



# Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

*Partners for a Better Community*

**March/April  
Newsletter**

Volume 46—Issue #4

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

To the members of the OTA,

When I was first hired, like many new teachers, being a part of a union meant little more to me than paying dues from my paycheck. I knew the purpose of a union but I didn't think it had a huge impact on me and my new job. Over time I was able to learn more about the importance of having a strong union through stories from veteran teachers. However, it wasn't until a few years ago that I truly learned the importance of our union.

On June 11, 2016 my dad suffered a very severe stroke. I will never forget that first day in the hospital and writing an email to my building and district administrators telling them that I didn't know how long I would be out for. Within hours I had responses from all of them telling me not to worry about school and that I would have the next ten days off as outlined in our contract because my family member was sick. This part of our contract, that I knew nothing about, allowed me to stay out of the rest of the school year without using a single sick day.

Thankfully, my dad was able to survive his stroke due to the amazing nurses and doctors at Upstate hospital. My parents use my mom's insurance, which is the same as ours at Oneida, as she is a teacher's aide at Madison-Oneida BOCES. During his initial 26 day stay in the Neuro-ICU at Upstate, my dad was given countless CT Scans, medications, blood work, and every possible test imaginable, on top of multiple surgeries.

My mom is the president of the teacher's aide union at Madison-Oneida BOCES. Right before my dad had his stroke she was offered to switch the insurance plan offered to her, in exchange for a pay increase. The new insurance would have co-pays and limits for many different things, such as CT scans and blood work. My dad's initial stay at Upstate would have cost my parents thousands of dollars out of pocket. Instead, when my mom received her statement from the insurance company, which totaled close to \$1 million, she paid \$0 out of pocket.

I learned quickly how important a union can be. During the most difficult experience in my life, the work of previous OTA members allowed me to be able to focus on my family. Hopefully, you never need to use many of the things provided in our contract, but it is great to know they are there when problems do occur.

With the major case coming to the Supreme Court this summer, I urge each of you to pledge to remain in the OTA, regardless of the outcome. A few years ago I would have never imagined that a union could do so much for me and my family.

Chris Meeker Oneida High School

## UPCOMING MEETINGS:

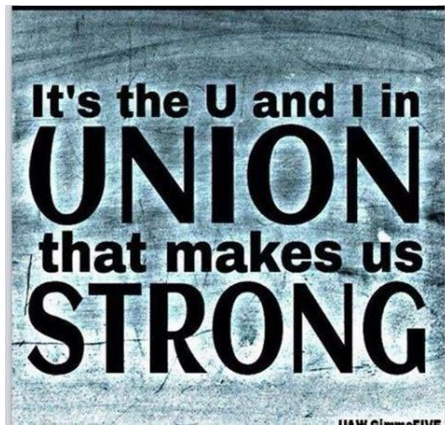
### OTA Representative Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month) ALL ARE WELCOME!

Next Meeting: Feb 13th 3:30 pm rm. 100 @ Oneida High School  
Mar 13th 3:30 pm rm. TBA @ Otto Shortell Middle School  
Apr 11th 3:30 pm TBA  
May 8th 3:30 pm TBA

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

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

Feb 13th 6:00 pm @ Oneida High School  
Mar 13th 6:00 pm @ Otto Shortell Middle School  
Apr 17th 6:00 pm @ Costello Transportation Center  
May 8th 6:00 pm @ Costello Transportation Center



## Your Union!

The **Janus** case is to go in front of the Supreme Court early in 2018 with a decision expected sometime in May or June.

## Donations and Contributions



This past March, and again in April, the OTA and OSEU came together to raise funds for a couple of our members. In all, we raised over \$2000 to help the family with their everyday expenses.

Thank you to everyone who contributed!



## TALES FROM THE CRYPT

The members of the Oneida Retired Educators Association remind you that we are alive and well and still active on the educational scene in Oneida. With over 160 members, 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.

We add our hearty congratulations and best wishes to those OTA members who have announced their retirement plans! Jeff, Brian, Tree, Bob, Kim and Carol...we stand ready to welcome you to our club, and hope you will become involved with the activities of the OREA and especially our quest to keep informed and be supportive of the OTA. You will receive information from us, as well as an invitation to the long-awaited "Back to School But Not For Us" breakfast that we hold each year on the opening day of school.

It's amazing to think of the lives you have touched throughout your years in our hallowed, yes, hallowed, profession. You have helped to mold the future...they don't all turn out to be the greatest citizens, but so many of them do, thanks in no small part to the compassion and dedication you have shown them. You have also made lasting friendships among colleagues along the way, and hopefully you will keep in close touch with these friends in retirement. And...here it comes...as you look back at your career and look to your future with its retirement check, all-important health insurance, and numerous NYSUT Retiree Benefits, you must think of the importance of a strong OTA and the benefits you have enjoyed because of your union. Without it, you could be looking at a whole different picture.

Thank you for any service you have given the OTA throughout your career. I know some of you have served as Building Reps or some other capacity, and it is much appreciated by all. A special thanks to Brian for his years of OTA involvement! Brian, your years of untold toil as President and negotiator are so appreciated by the OREA members. You have ALWAYS had our backs and have NEVER forgotten us when you were at the table, and for that we are forever grateful.

As these colleagues retire, it will be their turn to support the active OTA members and ask them to remember the importance of the union and the hard work of all who have gone before. These are troubling times for unions...witness the Janus Case, which threatens to take away a union's rights to deduct "fair share" fees and union agency fees. These fees provide representation, rights protection and determine our future...actives and retirees ALL depend on dues and agency fees to support our basic services. Even if the SCOTUS rules against labor unions, we MUST show our members how important it is to continue their union membership and pay their dues, for the well-being of us all.

Once again, congratulations to the new class of retirees! To all the "continue-ees": keep up the excellent work! We hear great things about what is going on in our schools, and we continue to be proud of the teachers and staff of the OCSD. Continue to fight the good fight for the benefit of us all.

PATRICIA ALBAUGH, Oneida Castle, Ret. 2007

## Janus v. AFSCME

Mark Janus, an Illinois healthcare and family services worker, has filed a lawsuit that has now been heard by the United States Supreme Court. His case asserts that he shouldn't have to pay dues to his union. The court has already heard oral arguments and will probably make its ruling within the next couple of months.

If the Supreme Court sides with Mark Janus, there will be immediate impacts felt across the country. All states would become Right to Work states – like Wisconsin is now. Average teacher salary in right to work states is \$49,269 compared with \$60,779 in Fair Share states like New York. Average health insurance benefits in right to work states are 21% higher than in fair share states.

*“The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress.”*

*“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone...Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us.”*

*-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Your salary, your benefits, and the privileges you enjoy within your contract are potentially jeopardized by this case. If the Oneida Teacher's Association remains strong and unified, many of the negative effects will be minimized and/or completely negated. This is why we have asked you to sign commitment cards as a show of solidarity to your union. Thank you for your support.

Have a wonderful, well-deserved vacation!



## Happenings in and around the OTA



**Jeff Didio**  
Physical Education  
Durhamville Elementary

Over 31 years of Teaching and Coaching have flown by and it has been a happy time- a time where I learned many life lessons and also a time where I learned a great deal about life. The many years have taught me the value of having a positive and enthusiastic group of co-workers. I want to pay **tribute to my colleagues for their support and** friendship. I will always remember our shared laughter, our joys as well as our struggles. Thank you too, for memories, words of encouragement, and your trust. I am extremely grateful for the role that everyone has played throughout the years- they have been happy years and years that I will always remember fondly.



**Brian Mroczek**  
Math Teacher  
Oneida High School

There is uncertainty with the upcoming Janus decision. Now, on the surface, it's understandable. After all, with any shift in curriculum, APPR, budgets, and demographics, there is always fallout that is out of our control. The Janus case is different. Its aftermath is completely in our control. **Simply ignore the decision and stay in the union.** Any thought of your union disappearing should scare the hell out of you. I could list the table of contents from the contract, but let's look at family health insurance only. As a union member, your dues are roughly \$700 per year and family health coverage is about \$2300, totaling around \$3000 annually. My non-union neighbor **showed me** his monthly health insurance bill of \$950, which is \$11,400 annually. If that alone isn't enough to convince you the importance of the OTA, grab your contract and read up on tenure, guaranteed salaries, class size, retirement incentives, school calendar, and evaluation and grievance procedures. Without the OTA, they all go away and...so could your retirement system. The OTA has always done what is best for the greater good. I would encourage everyone to become **more** involved with the union. It exists for you; it can become stronger with your help.

**ALL IN FAVOR  
OF SPRING  
SAY "I"**



**UNION STRONG**

## Happenings in and around the OTA



**Robert Richie**  
Technology Education  
Otto Shortell Middle  
School

All,  
Approximately 15 percent of the private sector workforce was represented by unions in the early '30s, just before passage of the Wagner Act. After the passage of the Wagner Act, union representation soared to a peak of approximately 40 percent of the workforce by the mid-'50s." Then began the steep decline to today's figure of well under 15 percent-a figure that is projected to fall below 10 percent in the 2000's. Neil Gorsuch is now seated on the United States Supreme Court and is listening to Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Betsy DeVos, our education secretary gave a wonderful interview to 60 Minutes.

I am confident that the OTA will weather all the storms on the horizon. We need to keep a few things in mind. 1. "You are the union" 2. Each of us have a voice. 3. Together we are united. 4. We must remember the sacrifices of our members who came before us. 5. Get involved, do something for the union!!

Respectfully  
Robert Richie



**Carol Allison**  
Music Teacher  
Willard Prior and Seneca  
Street Elementary

It has been a long career in education for me and I'm looking forward to a new chapter in my life! I've taught music for 36 years in 7 districts; earned tenure in 3 and have spent the past 25 of those years here in Oneida!

Through the years here in Oneida, I've taught Elementary Classroom Music and Chorus at Seneca Street, Durhamville, Willard Prior and Oneida Castle. I worked with Ken and Virginia Drake for 9 years on various musical productions at OHS, Co - directed with Roselle Lynch for 6 years at OSMS (you might remember the stage set-up in the cafeteria) and recently had the position of Vocal Director for 3 productions at OHS, including "Mary Poppins", "The Adams Family" and "Les Miserables".

I would leave you with the last paragraph from my retirement letter to the district:

I wish you all well and continued success for a bright future for the Oneida City School District in the coming years. Please continue supporting music and the arts in our schools; they are an important part of a child's education, a unique way to communicate ideas, promote lifelong learning and embrace diversity. In his book Understanding Music (2008) J. Yudkin states; "Music, like language, is an accomplishment that distinguishes us as humans."

Peace out,  
Carol Allison

## Happenings in and around the OTA



**Kim Hartner**  
Elementary Teacher  
Willard Prior Elementary

As I look back on my teaching career, I am sincerely thankful for the many years spent working in the Oneida City School District, where Willard Prior Elementary School became my home. Throughout my years as an educator, I have been fortunate enough to work with numerous caring, devoted and talented professionals, along with many exceptional children and supportive families here in Oneida. I feel blessed for the many friends I have made over the years; you have all touched my heart forever. I have genuinely enjoyed the time I spent in the Oneida City School District and am looking forward to the next chapter in my life. Thank you all for making this such an unforgettable journey.



**Teresa Costello**  
Physical Education  
Oneida High School

After graduating from Syracuse University in 1982, I started coaching for Oneida. In 1988, I started teaching at the elementary schools and then moved to the high school in 1995. I have actually taught at every building in our district and coached field hockey, girls volleyball, boys volleyball and girls track. My husband and I raised our two children here and the adventure was really a lot of fun. I have taught or coached many teachers that are teaching today and some families I have taught third generations. I will truly miss teaching and coaching. My husband and I will travel, spend more time with our grown children and enjoy every day. None of this would have been possible without our OTA. Thank you for all of the awesome memories and stories. No smile is too big for all of the gifts that I have received and it will always shine with gratitude.

**Minions**  
❤️  
total-hockey



### OTA Scholarships

The OTA has the nomination form up on its web page. Sign in to nominate seniors for an OTA Scholarship. Nominations open through April 18th.

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





## Happenings in and around the OTA

**GOOD  
BYE &  
GOOD  
LUCK!**

### **Mark Vinette: Business Teacher and OTA Treasurer**

After 16 years with the Oneida City School District, business teacher Mark Vinette has accepted a position at Cicero-North Syracuse School District. During his tenure at Oneida, Mark was forever student centered and an advocate for learners. As an advisor for Student Council, he planned countless activities to increase school spirit and participation as well as organize events to help those in need in our school and community. He attended and participated in a myriad of FBLA events as an advisor including local and state competitions. Mark's great optimism and contagious energy will be greatly missed! We wish him the best of luck as he enters this new chapter of his career!

Mark has also been very active with the OTA. He has been the Treasurer for about 10 years. Mark also participated in the Committee of 100. This committee would meet with local officials and "inform" them of the current issues and concerns of teachers in New York. Thank you Mark for all you have done for the OTA!!

**\*\*If you are in need of a realtor, Mark is your guy! Give him a call at 315.380.7555.**



### ***NYSUT and the Janus Case***

NYSUT has a web page set up specifically to give information about the Janus Case. Please visit them at Janus Action Center for more information. You can copy and paste the address below for access to this site or simply type in "Janus Action Center" in your web browser address bar.

Web address: <https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/janus-action>

## Your monthly bills won't stop if you become unable to work

Insurance is the type of product that you hope you never have to utilize. In the event that you need to use it, though, it's important to have the insurance product that best meets your individual needs.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed voluntary Disability Insurance Plan -- provided by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company -- provides valuable income replacement benefits to help meet your living expenses if you become partially or totally disabled and are unable to work.



**Disability insurance can be customized to fit within your budget and still provide peace of mind until you are able to get back on your feet and return to work. Applications for the new NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed Disability Insurance Plan are now available, with coverage effective dates on or after Jan. 1, 2018 from the Plan Administrator, Mercer Consumer.**

For more information and/or to get an application, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call **800-626-8101** for specific information about this program.

### Call to Action: Proposals requested for NYSUT *Educator's Voice*



New York State's classrooms are among the most diverse in the nation. In recognition of this, NYSUT is currently seeking article proposals on "**Culturally-Responsive Teaching**" for consideration in its annual edition of *Educator's Voice*, a *Journal of Best Practices in Education*. **The deadline for proposals is June 15, 2018.**

Do you have a project or practice that works well in your classroom, something you are passionate about and would like to share with other educators across the state? This is a great opportunity to write about it and become published in NYSUT's member journal, a publication created by NYSUT members for NYSUT members. No previous experience is needed nor do you need to be a professional writer to be published in *Educator's Voice*.

Once accepted, authors receive a great deal of editorial support and writing guidance throughout the year-long publication cycle. The result is a professional, research-based publication that can be shared with your colleagues and used for professional development. Authors or author teams can collaborate across schools or with partners in higher education; at least one author must be a NYSUT or affiliate member.

**For more information and/or to download the author submission form, visit <http://www.nysut.org/educatorsvoice>.**

Previous editions of this publication are available at [https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/educators-voice](https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources/sites/educators-voice).



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.