LOCAL DO’S

37TH ANNUAL AWARDS

BMUST DINNER / DANCE, JUNE 19, 2019

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“A THANK YOU NOTE”

BY MARK STEINBERG,

BMUST PRESIDENT-EMERITUS

It is difficult for me to comprehend that I am writing my final Local Do’s article. In many ways, my six years as President went by in a blink and now I’m days away from being officially retired. So many thoughts are running through my mind that I’m still experiencing somewhat restless nights of sleep. I’m hoping, as my new reality sets in, I’ll be able to establish a more stable sleep pattern. I hope!

So what can I share with my staff that will adequately sum up my 35-year career culminating in the last six years as President? Although I taught in most schools, the bulk of my career has been at Grand Avenue and I could not have been luckier. I have consistently worked with outstanding staff members who always seem to go the extra mile for kids. I taught and coached thousands of students who pushed me to be the best educator/coach possible. I have established some wonderful friendships that I’m sure will endure into retirement. I was truly fortunate.

Being a proud BMUST member began immediately and I became involved my first year teaching at Jerusalem Avenue during the ’84-’85 school year. I recently came across a ballot from a building representative election at Grand Avenue in 1986 and saw that I was elected along with Rose Lubrano. Rose served in many capacities for BMUST, but what I remember most about her is when she told me that I should be President one day. Of course I laughed and thought this lady was crazy. Who knew how prophetic she was back in the 80’s. I hope she’s looking down and is proud of what I have accomplished.

My journey with the Union has taken me from committee placements, PAC Co-Chair, building representative, Head Building Representative, Second Vice President, and President. I have been mentored by some outstanding Union Presidents… Lou DeFilippo, Rick Hamilton, and Mike Dolber, as well as numerous BMUST members, both active and retired. The importance of a strong union was instilled in me and I have done my best to nurture a strong union mindset with all staff members I have worked with through the years.

I do feel that BMUST is in a good place primarily because of the efforts of a core group of staff members who have chosen to become more active participants in their union. While we always would like to see everyone working to make our union stronger, the fact is there will always be a nucleus of staff members who bear most of the burden. We all owe a debt of gratitude to these men and women for stepping up and I would like to recognize and thank a few of them now.

Thank you to all of our building reps for assisting our Head Building Reps to properly represent our staff members everyday.

Thank you to all of our committee members for giving BMUST a voice with the administration and the opportunity to provide valuable feedback.

Thank you to our Head Building Reps Brian Moeller, Brian DeGaetano, Carolyn Condenzio, Bill

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Morris, Amanda Myles-McAnally and MAP Representative Mary Sweeney. Your job is, in many ways, the most challenging because day-to-day issues and concerns constantly need to be addressed.

Thank you to the other members of the Board of Trustees, Paraprofessional President Cynthia Leung, Retiree President Sharon Wisla, and Grievance Chair Jon Dell’Olio. You have represented your constituencies very well and your support was always appreciated.

Thank you to BMUST Treasurer Brad Seidman for taking on what has to be the least appealing job with BMUST. You were great Brad!

Thank you to my Vice Presidents (and soon to be President and First Vice President) Rob Walsh and Pete Brideson. This job would be impossible without your tireless dedication to me and our members. The contracts we all enjoy are largely due to your efforts. Your friendship and support have been the foundation of my presidency. Thank you!

Thank you to my administrative assistants, Meg Hirsch, and her predecessor, Kim Black, whose efforts keep our office running smoothly every day. Meg has been thrown into the fire this year with several elections and parties to coordinate on top of her regular responsibilities. She has done a wonderful job and we are very fortunate to have her as part of the BMUST family.

Thank you to the Central Administrators who were always willing to meet with me, discuss areas of concern, and come to equitable solutions for everyone involved. John, Mara, Mike, Kate…I appreciate the relationships BMUST has developed with administration. An honest, open relationship is good for everyone and I’m sure it will continue and flourish under President Walsh.

Finally, I would be negligent if I did not thank my wife Lisa, and my children Michele and Ben. My job took me away from them quite often and their patience and understanding made fulfilling my responsibilities infinitely more manageable. Nobody challenged me more than Lisa. She forced me to examine issues in ways that were not initially apparent. While that was frustrating at times, it was also very helpful (although I was usually reluctant to admit that).

As my career comes to a close, I can reflect back and appreciate how blessed I have been for the past 35 years. As I have said each year to the new teachers I have greeted, I hope they are as fortunate in their careers as I have been in mine. Bellmore-Merrick has been a wonderful place to work. What can be better than teaching children and putting them on a path of success? On top of the joys I experienced from teaching, having the opportunity to be deeply involved in BMUST and develop friendships with staff members from the entire district has made my work life truly wonderful.

Thank you and never forget “Solidarity Forever!”

Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and restful summer break. Enjoy!

In solidarity,

Mark
BY BILL MORRIS (MEPHAM H.S.), LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

Rob Walsh has been one of the hardest-working, most dedicated BMUST leaders of the last decade. He is a good man who brings people together, solves problems, and is one of the most genuinely nice people you will ever meet. Considering this, it’s no surprise that our members are excited to have him as our new President. Here are some kind words from our staff to thank Rob for the work he has done and to show our gratitude for the work we know he will do, on our behalf.

“If I scheduled a 24-hour block with you, I wouldn’t have enough time to say all of the nice things I have to say about Rob Walsh.”
- Edward Grosskreuz, Mepham

“Rob is the real deal. His energy and passion for our union, and the integrity of our profession, is contagious and exactly what BMUST needs during these changing times.”
- Lisa Shapiro, Merrick Ave.

“If you can’t get along with Rob, it’s YOU, not Rob. Nobody doesn’t like Rob Walsh.”
- Neal Madnick, Calhoun

“Rob Walsh epitomizes unity. The way he brings people together in all aspects of his life is so impressive.”
- Nicole Maresca, Mepham

“Rob’s experience in the Rep. Assembly, Board of Trustees, negotiations teams and working alongside a history of strong presidents will provide him with the tools that we are sure will be well received by staff and admin alike.”
- Deanne Junior, Merrick

“Rob is someone who always greets people with a warm smile. He is selfless. He cares about doing the right thing. That is shown through his actions and words.”
- Brian Moeller, Calhoun

“When I became BMUST President, Mike Dolber expressed how happy he was that I was following in his footsteps. I now know exactly how he feels. BMUST couldn’t be in better hands than with Rob Walsh.”
- Mark Steinberg, BMUST President - almost retired

“We are grateful for Rob’s compassion for our needs. His dedication to service and help with the Community Cupboard is greatly appreciated.”
- Geisha Kwiatowski, MAP

“Rob seems to have found the portal to the time space-time continuum. He has time for everyone. I don’t know how he finds those extra hours everyday that other mortals don’t have access to but I’m glad that it is someone as nice as him that has found it. We are so incredibly lucky that he gives so much to our union.”
- Sarah McCarthy, Mepham

“I am looking forward to Rob Walsh’s Presidency. I think he has energy and charisma to inspire our next generation of future union leadership!”
- Amanda Myles-McAnally, Merrick Ave. HBR

“He’s the most professional, thoughtful person I’ve ever worked with.”
- Jason Elias, Calhoun HBR

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“I have had the privilege of working with Rob on the Board of Trustees through the years. He has always been supportive of the retirees. BMUST is in good hands as he begins his presidency.”

- Sharon Wisla, BMRTA President

“Rob has been a positive influence on me as a colleague and brother in solidarity, always at the forefront, fighting the good fight. I wish him the best of luck as he leads BMUST into the future of public education.”

- Heather Castellano, Mepham HBR

“The quality that most impresses me about Rob is that he is humble and is not afraid to say: ‘I don’t know, but I will find out the answer.’ And rest assured if he says he's going to find out, he will.”

-Pete Brideson, 1st V.P.

“Rob is one of the most genuine people I’ve met. He exudes a sense of humility that puts you at ease right from the start of every conversation.”

- Carolyn Condenzio, Grand Ave. HBR

“I’ve known Rob since he first became involved in BMUST. He is a trusted friend and ‘union brother’, whose hard work and intelligence were invaluable, especially in our negotiations. I know he will do a great job as President.”

- Mike Dolber, BMUST President -retired

“Rob has been kind and welcoming to me since the moment I met him to interview last year. I look forward to working with him in the office for many years to come!”

- Meg Hirsch, BMUST Secretary

“During my time on the Board of Trustees, I have been fortunate to work alongside Rob Walsh. He is a passionate individual whose vision and character will prove to be valuable to BMUST as he leads us for the years to come. We are fortunate to have him at the helm - he is the leader we need and deserve.”

- Brad Seidman, BMUST Treasurer
``EMBRACING ALL CULTURES``

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

Colture Day was held at Calhoun on May 31st by the International Buddy Club. This special day was created in an attempt to effectively deal with and resolve situations involving racism and discrimination. The impact these situations have had on the students has inspired them to be more active in creating an atmosphere that fosters inclusivity, understanding, communication, and mutual respect given our increasingly diverse world. Calhoun’s first ever Colture Day was an all-day festival where students and staff learned about different cultures in a fun and engaging way. Each station will featured some type of interactive activity as well as bite-sized international food to try! Thank you to Heather Glick, the advisor of IBC!

Molly Flaherty Receives Student of the Year Scholarship Award!
Molly Flaherty, student at Calhoun High School was recently presented with the Student of the Year Scholarship Award. She was nominated by her teachers based upon her accomplishments during her time at Calhoun. She accepted this award at the LIASEA (Long Island Association of Special Education Administrators on Friday, June 7 at the Crest Hollow Country Club.

Girls Track Clinches Division Championship.
Calhoun High School girls track headed into the May 17 competition with a mission of earning their fourth consecutive division championship — and they were victorious.

“It was a very special day for the team earning their fourth consecutive division title,” Coach Joseph Migliano said. “They proved why track and field is a true team sport, scoring in all events and winning by roughly 50 points.”
“AND JUST LIKE THAT...”

BY LISA SHAPIRO (MERRICK AVE M.S.), LOCAL DO'S WRITER

And just like that, June has arrived. We have added another year to our pensions and I am sure we are all in agreement that a little R & R will be welcome.

As usual, our Spring Concerts and Art Show went off without a hitch and met with rave reviews. Our teams pulled off some phenomenal seasons with our coaches working as hard as they ever have. Sarah Norton held another series of "Shark Tank" presentations with her entrepreneurial classes and I believe I am now part owner of a food truck called the Angry Lemon. Denise Schleith's ENL students hosted a culture celebration day where they invited their teachers to learn about the countries they are from. They presented a Google Slide Show, played culturally-based games and prepared and shared foods they love.

One new event MAMS added to their agenda was PRIDE Week. With the support of staff and administration, Amanda Myles-McAnally and Lisa Shapiro brought what many hope will be a standing fixture for the future. From June 3rd-June 7th, the faculty and students were invited to dress according to theme; Monday was rainbow day, where we promoted supporting love, any kind of love. Tuesday was inspiration quote day with the intent being to find words to help guide oneself in a positive path. Wednesday was “Workout Wednesday” to support a healthy mind-body connection. Thursday was Heroes Day with the goal to be your own best hero while finding quality members of society to look up to and aspire to. Friday was MAMS Spirit Day to promote the feeling of unity within our school community.

Our Art Department made a wonderful sign that said “I Love Myself Because...” which was displayed in the hallway. Staff and students were invited to write a reason on a colorful post it. For some, that moment of reflection was difficult. But when given prompts that considered strengths as simple as having nice handwriting or being a loyal friend, kids were more readily able to find one thing they loved about themselves. As adults we know that at the end of the day, self-love is the most important love; we need to foster and support that here and now. Raffles were sold and the money collected was donated to the Long Island Counseling Center for the sake of suicide prevention and providing a supportive environment to youth identifying as LGBTQ.

This week-long event will hopefully be a thing of the past at some future date. Next year the plan is to expand the week by inviting in speakers who spread the message of love and kindness as a reflection of the career paths they have chosen. Change takes time. We know laws may constitute changes but attitudes and ideas don’t necessarily follow suit. We live in the greatest country and yet we are still on the threshold of tolerance when really, it feels like we should be in the throes of acceptance. We believe that if one kid looked around that week and saw the notes on the wall or the staff in shirts supporting love, any kind of love, and felt they were enough, then we were successful. Without the support of colleagues and administration, this could not have happened. We may not necessarily agree with one’s choices but accepting people for who they are, and loving the person we see looking back at us in the mirror; that is invaluable.

Speaking of love, the fall edition will be chock full of congratulations on upcoming nuptials and newborn babies. Congrats to Tim Conway and his wife, Laura, on the birth of their daughter, our latest mini Ram.

Have a great summer!
So for Martha DiGiovanna, MAP’s teacher of Chemistry, Forensics, and Marine Biology, it is not enough to achieve tenure and retire in the same month. Oh, no! It is also necessary to take on a project of titanic proportions. Our Martha has elected to spend the past month collecting plastic caps and lids (along with holding several food-based fundraisers) to create not one, but two, “buddy benches.”

What is a “buddy bench,” you ask? Allow me to explain. A “buddy bench” is constructed of recycled plastic caps and lids, thereby keeping said caps and lids out of the ocean. (Note the Marine Biology connection.) These two benches—which will be constructed in Indiana—will then be placed on two elementary schoolyards within the Bellmore-Merrick schools.

These benches serve a very special purpose. A child who feels lonely can sit on a “buddy bench” to signal to those around them that they are in need of a buddy.

To date, Martha—with the help of her extensive community of students, friends, family, and acquaintances—has collected well over 350 lbs. of plastic caps and lids, and the donations keep coming. She has almost reached her goal of collecting 400 lbs. Sea life everywhere are grateful, especially the albatross, fish, and turtles who will not be ingesting those 400 lbs. of plastic.

Bravo to our Martha!
“BMRTA CELEBRATES THEIR 35TH ANNIVERSARY!”

BY BRUCE REED (JFK), LOCAL DO’S EDITOR

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Bellmore-Merrick Retired Teachers Association (BMRTA). The occasion was marked with a celebratory luncheon at Elisa’s Ristorante in Bellmore, with dozens of retirees in attendance.

This anniversary helps us to reflect with gratitude on the years of service of these beloved teachers. At the same time, the BMRTA continues to be an active force within BMUST, and their guidance, experience and contributions have emboldened our unionism and enriched our communities.

We take this opportunity to congratulate all the members of BMRTA for your selfless dedication and continued service.

“KENNEDY ALUMNI SHARES WORDS OF INSPIRATION”

BY BRUCE REED (KENNEDY H.S.), LOCAL DO’S EDITOR

Judge Paul Feinman, a 1977 graduate of Kennedy HS, received a warm welcome from JFK’s G.S.A. Club & student officials from JFK’s Student Government. Judge Feinman was elected a Justice of the New York State Supreme Court in 2007 and appointed Associate Justice of the Appellate Division by Governor Cuomo in 2012, after serving as an Acting Supreme Court Justice from 2004 to 2007. Before that, he was a Judge of the Civil Court of the City of New York, first elected in 1996 and re-elected in 2006. As a Civil Court Judge, he was, for several years, assigned to sit in the Criminal Court of the City of New York.

Judge Feinman has recently been elevated to the highest court in New York State, the New York State Court of Appeals. He is the first openly gay judge to be appointed to the New York State Court of Appeals in its 170-year history.

Judge Feinman shared with the student assembly the hopes and challenges he faced within his professional career and offered words of encouragement to Kennedy’s LGBTQ community.

Thank you, Judge Feinman, for a wonderful and informative experience!
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