



# CTA SNIPPETS

<http://corningta.ny.aft.org/>

CORNING TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

January / February 2015

Volume 12 Issue IV

## President Report, Leslie Varga

### Standing up for our Profession

In an article published in *Education Week* on January 29, 2015, a Michigan Teacher states "*When I speak the truth in meetings about what is happening in public education, I am met with silence from my fellow teachers. It is the silence that is so maddening. I realize not everybody is as bold as me, but still--shouldn't the people working in this profession care about this profession? Beyond the four walls of their own classrooms? Am I crazy or what?*"

Evidently, this teacher (who chose not to be identified) struck a nerve--as her post drew 50+ comments, all of them thoughtful and passionate, about the problem of teachers whose heads are firmly planted in the sand when it comes to the policies, issues and critical questions shaping the work of teaching.

***If teachers are ever going to establish themselves as fully professional, they will need to develop an authentic, very public voice and vehicles to advocate for their professional interests and control over their own work.***

So what did the teachers in Michigan believe were the core reasons for apparent teacher apathy, compliance and unwillingness to speak out against destructive policies and practices? Here's a boiled-down summary of comments:

**Fear:** This one came up immediately and was threaded through the discussion. *I was marked down in my evaluation last year because I spoke the truth. It was called negative communication. I've got two kids to support and a mortgage. This is exactly what the de-formers want to happen. First, they attacked our union, then took away our seniority rights.*

**"It could never happen here" syndrome:** *It is not fear in my school--it's disbelief. Teachers truly don't think this is happening. They think I'm a conspiracy theorist. I work in a well-run district, where good administrators squeeze every last dime, so everyone here thinks the bad stuff is happening elsewhere.*

**Continued on Page 2**

## President Report, Leslie Varga

**Lack of information or misinformation:** *In order to advocate, to understand why better-informed folks sound radical, teachers need genuine facts. Information. And sorting through the information and editorial content out there takes time and skill. Lots of teachers rely on what they hear in the lounge, and there's no single source of concrete, trusted intelligence about the wider world of public education.*

**Teachers are too busy or distracted:** *I'm too busy to lead or speak up, because all my time is eaten up following someone else's goals.*

**Teachers are, by nature, consensus-builders, people who want to get along and be liked:** *I don't want to seem radical. Let's not bash our colleagues! They do not believe a word I say. I am shunned. Our biggest complainer about everything that is happening in public education goes around telling people I am a radical. When I have suggested ways she could actually do things to try to improve the situation, she has refused.*

**Teachers are not political:** *We are an easy profession to bull doze, and the reformers know it. Teachers tend to be rule followers, and don't like confrontation. There are also dark undercurrents of racism (those troubled districts) and sexism (I'm just here for the kids) at work--mention those and people really do think you're a radical.*

**Teachers too young and inexperienced to see danger ahead:** *Teachers coming through ranks are being indoctrinated to work in charters and to accept teaching to the test. The adulation of Teach for America--with all their shiny young Ivy League faces--doesn't help. When going for my masters I saw this often. It symbolized in a class where the text was *Writing On Demand*, a book designed to help teachers prepare students for writing on standardized tests. The modal level of teacher experience is one year, so we are gradually losing the wisdom of experience in practice.*

**Teachers are used to outsourcing all policy issues to their unions:** *It used to be that we trusted the unions to lobby for the right things. Our only concern was working with sketchy administrators. Now, it feels like there is nobody representing professional teachers in Lansing.*

*Continued on Page 3*

## President Report, Leslie Varga

**Pervasive anti-teacher attitude in media and policy-making:** *Politicians in both parties have painted us into a corner. When we raise a legitimate concern about education policy (student standardized test results used to evaluate a teacher's effectiveness, for example) , the public, which knows little of all the work we've done and the expertise we've developed in the field, considers us to be "whiners."*

And finally, this: *It is maddening and I have reached a point where I am not caring! Fire my \*ss! I am trying to do what is right and advocate for teachers and our kids!*

Was there any reason for optimism? Several people mentioned allies in the fight to honor the teacher voice in the policy process: Parents. Retired teachers, with nothing to lose and valuable perspective. Social media groups of like-minded educators. School leaders who might speak out, if their colleagues supported them--a couple mentioned strong, vocal superintendents or principals.

*The good news is that once teachers know what's going on they are a very difficult group of people to deal with. We are smart, well read, know how to research, write and make a strong argument, and are relentless.* (Michigan teacher)

*So.....what can WE (CTA members) do? We are smart, well read, know how to write and make a strong argument. I ask that you become relentless. I ask that you read. I ask that you research. I ask that you talk.*

- Start a conversation in your teacher's room
- Start a conversation with your neighbor who might not be aware of all that you do for the students in your classroom and school
- Talk to those parents you see in the aisles at Wegman's about what educators do for their children
- Come to a Board of Education meeting and listen to issues that affect us
- Attend a PTA meeting to show your support of public education.
- Come to a CTA meeting to listen to your colleagues advocate for your union rights.
- Write a letter to governor Cuomo.
- Write a letter to your local Senator.
- Follow CTA on Facebook.
- Download the NYSUT MAC app.
- Become an advocate for our profession.
- Become an advocate for our association.
- **Bring 3 or more colleagues to the forum: Advocates for Public Education on March 12 at 7pm in the CPP Middle School Auditorium.**

A famous quote by Pericles resonates true.... ***"Just because you don't take an interest in politics, doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you"***. It is our turn.



**IF**

# Cuomo's new "Education" plan passes:

**50%** of your annual evaluation will be based on state tests (or comparable measure of student growth for non-tested teachers)  
- up from its current 20%

The current 20% determined by "local control" would be done away with

The other 50% would be based on classroom observation.

35% of that would be done by an "independent observer" - someone outside your school

Your building administrator would only be responsible for 15% of your classroom observation

An "ineffective" rating in either 50% portion of your evaluation will result in a "Developing" rating on your overall evaluation score

Two consecutive "ineffective" ratings would be grounds for termination

**Visit the CTA Facebook page for more information and advocacy options**

# Vice-President Report, David Rich

## May 7, 2015 CTA Officer and Delegate Election Information

The CTA Officer and Delegate Elections are on May 7. I have provided the chart below to remind all members of the process that we, as a union, approved. In a nutshell, there are three CTA members who volunteered and were approved by the Executive Council to oversee the process. **Thanks to Shawn Finan (WN), Cathy Nagle (GR), and Doreen Bonomo (WN) for volunteering!**

The CTA Constitution is available in its entirety on the CTA website. However, you can also refer to the chart below for the duties of the election committee and the President. The process prohibits candidates from collecting and counting ballots. Furthermore, petitions to run for office will be provided to interested members by the Election Committee members. More specific information and dates will be mailed to your home addresses this Spring. **(Petitions will be available February 23 and due on or before April 7).**

### Election Committee:

**This committee shall oversee all aspects of the Officer/Delegate Election and ensure the following duties are conducted, per the chart below:**

Duty	CTA President	Election Committee
Election date notification to all members, per the Landrum-Griffin Act	✓	
Create Candidate Petition Forms	✓	
Provide Candidate Petitions to interested parties		✓
Collect and Verify Petitions		✓
Create the Ballot		✓
Provide Senior Building Representatives with Ballots for each voting site	✓	
Establish a time and place in which ballots are *returned to the Committee for counting. (*Ballots are not to be collected by or returned to any candidate).		✓

Furthermore, results are not valid until approved by a majority vote of the Executive Council and should not be revealed until said time. Committee members may not be candidates or current CTA officers or appointees. The committee will consist of a Chairperson elected by its membership and two other members. Members must be either a building representative or be nominated by their building representative and approved by the Executive Council.

# Corning Teachers in Action....



**January Zumbathon that benefited the CASA of the Southern Tier!**

Carolyn Kizis, Joelle Groff, Kristina Belanger, Mabra Karpie, Rhiannon Madden, Tammy Townsend



Carolyn Kizis, Joelle Groff, Kristina Belanger, Mabra Karpie, Rhiannon Madden, Tammy Townsend

# Corning Teachers in Action...

## 171 Cedar Arts Center Announces Winners....

### 2015 Bob Kinner Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence

**CPP Teacher Claire Gonta Smock** - - Mrs. Smock is a magna cum laude graduate of Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY, with a dual degree in Piano Performance and Music Education. She completed her degree at the Ithaca College London Center where she studied with pianist Martino Tirimo. Her Masters in Education was completed at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education in Teaching, Curriculum and Learning Environments. In 1996 she became a faculty member of the International Suzuki Institute in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, teaching Music for Your Baby, Music and Movement, as well as private piano. Mrs. Smock is a teacher in the Corning-Painted Post School District, and a 171 faculty member since 1980.





ServU Federal Credit Union was organized by the employees of the Corning City School District on March 15, 1956. Named the "Corning Teachers Credit Union," services were provided solely to the staff from the Corning School District. Today, ServU has grown to serve over 37,000 members from different occupations and backgrounds. However, ServU continues to provide exceptional financial products and services to our core group, educators!

### Why should you join ServU?

*To take advantage of low fee and low cost products and services.*

- Savings Accounts with competitive dividends and \$5.00 minimum deposit
- Checking Accounts with no minimum balance and free overdraft protection from Savings
- Consumer and Real Estate loans with low interest rates
- Loan rates are not determined by credit score. You always get our best rate!
- Free convenience services such as ATMs, 24 hour Telephone Teller, Online Banking, Mobile Banking and Bill Pay services
- Dividend earning Club Accounts
- Individual Retirement Accounts and Share Certificates
- Youth Accounts

### Educator Specific Products and Services:

**Summer Club Accounts:** An alternative to a large check at the end of the school year. Funds are generally sent via payroll deduction.

Benefits of a Summer Club:

- You earn the dividends on the funds in your account
- Funds are available during the school year with no withdrawal penalty
- Ability to make adjustments to contributions during the school year
- Pay yourself all summer!

**Summer Skip Program:** ServU offers the Summer Skip Program to make the summer months easier on educators. Loan payments are stretched out over 10 months instead of 12 months allowing you to skip payments in July and August. The length of the loan stays the same, and no additional interest is paid.

**Cash in the Classroom:** To support the introduction of financial literacy topics to students in our community, ServU FCU offers a wide variety of presentations for FREE to your classroom. We utilize both the National Endowment for Financial Education High School Program (NEFE) and the New York Credit Union Foundation's Money and Me Program materials.

Topics Include:

- Banking Basics
- Lending
- Identity Theft
- Life Skills
- Careers in Banking
- Budgeting
- Math & Money
- Checkbooks

**Owlstanding Teacher Award:**

For the second year, ServU will award three deserving teachers with cash prizes for being Owlstanding Teachers. Winners demonstrate commitment to students, innovative teaching style and concern for the community. Nominations will be accepted in the Spring.



Painted Post • Corning • Bath • Hornell • Alfred • Dundee

[www.servucu.com](http://www.servucu.com)

1-800-443-0663



# Make your dental & vision care a priority!

Well, another year has passed us by and the New Year is upon us! As you take stock of the various resolutions you've made for this year, now is the time to make your dental & vision care a top priority.

## Dental Care



The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed Dental Plan features the MetLife PDP Plus Network.

### The Plan offers easy to understand dental coverage that allows you to:

- Protect you and your family by providing competitively-priced dental coverage for most preventive and routine services that help promote long-term oral health.
- Choose the dentist of your choice at the time of treatment. You do not have to select a primary dentist and there is no ID card to show or referrals needed for specialty care.
- Save on out-of-pocket expenses by receiving services from thousands of participating dentist locations nationwide that agree to charge fees typically 15% to 45% lower than the average charges in your area.

With the MetLife Dental Plan featuring the PDP Plus Network, you'll receive a wide range of benefits that provide choice, savings and convenience to help make your dental health a priority.

## Vision Care

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed Vision Plan provided by Davis Vision ensures that you are able to obtain proper eye care.



### The plan offers a variety of benefits, including:

- One complete eye exam (including glaucoma testing, and when professionally indicated, dilation).
- One pair of eyeglasses (lenses & frames) or contact lenses per benefit period – paid in full according to plan specifications from participating providers.

Once you've enrolled in the plan and you're confirmed, simply call an in-network provider, identify yourself with your name or NYSUT ID number (available on your NYSUT membership card), make an appointment, and use all of the plan benefits at that visit (exam & glasses cannot be split into two appointments).

The provider's office will contact Davis Vision and verify your eligibility for benefits. There are no claim forms or ID cards needed to use the plan.

## February is Member Appreciation Month!

Don't forget that NYSUT Member Benefits is teaming up with its endorsed program providers for a special month-long event in **February 2015**.

Member Appreciation Month will feature a special prize drawing each day of the month in February, including a Bose Wave Radio, iPad Mini, several



Amazon Kindles, and a variety of gift cards. The winners of the daily prize drawings will be announced exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

You **MUST** be a member of the voluntary Member Benefits MAP Alert email service to be eligible for these drawings!

For more details about these endorsed programs or Member Appreciation Month, visit the Member Benefits website at [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call **800-626-8101**.