



# Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

*Partners for a Better Community*

January/February 2023  
Newsletter

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

OTA - Facebook Page

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## A Message from our President - David Wright

Spring is just around the corner! The current weather and temperature makes it feel like it will be just a few weeks away. But it is still February and mother nature has a way of teasing us with some warmth for a few weeks then turning back to normal, colder, typical February and early March temperatures. Besides Spring 2023 being just around the corner, the OTA elections process is coming up in the next few months. Every 2 years the elections are held for the OTA Executive Board. The Executive board is composed of President, 3 Vice-Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer Officers.

This election cycle, Heather O'Connell has been appointed election commissioner. She will collect nominations. Any active OTA member can be nominated from now until March 14th, for all of the positions previously mentioned. Once the window of nominations has closed, Heather will create the method of casting votes. Each active OTA member will have an opportunity to cast their vote electronically through the Google Form. After the votes have been tallied, the next OTA Executive Board will start their 2 year team starting in May.

If you are or if you know a colleague that might be a good candidate, please feel free to reach out to any of the current officers and we can share with you some time commitments and other duties that are required for these positions.

We have 2 current executive board members that are not seeking reelection this cycle. Dewayne Cronk and BeeAnn O'Herien are two very valuable members that have worked very hard and are dedicated Union members. I have come to value their input on various topics that have required our attention over the past few years. BeeAnn, who has been the OTA Treasurer for the past 6 years, has spent many hours organizing, documenting, and updating the OTA financial records. Dewayne has served as an OTA Vice-President since 2008. In addition to his role as a VP, Dewyane is also a valued member of the negotiation teams. He has worked on 4 previous contracts and our current contract. I would like to thank them both for their support, time, and devotion to the OTA.

Thanks

David Wright



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## UPCOMING MEETINGS:

### OTA Representative Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month) ALL ARE WELCOME!

Next Meeting:	Feb 14th	3:30 pm North Broad
	March 14th	3:30 pm Oneida High School
	April 18th	3:30 pm TBA
	May 16th	3:30 pm TBA

Any special meeting dates will be announced through e-mail.

### Board of Education Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month)

	Feb 14th	6:00 pm North Broad Elementary
	March 14th	6:00 pm Oneida High School
	April 18th	6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center
	May 16th	6:00 pm District Office

## Board of Education Meetings

The Oneida City School District Board of Education will meet on the second Tuesday of every month.

The meetings are generally held at one of the buildings in the district and begin at 6 pm.



We all need to remember that it is our job, our livelihood, that is constantly scrutinized. Make every effort to attend a meeting to show solidarity in the OTA. Remember, it is in your best interest to know what is going on in your district.

## Donations and Contributions

Great Job So far!

September we donated money to the Oneida City Rec. Department  
October donations went to Breast Cancer awareness

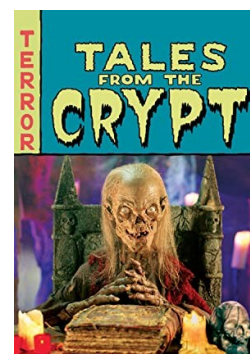
November went to Karing Kitchen \$207 (Student Council raised \$346) and to the Community Center \$150

December donations went to Local Families (\$481)



# TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Winter Edition



The Oneida Retired Educators Association (OREA) wants you to know we continue to be interested in the education of our children, the situations, rights and benefits of current and retired educators, and the state and federal legislation that affects us all.

It's February, and many retirees have headed to warmer spots, one of the many benefits of not having to go to work every day. I just returned from warm, sunny vacation in Antigua to learn it was time for the next OTA Newsletter, so decided to recycle a TALES that was published in 2014. Wow!

Nine years of these columns, and most of them continue to be pertinent as far as reminding us all of the importance of a strong union.

For that Tale, I asked a question which was perfectly and interestingly answered by Virginia Seminaroti. Here again is Virginia's Tale.

Question: Who needs a union, anyway?

Answer: Anyone who wants a legal, formal contract with a set salary schedule for all employees and clearly defined and stated benefits.

Tale: My most vivid, and maybe "most livid" memory of the pre-NYSUT days in Oneida occurred in the early 60s when the Board of Education asked the teachers to agree to accept for one year a \$50 raise across the board because that was all that it could afford. The teachers agreed to that amount, only to learn later that the District had received that year an additional \$20,000 in State Aid earmarked solely for raising teacher salaries.

How could this have happened? First of all, we had no union contract and no real collective bargaining unit. The agreement between the OTA and the District was the establishment of steps on a pay scale based on years of service. Then each teacher negotiated his/her own salary agreement and accepted the benefit of a basic hospital plan.

In my first years with the District I soon became aware of how inequitable this system was. I learned that not every first year teacher started on the same bottom step. Often the men with families to support were jumpstarted up the scale while women remained on the bottom steps. And it was appalling to note that some "high steppers" on the pay scale lacked professional abilities.

When the OTA joined NYSUT and became a union in the mid-70s, teachers finally gained bargaining powers not only on salary benefits, but on professional rights and securities. With a union contract a plethora of other unfair practices were eradicated. A whole new system of bargaining was implemented. The OTA finally acquired the assistance of a knowledgeable and resourceful union.

You should know that I wonder to this day about what it would have been like without a union to stabilize and make teacher salaries negotiable and equitable. I think back to my first year's teaching salary in 1958; it was \$3800 plus hospital benefit and a retirement contribution of eight percent. The pay scale increments were \$200 each year. Hypothetically on that plan, my final average salary in 1991 could have been \$10,400! Realistically, better increments would have kicked in over the years, but enough?? Would that system of salary agreement have worked for me? For others? For you?

Virginia Seminaroti--English teacher at OSMS, Retired 1991 (Thank you, Virginia!)

## Happenings in and around the OTA



Hello, my name is **Russ Meyers** and I am the new **Earth Science teacher** here at the **High School**.

I received my Bachelor's Degree from Oswego University and I am certified in Physics and Earth Science. I went on to get my Masters in Education from Elmira College.

Prior to coming to Oneida, I taught Physics in Maryland for 30 years. I am married to Jennifer and have three step-children. While I am away from the school, I enjoy playing a round of golf, fishing or relaxing with a book.



My name is **Lynne McHugh**. I was raised in Sherrill, NY and graduated from VVS in 1997. I will be working out of North Broad Elementary and Durhamville Elementary as a Mental Health Counselor providing mostly IEP counseling and assessment, as well as filling other needs relating to crisis situations. I'm very excited to join the team at OCSD. My Mom, Mary Jeanne Bialas, spent her entire career as a teacher at Oneida High School. I have been familiar with OCSD since I was old enough to walk. I received my BA in psychology from the University of Rochester in 2001 and received my M. Ed. in psychology from Springfield College in 2003 and became a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist that same year. I returned to the area in 2006, met my husband Andy, who is also an Oneida grad. We have a daughter, Molly, who is in her final year at Willard Prior. Professionally, I have worked in a variety of settings. I started my private practice in 2008 and have maintained that successfully since that time. I have worked across the spectrum of local mental health service systems including Placement Diversion, providing outpatient mental health counseling through the Oneida Nation Behavioral Health Clinic and more recently with the Help Restore Hope Center through Liberty and as an EAP counselor through the Center for Family Life and Recovery. I'm very excited to join the team here at Oneida and to have the opportunity to serve my community in such a meaningful way.



## Thinking About Retirement?

Whether you are 1, 3 or 5 years out, you want to check out NYSTRS. There is an abundance of information for you to collect, digest and use to your benefit. Don't forget to sign up for one of their retirement seminars. There's still time!!!

NYSUT Retirement Seminars - go on NYSTRS to sign up for one



## Happenings in and around the OTA

### OTA 2022-23 Retirees

#### Congratulations to each of you!

Say “Hello” to our current OTA members who have decided to retire at the end of the school year 2023. They will move on from the OTA and join the ranks of our retired members in the Oneida Retired Educators Association (OREA). When you see one of these amazing educators, wish them well in their next step of their journey through life.



**Dewayne Cronk** is an English Teacher at Oneida High School

**Dave Dampf** is an Social Studies Teacher at Otto Shortell Middle School.

**Jacqueline Moyer** is a 6th Grade Teacher at Otto Shortell Middle School

**Holly Marshall** is a Special Education Teacher at Durhamville Elementary School

**Lisa Mahon** is an Art Teacher at Otto Shortell Middle School

### OTA Website

Take a look at the “updated” OTA website [www.oneidateacher.com](http://www.oneidateacher.com). You can find a copy of our current contract there. Past issues of the OTA Newsletter are also available on the website.

Some new additions include the Tier 3 Medication Reimbursement form. This is money that was bargained for by the OTA to help offset Tier 3 medical costs.

Also included are forms for Flex Spending on Dependent care as well as Flex Spending on Health Care.

Questions on these things? Contact a Building Rep or any Executive member.



## Happenings in and around the OTA

### OTA ELECTIONS 2023

The OTA Executive Board elections are here. Heather O'Connell is the official Election Commissioner for the OTA 2023 elections. This year, as with the 2021 elections, elections will be held as a mail in ballot through a Google Form link which Heather is going to organize.

All current Executive positions are up for election. If you want to nominate someone, or yourself, [all nominations need to be submitted](#) to Heather at HOconnell@oneidacsd.org [by March 14th](#). Below is a list of positions and the current nominations.

<b>President:</b>	<b>Nominations: David Wright</b>
<b>V. President (3 positions):</b>	<b>Nominations: Megan Kelly, Steve Paz</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>Nominations: Chrissy Sawner</b>
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Nominations: Jennifer Armlin</b>

If you are nominated for a position, Heather would like from you, by March 14th, the following information:

- \*Positions held/building(s) worked in while in tenure in Oneida
- \*Years of teaching/years of teaching in Oneida
- \*Reasons why you feel you would be best suited for the position that you are nominated for ('sell yourselves')
- \*A photo of your choosing to include with your bio

The Official ballots will be sent out Tuesday, March 21st. They will be in a Google Form link sent to all active OTA members through your school email account. All ballots will have to be returned by Friday, March 24th for them to count.

The results of the ballot will be announced on April 11th, 2023. All elected positions will begin their two year term effect May 9th, 2023.

### What Has the OTA Done For You?



If you are looking to retire, whether in a year or a couple of years, the OTA has negotiated many benefits to help you move into retirement. Here are several negotiated incentives for you to consider;

- ◆ **Retirement Incentive Benefit — meet the criteria and get a retirement bonus**
  - ◆ **Accumulated Sick Leave Benefit — if you have sick days remaining when you retire, the District will buy them back from you**
  - ◆ **Service Salary Adjustment - after 10 years of service, the District will offer you a service incentive**
- All of the incentives have criteria. Please read your contract or contact an Executive or Building Rep for more information**

# Happenings in and around the OTA

Holiday fun in our buildings! Here are some pictures from some of our members.



Amy & Cindy at SS -12 Days of Christmas



Christmas at NB



Grinch and Santa at NB



Christmas at NB



Kristin's door decoration OHS



NHS Christmas donations



Making cookies OHS

# Check out all your union membership has to offer!

## LEGAL SERVICE PLAN

Plan benefits include:

- Crucial estate planning documents (a Simple Will, Health Care Proxy, Living Will & Durable Power of Attorney)
- Free telephone consultations
- Guaranteed maximum fees for specific legal matters

## FINANCIAL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Plan benefits include:

- Unbiased objective advice
- Free telephone & virtual consultations
- Assistance with retirement planning, 403(b) savings, college savings, tax planning and more



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the right,  
visiting [memberbenefits.nysut.org](https://memberbenefits.nysut.org)  
or calling **800-626-8101**.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

Jan-Feb 2023