

The COMMUNICATOR

Vol. 42

No. 8

OCTOBER 2024

Maximize Your PEF Contract: Don't Miss Out on Benefits

Unsatisfactory performance evaluation ratings can be appealed

NYS has a new dental provider



Extra accruals? PEP might be for you!

Don't leave these valuable contractual benefits on the table!

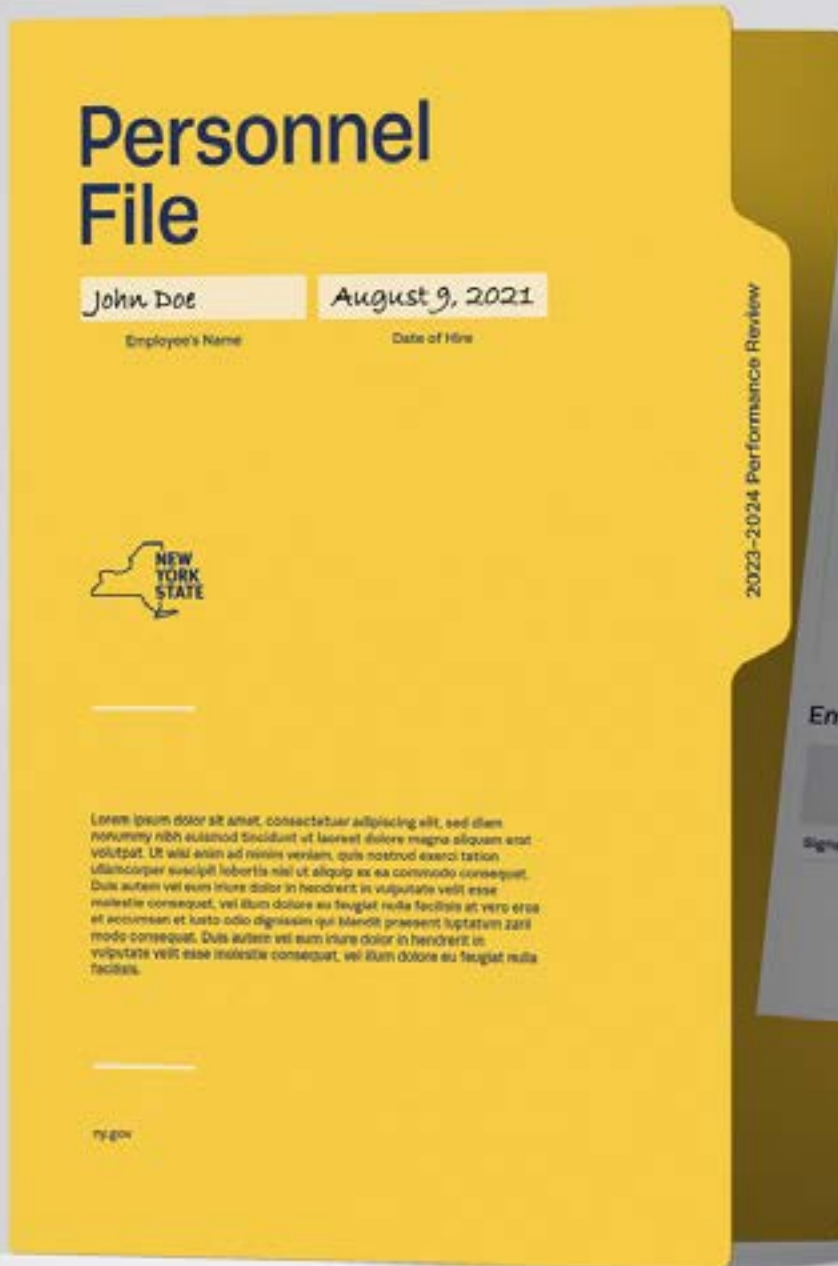


Table of Contents

The President's Message	3
Don't leave money on the table: Unsatisfactory performance evaluations can be appealed	4
PEF gives back to community at Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo	5
Extra accruals? PEP might be for you!	6
Don't leave these valuable contractual benefits on the table!	7
Verdict is still out on New York's new dental provider	8
After donating kidney, ITS member Jacques Goulet is spreading awareness of living donation	9
Members at ITS promote cybersecurity awareness, protect New Yorkers from cyberattacks	10
Make sure you're ready to vote on Nov. 5!	12
Unions step up to support those affected by Hurricane Helene	13
Multiple attacks and ensuing trauma made worse by workplace toxicity and bullying	14
Six new Executive Board seats filled in October Special Election	16
New York State Historic Preservation Office creates opportunities for communities	18
PEF mobilizes to support South Beach PC members after assault on nurse	20
Take advantage of CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies degree and certificate offerings	22
NYS schools waive application fees in October	23
Hundreds turn out for Region 6 appreciation day	24
Convention delegates: Retirees have got your back!	25
Members need your leave donations	27
Photo Highlights	28

THE COMMUNICATOR

Volume 42 No.8
October 2024 (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.

The Communicator Staff

Rob Merrill Managing Editor
Curtis Canham Graphic Artist
Kate Stickle Reporter/Editor
Najee Walker Reporter/Writer
Lauryn Schrom Junior Graphic Artist
Kristina Willbrant Comm Coordinator
Kaitlin Sheehan Digital Communications

Specialist

Officers of PEF

Wayne Spence President
Joe Donahue Secretary-Treasurer
Randi DiAntonio Vice President
Bruce Giddings Vice President
Darlene Williams Vice President

Regional Coordinators

Michele Iorfida Region 1
Shelby Wisneski, Region 2
Leisa Abraham, Region 3
Monica Moore, Region 4
David Dubofsky, Region 5
Christopher Dunham, Region 6
Barbara Stransky, Region 7
Danielle Bridger, Region 8
Gabriela Franklyn, Region 9
Tamara Martin, Region 10
Bernadette O'Connor, Region 11
Corinne Testa, Region 12

Trustees

Muriel Hardy-Lee, Kelly Nadeau, Mohan Radhakrishna

PEF Regional Field Offices

Region 1 Buffalo 1-800-462-1462
Region 2 Elmira/Hornell 1-800-724-5001
Region 3 Rochester 1-800-724-5003
Region 4 Syracuse 1-800-724-5004
Region 5 Binghamton 1-800-724-4998
Region 6 Utica 1-800-724-5005
Region 7 Potsdam 1-888-498-8532
Region 8 Albany 1-800-342-4306
Region 9 Poughkeepsie 1-800-548-4870
Region 10 Manhattan/Bronx 1-800-522-8700
Region 11 Brooklyn/Queens/Staten Island
1-866-897-9775
Region 12 Long Island 1-800-832-5284

Advertising in this publication does not represent an endorsement by PEF or its members.

Members wishing to change their email/ mailing address may call 800-342-4306, x221, or email jwright@pef.org.

PEF is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO and Services Employees International Union.



**Metro NY Labor
Communications
Council**

The President's Message By WAYNE SPENCE



President's Message: Vote labor to keep PEF strong!

Election Day, November 5, is right around the corner, and no matter who you choose to vote for, I encourage you to vote for leaders who support our labor movement and your union values. As a reminder, PEF's Regional and Statewide Political Action Committees recommended endorsements that were reviewed by the Executive Board. Here are the final lists: [U.S. Congress](#) | [NYS Senate](#) | [NYS Assembly](#).

Here in New York early voting begins on October 26 and runs through November 3. Check with your specific county, but in general most polling places are open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. If you do not have four consecutive hours to vote either from the opening of the polls to the beginning of your work shift or between the end of your shift and the closing of polls, you are legally entitled to take up to two hours without loss of pay to allow you time to vote. If you need that time, notify your supervisor not less than two days, but not more than 10 days, before November 5!

As for what voting union values gets you, this issue is filled with information about valuable contractual benefits like the [Productivity Enhancement Program and various flex spending plans](#). Did you also know that as a PEF member you can [appeal unsatisfactory performance evaluation ratings](#)? They can prevent you from getting lump sum awards and performance advances. The good news is PEF's Contract Administration Department has an excellent track record of getting them overturned. You have nothing to lose, so if you find yourself in this situation, contact your field representative.

New York State's new dental provider, [Anthem](#), began serving PEF members on October 1 and we want to know what you are experiencing out there. I've received feedback from some of you, both good and bad, but we want to try and get the broadest feedback possible so we can share it with Anthem and the NYS Office of Employee Relations. So please email Communicator@pef.org about your experiences. If you really like your Anthem dentist, let us know! In a future issue, we plan to list member-recommended dental providers in each PEF region.

And finally, a word of admiration for members in [PEF Region 6](#), who really showed up on September 28 for their annual family celebration at Critz Farms in Cazenovia! Maybe it was the beautiful fall weather or the bounty of this year's apple harvest, but I'd like to think it also had something to do with good old-fashioned union solidarity. Thank you to every PEF member for being part of this powerful union.

In Unity,

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

Wayne Spence
PEF President

Don't leave money on the table: Unsatisfactory performance evaluations can be appealed

By **KATE STICKLES**

If you receive an unsatisfactory rating on your year-end performance evaluation, and you feel it was unfair, inaccurate, or the process was not properly followed, you can appeal and, with the assistance of PEF, that unsatisfactory rating can often be overturned.

Why is that important?

There are two performance-dependent benefits in the PEF/State Agreement – performance advances per Article 7.11 that are added to an employee's base pay until the employee reaches the top or "job rate" of the salary schedule for their salary grade (not to be confused with the annual salary raises included in the contract), and performance awards (sometimes referred to as longevity lump sum awards), which are payments of \$1,500, \$3,000 or \$4,500 to certain employees based on years of service per Article 7.12 of the PEF/State Agreement.

"If you receive an unsatisfactory year-end performance evaluation rating, you won't get the performance advance or the performance award that you would otherwise be entitled to," said Director of Contract Administration Deb Greenberg. "It doesn't hurt to appeal, and we get a lot of these ratings overturned with excellent advocacy from PEF's Field Services Department. It's not just a matter of money, evaluations are also a part of your employment record."

There are mandatory steps that a supervisor must follow as a part of the yearly performance evaluation process, including providing the employee with a Performance Program within six weeks of the beginning of the rating period, and providing a Mid-Point Six-Month Rating within one month of the mid-point of the rating period. If either or both of those are missing, the evaluation is "technically deficient" and if appealed the unsatisfactory rating will be overturned. There are numerous other factors that can also prompt an overturn, such as the employee not adequately being put on notice of performance problems during the rating period.

"If the agency fails to provide a timely performance program or mid-point rating, or if the unsatisfactory rating is otherwise compromised, we can make strong arguments advocating for the overturn of the unsatisfactory rating," Greenberg said. "We want our members to know that we do well in the performance evaluation appeals process and it's worth contacting your field representative if you get an unsatisfactory rating."

The performance evaluation system in New York began in 1979 because of collective bargaining with unions and the current process is clearly outlined [here](#), including all the necessary steps and the corresponding timelines.

Members have 15 calendar days to [file an appeal](#) after receiving their



rating, so contact your field representative as soon as possible if you receive an unsatisfactory year-end performance evaluation rating. An unsatisfactory six-month rating cannot be appealed.

Each agency has a performance evaluation board made up of a neutral person, a PEF designee, and a management designee. The agency-level board makes a recommendation to the agency commissioner, who has the final say.

If PEF does not prevail at the agency level, the case can be appealed to a statewide board within 15 calendar days of receipt of the agency-level decision. The Statewide Appeals Board makes the final decision. That board consists of one representative from the Office of Employee Relations (OER), one representative from PEF, and a neutral arbitrator.

Probationary employees and trainees are not eligible to use this appeals process.



PEF gives back to community at Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo

By **NAJEE WALKER**



More than two years after the mass shooting at a Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo that killed 10 people, the community is still looking for answers and support. That's why PEF sponsored a community giveback event on October 12.

The event gave a chance for the community to gather supplies, books and other needs for school children. The books were donated as part of AFT's Reading Opens the World program, which has distributed more than 10 million books for free to children across the U.S.

PEF also partnered with members from the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) to give the community a chance to get to know the agencies while also working to recruit new employees from the community.

"There are state jobs here for the community, plenty of books, and other supplies," said PEF President Wayne Spence, who attended with other Statewide Officers from the union. "We want the community to know that PEF is here for them, and we keep them in our hearts."

PEF also partnered with local organizations like the Buffalo Urban League and fraternities like Phi Beta Sigma to make sure the community has the services they need and that they are registered

to vote. In addition, shredding services were on hand, allowing members of the community to safely dispose of their old documents and sensitive materials.

Hundreds of books were handed out and several visitors filled out job applications to potentially join the ranks of OPWDD and OMH in the near future.

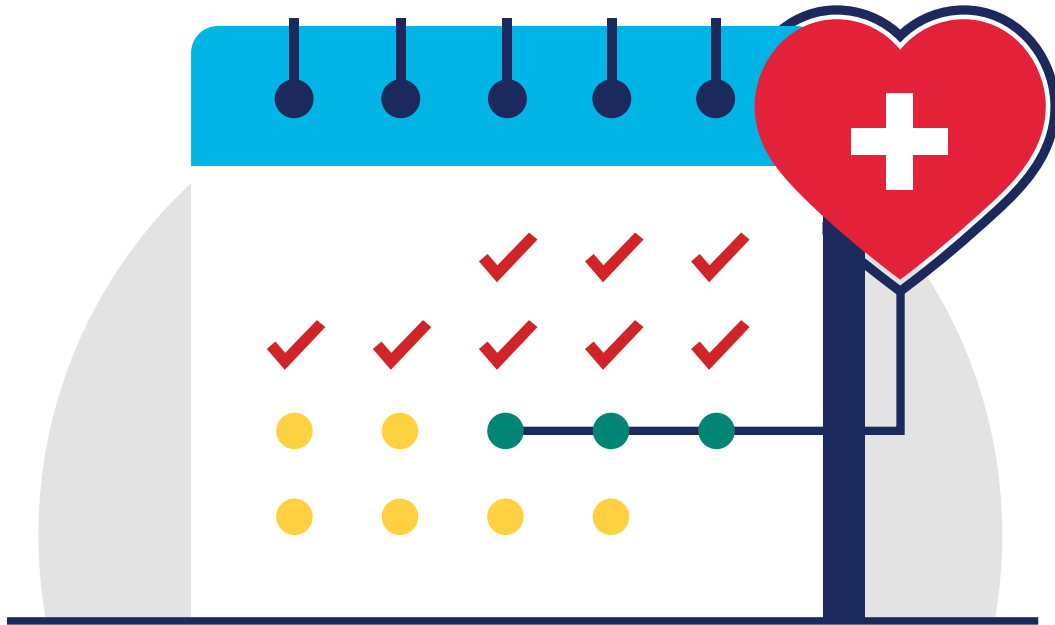
Teachers, daycare administrators and other educators appreciated the book giveaway, loading their trunks for their students.

"I'm very glad the Union is here, this community needs healing," said Sandra McAdor, a General Business Instructor at the Department of Corrections and Community Supervisor (DOCCS). "This is a community that is still experiencing trauma. Bringing books and these supplies means that there is a chance for people to escape that trauma. It can be very healing and I'm proud to be a part of that."

"I'm also proud of what we were able to do today," said President Spence. "The people here are still recovering, but it is great that we've been able to help them, even a little bit."



Left to right: PEF Membership Benefits Administrator Stephanie McLean-Beathley, PEF Vice President Darlene Williams, PEF President Wayne Spence, PEF Region 1 Coordinator Michele Iorfida, and PEF Regional Director of Field Services Eric Kwasniewski.



Extra accruals? PEP might be for you!

If you have extra accruals consider using them to help pay your health insurance premium by taking advantage of the Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP).

PEP allows you to exchange previously accrued vacation and/or personal leave in return for a credit to be applied toward your share of your NYSHIP premium. The enrollment period is November 1 to December 9, 2024. We will update this story with an enrollment link when the State provides it.

The 2023-26 PEF/State Agreement increased the number of days that can be used for this credit to a maximum of 8 days (\$1,600) for salary grades 17 and below; and to a maximum of five days (\$1,500) for salary grades 18 to 24. It also expanded the Teachers PEP allowance to include crediting of compensatory and floating days, in addition to personal leave.

Use the chart below to calculate your PEP credit:

	Days Forefeited	Annual Credit
Grade 17 and Below	4	\$800
	8	\$1,600
Grades 18-24	2.5	\$750
	5	\$1,500
	8	\$1,600
Institution Teachers	1	\$200
	2	\$400
	3	\$600
	4	\$800
	5	\$1,000
	6	\$1,200
	7	\$1,400
	8	\$1,600

Contact your Health Benefits Administrator for enrollment information.



Don't leave these valuable contractual benefits on the table!

As a PEF member, there are several pre-tax benefits you may be eligible for, including the Dependent Care Advantage Account (DCAA), the Health Care Spending Account (HCSA), the Adoption Advantage Account, and/or the NYS-Ride Benefit.

These accounts give you a way to pay for your dependent care, health care, adoption expenses, or qualifying public transportation costs with pre-tax dollars.

Health Care Spending Accounts

An HCSA allows you to set aside pre-tax dollars to pay for medically necessary health care expenses that are not reimbursed by your health insurance or other benefit plans. This includes medical, hospital, dental, vision, hearing, and prescription drug expenses for you, your spouse, and your eligible dependents.

This account can pay for the following services, and so much more:

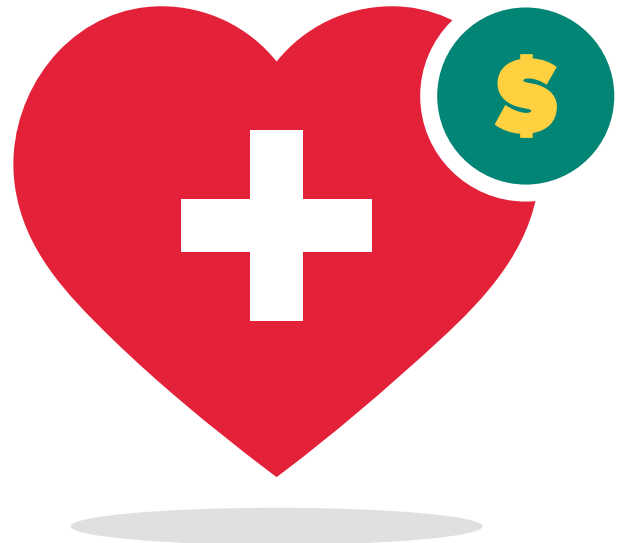
- Dental implants and crowns
- Laser eye surgery (LASIK)
- Acupuncture
- Braces and orthodontic care
- Chiropractic care
- Infertility treatments and pregnancy tests
- Diabetic care and supplies, including insulin
- Copayments and deductibles
- Prescription sunglasses
- Eligible over-the-counter drugs, as long as the items are used to treat a medical condition or illness, such as allergy, cough, cold, flu, and sinus. These can include Tylenol, Advil, Bengay, acne medications, sleep aids and more.

Adoption Advantage Account

This account allows you to pay for expenses related to the adoption of an eligible child with pre-tax dollars.

Dependent Care Advantage Account

A DCAA account allows you to set aside pre-tax dollars to pay for eligible child care, elder care, or disabled dependent care expenses while you are at work. Eligible employees can also enroll without having to set aside any of their own money and will still be eligible to receive the contractual employer contributions, which as of 2024 was between \$500 and \$1,000 annually, depending on salary.



If you have eligible dependent care expenses, don't leave this employer contribution on the table!

For more details on these programs, visit <https://oer.ny.gov/fsa>.

NYS-Ride Benefit

This benefit allows you to use pre-tax dollars for eligible public transportation costs and qualified parking expenses. This does not apply to parking provided by the state.

To enroll, you must place your order by the first of the month, two months before the commuting month. If you wish to make, change, or cancel your order, you must do so online by 11:59 p.m. EST by the first of the month or by phone by 8 p.m. EST on the weekday on or before the first of the month.

For more information, visit <https://oer.ny.gov/nys-ride>.

Didn't get your Anthem ID card yet? Call them at (833) 821-1949 or contact your agency's HR Department, Health Benefits Administrator, or Business Service Center!



Verdict is still out on New York's new dental provider

New York State's new dental provider, Anthem Blue Cross, began serving members on Oct. 1, after PEF led a multi-union charge to get the state to put the decades-old dental contract out to bid. The level of benefits offered are determined by the current 2023-2026 PEF/State Agreement and have not changed under Anthem. Among the enhanced contractual benefits afforded PEF members are:

- a higher annual maximum allowance of \$3,000 per person
- an increase to \$3,000 for the orthodontic lifetime maximum per child
- inclusion of a \$600 implant allowance
- long overdue coverage for precious/upgraded metal fillings

Now that some members have received or scheduled dental care with Anthem, PEF wants to know: How is it going? Please email Communicator@pef.org with your experiences, positive or negative. If you've had a positive experience with a dentist in your area and recommend the provider to your fellow PEF members, please let us know! We are attempting to create a list of member-

recommended dental providers in each PEF region. Similarly, if you've had a negative or frustrating experience, please be as specific as you can in your email and the union will share that feedback with Anthem and the NYS Office of Employee Relations.

PEF members who have not yet tried out Anthem should use this link to search for an in-network dentist:

<https://www.anthembluecross.com/mcr/nys-dental>. Select "New York State Dental Plan" under Search for a Dental Provider. You will be directed to the XPO Dental Complete network where you can search for providers by address, doctor name or specialty type. If you need further assistance, contact Anthem Blue Cross at (833) 821-1949.



After donating kidney, ITS member Jacques Goulet is spreading awareness of living donation

By KATE STICKLES

October 24, 2024 -- For years, PEF member Jacques Goulet has been a regular blood donor, but he never considered he could do more until he came across a Facebook post from a high school acquaintance whose father was in desperate need of a kidney.

Dominick Purnomo's dad, Yono, a retired restaurateur, was in end-stage renal failure and would not survive the expected five to seven years wait for a kidney donor.

"At first, I hadn't even considered that I could potentially donate," Goulet, a 10-year PEF member and Information Technology Specialist at the Office of Information Technology Services said. "But I came back to that Facebook post a few times and thought, 'Why not?' After doing some research, it seemed (surprisingly) straightforward and doable, so I went forward with it."

Goulet began the process by reaching out to and meeting with the donor coordinator at Albany Med that was listed in the Facebook posting. With live donation, hospitals help coordinate the donation in order to protect everyone's privacy and ensure no collusion occurs. It's illegal in the U.S. to receive compensation for an organ.

What came next?

"Labs. Lots of labs," Goulet said. "Blood tests, imaging, meetings with surgery staff."

The donation process shifted from Albany to New York Presbyterian Hospital in the city, which performs the most kidney transplants of any hospital in the country, and where Yono's family decided to travel for his treatment. After several weeks of testing and clearances, Goulet and Yono underwent surgery on April 23, 2024.

"Recovery was pretty standard: Rest, walk, when possible, no heavy lifting," Goulet said. "My wife (fiancée at the time) was a rockstar during that time, because apparently, I have a hard time not doing anything! She kept me on track, and we avoided any hernias. She also planned a wedding during that time, and we tied the knot on May 26, just over a month after surgery."

"We are now at six months post-op and Yono and I are both doing great," he said.

Meeting his recipient was "surreal," Goulet said.

"We met in the waiting room on the morning of the surgery, and he just gave me a big hug with tears running down his face," he said. "It took me awhile to really grasp the full impact of it all. The whole process was pretty easy for me, just a lot of appointments, but for Yono it was literally a lifesaver."



Goulet said he is fortunate to be a New York state Employee because he was granted paid leave for live organ donation.

"That was a huge help in all of this. For many people, if you don't work, you don't get paid, which can be a significant roadblock," he said. "That said, there are several organizations that assist with things like lost wages, travel expenses, and other things for live donors. [Donor Shield](#), for example, reimburses up to \$2,000 per week for lost wages."

Medical expenses related to the procedure are covered by the recipient's insurance.

"I think the main thing I'd like to convey is just how doable this may be for many people who maybe hadn't considered being a live donor before," Goulet said. "You could save a life!"

Learn about live kidney donation [here](#).

Members at ITS promote cybersecurity awareness, protect New Yorkers from cyberattacks

By KATE STICKLES

From phishing to malware/ransomware to widespread coordinated data breaches, the list of ways cyber criminals can access your information and devastate your finances and privacy continues to grow. The same danger lies in wait for the systems PEF members use to deliver state services to New Yorkers.

According to the [Identity Theft Research Center \(ITRC\) Annual Data Breach Report](#), 2023 saw a record-high number of data compromises in the U.S. in a single year: 72 percent more than the previous record set in 2021, impacting at least 353 million individuals. That same year, the public submitted 880,418 complaints of cybercrime to the FBI, increasing the potential total loss to \$12.5 billion in 2023, up from \$10.3 billion in 2022.



October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month and PEF members at the New York State Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) shared what they do to keep New Yorkers safe, and tips for you to keep yourself safe online.

The importance of cybersecurity

Cyberattacks come in all shapes and sizes, and they can impact PEF members as state employees and as individuals, alike.

"Paying with credit at the pump? Jiggle the card reader – there may be a card skimmer on there. Got a call from your bank about a recent transaction? Hang up and call the bank directly using the number on the back of your card – scammers like to call pretending to be the bank asking about a huge charge. Receive an unknown phone call from a loved one in a panic asking for emergency funds? Hang up and call them directly – new scams are now using AI voice generation to make calls sound like they're coming from someone we love."



That advice comes from Abraham Lara, who joined PEF in January 2024, and is one of the recently appointed Dedicated Information Security Officers at ITS, assigned to supporting the Department of Labor (DOL). The dedicated support model allows for 24/7/365 service from a team that knows the agency inside and out.

"My team and I work hand in hand with our partners at DOL to review technology solutions, provide recommendations on

information security best practices, and respond to any issues that may arise," Lara said. "Our goal is to mitigate risk and come up with possible controls to prevent future issues while aligning with the agency's objectives."

Lara answered a call to action during the global [CrowdStrike outage](#) in July 2024 when a software update from the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike caused Microsoft Windows operating systems to crash—resulting in potentially the largest IT outage in history.

"We mobilized and went across New York to manually repair state computers to restore critical services to our citizens," Lara said. "I was scheduled to attend a friend's wedding out in Rochester when we got a call for volunteers to help with the CrowdStrike outage. I remember going on site in a suit and working with other local tech folks to remediate more than 100 computers."

What can we, as a community and a state workforce, do about it?

PEF member Andrew Dolan, an Information Technology Specialist with ITS's Chief Information Security Office (CISO), whose team focuses on training and awareness, has some advice: the best defense is you.



"The most important thing anyone can do to beef up their cybersecurity is to educate themselves," said Dolan.

"Whether you are utilizing social media or banking applications, it is critical that we all practice good cyber hygiene to better protect ourselves."

Dolan's team organizes the annual New York State Cybersecurity Conference, which has been going strong for more than 25 years. The conference brings together people from state government, schools, the federal level, and more, for days of workshops and training.

"New York is one of the leaders when it comes to taking charge of cybersecurity," Dolan said. "We are always at the forefront. People know there is executive support and leadership buy-in. End users and our PEF workforce are the most important part because at the end of the day, people are the biggest component to cybersecurity."

State employees are regularly tested on their ability to spot cyberattacks and Dolan's team is part of the procurement process for those vendors.



"A lot of work goes into figuring out who is the best fit for what type of cybersecurity training and phishing exercises we need," he said. "The biggest thing with phishing is they try to manipulate emotions. They try to get people to click without thinking. We are looking to kick off a new round of training for Cybersecurity Awareness Month."



Arbina Camaj, fourth from right, was one of 19 state employees recognized as State Cybersecurity Champions for their significant contributions to support and enhance cybersecurity across New York State. The winners were honored at the 26th Annual New York State Cybersecurity Conference on June 4. From left to right are Stephen Addison, Joel Butler, Shawn Fodor, Camaj, and Ben McFarland.

Testing statewide system vulnerabilities

For PEF member Jared Hoffman, a Manager Information Technology Services 1 on the CISO CyberCommand Red Team, penetration and offensive security testing has been a passion for more than a decade.

"My team performs offensive security testing on various state technologies," he said. "This is commonly referred to as penetration testing. Our focus is to identify and exploit the vulnerabilities present within these applications and systems, execute various attack paths, and then work with the teams and stakeholders who are responsible for fixing the issues."

This behind-the-scenes work is vital to data safety for New Yorkers accessing state services.

"Our offensive security testing has a direct impact on both state citizens and fellow PEF members given the types of applications and systems we test," Hoffman said. "A large portion of these systems and applications are used by the public. We ensure that all associated data, resources, and underlining technology supporting these applications are secure."

Testing, however, can only go so far – people need to be aware of what they do on the Internet.

"In today's world, having a strong cybersecurity awareness and

forethought can help protect an individual from the tidal wave of scams, attacks, and cyber threats that seem to grow by the day," Hoffman said. "No matter how much we try to avoid it, all aspects of our lives seem to have some level of internet connectivity. Since we are expected to operate in this domain, being aware of the risks and threats is a must. Cybersecurity is a responsibility we all share as public servants."

The Joint Security Operations Center (JSOC) was developed to be the nation's first-of-its-kind cyber hub to provide a statewide view of the threat landscape and improve coordination and agility on threat intelligence and incident response, said PEF member Arbina Camaj, a founding member of the JSOC initiative and currently a Manager Information Technology Services 1 working as a senior SOP and Playbook Developer under CISO CyberCommand's NYSOC division.

"We monitor New York's critical infrastructure 24/7/365 because we know no one can do it alone," Camaj said. "NYSOC provides security monitoring for state, local, tribal, and territorial entities and has achieved a level of security collaboration across government lines never seen before. Nearly all platforms PEF members utilize are monitored in some capacity by NYSOC staff."

Camaj said involvement with other PEF members and the NYSOC team is rewarding.

"There has been a persevering mentality amongst our team of going to work to do the best job conceivable and coming back the next day to do even better," Camaj said. "We feel a deep-seated duty to protect New York to the best of our ability. I can genuinely say I enjoy the work I do and the impact we have is making New York state a safer place."

A data breach of more than 272 million Americans' Social Security information puts into perspective the importance of cybersecurity as technology, such as artificial intelligence, evolves.

"Cybersecurity awareness is absolutely crucial," Camaj said. "Without proper awareness, it is difficult to prevent, detect, or respond to threats, protect data or information, and so much more. With the emergence of AI, the capability of bad actors is increasing at an alarming rate. It should be apparent this is something people cannot opt-out of."

What steps can you take today?

Dolan had a few tips for people who want to improve their protection.

"Even the simplest steps can help you be better protected," he said. "Make sure you are using up to date anti-virus software, make sure to install updates and patches in a timely manner, use secure passwords, avoid connecting to public wi-fi, utilize multi-factor authentication when possible, and most importantly, never stop learning."

Most of us have been annoyed at the complexity required when creating a password – that complexity, however, is an integral part of cybersecurity defense.

"Updating your password on a regular cadence is a standard best practice, as well as enabling multi-factor authentication on all online accounts," Hoffman said. "This can help keep someone protected even in a situation where their password is compromised."

Steering clear of unsolicited or suspicious emails, texts, phone calls, or social media activity is also paramount to staying safe online.

"Phishing has splintered from primarily email-based attacks to almost any type of communication," Hoffman said. "Avoid these messages and follow up with the institution the attacker is claiming to be."

Camaj likened beefing up your cybersecurity to how you protect your home from a common thief.

Enabling two-factor authentication (2FA) is like a security alarm for your home," said Camaj. "Even if someone is able to get through your locked door (your password), the alarm (2FA) adds another layer of protection.

"Just as you wouldn't let a stranger into your home without knowing who they are, don't click on suspicious links or download unknown

attachments," Camaj continued. "In the event protections fail, report it as soon as possible to the appropriate authority, even if you are not certain. The situation often only gets worse until there is appropriate intervention."

Start young for success

One of the keys to successfully battling cybercrime starts with our youth, Dolan said.

"We really need to start at a young age," he said. "By the college level, it's too late."

That's why ITS holds an annual poster contest for K-12 students.

"The poster contest is a fantastic way to do it," Dolan said. "It's incredible to see how some of these kids in elementary school really know the message. I'm always impressed." Click [here](#) to see last year's contestants. Schools can find information about the next round [here](#).

Make sure you're ready to vote on Nov. 5!

PEF members know what is at stake in this year's general election. From the federal level on down to the local level, there are incumbents and candidates who are running to try and make a positive impact on the lives of workers everywhere. As Election Day, Nov. 5, 2024, approaches, there is still time to make sure you are ready to do your part as a member of a labor union and your civic duty as an American.

As a PEF member, you can make sure that our current elected officials know what is important to you and your union. From workplace bullying to Artificial Intelligence, there are several bills the governor will consider before the end of the year. [Please send a letter to Governor Hochul today.](#)

At both the national and state level, members can get involved by phone banking and door knocking with union siblings to support the election of leaders who share the values of organized labor. The AFL-CIO has created a [map of events happening across the nation](#), including here in New York.

As you're gearing up for Election Day, don't forget to check your own registration and confirm your polling place, if you plan to vote in person on Nov. 5. You can do that by visiting the New York State Board of Elections [website](#). Early voting is underway in New York State and runs through Nov. 3.

No matter who you select on your ballot, PEF is committed to supporting candidates who enact laws and implement policies that make a change for the better in the lives of workers like you. In addition to voting to support Kamala Harris for President, the PEF Executive Board and the PEF regional and Statewide Political Action Committees issued the following endorsements for [U.S. Congress](#), [State Senate](#), and the [State Assembly](#).

Together, we can make a difference and work towards a better future for all.

A graphic with the text "RISE UP. SHOW UP. VOTE!" in a bold, sans-serif font. "RISE" and "VOTE!" are in blue, while "UP." and "SHOW UP." are in red. The text is arranged in three lines, with "RISE" on the top line, "UP." on the second line, "SHOW UP." on the third line, and "VOTE!" on the fourth line.



Unions step up to support those affected by Hurricane Helene

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Hurricane Helene made landfall on the Florida Gulf Coast on September 26 as a Category 4 storm, tracking north and dealing a devastating blow to western North Carolina. More than 200 people were killed or reported missing after the storm, and power, drinkable water and food are still in short supply.

While the federal and state governments are doing their best to handle the crisis in North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee and Georgia, volunteers and community members from across the nation have helped deliver additional aid.

PEF is working with the New York State AFL-CIO to spread the word and collect donations to the [Union Community Fund](#). The fund functions like PEF's own relief fund and is prioritizing all donations to provide relief for those impacted by Hurricane Helene.

"I am encouraged by the leadership of unions in this state and across the nation to help our fellow union members and community down in North Carolina and in other parts of the nation where the storm hit," said PEF President Wayne Spence. "I am hopeful that our aid can help bring much needed relief to the victims of this devastating storm."

"As a Union Movement, we always come together in times like these to support our union families facing unimaginable challenges and hardship," said NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento. "The aftermath of Hurricane Helene has left deep scars, and while it will take years

to recover and rebuild, we can take meaningful action right now. The Union Community Fund, activated by the National AFL-CIO, assists those directly affected by the disaster. We are proud to contribute to making a real difference for the families impacted."

A few other notable union efforts:

Members of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) are heavily involved on the ground, [helping restore services in critically effected areas](#).

The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) [donated \\$100,000 to the American Red Cross "Hurricane Helene Relief" fund](#), even while their members were on strike in early October.

Members of the International Association of Fire Fighters in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina are [volunteering in their communities to assist residents in need](#).



TOXIC TALES

Multiple attacks and ensuing trauma made worse by workplace toxicity and bullying

By **KATE STICKLES**

When Ruth Johnson joined state service in 2005, she couldn't have imagined the turmoil she would face over the next nearly 20 years – from violent attacks, to requests for job adjustments being ignored, to eventually being pushed out of her job.

Johnson was the victim of an attack while working at the Staten Island DDSO, where administrative staff warnings about a client's violence toward other clients and staff fell on deaf ears. In September 2014, while working at South Beach Psychiatric Center as a social work assistant, she suffered the most brutal attack of her career.

"While on duty at SBPC, a patient who should have been transferred to a secure unit, but was not, attacked me," Johnson said. "The three staff on the unit were unable to stop the patient from continuously punching me in my face. The panic button was not working and unfortunately, we discovered it after it was pressed. An alert did not go out due to the failure of the panic button. I held my arms crossed over my face for about five minutes."

Eventually, another patient came behind the staff desk and intervened, she said. Johnson spent the next 45 days recovering from the physical and psychological injuries. Even upon her return, she was still suffering and missed occasional additional days.



Ruth Johnson

"I told the executive director I could no longer handle working on the units," she recalls.



Knowing her future had to lie in other areas of the agency, she interviewed for a vacant discharge coordinator position and was hired. This role did not involve working on the units. Instead, she was responsible for seeking housing assistance in a pilot reintegration program, advocating for forensic people with mental illness.

Over her remaining years at South Beach, she continued to require dental procedures to restore knocked out and misaligned teeth; psychotherapy; dermatology; orthopedic; and occupational therapies through Workers' Compensation.

She continued to seek opportunities within her agency, taking the social work assistant 3 exam and interviewing for jobs that did not involve direct patient contact. In March 2017, she accepted a position at Brooklyn OPWDD as a social work assistant 3/gatekeeper because it didn't involve direct contact. In 2021, that position was shut down by a manager (referred to here as a member of management), who demanded she take a role as a habilitation specialist 1, a grade 14, despite her title of social work assistant 3, a grade 17. While she was able to keep the salary grade, she was sent out in the field.

"She informed me that I would be responsible for working in Brooklyn OPWDD IRA homes," Johnson said. "In addition, I would be responsible for conducting goals which would involve direct care support for the people OPWDD serves with mental illness."

PEF Field Services requested a meeting with the agency's HR department, but that meeting was declined because the member of management allegedly did not provide information on Johnson's new duties.

"[The member of management] continued to push out-of-title work," Johnson said. "In December of 2021, I was unable to deter [the member of management] from plans to force me into a position that due to my post-traumatic stress disorder, I cannot do."

In January 2022, she submitted a request for a reasonable accommodation. The member of management's continued inconsistencies on questionnaires led to an eventual denial – a year later.

Johnson was advised to cease work immediately in January 2022 after a significant relapse. While she was out of work, personal items and confidential files were removed from her office. She sent 24 letters, including doctor's notes, saying she could return to work but not direct client care. Despite her desire to continue working, she was never offered a position that would not involve direct client care.

After 19 years of state service, Johnson was terminated in January 2024 under Section 71 of New York State's Civil Service Law, which governs the termination of state employees with work-related disabilities.

"I'm not telling my story to focus on my termination, it's about how the matter was processed," Johnson said. "Why did HR not demand [the member of management] give a complete list of my duties when the PEF representatives were on the phone conference? Why did it take a few weeks short of one full year to process my application for reasonable accommodation and receive a final determination?"

Johnson asserts the actions of the member of management – toxic from the start – were never curtailed or called out. And at a time when the state struggles to fully staff agencies, toxicity has no place in already stressful workplaces.

If you have a toxic tale to share, please get in touch with us at Communicator@pef.org. We will work with you to share your story in the most sensitive way and safeguard your identity if necessary. New York State workers have been silent for too long and we are determined to give them a voice! Together we can clean up the toxic work environments that are far too common inside New York State agencies!

**TOXIC
TALES**



Six new Executive Board seats filled in October Special Election

By **NAJEE WALKER**

Six seats in the October 2024 Special Election for PEF's Executive Board have been filled. Balloting is required for four additional contested seats. Additionally, five seats currently have no candidate in the running.

Vicki Sweet was elected to Seat 220, representing members at the Workers Compensation Board in Menands. Francis McIntyre was elected to Seat 10, representing members at the Department of Financial Services in New York City. Joshua DeJesus was elected to Seat 385, representing members at South Beach Psychiatric Center on Staten Island. Sangeetha Kailas was elected to Seat 425, representing members at the Department of Public Service, Downstate. Gustavo Santos was elected to Seat 490, representing members at the Department of Civil Service, Main Office. Carrie Hoopes was elected to Seat 545, representing employees of Alleghany County.

Terri Busby and Gina Corona were certified for Seat 295, which represents members at the Office of Mental Health in Syracuse. Maria McClinton and Brooke Bosch were certified for Seat 350, which represents members at the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities in Taconic, N.Y. Scott Wendt and Derick Kehoe were certified for Seat 530, which represents members at the Department of Transportation in Syracuse.

Ballots for all contested seats will be counted on December 9, 2024.

No candidates were certified for the following remaining vacancies:

Seat 15, Civil Service
Seat 90, Higher Education Services
Seat 161, Criminal Justice Services
Seat 165, Justice Center
Seat 200, Department of Health, Main Office

Another Special Election for these seats will be held in January 2025 for any member interested in serving.





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](#).

www.pef.org/careers-at-pef



New York State Historic Preservation Office creates opportunities for communities

By NAJEE WALKER

A new grocery store is doing business in a critically underserved area of Troy, N.Y. The store, simply named Bargain Grocery, sells fruit, vegetables, meat and other essentials at 30% below the price of big box stores.

Bargain Grocery is a project of the Compassion Coalition, a religious non-profit organization focused on addressing food insecurity. It has one other storefront in Utica. What makes the Troy location special is the building that houses it.

The building, located at 558 River Street, was once a factory which made boxes to hold collars manufactured by the factory across the street. The factory was transformed in 2021 into mixed-income apartments.

These projects, and others like it, pop up all over the state. When owners of income-producing properties that also happen to be in an historic building seek to rehabilitate the building, they can take advantage of Historic Preservation Tax Credit programs which the New York State Historic Preservation Office (part of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) oversees.

"This program, which has been around since the 1970s, started as a federal program. The federal government gives 20% back of qualified rehabilitation costs in the form of a tax credit," said Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator and PEF member Sloane Bullough. "In 2006, New York State signed a state equivalent into law that adds another 20% or 30% depending on the size of the project."

Bullough said that since 2010, much of New York has taken advantage of the program, especially in the Buffalo area. About \$13 billion in project expenses have been stimulated in New York State, which includes money spent for the creation of jobs. New York State leads the nation in use of Historic Tax Credits, with nearly \$4 billion spent in total rehabilitation costs from 2018 to 2022.

For her part, Bullough wears many hats as part-educator, part-scientist, part-architect and part-historian. She holds workshops to inform the public on how these tax credits are used, reviews documents to make sure that projects are adhering to the standards of the program, and delivers instruction on how best to deal with rehabilitation efforts.



Photo of Bargain Grocery located in Troy, NY courtesy of Bargain Grocery Facebook page.

"I sometimes focus on things like the mortar mixture between the bricks. It must be the right softness, or else the surface of the bricks could peel off because some were made in the early 19th century," said Bullough.

Buildings across the state that have utilized the program include the Lion Factory building in Troy, which has now become a 151-unit apartment building, the former Utica Steam & Mohawk Valley Cotton Mill, now a mixed use space for housing and business, and the Northland Workforce Training Center, formerly a factory in Buffalo.

The federal and state Historic Preservation Tax Credit programs both have criteria that must be met in order to apply. Both require the income-producing property be on the National Register of Historic Places individually or as part of an Historic District. The work performed, both interior and exterior, must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and be approved by the National Park Service. The state program offers an additional tax incentive for properties located in qualified census tracts.

Despite it being law, Bullough said that distinction from the state is important, because it can often bring much needed revitalization



to communities that need it. While the history of these buildings is important, Bullough said, equally important are the communities that benefit from investment.

“When the law was passed, it was limited to distressed census tracts and economically distressed communities; all of Troy is eligible for this program,” said Bullough. “And imagine the good this grocery store is going to do thanks to the program. The neighborhood had a lack of access to healthy, affordable food; a higher poverty rate than the surrounding neighborhoods; and families who struggle with issues faced in communities like these.”

New York State also offers an Historic Homeownership Rehabilitation Credit Program that gives homeowners a state income tax credit equal to 20% of certain expenses associated with repair, maintenance, and upgrades to historic homes in qualifying census tracts. Projects are reviewed and approved by State Historic Preservation Office staff.

“All of the information for both programs and information about how property owners can utilize the incentives are available on our website,” said Historic Preservation Communications Specialist and PEF member Aine Leader-Nagy. “These programs are for the public and we want people to know about them and use them.”

For Bullough and Leader-Nagy, these programs and the many others offered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation mean that New York history has a chance to be preserved for generations. It also means that the state’s underserved communities get access to the things they need to do more than just survive.

“When you talk about these historic spaces returning to their roots, you have to understand who was there before,” said Bullough. “For the box factory and so many other factories in Troy, it was Irish immigrants, many of them women. They came here because the collar industry provided jobs and a future. And now places like the box factory are providing those opportunities again.”



Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator and PEF member Sloane Bullough



PEF mobilizes to support South Beach PC members after assault on nurse

By **KATE STICKLES**

In the wake of a brutal assault that left a PEF member from South Beach Psychiatric Center on a ventilator in a Staten Island hospital, PEF leaders and staff immediately mobilized to assist and support members at the facility and engage with management and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) to address security issues.

On September 17, the PEF nurse was hit in the side of the head by a patient, knocking him to the ground. He was rushed to the hospital with multiple brain bleeds, where he remained as of October 7.

"I saw the video of Peter get hit on the side of his face," said PEF Vice President Darlene Williams. "He fell so hard. On September 17, he left for work, probably said goodbye to his family, but he's not going to come home that same person. He will never go home the way he was when he left."

**South Beach
Psychiatric
Center**



The South Beach PC attack comes on the heels of the stabbings of a PEF member and his CSEA coworker at Buffalo Psychiatric Center in April; as well as more than one incident of rape and additional stabbings.

“When is OMH going to say enough is enough?” Williams said. “When is OMH going to say that people who work in mental health or any facility have the right to go home the way they were when they left? When is OMH going to say it is our responsibility to take care of the individuals that we employ?”

Williams credited PEF President Wayne Spence’s response to the attack for getting the alleged perpetrator quickly into police custody.

“He said, ‘enough is enough.’ But it shouldn’t have had to be the president of the union doing that.”

PEF held rolling meetings at South Beach PC on September 26, connecting with more than 150 members to listen to their concerns, offer support, and update them on what the union is doing to protect their safety on the job.

“Patients are entering facilities and programs from the prisons and criminal justice sector and our members, and their coworkers, are not taught how to deal with individuals who not only have mental illness, but who also really want to hurt people,” Williams said. “The level of violence that our members deal with is truly horrendous.”

PEF creates an action plan

In collaboration with the PEF Health & Safety Department, an action plan was created to address the South Beach PC incident, ranging from a meeting with the District Attorney to hasten the custody process, to the need for a system to better track outpatient services, to streamlining the process for calling emergency services.

Spence said the situation requires swift action.

“Violence against our members is unacceptable,” he said. “For managers to tell folks it comes as part of the job – that’s unacceptable. We are committed to doing something about it.”

You can help

The PEF Health and Safety Department has been studying incidences of violence at state facilities operated by OMH, the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

You can sign a petition that calls on the state to work toward curbing workplace violence by:

- Establishing Labor-Management Workplace Violence Prevention Committees at each agency which will meet monthly to identify and resolve issues;
- Immediately installing metal detectors at each facility operated by these agencies;
- Screen patients, visitors, and vendors for weapons and contraband;
- Set up a process to review and rectify issues when there are conflicting clinical recommendations regarding appropriate care, custody and security for clients with violent tendencies or other mental health issues;
- Establish and enforce appropriate staffing ratios in facilities operated by these agencies.



Sign up **TODAY** for the Communicator

Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your monthly. Make sure we have your personal email address. PEF will never email at your work address.

<https://www.pef.org/emailme/>



Take advantage of CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies degree and certificate offerings

PEF members in the New York City area who are interested in pursuing a degree or certificate in various fields, from healthcare leadership to public administration to labor relations, can attend an upcoming virtual information session with the CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies (SLU).

Remaining sessions are from 6 to 7 p.m. via Zoom on November 12, and December 11. You can register, [here](#).

SLU offers undergraduate and graduate degrees that are designed to meet the needs of working adults as well as traditional-age college students who seek to learn more about the challenges confronting poor and working-class populations in the workplace and in the community.

It also collaborates with other units of CUNY to offer a range of college-credit programs designed to give workers the academic and technical skills they need for professional advancement

For more information on SLU, visit <https://slu.cuny.edu/>; call 646-313-8300; or email admissions@slu.cuny.edu.



COLLEGE APPLICATION MONTH

NYS SCHOOLS WAIVE APPLICATION FEES IN OCTOBER

Are you or one of your family members planning on attending college? If so, take advantage of NYS College Application Month (CAM). CAM's primary goal is to increase the number of students applying to college from NYS high schools.

The New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) runs the campaign, which provides students with tools, resources and guidance to help them pursue their higher education.

More than 130 colleges and universities throughout New York State are waiving their application fees in October. This means students can apply to multiple colleges without the burden of application fees, making it easier and more affordable for students to pursue their college goals.

For a complete list of participating schools and their fee waiver dates, please [click here](#).

Want to get connected to resources you need to prepare for college or apply for financial aid? Sign up now to receive texts with key information about financial aid, important deadlines, and resources to put you on the right path toward your college career.



Smiles from some of the nearly 500 PEF members and their families who enjoyed this year's Region 6 event at Critz Farms.



Hundreds turn out for Region 6 appreciation day

By **KATE STICKLES**

PEF Region 6 -- comprising members who work in Fulton, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Montgomery, and Oneida counties -- had a record turnout for its Member and Family Appreciation Day on September 28 at Critz Farms in Cazenovia, with 487 attendees enjoying the all-day event.

In past years, the event was held in partnership with Region 4 -- drawing 100 members the first year and 300 the second. This year, Region 6 went solo and attracted the highest number of attendees yet, said PEF Region 6 Coordinator Christopher Dunham.

"Our members work very hard," Dunham said. "We have a lot of members in locked facilities in OMH (Office of Mental Health), DOCCS (Department of Corrections and Community Supervision), and we have a lot of OPWDD (Office for People With Developmental Disabilities) facilities. We have so many agencies and we work so hard in this Region, I like to give our members and their families an opportunity to enjoy some fall weather."

The event featured free admission for PEF members and up to three members of their immediate family, along with free snack and beverage tickets. Activities included pumpkin picking, games, rides, a petting zoo, a corn maze, and more. PEF also had a booth on site with door prizes and giveaways.

"One of my primary goals was to reach out to the members, engage and exchange information and make sure they have the most information possible concerning the new dental provider," Dunham said. "Every member walked away with my business card and contact information, and I encouraged them to reach out if they encounter any problems."

Dunham was pleased to see families, couples, and sometimes solo members show up to enjoy the day at the farm.

"It's really nice to give back to show support and appreciation for how hard our members work every single day," he said. "It was great to see the members show up."





Convention delegates: Retirees have got your back!

By **JIM CARR**

I've just returned home from this year's PEF convention where I addressed the delegates at the invitation of President Wayne Spence. The focus of my speech was the similarities and differences between the PEF members and retirees, telling them that I've walked in their shoes and someday they'll be walking in mine.

Retirees are a resource for the union because we contribute generously to COPE. We rally, phone bank and are always willing to lend a helping hand. We are a daytime army of 20,000-plus members. We have a very active and engaged membership. Therefore, I suggest that the Regional Coordinators of PEF reach out to retiree chapter members to learn more about your union's history. Many locals have fascinating backstories, such as contract battles, strikes, or organizing struggles.

I mentioned to this year's delegates that their pension fund is guaranteed by the New York state Constitution. But their health insurance is not. This is an area of interest where retirees and active members need to move together to maintain and preserve quality affordable health care for all of us. Currently, health insurance in retirement is administered by the New York State Department of Civil Service. The New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP) is not constitutionally guaranteed.

Once a worker decides to retire, he or she has lots of decisions to make. I suggest to you as I suggested to the convention delegates, "Do your homework and make well informed decisions."

Retirees are also politically engaged because we understand we're affected by political decisions. We also know how important it is to support our union-endorsed candidates. During this year's Convention, I and other retirees were phone banking for State Senator John Mannion, the PEF-endorsed candidate for the 22nd Congressional District.

Your union only endorses candidates who support our values and policies that best serve the members. John Mannion is a good example of a candidate that has had the union's back. We support candidates who support a campaign of common cause over a chaos campaign regardless of party. We would rather have unity and cooperation with diversity and commitment. We need elected leaders who support working people, public employees and our union - not candidates who say one thing and when we check their voting record it doesn't match their rhetoric.

I want to congratulate President Spence and his team on their reelection win as well as their continued support of retirees and a future where we can all have a secure retirement.



Letters to the Editor

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. Please include your name and location. Letters may be published in upcoming issues of *the Communicator*.



Sign up **TODAY** for the Communicator

Keeping PEF members current on PEF news, emailed to your monthly. Make sure we have your personal email address. PEF will never email at your work address.

<https://www.pef.org/emailme/>





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.

Barbara Bertucio is a curatorial visitor services specialist 1 at the Office of General Services in Albany.

Cassandra Bradford is a registered nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse.

Kevin Bromley is a registered nurse 1 with the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities in Norwood.

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.

Lori DeVito is an administrative specialist 1 at the Office of General Services in Albany.

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.

Wayne Green is a maintenance supervisor 3 at St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in Ogdensburg.

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.

Ann Krenn is an Offender Rehabilitation Coordinator at Groveland Correctional Facility in Sonyea.

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

Rose Niang is an investigative specialist 1 at the Department of Education in Manhattan.

Danielle Porter is registered nurse 1 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse.

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

Vexilla Quinlan is a registered nurse 1 at Bronx Psychiatric Center in the Bronx.

Christine Ward is a senior Worker's Compensation Examiner at the Worker's Compensation Board in Menands.

Jennifer Wells is a registered nurse 2 at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse.

Roslyn Williams is an economic development program specialist 2 at the Department of Agriculture and Markets in Albany.

Jennifer Zullo is a research scientist 2 at the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities 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 174 and 175 of the [2023-26 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, or call 518-785-1900.



September 27, 2024

PEF and Teamsters Local 118 from Rochester, teamed up to load up a truck to bring thousands of books, courtesy of AFT's Reading Opens the World program, to the Rochester community as part of an upcoming Rochester Labor Community Job Fair.



October 13, 2024

NYS AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento, left, joined union members in the Hudson Valley, including PEF Region 9 Coordinator Gabriela Franklyn, center, to get out the vote for labor-endorsed candidates.





October 21, 2024

PEF presented to members at the Office for the Prevention Domestic Violence during a training. Vice President Bruce Giddings and Region 8 Coordinator Danielle Bridger spoke with members about PEF's mission, values and what PEF offers to our members.



October 20, 2024

PEF leaders and members boarded a bus in NYC on Oct. 19 for a trip to Scanton, Pa., to knock on the doors of union households and encourage them to vote. This is one of the canvassing teams posing for a photo outside the childhood home of President Joe Biden.



October 24, 2024

PEF convened a planning meeting of the Brooklyn Needs Downstate coalition on Oct. 21 in New York City. A representative from UUP joined PEF leaders and staff and members of the NYC clergy to discuss next steps in the fight to Save SUNY Downstate. The coalition plans to step up its pressure on Gov. Kathy Hochul to name the advisory panel she promised would play a role in imagining a sustainable future for Brooklyn's premiere community hospital.

October 8, 2024

PEF members in Region 4 gathered to door knock and phone bank for John Mannion, who is running for Congress to represent Syracuse. Currently a State Senator, Mannion was formerly a union member himself as a teacher and is a good friend of labor.



October 16, 2024

NYS Speaker of the Assembly Carl Heastie met with labor leaders on Oct. 16 in New York City. Pictured in various photos are Region 11 PAC Chair Charles Roland, Trustee Radhakrishna Mohan, and Executive Board Member Al Famularo, with elected officials.



Trustee Radhakrishna Mohan, EBoard Member Al Famularo, Speaker Carl Heastie, and Region 11 PAC Chair Charles Roland.



EBoard Member Al Famularo, Assemblymember Alex Bores, and Trustee Radhakrishna Mohan.



EBoard Member Al Famularo, Assemblymember Grace Lee, and Trustee Radhakrishna Mohan.



EBoard Member Al Famularo, Assemblymember Latrice Walker, and Region 11 PAC Chair Charles Roland.

October 21, 2024

PEF joined the Rochester Labor Community for a Community Job Fair on Oct. 19. Region 3 gave away backpacks and books to students.





September 28, 2024

PEF Region 9 hosted the Hudson Valley Labor Walk. The day started with training and then they hit the streets to knock on doors in support of PEF-endorsed union candidates like U.S. Rep. Pat Ryan and Yvette Valdez Smith, who is running for the State Senate in District 39.



Recommit Today!

New + Existing PEF Members

SIGN NOW!

