

JANUARY 2016

LOCAL DO'S

THE HOPE & STRUGGLE OF UNIONISM

**BY MARK STEINBERG,
BMUST PRESIDENT**

As the year moves along, I find myself becoming increasingly reflective about the path of my teaching and union career here in Bellmore-Merrick. I think back to my first day as a per diem sub for Jane Kline at Jerusalem Avenue Junior High School in January 1984. Little did I know I would be spending a significant portion of my career working side by side with Jane. I recall moving into a permanent

sub position at Jerusalem Avenue in October of that year, receiving my information from the retirement system, and thinking how distant 2016 (the year I could retire without a penalty) was for me.

My union involvement began immediately as the elections representative at Jerusalem and has evolved to my present position as your President. I have had the good fortune to learn about BMUST and unionism from my predecessors Lou

DeFilippo, Rick Hamilton, and Mike Dolber. I watched them navigate our organization

through the education reforms and fads of the 1990's and 2000's just as we have had



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BMUST

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CALHOUN - BETH FINNERAN
GRAND AVENUE - PIA SANTODONATO
MAP - LAURA SHERIDAN
MEPHAM - ROB WALSH
MERRICK AVE - JOE AMADOR

to confront APPR, Common Core, Governor Cuomo and attacks on public education. The more things change....

I am proud of the work BMUST is doing for our staff and community. I am proud of the charitable efforts we undertake each year for the Interfaith Nutrition Network (INN), Long Island Cares, and Making Strides to name a few. I am thrilled that we are able to offer ten graduating seniors \$600 scholarships from BMUST. It's wonderful being able to present dozens of toys

much to be concerned about in the future. The ballot we will all see on November 7, 2017 (Election Day) will have the following twelve words at the top: "Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend same?" The results of that question could have an enormous impact on all NYSUT members as well as every citizen in the state.



Mark Steinberg,
President, BMUST

“Opening the state constitution for amendments (in 2017) could have dire consequences for all of us. Many of the rights we enjoy as citizens and public employees could be compromised.”

to children at the Nassau University Medical Center with Santa Claus, Henry Dircks leading the way. Yes, we have much to be proud of here.

For staff, negotiating a contract is obviously a vital function of being a union member. Just as education trends have changed over time, so has the negotiations process. Negotiations in the 1990's and 2000's is quite different from the process today and yet, the goal is the same... a fair contract for our members. We have assembled an excellent team led by myself, Rob Walsh, Pete Brideson, and Jason Elias, and I am confident that all of our efforts and sleepless nights will culminate in a fair contract for our members.

Despite the improving climate for public education with the APPR, Common Core, No Child Left Behind, and testing initiatives all being reexamined, BMUST and unionists still have

Opening the state constitution for amendments could have dire consequences for all of us. Many of the rights we enjoy as citizens and public employees could be compromised. These include:

- Guaranteeing the right to a free public education
- Prohibiting reductions in public pension benefits
- The right to be a member of a union and bargain collectively

NYSUT and BMUST will collaborate with several other constituency groups to prevent a constitutional convention in 2017. We will need to make sure voters understand what could happen if this passes. The concern is that 2017 is an "off" election year so we will need to get involved quickly, stay active politically, get informed about the issues, and be ready to work on this in 2017.

In solidarity,

Mark

BELLMORE-MERRICK CHSD COUNCIL OF PTA'S
FOUNDERS' DAY DINNER

PLEASE JOIN US FOR AN EVENING OF
DINING & AWARDS

Monday, March 7, 2016

Cocktail Hour: 6:00 PM

Dinner immediately following
(Cash Bar)

Coral House Catering Hall,
Milburn Ave & Merrick Road

DOMINIQUE TIRINO 516-314-8047

EVELYN WILKEN 516-652-8369

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A CELEBRATION OF LIFE: HONORING DOUG SMESTAD

BY WENDY SIMSON, (CALHOUN H.S.), LOCAL DO'S

Calhoun H.S. honored Doug Smestad with a Celebration of Life Memorial Service. Many alumni returned for the night along with parents, friends and students. The Concert Choir and choral alumni sang "The Lord Bless You and Keep You" followed by "Unwritten" which sums up the message that Doug gave to so many. There were a series of speakers – a mix of colleagues and students who are current, recent, and not so recent graduates – who spoke so lovingly about the impact Doug had on their lives. Doug gave so much to all who crossed his path and what he did for so many students was extraordinary. A standing ovation for the music but also for Doug was followed by the presentation of his memorial plaque that will be affixed outside his classroom. Ethan Smestad ended the evening talking about his parents and the love they gave and what he learned from them about giving to others – gratitude was the theme. That is one of many things we learned from Doug – what the spirit of gratitude looks like and sounds like and how to live giving to others. Matt Koffler announced the plan for the first annual "Smes Fest" on June 11, 2016. It will be a day of music, renaissance, and giving. More details to follow.



The **Coat Drive** was incredibly successful. Assemblyman David McDonough picked up the coats and took a picture with Ms. Clarke who organized the drive. Thanks to all of you who donated coats. The Toy Drive for Bellmore Lions and Toys for Tots through Senator Venditto's office was also very successful. Mr. Raucci and members of the girls lacrosse team helped to organize it and there were hundreds of toys donated. Thanks to all of you who donated toys.

M.A.P. CELEBRATES 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

BY LAURA SHERIDAN, (M.A.P.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Momentous events: Congratulations to Jennifer Weinstein (Math) on her marriage to Stephen Ondras this past July! In September, MAP began its 10th-anniversary year! We welcomed 15 new students this fall, as well as three new staff members: Michelle Troice (Math), Rob Aronowitz (Para), and Catrina Christensen (Guidance). This fall, Joe Corea (Math) retired from the BMCHSD for the third time. We miss him terribly and hold out hope that he will grow bored again and return to MAP. MAP bid a tearful farewell to our beloved Donald Smith (Security) who moved upstate.

Community service: There is a new UNICEF club at MAP under the guidance of Mary Sweeney. They raised \$260+ with their Halloween Trick or Treat Boxes. Key Club at MAP is in its second year under the guidance of Tiffany Rempel and is currently raising money to fund sandwich making for the Mary Brennan INN in Hempstead. MAP staff and

students helped members of the Lions Club wrap over 600 children's gifts for a Christmas party for 366 homeless children living on Long Island. Karin McMahon (P.E.) and nurse Darlene Boden spearheaded our blood drive with the Long Island Blood Association, and Karin also ran Holiday Mail for Heroes (cards to military personnel) at MAP. Each Friday afternoon, MAP members volunteer with Rock and Wrap It Up! by picking up leftover food at GAMS and MAMS and delivering it to the Rosa Parks INN.

Miscellaneous: John Boyle (Special Ed) is directing *Grease* at MAMS. Performances are March 17 and 18. Our course options have increased! MAP is now offering Intro to Chemistry (Martha Di Giovanna) and both AP Literature and AP Language (Laura Sheridan). Martha Di Giovanna received a grant from the CPC. She used it to purchase two hydroponic gardening kits, developing alternative farming methods. Ecology.

“GRAND HAPPENINGS”

BY PIA SANTODONATO, (GRAND M.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

Red Ribbon Week

The **Grand Ave SADD Club** held their annual **Red Ribbon Week Extra Mile Assembly** which honored 2 Grand Ave faculty members with the Extra Mile Award. The Extra Mile Award, presented by Steve Rose – Retired Grand Social Worker, is to recognize Grand staff members who have gone the Extra Mile for students.

The 2015-2016 winners were:

Denis Dagger- Math

Sean Arrestor- English

The Red Ribbon Week Assembly also awarded 10 students with Target Gift Cards for being the Poster Contest Winners of the 2015-2016 theme:

I Believe in Me: Happy, Healthy & Drug Free

The **Drama Club** led by Rebecca Levy also performed and **Decision Making Skit!**

The finale of the Red Ribbon Week Assembly included Grand's Principal & Assistant Principal's getting a pie in his face from 3 students who were the winners of the Book Fair Raffle. Any student who bought a book at the Book Fair was given a Pie in the Face Raffle Ticket.

1,000 Good Nights

The **Grand Book Club** hosted 1,000 Good Nights encouraging staff and students to donate a new book and/or PJs to the cause. All those who donated were able to wear their PJs to school.

Patriot's Day

On 9/11 Grand held Patriot's Day. Everyone was encouraged to wear Red, White, and Blue as well as pass silently in the hallway between 10:13-10:17am

Back from Maternity Leave:

Katie Smith- Special Education
Carrie Perkins-Hamilton- Physical Education

Birth Announcements:

Kerry Erickson (Special Education) & her husband Mark welcomed:

Grady Sullivan Erickson

10/9/15

8 lbs 1/2oz 19.5 inches

Ashley Johnson (World Languages) and her husband Keith with proud Grandma Janet Johnson- Retired Guidance welcomed:

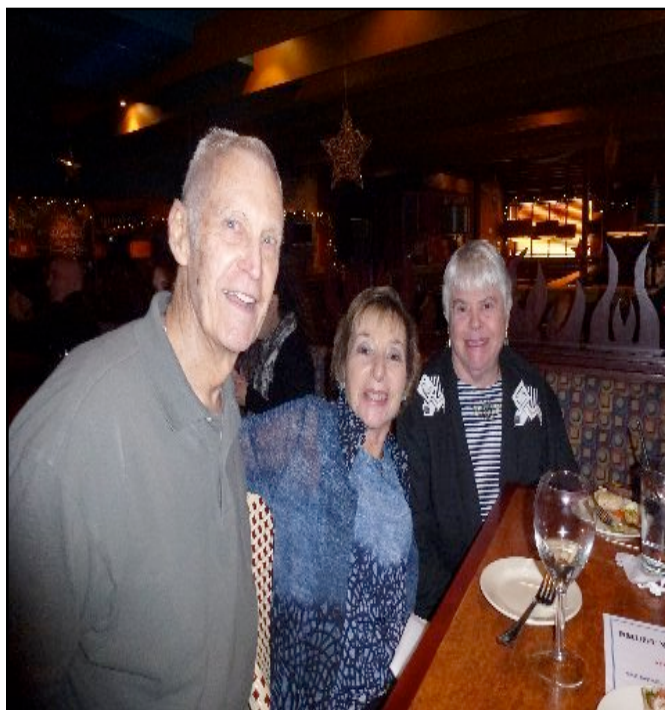
Isabella Jane Johnson

10/29/15

9 lbs. 2oz 22.5 inches

BMUST HOLIDAY PARTY!

GRILLFIRE, MERRICK, N.Y.



BY BILL MORRIS (MEPHAM H.S.),

LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

CONSIDER YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH

I know; we're teachers not financial experts, but we're smart, and that means we can learn some simple tips for retiring with more money. We, perhaps more than any other group, know that the overseers of the State of New York have been embroiled in controversy. But, believe it or not, the State administers a very successful, low-cost retiree investment plan for public workers, including teachers. BMUST has secured this option for us through the district, along with automatic-payroll deduction.

Did you know that if you invest \$2,500 per year for 30 years in a N. Y. State 457B retirement plan, projections estimate that you will retire with an additional \$190,000? Your investment will also be deducted pre-tax, which means that you will have a tax benefit. This means that your hypothetical \$2,500 investment will actually cost you about \$1,800 per year out of your paychecks. Check out the State's interactive retirement calculator for more information and projections at: <https://www.nysdcp.com/iApp/rsc/retirementPlanner.x>.

Now, is there anything else that makes this plan attractive? Yes; and the simple answer is **low**



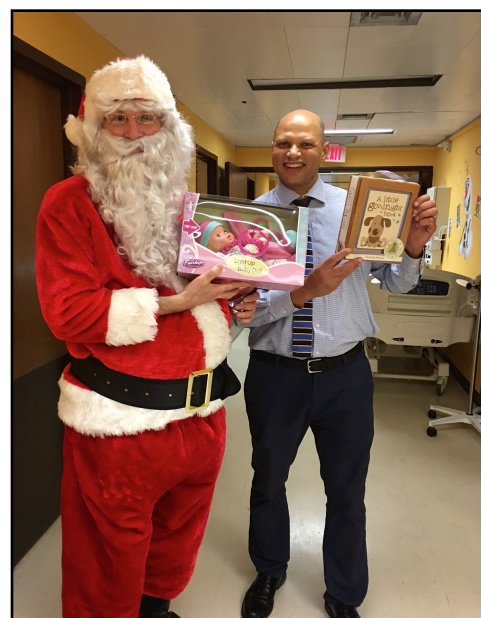
fees... According to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, fees are the number one predictor of investment success. In other words, the more money that is siphoned off for fees, the less you will have for yourself in retirement. When it comes to a N.Y.S. 457B plan, the cost of investing can be as much as twenty times lower than investing in some other types of approved plans. That's right. That means that the cost to run a State 457B fund that has grown to \$100,000 can cost less than \$100 per year (depending on allocations), as compared to the \$2,000 per year required to run some other plans that have grown to the same amount. Legally, every State employee with access may invest **up to \$18,000 pre-tax dollars into a 457B plan**. This is in addition to any investments made into other vehicles including Roth IRAs and 403B plans.

If this matters to you, please help to continue the discussion, continue to research, and check out www.nysdcp.com for much more information, a helpful contact number, and retirement projection calculators.



Once again, our **BMUST staff** collected hundreds of toys that were delivered to sick children at the Nassau University Medical Center. Henry Dircks, our “Santa”, along with several BMUST staff members, delivered smiles and holiday toys to many children throughout the hospital. The BMUST volunteers visited the Pediatric and Psychiatric Wards and the Outpatient Clinic. BMUST was also able to donate \$380.00 to the I.N.N., a non-profit agency in Hempstead that runs homeless shelters and operates food pantries. - Bruce Reed (J.F.K.), Local Do’s Editor

TOYS 4 TOTS ~ NASSAU UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER



5 *Benefits Of Being a NYSUT Member*



1. Higher pay & better benefits
2. A contract you can rely on
3. A strong voice at work
4. Professional learning

5. NYSUT Member Benefits

NYSUT members & their families can choose from a variety of insurance, financial, legal, and shopping & travel programs designed with the NYSUT member in mind -- including term life insurance, auto insurance, legal & financial services, car rentals, vacation packages, and much more!

Member Appreciation Month is back again this February!

Since it was such a big hit last year, we're doing it again! Member Appreciation Month is coming February 2016.

This year will be even bigger because it's a leap year... that means more chances to win even more great prizes!!!

Once again, Member Appreciation Month will be filled with a series of special prize drawings for items donated by Member Benefits and our endorsed program providers. Prizes will include gift cards, Beats headphones, a Go Pro camera and more.

To be eligible for these drawings, all you need to do is participate in our voluntary MAP Alert email service.



We will announce the winners of these special prize drawings exclusively on the Member Benefits website throughout the month of February.

It's the strength of the more than 600,000 NYSUT members that makes it possible for Member Benefits to offer more than 40 endorsed programs & services designed with you in mind.

For more details about this exciting event, visit the Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101.



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