



Oneida Teachers' ASSOCIATION

Partners for a Better Community

September/October 2023
Newsletter

www.oneidateacher.com
OTA - Facebook Page

Volume 51—Issue #1

A Message from our President - David Wright

September flew by and now we find ourselves in the month of October. We have 28 new members to the OTA that we would like to welcome. Each September the OTA welcomes these new members by explaining to them the positive aspects of belonging to a union. During this meeting we discuss the importance of dues, sick bank, personal and sick days, vote COPE, the different compensation rates, how our insurance works along with other important parts of our contract. Each new member walks away with a binder that helps them with these topics and more. We end the meeting by telling the new hires that if they are unsure or if something does not seem as it should be, they need to speak up, talk to their mentor or ask an OTA building representative.

This October we will be offering in-house building representative training. Typically these types of trainings take place over a weekend. Usually the OTA representative gives up a Friday afternoon, full day on Saturday, and Sunday morning to go to a training session at one of the NYSUT seminars. This in-house training takes place on October 19th and will be led by a NYSUT Labor Relation Specialist (LRS). These individuals are skilled negotiators working to ensure that your rights are protected through the collective bargaining process. Our LRS works with the OTA leadership team to provide assistance before, during and after contract negotiations to maximize the impact of your collective voices.

The last topic I would like to touch on for this newsletter is negotiations. This past summer the negotiation team met and set a plan as we move forward through this process. Currently we are collecting information from other districts, NYSUT, and most importantly you. The team just finished collecting the survey information from our members. During the month of October, the negotiations team will follow up with those members that put in comments that need more information. The next step of the process is to put together a negotiation proposal that will eventually lead to a January start for meetings between the district and OTA negotiation team.



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UPCOMING MEETINGS:

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

Next Meeting:	September 12th	3:30 pm OHS
	October 11th	3:30 pm Seneca Street
	November 14th	3:30 pm North Broad
	December 12th	3:30 pm OSMS

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

Board of Education Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month)

September 12th	6:00 pm Costello Transportation Center
October 11th	6:00 pm Seneca Street Elementary
November 14th	6:00 pm North Broad Elementary
December 12th	6:00 pm Otto Shortell Middle School

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 Welcome to our Casual Friday Updates!



The first Friday of the month we try to have a District wide Casual Friday.

Sometimes we may alter it based on what is happening during the month.

As always, we ask that all individuals dress appropriately to our profession!

TALES FROM THE CRYPT (Beginning of Year 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.

The 2023-2024 school year is in full swing, and we have heard about all kinds of great things going on in the OCSD! We also know this is a negotiating year, and that when the word "contract" is mentioned, we know that "salary" and "insurance" are two of the top priorities for all. They are both extremely important. Depending on where you are in your life, one may appear to be more important than the other. **Make no mistake...good insurance is the priority.**

Read this personal story from Linda Evans, 2005 retiree, Art, N. Broad and Oneida Castle.

"We have all heard about the insurance issues surrounding the metal plans and how the adoption of one of these plans would decrease the coverage we now have in our school district contract. Good insurance is important. A recent tragedy in my life showed me just how important good insurance can be.

My husband Dwight suffered a grand mal vocal seizure in June of 2022. He was taken by ambulance to St. Luke's stroke center. Within hours it was determined he had a brain tumor known as a glioblastoma, something from which one does not recover. This is the brain cancer that recently took our friends Barry Zebley and Jeanie McAlpine, as well as a woman from Sherrill who was a friend to many of us.

Dwight had surgery, but these tumors have tentacles that penetrate into the whole brain, making complete removal impossible. After many weeks in neuro ICU and ICU he was released to the acute rehab center at St. Luke's. Throughout the two months of his hospitalization we were treated with the utmost care and concern for his and my well being by all the mostly young doctors and nurses. The summer consisted of three more trips in the ambulance, two weeks in rehab, nearly daily visits from the surgeon and neuro doctor, and several weeks at home with visiting nurses, PT and OT.

A third seizure sent him back to the hospital for 12 days, a stint he did not really recover from. My decision to bring him home with Hospice care and lots of help from friends and family meant he could at least spend his remaining days in the comfort of his own home. After a four month ordeal, his suffering was over.

As I watched the enormity of equipment usage, Dr. and nurse visits, ambulance transports, medications and rehab efforts, I was seeing BIG dollar signs mount up. Thank goodness for Medicare and our school insurance as my secondary coverage. I have not paid anything out of pocket during this whole time. If I had not had this coverage, I would have been looking at many hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills.

This is not how I thought our lives would go into the future, but we don't get to decide that. In one quick instance of a very bad headache, our lives were changed forever. Now that I am on my own, as many in our school system are, I am so grateful that our negotiating team is still fighting for our health insurance, and not falling to the promises of the consultants representing the metal plans. If we are forced to move to a metal plan, we will be stuck with lower coverage and more out of pocket expenses. Some say that they would like the money saved by a different plan, to use now. The reality is that very few people can save enough money for medical costs which are rising every day. Do you really want to be strapped with what amounts to several years at an Ivy league college, in medical payments?

OREA recently had a guest speaker who is highly knowledgeable about the two different plans: Excellus and the metal plans. Districts that have moved to the metal plans do not have representation at the BOCES Insurance Consortium meetings and really have no knowledge of what they have given up by changing plans. Thanks to two retirees, Kathy Wojciechowski and Kris Agan, Oneida is well represented at these meetings and we are well informed about what is at stake. At the last Consortium Health meeting it was announced that the Platinum Metal plan, which is their top plan, will be "downgraded" in January of 2025. Contact your OTA reps for information regarding the financial and health impacts these metal plans can have for you and your family. Being informed is in your best interest. I have lost my husband of 51 years but I have not lost everything else that was dear to us. With a metal plan, that could happen."

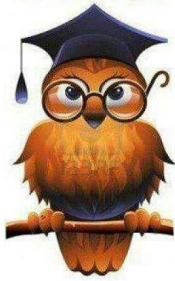
Thanks to Linda for sharing this difficult story. There are many, many more current and retired employees with similar heart-breaking tales that illustrate the fact that good insurance can be an important bright spot in an otherwise devastating situation.

OREA thanks the OTA for their attention to and consideration of the retirees when it comes to negotiations, and we wish you all the best for a fantastic school year.

Patricia Albaugh...Oneida Castle School...2007

Happenings in and around the OTA

Teacher at the beginning
of the school year



Teacher at the end
of the school year



Faculty Follies Return?

They could be coming back! Our own Heather O'Connell proposed the idea at our September OTA meeting. She is willing to coordinate the re-birth of the Faculty Follies.

With that said, look for a Google Form coming your way in the near future to help determine the interest in doing a Faculty Follies again. (pictures are from the 2011 Faculty Follies)



District Facility Plan

Keep yourself in the know.... Check out the Facility & Grade Study that the Oneida City School District has been conducting over the past 10 months. Included in all these meetings/reports is school population numbers (from individual class to grade level to building level), school building use information, building feasibility reports and much more information. This study is required by NYS every 5 years for every District in the State. go to the OCSD home page and check it out!



The Oneida Teachers' Association is celebrating its' 50th anniversary this year.

Honorable mention to the past Presidents of our wonderful Union and the work they have done.

Tim McElheran	1973 - 1980
Jim Gleason	1980 - 1982
Barry Zebley	1982 - 2000
Leo Maloney	2000 - 2008
Brian Mroczek	2008 - 2016
Dave Dampf	2016 - 2020
Dave Wright	2020 - present

Each of these individuals have led the OTA to be a better Union by **BUILDING** on the **SUC-CESES** of their predecessors.



Happenings in and around the OTA

Teachers be like.....



Don't Forget! Save for your Future

Invest in a **403b Savings Plan**. Upfront, it reduces the money you have to pay in taxes because any payments to the 403b are pre-tax. Saves you money when you withdraw from your 403b because you will likely be in a lower tax bracket.

Contact the District Office, either **Kelly Pellegrino** or **Lisa Donaldson**, and they can get you started.

Our own **John Markle** (OHS Social Studies) is available to discuss 403b plans as well. He's not an advisor, just someone who did some research and is willing to talk to you about these 403b plans.



Greetings fellow **Teachers' Retirement System** Members.

My name is John Zamperetti and I am your representative to the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). I have been a member of the TRS since 1996 when I started my career at Camden High School. In 2001, I came to Oneida and I've been here ever since. I am nearing retirement and I approached David Wright about filling the representative position last spring. The role of the representative is to answer any questions regarding the retirement system as to take that burden off of the Union's Executive Team. Should you have any questions regarding the TRS feel free to contact me at jzamperetti@oneidacsd.org and I will be happy to address your inquiry. If it is something that I can answer, I will. If I can't answer, I will reach out to the TRS and get back to you as soon as I can.

NYSTRS/NYSUT Workshop

The OTA has organized an in-person **retirement workshop** for Oneida CSD employees and their spouses that are members of NYSTRS.

The date of the workshop is **Monday, November 27th** (November 28th snow date).

The workshop will be held in the **OHS Auditorium** and will begin at **5pm**.

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



Welcoming our new Members!

New Member Meeting

The OTA held our new member meeting on Wednesday September 13th. The meeting took place at the Marble Hill Inn in Sherrill.

New members were signed up with NYSUT, asked to contribute to VoteCope, signed up for the Sick Bank and introduced to some of the members of the OTA.

Binders were presented to each member with information about the OTA, insurance, 403b plans, school district info and much more!



New members getting signed up for NYSUT



Executive members Jen Armlin, Chrissy Sawner and Steve Paz



Logging in to NYSUT



New members getting a bite to eat before starting



Welcoming our new Members!

I am **Kristin Myatt** and this is my first year teaching **Writing for the 21st Century at OSMS**. Prior to Oneida, I taught high school business at Camden for 17 years. I am married to Brad Myatt and we have two children in the Oneida City School District. Molly is in 8th grade and Tess is in 6th grade. I graduated from Oneida High School 22 years ago, went to SUNY Oswego (majored in Business & Marketing Education), and moved back to Oneida after I graduated college. It's so nice to get the opportunity to work in the community I've lived in my whole life. My spare time is consumed with all things sports and every once in a while, we have time to go on a few family vacations.



I am **Al Vincent Watkins** and I am working at **Oneida High School as an Art Teacher**. I attended Adelphi University and got my degree in Art Education. I am certified K-12 in Art. Last year at this time I was teaching Art in Citizenship at the Academy of Syracuse. During my down time, I like to paint, listen to music and watch my favorite TV shows.

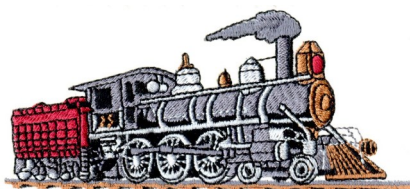


Hello, my name is **Susan Platt** and I am working at **Oneida High School as a LTA 1-1**. Last year I was working at Willard Prior Elementary as a Building/Teacher Aide.



Hello, my name is **Holly Dillard** and I am a **LTA at Willard Prior Elementary**. I attended Chapman University and am certified in California K-8 multiple subjects and here in NY I am a certified LTA. I am currently attending Syracuse University to acquire my Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education. I spent 8 years teaching Kindergarten and 1st Grade in California. Last year I was a long-term sub at Willard Prior, Oneida High School and North Broad. During my time away from work, I like the outdoors including kayaking and hiking. You can also find me sitting down with a good book as well.

My name is Lauren Messenger-Harris. I am a speech pathologist at WP and OHS. I previously worked for Rome City School District. I went to Geneseo for my undergrad work and Ithaca College for my Masters. In my free time I like to travel, spend time outdoors, try new places to eat, and be with my family. Everyone in Oneida has been so welcoming and friendly, I am happy to be here!



Chug, Chug, Chuggin' Along to a new School Year!



A Union of Professionals

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE

Oneida Teachers Association, #2894

50 YEARS

1973-2023

MAY YOUR HALF CENTURY OF SERVICE AND ADVANCEMENTS
BE REWARDED WITH CONTINUED GROWTH AND SUCCESS.

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

RANDI WEINGARTEN
PRESIDENT

FEDRICK C. INGRAM
SECRETARY-TREASURER

EVELYN DEJESUS
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

NYS Teachers' Retirement System:

A Seasonable Approach to Retiring

In **Fall** of your Final School Year

- *Review your contract so you'll know when to notify your employer you intend to retire. Also discuss with them health insurance coverage in retirement.*
- *If you haven't already done so, claim and purchase credit for prior New York State public employment or military service, if eligible. Visit the Video Vault at NYSTRS.org and watch PSI: Prior Service Investigation for details.*
- *Plan to attend a NYSTRS PREP seminar for a comprehensive overview of the key retirement issues you face, including legal considerations, financial planning, Social Security, and NYSTRS benefits.*
- *Schedule a benefits consultation with a NYSTRS representative and review the retirement process and get estimates for possible retirement dates.*
- *Begin reviewing the differences between benefit payment options available to you. See our publication *Maximum or an Option* for more details.*
- *Confirm the accuracy of service and salary information in your Benefit Profile. If there are discrepancies, ask your employer to send revised information to NYSTRS.*

FIX tier six

Compared to Tier 4, Tier 6 members will pay more and earn a significantly reduced pension.

TIER 6

At the start of their careers, both NYSUT members pay 3 percent of their salaries toward their pensions.

TIER 4

His payments increase as he earns more.

At \$46,000, he pays 3.5 percent.

At \$56,000, he pays 4.5 percent.

At \$76,000, he pays 5.75 percent.

At \$101,000, he pays 6 percent.

Tier 6 members can't retire and collect their pensions, penalty-free, until age 63.

10 years

Her payments end after 10 years and are capped at 3 percent.



30 years

Tier 4 members can retire and collect their pensions, penalty-free, with 30 years of service at age 55.

Learn More and Join the Fix Tier 6 Team: [FixTier6.org](https://www.FixTier6.org)

Back to school can mean a lot of different things:

- Starting a new career
- Planning for the future
- Balancing work and home life
- Making difficult decisions
- Enjoying your final year before retirement
- Recalling memories of a proud career



Regardless of what you might be doing this fall, **NYSUT Member Benefits** offers a variety of endorsed programs and services that could help make you as prepared as possible for whatever the new school year may throw at you.

Whether you are looking to save money, protect your family, or plan for the future, **NYSUT Member Benefits** is a great place to start. With dozens of endorsed insurance, legal, financial, shopping, travel, and discount programs, you are certain to find something of interest that could benefit you or your loved ones.

And speaking of savings, the **Member Benefits Discounts & Deals** program utilizes the nation's largest private discount network to offer all NYSUT members (both in-service and retiree) exclusive access to savings of up to 50% at 850,000 locations -- including more than 21,200 New York State deals. If you have not already done so, head over to mbdeals.enjoymydeals.com to create your account with your NYSUT ID number, preferred email address, and password.

You'll then be eligible to save on restaurant dine-in or take-out, flowers and gift baskets, Bose electronics, clothing and shoes, oil changes and vehicle maintenance, sporting events, hotels and flights, car rentals, theme parks, movie tickets, and much more. Members are encouraged to download the MB Discounts & Deals mobile app for the best user experience with this program.

Check out all your union membership has to offer!



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.