



Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

Partners for a Better Community

A Message from our President - David Wright

As each year comes to an end, so do the teaching careers of several members of the OTA. It's with great pleasure, as well as a bit of jealousy, that we congratulate this year's retirees....

**Dona Fiedler
Jackie Skibitski
Anna Collins
Maggie Shoeneck
Julie Koelsch**

Many thanks go out to each as they have dedicated many years and countless hours to the youth of Oneida and the betterment of the District. We wish them the very best in retirement...Relax and enjoy!

This year's state budget promises to fully fund foundation aid to all districts. A large sector of the OCSD budget is funded by foundation aid. After many years of budgets that fell short of expectations this is a change that is welcomed. In addition to fully funding the foundation aid, the state budget is also promising a minimum 3% increase in foundation aid to all districts in New York State. Other changes to the state budget include some reforms to the Tier 5 and 6 pension plans. It reduces the vested period from 10 years to 5 years. While this change is considered small to some it is a step in the right direction to keep and attract new people into our profession. I envision that more changes will need to be made to encourage and keep talented professionals in this extremely tight labor market.

While it is encouraging that Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York Legislature are more understanding and are attempting to address the needs of education within the state, it should not be taken for granted that the local school budget will be approved. It takes the voters - supporters like us to ensure that it does. Please make time to vote for your local school budget on Tuesday, May 17th.

**March/April
Newsletter**

Volume 50—Issue #4

www.oneidateacher.com



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UPCOMING MEETINGS:

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

Next Meeting:	Apr 19th	3:30 pm	Google meet
	May 17th	3:30 pm	Google meet
	June 14th	3:30 pm	Google Meet
	Sept 13th	3:30 pm	TBD

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

Board of Education Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month)

Apr 19th	6:00 pm	Costello Transportation Center
May 17th	6:00 pm	DO
June 14th	6:00 pm	Costello Transportation Center
Sept 13th		

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

We are still making donations!



Through the first half of our current year, We have managed to raise just over \$3400.00 (add Feb & Mar) That is amazing! Congratulations and Great Job.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Spring Edition

In the last edition, we reiterated the importance of Tim McElheran in the unionization of the Oneida Teachers Association. Last month we lost Barry Zebley, the man who carried on the work Tim began and became an OTA and then OREA icon. I asked Rich MacAlpine, a colleague and close friend of Barry's, to tell the important story of Barry Zebley. Thank you, Rich, for the tale. (P. Albaugh, 2007 Retiree)

August of 1968: I had just signed a contract to teach Social Studies at Oneida High School. I was given a tour of the building and in the process met many of the teachers who were there preparing for the upcoming school year. I was twenty-two at the time and they were all gray-haired and a LOT older than me. Then I was shown the Social Studies workroom up on the second floor and in there was a young guy about my age making transparencies. That was how I met Barry Zebley and it was the start of a 54-year friendship. We taught together for 33 years until my retirement in 2001; he retired two years later. What was an aging faculty in the late 1960s became a young faculty in the 1970s and then an aging faculty again until we all retired in the early 2000s.



The members of the Social Studies Department of Oneida High School

Barry was head of the Social Studies Department for over twenty-five years. As such, he ran a tight ship. He was a great organizer and a fierce advocate for the members of his department. He insisted on having a major role in the selection of new Social Studies teachers. More significantly, he was the President of the Oneida Teachers Association at a critical time in its development. The year before I started teaching in Oneida, the Board gave teachers a \$50 raise and a member of the Association actually wrote a thank you letter to the Board. The process of turning the OTA from an "association" into a UNION began with President Tim McElheran in the high-inflation years of the late 1970s. When Tim McElheran left the district around 1980, Jim Gleason took over as President and named Barry as his Vice President. When Gleason retired in 1982, Barry moved up to President.

Barry took what Tim started and further strengthened the organization during the eighteen years he served as President (1982-2000). He was a key part of a tough negotiating team when it came to contract time. For years, Tony Burnett played "bad cop" and Barry played "good cop": a successful combination that gained concessions from Board negotiators. Twice in his time as President, the OTA membership was prepared to call a strike. Both times that caused the Board to yield on important issues at the last minute. Although during those times, Barry had an adversarial relationship with the Board and the Superintendent, he earned their respect. Former Superintendent Rick Volp recently wrote: "When I think of Barry Zebley, the words Leadership and Honesty come to mind first. During my seventeen years in the Oneida administration, I worked closely with Barry. He always sported three hats simultaneously: Teacher, Social Studies Chair, and Oneida Teacher's Association President. He wore each of these hats confidently and fulfilled the associated roles very effectively. As the long time Social Studies Chair, Barry recruited talented faculty and encouraged their growth as instructors. As the Oneida Teachers' Association President, Barry represented his membership vigorously and tirelessly.

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

Spring Edition (cont'd from previous page)

In contract negotiations, Barry was always strong in his advocacy, and always fair. We shared a mutual respect, often reinforced by humor, in the face of many challenges. Barry consistently performed the responsibilities attached to his three roles, with the aforementioned honesty and superior leadership.” Former Superintendent Pete Tamburro added: “Barry was always a man of his word with great integrity. His follow through on any project or issue was impeccable. He was capable of seeing the big picture and both sides of any issue.” Marc Reitz was the attorney for the school district and, as such, sat across the table from the OTA negotiators. Leo Maloney, who was on that team with Barry reported: “When we retired in 2003 Marc Reitz came to Oneida to wish us well and commented that although the negotiations were often tough, it was always about issues and matters of principle, never personal. Unlike many schools that he dealt with, the guiding principles were for the good of the organization -- not ‘feathering the nest.’ One year in allocating the pot of money that the District granted, there were only four people that did not receive the minimum percentage raise...three of those were on the negotiating team!”



Barry and Mildred pose with a cruise ship captain somewhere in the Caribbean

When Barry was serious, he was all business: focused, dedicated, and determined. However, the man loved to have fun. Early in our careers in Oneida we were part of what eventually became known as the Curriculum Development Committee, which was basically going out for a few beers on Friday afternoons to blow off steam and celebrate the end of another week of school. We called it that so we could ask each other in the hall at school: “Are you going to the Curriculum Development Committee meeting this afternoon?” The kids must have thought we were really dedicated to be doing that on a Friday afternoon! Those who knew Barry socially are very familiar with his alter ego, Mildred Duck. One time another retired colleague, Kevin Roy, and I got in a serious discussion on Facebook about different breeds of migrating ducks. That was around 2010 when I lived over on Keuka Lake - mergansers, redheads, ringnecks, buffleheads. Hoping to add a little fun, Barry created the persona of Mildred Duck. He went and got a toy duck that one of his daughters had as a child and suddenly Mildred Duck was everywhere. Mildred Duck started posting on his wife’s Facebook page until she kicked him off and then Mildred got her own page! Mildred went to morning coffee at McDonald’s with a group of retired colleagues called the Brain Trust. Mildred went on cruises, went to Ireland. Barry loved to see people’s reactions to him carrying a blue, stuffed duck. He used it as a conversation starter. Often, he would ask people to pose for a photo with Mildred. Most agreed, but a few definitely did not. I remember one guy in an Irish pub saying to his friend: “That bloke’s got a duck!” For those who knew Barry socially, he was a joy to be around.

Barry died this past March at the age of 78 after a months long battle with brain cancer. Teachers in the Oneida City School District today still benefit from the strengthening of the OTA that occurred during the years that he was President. Those of us who are now retired especially appreciate the work that he did on medical insurance, both before and after his retirement. In retirement, he served as the medical insurance expert for the Oneida Retired Educators Association. His time spent in our profession was time well spent, and both those of you who are still teaching and those of us who are retired benefit from that.

Richard MacAlpine...Retired 2001...Oneida High School

Happenings in and around the OTA

OTA 2022 Retirees (current)

Congratulations to each of you!

Say “Hello” to our current OTA members who have decided to retire at the end of the school year 2022. 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 on their next step of their journey through life.

Jackie Skibitski is a Special Education Teacher at Otto Shortell Middle School

Dona Fiedler is a Foreign Language Teacher at Oneida High School

Julie Koelsch who taught at Willard Prior, Seneca Street, and Otto Shortell Middle School

Anna Collins is a Nurse at North Broad Elementary School

Maggie Schoeneck is a Nurse at Oneida High School



Guardian Angel Society Annual Kentucky Derby Fundraiser

The OTA purchased 2 tickets to this annual fundraiser.



Kevin Goggins



Melissa Trent

And the winner of the two tickets is **Kevin Goggins!** Kevin could not attend the event so the tickets were given to the 1st responder to the emails **Melissa Trent.** However, due to a family issue, Melissa could not attend so the tickets finally made their way to our 2nd responder **Matt Quenneville!** Matt, enjoy the Kentucky Derby Party on May 7th, 2022.



Matt Quenneville

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



Our OTA Retirees



Dona Fiedler: Foreign Language Otto Shortell and Oneida High School
My Teaching Career began at Stockbridge Valley Central School. I remained there for several years- always hoping a position would open here in Oneida- my alma mater. Thankfully, a position became available in 2000, where I was hired to teach 7th grade Spanish at OSMS and Spanish 2 at OHS. After a full year of traveling from OSMS to OHS, a full-time position opened up at OSMS, where I remained for 10 years before moving to OHS, where I am finishing out my 30-year career.

Words can't express how I have loved being a teacher. Teaching is not just a job; it's a vocation. It has come with many highs and lows, but it has been extremely fulfilling. So many students have come and gone over the last 30 years, yet many of those students have made me a better person and teacher-their impact on my life is immeasurable.

Although a new, exciting chapter will be starting, I often think that a lot of my identity is as an educator and I will have to adapt to a "new normal". I will wholeheartedly miss the time I have spent with my fellow Foreign Language colleagues- they will never know how much I have learned from them and admire them. They are all amazing teachers and a huge asset to this District as is the entire faculty and staff.

I want to encourage the recently hired teachers to become/stay active in the OTA in order to remain informed of what is happening around them. The efforts of our officers and negotiating team are the reason why we have such a stellar contract. Don't allow yourself to be apathetic! To the veteran teachers, **HANG IN THERE!** I hope you know how important you are to this district!

I look forward to and pray for a long, healthy retirement where I can, not only travel, but spend a lot of time with my children and loved ones. I am so grateful to have been a part of this wonderful district and I wish you all a happy, healthy future.



Jackie Skibitski: Special Education Otto Shortell Middle School

I am proud to have dedicated my career to the students of this district. I have great memories of many great, hard working colleagues. My Mentor, Deb Philips, who was a blast to work with, showed me how important it is to work hard EVERY day because the path for our children to truly be successful lies in the faculty's expectations.

I am a big Union supporter who was fortunate to work with and reap the benefits of the dedicated leaders of our OTA. Former OTA President Barry Zebley encouraged me to get involved and the advice from this ultimate professional leader meant extra-work but extremely worthwhile rewards. If you are not involved in OUR union then start ...TODAY.

This district can be special. I met my husband in the lunchroom, my daughters challenged its most rigorous curriculum and thrived in its atmosphere and our friends are like-minded educators. Please maintain this District's influence on children.

My classroom light will be turned off after 31 years....but the beer light will be on every Friday nighttake advantage.

Our OTA Retirees



Julie Koelsch: Elementary Teacher Seneca Street, Willard Prior and Otto Shortell Middle School

Yes! After thirty years of teaching, I am ready for the next chapter of my life. Without a doubt, I see traveling, quilting, and gardening in my future. I am originally from Oneida. I was born and raised here. I became a teacher because I love to teach and learn. I wanted to give back to my community and help kids succeed. I understood the Oneida culture and I knew that I could make a difference in my students' lives. And I'm proud to say that over the past 30 years, that desire has never changed. I have loved watching my students grow and learn. I have seen second generations walk through my classroom door. The memories of smiles and laughter are what I keep closest to my heart.

I started my career off at Willard Prior teaching third grade for nine years and sixth grade for two years. At the time, Barney was the most popular PBS kids show on television. I had one clunky computer in my third grade classroom that everyone shared. I remember Halloween parades around the block, neighbors sitting on their porches to watch us walk by. We did the attendance and lunch count on paper. I taught cursive handwriting. Kids were given a spelling list every week. "Cut and Paste" was self explanatory. It involved scissors and glue. The photocopier machine? Slow! Double sided copies? Flip the paper on your own. Schools were unlocked and parents were welcomed to visit the classrooms. Field trips? We went on a lot! My greatest mentors were from Willard Prior. Mary Ann Benedict, Sue Koory, Jackie Moller and Barb Carona.... They were just a few of the greatest teachers I ever worked with. Whole Language was the "bees knees," and my curriculum revolved around literature.

While at Willard Prior, my family grew. I became very busy with my three boys, Brian, Nathan and Steven. Sometime after my youngest son Steven was born, I opted to go and teach fourth grade at Seneca Street. The change was good for me. I enjoyed learning and teaching the different curriculum. I taught every subject **except** science.

After eleven years at Seneca Street, I wanted to try teaching 6th grade in the middle school setting. I have absolutely loved the middle school. I work with a great bunch of students, teachers, and administrators. While here, I definitely came out of my comfort zone, and embraced science. Thank you, Miss Hein.

My advice to you all: Do not fear change and embrace all that life has to offer. I do not know where my path is going to lead me next, but I do know that I will only take it one step at a time. Thank you and good luck to all of you.



Maggie Shoeneck: School Nurse Oneida High School

I began working at OHS in the Fall of 2009. Prior to that I worked at Crouse Hospital in Medical Surgeries and Pediatrics. I have loved working at the High School and rarely say "I don't want to go to work today". I will miss the students and working with the most caring bunch of people I have ever worked with. I am hoping to return to Oneida Schools and help the Nurses, as they need me.

Traveling to a warmer place during the cold winters is definitely on my bucket list and spending more time with my grandchildren and more time hunting!

Happenings in and around the OTA

OTA Scholarship Nominations

This year the OTA will be awarding five \$500 scholarships to deserving members of the graduating class. Nominees are posted on the OTA website (oneidateacer.com) with teachers choosing the students they want to nominate. The Selection Committee will finalize the nominees. Voting will be open from April 5th through April 22nd.

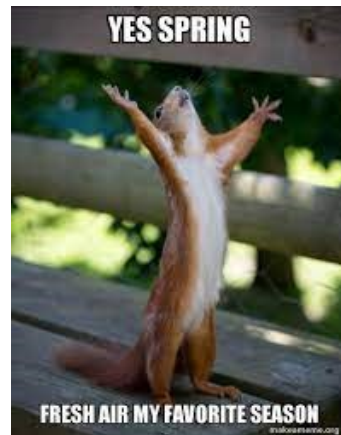
Criteria for the Scholarship include:

- 1- Be accepted at an institution of higher education.
- 2- Have a need for financial assistance.
- 3- Have achieved the Standard of Excellence established by the Oneida City School District. According to these standards, the nominee may be described as.....

"an effective communicator"
"an applier of technology"
"a life long learner"
"a responsible citizen"
"a critical thinker"
"an independent learner"
"a global citizen"



Anna Collins — Nurse
North Broad Elementary
COVID Coordinator



SPRING FLING!

OTA Annual Spring Fling

It's back and bigger than ever! Well, almost.

Becca Piccola has taken the lead on the Spring Fling. If there are any members interested in assisting with this annual event, Contact Becca at rpiccola@oneidacsd.org.

As the plans continue to get finalized, be sure to keep your email open. Great time for Food, Fun, Friends, Prizes and maybe an adult beverage or two!



NYSRTA Grant Application

The Retired Teachers' Association of Central New York Region is offering a \$1000 Grant to teacher's in the counties of CNY. Deadline for the application is June 1st, 2022.

For more information, you can contact Stella King at sking214@twcnny.rr.com.

You may also contact me for a copy of the information that was sent out.



May 7th, 2022

Marriott Syracuse Downtown • Grand Ballroom • 5-10 PM

Watch the Derby Live • Music by Atlas

*Derby Themed Buffet • Whiskey Tastings & Mint Juleps
Fabulous Basket Raffles • Pick-a-Pony Contest
Best Dressed/Hat Contest • Special Hotel Rate*

— \$95 per person —

For reservations, sponsorships and advertising opportunities call or visit:

315-422-7218 • GuardianAngelSoc.org

Please note all purchases are non-refundable, they can however be transferred or become fully tax-deductible.

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When you're planning for the future, what's at the top of your list?

- A comfortable nest egg for retirement
- Providing for your family
- Purchasing a new home
- Home improvements
- Purchasing a new vehicle
- Travel and entertainment



NYSUT Member Benefits offers dozens of endorsed programs to help turn those dreams into reality.

When it comes to saving you money, protecting your family and helping you plan for the future, NYSUT Member Benefits has a variety of programs and services to help with your goals. Whether you are just starting out on your journey, well into your career or enjoying a well-deserved retirement, there is a Member Benefits-endorsed plan that may be of assistance featuring value-added extras unavailable to the public.

Get started by first bookmarking the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org. There, you will find numerous tools and resources available to you as a NYSUT member – including a **Financial Learning Center** with articles designed to help educate you on financial decisions and topics. Member Benefits also endorses important **legal and financial services** along with an **online savings program** featuring some of today's most competitive interest rates.

Next up would be looking in the "Shopping, Travel & Personal" section of our site for **MB Discounts & Deals**. This program utilizes the nation's largest private discount network to provide NYSUT members with exclusive access to savings of up to 50% on restaurant dine-in or take out, groceries and food delivery, clothing and shoes, hotels and flights, vehicle maintenance, and much more.



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org
or calling 800-626-8101.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Mar/Apr 2022