

LOCAL DO'S



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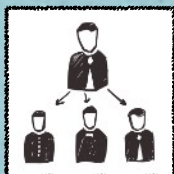


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AND MUCH MORE!



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“PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT”

**BY MARK STEINBERG,
BMUST PRESIDENT**

By the time this issue of Local Do's is shared with staff members, my decision to retire will have been finalized and made public. My decision was not an easy one. I love my job and I've done it a long time (35 years!). I can still recall receiving my first retirement system benefit profile and seeing that I could retire without a penalty starting in 2016. It seemed so far away. As I now begin the process of bringing my career to its conclusion, I can't help but reflect on what I was always told to do and what I have done to prepare for my retirement.

Whether you are in your first year of service or your last, it's time to take a closer look at the money you will be entitled to after your teaching career. The most effective way to do this is to visit the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) website and set up a [MyNYSTRS](#) account. This simple task will allow you to:

- Calculate your pension and see your retirement options
- Apply for service or disability retirement and track the processing of the application
- See your salary, service and contribution history and correct if needed
- See and update beneficiary information
- Get information about prior service credit (which could mean retiring earlier with a larger pension)

Unfortunately, as I learned recently at a Long Island Presidents Conference, over 2/3 of NYSUT members do not have an online account with the NYSTRS. This important tool, which allows us to monitor and keep apprised of our pensions, is significantly underutilized. So I repeat, whether you are in your first year of service or your last, please set up your [MyNYSTRS](#) account to monitor this vital retirement asset. I would even encourage substitute teachers to join the retirement system and set up an account as soon as possible to avoid having to buy back service time at a later date.

Another step in preparing for retirement is investigating with a trusted financial advisor the pre-tax savings plans available to BMUST members. Whether it is a 403-B, 457-B or Vanguard plan, your financial future will be much more comfortable if you start saving in one or more of these plans as early in your career as possible.

Your contributions can be easily taken through payroll deduction and it won't be state or federally taxed (although you will pay FICA and Medicare taxes). I can still recall encouraging a colleague in his 40's to establish a 403-B plan. Upon retirement, that teacher thanked me because he had an extra \$150,000 to supplement his pension. BMUST provided information early in the year to our new members about these retirement plans. I sincerely hope all of them have taken advantage of this important contractual benefit. (On a side note, we also have an after-tax savings option available in our contract through the Roth 457-B plan. You and your financial advisor, who should be a fiduciary to ensure all decisions are made in YOUR best interest and not theirs, should decide together what works best for you, taking into account fees, past performance and objectives).



**Mark Steinberg,
President, BMUST**

The NYSTRS offers seminars throughout the year to help us prepare for retirement. Individual meetings can be arranged to discuss your personal situation. Much of this information is attainable locally through our Retirement Consultant, [Hank Sessa](#). Hank offers a workshop every year where he discusses the Building Blocks of Retirement (pension, Social Security, and assets, such as savings, 403-B, life insurance, etc.). Hank was the President of the Bellmore Faculty Organization and upon retirement became a Retirement Consultant for NYSUT. He has a working knowledge of our retirement system, disability, workers' compensation and Social Security. He does not sell anything and is available for free phone consultations. Appointments with a reduced fee can also be arranged in your home. Please see the [BMUST website](#) for information about this retirement planning option.

Having a retirement plan is vital. Understanding your benefits both as an active teacher and a retiree is essential. Being organized with your paperwork will alleviate potential issues during an emotional time. Preparing for retirement from the beginning of your career will hopefully result in comfortable retirement years.

Don't wait! Retirement can sneak up on you! Please do everything that you can to be prepared.

In solidarity,

Mark

“WORLD LANGUAGES CELEBRATED AT MEPHAM H.S.”

BY BILL MORRIS (MEPHAM H.S.),

LOCAL DO'S STAFF WRITER

The Mepham Department of World Language teachers organized a wonderful celebration of language, culture, and the arts, once again. A few highlights of this month's festivities include having decorated the language hallway with beautiful, colorful displays and student-produced posters - visual representations of this year's "Languages inspire unity" theme.



There was also a wonderful collaboration with the Bellmore Merrick Broadcasting program and the Spanish Honor Society, where the *Around Campus* interview program was produced entirely in Spanish, with English subtitles. Chipotle was served at our March Faculty Meeting, and a mystery speaker contest was done in language classes where teachers of different subjects were recorded speaking in different languages. Once again, there was a fantastic evening celebration of Italian culture through food, music, poetry and art, hosted by the Italian Honor Society.

Finally, who knows how many wonderful lessons were taught infusing music, food, and other beautiful elements of world culture by our dedicated language teachers? Check out some of the highlights and the *Around Campus* interview here: [Around Campus](#).



CONGRATULATIONS TO NEW NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFIED TEACHERS

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

CONGRATULATIONS to **Linu Chako (Mepham H.S.), Jessica Metkiff (Kennedy H.S.), William Morris (Mepham H.S.), and Christy Rochford (Kennedy H.S.)** for achieving **National Board Certification**.

National Board Certification represents a consensus among educators about what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do in the classroom. The standards for accomplished teaching, according to the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, “encompass both the habits of mind needed by outstanding teachers—their knowledge, strategies, grasp of subject matter and understanding of developing kids—and also their skills, the technical habits of practice that accomplished professionals in every field of practice have honed and developed. It was designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teachers and to generate ongoing improvements in schools nationwide.” Congratulations for your dedication and commitment to the teaching profession.



“CALHOUN HONOR”

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

Calhoun H.S. honors Sandy Sardo, Elizabeth Separ and Ed Tumminelli. Sandy Sardo will be receiving the BMUST Outstanding Professional Award in June. Elizabeth Separ and Ed Tumminelli were Founders' Day recipients on March 11th. A huge congratulations to these dedicated educators!

This year Senior Experience is hosting its annual Fashion Show on Tuesday, April 16th, 2019! The 2019 Senior Experience class is supporting the Make-A-Wish Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to granting wishes to critically ill children. Make-A-Wish takes the money that is raised and grants a child's wish, which in turn helps to encourage the child to fight harder against his sickness. 100% of all proceeds will be donated to Make-A-Wish! Come and support the cause on April 16th at 7:00pm at Calhoun High School.




Kacie McKeever, a sophomore at Calhoun High School, was awarded third prize for Documentary Film in the Gilder Lehrman Institute's annual Civil War Essay Contest. The course is affiliated with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and is a project-centered research elective in American history. McKeever's submission was selected out of more than 900 entries. Her social studies teacher, Donald Campbell, advised McKeever and other students on the project. “Kacie has done wonderful research all year,” said Campbell. “She is incredibly perceptive and insightful. I'm really proud of her and so impressed that she won such a prestigious award in such a competitive contest.”

“KNOW YOUR CONTRACT”

BY JONATHAN DELL’OLIO (BMUST GRIEVANCE CHAIR), LOCAL DO’S CONTRIBUTOR

As we approach the final few months of school, chances are you have used some of your 16 sick days of sick leave. However, you might not be aware of some of the nuances regarding our sick leave allowance. Below is a brief summary of Article X beginning on page 18 and ending on page 20 of our contract.

<p>225</p> <p>You are allowed to bank 225 days.</p>	<p>180</p> <p>You may only cash in 180 days upon your retirement.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>There are certain parameters within your 16 days of sick leave</p> 
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- 4 days can be used for personal business—no more than 2 consecutive
- 5 days can be used for religious observance.
- 2 days can be used for court appearance.
- 5 days can be used for bereavement.
- 10 days can be used for the purpose of adopting a child.

“GRAND HAPPENINGS”. BY STACI PEKUSIC (GRAND AVE M.S.), LOCAL DO’S WRITER



Grand Avenue Middle School’s Special Education Department raised money for Autism Awareness by selling t-shirts and puzzle pieces. Teachers will all wear their shirts on

April 2. Faculty, staff, and students were also able to purchase a puzzle piece for \$1 and decorate it to represent their personalities. All puzzle pieces are displayed in the main office hallway.



Grand’s English Department and Library are sponsoring the first, school-wide community read. Students, parents, faculty, staff, and community members voted to read

Restart, by Gordon Korman. Students can complete weekly reading challenges and an interactive scavenger hunt.

Website: GrandREADS.weebly.com.

“SPRING HAS SPRUNG”

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

Spring is here which means spring fever is about to kick in! Spring Break is right around the corner but to keep our minds off the long haul, we have been keeping very busy at MAMS.

“**Word of Mouth,**” along with the choir students at Kennedy H.S., were fortunate to watch a performance of a professional ‘a cappella’ group called **Backtrack**. The group sang songs and discussed with the kids the arrangement of their music. A bonus: the kids got a lesson on beatboxing!

The MAMS World Languages Department celebrated **Foreign Language Week** with fantastic in-class activities for the holidays of Carnevale, Carnaval, and Mardi Gras. ENL students made announcements in both their native language and in English. The Department kicked off its annual contest with a poster display, the theme of which was “**Languages Inspire Unity.**” Students also participated in essay, poem, comic strips and photo contests.

As part of **Foreign Language Week**, 7th grade students in **Mrs. Schleith’s** French classes volunteered to make “King cakes,” traditional cakes eaten during Mardi Gras. Her 8th grade French students continued their tradition from last year. As the tradition goes, the students who received the “baby” in their piece of cake the previous year would receive good luck for that year, and bring the “King cake” the following year.

International Buddy Club held a fundraiser "Guess the Candy Hearts" and a Bake Sale for a Valentine's Day. All money was donated to St. Jude's Children's Hospital Fundraiser. Students raised \$230 for this great cause.

As **Autism Awareness Month** approaches in April, students and staff were given puzzle pieces to decorate with their own unique design. The puzzle pieces were then connected together and hung outside the classrooms. Students and staff will be lighting the halls up blue on April 2nd.

MAMS is also gearing up for their second annual **Pride Day** event, led by **Amanda McAnally** and **Lisa Shapiro**. During their lunch periods, students will be asked to write something they love about themselves on a heart, in rainbow colors of course. The hearts will be displayed in the hallways as a reminder that no matter what, we should all love ourselves.

Our extended Ramily continues to grow! Mazel Tov to World Language teacher, **Erin Yaltzindeg** and her husband Nissim on the birth of their daughter, Eliana. Congrats to **Vinny Rasulo**, our head custodian, and his wife, on the birth of their daughter, Stella. There is nothing like a new-born baby!



“WOMEN OF HONOR”

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

March 11th saw Martha DiGiovanna and a group of our young women at the Cradle of Aviation Museum attending a “Salute to Women in STEM.” For Gabriella Aviccoli, Valerie Kerbs, Stephanie Mangual, Mariana Mori, Brianna Ottofaro, Jenna Rath, Nicoletta Rath, and Jessica Starke, this was an amazing opportunity to attend a community event for high-school students, promoting careers in STEM on Long Island. This is the sixth year that Mrs. DiGi has taken students on this trip during Women’s History Month “to show young women the opportunities they have in the STEM field.” She notes that it is especially important that “they go on a trip where there is no judgment, because it is empowering.” She adds that “the students are so moved by the speakers that it brings them closer together.”



The students had the chance to listen to and interact with three impactful women at the Salute:

- News 12’s Carol Silva mediated the event. She made an impression when one of our students fumbled a question. Ms. Silva allowed her to gather her thoughts and came back to her, thereby creating a safe and encouraging environment for questions and self-expression.
- Astronaut Nicole Stott spoke to the students as if it were normal to expect that they would go into space. She continually encouraged them to “pick up the pen” and fill out and submit the application, reminding them that they can decide later what they want to do. She spoke about how her desire to fly led her to aeronautics and stressed the importance of exercise and camaraderie. She challenged the students by asking them: *If we can all get along in the space station, why can’t we all get along on Earth? We live on a planet; we are all Earthlings.*
- Dr. Sharon DeVivo, the first female president of Vaughn College of Aeronautics and Technology, spoke about careers in engineering. She explained that there are schooling and jobs in every capacity in engineering available on Long Island.

Together, these women all encouraged our students to assume that they could succeed.

Mary Sweeney, the other half of our Science Department, pointed out that research articles stress the fact that women need to interact with female role models in STEM fields in order to see themselves in those roles. Successful STEM women say a female role model was important to their development. So bravo, Martha!

On Thursday, 3.14, Jen Weinstein-Ondras organized MAP’s 12th annual π -eating contest. This year’s contestants included Matthew Cunningham, Stephanie Mangual, Xavier Peralta, Aidan Vitsenzos (this year’s winner), and Andrew Vogel. Congratulations to Aidan and to all our contestants who put forth a noble gustatory effort!

Best regards,

Laura



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