



Unit 9200 Newsletter

DECEMBER 2007 Volume 2, Issue 4

Highlights

- New York State Retirement System
- Security Upgrade for DSS Employees
- Employee Assistance Program
- Tuition Reimbursement
- Workplace Safety [PESH/OSHA]
- AFSCME Scholarships
- Health and Safety Committee Member Survey
- Defensive Driving Courses
- Member Conference & Fundraisers

In Each Issue

FEATURE STORY	1
Your Benefits	2
Union Achievements	
At Your Service...	3
Your Rights	
Member Participation	4
UPCOMING EVENTS	

Communications & Public Relations Committee:

- Kimberly Gotzen (DSS)
- Chair / Designer
- Teresa Rella (DSS)
- Co-Chair
- Kathryn McCoach (DSS)
- Editor
- Gwen Hill (Health)
- Secretary
- Keturah Hadley (Probation)
- Contributing Editor
- Elio Giuliani (Finance)
- Unit Board Liaison / Contributing Editor

Our Union Represents 4,000 Employees of Westchester County Government and Westchester Community College

'Our **MISSION** with this newsletter is to reach out to Unit 9200 members to provide union-related information, updates and resources to empower us to make informed decisions that strengthen the membership as a whole.'

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

The CSEA Unit 9200 Negotiation Team met with the County negotiator Mike Wittenberg on November 1st and November 30th.

November 1st: During that day, several sessions with Wittenberg were held in which the County made some effort to negotiate. During these sessions, it was mutually agreed that Anthony Zumbolo, from the NYS Public Employee Relations Board (PERB), would be our appointed mediator, and a letter requesting his assignment was sent to PERB. This letter is on the [Contract Updates](#) page of our web www.CSEA9200.com. We are currently waiting for the appointment and subsequent meeting dates to be established with all parties.

Unfortunately, the County is still adamant in suggesting that your CSEA Team accept what was previously rejected and that does not approach the package needed to bring about an agreement. It was stated to Wittenberg that we cannot accept now what was previously rejected as unacceptable.

Wittenberg proposed a 2 year agreement for 2006 and 2007 and a commitment to continue negotiations for another successor agreement past 2007. Wittenberg also said that all employees would be required

to participate in a Wellness Promotion Health Survey/Guidance Program. Later in the day, Wittenberg proposed a 3 year agreement ending December 31, 2008. This was outlined later that day to our President and to our CSEA Labor Relations Specialist, Larry Sparber.

November 30th: Your negotiation team insisted that we meet and see the presentation from the One Care Street staff before any of the Health Care Survey/Guidance Program is even considered. In addition, the County will meet and discuss the Canadian Prescription Drug program **PROPOSED LAST YEAR BY THE UNION** to the County as a means of saving money, which in turn would allow more funds for our raises. Your Team internally discussed that **IF** the Health Care Survey/Guidance Program is mandated, that all policies would be decided by a Joint Labor/Management Committee and **NOT** from County policies. **It was also stated to Wittenberg that all union proposals made on February 17, 2006 ARE STILL IN PLAY** should the County actually come back with a new counter-proposal that is amenable to us. This proposal is available on the [Contract Updates](#) page of our web www.CSEA9200.com.

SAVE ON HOLIDAY SHOPPING!

Unit 9200 members can now enjoy the **Working Advantage** Employee Discount and Reward Program and save up to 45% on tickets to movie theatres, theme parks, ski resorts, family events, Broadway theatre, hotels and [many online shopping retailers](#). Please visit the [Benefits](#) page of our web www.CSEA9200.com for access instructions
www.WORKINGADVANTAGE.com

DID YOU KNOW...

Employees must be **Active on the County Payroll** at the time a **New Contract** is ratified to receive **New Benefits** and **Retro-active Salary Payments**

(Please note that changes to benefits such as Co-Pay's, etc. are **NOT** retro-active)

CSEA Committees

The CSEA Unit 9200 Health and Safety Committee is asking for your help in assessing the safety of your workplace

The committee is distributing an anonymous Health and Safety survey

By filling out this survey, you will help us to determine if your site should be improved in the matter of health, safety or security

**Print Your Survey At:
www.CSEA9200.com**

Your Benefits as a Union Member

Our New York State Retirement System

In the past few years, it seems that having a pension system has become a bad word. More and more corporations are cutting back or changing the pension programs that they provide for their employees. As CSEA union members, we enjoy the expectation of a financially solid New York State retirement system when we become eligible to retire.

The **New York State and Local Employees' Retirement System (NYSLERS)** is one of the benefits that have been won by pressures brought to bear by organized labor, specifically CSEA.

Many of labor's victories, once achieved, are sometimes forgotten by the represented workers. Many newer employees who are hired after the benefits have been created, expanded or improved do not realize that it was the union (CSEA) who won those benefits.

Since CSEA's formation in October of 1910, it has dedicated itself to the goal of winning fair and equitable wages and quality benefits for its 265,000+ active and retired members.

The Retirement System over the years has been greatly improved mostly because of the efforts of CSEA and other AFSCME and AFL-CIO affiliated Unions, for the benefit of the working men and women who keep government and private sector companies going and providing quality services to the taxpaying public.

- Don Kelly, CSEA Deputy Director of Contract Administration/Research, Albany

NYSLERS Tiers:

Tier 1 > Employees hired prior to 7/1/1973; **Tier 2** > Employees hired 7/1/1973 - 7/26/1976; **Tier 3** > Employees hired 7/27/1976 - 8/31/1983; **Tier 4** > Employees hired since 9/1/1983.

Your Union Working For You

Security Panels installed at 85 Court Street

A massive capital project was commenced by the County of Westchester in 2003 to renovate the interior of the 85 Court St, White Plains District Office. After a few years of demolition noise, dust and dirt, temporary relocations, and full days of general inconvenience to County workers, the renovated offices were again reoccupied in 2006.

Unfortunately, the safety and security of the Social Services (DSS) reception counter employees was totally ignored. The County had designed and constructed a very sleek and attractive low public reception counter offering absolutely no security to the staff. This counter might be appropriate at a 5 star Hilton resort but was completely inadequate and poorly designed for a **high volume area that can at times be occupied with volatile recipients of Social Services**.

This safety issue was immediately brought to the attention of the DSS and Dept of Public Works (DPW) departments by your union officers after the DSS staff voiced their concerns. (DPW designs and manages renovations after the requesting department (DSS) approves the design plans).

After many denials, involvement of the NYS PESH office for safety concerns, and the constant pushing of the issue by your CSEA union officers, the County agreed to install clear Plexiglas security panels on the reception counter in July 2006. In January of 2007, a contractor was engaged to install the panels and do what should have been originally designed and approved prior to 2003.



Unit 9200 Contract Benefit

Tuition Reimbursement

One of the negotiated benefits in our Union Contract is a yearly Tuition Reimbursement (TR) fund for CSEA employees. Currently the County reimburses \$350,000.00 for tuition reimbursements per calendar year to CSEA applicants. Only Tuition for **Credit Courses** (20 hours or more) is eligible for reimbursement; other expenses, such as books, fees, supply costs, etc., are **not** eligible. Applicants are required to achieve a grade of C or higher (2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale) for each course, and reimbursement above \$5,250.00 in one calendar year is required to be taxed per Federal Law H.R.1836. This is a CSEA negotiated benefit. Your department has no say on which courses you must take. Applicants must be on County payroll continuously while enrolled in the courses, and when the reimbursement checks are issued, usually in June for the previous calendar year.

For courses completed in **2006**, a total of **\$555,503.00** in tuition expenses were approved by the Committee for CSEA applicants, which when divided by the \$350,000.00 available for reimbursement resulted in a **63%** reimbursement rate to each applicant.

The TR Committee is comprised of members of the County administration, CSEA union members, and members of other unions, and meets several times to review all applications. The TR application and filing regulation document is available on the **Benefits** page of our website: www.CSEA9200.com. Each applicant should carefully review and understand the regulations.

The filing deadline is JANUARY 7, 2008 for courses completed in 2007.

UNION LEADERS

DANNY DONOHUE
PRESIDENT - CSEA LOCAL 1000



Our Union consists of working men and women.

We organize and represent workers to ensure our voice is heard, and our goals are met.

Presently our goals are:

- 1. Involve more members**
- 2. Hold politicians accountable**
- 3. Increase membership and create a stronger organization**
- 4. Make affordable health care Universal**
- 5. Project a bold new image for public services and AFSCME**

AT YOUR SERVICE...

Employee Assistance Program [EAP]

The Employee Assistance Program is a valuable service for County Employees and their family members

EAP professional counselors can help with:

- Family problems
- Emotional issues
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Legal, credit, housing and any other concerns of daily living.

The EAP helps you assess your problems and will refer you to a community resource covered by your health plan.

Any employee or a member of an employee's family can call the EAP directly for a convenient, confidential appointment at the White Plains office.

The EAP is a free service provided to employees and their family members. Confidentiality is maintained if you initiate the contact with EAP. No one's job security or promotional opportunities will be affected by participation in the EAP.

However, in the event that you are directed to attend EAP by your Department, confidentiality is not guaranteed. Information may be shared with your Department.

The EAP has the full support and endorsement of administration and the bargaining units which represent you. It is our mutual goal to provide an opportunity for you to enjoy a happy, healthy and productive life.

Since 1917, employee assistance programs (EAP's) have provided support and assistance to employees who have work performance problems that result from some type of personal problem. Labor Unions such as CSEA and AFSCME have contributed to the growth of this program in New York State, which assists thousands of employees in the public and private sectors each year.

The EAP offers you an opportunity to actively seek assistance. The first step is up to you. CALL FOR AN APPOINTMENT at (914) 995-6070.

- Kathryn McCoach

AFSCME Union Benefit

College Scholarships

The **AFSCME Family Scholarship** Program provides \$2,000 scholarships to high school seniors, renewable for \$2,000 each year for a maximum of four years, provided the student remains enrolled in a full-time course of study. The scholarship may be used for any field of study.

Applicants must be the daughter, son or financially dependent grandchild of an active or retired AFSCME member; a graduating high school senior in 2008, and be accepted to an accredited college or university as a full-time student in a four year degree program.

Application deadline: December 31, 2007

The **Union Plus Education Foundation Scholarship** is for active and retired members of unions participating in any Union Plus program, and their spouses and dependent children. Awards are not based upon participation in a Union Plus program.

Applicants must be accepted into an accredited college, university or recognized technical or trade school at the time the award is issued. (Please Note: Graduate students are now eligible.) Applicants for scholarships are evaluated according to academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor. One-time cash awards range from \$500 to \$4,000 for study beginning Fall 2008.

Application deadline: January 31, 2008

To apply go to: www.afscme.org/members/852.cfm

- Keturah Hadley

DID YOU KNOW?

Westchester County Employees can access their County Email from home at:

ma.westchestergov.com

Enter the same Username and Password as you would on your County PC.

UNION DISCOUNT

DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSES

for CSEA Members AND Families

Only \$19.00

Save 10% on Insurance

Call 1-800-942-6874

Courses January-March 2008

Your Rights as a Union Member

Workplace Safety

Employees of NY State and Local Governments are covered by safety laws under the **NYS Public Employees Safety and Health (PESH)** act, created in 1980 to provide occupational safety and health protection to all public sector employees. NYS PESH enforces all safety and health standards promulgated under the **United States Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)**, to ensure that employers provide their workers with an environment free from dangers to their safety and health, such as exposure to toxic chemicals, excessive noise levels, mechanical dangers, heat or cold stress, or unsanitary conditions.

As a public employee, you, or your union, can file a written complaint with the nearest **Division of Safety and Health (DOSH)** office requesting an inspection if you believe there are unsafe or unhealthy conditions in your workplace. The complaint must describe the grounds for concern. Although it must be signed, you may request that your name be withheld from your employer.

If the complaint results in an inspection, an authorized representative of the employee as well as the employer can accompany the inspector during the walk-around. Employees must get regular pay while doing so.

If a Department of Labor inspector believes that a violation has been found, a citation will be issued. This "notice of violation and order to comply" specifies the nature of the violation, indicates which standard was violated, and establishes a set period of time for compliance. The citation must be prominently displayed by the employer at or near the place(s) of the violation to warn employees of dangers that may exist.

The Public Employee Safety and Health Act does not grant employees the right to refuse work they believe to be dangerous or hazardous. However, if the State Supreme Court grants an injunction against the employer based on findings of imminent danger to health or safety, or if an inspector has "red-tagged" a piece of equipment, a work area, or an entire facility, an employee may refuse to work under those specific conditions.

No employer may discharge or otherwise discipline or discriminate against employees who have filed a complaint or otherwise exercised their rights under the PESH Act. If you believe you are the victim of such discrimination, you or your union can file a complaint with the state Industrial Commissioner within 30 days. The Commissioner is required to investigate, and you may request that your name be withheld during the investigation.

WE NEED YOU!

Sign up for
EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS
of the latest
CSEA Unit 9200
Information and Events



Visit 'Contact Us' at
www.CSEA9200.com
to be added to the list!

Member Participation

CSEA Local 860 1st Annual Self Development Conference

The first annual CSEA Local 860 Self Development Conference, was held on Saturday October 6, 2007, at the Renaissance Hotel in White Plains. The conference offered members an opportunity to attend workshops on: Member Benefits, insurance, retirement information, personal growth and development.

Breakfast and Lunch were served, and representatives from CSEA Legal Services, Westchester County Dental and Pearl Carroll Insurance provided various informational material.

This conference, the first of its type for our local, was enthusiastically received and approximately 300 members attended. Due to the overwhelming response of our members, the next conference, which will be held in October 2008, will take place at a larger location, so that even more members can attend.

General Membership OPEN Meetings: Generally 1st Tuesday of Each Month - Light Dinner 5:30PM / Meetings Start 6:00PM

CSEA LOCAL 860 OFFICE - 595 West Hartsdale Avenue (Route 100A near intersection with Route 100B) - White Plains (across from Mighty Joe Young's Restaurant)

- Please call the Unit 9200 Office at (914) 995-2151 to R.S.V.P. and confirm dates for January and February 2008 -



*Happy and Healthy Holidays to
All of Our Members and Their Families.*

Unit 9200 Members Participate in American Cancer Society Fundraiser



The Fund Raising Committee held a breakfast in the lobby of MOB1 on October 2, 2007, to benefit the 'Making Strides Against Breast Cancer' campaign by the American Cancer Society, and raised approximately **\$1,255** in donations.

The committee reached out to the membership and local businesses through word of mouth, email and our website, for participation and donations of time, baked goods and raffle prizes.



Unit 9200 members also participated in the **Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk** at Manhattanville College on Sunday, October 21st. Approximately 14,000 people participated, raising approximately \$1.4 million dollars for the American Cancer Society.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this worthwhile event.



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**WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR CONTRACT...
ARE YOU FIGHTING FOR OURS?**

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