



# Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

*Partners for a Better Community*

May-June  
Newsletter

Volume 49—Issue #5

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

## A Message from our President - David Wright

The 2020- 2021 school year will be one that we will not forget. Teachers and students alike have navigated uncharted waters to the land of distance learning. Preparing to teach in an entirely different way - one we never trained for - one we never could have dreamed would become reality. However, we did it. We tackled distance learning, we mastered hybrid teaching, and we survived the use of ThoughtExchange.

A new positive item for the OTA members occurred on June 8th when a Memorandum of Agreement, also referred to as an MOA, was approved by the Board of Education. The agreement helps members now and in the future who find themselves needing to attend to business of their domestic partners family in the event of an adoption, serious sickness, or unfortunate death.

Occasionally, the question is asked – what does it take to put together a MOA? The short answer is many hours over a number of days or weeks. The work of the OTA leadership continues beyond the length of the school day. A lot of thought and time is required to compose any items added to our contract. The new MOA signed June 8<sup>th</sup> will not be in the back of the new contract. With that being said, each member should have a 2021-2024 printed contact.

For your summer assignment, I would like to suggest that you absolutely make some time for yourself and your family. Finish the home project that you have been waiting to complete. Sleep in, take naps, go out for ice cream, hydrate (be sure to do that one), and recharge for next school year. I hope that everyone is able to complete some if not all of this assignment.

Enjoy the summer!

David Wright



### Table of Cotents:

- Page 1 .. A word from our President**
- Page 2 .. Meeting dates/Special Events**
- Page 3 .. Tales from the Crypt (OREA)**
- Page 4 .. OTA Executive Members**
- Page 5.. OTA Executive Members**
- Page 6.. OTA Executive Members**
- Page 7.. Happenings in the OTA**
- Page 8.. NYSUT Ad**

## UPCOMING MEETINGS:

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

|               |               |                        |
|---------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Next Meeting: | June 8th      | 3:30 pm TBA (virtual?) |
|               | September 8th | 3:30 pm TBA            |
|               | October 13th  | 3:30 pm TBA            |
|               | November 10th | 3:30 pm TBA            |

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

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

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| June 9th      | 6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center |
| July 1st      | 6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center |
| August 18th   | 6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center |
| September 8th | 6:00 pm TBA                            |
| October 13th  | 6:00 pm TBA                            |

## Board of Education Meetings

The Oneida City School District Board of Education will meet on the second Wednesday 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!



With just over \$5000 raised over the course of the year so far, we still have May and June to add to our totals (not to mention what individual buildings are doing)!

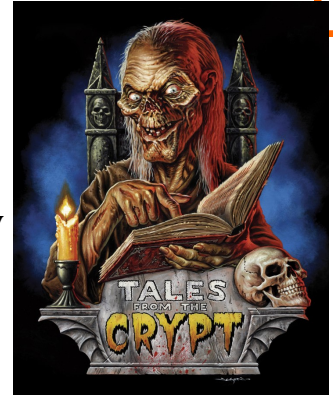
In April, we raised over \$1500 in support of a colleague!

Keep up the Great Work!  
Awesome Job!

## TALES FROM THE CRYPT (End of Year Edition!)

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.

Is the end in sight? Right now it appears that the 2021-2022 school year may begin as a “normal” year, not that anyone can really define the word “normal”. Things will never be the same as they were pre-Covid, and that’s not a negative statement. Teachers, being the naturally resourceful people they are, have greatly expanded their bags of tricks out of necessity, and will no doubt continue to use some of those new ideas to enhance their programs post-Covid. Kids have changed, homes have changed...a whole new set of challenges will be waiting in September, and you will meet them head-on as usual, and also, as usual, the OREA will be supporting you and wishing you all the best.



Of course, you won’t ALL be there...congratulations and hearty thanks to those who will be joining our ranks at the end of this year! Diana D’Amico, Ken Infarinato, Jeff Skibitski and Leanne Youngkrans will be stepping out of the classroom; Nancy Duncan, Dana Fariel, Pam Tamburro, Denise Haldenwang and Patricia Miles will be leaving posts in the school office, custodial department, library and various classroom situations. Good luck to all!

Thank you so much to Dave Dampf for his years as President of the OTA, and for his willingness to work with the OREA to keep us in the loop and in the minds of OTA members. We look forward to working with David Wright, and thank him for his willingness to lead. We give huge thanks to the OTA Negotiating Committee and congratulate the members and the District, who worked so hard and achieved a contract before the end of the school year, the first time this has been accomplished in four negotiating cycles.

I am going to let one of your retiring OTA members provide the OREA “union plug” this time around. I hope you read Jeff Skibitski’s “farewell letter” that appeared in your last OTA Newsletter. He said it so well, and his words bear repeating again and again and again. He summed up his career and gave thanks for the many rewards he has received while teaching in the OCSD. He concluded with this:

“The biggest reason I can be so blessed is our UNION. The people who started the OTA when teachers qualified for food-stamps. The many colleagues who sacrificed to obtain for ALL OF US great healthcare coverage, professional development opportunities, competitive salaries, benefits, class size caps, etc.

My charge to my older colleagues: tutor the young teachers under your roof, embrace them and teach them the history of the union’s struggles to create our CONTRACT.

To those newbies of today: learn the history of the OTA, take advantage of what it provides you, respect what your elders accomplished, get involved, and most importantly: PRESERVE our contract!!!”

Well said, Jeff! Thank you!

Congratulations once more to all of you on the conclusion of the weirdest school year on record...have a wonderful summer.

Patricia Albaugh---Oneida Castle School---Retired, 2007

## Happenings in and around the OTA

### Meet the Executive Members

#### OTA President David Wright

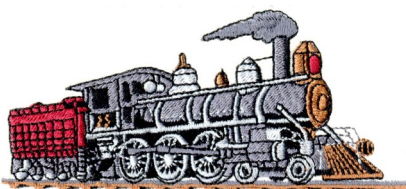


My name is David Wright. I am the new President of the OTA. Currently I am in my 16th year of teaching, as a Technology/Engineering Teacher. I have been teaching at Oneida High School for the past 13 years and I have seen and experienced the positive aspects of being an OTA member. Four years ago, I was elected to serve as one of the Vice Presidents of the OTA. During these last 4 years, I worked with the OTA leadership team to become more familiar with the role of the OTA, our contract, and many dedicated members that belong to our unit. I see my previous years of service to the OTA as a positive aspect. I also have an ability to problem solve, work with, and communicate to our members as I embrace the role as President.

#### Vice President Steve Paz



Hi, I'm Steve Paz and I am one of your Vice Presidents for the Oneida Teachers' Association. I have worked for Oneida for 25 years as a special education teacher. I am currently a 15:1 special education teacher at Durhamville Elementary School. I have been the Vice President for the Elementary Level for the past 6 years. I have also served on our Contract Negotiations Committee for over 10 years. I have been a member of our district APPR committee for over 10 years, helping to negotiate and create our annual teacher evaluation systems. I have also served as an OTA building representative for about 15 years at Durhamville. I chose to run for the position of Vice President because I believe that we need to continue to work as a unified staff to advocate for the interests of our students and our profession. It seems like every year we are presented with new and bigger challenges that require us to be stronger advocates for the students we teach and the community we serve. As we all know, that advocacy can take many different forms and, unfortunately, is not always pleasant to pursue. There is a saying in education that goes something like this. "If you always do what's best for kids, there will always be a place for you in education...AND if you always do what's best for kids you may make some people angry along the way!" But if that advocacy is directed toward honest and valid purposes, we will serve our students, community, and our profession well, with the confidence and courage to do what is right and make Oneida a great place for a career in teaching. I thank you for the opportunity to continue to represent and advocate for you.



**Chug, Chug, Chuggin' Along to Summer Vacation**

## Happenings in and around the OTA

### Vice President Dewayne Cronk



I am in my 28th year of teaching English for the Oneida City School District. During that time, I have coached a total of 33 athletic seasons in soccer and tennis. I have been involved with the union for almost 15 years. I started as a building representative and then became the vice-president about 12 years ago. I have served on the negotiating team for four contract settlements and we are currently working on number five.

### Vice President Megan Kelly



I was fresh out of college when I was hired to teach social studies at OSMS in 2001, and I didn't know much about salary steps or health care, let alone retirement benefits. When my first child was born with some minor, but unexpected, health concerns, I didn't know how to extend my sick time and use the sick bank. In each of these instances, and in countless others, I was able to rely on our strong contract and dedicated OTA members for help and guidance. For the past 19 years, I have benefited tremendously from the work of the Oneida Teachers' Association. I know first-hand the value and strength our contract and our union gives to us. I would be honored to "pay it forward" and work to support each member as a Vice President of the OTA.

## 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

### Secretary Jen Armlin



It doesn't seem possible, but this is my 19th year in the district. The majority of my time in the district was shaping fourth grade minds. I made the move to second grade a year ago. I have had the opportunity to work in three of our elementary buildings: Seneca Street, Oneida Castle, and most recently, North Broad. Through my time in each building I made long lasting friendships and acquired invaluable knowledge from our veteran teachers. Along with sitting on the negotiations team for the last two contracts, I have also served as OTA Secretary since Mary Jo Donaldson retired. It has been an honor, and, very interesting to say the least, to serve in both positions through the last few years. I look forward to continue being your OTA Secretary.

### Treasurer BeeAnn O'Herien



My name is BeeAnn O'Herien and I am the Treasurer for the OTA. I have worked in Oneida for 27 years, all of them as a 6th grade teacher. I started my career at Sylvan-Verona Beach, moved to North Broad and Oneida Castle before landing at OSMS for the past ten years. My commitment to the OTA began as a building rep and then in 2018 was voted to replace the current Treasurer who was leaving our district. As Treasurer, I have worked to ensure that our finances are more transparent, all monies are documented, and expenditures are voted on and signed off with two signatures. In addition, all of our banking is balanced on a monthly requisition statement. Moving forward, I will continue to keep our membership informed and involved.

### Contract on its way!



Well, it is finally here. We ratified our successor agreement before the end of the school year! First time in FOUR negotiations! The District has gone through the process of copying the contracts and, hopefully, you have received your copy. If you have not, please contact your Building Rep and they will see that you get a copy. Have a Great Summer!

## Happenings in the OTA

### OTA T-shirts!



The OTA put out a size request form for some new OTA t-shirts. Designs are set and, hopefully, we will be seeing these new shirts before the end of the school year. They will be a great addition to your wardrobe for Casual Fridays or other social events where you would like to show off your membership in the OTA!

I'm Ready  
For Summer!

WHO'S  
WITH  
Me?!



### Building Celebrations

The **High School** will be having a pot-luck "luncheon" on **Thursday, June 24th from 11:30-1:00** for the retirees in the building, **Leanne Youngkrans and Jeff Skibitski**. Jess Wagner will also be celebrated during the luncheon.

**OSMS** will be having a celebration at Julie Koelsch's house on Oneida Lake for **Ken Infarinato** on the **afternoon/evening of Friday, June 25th**

### OTA End of Year Celebration

**When: Tuesday, June 22nd**

**Time 3:30—6:00 pm**

**Where: Oneida Community Golf Course**

Taking the place of our Spring Fling, our End-of-the-Year event is your chance to catch up with your fellow members of the OTA in a "relaxing" environment. This year, it is an **OTA member only** event because of COVID protocols. Still, a nice opportunity to get out, socialize with your colleagues and relax a little before we all head out for the summer.



## Not sure where to start with your summer to-do list?

Whether it's assisting NYSUT members with everyday essentials, important choices about insurance needs, or making prudent decisions about financial and legal concerns, NYSUT Member Benefits can help.



Scan the QR code below to learn more about the following endorsed programs and services.

### Saving you money: MB Discounts & Deals

With the **Member Benefits Discounts & Deals** program, NYSUT members can save up to 50% at more than 700,000 merchants nationwide (including thousands throughout New York State). Save on groceries and food delivery; restaurant dine-in or takeout; gasoline, oil changes and vehicle maintenance; clothing and shoes; and much more. You can even request that your favorite merchant join the network.

### Saving you money: Every \$\$\$ counts

Whether your summer plans include home renovations, replacing or upgrading appliances, getting a new car, stocking up for the return to school, or even just hanging out and enjoying some time off, Member Benefits has a variety of endorsed programs -- **Purchasing Power**, **Buyer's Edge Inc.**, **Office Depot/OfficeMax**, **Bose**, **Powell's Books** -- that might be able to minimize the impact on your wallet and maximize your enjoyment of the all-too-fleeting summer months.



### Protecting your family: Insuring yourself and your family

Member Benefits endorses a number of competitive insurance programs that are available to NYSUT members. These include **auto/home/renters, life, disability, long term care, dental, vision**, and even **pet insurance**. Some of these programs are also available to or cover spouses/domestic partners of members, dependent children, dependent parents, and grandparents. Most offer payroll & pension deduction as payment options.

### Planning for the future: Have a plan for wherever life takes you

It's never too early or too late to make a plan. Just starting a career or looking at retirement? Beginning to pay off loans or building a nest egg? Looking to buy a new home or refinance the one you're in? Welcoming a new child or adopting? Now would be a good time to look into the ways to put a plan in place or make adjustments to your existing one. Explore the **Member Benefits Financial Learning Center** for assistance; while you're there, check out our **Legal Service Plan** and **Financial Counseling Program**.

NYSUT Member Benefits offers dozens of programs and services that are available to NYSUT members and their families, including the following options:



DINING & SHOPPING DISCOUNTS



TRAVEL & TOURS



CAR & TRUCK RENTALS



LIFE INSURANCE



AUTO & HOME



LONG-TERM CARE & DISABILITY

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org), call 800-626-8101 or scan the QR code above.

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