this organization will be made without regard to sex, race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age or handicap of any applicant. An applicant is any child, step child or ward of any active, retired or deceased PEF member.

I am a senior in H.S. and expect to graduate in

mo. / yr.

I am a college freshman and expect to graduate in

mo. / yr.

Applicants are eligible if they are a senior in high school or a freshman in college.

Applicant information (Please use a separate form for each applicant)

Applicant's name _____
Last First Middle Initial Relationship to PEF member

Address _____
Number Street City State Zip

PEF Member information

Member's name _____
Last First Middle Initial Social Security number

Number Street City State Zip Address

Division Region Agency Code Number Work phone Home phone

Office use only:
Application sent:

Status:
 Active
 Retired
 Deceased

financial crunch of college

and others unions participating in any of the Union Plus programs. Members are not required to purchase any Union Plus products or participate in any Union Plus program to apply.

The amount of the award ranges from \$500 to \$4,000. This is a one-time cash award sent to individual winners for undergraduate study beginning in the fall of the same year. It is open to students attending or planning to attend a four-year college or university, a community college or a technical college or trade school.

Winners are chosen based on academic achievement, potential, character, leadership, social awareness, career goals and financial need.

Applications must include one letter of reference sealed in a separate envelope and an essay of no more than 500 words describing career goals, aspirations and community service.

Applications can be found online at www.unionplus.org/education, and must be postmarked by Thursday, January 31. They should be mailed to: Union Plus Educational Foundation, c/o Union Privilege, P.O. Box 34800, Washington, D.C. 20043-4800.

Because of the high volume of applications, only winners will be notified and announced in late May.

SEIU

You can also help fulfill your scholarships goals by checking-out the Service Employees International Union (SEIU).

Through five different scholarship programs, SEIU awards 53 scholarships that enable members and their children to pursue educational goals at accredited colleges, universities and technical schools.

PEF members are eligible to apply for the \$5,000 Moe Foner Scholarship if you or your children are interested in pursuing a degree or training in the visual or performing arts, and believe the arts can promote cultural identity and social change.

Foner founded the SEIU 1199 Bread and Roses Cultural Project and used his energy and imagination to tap into New York's thriving artistic community while making SEIU one of the most recognizable unions in the nation.

Applicants must include a 200-word summary or less describing what the labor movement has meant to you and

your family.

SEIU also offers the \$5,000 Jesse Jackson Scholarship to a student whose work and aspirations for economic and social justice reflect the values and accomplishments of the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

This scholarship can be renewed annually for a maximum of four years.

Eligibility requirements for both the Foner and Jackson scholarships can be found at seiu.org/resources/scholarships.

The SEIU scholarship program kicks off in December 2007, and applications must be submitted before Saturday, March 1, 2008.

To apply, request the specific program by writing to Scholarship Programs Administrators INC. (SPA) P.O. Box 23737, Nashville, TN. 37202-3737 or by calling (615) 320-3149.

Other sources

The state Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) also provides free information about financial aid for New York residents. It administers the Tuition Assistance program (TAP) and a highly successful college savings program for students and families. You can order free HESC publications and fact sheets, and get information on scholarships, awards, grants and loans online at www.hesc.org or call 1-888-697-4372 or (518) 473-1574.

For local scholarship and loans, check with the guidance counselor at your child's school for information on financial aid workshops that are traditionally held throughout the state during January. And when applying, don't forget to meet the deadline.



Pride at Work to battle workplace discrimination

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

This fall, Tom Privitere, PEF's director of field services in western New York, and other local activists in the Rochester area formed the Rochester-Finger Lakes Chapter of Pride at Work.

Pride at Work (PAW) is a constituency group of the AFL-CIO that mobilizes mutual support in the organized labor movement and the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) community to achieve social and economic justice for all workers.

In 1993, Privitere and PEF member Vivienne Freund of New York City helped convince AFL-CIO leaders of the need to recognize such constituency groups to fight workplace discrimination.

Currently, PAW is working to get gender-identity language restored to

the national Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) which was passed by the House of Representatives in early November. The bill was meant to end workplace discrimination for lesbians, gays and bi-sexuals but falls far short in its present form.

"Through our new Rochester-Fingerlakes Chapter, we will work to create a strong, unified labor movement that cherishes diversity, encourages openness, and ensures safety and dignity," Privitere said.

"Our goal is to educate people in the LGBT community about the benefits of union membership for them and other working people, and to build support and solidarity in the union movement.

"Efforts like these go well beyond our issues. If it weren't for the efforts then of the Gay and Lesbian

Caucus of PEF, we wouldn't have received domestic partner benefits in 1995 in the PS&T contract." Privitere said.

Those benefits, he said, are used by more unmarried heterosexual couples, than by LGBT members. For instance, in March 2007, 3,494 state employees were using domestic-partner benefits – less than 1 percent of the 373,158 enrollees in the state health plan. Just 863 of those using the domestic partner benefits were covering same-sex partners.

Privitere said anyone, including people who don't belong to a union, can join PAW.

For more information about joining or forming a PAW chapter in your area, contact Privitere at tprivitere@pef.org or go online to www.prideatwork.org.

Did you know that PEF members could save up to \$327.96 or more a year on auto insurance?



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or call 800-626-0291 ext. 5308 to speak with a licensed representative

Agency fee procedure outlined

1. Notification of Dissent: Any person paying an agency fee to PEF may notify the union of his/her dissent from the expenditure of any portion of the fee by PEF or its affiliates in aid of activities or causes of a political or ideological nature only incidentally related to terms and conditions of employment. Notification shall be made by letter sent to PEF's Secretary-Treasurer by regular, registered or certified mail during the period between February 15 and March 15 of each year, prior to the fiscal year to which the objection applies. In the notification, the dissenter must specifically inform the union whether the objection is continuous, which means that it does not have to be renewed each year. If the notification does not state that the objection is continuous, the objection must be renewed annually according to the requirements and time frames provided herein. A person who is newly employed or re-employed at any time during the fiscal year to which his/her notification applies must send his/her notification, in the manner described above, within thirty (30) calendar days of

receipt of his/her first payroll check from which agency-fee deductions are made.

2. Estimated Refund: Each person who notifies the Union as provided in paragraph 1 shall, pending PEF's final refund determination, receive an estimated refund. This estimated refund shall represent the dissenter's approximate pro rata share of expenditures by PEF or its affiliates in aid of causes of a political or ideological nature only incidentally related to terms and conditions of employment. The estimated refund shall be transmitted within thirty (30) days of the end of PEF's fiscal year to a dissenter who files a timely notice of dissent.

3. Refund: The approximate proportion of agency fees actually spent by PEF and its affiliates during the fiscal year in aid of causes of a political or ideological nature only incidentally related to terms and conditions of employment shall be determined annually, after the close of each fiscal year of PEF. This determination shall be promptly communicated, in writing, to each dissenter. If this determination is for an

amount greater than the estimated refund, the difference with interest at the statutory rate shall promptly be transmitted to each dissenter.

4. Objections/Neutral Hearing: If a dissenter is dissatisfied with PEF's refund determination, an objection may be made within thirty (30) days of receipt of the refund. Objections shall be made to PEF's Secretary-Treasurer by regular, registered or certified mail. All objections will be expeditiously submitted by PEF for hearing and resolution to a neutral party appointed by the American Arbitration Association from its panel of arbitrators. PEF, at its option, may consolidate all objections and have them resolved at one hearing. An objector may present his/her objection to the neutral in person. The cost of this hearing shall be borne by PEF.

5. Escrow: The balance of a dissenter's agency fee payments during the fiscal year in question shall be held in an interest-bearing, segregated account until PEF's refund determination is made and any objection by the dissenter is finally determined under the procedure set forth in paragraph four.

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Balanced life Women's Committee theme

**GET BALANCED —
Germaine Greco
introduces Women's
Committee speakers.**

— Photo by Richard Dillard

By SHERRY HALBROOK

Do you ever feel pulled in too many directions at the same time, and no matter how hard you try, you know you are going to come up short somewhere?

The PEF Women's Committee feels your frustration. That's why it devoted its meeting time at the PEF convention in September to teaching delegates some strategies for coping.

"How to create and maintain balance in your life was our topic," said Women's Committee Chair Germaine Greco, and our three guest speakers addressed it from different perspectives. One of the delegates to our 2006 Convention meeting had suggested the topic of balancing work life with personal fitness and health."

Susan Tendy, an associate professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, showed how to use a wheel-shaped diagram to determine if your life is in balance, or if some aspects are taking too much of your time and effort at the expense of others.

Lorraine Hannon, the deputy chief of internal affairs for the Nassau County Police Department, discussed ways to bring your life into balance.

And state Supreme Court Judge Ed McCarty of Nassau County talked about how to tell positive opportunities from dangerous or negative risks and the importance of taking the right risks in moving your life forward.

"The speakers explained this is a learning process. First you identify

what needs to change in your life. Then you make up your mind to commit to making that change happen. And finally you must establish a support system to help you succeed," Greco said.

A secondary theme of the speakers, Greco said, was the need to recognize the common bonds we share with other people and the importance of looking out for others as well as ourselves.

Greco said she wants to encourage members to work with their PEF regional coordinators to organize women's committees in their regions. Most regions had committees in years past, but only a few have been active in recent years.

Fahey joins E Board; two seats vacant

Thomas Fahey was elected to fill a mid-term vacancy in PEF Executive Board Seat 180 which represents certain members at the state Health Department's main office and in PEF Regions 1-7, except Saranac Lake and Herkimer. It also represents members at DOH's Oxford and Batavia Veterans' Homes. As the only certified nominee for the seat following petitioning, Fahey was elected and seated without balloting.

Deborah Egel and Robert Purtell have both resigned from the board, vacating seats 415 and 290, respectively. Special elections to fill

these vacancies will begin in January, with nominating petitions available beginning January 7 and returnable by January 28.

If two or more nominees for either or both of these seats are certified by the Special Elections Committee, ballots will be mailed February 19 to constituents, for return to the American Arbitration Association by March 11. They will be counted March 12.

Seat 290 represents certain members at the state Offices of Mental Health (OMH) and of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) in: PEF Region 5, including Binghamton

Psychiatric Center, Binghamton Children Services, Broome Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO), and Valley Ridge CIT; Region 5 items only at Central NY Psychiatric Center, Elmira Children's Services, St Lawrence Children's Services, Elmira Psychiatric Center, the OMRDD Main Office, and the Capital District DDSO.

Seat 415 represents certain members at the state Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services statewide, including all 13 alcoholism treatment centers and all administrative offices.

— Sherry Halbrook

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY DEBORAH A. MILES

If you ever attended a rally at the Empire State Plaza in Albany or an event such as the annual Fourth of July festivities, you probably didn't think too much about the behind-the-scenes effort it takes to get the plaza ready.

But Christopher Gil thinks about it all the time.

Gil is responsible for the maintenance of 11 million square feet of space — the entire Empire State Plaza complex.

He is a maintenance supervisor 4 at the state Office of General Services, a PEF Division 179 member and oversees a staff of 67 state employees. His crew includes plumbers, electricians, carpenters, locksmiths, welders, plus 18 per-diem employees who are painters, caulker's and masons.

"I have a great staff. Everyone is very knowledgeable," Gil said. "We are the hub for maintenance at the Empire State Plaza, the Capitol, the newly renovated Alfred E. Smith State Office Building and the Governor's Mansion. We are available for any type of maintenance that needs to be done.

"Besides doing the regular work, my staff is very innovative and makes recommendations for improvements. We focus on preventative maintenance and energy conservation, and we take an aggressive approach especially with water and lighting conservation."

Flexibility creates results

Gil also tipped his hat to the OGS managers for making it a job he enjoys.

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Christopher Gil

enough flexibility to do our job and take ownership of our jobs. That's just as important as employee development and enforcing work-safety practices.

"The way things are run ensures the safety and well-being of the thousands of people who work at the plaza, plus the thousands who visit," Gil said.

Although a typical day includes monitoring and repairing leaky drains, which is a nuisance problem at the plaza, Gil and his staff are also the ones who prepare for visitors on a grand scale. At this time of year, they focus on opening the skating rink through a "well-coordinated joint effort."

"It takes more man power than material costs, but the key factor is the weather. It needs to stay cold, otherwise we have to ice paint the rink again. Warm temperatures dilute the paint," he said.

Making it all happen

Gil's team is the one that gets the lighting ready for the holiday tree located at the north side of the plaza, and provides the power for the lighting of the tree at the State Capitol.

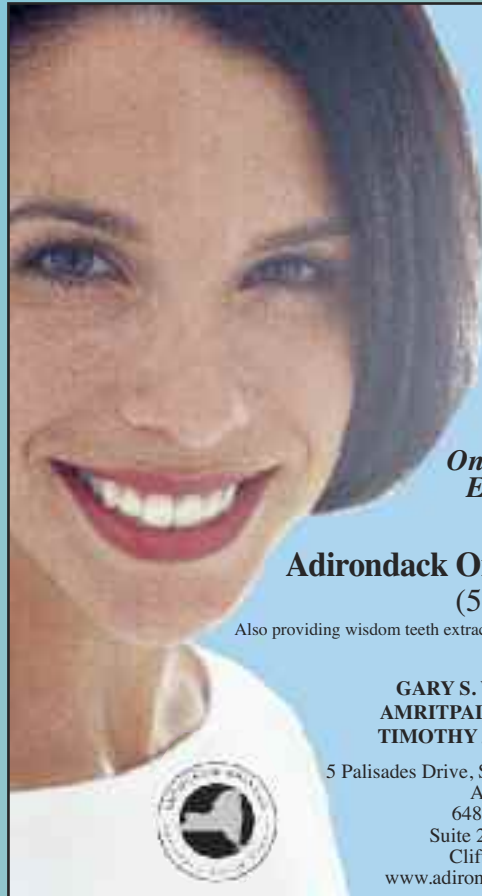
"We are the forgotten people who pretty much make everything happen around here," he said.

Among the numerous events held at the plaza, Gil's favorite is the Fourth of July as he and his family, including seven children, enjoy the fireworks, food and music.

And one of these years, he hopes to sing the national anthem on that holiday, as he has done for other OGS events. It's just another talent of this unsung hero of the plaza.

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2007-8 Ski Season Discount Consignment Tickets

Park	Regular Price	Discount Price **	PEF Member Price *	Park	Regular Price	Discount Price **	PEF Member Price *
Bear Creek Macungie, PA	\$ 52 adult/wkend/hol \$40 youth/sr/wkend/hol (ages 6-21/62-69)	\$39.00 adult/youth/sr/ wkend/hol	\$31.00	Jiminy Peak Hancock, MA	\$52 adult/mid-wk \$53 teen/wkend/hol (ages 13-19) \$43 jr/sr/wkend/hol (ages 7-12/62+) \$37 twilight	\$44.00 adult/teen/jr/sr/ wkend/hol	\$35.00
Bousquet Pittsfield, MA	\$37 adult/wkend/hol \$20 adult/wkday	\$18.00 adult/wkend/hol	\$15.00			Kissing Bridge Glenwood, NY	\$44 adult/wkend/hol \$34 adult/wkdays \$34 jr/wkend/hol \$26 jr/wkdays (ages 13 and under)
Bromley Manchester Center, VT	\$66 adult/hol \$63 adult/wkend \$58 teen/sr/hol \$55 teen/sr/wkend (ages 13-17/65-69) \$44 jr/sr+/hol \$39 jr/sr+/wkend (ages 6-12/70+)	\$36.00 adult/teen/sr wkend/hol	\$29.00	Mount Sunapee Newbury, NH	\$64 adult/wkend \$53 teen/sr/wkend (ages 13-18/65-69) \$40 jr/super sr/wkend (ages 6-12/70+)		
Catamount Hillsdale, NY	\$52 adult/wkend/hol \$42 jr/sr/wkend/hol (ages 7-13/65-69)	\$32.00 adult/jr/sr wkend/hol	\$26.00			Ski Butternut Great Barrington, MA	\$50 adult/Sat/hol \$40 jr/sr/Sat/hol (ages 7-13/65-69) \$20 Mon-Th/non-hol
Gore Mountain North Creek, NY	\$66 adult/wkend/hol \$57 adult/mid-wk \$54 teen/sr/wkend/hol \$51 teen/sr/mid-wk (ages 13-19/65-69)	\$51.00 adult/wkend/hol	\$41.00	Stratton Mountain Stratton, VT	\$78 adult/wkend/hol \$69 adult/mid-wk \$66 young adult/sr/wkend/hol \$60 young adult/sr/mid-wk (ages 13-17/65-69) \$55 jr/super sr/wkend/hol \$54 jr/super sr/mid-wk (ages 7-12/70+)		
Holiday Mountain Monticello, NY	\$40 anyone/wkend/hol (5 & under/70+ Free) <i>(Use PEF ID for discount on Tuesday - Friday)</i>	\$25.00 anyone/ wkend/hol	\$20.00			<i>(Use PEF ID card for adult and juniors for Sunday discount)</i>	
Hunter Mountain Hunter, NY	\$62 adult/hol \$59 adult/wkend \$53 adult/mid-wk \$56 young adult/hol \$53 young adult/ wkend \$48 young adult/ mid-wk (ages 13-22) \$43 jr/sr/hol \$40 jr/sr/wkend \$35 jr/sr/mid-wk (ages 7-12/65+)	\$50.00 adult/young adult/wkend/hol	\$40.00	Ski Shawnee Shawnee-on- Delaware, PA	\$49 adult/wkend/hol \$42 adult/mid-wk \$35 student/wkend/hol (ages 21 & under) under 46" free	\$35.00 adult/Sat/hol	\$28.00
Mountain Creek Vernon, NJ	\$62 adult/wkend/hol \$45 youth/ wkend/hol (ages 7-18) \$49 adult/mid-wk twilight \$35 youth/mid-wk twilight	\$50.00 adult/wkend/ hol	\$40.00			Windham Mountain Windham, NY	\$61 adult/ wkend/hol \$48 jr/wkend/hol (ages 7-12)
Whiteface Mountain Wilmington, NY	\$72 adult/hol \$67 non-hol/adult \$62 teen/sr/hol (ages 13-19/65-69) \$45 jr/hol (ages 7-12)	\$51.00 adult/teen/sr anyday/hol	\$41.00	2-29-08 will be the last day PEF is contractly permitted to sell Windham vouchers.			
Swain Resort Swain, NY	\$42 adult/anyday \$34 jr/sr/anyday (ages 8-12/61+) \$31 night (4-10pm)	\$34.00 adult/jr/sr/ any day, excluding 12/24/07-1/02/08, 2/19/08-2/23/08	\$28.00				
		\$26.00 (4-10pm)	\$21.00				

* PEF Member Price – Price for tickets 1-10

** Discount Price – Price for tickets 11-20.

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