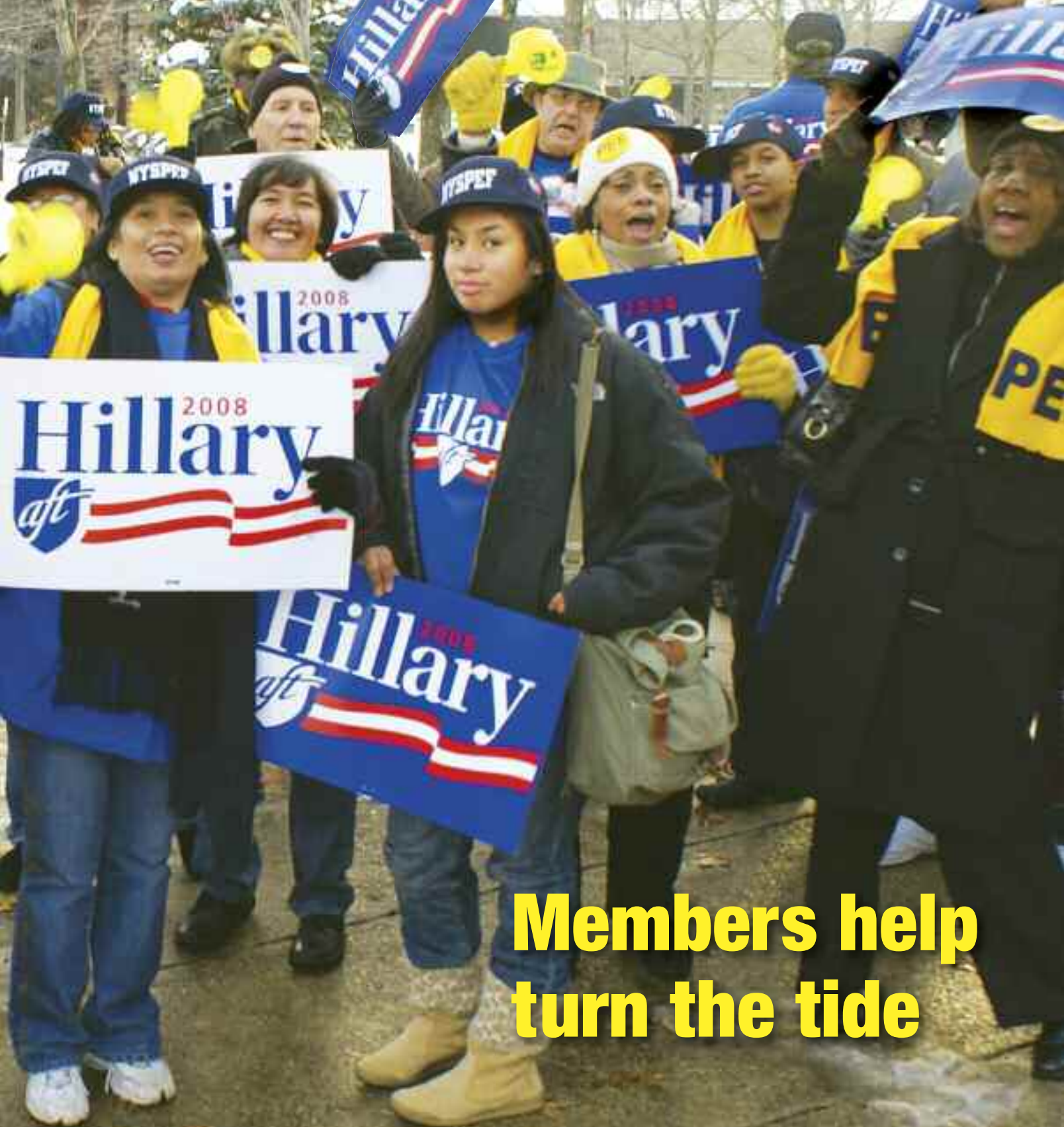


The Communicator

The Official Publication of the NYS Public Employees Federation www.thecomunicator.org February 2008



**Members help
turn the tide**



Pride article delighted mom

To the Editor:

I was delighted to read the article about the efforts of "Pride at Work to battle workplace discrimination" in the last issue of *The Communicator*.

As a PEF retiree and very proud mother of a gay man, I am glad to know my union is helping in the fight for civil rights for all working Americans. ENDA – the Employment Non-Discrimination Act – as it exists on the national level, falls short in its present form, but it took us more than 30 years to get a similar bill out of committee and passed in New York state.

I am very proud my union and people like Tom Privitere are working so hard to make sure that bigotry in all of its forms has no place in our workplaces. It can be done; I now live in Arizona where a domestic partnership coverage bill was passed – the only state to pass such a bill.

Again, many thanks and kudos to all of those who are working so diligently to make equality for all a reality.

LILA HAUPTMAN
Surprise, AZ

Leave donations appreciated

To the Editor,

I'd like to thank all PEF members who donated hard-earned (vacation) time to someone they don't know. It comforts me that kindness to a stranger still exists.

On the 8th of October they placed an artificial heart in me until the time comes for the transplant. It's been a rough road, but all those days lying in ICU (the intensive care unit) it was such a comfort for us not to worry about losing our home.

Your donations have provided financial security until transplant time and it feels great to be able to focus on getting ready for that final step.

Thank you seems such a small word to use for what you have done for us, but from us: Thank you.

CHRIS SHEAFFER
Camilus

Fight to get higher DOT pay

To the Editor

Excuse me, but I believe the PEF is fighting a battle on the wrong side.

The state transportation commissioner is out drumming up support for funding to preserve our highway and transportation infrastructure.

PEF is asking for the state Transportation Department (DOT) to hire more personnel. Fine. But, at the same time, PEF is asking for consultant salaries to be lowered to meet DOT levels – isn't that backward? With the state of the infrastructure as it is; with hiring down, with everyone doing more with less, shouldn't PEF be taking the opposite approach?

DOT personnel are being asked to work longer and harder and they deserve at least the inadequate salaries paid in the private sector. State-employee benefits are no longer so superior to those on the private side that they justify a lower salary. Also, many DOT personnel are engineers who have a long, arduous and expensive educational background – equivalent to any lawyer or doctor. Shouldn't PEF be seeking salaries that reflect that effort?

Also, look at PEF's makeup. More and more often, downstate positions are filled with new immigrants or green-card-holders because the salaries are not high enough to attract qualified U.S. citizens. Upstate, graduate engineers and professional engineers are stuck at technician levels because of antiquated civil service title series and no promotions.

How is the Empire State to live up to its name and produce the quality and volume of work required to keep it from sinking to the level of a Third World country when PEF helps the government to hold down salaries.

I urge you to join the private sector to raise the respect and salaries of employees the state needs so we can maintain our standard of living; and do it before the country starts to outsource all engineering. Then where will PEF be?

JOSEPH ANGELO

Editor's note: PEF is fighting for better pay for all of its members, especially those such as engineers who are often paid far less by the state than they could earn in the private sector. The state has found it must increase its hiring rates and add what it calls "geographic differentials" in order to compete in the labor market downstate and in some other parts of the state for engineers, nurses, and other titles.

PEF, various state comptrollers and private auditors have been critical of the state for spending more for private contractors to do work than it would cost for state employees to do the work.

PEF maintains the state could save money by doing jobs in-house. Taxpayers would get better value for their investment and would have greater control because public employees are more directly accountable to the public, better regulated and are dedicated to public service.



Member: Thanks for support

To the Editor:

I would like to thank all of my PEF brothers and sisters for the caring and support I have received since the article about my plight was written in the October 2007 issue of *The Communicator*.

I have always said the strong relationship I have had with my co-workers and administration in the Department of Correctional Services is one of the things that has made my battle (with breast cancer) easier. I have never had to worry about anything but healing.

Thank you again for your continued support. You will never know what this means to me.

JOYCE KRYGIER
Cheektowaga

Thanks for your condolences

To the Editor:

On behalf of the family of Mrs. Catherine Omotomilola, who passed away October 31, 2007, I thank all PEF members, staff and others for their expressions of sympathy. The cards, telephone calls, and e-mails are greatly appreciated.

OLUBIYI SEHINDEMI ("Mr. B")
PEF Trustee

You Said It: Letters to the Editor



thecomunicator@pef.org

Oops!

An article in the December-January issue mistakenly included the Department of Civil Service with state agencies that have no PS&T unit employees. In fact, PEF represents nearly 60 PS&T employees at DCS.

The calendar which appeared in the December-January issue mistakenly indicates both administrative and institutional paydays fall on Wednesdays. Institutional paydays are on the Thursdays of the weeks in which they are currently shown.

ON THE COVER — Photo by Richard Dillard

THE COMMUNICATOR

Volume 25, No. 1 February 2008 (0745-6514)

The Official Publication of the New York State Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO, 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110-1006. *The Communicator* is published monthly, except for January and August, for members of the New York State Public Employees Federation. Periodical postage paid at Latham, NY and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to: Editor, *PEF Communicator*, 1168-70 Troy-Schenectady Road, P.O. Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414. Phone (518) 785-1900, ext. 277.

Letters Policy: *The Communicator* welcomes letters to the editor about union issues and events relevant to PEF's diverse membership. All letters are subject to editing for space, fairness and good taste. Please type your letters, keep them brief (up to 250 words), and include your name and phone number for verification. Send letters to:

The Communicator, PEF, P.O. Box 12414, Albany, N.Y. 12212-2414 or email to: thecomunicator@pef.org

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PEF Regional Field Offices

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The Communicator Staff

Stephen Chamberlain Managing Editor
Darcy Wells Editor-In-Chief
Sherry Halbrook Editor
Mario A. Bruni Graphic Artist
Deborah A. Miles Reporter/Writer
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Paul Murphy Secretary/Typesetter
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PEF is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO & Services Employees International Union.

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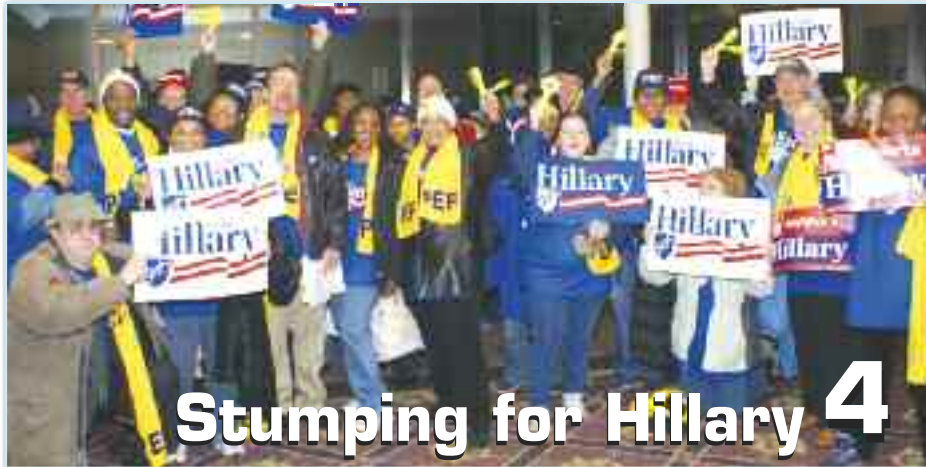
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www.thecomunicator.org



On the stump



Hillary supporter from NY urges Manchester residents to vote for the former first lady in the NH primary.
— Photos by Richard Dillard

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

Nearly 100 volunteers from PEF and PEF Retirees climbed on buses in Albany and New York City before dawn Saturday, Jan. 5, to make a five-hour pilgrimage to New Hampshire.

Their mission: Convince NH voters to pick Sen. Hillary Clinton to be the Democratic candidate for president of the United States.

Just three days later, she defied the pollsters and pundits predictions and won the NH primary.

The volunteers may have been bleary-eyed, sleep-deprived and stiff from the long bus rides, but it all gave way to a boundless spirit of enthusiasm as soon as they stepped off the buses and began their march up the streets of Manchester.

They spread out along the downtown streets to show support for Clinton in the city where she and the other leading

Democratic and Republican candidates would be debating on national television that night.

"We had a great time," said PEF Vice President Joe Fox, who chairs PEF's

Political Action Committee (PAC).

"We were the AFT (American Federation of Teachers, one of PEF's two international affiliates) presence at the event. I was on ABC, CNN, NBC, CBS and Fox TV in the US and we were interviewed by the media from Australia, France, and Japan," Fox said.

"People were even stopping their cars to take our pictures," said PEF Region 8 Coordinator Tom Comanzo.

Accompanying the PEF volunteers on the buses and at the rally were state Assembly Member Jack McEnery of Albany, Schenectady Mayor Brian Stratton and Charles Diamond, chief of staff for U.S. Rep. Mike McNulty. AFT President Edward J. McElroy also joined the PEF contingent in New Hampshire.

In addition to Fox and Comanzo, PEF leaders adding their voices to the throng were Vice President Pat Baker, Trustees Olubiyi Schindemi (Mr. B) and Julio Munoz, Region 10 Coordinator Vernetta Chesimard, and Region 11 Coordinator Jemma Marie Hanson. Mary Reid, Long Island Chapter president of PEF Retirees, was there too.

Two of the PEF Retirees who participated, Ron and Jayne Mikat, actually postponed their trip to Florida so they could be in New Hampshire for Hillary.

PEF Region 11 nurses Angelica Lladoc and Maribeth Bote said they had a great time and are glad they went, even though they are not U.S. citizens and cannot vote in the election.



AFT President Ed McElroy thanks PEF VP Joe Fox and other volunteers for their activism as they arrive in Manchester, NH. Also shown is PEF member Angel Acosta of New York City.

for Hillary in NH



PEF members Jennifer McDonald and Corina Ruiz hail Manchester traffic for Hillary Clinton.



"It was a first for us and it was very exciting," Bote said.

Lladoc said,

"We wanted to see if it was different than election campaigns in the Philippines where we are from. It wasn't. It was the same, but it was lots of fun. And Hillary won!"

Although the volunteers had to climb back on the buses and begin their long trip home before

Hillary arrived and the debate began, they were thanked by former president Bill Clinton for their spirited support.

Fox said the PEF volunteer effort to support Clinton would focus next on helping her win the New York primary on February 5.

If you want to volunteer, contact your regional PEF PAC chair or call the PEF Legislative Department at 1 800-724-4997.

In compliance with federal election law, the above material is paid for by the New York State Public Employees Federation — Committee on Political Education (COPE), a separate, segregated fund at PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212; phone: 518 785-1900; and was not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.



THEY'VE GOT THE SPIRIT – PEF members Evarist Nicholas (upper left), Angelica Lladoc (above), Ray Moroz (far left), and Maribeth Bote and Jane Torres (near left) give New Hampshire voters a stiff shot of PEF enthusiasm in Manchester three days before the NH presidential primary.



law bringing legions of state contractors into sharper focus

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

A PEF-supported accountability bill that was passed and signed into law in 2006 is now starting to produce important information about state spending for private consultant services just when that data is needed most.

As the governor and state legislators look for ways to get the maximum benefit from state revenues in the 2008-09 budget, the Contract Disclosure Law of 2006 is providing some keen insights into an area of state spending that was previously hidden.

The law requires the state Department of Civil Service (DCS) and the Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) to begin reporting how much state agencies are spending for consultant services and how many private consultants work under those contracts. This is the first time that information has been gathered and publicly reported in New York state.

"Up until now, this has been the invisible elephant in the room at budget time. At PEF, we knew it was big, because we got glimpses of various parts by analyzing some individual contracts. Now, the whole beast is finally starting to come

into focus and it is a monster," said PEF Director of Civil Service Enforcement Tom Cetrino.

"We now know, for instance, that at least 23,000 consultants worked for the state in fiscal year 2006-07. And more than 1,000 consultants were working under private contracts at each of at least five state agencies," Cetrino said. "We are talking about a multi-billion-dollar expense to state taxpayers, that could be cut dramatically by bringing much of that work back in house to be done by state employees."

"That information was not collected or reported at all before the Contract Disclosure Law took effect," Cetrino said. "We must still do a lot of analysis to get at the truth, because the DCS and OSC reports look at the same contracts from different perspectives and in different time frames, so we find many apparent anomalies."

For instance, the DCS report deals with data for all of NYS fiscal year 2006-07, that runs from April 1, 2006, through March, 31, 2007. The OSC report looks at just the

final three-quarters of SFY 2006-07.

"We are striving to get to the bottom of many questions we have about the data in these reports, and will report on what we find out as we learn it," Cetrino said. "However, we have identified some important information to share with the public and state budget makers now."

In terms of the numbers of consultants working under private contracts with state agencies in the 2006-07 fiscal year, the top five agencies are: the state Transportation Department (DOT); the Office of General Services (OGS); the State University of New York (SUNY); the state Health Department (DOH) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

"Clearly, each of these agencies is handing work off to at least 1,200 consultants through private contracts," Cetrino said, "and at one or two of these agencies those previously invisible workers total more than 5,000."

Another area coming into sharper focus is the kind of work these private consultants are doing.

"At least 9,500 of them are providing engineering services," Cetrino said, "and more than 5,000 provide health services. About 2,800 work in the area of information technology, according to our current analysis, but we suspect that number might climb substantially as we delve and probe more deeply into these reports."

PEF President Ken Brynien praised state legislators for passing the Contract Disclosure Law and Gov. Eliot Spitzer for recognizing the significance of the data it is revealing.

"Gov. Spitzer has begun to turn this enormous battleship around," Brynien said. "He has begun by hiring hundreds of new state engineers to start filling vacant jobs at DOT. (See related story page 8) And the governor is working with PEF to look closely and fairly at the comparative costs of doing work in-house, versus contracting it out, before state agencies award contracts.

"It is just common sense, but it has taken many decades of hard work by PEF to create the will among state leaders to fundamentally change the way the state does business. It will ease the burden on state taxpayers and that will be a welcome change for all New Yorkers."



AS WE GO TO PRESS...

Governor alerts PEF to closings at DOCS, OCFS

By **DARCY WELLS**

Before Gov. Eliot Spitzer announced his state budget, he notified PEF President Ken Brynien of plans to close four state prisons and close, consolidate or reduce beds at six youth facilities in January 2009.

Brynien met with the commissioners from the state Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to discuss the changes.

The targeted closures include Camp Pharsalia in Chenango County, Camp Gabriels in Franklin County, the medium-security Hudson Correctional Facility in Columbia County and Camp McGregor in Saratoga County.

The six residential youth facilities are the Adirondack Wilderness Challenge in Clinton County, Auburn Residential Center in Cayuga County, Brace Residential Center in Delaware County,

Gloversville Group Home in Fulton County, Great Valley Residential Center in Cattaraugus County and the Pyramid Reception Center in the Bronx.

The closures would affect approximately 71 members at the DOCS facilities and 45 members at the youth centers.

"Any announcement concerning our members puts us at 'high alert,' Brynien said. "But, we are encouraged the governor and commissioners reached out to us directly, unlike the previous administration. They have promised to work with us toward a positive solution in relocating our members to other facilities."

Brynien said PEF leaders will hold meetings with all the members who may be affected by the closures.

"We will review the proposals and do everything possible to ensure the job security of our members," Brynien said. "And, we will also make sure public safety is not jeopardized."

PEF ready to do whatever it takes

By **KENNETH BRYNIEN**

As this issue of *The Communicator* goes to press, we await the governor's Executive Budget proposal.

No doubt, with the state facing a projected \$4.3 billion deficit, there will be challenges for PEF in the budget proposal and in our contract negotiations.

We have already received notice of the governor's plans for closures and consolidations in the Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) and in the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The governor's State of the State Address proposed tapping the state's lottery through private investment or financing, which could mean a privatization proposal.

Any announcement concerning our members' job security or the possibility for privatization puts us at high alert. Our uppermost concern is the employment security of our members and we will use all options available to us to protect their employment.

What is different this time, than in the past, is the governor and his administration have shown a willingness to listen and work with us. The governor understands the value of the state workforce; this is encouraging, and his actions, so far, bear this out. You have to read no further than the article on page 8 of

this issue on hiring at the state Transportation Department for verification. However, even though we can graciously accept the governor's cooperation and goodwill, there will be times when a cooperative relationship won't work.

Inevitably, there will be times when, in order to achieve what we rightfully deserve, we will have to back up our positions with more than just a good argument. There are times when we will have to back up our positions with membership action. In the previous issue of *The Communicator*, I wrote on

the benefits and power of coalitions in achieving our goals. Like membership action, this is just one more weapon in the arsenal we have to achieve our members' goals.

As we face the challenges ahead – from protecting the job security and retirement benefits of our members, to bringing home the best contract we can, to fighting unnecessary and wasteful contracting out and privatization – you have my commitment that we will use all options available to bring about the best results for our members.



ON THE RECORD – PEF President Ken Brynien is interviewed by a Long Island television reporter during the October cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) rally held in Hauppauge.

— Photo by Darcy Wells

PS&T contract talks take a historic turn

By **DEBORAH A. MILES**

A historic meeting took place January 14 when PEF President Ken Brynien, Secretary-Treasurer Arlea Igoe and members of the contract team met with top state administration officials at the Capitol in Albany.

"We are at a very serious stage of bargaining," Brynien said. "PEF has not been offered a deal comparable to those provided our co-workers. The meeting at the Capitol was intended to get us beyond this impasse.

"There are those in state government who want us to take a sub-standard agreement. I am pleased our relationship with Gov. Eliot Spitzer allows us to appeal directly to him and his top advisors when this occurs," Brynien said.

PEF Vice President and Contract Chair Lou Matrazzo said the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) is responsible for negotiating contracts

with 14 units and, at this writing, six have settled, including the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA).

"In each of the other negotiations, GOER agreed to provide significant economic relief in an area of concern expressed by the union. This relief went beyond the pattern items of across-the-board increases and location pay enhancements. When we were denied comparability of treatment by GOER, our negotiations moved up the food chain," Matrazzo said.

"Specifically, tens of millions of dollars in additional benefits were provided to our co-workers, and an equivalent offering has not been made to PEF," he said.

At the meeting, PEF also delivered a

presentation on the dental and vision program that included two proposals. Each showed how the state would not have to take on a significant cost, while raising the benefits to a level comparable to what other unionized state employees receive.

Brynien closed the meeting with a statement emphasizing the seriousness of an impasse. State administrators promised a close review of PEF's issues and will respond no later than January 25.

"I ask you to stand strong with us. Be patient and trust our contract team will do its job. Most importantly, be ready to join us in a fight for what is right, should it become necessary," Matrazzo said.

For current updates, visit the PEF Web site, click on contract, or sign-up and read the Active Informed Member (AIM) bulletins.



MATRAZZO

PEF pressure shifts DOT into hiring gear



CHECKING IT OUT - PEF Division 258 member William Stachnik, a civil engineer I, inspects a bridge in the Binghamton area last August.

— Photo by Mark Lippolis

By DEBORAH A. MILES

There's an old saying, "When the winds of change blow, adjust your sails."

That's exactly what PEF members at the state Department of Transportation (DOT) did when nearly 1,100 employees took the early retirement incentive, resigned or transferred during the last decade.

Within the last few years, members realized they had to change their course of action to refill the vacant jobs at DOT. They united, fought hard, and brought their issues to higher levels. Now, they are beginning to see the winds of change blow in their favor.

DOT has taken a new direction that benefits not only state workers, but taxpayers. It is finally hiring state workers, instead of giving the work to high-cost private contractors.

"DOT has put together a budget initiative to add eight additional in-house bridge inspection teams in the next two years," said Lou Ferrone Jr., PEF labor-management chair at DOT. This package includes bridge maintenance staff and equipment. The initiative is currently under review. At the



FERRONE

end of the two years, there will be more in-house inspection teams than consultants."

"This is a victory for PEF," said Darlene Morabito, a civil engineer 1 and PEF Division 256 member. "It's a starting point in one small area and we are hoping the hiring of state employees will also be visible in other areas of DOT."



MORABITO

"We are getting back to where we were with state bridge inspectors before so many of our colleagues retired," she said.

Along with Ferrone, Morabito testified at a hearing of the Assembly Standing Committee on Transportation in March 2006 that

highlighted the issue of paying expensive consultants to perform work state DOT employees could do for less.

"That hearing may have been a pivotal point because PEF built a strong case and had solid evidence," Morabito said. "Lawmakers really listened to what we had to say. They understood the numbers, but they also started to understand the personal pride state bridge inspectors take."

Daniel Majeski, a civil engineer, PEF Division 227 council leader and Executive Board member, agreed.



MAJESKI

"If PEF didn't bring this to the forefront in state government, more consultants would be on the scene. This is a victory in many ways. There is an enormous savings for taxpayers. Also, consultants do take pride in their work as engineers, but they look at a bridge once or twice. There is a high turnover, whereas a state bridge inspector has ongoing training, consistency and comparative value. It's the trained eye versus a revolving-door type of inspection," Majeski said.

In the Binghamton area where he works, Majeski said DOT has a unique situation with bridges in seven counties to inspect.

"Currently, we have two inspection teams with hiring interviews being held for a third. Ideally, we should have four to five teams in the Binghamton region," he said.

Ferrone said a total of eight teams will be added during this year and next in various DOT regions. "The department has increased its recruiting to the southern states. We are approximately 300-400 employees below the target. With the course we took to get here, we are better off than a year ago."

AFT turns to PEF for tips on mobilizing members

By **DARCY WELLS**

When hundreds of PEF members gathered in Hauppauge in mid-October and two weeks later in Manhattan calling for cost-of-living pay increases in high cost areas, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) took notice.

The AFT — one of PEF's affiliates — was producing a training video to help its locals mobilize members around contract issues before heading to the bargaining table. So, AFT reached out to PEF to tap into the union's experience and insight for the project.

"I knew PEF was in contract negotiations," said Lynne Mingarelli, associate director at the Center for Collective Bargaining at AFT. "And I knew PEF has a mobilization department.

"Your downstate COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) campaign hits home. It demonstrates the importance of mobilizing members around an issue before heading into negotiations. You can't just enter into talks and then ask members to support the team," Mingarelli said.

"Our goal was to use the downstate COLA rallies as one example of what other locals can do to energize their members," Mingarelli added.

Brynien goes on record

The AFT requested copies of PEF's video of the COLA rallies and arranged a follow-up interview with PEF President Ken Brynien.

"What our members may not realize is that having a mobilization department is unique," Brynien said.

"The department was created in 1999 when there was an urgent need for change.

"During the interview, I explained the importance of having a plan for mobilizing members and having an issue they can mobilize around," Brynien said.

"Our cost-of-living campaign was a timely example. I shared the entire process, from picking locations for the rallies, notifying our members through the distribution of flyers, holding member meetings, developing the message and most importantly, turning



MEMBERS MOBILIZED – Debra Konstantakis, DMV Supervising Motor Vehicle Representative 2, is interviewed about why a COLA is important to her.

— Photo by Jonathan Gittens

Below, President Ken Brynien makes a point at the Manhattan COLA rally as members cheer him on.

— Photo by Richard Dillard



out members," he added.

AFT video well received

A rough-cut of the AFT video was shown to its leadership and staff contract negotiators representing a third of the locals nationwide at a December conference in New Orleans.

"It was well received," Mingarelli said. "Everyone liked the video and thought it would be a helpful training tool, but they need other support materials such as PEF's worksite mapping plan," she said.

"The worksite mapping plan actually identifies the exact location of our members at their worksites," said PEF Mobilization Director Margaret Messer.

"You have to know where your members are by building, floor, shift and work schedule.

"It's a powerful tool we use to

communicate, educate and activate our members," Messer said.

Brynien said his role in the video will help other union leaders understand the importance of identifying members' key contract concerns; focusing an action on one of those key concerns; and making that action a success.

"We are taken more seriously at the bargaining table when negotiators have already heard our message from our members.

"The benefit is twofold because members see it was worth their time and effort and makes the next time out much easier to get the participation," Brynien said.

AFT hopes to wrap up the training video within the next month or two and make it available to locals as they prepare for contract negotiations.

Feds: Report time you spend on union business



By **SCOTT GOODSPEED** and
SHERRY HALBROOK

If you spend time at work doing PEF business, you may be required to report it to the feds under new regulations, enacted in 2007 by the Bush administration. This change and others took effect January 1 of this year.

Most notably, if you are being paid by your employer for time you spend on union work in 2008, and that time is not reimbursed to the employer by PEF, you may be required to report it to the U.S. Labor Department (USDOL).

Expose conflicts of interest

Originally, the regs, promulgated under the federal Labor-Management Reporting Disclosure Act (LMRDA), were enacted to make union financial transactions transparent by disclosing certain potential conflicts of interest between union officers and employers, and between union officers and vendors.

Traditionally, PEF officers and employees were required to disclose any monetary benefits they received from vendors and from the state and other public or private entities, whose employees PEF represents or is trying to organize.

Time is money

The new regs, however, focus more on identifying how much employer-paid time is spent on union business.

The regs significantly expand the number and classes of union officials who must file lengthy financial reports.

Now, once the total hours of contractual leave exceed 250 in a single year, you must report all of the wages you received from your employer for time you spent conducting union business.

So, if you are a PEF steward who averages more than five hours per week helping union members while on contractually guaranteed union leave or release time, you must report all the wages and benefits you receive for those hours to the USDOL.

You are not required to report it if PEF reimburses your employer for the time you spent on union business.

You must report it all, even if it totals less than 250 hours, if your employer gives you union leave or release time under an arrangement or local agreement other than the PS&T contract or other collective-bargaining agreement.

Keep careful records

"The bottom line is that any PEF member who is paid by their employer while on union release time or union leave must keep track of all their time spent on such leave," said PEF General Counsel William Seamon.

"If you are using union leave guaranteed by contract, the obligation to fill out a report won't kick in until you've worked 250 hours. But it's your

responsibility to know when you meet that threshold. So, start keeping careful records now," Seamon said. "And if your leave is guaranteed by some arrangement other than the contract, you must report all the wages and benefits received for those hours.

"It's a good idea to keep track of any time you spend out of your workday doing union business.

"If PEF is going to pay your employer for it, PEF will need to know how much time it was. And if the union will not be reimbursing your employer for that time, you may have to report it to the USDOL on Form LM-30," Seamon said.

The LM-30 for the period January 1, 2008 – December 31, 2008, must be filed by March 31, 2009.

Failure to file a form LM-30, could result in criminal penalties. Therefore, it is extremely important to keep good records of employer-paid time spent on union business.

For more information, check out the December 18, 2007, memo posted under Current News on the PEF Web site at www.pef.org. At the end of that memo, you will find links to download Form LM-30 and the instructions for completing it.

Taking a close look at the form and instructions now will give you a better idea of exactly what detailed information you will need to report this time next year.

Women's event to be March 29 in Saratoga Springs

The PEF Women's Committee is busy preparing for Women's History Month in March. The committee wants to nominate an activist for the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls and it is planning a program for Saturday, March 29, in Saratoga Springs.

You can help the committee by sending your suggestions of activists who have made a difference in the

lives of PEF women for recognition in the Hall of Fame. Send their names and information about why they deserve the nomination to the PEF Women's Committee, PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414. Suggestions must be received by February 29.

The March 29 program will be held at the Inn at Saratoga and will feature speakers from the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) focusing on

mobilizing and on health issues. Tentative plans call for the program to begin at 11:30 a.m. and to include light refreshments. More information will be publicized when it becomes available in the March issue of *The Communicator* and the PEF Information Line weekly updates.

– Sherry Halbrook

Membership Benefits team saves members millions

By **DEBORAH A. MILES**

If you think the shopping malls were busy during the holiday season, PEF's Membership Benefits Program in Albany topped its one-day record of sales on December 17 when members purchased \$45,236 worth of discount tickets.

What may be more impressive are the millions of dollars in savings to members who bought tickets June 1, 2006, through May 31, 2007.

"If members had paid full price for the tickets they purchased from us during that time, it would have cost them an additional \$1.5 million," said Lisa Crouch, Membership Benefits marketing executive.

The department has a bustling atmosphere where hundreds of members stroll in daily, call or place Internet orders to purchase movie discount tickets, deals for ski and golf resorts, and savings at amusement and theme parks. Helping them is all in a day's work for the 17 people who remain dedicated to serving PEF members.

The Membership Benefits staff puts the human touch in all it does. It is a customer-orientated team of professionals who have contact with thousands of members, and are glad to show them how to take advantage of the huge savings that's available to boost the quality of their daily lives.

"Everyone is versed in many areas and works hard at being accessible and helpful to PEF members," Crouch said.

"The PEF Membership Benefits program is unique as it works with vendors to subsidize discount tickets and negotiates quality insurance programs," said PEF Vice President Joe Fox.



FOX

The program operates under a board of five trustees, including Fox, who are appointed by the PEF president. It also operates under a trust established in 1979 and is totally self-funded.

"The type of benefits and providers are selected after extensive investigation and review," Fox said. "Our staff is there to provide support for the programs we offer, and to assist in disputes that may arise between a member and a vendor."



ACCOUNTING AND PROGRAMMING – (L-R) Frank Norvici, Maria Zap, Jason Vanderwall, Kelly Meek, Connie Fedden and Joe Cocci.



SALES AND MARKETING – (L-R) Paula Veteramo, Sarah Krammen, Lisa Crouch, Nancy Holford, Annmarié Bikowicz and Megan Burns.

Connie Fedden, Membership Benefits financial executive, said, "PEF members' dues are never used to fund the operations of the program or any of the benefits offered."

The program offers nearly 10 different insurance programs.

"A recent negotiation with our insurance partner includes a new rate decrease of 7.5 percent for long-term disability insurance," said Buffy Horan, who manages the staff responsible for processing and coordinating insurance benefits among members and insurance vendors.

Membership Benefits also provides financial consulting services such as mortgage and real estate discounts, auto/home/renter's insurance, and a defensive driving course that costs \$18. The bulk of the business is the discount tickets, from baseball games to the Bronx Zoo. And it includes a top-notch, full-service travel agency – PEF Travel.

"We have statewide and regional discount benefits and tickets," Crouch added. "The PEF Web site also has a complete listing of what we offer. It's an easy and secure way to order tickets and is quite popular. With the Web site, we are there 24/7 for all our members."



INSURANCE STAFF – (L-R) Jacki Allen, Michele Palmer, Barbara Boratynski, Eileen Zampella and Buffy Horan.

Old soldier's memory neither dead, nor faded

By **SHERRY HALBROOK**

In August 2007, PEF retiree William Dolce was stunned to receive a letter from the French government inviting him to a ceremony on November 12 at the French Consul in New York City.

He was to be named a "chevalier of the French Legion of Honor" for his courage in helping to liberate southern France from the Nazi occupation.

Dolce had thought he was perhaps the only one who still remembered August 15, 1944.

"I can remember it like it was yesterday. But I'm glad it's not," Dolce said.

He remembers it so vividly because it is a day soaked through with danger, dying men and his own amazing survival. It was the day he took part in the American forces "landing" on the beach at Cavalaire-sur-Mer in southern France.

Dolce is 89 now. But he was just a 25-year-old combat engineer in August of '44, huddled with dozens of other frightened young men in a landing craft that couldn't reach the beach because the tide was too high that day.

The boat stopped about 75 yards offshore amidst heavy German fire and the men were expected to jump into the water and be pulled by a rope to the shore.

They were weighed down with many pounds of gear, weapons and ammo. The heaviest thing they struggled to bring ashore that day was their own fear and dread, and for Dolce that was



PROUD MEMORY — PEF retiree William Dolce displays the French Legion of Honor he received in 2007 for his service in WWII.

— Photo by Harry Scull Jr./The Buffalo News
magnified by a petrifying awareness that he did not know how to swim.

The men in the boat next to his were hit by an artillery shell and flung into the air, before they could even try their chances with the rope.

But Dolce said he prayed and, although the explosion destroyed his hearing in one ear, somehow he survived.

He served nearly five years in Europe during WWII and then joined

the reserves. He was called up to serve again during the Berlin airlift. He gradually moved up to the rank of chief warrant officer, and served a total of 38 years in the Army and reserves.

Born and raised in Silver Creek, Dolce signed on with the state Department of Labor and worked 36 years in the Buffalo area. As a veterans' services representative, Dolce was dedicated to helping his fellow military veterans find civilian jobs.

He retired from state service January 1, 1981, but continues to aid veterans as an active member of the Military Officers Association of Western New York.

Dolce had assumed his story of individual heroism was entirely faded into history by now. He thought the memory was only vivid and meaningful to him.

Unable to make the journey to receive the award, Dolce received it in the mail.

"I was the 10th one selected to receive the award," Dolce said. "I was very surprised to get it after more than 60 years."

So, at 89, life still holds some surprises for Dolce and Angela, his wife of 65 years.

They live at home, on their own, and he continues to visit veterans in hospitals and nursing homes. When there is nothing more he can do for them, he attends their funerals and helps their widows with the paperwork for military burials.



WELL DONE — Paul Tonko receives plaque of appreciation from PEF Region 8 Coordinator Tom Comanzo.

— Photo by John Epting

Region 8 PAC honors Tonko's service

Paul Tonko, president and CEO of the NYS Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA) was honored by the PEF Region 8 Political Action Committee at its annual dinner meeting held December 11 in Albany.

Tonko was the first PEF member to be elected to the NYS Assembly, serving there from 1983 to June of last year when Gov. Eliot Spitzer appointed him to head NYSERDA.

"We have always had a very good working relationship with him (Tonko)," said PEF Region 8 Coordinator Tom Comanzo. "We wanted to honor his years of service to the people of New York

state and his years of membership in PEF."

Born and raised in Amsterdam, Tonko earned a BS in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering from Clarkson University in 1971, and went to work for the state Transportation Department and later was a senior valuation engineer for the Department of Public Service until his election to the state Assembly in what is now the 105th District.

"He was always with us on our issues," Comanzo said.

— Sherry Halbbrook

A message from PEF Retirees President Steve Muscarella

Inflation sucking the life out of your pension?

Former state Comptroller Arthur Levitt Sr., who served from 1955-1979, said inflation is the greatest threat to the financial security of state retirees.

PEF Retirees has continually advocated for a full COLA (cost-of-living adjustment) to our pensions to offset inflation. But we've been advised it's unrealistic in the current political climate to ask for even this change in our current COLA level of 50 percent of inflation.

It's even been suggested that a campaign for a full COLA would be portrayed as greedy by our detractors who would not hesitate to call us "pigs at the public trough."

The maximum benefit PEF retirees can receive from their 2007-2008 COLA is \$21 per month, that's based on half of the CPI (Consumer Price Index). If we received a full COLA, that maximum would double to \$42 monthly. No senior could ever consider buying a villa in France with that largess.

Any characterization of state retirees as greedy pigs is truly outrageous.

Contrast our modest, hard-earned pensions with the lavish retirements of the leaders of corporate America who often receive tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars, whether the CEO was successful or not.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), reports the average corporate chief executive officer earns more on the first day of the year than the average worker earns all year.

Average CEO pay was 411 times greater than average worker pay in 2007 - a gap nearly 10 times wider than it was in 1980, when CEO pay



MUSCARELLA

averaged 42 times more than average worker pay.

Statistics indicate 30 percent of our nation's elderly were living in poverty in the 1930's, which triggered the demand for Social Security and pensions.

The trend has turned.

In 1983, more than two-thirds of households headed by people ages 47 to 64 had someone earning a pension. But by 2001, fewer than half did."

Worker pay is eroding and pensions are disappearing. The retirees who have pensions need a full COLA just to offset the unrelenting ravages of inflation.

After decades of dedicated service to New York state, we should not have to face our senior years experiencing insecurity and ever mounting financial stress.

In 2006, state Assembly Member Peter J. Abbate Jr. introduced Bill A08376 that would increase our COLA from 50 percent to 100 percent of the CPI.

The PEF Retirees strongly supports this bill. What's lacking, however, is a matching "companion" bill in the state Senate.

That's where you can make a big difference. First, write your state senator and ask her or him to submit/support a companion bill for A08376. Explain how your pension's value is being undercut more deeply by inflation every year.

Then, write your Assembly member to request support to get A08376 out of committee and passed.

It took many years of steady pressure to achieve the COLA we have. It will take no less determination and effort to finally get it to where it always should have been: equal to 100 percent of inflation. We need it and we've earned it.



ACTIVIST ALL THE WAY — Mary Reid, former PEF Reg 12 coordinator and now president of the PEF Retirees Long Island Chapter, is one of several retirees who made the long trip to New Hampshire in January to support Hillary Clinton.

— Photo by Richard Dillard

Don't miss Black, Puerto Rican legislative conference

The Black Caucus of PEF will host a reception and a workshop this year at the 37th Annual Conference of the NYS Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators in Albany. The PEF Political Action Committee also will hold its annual invitation-only reception for legislators at the conference.

The conference is Friday, February 15, through Sunday, February 17, at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany.

If you are in town, stop by the PEF

booth on the ESP concourse Saturday.

And if you would like to attend the PEF Black Caucus reception Friday night at the Hilton Garden Inn, Albany Medical Center, contact Maddie Shannon Roberts at ladyindr@aol.com or call her at 518-426-1347. Or e-mail Carlos Garcia at impactcrds@aol.com. The hotel, which is at 62 New Scotland Avenue, is a new site for the reception which will be held on the second floor.

Details are still being finalized for the caucus' Saturday workshop at the ESP Convention Center titled

"Increasing Diversity in NYS."

Tentative plans call for it to feature speakers Hayward Horton, associate dean of graduate studies at the State University of NY, Albany, and Merton Simpson, president of the Albany Chapter of Blacks and Government. Check your conference program for the exact time and place.

PEF's PAC reception will be held 4-6 p.m. Saturday, February 16, at the Crowne Plaza.

— Sherry Halbrook

Official AFT & SEIU Call and Rules



AFT and SEIU CONVENTIONS



For the AFT and SEIU conventions the following rules apply:

1. In order to be nominated, a dues-paying member must obtain the signatures of fifty (50) other members from within the designated title groupings for this convention (*see listings*).
2. A nominee may not sign his/her own petition.
3. A member may sign only one (1) nominating petition.
4. The accuracy of the information contained in the petition is the responsibility of the person filing the petition.
5. Original petitions must be returned to PEF-Albany Headquarters c/o Delegate Election Committee at PO Box 12414, Albany, NY 12212-2414 and received no later than 5 p.m. March 10, 2008. Received means "in-hand" not mailed or post-marked. Faxing of petitions will not be allowed.
6. Petitions may be returned by certified mail (return receipt requested), although this is not required. Certified mail sometimes takes longer than regular mail. Postal failures or inadequacies are a matter between the mailer and the post office, not the Elections Committee. Allow five (5) days or more for mailing to be safe. PEF sends each nominee a notice of receipt.
7. Per PEF Constitution and Executive Board policy, the five (5) statewide officers are automatic delegates to the AFT and SEIU Conventions.
8. In addition to the statewide officers, a minimum of ten (10) elected delegates will comprise the PEF delegation to the convention for AFT and 20 for SEIU's.
9. (a) If ten (10) or fewer valid nominating petitions are received, those individuals who submitted a valid petition will be deemed duly elected for AFT.

(b) If twenty (20) or fewer valid nominating petitions are received, those individuals who submitted a valid petition will be deemed duly elected for SEIU.
10. The Secretary-Treasurer will provide the Delegate Election Committee with the estimated cost of sending one delegate to the forthcoming AFT and SEIU Conventions. In addition, the Secretary-Treasurer will provide the committee with a cost estimate for holding an election. The committee will determine the breakdown of the total number of delegates that could attend the convention, compared with the cost of holding an election. This will be determined by dividing the cost of holding an election by the cost of sending one delegate to the convention. If the total number of valid petitions received is equal to or fewer than the break-even number, all individuals who submitted valid petitions will be deemed duly elected delegates and no election will be held. The maximum number of delegates cannot exceed our authorized number of seats.
11. If the number of valid petitions received is greater than the break-even total (see #10), an election will be held (see Convention Information). Alternates will fill the delegate openings by rank order or the number of votes received in case of an election. Ties will be broken by lot.

SEE JOB-TITLE GROUPINGS AND CONVENTION
INFORMATION ON FOLLOWING PAGE

AFT/SEIU Convention Information (continued)

1. No EOL (Employee Organization Leave) will be provided for delegates attending the AFT/SEIU Conventions.
2. Travel and lodging will be arranged and provided by PEF.
3. A per-diem allowance for meals will be provided by PEF.

4. **AFT Convention**
Site: Chicago, IL
Dates: July 10-14, 2008.
PEF title groups eligible to attend the AFT convention:
A, B, C, D, F, Q and S.

5. **SEIU Convention**
Site: Puerto Rico
Dates: May 31- June 5, 2008.
PEF title groups eligible to attend the SEIU convention:
E, G, H, J, K, M, N, O, P and R.

6. **Dates To Remember**
 - A. Nominating petitions will be available at all PEF offices for potential candidates to pick up during regular office hours starting 9 a.m. – February 11, 2008 and are due back by 5 p.m. – March 10, 2008.
 - B. Elections (if needed) will begin with ballots being mailed by March 24, 2008 with a return date of 5 p.m. April 21, 2008.



AFT PEF job-title groupings

- A. Nurses and related nursing titles.
- B. Engineers, right-of-way agents, designers, architects, drafting and related engineering technicians, pilots and conservation titles.
- C. Teachers, librarians, trainers and related educational titles.
- D. Doctors, dentists, psychiatrists, psychologists, dieticians, veterinarians, pharmacists, health-care, home-economist and related medical researchers.
- F,G,S. Chaplains, scientists, cultural affairs specialists, related artists and sciences professionals, management personnel and related administration specialists, planners and supervisors.



SEIU PEF job-title groupings

- E. Social workers and social services.
- G. Attorneys, referees, hearing officers, hearing examiners, mediators and judges.
- H. Therapists, rehabilitators.
- J. Parole officers, drug abuse counselors, and related law enforcement professionals.
- K,R. Computer professionals, superintendents, maintenance specialists, technicians and skilled tradesman.
- M. Claim examiners, investigators and inspectors.
- N. All counselors.
- O. Interviewers, manpower specialists, OJT specialists, apprenticeship reps., consultants and field reps.
- P. Accountants, auditors, estimators, statisticians, examiners, appraisers, analysts, head clerks, reporters.

Holiday giving fills hearts of children, members



MAKING THE SEASON MERRY - (L-R) Scott Ray, Debi Chowdhury, PEF President Ken Brynien, Cindy Brynien, Tom Comanzo, Sue Comanzo, Bill Wurster, Don Sislowski, Sue Jeffords, Dennis Anderson, Lynette Oyer and Bob Harms.
— Photo by John Epting

By DEBORAH A. MILES

Year after year, the generosity of PEF members increases during the holiday season. Across the state, members take the time from their personal lives to shop and donate items to annual toy and food drives and bring some happiness to children and those in need.

In PEF Region 8, the tradition of gathering toys, food baskets and wrapping everything has become an annual event some members consider a part of their holiday season.

Bob Harms is one of those volunteers. The program was begun in 1990 by parole officer Sue Jeffords. For the past 15 years, Harms has looked forward to that Saturday morning just before Christmas when the wrapping paper and Scotch tape are shared in the gesture of good will.

"This is a worthwhile thing to do, to

help families," Harms said. "I've been volunteering for 17 years and it's something I want to do. Some of the faces change and some people are in different political camps. But that's not why we are here. We gather in the spirit of harmony, and you feel great knowing you are helping people. It's a cool thing."

During the years, Harms has

me," Harms said.

PEF Region 8 Coordinator Tom Comanzo said the program is something to be proud of.

The toys are donated to Toys for Tots, St. Margaret's Children Center in Albany, and to families of deserving parolees.

"The program is unique as it recognizes that children of parolees are special. They are not responsible for the actions of a parent. Receiving something extra for the holidays, or for some it may be the only gift, helps them realize there is good in the world and people care. It's a very positive experience for all involved," Comanzo said.

In PEF Region 8, Comanzo said members also staffed a booth at Crossgates Mall in Albany where shoppers could donate to the Regional Food Bank.

Downstate members got into the spirit of giving by hosting a second annual holiday party. They brought an unwrapped gift, with a minimum value of \$20, to the PEF office for their admission, or paid that amount at the door.

PEF Region 10 Coordinator Vernetta Chesimard said the project was a joint effort with the NYC Central Labor Council and the U.S. Marines.



MAKING IT MERRY – Friends of PEF Region 8 enjoy some time with Santa, played by Dan Ryan. (L-R) Maya, Sydni and Michelle Moss.

— Photo by John Epting

noticed people are spending more on donated gifts, up to \$30 or \$40 for a toy. He's also noticed there is still the usual array of Raggedy Ann dolls, Tonka trucks and teddy bears, but affordable technology items are becoming popular gifts as well.

"The generosity of people amazes



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- 🕒 **CONDITIONAL GUARANTEE ISSUE:** COVERAGE AVAILABLE UP TO \$150,000 FOR MEMBERS WHO ARE ACTIVELY AT WORK AND HAVE NOT MISSED MORE THAN 5 DAYS OF WORK OR HAVE NOT BEEN HOSPITALIZED IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS.
- 🕒 **SIMPLIFIED ISSUE:** TO APPLY FOR COVERAGE FROM \$151,000 TO \$300,000, THE MEMBER MUST MEET THE ABOVE REQUIREMENTS, AND ANSWER A FEW HEALTH-RELATED QUESTIONS. NO BLOOD TESTS OR MEDICAL EXAMS ARE EVER REQUIRED.
- 🕒 **ACCELERATED DEATH BENEFIT:** ALLOWS FOR EARLY PAYMENT OF THE DEATH BENEFIT FOR TERMINAL ILLNESS WITH THE BALANCE PAID TO THE BENEFICIARY.
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or call 800-626-0291 ext. 5308 to speak with a licensed representative**

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MEMBERSHIP
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*Source: Housing and Home Finance Agency of the U.S. Government, 1998.

SEIU offers Geagan scholarship, lottery

The Service Employees International Union is offering another scholarship program, in addition to the ones listed in the last issue of *The Communicator*.

It's the John Geagan scholarship, named after its long-time organizing director during the 1970s and 1980s, and is for applicants who are pursuing a degree in labor relations.

The scholarship is for \$5,000 and is expended over a 24-month period (\$2,500 a year). This scholarship can be used in any labor studies program where college credit is awarded. This includes four-year and two-year institutions, labor studies centers, certificates and online programs – as long as college credit will be earned toward a bachelor's or associate's degree in labor studies.

The deadline for the application is March 1. Applications are available online at www.seiu.org/mbe/scholarships.

SEIU lottery

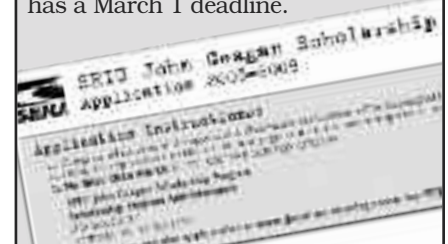
If your child will graduate from a high school or GED program by August 2008, and will be enrolled as a full-time college freshman by the fall semester of 2008 at an accredited four-year college or university, he meets the eligibility criteria for the SEIU scholarship lottery.

Each year, SEIU awards fifteen \$1,000 scholarships that are available in annual installments that are renewable for up to four years and thirty-three \$1,500 scholarships covering one year of study that are non-renewable.

Recipients for both types of scholarships are selected by a lottery drawing of qualifying applications.

All applicants must read "On The Rise: To Restore The American Dream, and the SEIU 2006 annual report — then correctly answer all the questions on the SEIU lottery scholarship.

The annual report and application are available at www.goonline.cc, and has a March 1 deadline.



Cornell ILR honors PEF H&S chair

BY SHERRY HALBROOK

PEF Health and Safety Chair Kathy D'Arminio was honored in November by the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

D'Arminio, who also serves on the PEF PS&T Contract Team and the Executive Board, received the Jessica Govea Thorbourne Courage Award at the 60th Anniversary Celebration of Cornell ILR Labor Programs, held November 15 in New York City.

The award recognizes individuals "who have demonstrated exceptional and courageous service to the cause of organized labor and all working people."

The ILR established the award as a tribute to Thorbourne who grew from a childhood as a farmworker in California to a labor organizer and activist and then as a labor educator with the Cornell ILR Extension program until her death from cancer in 2004.

In presenting the award to D'Arminio, the ILR said her "focus on health and safety, as well as her courage in the face of tremendous challenges, was shown after the catastrophic floods of April 2005 in western New York paralyzed the



IT'S AN HONOR — PEF Health and Safety Committee Chair Kathy D'Arminio thanks the Cornell ILR for presenting her with its Govea Thorbourne Courage Award. At left is Ken Margolies, director of organizing programs.

— Photo by Clark Jones, courtesy of Cornell ILR Labor Programs

region and killed 16 people. Kathy led her union's effort to get management to let people go home, seeking intervention from state legislators to protect her members from being penalized for the work they missed during the disaster."

"The safety of our drinking water at work and at home was a serious concern," D'Arminio said, "and many members were afraid to come to work

because of the unsafe conditions all around us.

"I work for PEF and our members because I care about their safety and my own," she added. "I try to be proactive with management to resolve problems. This will make the workplace safer and more productive. Safety would be in jeopardy without our active union."

Health and safety director receives national honor

Jonathan Rosen, director of PEF's Health and Safety Department, received national recognition for his efforts in November.

The American Public Health Association, at its annual meeting in Washington, presented Rosen with the 2007 Tony Mazzocchi Award for outstanding grassroots activism in fighting for the health and safety rights of workers.

The founder of the Labor Party in the U.S., Mazzocchi led the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union and was considered the most influential labor leader in the area of occupational safety and health until his death in 2003.

In presenting the award to Rosen, APHA praised him as "a tireless health and safety activist for more than 25 years," who has led the state and national fight for preventing workplace violence and has been "instrumental in shaping the field of workplace violence research, insisting on ... research methods that emphasize the importance of including workers in all phases of a research project."

Rosen shared the 2007 Mazzocchi Award with Tammy Miser, an activist who launched national Web sites to help the families of workers who are killed on the job, and to compile and report the "Weekly Toll" of recent workplace fatalities.

— Sherry Halbrook



THE WINNER IS... — PEF Health and Safety Director Jonathan Rosen is congratulated by Kate McPhaul, a University of Maryland researcher who nominated him for the 2007 Tony Mazzocchi Award of the American Public Health Association.

Nurses: Mark your calendars!

Tuesday, June 10, Nurses' Lobby Day



Ask now for that day off, so you can catch the PEF bus to Albany for Nurses' Lobby Day.



Unite with nurses from throughout the state and other unions at the Capitol to demand an end to chronic understaffing and mandatory overtime. For more information, call Nancy Wolff at 1-800-342-4306, ext.344.

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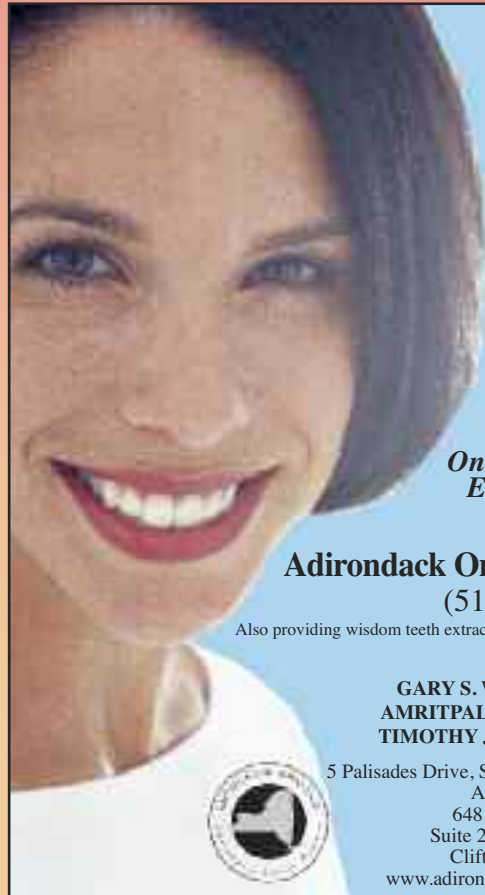
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