



The  
**Communicator**  
PEF

PEF holds Nurses Day of Action





# Table of Contents

The President's Message	3
Legislators support PEF nurses' call to boost pay, staffing	4
Membership 'blitz' brings PEF organizers to doors and worksites across the Capital Region	6
Members ask tough questions at DOCCS annual Open Forum	8
PEF Relief Fund collects more than \$2,600 for Ukraine	10
Ida Jane Anderson, New York's first registered nurse	11
PEF organizer receives Diversity in Labor scholarship	12
Verify your contact information at the Department of Civil Service	13
New regional coordinator, Executive Board members elected	13
United Way honors PEF members at Upstate	14
PEF Telephone Town Hall provides contract, state budget updates	16
PEF shares Fund Our Future info with other SEIU locals	18
Unions in the News	19
Cultural resource preservation takes PEF member on a journey through NY's history	20
Ailing members need your leave donations	22
Letters to the Editor	23
Retirees in Action: Watch out for scams, identity theft	24
Photo Highlights	25

## THE COMMUNICATOR

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# The President's Message

By WAYNE SPENCE



## Celebrating PEF nurses and engaging all members

The May issue of The Communicator arrives on the last day of National Nurses Week, May 12, marking Florence Nightingale's birthday. For PEF nurses, the week culminated on May 10 with a press conference at the State Capitol in Albany, where I was joined by nurses from across the state and more than a dozen senators and members of the assembly who came out to voice their support for policy changes that will improve the working lives of all PEF nurses. [Please read the full story](#) in this issue and if you have a nurse in your life, thank them for the compassion and care they provide every day. PEF nurses made more than 100 phone calls to lawmakers during our Nurses Day of Action and we delivered more than 1,000 postcards stating our demands. We're asking the State to restructure nursing titles to make the profession more enticing and worth making a career in the public sector, as well as end the obscene amounts of mandatory overtime nurses are forced to work under the current law. The New York State legislative session is set to end in early June and we are hopeful that our advocacy will truly make a difference.

Our member mobilization campaign in late April certainly made a difference. According to the report from AFT that I received, the six teams that fanned out across the capital region held 39 meetings at worksites, knocked on 840 doors, and signed up 95 new members from the PS&T bargaining unit. [Read all about it here](#), but there's no question it was a resounding success, and a model that PEF Organizing will continue to refine and employ across the state.

Last month also marked our latest quarterly election. [A new Region 2 coordinator was seated, along with eight members of the PEF Executive Board](#). Congratulations to Shelby Wisneski, who will lead PEF's efforts in the Southern Tier. We will share a brief profile of her later this month. The next PEF Special Election will be in July, and as always, I encourage members to get involved in your union. We are only as strong and engaged as our membership and as an organization we are committed to identifying future leaders so that PEF can continue to be a powerful force – in Albany, at every agency, and from Brooklyn to Buffalo.

The New York State legislative session is set to end in early June and we are hopeful that our advocacy will truly make a difference. The Statewide Political Action Committee and PEF Legislative Department have identified 14 end-of-session bills that address PEF priorities. [Please visit this page to send letters to your elected leaders supporting them](#).

Thanks for reading and if you have any questions about anything the union is doing, please talk to your steward or reach out to your field representative. Just [call your regional office](#) if you don't have direct contact information.

In Unity,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Spence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Wayne Spence  
PEF President



# Legislators support PEF nurses' call to boost pay, staffing

The state Legislature was in session Tuesday, May 10, but at least 16 lawmakers ducked out of meetings at lunchtime to join PEF nurses at a press conference outside the Capitol.

Nurses Day "Our nurses made a strong case for better staffing and better pay to meet a nursing shortage in state health care facilities that has reached crisis proportions," said PEF President Wayne Spence. "It was gratifying to see so many state legislators make the time to join us and pledge their support. We profoundly hope it will yield real legislation to address these issues and that the governor will sign those bills."

Just a few weeks are left in this legislative session, which is scheduled to end in mid-June. That's why PEF brought this issue to the Capitol during National Nurses Week that ends May 12.

The biggest problem state nurses face is the staffing shortage and the pressure it puts on them to work mandatory overtime. A major reason for the lack of nurses is the poor pay they receive from the state, which hinders both recruitment and retention. Daily, nurses employed by New York State work alongside private agency, or "traveling nurses," but their pay is vastly different.

"Traveling nurses earn tens of thousands of dollars more than state nurses they are hired to assist because of short staffing," Spence said. "How is that fair? I've heard from PEF nurses who have received job offers from nursing agencies willing to pay them six figures a year to be a traveling nurse."

John Taverne, a nurse at Mohawk Correctional Facility in Rome, N.Y., said it puts a lot of stress on state nurses with decades of service to learn that traveling nurses with only a few years on the job may earn just as much money as they are.

State Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried said he was shocked to find that the law he helped pass barring mandatory overtime for state nurses in non-emergency situations has had little effect. "The complaints of violations are coming from the nurses who work for the government!" Gottfried said. "That is unacceptable. This is a crisis and the time to act is now!"

State Assembly Labor Committee Chair Latoya Joyner said she has already taken action. She has a bill in the Assembly now — S.8063/A.8874 — that would limit the state's ability to mandate nurses to work "emergency" overtime. That bill was introduced in the state Senate by Jessica Ramos, who chairs the Labor Committee in that chamber.

State Sen. Robert Jackson, a former PEF member and former PEF staff member, and Assembly Mental Health Committee Chair Aileen Gunther have also introduced bill S.01997-A/A.286, which adds penalties for employers who mandate overtime in violation of the existing law that Gottfried referenced.

"Nurses are the backbone of our health care system, but they are tired!" Jackson declared at the press conference. "The state's non-competitive salaries for nurses are a reason why we have a recruitment problem and why the nurses we do have are mandated to work extra shifts. We should never be at a point where nurses are mandated to work overtime. Enough is enough!"

Mandatory overtime is a major factor when it comes to nurses burning out and leaving the profession. PEF applauds SUNY for announcing an additional investment of \$3.2 million at its statewide campuses, which they estimate will create 1,500 nursing spots. ([Read the full story here.](#)) But even that is just a drop in the bucket when it comes to the number of nurses needed to care for New Yorkers during the current pandemic and any future health crises. Gov. Kathy Hochul says her goal is to grow the state's health care workforce by 20% in the next five years.

Nurse Carolyn Cole, chair of the PEF Nursing Committee, said she has worked 31 years for what is currently the state Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, and has found it necessary to work a second job as a hospice nurse for 20 years in order to provide for her family. The average age of state nurses is 48 to 55 years, she said, and they will soon retire.

"Who is going to fill our shoes?" Cole asked.







This image was created for the Nurses Day of Action on May 10 and was displayed on posters at the press conference, as well as on the side of a truck (a mobile billboard) that circled the State Capitol.



PEF leaders and staff, along with volunteers from AFT locals across the country, pose for a team photo at the Albany Hilton, which served as headquarters for the weeklong mobilization campaign.

# Membership ‘blitz’ brings PEF organizers to doors and worksites across the Capital Region

By **SHERRY HALBROOK AND KATE MOSTACCIO**

Dozens of volunteers from PEF and local American Federation of Teachers (AFT) unions throughout the country converged on Albany at the end of April to take part in a week-long membership blitz to build PEF membership and unity.

It was an impressive effort that reached nearly 1,200 members at 39 worksite meetings and led the blitzers to knock on 840 doors of members and potential members in New York’s Capital District over the course of four evenings.

Worksite meetings throughout the week took place at the following state agencies: Education, Addiction, Gaming, Law, Mental Health, Comptroller, Insurance Fund, Developmental Disabilities, Children and Families, Temporary and Disability Assistance, Public Service, Information Technology, Transportation, Environmental Conservation, Parks, Workers Compensation, Labor, Motor Vehicles, Health, and Taxation.

“It’s important to reach out to the people we represent, to provide updates about important issues such as the state budget and contract and hear from them about their ideas and concerns,” said PEF President Wayne Spence. “We want to make sure they understand how the union represents them and the many opportunities and benefits that it provides. The more involved and actively participating they are in PEF, the more effective we can be on their behalf.”



The out-of-state volunteer organizers came from Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland and Montana to join PEF leaders in visiting the worksites and knocking on doors, with the goal that some of them who are already active in PEF will choose to become leaders in the union, while others who may not be aware of the benefits of membership will sign up.



The weeklong effort signed up 95 new members with PEF and garnered 733 signatures on petitions supporting the union's Fund Our Future campaign. In addition, 41 members authorized new bi-weekly contributions to the COPE fund that supports political action on the national level.

A steady flow of PEF members stopped by the membership meeting at the OMH Central Office on Holland Avenue April 28, enjoying lunch and learning about benefits and the workings of the union.

Some shared what they felt was the most valuable part of union membership.

Tina Kilter-Hotaling said PEF's lobbying took the message of what's important to members to the Legislature, something the average person couldn't easily do.

"They can talk to the people we can't talk to," she said, adding that many people don't know which representatives to talk to, let alone have access to those politicians.

She also commended PEF's efforts on telecommuting during the height of the pandemic and highlighted the power of collective bargaining and having someone in your corner during disciplinary proceedings or workplace issues. Other members shared her appreciation of PEF's telecommuting negotiations.

One member at OMH said the membership benefits drew her to the union. Her husband used the tuition reimbursement benefits, and the family takes advantage of Family Days and discounted movie tickets.

Member Michelle Probst was grateful the union kept its membership updated on pertinent information, including the progress of contract negotiations. PEF also routinely posts information about Public Service Workshop Program trainings, temporary negotiations extending overtime rates or accrual use-by dates, and lobbying efforts.

Division 194 members at the State Education Department in Albany were the first group treated to lunch and a worksite visit by the blitzers. Members received up-to-the-minute information about the state budget and other legislative priorities, and also heard about the PEF Contract Team's preparations for negotiations on a successor contract. (The current Collective Bargaining Agreement with the state expires April 1, 2023.) Union leaders and the contract team will be traveling around the state to hear directly from members about their issues and priorities, and they are also looking for contract suggestions and comments from members emailed to them at [Contract2022suggestions@pef.org](mailto:Contract2022suggestions@pef.org).

Dan Carpenter, who heads PEF's organizing efforts, told members that PEF was able to block a plan to transfer the duties of some SED members to the state Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Division 194 Council Leader Ved Shrivah said the most important thing they can do to make PEF a strong and effective advocate is to "be united and be there" when the union calls for their support.

Two days later, a team met with members of Division 177 at the state Transportation Department (DOT) in Albany for another lunchtime worksite event and were able to answer a broad range of their questions.

Stephanie McLean-Beathley, the Membership Benefits Program administrator, answered questions about benefits and how to order tickets online that are then mailed to you.

Division 177 Assistant Council Leader Ed Lucas spoke at length with a member worried that PEF stewards are not able to be in touch with all of the newest employees at DOT.

Another member wanted to know how recently the ventilation system in their building had been cleaned. Lucas said that PEF has asked management that question, but has not received a clear and definitive answer. PEF health and safety specialist Veronica Foley also spoke about using carbon dioxide monitors to check the indoor air quality if they are concerned about it.

In response to a question about COPE (Committee on Political Education), the team explained that it is a way for members to contribute voluntary donations that can be used to support federal political candidates and issues. McLean-Beathley said that she had personally seen the importance of political action when she was a PEF member leading a long, but ultimately successful, campaign to save Western New York Children's Psychiatric Center from being closed.



President Wayne Spence talks to members at the Department of Labor during the final day of worksite visits conducted as part of the PEF Membership Blitz



# Members ask tough questions at DOCCS annual Open Forum

After a two-year hiatus due to COVID, President Wayne Spence, Statewide Labor Management Chair Steve Drake, and the Statewide Labor Management Team were eager to host the annual Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) Labor Management Conference, held May 11-13 in Saratoga.

The conference began with several training sessions in various areas, including Health & Safety Issues, Student Loan Forgiveness, Divisions Finance, Workers Compensation, Parole Contract Insurance Overview and Member Engagement.

The highlight of the conference was the three-hour open forum discussion. During the forum, attendees had the opportunity to direct questions to management, including Acting DOCCS Commissioner Anthony Annucci, Executive Deputy Commissioner (EDC) Daniel Martuscello III, as well as Deputy Commissioners, Assistant and Associate Commissioners representing various areas.

Acting Commissioner Annucci opened the forum, speaking about the continuing priority of safety and security, stating “we must all feel comfortable and safe when we come to work.” He acknowledged that is an increasingly difficult task, taking into consideration the dangerous population of incarcerated individuals, the COVID pandemic, and numerous legislative changes that have substantially affected the department. Annucci stressed the importance of management and staff working together to create an environment that is conducive to safety while maintaining productivity.

Conference attendees asked important questions regarding issues and concerns voiced by members from facilities and community supervision offices across the state.

Darrell Robertson (Wallkill Correctional Facility) stated that incarcerated individuals often come to programs after receiving medication, including Medical Assisted Treatment (MAT). These individuals come to vocational programs and use tools, equipment and other machines, even though occasionally, Robertson said, they are “out of it.” EDC Martuscello stated that if any staff member notices an incarcerated individual exhibiting unusual or concerning behavior, staff should immediately notify an officer in the area so the individual can be removed from the program. Staff should also notify their supervisor, as well as Medical in case an adjustment in their medication is needed.

John Taverne (Walsh Regional Medical Unit) and Donald Yates (Attica Correctional Facility) spoke about the strain put



Commissioner Annucci addressing the DOCCS L-M Conference

on nursing staff during a facility incident such as a lockdown, Correction Emergency Response Team (CERT) deployment, or an extraordinary number of Unusual Incidents (UIs). They suggested implementation of a protocol to allow for deployment of additional nursing staff in the event of a serious incident or emergency, if the impacted facility does not have adequate staff. Taverne said the issue had been discussed earlier in the day during the Nurses Subcommittee meeting. EDC Martuscello agreed that administration had a productive discussion with the Nurses Subcommittee regarding the issue. He noted there have been two recent CERT deployments, at Cape Vincent and Attica, and acknowledged nursing staff is extremely busy providing medical care not only to incarcerated individuals, but also to facility staff and CERT members. He reported the department is working to resolve the issue so that staffing can be increased for a large number of UIs and injuries if indicated.

Steven Feinstein (Bedford Hills Correctional Facility) requested clarification on scheduling in regard to DOCCS nurses and agency nurses, and asked if it is acceptable to use nursing staff shortages to give agency nurses preferred schedules. EDC Martuscello said facilities should be following rule 6.02, which states DOCCS nurses should be used first.

Sandy Derr (Altona Correctional Facility) expressed concern over the decreasing population of incarcerated individuals in facilities. EDC Martuscello reported the population was approximately 30,789 incarcerated individuals, leaving about 8,000 empty beds in the system. Martuscello said the department has been looking at bed consolidations, meaning taking beds or dorms “offline.” Consolidating in such a manner leaves areas in the facility available to isolate incarcerated individuals with infectious diseases like COVID, influenza or chicken pox.



Christopher Lanz (Franklin Correctional Facility) reported that one of the positive changes brought about by the Prison Violence Task Force was a modification in the package program and asked administration to provide more information regarding the program. Acting Commissioner Annucci stated there was a need to change the package program and he believes the new program will be safer for all involved. "People are dying because of the packages," he said. Annucci indicated there were 594 uses of Narcan last year in facilities. The package program was implemented in the Wende hub on May 9, and a follow-up will be conducted with all superintendents in that hub to determine if any changes need to be made. The program is expected to continue to roll out hub-by-hub once the pilot in Wende has been reviewed.

Najieh Isaac (Bronx I) voiced concern regarding Parole Officers being utilized as Court Officers. He said they are even given keys to the area while they are there. Deputy Commissioner Marco Ricci said there are plans to post Institutional Safety Officers in these areas and personnel has been contacted for additional staffing. The courts are working with the department to provide a safe work environment for staff. Workplace Violence Assessments are being conducted in the newly assigned court areas and recommendations will be shared with the courts. Ricci emphasized staff safety is of utmost importance.

Gabriela Franklyn (Community Supervision) said that the "Less is More" parole law has literally created chaos in the courts and cities and is hindering the safety of Parole Revocation Specialists (PRS) and Hearing Officers because they do not have weapons. Administration stated they would have an internal discussion about the issue. Under the current guidelines, PRS do not have the right to carry a weapon and the department cannot issue a state weapon on a permit.

Selina Reed (Peekskill Area Office) inquired if Area Offices would be closed or merged or consolidated and, if so, is there any information as to which offices would be affected and when would it take place?

Marco said that the initial projection for reduction in parolees was between 6,000-8,000, and that in actuality, it will be more like between 10,000-11,000. He emphasized that no one should panic about consolidation. He said he will look at balance when replacing staff to "right-size" regions as they manage the change in the parolee population.



Pictured: Region 7's DOCCS Division Leaders; Sandy Derr, Carly Gagnon, Dave Mosier and Region 7 Coordinator, Barb Stransky

Additional questions related to training in various areas. Deputy Commissioner Jeff McKoy stated there will be more training for staff on the Residential Rehabilitation Unit process. DC Ricci discussed possible training in prisoner transport, stating we "do not want to be in that business in the first place," but the reality is sometimes DOCC has no other choice. Ricci also discussed additional training along the lines of annual Officer Street Survival Training.

Statewide Labor Management Chair Steve Drake said he "appreciates the open dialogue PEF continues to have with administration and stressed it would not be possible without cooperation from both management and labor." He stated it is important to make use of labor management on a local level, but emphasized that he and the statewide labor management team are "only an e-mail or phone call away" if issues cannot be addressed at the local level or there are exigent circumstances. Drake said he speaks with EDC Martuscello "at a minimum weekly, usually more often than that," a statement confirmed by Martuscello.



# PEF Relief Fund collects more than \$2,600 for Ukraine

By KATE MOSTACCIO

Fifty members donated a total of \$2,373 and Region 2 donated \$250 to support workers and union members in Ukraine as they continue to face hardships resulting from Russia's ongoing attack on the country.

"The global labor movement coming to the aid of Ukraine highlights the importance of international solidarity," said PEF President Wayne Spence. "PEF members rose to the challenge, raising money to provide aid to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine. We are stronger together."

Through the PEF Relief Fund, the union gathered donations and presented a lump sum to the Common Solidarity Fund, established by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The donations will be used to support workers and union members fleeing Ukraine with shelter, food, supplies, transport and more, as well as help refugees in neighboring countries.

"To date over 1,000 individuals and organizations, including local trade unions around the world, have contributed to the ITUC public fundraising appeal for humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and to refugees in neighboring countries," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow in a letter to PEF, thanking the union for its donation.



PEF Division 196 (Roswell Park) also donated \$1,000 to the Dnipro Ukrainian Culture Center in Buffalo. Treasurer Larry Tworek presented the check.





# Ida Jane Anderson, New York's first registered nurse

By KATE MOSTACCIO

*Oh, the graduates of 1902  
We're the kind  
That were always true blue  
Their work never shirking,  
With no interne's flirting,  
Those nurses of 1902.*

Those are the words [penned](#) by Ida Jane Anderson in 1902 for her graduating class at the Rochester Homeopathic Hospital Nurses' Training School. She would go on to become the first official registered nurse in New York.

In 1903, the New York State Nurses Association met in Rochester to discuss the Nurse Practice Act that would establish uniform regulation and credentialing for the practice of nursing.

The meeting drew over a hundred nurses from across the state and featured keynote speaker Susan B. Anthony. Sophia Palmer, the superintendent of the Rochester City Hospital, pitched the idea that nurses who met specific requirements bear the title "registered nurse."

New York passed the Nurse Registration Act in May 1903, one of four states that enacted similar laws that year. At the time, nurse training schools were growing in number and classes increasing in size.

"In 1905, the 56 schools of the state reported 2,765 students; ... in 1908, 101 schools reported 3,440 students; in 1909, 109 schools reported 3,281 students; in 1910, 116 schools reported 3,669 students," according to a [1911 article](#) in the American Journal of Nursing.

Anderson dedicated decades of her life to nursing – from caring for smallpox patients at Hope Hospital during the 1902 smallpox epidemic, to working as a night supervisor and the second social worker at Rochester Homeopathic Hospital. She donated her uniforms and hospital pins to the hospital's Alumni Archives.

Nursing today: It's time for action

In Anderson's time, nursing schools and classes were growing – today, the profession of nursing faces shortages and understaffing and pay inequity between private and public nurse salaries.



Miss Ida Jane Anderson, Rochester Homeopathic Hospital School of Nursing class of 1902, was the first registered Nurse in New York State. Photo credit: nyheritage.contentdm.oclc.org

New York nurses are moving out of state or becoming agency nurses seeking higher pay. The state is the eighth highest paying state for registered nurses, but state nurses and PEF member salaries fall short of the average.

PEF recently held a Nurses Day of Action in Albany, highlighting the hurdles nurses are facing and calling for change.

[Click here for the story.](#)

# PEF organizer receives Diversity in Labor scholarship

The CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies awarded downstate PEF organizer Lisa Pinkard-Adams a scholarship for Diversity in Labor, allowing her a full ride to study at the university.

“The scholarship was created to create pipelines that will bring women and people of color to the forefront of the labor movement and labor education,” said CUNY’s website. “Each year the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies will award up to \$150,000 in scholarships to qualified applicants, both at the graduate and undergraduate level.”

Pinkard-Adams holds a master’s degree in social work from Fordham University, where she concentrated on policy, leadership, and not-for-profit management. Before coming to PEF in 2018, she worked on political campaigns, civic engagement, and as the first female African American chief of staff to the Ninth District Legislative Office.

As an organizer for PEF, Pinkard-Adams is dedicated to educating non-members on the benefits of the union, assisting agencies in Region 10, 11 and 12 to establish leadership, and identifying issues to rally around for the benefit of members.

“One of my goals in my new role is to really just be ‘present’ for the membership,” she said. “I want members and non-members alike to see how much their union genuinely cares about them and their wellbeing at the worksite. My new position will require me to collaborate with all levels and departments within PEF.”

“Organizing is truly a collaborative effort and I am looking forward to locking arms with the PEF team to push the union forward.”



PEF organizer Lisa Pinkard-Adams



## Verify your contact information at the Department of Civil Service

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Please ensure that the Department of Civil Service (DCS) has your current contact information. When you are taking a written test, your mailing address is used to assign you to a test site. If you have a prior or incorrect address listed, you might be assigned to a test site that is farther from your home than necessary.

Additionally, the email address you have on record with DCS is used to contact you about examinations, canvasses, and related issues. If the email address they have for you is not one that you regularly use, you might miss important, time sensitive communications.

You can use the following link to access your account and check the contact information you have listed: <https://www.cs.ny.gov/home/myaccount/>

Also, if you have not done so, you may want to sign up to receive examination announcements from DCS. To do so, you can use the following link: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/NYCS/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=NYCS\\_4](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/NYCS/subscriber/new?topic_id=NYCS_4)



## New regional coordinator, Executive Board members elected

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The results of PEF's April 2022 Special Elections are in. Shelby Wisneski was elected Region 2 coordinator, taking over for Andrew Puleo, who joined the PEF staff as an organizer in Western New York. Eight seats on the Executive Board were also filled. The board next meets on June 9-10, 2022, when those members will be formally sworn-in.

Preparations for the July 2022 Special Elections are underway. Fifteen executive board seats are vacant. Postcards will be mailed in June with additional details about vacancies in your region. For more information, visit [PEF.org/Elections](https://PEF.org/Elections).

# United Way



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## United Way honors PEF members at Upstate

The United Way of Central New York recently recognized PEF members at SUNY Upstate University Medical Center for their hard work and service to the community.

"It's more than just a career, this is a calling," said Region 4 Coordinator Gina M. Corona in a video released by United Way. "The strength that the community has is going to influence any service or intervention that we do. Our PEF members work hard every day for New Yorkers. They come every day to work to serve. To have somebody recognize their service and their contributions is a wonderful thing."

Every year, United Way of Central New York's Achievements in Caring celebration recognizes enthusiastic corporate partners, dedicated agencies, and exceptional community members

who have gone above and beyond throughout United Way's workplace campaign season. The 2022 "Organized Labor" award was presented to the unions representing employees at SUNY Upstate – PEF, CSEA Local 615, and UUP Upstate Medical Chapter.

"I'd like to thank Sister Helen for recognizing the unions and their efforts," Corona said.

The United Way created a video of the virtual award presentation [here](#).







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[www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/](http://www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/)



# PEF Telephone Town Hall provides contract, state budget updates

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

PEF President Wayne Spence and Legislative Director Patrick Lyons updated members in a telephone town hall April 20 on how the union's preparations for contract negotiations are progressing, and how some of PEF's issues fared in the new 2022-23 state budget.

"This is the first year we aren't fighting budget cuts," Spence said.

Spence said PEF's Contract Team began training March 14-16 for the negotiation of a successor agreement that will pick up when the current contract expires April 1, 2023.

"PEF will send a letter (to the Governor's Office of Employee Relations) demanding that negotiations begin this December or in January 2023," Spence said. He added that the Civil Service Employees Association has already begun its contract talks with the state.

PEF wants to hear from members about what their issues and priorities are for the next contract, and Spence said the union will hold contract townhalls throughout the state this year to hear from members. If you want to share your thoughts with the contract team, you don't have to wait for one of those meetings. Spence said you can email your comments to the team at [contract2022suggestions@pef.org](mailto:contract2022suggestions@pef.org).

It has been more than a decade since PEF negotiated with a governor not named Cuomo, and Spence said he was encouraged by the way Gov. Kathy Hochul picked up on PEF's Fund Our Future budgetary concerns that the union shared with her at its 2021 convention in Niagara Falls.

"The governor incorporated quite a few of our positions in her budget proposal, and some of those are still in the new state budget," Spence told members.

To help the state recruit and retain new employees to fill thousands of vacant positions, PEF urged Hochul and legislators to amend the laws that created pension tiers 5 and 6 to make them more attractive for career public servants.

A whopping 48 percent of the state workforce is in Tier 6, Spence said, and its 10-year vesting requirement and benefits "are not competitive anymore." So he was pleased to see lawmakers adopt a five-year vesting period after heavy lobbying from PEF members. In addition, PEF successfully shielded COVID-related overtime from the calculation of mandatory employee contributions to the NYSLERS, allowing members to keep more of the extra money they earned in service to the state..

Lyons reported that PEF also lobbied for bigger state agency budgets, hazardous duty pay for PEF members who were deemed essential and worked on the front lines throughout the pandemic, improved state services for mentally ill and developmentally disabled New Yorkers, and common sense changes to the state's criminal justice system.

When the state budget was adopted, it contained \$10 million in funding for 100 beds for psychiatric patients that the state Office of Mental Health had planned to close.

Lyons outlined numerous other positive changes PEF secured in the budget.



PEF was one of the only public employee unions that fought to secure hazard pay for all “essential” employees and PEF drafted legislation to provide that benefit to members more than two years ago. While the union wanted a broader benefit that included more “essential” employees, PEF did support Gov. Hochul’s workforce bonus for healthcare and mental hygiene personnel that will award \$3,000 in extra pay for their sacrifices during the pandemic. The union will continue to push for the bonus to expand all state employees who were deemed “essential” during the COVID state of emergency.

In addition, the budget contains student loan forgiveness for nurses in hard-to-staff areas of the state, a proposal that originated in the PEF Nurses Committee.

“These conversations began last fall after Hochul took office in August 2021,” Lyons said. PEF made its case for these changes by writing editorials in newspapers, forming coalitions with other interested parties, testifying before legislative committees, direct lobbying and sending approximately 14,000 letters from members to lawmakers.

“We thank every one of you who wrote those letters,” Spence said.

“Your work supports what we (in PEF’s Legislative Department) do at the Capitol,” Lyons said. “We were most successful where we sent the most letters.”

Lyons and Spence said PEF continues to need that member action to keep moving forward on important issues.

“We got the door to hazardous duty pay open. We can keep building on that going forward,” Spence said. “We are the first union in New York to have language in our contract on telecommuting, and we are going to build on this.”

The president also urged members to use their vacation leave before it expires, especially with many members now able to take time off with the COVID state of emergency ended.

“Use your vacation leave. Do not give it back to the state of New York.”

# RECOMMIT TODAY!

**NEW + EXISTING PEF MEMBERS**

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# PEF shares Fund Our Future info with other SEIU locals

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

The leaders of other SEIU local public employee unions throughout the country learned about PEF's Fund Our Future campaign in a virtual meeting April 14, where PEF President Wayne Spence and Vice President Randi DiAntonio shared information about it. The leaders especially liked the video showing PEF members talking about the work they do for the people of New York.

SEIU is the Service Employees International Union and it, along with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), are PEF's parent unions and international union affiliates.

Spence said PEF is using the Fund Our Future campaign to educate New Yorkers about the key roles its members play in bringing them the services they need. The campaign also is educating PEF members about the need for them to share their stories with other people.

"We wanted to engage our members to engage the community," DiAntonio said.

When the pandemic struck in 2020, PEF members often were forced to go to new and extreme lengths to make sure those services were maintained. Whether they were working in hospital intensive care units or taking unemployment claims at the state Labor Department, they frequently made difficult personal sacrifices to meet the public's suddenly increased needs.

"COVID magnified the importance of what our members do," DiAntonio said.

Spence said he wanted the public and policymakers to get the message: "Don't call us heroes today and then give us zeros tomorrow!"

Spence said he began meeting weekly with Alan Lubin, a retired leader of the New York State United Teachers, to brainstorm on "how to highlight the work PEF members do and how underfunded state services are." The Fund Our Future campaign resulted from those meetings and it fit well with AFT and SEIU goals.

Spence said PEF began with a news story about underfunded public services that result in increased violence and mentally ill people going homeless or becoming incarcerated.

Then PEF created the videos of its members talking about their work.



"I can never be as eloquent as our members can be in telling about the work they do," Spence said. "They are the true Fund Our Future ambassadors."

Spence said it has been gratifying to see the positive effects the campaign has had so far.

"We shared our priorities with Gov. Hochul after she appeared at our convention, and we were surprised to see that she incorporated a lot of them in her state budget, even using our buzz words and language."

"We sent our video to the state commissioners to put out about the need for services," Spence said, and mentioned a commissioner told him that he was always comfortable with PEF calling for his agency to get more funding.

DiAntonio invited the other SEIU leaders at the meeting to join the Fund Our Future Coalition on its web page and follow it on Facebook.

The leaders had lots of questions, including what PEF has found to be the most effective way to get its members involved in the campaign.

DiAntonio said the most important thing is to educate members about it, meet people where they are, and then keep their participation easy and simple.

The leaders had many positive responses to the presentation, such as Local 526M Executive Director Andy Potter's comment that he likes the way the campaign "really lifts people up."

# Unions in the News



## President praises union organizers

Six union organizers from Starbucks to Amazon visited the White House this month and sat down with Vice President Kamala Harris and Labor Secretary Marty Walsh, who chair and co-chair the Biden administration's taskforce on supporting unions.

President Biden joined the guests for a surprise visit.

Read more [here](#). Read the task force readout [here](#).

## NLRB reports steep increase in union petitions

During the first half of 2022, the National Labor Relations Board reported a 57 percent increase in the number of union representation petitions filed and a 14 percent rise in charges of unfair labor practices. A recent Gallup poll shows 68 percent of labor unions in the U.S. have the highest approval rating since 1965.

Read more [here](#).



## Intel engineers fed up, eye unionization

More than 350 engineers at Intel, the largest semiconductor company by revenue and the largest private employer in Oregon, are looking to form a union to support the exhausted workforce. Engineers are essentially "on call" all the time, proponents of a union state.

Read more [here](#).



## House staffers gain right to unionize

The U.S. House of Representatives voted to grant aides the legal protections to form a union, a step toward ensuring staffers can bargain over working conditions without fear of retaliation. Aides, particularly junior staff, are frustrated over low pay, long hours and a difficult work environment.

Read more [here](#).

# Cultural resource preservation takes PEF member on a journey through New York's history

By KATE MOSTACCIO

To help ensure its preservation, the state Department of Education created the Cultural Resource Survey Program (CRSP) in 1958 to help other state agencies meet historic preservation mandates. Staff dig deep into available research archives and conduct fieldwork to ensure planned projects don't negatively impact cultural history.

PEF member Aaron Gore, a cultural education specialist with the Department of Education, explained how the process works.

"Say DOT wants to build a road, DOCCS wants to build a wing on a prison or DEC wants a new parking lot at a state park. There are federal and state statutes that surveys must be done in advance of those projects," Gore said.

To prepare for site visits, CRSP staff scour period maps to get the lay of the land and guide their fieldwork.

"When we go out there and we do our excavation, we have a little bit of guidance where we might find artifacts," Gore said. By digging a series of shovel test pits, circular holes about 30 centimeters across, staff take the soil out and screen it layer by layer.

"We look and see what's in those layers, and we make our interpretation from that," Gore said.

Based on historic records, one such project brought the team to a location in Saratoga County known to have been the site of locally prominent businessman Alvinza Finney's house and store. The latter, known as the "Union Store," served local residents and people traveling through the area by canal boat.

"Thousands of 19th century artifacts and a few below-ground features, including a stone and brick foundation for a small building likely relating to Champlain Canal activity, were uncovered during the excavation, consistent with earlier survey results," Gore said. "However, archaeologists were not expecting to find significantly older objects, including



Cultural Resource Program staff excavate at the Alvinza Finney site in Saratoga County, digging test squares at intervals across the property. Finds included some unanticipated pre-contact items, like a 1748 British coin and Native American items. Photo credit: NYS Museum/NYSED

a 1748 British coin and Native American items, including a resharpened projectile point, a sherd of decorated pottery, and chips from stone tool manufacture or resharpening.

"That is the nature of this work," Gore said. "You never know what you're going to get. You do research and go to a project area, and you expect to find something, but sometimes you find other things you didn't expect. That's what makes the job so exciting. The unexpected finds are generally pretty exciting."



Gore's lifelong interest in history drew him to this work.

"Ever since I was a kid, I was always really into history," he said. "I was on track to be a historian. I grew up in a small town on the Canadian border and there was an 18th century French fort on a property in town. I had the luck to excavate that French mission, Fort de la Presentation, in Ogdensburg."

"That was amazing," he said. "We found all sorts of great stuff: gun flints, musket balls, a cool pipe bowl."

Gore's work with the CRSP takes him all over the state, traveling from the Canadian border to the far end of Long Island. Projects can be large, like the Exit 3 project on the NYS Thruway and the signage for Albany International Airport – others can be small, like a single building.

"It's a great job," he said. "It's not just archaeology. We look at historic buildings, structures, bridges. All of these are considered cultural resources."



## Sign up **TODAY** for the Communicator

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PEF news, emailed to your mobile device  
or home computer monthly.

[www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/](http://www.pef.org/ecommunicator-signup/)



# Ailing members need your leave donations

The following PEF members have reported a need for leave donations due to the need for medical treatment or recuperation from illness or injury.

Donations are made from annual leave and donors must retain at least 10 days of annual leave after donating. To donate leave, obtain a leave-donation form from your personnel or human resources office and submit it to that office. You may donate leave to employees at both the agency where you work and to those working at other state agencies.

To help facilitate donations, we list an HR contact number for each person needing donations on the list below.

- Diane Aleksandrowicz is a nurse 2 at Rochester Psychiatric Center.
- Maria Lisanti is an intensive case manager at Bronx Psychiatric Center.
- Matthew Cassidy is a senior librarian at Woodbourne Correctional Facility in Woodbourne.
- Eddie Lorenzo is a public health field services representative trainee 1 in Central Islip.
- Deena Christian is an offender rehabilitation coordinator at Greene Correctional Facility in West Coxsackie.
- Sharon Lynch is a parole officer in Jamaica Queens.
- Carol Christiansen is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.
- Margaret Mendez is a motor vehicle referee at the state Department of Motor Vehicles in Brooklyn.
- Leanne Graf is a teaching and research center nurse 2 at Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.
- Kyle Tomlin is a supervising offender rehabilitation coordinator at Ulster Correctional Facility in Napanoch.
- Monica Kehagias-Gordon is an intensive case manager at Buffalo Psychiatric Center.
- Karen Tully is a senior attorney at the NYS Department of State in Albany..

The rules for making and receiving leave donations (such as leave recipients may not have had any disciplinary actions or unsatisfactory performance evaluations within their last three years of state employment) are set forth on pages 189 and 190 of the 2019-23 PS&T Contract. If you, or a PEF member you know, need leave donations because of a medical issue, you may contact The Communicator to request publication of that need. Send requests to [thecomunicator@pef.org](mailto:thecomunicator@pef.org), or call 518 396-8201. Be sure to provide your contact information.





# Letters to the Editor

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### Wants PEF parole lobby day

To the Editor: Why is PEF not having a lobby day for parole officers? This is outrageous that nothing has been done to stop Less Is More.

AMY CUMMISKY  
Hamburg

**Editor's Note:** PEF is lobbying intensively (<https://communicator.pef.org/issue/volume-39-no-8/pef-was-a-strong-foe-of-less-is-more-legislation/>) to educate state leaders and the public about the serious problems related to Less is More. We held rallies in late 2021 in New York City and Rochester and more recently in April 2022 members of PEF Division 236 were in Albany to lobby legislators during the annual conference held by the New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus. We have introduced a bill in both houses of the state legislature to address the more onerous issues associated with the law. With just a few weeks left in the legislative session, members are encouraged to visit PEF's website and send a letter to their lawmakers about why Less is More is a bad law.

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### When do we get our money?

To the Editor: Do you know when PEF members will get longevity payments for 2022?

LEO ESTRELLA  
Gardiner

**Editor's note:** Checks with performance awards and advances will be dated April 21 for members on the state's Institution payroll and April 27 for those on the Administrative payroll. Coming paychecks will also include 2022 across-the-board raises. [See our story in this issue for details.](#)





# Watch out for scams, identity theft

Chances are, you or someone you know have received an ominous call or message from someone pretending to be from the government, alleging that your information has been compromised or demanding immediate payment. Ignore it. This is just one of the tips the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General (SSA OIG) shared about scams during a national "Slam the Scam Day" in March.

The initiative, which began in 2020 to combat Social Security-related scams, is now expanding to include other government-imposter scams. These scams often involve someone claiming to be an SSA or other government employee who asks for personal information, demands payment, or makes threats. These scams are primarily carried out over the telephone, but perpetrators may also use email, text messages, social media, or U.S. mail.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), from January through September 2021, consumers lost more than \$331 million to government imposter scams.

SSA OIG urges everyone to be cautious of any contact supposedly from a government agency telling you about a problem you don't recognize. Real government officials will never:

- threaten arrest or legal action against you unless you immediately send money;
- promise to increase your benefits or resolve a problem if you pay a fee or move your money into a protected account;
- require payment with gift cards, prepaid debit cards, wire transfer, Internet currency, or by mailing cash;
- or try to gain your trust by providing fake "documentation," false "evidence," or the name of a real government official.

"The best ways to avoid falling prey to these types of scams are to hang up the phone or delete suspicious texts and emails without responding," said Joseph Peters, Jr., secretary-treasurer of the Alliance for Retired Americans.

Report Social Security-related scams and fraud online at <https://oig.ssa.gov>.

Other government-imposter scams may be reported to the Federal Trade Commission at <https://www.ftc.gov/scams>.

Scams happen all the time so it is important for us to be informed to protect ourselves. Here is some more information about identity theft from the NYS attorney general.

Besides a general desire for personal privacy and to be "left alone," there are very legitimate reasons why people act to decrease the personal information easily accessible about themselves.

The fastest growing financial crime in the nation — "identity theft" — is one important reason. Identity theft is when someone uses your personal identification information, such as your credit card number or Social Security number, to obtain something of value.

It takes very little to have your identity stolen. Only a few pieces of information can give a thief the ability to, for example, get a credit card in your name and leave you to deal with the bills.

If you believe someone has been using your name or personal information to make purchases, to get credit, or to obtain employment, you need to act right away to protect yourself.





**April 2, 2022**

Region 9 Leadership Retreat



**April 2, 2022**

PEF psychologists learning at our Region 9 Leadership Conference.







**May 6, 2022**

Division 249 OMH/STARC/OASAS celebrated Nurses' appreciation week. Division Steward Sue Pirie, PEF Field Rep. Marty Blair and Region 7 Coordinator Barb Stransky passed out vouchers for a pizza or a sub to the RN'S within Division 249 to show appreciation.

**April 30, 2022**

President Spence spoke Saturday on a panel about community engagement and the union at the AFT Leaders Meeting in New York, sharing the goal behind PEF's Fund Our Future campaign -- reinvesting in services and communities so every New Yorker can thrive.







**April 28, 2022**

President Wayne Spence talks to members at the Department of Labor during the final day of worksite visits conducted as part of the #PEF Membership Blitz this week in the capital region. Six teams of 36 people visited 40 agencies and knocked on more than 630 doors this week (and counting!) to assess members and encourage their activism.



**April 24, 2022**

Team building fun at the PEF/AFT Mobilization Training this morning - 14 minutes to build a tower out of only balloons and painter's tape. Communication, teamwork and flexibility were the keys to Team 4's winning 7' tower!

