



# 'Tis the Season for Thanks & Solidarity!

the  
**communicator**

Volume 41, No. 8 | November 2023

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## THE COMMUNICATOR

Volume 41 No.9  
November 2023 (0745-6514)

The Official Publication of the New York State  
Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO  
1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Rd., Latham, NY  
12110-1006

The Communicator is published monthly,  
except for January and August, for members  
of the New York State Public Employees  
Federation.

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# The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE

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## Giving Thanks, This Week, and Every Week

Colder days and early sunsets herald the holiday season in New York. No matter how you celebrate, I hope the spirit is one of thanks and solidarity.

We are always grateful for the hard work and dedication of our members, and it motivates us as we advocate locally, at the health and safety and labor management tables, and, of course, inside the halls of state government.

In this issue you'll find coverage of a [Town Hall meeting](#) I convened on November 15 (you may listen to it, [here](#), if you missed it), where I was joined by staff to update members on carried-over vacation accrual deadlines, the legislative agenda for 2024, and anti-union groups targeting our members. There are immediate steps you should take to protect your hard-earned accruals, so please read the story.

We continued to bring your needs to the forefront by attending this year's Somos conference in Puerto Rico earlier this month, where we had the opportunity to discuss issues that impact all of us with New York politicians and labor leaders. PEF sponsored the Labor Breakfast on Saturday morning and I drove home how important it is that we Fix Tier 6 and Fund Our Future. [Click here to watch a short video clip](#). From the applause, I can tell you, we were heard!

It's never all just talk at Somos though. We also spent a day at the Escuela Santiago Iglesias Pantin school with AFT, raising a basketball hoop, revitalizing their landscape, and designing and painting a mural. PEF members are no strangers to giving back to the community – we do it every day on the job. Check out this issue's [photo gallery](#) for plenty of pictures.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the murder of [PEF member Judi Scanlon](#), a mental health intensive case manager from Buffalo who was killed by a patient while conducting a home visit just two days before Thanksgiving in 1998. A quarter century later, PEF and other advocacy groups representing healthcare workers are still calling for an end to workplace violence. Stay tuned over the coming months as we work toward safer worksites for all.

I wish you all a Thanksgiving filled with restorative time with family and friends and thank you, as always, for being a PEF member.

In Unity,

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

Wayne Spence  
PEF President



# PEF Telephone Town Hall informs members about carried-over accruals, anti-union propaganda, legislative agenda

By NAJEE WALKER

President Wayne Spence and several PEF directors updated members on important updates regarding carried-over vacation accruals, anti-union activity, and PEF's legislative agenda on Nov. 15 during a Telephone Town Hall.

"Let me start with what I believe is the most urgent item," President Spence began. "This could literally be costing our members money, and other unions, like CSEA and NYSCOBA, could be affected as well."

[Click here to listen to the Town Hall](#)

## COVID Accrual Extension denied by the State

At the height of the pandemic, starting in April 2020, and through April 2023 PEF negotiated with the state to allow PEF members to carry over vacation accruals beyond the 40-day April 1 contractual cap.

"These accruals will be forfeited if not used by December 31, 2023," said Director of Contract Administration Debra Greenberg. "This is despite the fact that PEF requested to extend the deadline to April 1, 2024."

The state's insistence on the December 31 deadline means that there are now two different deadlines for use of accruals depending on when members accrued their time.

"Accruals that were carried over above the 40-day cap on April 1, 2023, must be used by December 31, 2023," Greenberg said.

Accruals earned since April 1, 2023 will not be subject to the 40-day cap until April 1, 2024

"As long as accruals were earned on or after April 1, 2023, you can potentially be over the 40-day cap," Greenberg said. "We want people to be clear on this, since some agencies provided misinformation about PEF members losing any accruals over 40 days after December 31, 2023."

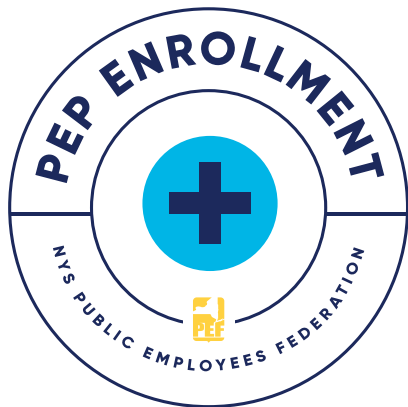
Because there are now only about six weeks left in the year, PEF recommends any member with carried-over leave subject to forfeiture request time off now, even if they think or know that it will be denied.

"You must put in your vacation requests in writing and ask for a response within five days," Greenberg said. "If your supervisor verbally denies the request, be sure to confirm the request in writing. Send them an email and save the denials."

"We don't want to leave any money on the table," Greenberg said. "Five days of accruals is a week's pay, and we will do what we can to try and get that money back for people who were not able to use their accruals and had to forfeit them after December 31, 2023. PEF will be seeking compensation for those denials."

Members who are unsure about their balance of carried over accruals have a few ways to find that information. For agencies using LATS to track their time, there should be a "COVID 20" tracker in the software. Other members should ask their HR or personnel office to provide the balance of their carried over vacation accrual within 48 hours.

For employees in agencies that did not separately track carried over vacation accruals, the balance of these accruals can be estimated. To do this, subtract any vacation accruals charged since April 1, 2023 from your vacation balance as of April 1, 2023. Anything over 40 days is your “carried-over” accrual balance and must be used by December 31, 2023.



### **If you can't or don't want to take time off, consider PEP**

“Members at Salary Grade 24 or under may use vacation accruals and carryovers as a credit to help offset their share of health insurance premiums through the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP),” Greenberg said. “If you are at risk of forfeiting carried-over accruals, please keep the PEP program in mind.”

PEF is in conversation with OER and the Governor’s Office about this issue. Greenberg said that agencies are going to be reviewing and approving requests at the direction of OER and the Governor.

“Once again, please be sure to put in your requests as soon as possible and make sure you keep a record of any denials,” Greenberg said.

### **Fighting Back against Anti-Union Organizations**

PEF has been working to combat anti-union sentiment from organizations like the Freedom Foundation and Opt Out NY for some time now. However, despite the work being done, the influence of these organizations is rising nationwide.

“I received an email not too long before this call from a member asking about an \$800 refund,” President Spence said. “These groups are doing whatever they can to target our members and get them to leave the union.”

PEF Director of Organizing Dan Carpenter said that he and his team are doing as much as possible to educate members.

“Unions have historically been the backbone of the labor force — we were talking about the effect COVID accruals are going to have on other public unions — PEF is fighting for you and for other unions,” Carpenter said. “However, the anti-union movement aims to weaken us and promote misinformation to discourage union membership.”

PEF Organizing is taking that message directly to members in Region 8 for the rest of the year.

“We will be set up at a table in the Empire State Plaza every Wednesday during lunch time to talk to members and employees in the area about PEF, the contract, and other issues,” Carpenter said. “For those who are not in Albany and cannot visit the plaza, please email me — Daniel.Carpenter@pef.org — and we will connect with your leaders and figure out how to provide this education to you and other members.”

Solidarity is the key, Carpenter said. Combating anti-union forces requires a combined effort of education and solidarity by union leaders and members.

“We can preserve the integrity of our unions and continue to fight for the rights and welfare of workers,” Carpenter said. “Please talk to your folks about dangerous communications and we will be sure to connect you with other leaders to have these conversations as well.”

AFT, one of PEF’s parent unions, recently sent a cease-and-desist letter to the Freedom Foundation.

“This is the first time in my history I’ve seen this happen,” President Spence said. “Unions are beginning to work together to combat these groups.”

### **PEF’s Legislative Agenda**

Legislative Director Patrick Lyons spoke about PEF’s priorities for the upcoming New York State legislative session, which officially begins on Jan. 4, 2024.

“As many of you know we are in the middle of an unprecedented staffing shortage,” Lyons said. “Public sector workers logged over 22 million hours of overtime at a cost of \$1.3 billion to the state last year.”

One of PEF’s top priorities is reforming Tier 6, the current rules governing the pension plan for State workers. PEF believes the state must provide a greater incentive to attract and retain new employees. The union urges the State to standardize employee contributions into the pension plan at 3% and end the sliding scale of contribution.

“We have been able to achieve a compensation upgrade through our contract and the New York State budget includes money set aside to conduct a paygrade study,” Lyons said. “Now, we need to do more. We need to end the lag payroll system and not penalize new employees who are waiting for their money.”

PEF continues to support legislation that protect workers in the state’s correctional facilities. Similarly, the union is pushing back on laws that do not hold violent criminals accountable for their actions, like the parole law called “Less is More.”

PEF also has legislative policy and budget requests surrounding the support of the Department of Labor Enforcement Operations— asking for a budget that allows for better enforcement of laws that protect vulnerable, at-risk workers—and requests to address suspensions and closures of OPWDD facilities.

“Over the next few months, you may receive an email asking that you sign a letter or make a phone call,” President Spence said. “I hope that this update provided you with the information needed to understand why it is important for you to sign on.”

**Black Friday at Membership Benefits**

To conclude the Town Hall, PEF Membership Benefits Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley shared with members an upcoming holiday discount.

“MBP is happy to announce that we are having a Black Friday Gift Card Sale beginning Monday, November 20th,” McLean-Beathley said.

The Black Friday Gift Card sale discounts even further the price of eight gift cards: Applebee’s, Ruby Tuesday, Honey Baked Ham, Buffalo Wild Wings, Yankee Candle, Jewelry TV, Arby’s and Burger King.

President Spence wished all members a happy holiday season and thanked them for their service. He promised additional Town Halls whenever they are merited in the New Year.



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# Chowdhury recognized by City & State for leadership on Staten Island

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*City & State* magazine named PEF Executive Board member Mohammed Karim Chowdhury one of its 2023 Staten Island Power 100 honorees.

Chowdhury is co-chair of the PEF Joint Affirmative Action Advisory Committee; a PEF delegate to the New York City Labor Council; and the national secretary of the Alliance of South Asian American Labor (ASAAL), among many other political and labor roles.

His union advocacy goes back to 2001, when he became an active member of NYC Local 371. In 2007, he became an active member in PEF, moving up the ranks to serve as Council Leader for Division 349 from 2019 to 2021.

As co-chair of the Joint Affirmative Action Advisory Committee, Chowdhury helps deal with mounting complaints of discrimination and helps PEF members find appropriate resolutions, including filing grievances. He also serves PEF members as a member of the Statewide Labor Management and Health & Safety committees.

A first-generation immigrant who migrated to the United States in 1997 from Bangladesh, he jumped into organizing South Asian people on Staten Island, initially working with low-income immigrant families, helping them find good jobs and overcome poverty. He inspired many to join the public sector.

Chowdhury is well known in his community for his dedication to helping others.

"I enjoy serving others and take pride in solving issues faced by individuals and families," he said. "I help members of my community in finding jobs, resume preparation and improvement, applying for jobs, job training and educational opportunities.



"I firmly believe organizing working-class Americans and building coalitions among various community groups to voice identified issues affecting the communities can deliver swift results," he said.

# 25 years later, what has changed after the passing of Judi Scanlon?

By NAJEE WALKER

November 24 marks 25 years since Judith “Judi” Scanlon, a PEF member and healthcare professional from Buffalo, was killed by a patient while conducting a home visit just two days before Thanksgiving in 1998.

Scanlon was a mental health intensive case manager. The patient was convicted of second-degree murder, and the tragedy shined a spotlight on the safety of healthcare workers.

A quarter century later, PEF and other advocacy groups representing healthcare workers are still calling for an end to workplace violence.

The gaps in New York State’s treatment of mental health and the safety of healthcare workers were made apparent by Scanlon’s passing. PEF immediately began advocating for increased safety around community mental health workers and legislation to enforce critical safety measures.

PEF called for new policies, equipment, and training to protect healthcare workers and local communities. Kelly Scanlon, Judi’s daughter, urged state lawmakers to act to prevent further tragedies.

PEF introduced “The Judi Scanlon Bill” in 2006. It would have required an employee from the Office of Mental Health to accompany all State health care workers during home visits. Kelly Scanlon joined PEF at a rally supporting the bill in Buffalo on July 24, 2006. Unfortunately, the bill was vetoed by New York Governor George Pataki.

However, that same year the Workplace Violence Prevention Bill, which requires public employers with more than 20 employees to assess risk and develop action plans to prevent potential violence, passed with the help of PEF’s advocacy.

Today, two-and-a-half decades later, PEF continues to advocate on behalf of healthcare workers who are too often put at risk due to short staffing and decades of disinvestment at stage agencies. This year, [PEF lobbied legislators to improve the working conditions for social workers](#).

On this anniversary, PEF remembers Judi Scanlon and remains committed to preventing tragedies at the workplace. PEF Region 1 has honored Scanlon every year since her passing by offering scholarships to dependents of PEF members in Western New York who are pursuing higher education.

The scholarship carries Judi Scanlon’s work and legacy into the future and gives the children of PEF members support while they are enrolled in nursing, social work or other healthcare-related programs.

“We have raised tens of thousands of dollars since the start of the Region 1 Judi Scanlon Scholarship fund,” said Region 1 coordinator Michele Iorfida. Iorfida said that the region has raised \$10,000 in scholarship money since 2018 alone, when she became regional coordinator.

Members who wish to get more involved in local health and safety issues in their regions should contact [HealthandSafety@pef.org](mailto:HealthandSafety@pef.org).

Buffalo News, November 26, 1998

## Lawyers draw disparate profiles of murder

defendant  
By MATT GRITTA  
News Staff Reporter

Diane Wylie was portrayed as both a cold-blooded killer and as a woman so emotionally disturbed she could not control her actions, as testimony in her murder trial began in Erie County Court.

Wylie, 40, was charged with second-degree murder in the 1996 blood-gone death of psychiatric nurse Judith Scanlon, 44. Her trial before Judge Sheila A. DiTullio is scheduled to resume Monday.

Wylie has been in jail since shortly after she called 911 about the incident. If she is convicted, she faces a prison term of 23 to 23 1/2 years to life.

Earlier this week, she decided to fight her right to a jury trial, instead choosing to let DiTullio decide her guilt or innocence.

In line with that decision came a change in defense strategy, her lawyers, Michael Chertsey and Bonnie A. McLaughlin, dropped their insanity defense this week and now contend Wylie was unable to deal rationally with what was occurring the day of the killing.

If DiTullio agrees with that argument, she must find Wylie guilty of first-degree manslaughter, which carries a prison term of up to 25 years.

Taking the stand as a prosecution witness Thursday, Wylie's husband, Raymond, said his wife seemed to be very nervous she told him she had killed Scanlon's patients earlier.

Raymond Wylie, 42, testified that his estranged wife came to his Richmond Avenue home sometime after 12:30 p.m. Nov. 24, 1998, and said she thought she had killed Scanlon in her West Ferry Avenue flat. She said "she was very sorry for what she did," he testified.

Raymond Wylie said he met his wife in a psychiatric inpatient program for schizophrenia. He said they lived together for three years and their fights prompted him to move, but he said she would regu-



Diane Wylie is escorted into county court Thursday, where she is on trial for second-degree murder in the death of a social worker.

larly come to his flat for coffee and cigarettes and always brought their daughter, Chase.

"I don't have the right to see this but I just hope for all the best for my wife, I really do," Wylie said as he was completing his testimony.

Also Thursday, Robert McIninch, Scanlon's supervisor, said that the day before the murder, Scanlon had complained to him about Wylie's growing skills. He said Scanlon didn't find Wylie abusive or neglectful of her duties, but felt she needed professional counseling.

Also Thursday, prosecutors played the tape of Wylie's 90 call. In it, she said she just saw a woman through the window of a house, bleeding, but said she did not know who the woman was.

In opening statements, Chertsey said Wylie was emotionally out of control at the thought of losing her 4-year-old daughter to the government. Scanlon, a Buffalo member of the union and a case manager for New Orleans Erie County Seniors Care Management Services of Buffalo Psychiatric Center,

had come to Wylie's home the day of the slaying to discuss a possible foster care situation for Wylie's remaining child.

Wylie had already lost two of her other children; one apparently ran away from home, the other was removed by Hawaiian authorities after Wylie was arrested in connection with a series of bank robberies there, her lawyers have said.

"However unreasonable" her actions might seem to others, Chertsey asked DiTullio to consider how Wylie felt about the possible loss of her remaining child, warning his client "lacked the intent" to willingly commit a crime.

Prosecutor Frank A. Sedita III said the judge will judge Wylie planned to kill Scanlon because she "vacated" her interview in her life. Sedita told the judge Wylie "showed no mercy" to the un-supposed Scanlon, blood-gone her 13 times on the head, face and nose with a hammer, stuffing her face twice and stabbing her in the chest before the cadaver cleaned up, changed her bloody clothing and tried to get her out instead of to let her die.

[Click here for full story.](#)





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Photo credit: NYS Department of Labor

# Members at DOL giving youth a Career JUMPSTART

By KATE STICKLES

Today's youth will be tomorrow's leaders.

PEF members at the Department of Labor (DOL) are preparing youth for the transition from school to work through a pilot program called Career JUMPSTART.

## Pilot launched in 2021

Over the course of 12 days in the summer of 2021, 128 students spread across six faith-based organizations in New York City learned everything from dressing for an interview to creating a resume.

"It was a perfect trust triangle," said Juie Deo, a workforce program specialist with DOL, who participated in the pilot program. "We had the organizations that could bring in the youth and young adults into one place. They did all the groundwork there. On the labor side, we were able to begin working with them and training them to seek autonomy and independence."

Deo, a PEF member for more than a decade, said the youth learned a variety of skills, including career development and readiness, but there was also a "community and me" angle.

"The youth really care about those things," Deo said. "There was a lot of peer teambuilding aspects, and some locations were able to travel for tours to other locations. At the end, the programs culminated in some sort of project or celebration to demonstrate the skills they learned."

Michelle Cortes, a supervising labor services representative and 11-year PEF member, also had the opportunity in 2021 to work with some of the participants on site.

"I really enjoyed interacting with the youth," she said. "They are very enthusiastic and thrilled to be there. I was really surprised; they attended every single day, and they were engaged and enjoyed every minute of it."



Cortes said her group held roundtable discussions, created art projects and mock businesses that they would love to start, went over interview skills and how to present yourself to an employer, and learned how to write a resume for people without work experience, among other things.

"We also went over their digital footprint," Cortes said. "How social media can impact employability, how they need to be careful what they post and lock down their accounts."

The groups ranged from freshmen to high school seniors and when school restarted, many of those participants went right to their offices to ask for working papers or began volunteering in their communities.

"I walked away feeling very fulfilled," Cortes said. "Feeling that the work we are doing is really making an impact."

Working with often diverse groups, she recalled a special moment that showed the trust between the adults and youth.

"The kids were very into pronouns, and I brought pronoun pins," Cortes recalled. "One of the students was trans and they were concerned about using the bathroom in the church, whether they would get in trouble for using their preferred bathroom. Just having that pin made them feel like they could come to me and ask me that."



"That made me feel great, that they felt they could trust me," Cortes said. "It felt good to have that conversation with someone you just met, and it was empowering for them and for me."

Deo said there was a synergy between the community organizations and the state.

"I didn't know our community cared that much," she said. "People were coming in as speakers, there was amazing food, some sports celebrities came and spoke, all different places in the community were coming, speaking, and sharing. That's meaningful for the young adults. They felt like the adults were coming together for their future."

One speaker was formerly incarcerated and had a unique view to share with the youth.

"They came in to speak to the youth about how easy it is to fall down the wrong path," Cortes said. "They told them to take advantage of all the resources available to keep them on the right path. It was an emotional testimony and I think it really impacted them. We didn't just show them job readiness, we also brought a speaker that gave them the flip side of this. It opened their eyes, and they had a lot of questions."

#### Where does it go from here?

The modules used in the 2021 pilot program are now ready for other community groups to put to use in their towns, villages, and cities.

"We are hoping to encourage people to use the module lessons," Deo said. "They have been tested in so many ways and they are now out there for groups to use."

In a press release this summer, DOL Commissioner Roberta Reardon said: "Young New Yorkers will be the inheritors of our economic future. These career development modules and activities can inspire students to start exploring careers and set young New Yorkers up for a successful future in our workforce."

Those interested in integrating the modules and activities in their youth and young adult programs can complete [this online form](#) to download the toolkit. Questions can be submitted to [YouthTeam@labor.ny.gov](mailto:YouthTeam@labor.ny.gov).

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# the PEF pulse

## Introducing the PEF Pulse!

With our busy schedules, time is valuable. That's why we have reimagined the way we share important news and union updates with our members. PEF Pulse will bring you "breaking news" or important information that can't wait for the next full issue of The Communicator, which will still be delivered to your in-box 10 times each year and can always be read at [Communicator.PEF.org](http://Communicator.PEF.org).

When a benefit enrollment period begins or new union leaders are elected, PEF Pulse will let you know. If a major union event occurs before we publish The Communicator, PEF Pulse will share it with you.

We are always looking for feedback, so please be in touch at [Communicator@pef.org](mailto:Communicator@pef.org). If you have an idea for a story, know someone who deserves or received recognition for their work, or hear about a member making a difference in their community, give PEF Editor Kate Stickle a call or send an email to [Communicator@pef.org](mailto:Communicator@pef.org).

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Sign up today at [pef.org/emailme](https://pef.org/emailme)

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# UAW's recent strike harkened back to 1945

By **NAJEE WALKER**

On November 21, 1945, the United Automobile Workers (UAW) organized 320,000 workers over 96 plants across the nation in a strike against General Motors (GM). The union demanded wage increases of 30 percent and a hold on product prices. The strike lasted 113 days — the longest ever action against a major manufacturer for the UAW and the longest national GM strike in its history.

The strike started almost as soon as World War II ended. Unions made a promise to not strike during the war, but when Germany and Japan surrendered, auto companies slowed production and raised prices to make up for their lost government contracts.

The post-war strike was led by Walter Reuther, director of the UAW's General Motors Department and the coordinator for union relations with General Motors. Under Reuther's leadership, the union put pressure on GM's manufacturing plants by striking at plants across the country "one-at-a-time," until all were striking at once.

Even before the strike began, Reuther held the idea that due to corporate greed, Americans could not afford to purchase goods and there would be limited investment in infrastructure and rebuilding communities.

"It is my determined belief that there can be no permanent prosperity so long as the controls of production remain in the hands of a privileged minority," said Reuther.

The targeted UAW strikes at the Big Three automakers that ended on Oct. 30, 2023, were similar to Reuther's blueprint 78 years ago. UAW and Reuther believed that with technological advancements coming to the production line, corporations would begin to maximize profits while cutting jobs, driving up prices as a result.

The 2023 UAW strike, led by President Shawn Fain, took the fight to Ford and Stellantis (Crysler) as well as GM. Fain, much like Reuther before him, held similar ideas about the UAW and corporate automakers.

"As companies kept making more and more money, and workers weren't seeing anything get better, obviously it drove workers to not be happy with what's going on," Fain said in an interview with *The Intercept*.

UAW's demands this year were similar to the 1945 strike: Workers wanted better wages to offset higher prices, an end to the underpayment of new employees, and protections against plant closures, especially as technology changes the way plant employees work with new machinery geared for electric vehicle production.

UAW also employed a "rolling strike" strategy again, starting with workers walking off the assembly line at Ford's Michigan plant in Wayne, Michigan, then Stellantis employees in Toledo, Ohio, followed by GM workers in Wentzville, Missouri. At the height of the strike, over 45,000 UAW workers from 46 plants were walking picket lines.

The result of the labor actions in both 1945 and 2023 amounted to an overall positive for auto workers. In 1945, UAW secured a 17.5 percent hourly wage increase, but not the ability to set product pricing. This year, the tentative 4.5-year agreement, lasting through to April 30, 2028, includes wage increases of 25 percent, but union negotiators did not achieve the 32-hour workweek they wanted. As of November 20, 2023, the new contract has been ratified by the membership.





# Remembering Ed Swierkowski, 1952-2023

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Former PEF Executive Board member and Council Leader Ed Swierkowski passed away Nov. 5, 2023, on Long Island, surrounded by family. He represented members of Division 200 at the Department of Labor (DOL).

Swierkowski, 70, of Merrick, leaves behind his wife Jeanne; children Lisa and Lynn (Chris) Dinger; and grandchildren Ryan, Brianna, and Avery, among many other relatives and friends.

Executive Board member Scarlett Ahmed was elected to the board at the same time as Swierkowski in 2015, both representing DOL members downstate. They often rode to Albany together for meetings.

"We had many wonderful, hilarious talks and meals during our long trips back and forth," she said. During one trip upstate, Ahmed recalls learning her husband was in the hospital and how Swierkowski was ready to drop everything and bring her home. "He offered to drive me all the way back to the city, through a snowstorm, to get me home. That's a demonstration of how kind Ed was, to everyone."

As a union leader, Ahmed said he was always accessible.

"He was an old-school rank-and-file union leader who believed in showing up in person to local offices as much as possible to talk to members and local managers to try to solve problems before they got worse," she said. "He was friendly, funny, and quite possibly the kindest person I've ever met. Rest in power and peace, my union brother."

Fellow Long Island member and now PEF Nurse Organizer Nora Higgins also has fond memories of her interactions with Swierkowski.

"I met Ed when I became the regional coordinator (for Region 12) in 2015," she said. "He had already been a council leader and involved in the regional PAC. He would consistently show up early to help get things set up at meetings. He would only leave if everything was cleaned up and put away. Ed was the kind of person that would do anything for anybody, even if it meant the shirt off his back. Ed was a great and kind man who will be missed and remembered."

[View Ed Swierkowski's online obituary page here.](#)

# PEF urges oversight and caution when it comes to use of Artificial Intelligence in the State workforce

By **NAJEE WALKER**

PEF Executive Board members Christopher Ford and Prakash Lal testified on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the state workforce before the State Assembly's Standing Committees on Labor and Science & Technology on October 19. Both are longtime PEF members at the Office of Information Technology Services (ITS).

"AI has and will affect everyone's lives and livelihood and has and will continue to have a profound impact on our members and the services they provide to the State of New York," said Ford. "As the use of AI expands exponentially across all platforms, there are no regulations or unified protocols or practices for entities that develop, distribute or use these systems.

"In our written testimony, you will find recommendations that our union has developed to ensure that the continued development of and deployment of AI is responsible and ethical by developers and users—including the State," Ford said.

AI works based on the information given to it, which informs how it processes that information and what information is given back to a user. Accordingly, PEF recommends complete transparency when it comes to the data AI uses to power its algorithms. PEF also recommends that the testing and oversight of AI be ongoing, especially to protect data privacy, security, and copyright.

PEF reminded lawmakers that the explosive growth of AI will have real-world impacts.

"The continued development of AI will have a major impact on workers as both public and private sector employers are using AI systems to perform tasks that were once performed by actual people," said Lal. "We need to protect workers from losing their jobs to AI systems. We need to ensure that workers impacted by the development of AI have access to upskill or reskill training for other positions. AI should inform and assist in service delivery, not displace them."

Some of the assembly members asked Ford and Lal what exactly that training might look like and what, if anything, New York is already doing.

"At present, New York State doesn't have an AI inventory," Lal said. "We do not know where AI is being used in the state, so we do not know of training being provided at the moment."

"Additionally, we should never substitute humans with AI systems around eligibility for public assistance, mental health referrals, substance abuse treatment, or any other human service need," Lal said. "What we cannot afford, after a decade of hiring freezes and

job cuts, is anything that would further erode the State's safety net services."

## AI's Role in the Workplace

Ford and Lal both stressed that while AI is not new, especially at ITS, it is rapidly changing how workers do their jobs, how those who use state services interact with the state, and how employers hire and attract workers.

"We've always had search engines, we've always had surveillance in the workplace, we've always had time keeping systems," Ford said. "The application of AI allows for faster decision making based on that data, it does not necessarily allow for more accurate or ethical use of that data in making those decisions."

Ford, and the members he represents, are mostly seeing AI augment their work, instead of replacing workers outright, but that doesn't mean it isn't happening elsewhere or that members in his unit couldn't be replaced in the future.

"I would say that much of the workforce over time would face the need for reskilling or upskilling," Ford said. "I would also say that newer members entering the workforce, you hear all the time that they like to change what they do, jump jobs, try new things. I have hope that they will adapt quicker than those of us who are already in the workforce."

Ford and Lal offered examples of how AI has helped the State workforce, with call centers implementing chatbots to help with queues and handling concerns in an orderly fashion. Their concern lies with decision making. AI should not be relied upon to make determinations regarding public goods and services.

"Where I see great risk is with the service providers," Ford said. "Things like Department of Labor unemployment insurance decisions, social work, making decisions for parolees."

The 2023-2026 PS&T contract includes a side letter establishing a joint committee with the state to continue discussions about AI in the workplace. PEF also recommended in its written testimony that New York establish a task force to determine how the state uses automated decision systems (ADS) or algorithms.

To read PEF's full submitted written testimony, [click here](#). To watch the testimony delivered by Ford and Lal, [click here](#).

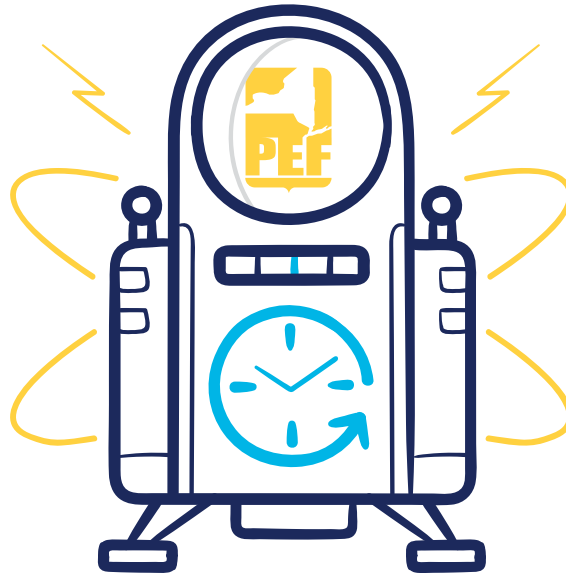




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# PEF Blast from the Past: Big Labor-Management Win at Prisons in 1986

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*Editor's Note: In a new feature, we will look back at significant PEF achievements since the union's formation in 1979.*

PEF members are no strangers to out-of-title work and they often look to their union for resolution. That's what members at the then-Department of Correctional Services did through the labor-management process in 1986, when professional staff at state prisons were being forced to mop, haul garbage, and perform other out-of-title work during scheduled lockdowns.

The agreement was a significant victory for the L-M team and resolved a years-long problem in the prison system.

Then-PEF President Rand Condell said: "This is PEF at its best. This agreement dramatically increases the respect and recognition the state has for our union."

Condell himself was a former prison teacher who lugged garbage during lockdowns at Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Comstock.

We've reprinted the original on the next page. Please reach out to [Communicator@pef.org](mailto:Communicator@pef.org) if you would like to suggest a possible feature from the past.





# COMMUNICATOR

The Official Publication of the New York State Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO

VOLUME 3, NO. 5

(ISSN 0743-6514)

November/December, 1986

## "Milestone" Accord

### Prison Pact Ends Out-Of-Title Work For Professionals

By Ronald Kruman  
Editor

Employees working in a prison with a budget problem will no longer be asked to perform out-of-title work during scheduled lock-downs as part of a major labor-management pact hammered out with the state prison.

The agreement is a milestone in working conditions for the Correctional Management. It also provides a fighting platform for a problem which has plagued PEF members working in prisons for years.

After six years of trying to change the out-of-title work practice, PEF's Executive Director Robert Alexander signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Thomas Caughlin in mid-October.

About 2,000 PEF members in various positions, such as teachers, nurses, and chaplains are affected by the agreement.

This is PEF's first labor-management President Ronald Landell. "This agreement dramatically increases the respect and recognition for the job of our members," added Landell. "It also guarantees that our members will not be asked to perform out-of-title work during scheduled lock-downs at the State Maximum Correctional Facility in Dannemora."

Alexander, who assumed the chairmanship of the



**CORRECTIONS BREAKTHROUGH** — Members of PEF's labor-management team for Corrections recently celebrated the signing of a pact which stops the practice of out-of-title work during scheduled prison lock-downs. State Department of Correctional Services Commissioner Thomas Caughlin, seated on right, signs the agreement while Robert Alexander, center, chair of the L/M committee, looks on. Also seated is Joe Lewis. Standing from left to right, are committee members Mike Valentin, Dick Collins, Mervyn Marcus, Sally Kellern, Bill Pappano, Peter White, David Green, Doug Allan and Mike Corbett.

Department of Correctional Services called the pact a "milestone."

"It's been so frustrating and demanding for our people — professionals — who were forced to do out-of-title jobs during out-of-title work," Alexander said. "This is a historic event."

Specifically, the agreement prohibits PSEF employees to perform their regular jobs and regular activities during non-emergency shutdowns, such as scheduled risks and maintenance operations.

During scheduled shutdowns, the department will notify PEF at least 48 hours before the start of the department plans to assign PSEF members according to the terms.

PEF and department officials will determine ways to resolve outstanding more important to either party.

Previously, PEF members were ordered by prison administrators to perform jobs such as mopping.

(Continued on Page 14)

## Corrections Agreement . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Employees will be asked to perform out-of-title work during the crisis.

The agreement will work to resolve out-of-title work during scheduled lock-downs.

David Lewis, who heads the L/M team before Alexander's resignation, said the agreement is a "milestone" and a "historic event."

Alexander's resignation came after Alexander signed the agreement in October 1985. He said the agreement is a "milestone" and a "historic event."

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PEF would give Caughlin an agreement which will be a "milestone" and a "historic event."

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Management officials are joining the fight to change the terms and working conditions for out-of-title work. "We're not going to let this go," said Landell.

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Parole Officer and Executive Board member Catherine Adams

## Feeding veterans in need

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Parole Officer and Executive Board member Catherine Adams spent the day November 18 volunteering at a food pantry in Brooklyn, helping to feed veterans in need.

Adams said she heard about the call for volunteers from a Facebook post by PEF Vice President Darlene Williams.

“This particular pantry is near my home, and I wanted to assist as a PEF member, so I went,” she said. “It’s been a while since I have been able to do this and it was the perfect time.”

# SPECIAL ELECTION

## Board gains four new members following Special Election; one contested seat goes to balloting

By KATE STICKLES

Four new Executive Board members were seated following the October 2023 Special Election.

For the term of office until July 31, 2024, Matthew Fagan will fill Seat 10 (DFS); Mario Chiarello will fill Seat 172 (ITS); Patricia Trowbridge will fill Seat 395 (OPWDD); and Ross Dorsey will fill Seat 430 (OCFS).

The race for Seat 310 (OMH) was contested. Ballots will be mailed on Nov. 21, 2023, by AAA and must be returned to the address listed on the return envelope no later than 5 p.m. Dec. 13, 2023. Return in this case means, in hand, not date mailed or postmarked.

Ballots will be counted on Dec. 14, 2023. If you would like to observe the count, please email [SpecialElections@pef.org](mailto:SpecialElections@pef.org) for information.

“Our Executive Board makes important decisions on behalf of our members, and we are determined to fill every seat so as many members as possible have representation,” President Wayne Spence said.

There will be no further Special Election cycles until after the 2024 Regular Election. Special Election cycles will resume October 2024 for any seats not filled during the Regular Election.

Visit [www.pef.org/elections](http://www.pef.org/elections) for information on petitioning, elections, and duties of elected leaders.



# 2024 Joseph Scacalossi Scholarship applications now available

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Each year, PEF awards 10 scholarships valued at \$1,000 for four years to students from union families through the Joseph Scacalossi Scholarship. The scholarship is available to children, stepchildren or wards of active PEF members, retirees, or deceased members.

The program is open to high school seniors and college freshman. Applications can be downloaded from the [PEF website](#). The application deadline is March 15, 2024.

Union leaders who want to share information about PEF regional or divisional scholarships should email [Communicator@pef.org](mailto:Communicator@pef.org) with details and they can also be posted on the website.

# Flex spending accounts for PEF members now open for enrollment

By KATE STICKLES

The 2024 open enrollment period for Dependent Care Advantage Accounts (DCCA), Health Care Spending Accounts (HCSA), and Adoption Advantage Accounts runs from November 1 to December 11, 2023.

These flexible spending accounts are state employee benefits that allow payment for certain expenses with pre-tax dollars.

## HCSA

This account lets you set aside any amount from \$100 up to the maximum contribution of \$3,200 for the 2024 plan year to pay for health care expenses that are not reimbursed by health insurance or another benefit plan. Only medically necessary medical, hospital, dental, vision, hearing, and prescription medications for you, your spouse, and eligible dependents can be reimbursed or paid for by your HCSA. The account provides carryover, allowing you to use the remaining balance, up to a maximum of \$610, from your 2023 account toward eligible expenses in 2024.

## DCAA

This account allows you to set aside pre-tax money up to \$5,000 or \$2,500, based on your tax filing status, to pay for eligible childcare, elder care, or disabled dependent care expenses while you are at work. Eligible employees can enroll without setting aside their own money and still be eligible to receive the contractual employer contribution.

If you file Married Filing Jointly, the IRS \$5,000 maximum contribution rule is applied. If both you and your spouse participate in a DCAA, the total household contribution is limited to \$5,000. If you file Head of Household, the maximum contribution is \$5,000.

If you or your spouse earn less than \$5,000 annually, you cannot put more money into the account than your income or your spouse's income — whichever is less. If you file Married Filing Separately, the IRS limits contributions to \$2,500 and if you file Single, the limit is \$2,500.

The program provides a grace period of two-and-a-half months, or until March 15, 2024, to incur expenses that can be reimbursed from your 2023 balance.

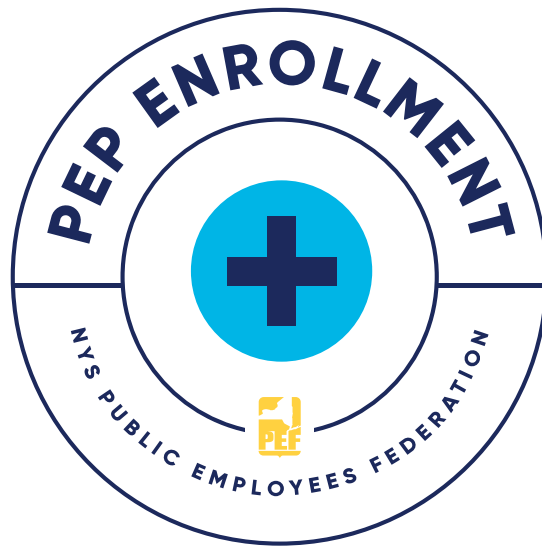
"PEF successfully negotiated for the state to increase its employer contribution level by \$200 per participating employee, starting in 2023, and this increase continues for the 2024 program year," President Wayne Spence said. "Amid high inflation, every penny saved counts."

## Adoption Advantage Account

This account allows you to pay for expenses related to the adoption of an eligible child with pre-tax dollars, up to a maximum of \$16,810.

[Click here to access the PEF memo](#) on these flex spending accounts. You can view full plan details [here](#). Enroll [online](#), by telephone at (800) 358-7202, or by scanning the QR code on the memo. You will need your NYS EMPLID number, located on your paystub, to enroll.





# Productivity Enhancement Program now accepting enrollment

By **NAJEE WALKER**

The 2024 Open enrollment for the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP) has begun and will run through December 11, 2023.

PEF allows PEF members to exchange accrued annual leave or personal leave in return for a biweekly credit that reduces an employee's share of the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) premium.

For 2024, employees at salary grade 17 and below can use additional days to receive a credit up to \$1,600. Employees in grades 18-24 are allowed a credit up to \$1,500. For the Teacher's PEP, the same salary grade restrictions apply. Teachers are also able to use floating holidays and compensatory days (if applicable) for PEP as well.

Additionally, both the PEP benefit and the Teacher's PEP benefit no longer expire at the end of the PS&T 2023-2026 contract. Your agency's attendance and leave office must first review your eligibility, prior to forwarding to the agency Health Benefit Administrator (HBA) for entry into NYBEAS.

Agencies must coordinate with the personnel office and the Health Benefit Administrator (HBA) to distribute and retain all enrollment forms. Agencies also are responsible for certifying the accrual adjustments and initiating the credit on the New York Benefits Eligibility and Accounting System (NYBEAS).

The 2024 PEP credit begins with the first health insurance premium deduction in 2024. Credits for part-time employees will be prorated based upon payroll percentage. PEP credits will never exceed the employee's biweekly NYSHIP premium.

# Vincent Cicatello is passionate about his work in healthcare and for PEF

By **NORA HIGGINS, PEF Statewide Nurse Organizer**

When asked, “**Who is Vincent Cicatello,**” he immediately answered that he is the “PEF Council Leader of Buffalo Psychiatric Center, I serve on the PEF Executive Board in Seat 260, newly appointed as Co-chair of the PEF Statewide Nurses Committee, and was most recently a member of the 2023 PEF Contract Team.”

When asked **what title he works in for New York state,** he responded that he is an “RN2 Community Mental Health Nurse and a Skilled Nursing Facility Liaison.”

**When did he become involved in this career,** was my next question. Vincent recalled that there had been a western New York revitalization in 1999, which led him to Buffalo Psych. He began as a CSEA member employed as a therapy aide. He reminisced that he was intrigued by observing how the RNs ran the unit and thought that he could do that job, too.

So off he went at the age of 30 to Erie Community College with financial assistance from CSEA and acquired his associate degree in nursing. Six years later, Vincent applied to the Nursing Development Program (NDP), where he became the program’s first recipient from Buffalo. With the help of PEF and the NDP, Vincent earned his bachelor’s in nursing from Daemen University.

## **What or who has impacted your career in Nursing?**

The pandemic was a very difficult time for healthcare workers. The pandemic magnified the need for nurses, and now we have the opportunity to continue to make improvements. We still have quite a long way to go in creating and maintaining adequate staffing and a workplace free of violence and bullying.

## **What advice do you have for those considering or just beginning a career in nursing?**

I would say that you should make sure your heart is in it. If you want to make a difference, then your heart is in the right place. If you are just going into nursing for what’s in your wallet, that’s not going to work out.



Vincent Cicatello addresses the chair at the 2023 PEF Convention in Syracuse.

## **Any final thoughts?**

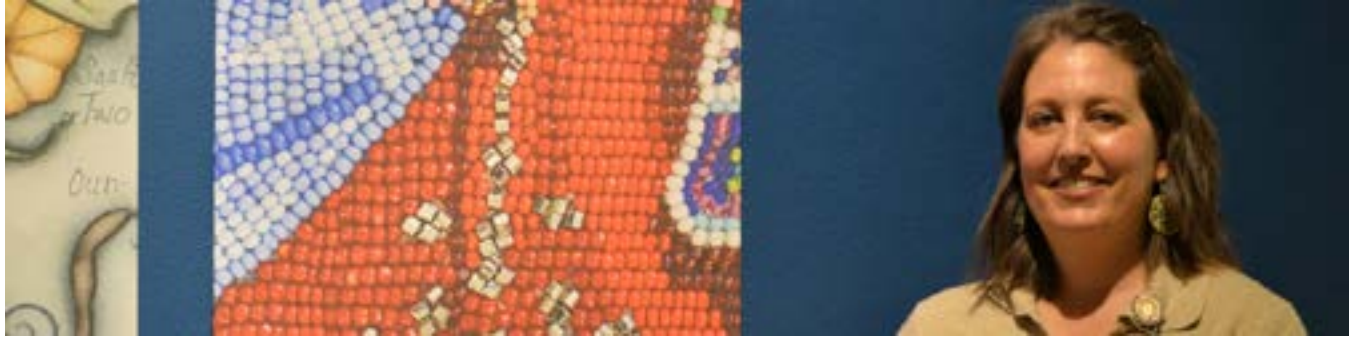
I have to give a shout out to President Spence for all he did through the pandemic in defending members’ rights and access to PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). President Spence helped to demonstrate the value and worth of nurses and Nurse Practitioners with the recent salary grade reallocation, and geographic pay increases to many of the titles.

## **On a personal note:**

Vincent’s son, Vi, just turned 27 on October 2 and was diagnosed at 6 months of age with SCID (Severe combined immunodeficiency). He is currently undergoing treatment at Sloan Kettering in New York City for his fourth bone marrow transplant and will need hospitalization for the next few months. There is a [GoFundMe page](#) for those interested in helping the family with their financial burden.







PEF Member Dr. Gwendolyn Saul.

# PEF member at New York State Museum curates indigenous art and inspiration

By **NAJEE WALKER**

One of the largest curations of indigenous art from across New York State is now being featured at the New York State Museum. Each One Inspired: Indigenous Art Across the Homelands looks at the sources of inspiration for Indigenous artists from across the state. This is the third time this collection has been put together, and the current iteration is the largest so far. "It opened at Syracuse University in 2021, where it was specifically just Haudenosaunee art in our collection, then it traveled to St. Lawrence University, and then we had an opportunity to have it here," said Dr. Gwendolyn Saul.

Saul, a PEF member with the title "Museum Scientist 3," curated the exhibit. She has worked at the museum since 2016. Before that, she worked and lived in the southwest and did her graduate work at the University of Mexico. While there, she spent her time working at the Maxwell Museum of Anthropology and working with Diné (Navajo) communities on different projects.

An exhibit of this size typically takes three to nine months to prepare for public view, according to Saul. But because the museum and Saul already had many pieces in their collection, enough of the groundwork was done to help get this show up and ready in just three and a half months.

"When I originally came up with the concept, it was during the pandemic. I was thinking about what kinds of inspiration we were holding on to during this time," Saul said. "I would come into the museum to check on the collection and think about the artwork and the artists that we represent, and I really wanted to share that inspiration with people."

The theme of the show is all about inspiration, but also takes the time to explore connections to land, community, ancestry, history and even connections to current events and issues as well.

One piece, a pottery design by Natasha Smoke Santiago, is dedicated to and commemorates the water protectors at Standing Rock. Another piece, a corn husk installation piece by Erin Lee Antonak titled "Mom," is both a tribute to the artist's mother and to the tradition of Haudenosaunee people using corn husks in multiple ways (shoes, dolls, salt bottles) for generations.

The exhibit documents only personal stories of struggle, triumph, and celebration, while drawing from shared cultures and traditions and looking to the future.

Saul worked closely with many artists and got to know them and their work intimately while collecting pieces for the museum. She has been incredibly impressed by bead work artists, who take small glass beads and design intricate pieces for clothes, bags, and more.

"The more I got to know people and read up on the history and scholarship of beadwork, the more I became impressed with it," Saul said. "It tells a story of community, resilience, and determination. For so long, bead workers were relying on what they sold at Niagara Falls and Saratoga Springs to put food on the table."

For as much joy as this exhibit brings to Saul, the one thing that she admittedly does not enjoy is the amount of paperwork required for the State to purchase artwork. Private museums can grow their collections much faster without all the bureaucracy.

"In some ways, that is to our advantage, because you really have to have a relationship and agreement with the artists," Saul said. "It's a challenge, but it's also a good thing."

Each One Inspired: Indigenous Art Across the Homelands is a free exhibit available for public viewing in the West Gallery at the New York State Museum. The Museum is open Tuesday through Sunday, except on state-observed holidays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

[Click here to visit the website and learn more.](#)





## Are you interested in a career with PEF?

The New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) is a diverse and powerful labor union committed to creating a better working life for its members. PEF staff work in various departments in collaboration with PEF's elected union leadership to serve 50,000 members employed in professional, scientific, and technical titles across the State. Some of PEF's departments include: Communications, Contract Administration, Field Services, Finance, Health & Safety, Legal, Legislative and Organizing. If you believe in workers' rights, justice and equality, then a career in the labor movement may be right for you. To see what opportunities are available at PEF, please visit our [Careers Page](#).



# When it comes to Medicare, if it sounds too good to be true...

Do you ever wonder why there are so many ads, mailings, and solicitations for Medicare Advantage Plans? The for-profit private insurance industry spends a lot of money on promoting private for-profit Medicare plans. My recommendation to retirees is to join traditional Medicare and keep your employer-sponsored NYSHIP Supplemental plan which covers what Medicare doesn't.

I came upon the article below in my Sunday newspaper, which runs a weekly "[Savvy Senior](#)" column written by Jim Miller. I'm sharing it because it does a good job of explaining Medicare Advantage plans.

**Q:** I'm currently enrolled in original Medicare but have been thinking about switching to a Medicare Advantage plan during the open enrollment period. Many of the Medicare Advantage ads I've seen offer lots of extra benefits beyond what traditional Medicare offers and no monthly premiums. What are your thoughts?

**A:** Be very leery of the Medicare Advantage ads on TV, radio, social media, and that come in the mail. While many of these ads may tout free vision, hearing, dental and other benefits with zero monthly premiums, they aren't always what they claim to be.

### Advantage basics

Medicare Advantage or MA plans (also known as Medicare Part C) are government-approved health plans sold by private insurance companies that you can choose in place of original Medicare. The vast majority of Advantage plans are managed-care policies such as HMOs or PPOs that require you to get your care within a network of doctors in a geographic area.

MA plans have exploded in popularity in recent years as insurers have flooded the airways with advertisements, often by celebrity pitchmen, that promote low-cost options with lots of extra benefits.

But be aware that the federal government has deemed many claims in MA ads fraudulent and misleading. Some ads imply the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services endorses or prefers a specific plan. Others promise more cost savings than you really get. And if you choose the wrong plan, your doctor may not be a member of that plan's network, or you may end up paying out-of-pocket. This past September, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began cracking down on these ads, but you still need to practice self-defense.

### Cover your needs

When evaluating MA plans, make sure the ones you're considering cover the doctors you like and the health care facilities you normally go to. Also, make sure all of the prescription medications you take are on the drug plan's formulary.



To help you compare plans, a good first step is to call the office managers of the doctors you use and find out which Advantage plans they accept, and which ones they recommend. Then go to the [Medicare Plan Finder tool](#) to compare plans in your area.

### Understand the details

Some MA plans promote no monthly premiums, but the reality is that you are still responsible for your original Medicare costs including your Part B premium and deductibles and copays for covered services. Moreover, you may have to pay more out of pocket if you see a doctor outside the network. Also, if the plan is an HMO, it generally doesn't cover non-emergency care out of network, so an individual may be responsible for full costs. A PPO on the other hand, allows people to go out of network, but they generally have to pay more to do so. Many MA plans tout free vision, hearing and dental benefits that are not covered by traditional Medicare, but these benefits are often limited. For example, a plan that offers free dental coverage may cover only cleanings and x-rays. Extensive procedures such as root canals or caps may not be covered, or the plan may limit the dollar amount it pays.

### Get help

Reach out to your local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) at [ShipHelp.org](#) or call 877-839-2775. These are nonprofit programs that provide unbiased one-on-one Medicare counseling and assistance.

You can also report any misleading MA claims to the Senior Medicare Patrol Resource Center at [SMPResource.org](#) or by calling 800-447-8477."



## Letters to the Editor

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Sending letters to the editor is a powerful way for members to get answers to their questions, express their opinions, and contribute to public discourse. They can raise awareness, spark dialogue, and influence public opinion on various issues.

**We want to hear from you!**

Send your letters to to [thecomunicator@pef.org](mailto:thecomunicator@pef.org). Please include your name and location. Letters may be published in upcoming issues of *the Communicator*.



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## Leave donations:

# Ailing members need your leave donations

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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.

LaShon Boyd is an habilitation specialist 1 at the Metro Developmental Disabilities Services Office in Manhattan.

Gloria Broadbent is an instructor at the School for the Deaf in Rome.

Rhonda Carroll-Eldridge is a dairy products specialist 1 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets in Steuben County.

Brian Cellery is an information technology specialist 3 at the Office of Information Technology Services in Albany.

Megan Dolan is a vulnerable persons protection specialist 2 at the Justice Center in Delmar.

Kimberly Ernst-Harris is a supervising offender rehabilitation coordinator at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision central office in Albany.

Heather Farthing is a registered nurse 2 at Capital District Psychiatric Center in Albany.

Sally Fontana is social work supervisor 1, LCSW at Mohawk Valley Psychiatric Center in Utica.

Cherie Griffin is a taxpayer services specialist 2 at the state Department of Taxation and Finance in Albany.

Rishona Haynes is a registered nurse 1 at SUNY Stony Brook on Long Island.

Drina Holden is a senior certification analyst at the state Department of Economic Development in Manhattan.

Tammi Holtslander-Camp Sr. is an occupational therapist at Greater Binghamton Health Center in Binghamton.

Joann Loeber is a financial services examiner 4 at the state Department of Financial Services in New York City.

Cassandra Mascaro is a gender violence prevention specialist 1 at the state Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence in Albany.

Roxeen Mundy is an information technology specialist 2 at the state Office of Information Technology Services in Albany.

Melissa Pine is an underwriter 1 at the state Insurance Fund in White Plains.

John Reed is licensed master social worker 2 at Rockland Children's Psychiatric Center in Saugerties.

Darlene (Gemma) Rose is an employment counselor for the state Labor Department in Amsterdam.

Marcus Smith is a health program administrator at the Department of Health in Albany.

Kevin Valazza is a teacher 4 at Wende Correctional Facility in Alden.

Laquita White is a real estate specialist 1 at the state Transportation Department in Buffalo.

Caitlin Wilkens is a research scientist 2 at the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision main office in Albany.

Roslyn Williams is an economic development program specialist 2 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets 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 [communicator@pef.org](mailto:communicator@pef.org), or call 518-785-1900. Be sure to provide your contact information.



**November 18, 2023**

A tip of the PEF hat to Parole Officer Catherine Adams, who volunteered at a Brooklyn food pantry feeding veterans.



**November 16, 2023**

Region 7 continued an annual tradition today, donating candy to the St. Nicholas Christmas Truck, a charity effort that brings smiles to people in the North Country throughout the holiday season. Pictured with PEF's donations are Region 7 Coordinator Barb Stransky, Gail Roberts, founder of the St. Nicholas Christmas Truck, and PEF Field Representative Martin Blair.





**October 26, 2023**

Vice President Randi DiAntonio and Region 6 Coordinator Chris Dunham just wrapped up a visit with PEF members in Utica, engaging 175 members over two impactful days

**October 20, 2023**

Congratulations to Region 11 PAC Chair Charles Roland, who was honored with the Hon. John W. Lavelle Labor Award from the Staten Island Democratic Association along with State Sen. Jessica Scarcella-Spanton.





**November 8-12, 2023**

That's a wrap from SOMOS! Thanks to our Puerto Rican hosts, AFT - American Federation of Teachers for another amazing Day of Service, and all the State legislators and executives who make Somos come alive each year and give unions like ours an opportunity to talk about our priorities in the year ahead.







