

# The Bridge

Nyack Teachers  
Association

Edition: June 2009

Editor: Sheri Viggiano

## President's Message

By: Donna Ramundo

As the close of the school year is upon us and we look towards summer vacation, I look back and reflect on my 25 years in the Nyack School District. I have experienced 3 union presidents, 6 superintendents, 4 principals and many students. Yes, there has always been change, but as this particular year comes to an end, the changes and challenges we face are unlike any I've seen before.

Unfortunately, we leave this school year with an expiring contract as of June 30, 2009. A school board that is not in total sync with each other, the governor still pursuing a tier 5 for new members, involuntary transfers, unstable economy, security

guards still without a contract, grievances, losing untenured staff, course denials, swine flu, attacks on our pension and the list could go on. We need to be at the "center of change" for decisions affecting the workplace. As members of the NTA, we must continue to empower ourselves. We need to encourage and influence each other in advocating for things we know are promising and speaking LOUD and CLEAR and advocating for best practices that continue to keep students success as the ultimate goal.

We have handled these roadblocks with professionalism, holding our heads up high as we move down the path knowing that *activism is the key to*

*success.* With two hundred and ninety two members strong, the NTA has established that action is power. We need to be supportive of each other as we have a long road ahead of us. Your involvement in any way will strengthen the NTA.

As I look back at the 2008-2009 school year, we have accomplished a lot this year and have worked very hard as a union. Also, our ongoing efforts spearheaded by our LAP team (Local Action Project) have continued to further positive relationships between the NTA and our community. Some of our accomplishments this year include: member participation, community outreach, (continued on page 4)



### NTA Officers

Donna Ramundo	President
Tom Burns	VP - Secondary
Barbara Anderson	VP - Elementary
Shirley Birmingham	Treasurer
Robin Maslanek	Secretary

### Special points of interest:

- Note from your Elementary Vice President
- Nyack Teachers Center
- Nurses Corner
- Tenure Awards
- Retirees
- This and That

## VCE Cares



Bicycle helmets were all the rage on May 20<sup>th</sup> at the Clarkstown (Central Nyack) Community Center. After hearing about a VCE child getting into an accident with a car and sustaining minor injuries because of the lack of a helmet, Maureen Lynch (VCE - TA), and Julie Kassel (VCE - Fam. Res.) teamed up with the Clarkstown PBA. Officer Kevin Shannon taught the children and their parents bicycle safety. Through the generous donations of new and slightly used helmets and bikes every child walked (rode) away with something.



# Editors Column

By: Sheri Viggiano

I cannot believe another year has gone by. For me, this is the end of my tenth year here at Nyack. This is also the end of my first year as the editor of The Bridge. Being the editor has given me the opportunity to be more involved with the union, which has been an awesome experience. I have made friendships with people that I may not have got-

ten to know otherwise. It has also given me the opportunity to meet people from the other buildings. We have so many wonderful staff members throughout our district. I have noticed that we all tend to migrate towards our colleagues from our own building; I am guilty of that also. But for next school year, I challenge each and every one of my colleagues (high school, middle school and elementary school) to go to an NTA

sponsored event and get to know the staff from the other buildings. It would be wonderful to know your colleagues from other buildings; maybe even form some friendships.



I know we are all happy that summer is here, we could all use the time to refresh ourselves. So I wish everyone a wonderful, restful summer and will see you all in September.

## A Note from your Elementary Vice President

By: Barbara Anderson

Wow, what a year 2008-09 has been. Lots of challenges, changes and still uncertainties ahead. I would like to deeply thank all of you who get the idea that there is strength in numbers and everyone needs to take part. You were there when you were asked; you came forth with an idea; you gave a helping hand and made your presence as an NTA member known and apparent. It is so very important that more of us step up to the plate to take

some sort of active role.

I have been part of the NTA for almost twenty years and have worked side by side with some great leaders. I have learned many things over the years and have had several mentors throughout this journey. I feel compelled to let you know our president, Donna Ramundo, gives more than you will ever know for what she believes is fair and right. We are truly fortunate to have her as our president. The time she spends devoted to this role is beyond meas-

ure, just ask her husband and your executive board.

We all need to be there in the near future to support and maintain the strength of our union. We cannot take a passive role!

Thank you to our executive board, chief building reps., building reps., all the way to the individual teacher who gave sometime at a phone bank. My sincerest gratitude to our president, you go Donna!

## Business Honor Society is Back



By: Beth Sheehan

Business Honor Society was brought back to NHS last year with 21 students inducted into the BHS on April 3, 2008. This year, on March 31, 2009, we had our 2nd induction

ceremony with 17 new students inducted.

The business program continues to expand with additional course offerings which include 2 college credit courses; accounting and business law.

By: Joanne Neibanck

**Teacher Center Funding for 2009-2010:** Thanks to your efforts as well as those of NYSUT and teachers across New York State, the Legislature has voted to reinstate funding for teacher centers for the same amount as this year.

**Summer Courses:** There is still time to register for three of our on-site courses: Teaching Reading in the Content Areas (Gr 6-12); and Teaching the Impulsive or Disruptive Child (Gr K-12), which are both approved for 60+, and Math Links (Gr K-8).

**Mini Grants Awarded:** Congratulations to Jody Skidd-Tauken (Nyack High School), who has just received a 2009/2010 MiniGrant for her e-portfolio project, "The Power of Publication".

# Nyack Teachers Center

**Call for MiniGrant and Maxi-Grant Proposals:** Do you have an idea for a project you like to do with your students? Would you like to attend a conference, or observe a program you like to learn more about? Would you like to participate in a study group with your colleagues, or set up a peer coaching team? Would you like to work with your colleagues to design an innovative program? Apply for a Mini-Grant (\$25 - \$500) or a Best Practices MaxiGrant (\$500 - \$1000).

**Teacher Center Website:** Have you visited our website yet? It's a good way to find out about the Center and the services we can provide. Go to [www.nyackteachercenter.org](http://www.nyackteachercenter.org)

**Policy Board 2009-2010:** There are several openings on the Policy Board for next year. If you are interested in joining, please speak to your NTA Building Representative.

**Policy Board 2008-2009:** We'd like to thank the following teachers and teaching assistants who have served on the Policy Board this year: Barbara Anderson, Shirley Birmingham, Shari Colucci, Sharon D'Amore, Dorothy Edelstein, Sharon Hall, Anne Jacobs, Pat Jacobson, Shelley Karlen, Susan Klein, Mary Mark, MaryAnne Mathesen, Brigid McKenna, Connie Rubi, Beth Sheehan, David Sheehan, and Merry Street.



## Nurse's Corner

### THE TRUTH ABOUT ANTIOXIDANTS

By: Miriam Lynn

According to the American Heart Association {AHA}, embracing antioxidants in their natural state is the way to go. A good place to start is with the five servings of fruits and vegetables. Antioxidants exist in foods as vitamins A, C and E, minerals [selenium], carotenoids [lycopene] and polyphenols. Our bodies require oxygen to function, but oxygen is highly reactive and creates byproducts through oxidation. These byproducts, called free radicals, they have the potential to damage cells. Antioxidation, as the name reveals, can stabilize free radicals before they cause harm. In fact, an abundance of antioxidants can actually have the reverse effect. For example, the use of the supplement carotene has been shown to

contribute to an increase risk of lung cancer in smokers. And taking excessive amounts of carotene can turn good cholesterol into bad cholesterol.

Darker foods, like pomegranates and plums, tend to be more antioxidant rich. Orange foods like sweet potatoes, carrots, and pumpkin contain beta-carotene. Lutein, known for its association with healthy eyes, is abundant in greens. Antioxidants are also found in nuts, grains, liver milk, mangos almonds, broccoli, poultry, fish egg yolks and whole grains. These foods are an energy source that empowers the system. Five servings a day can help you maintain a healthy lifestyle along with exercise at least 30 min daily. Yes walking fast is exercising.

# Presidents Message (continued from page 1)

political action and communication as listed below:

- New Member Social
- Light the Night Walk for Leukemia & Lymphoma
- Nyack Street Fair
- Making Strides for Breast Cancer
- Hispanic Heritage Celebration
- SRP celebration (breakfast)
- People to People Brown Bag Lunch
- NYSUT Retirement Convention (Shirley Birmingham and James Grasso delegates)
- Celebrating Senior Citizens at HS Thanksgiving Dinner
- Holiday Social
- Bowling for New Members
- Annual NYSUT food drive
- Casino Night
- Video Certification
- Our attendance at the *Representatives Assembly* in Buffalo and the *Committee of 100* in Albany supported the efforts of *NYSUT* to ensure quality education for all public school children and quality of life for our members. The ripples heard about tenure reform

became a strong current, as union lobbyists were successful in defeating the idea of using test scores in determining tenure.

- Phone calls & mailings for School Budget vote
- Tenure Celebration
- New Office for the NTA
- Golf Outing
- 3 scholarships given out to HS seniors (Annual NTA, In honor of Vic Czajkowski and In memory of Dr. Fletcher Johnson)
- NYSUT Community Service Award
- Our Bridge (newsletter) won various NYSUT awards
- WEB page active by June 30<sup>th</sup>
- Attended board meetings
- Attended Central labor Council Meetings
- Attended RCTA Health and Safety Network
- Attended RCTA Special Ed Network
- New member workshops
- NTA End Year Social

- Summer Leadership- we will be sending 14 members in August 1 (our largest group ever)

The small acts of many NTA members have created an energy that encourages our solidarity, fuels our actions, and gives us the strength to create change. In education there are no certainties except the life-long relationships we have made and the student's lives we have touched. ***We Stand United!***

With warmest wishes I would like to congratulate our retirees: Philip Ingber, Susan Klein, Sandra Connolly, Sharon D'Amore, Linda Thompson, and Doreen Uhl.

Congratulations to our newest members that received tenure this year.

Thanks to Brigit Feldman-Broadley for organizing our end year social. It was a lot of fun!

Lastly, thank you to our officers, committee chairs, chief reps and building reps for all that you do. It's not an easy job!

Have a great summer vacation!!!!

## NYSUT Social Services

We at NYSUT know your lives are complicated, busy and full. Unexpected complications arise. NYSUT Social Services can help by suggesting a positive course of action, providing pertinent information, and/or help from a caring professional.

**Let NYSUT Social Services assist you.**

Please call 1-800-342-9810, ext. 6206 or email us at: [socsvcs@nysutmail.org](mailto:socsvcs@nysutmail.org)

Confidential ~ No Cost ~ Available to In-service & Retirees, and their families

Scott Hicks, LCSW ~ Laurie Kupperstein, MS ~ Ani Shahinian, LCSW-R

# Tenure Awards



Over 30 members of our family were awarded tenure back in May. We would like to congratulate the following people on a job well done. We look forward to celebrating a long career with you.



**Elementary Schools:**

- Yvette Alcenat
- Adam Beirlein
- Emmanuel Bobo
- Maureen Bosley
- Debra Ceresnak
- Angela Challacombe
- Christine Carolus



- Doreen Dillon
- Anne Marie Gatti
- Heidi Grajar
- Mary Ann Mathsen
- Virginia Nardi
- Melinda Nealon



- Michelle O'Sullivan
- Anita Perillo
- Christine Prato
- Kathleen Prisco
- Nicole Pregiato
- Amy Romano
- Amy Sabol



- Barbara Schild
- Elaine Schupak

**Middle School:**

- Ruth Hartell
- Shiela Jeannot



- Karl Mattsen
- Jennifer Pellicer
- Lisa Ryder

**High School:**

- Randy Barbarash
- Bryan Costa
- Emily Dempsey



- Marie Hussey
- James Seifert
- Jody Skidd-Tauken



# Farewell to Our Retirees



**Phil Ingber** has been teaching for thirty one years. Throughout his career he taught middle school, computers, math and science; he is a jack of all trades. He joined the Nyack family 25 years ago teaching at the old high school. He taught computer technology with Barry Bookstein and Bill Fatale. He taught only computers for years, and a few years ago he went back

to teaching mathematics.

He was also very involved with the union. Phil committed himself to the union for 19 years, of which 10 of those years he was the chief building rep for the high school. I can speak first handed, he is a very knowledgeable resource.

During his retirement, Phil would like to

learn to play the guitar like Eric Clapton. He has also started to rebuild old guitars. He has a passion for model airplanes, so he will probably be building more. So needless to say, Phil plans on being a kid at heart and doing whatever he wants to do during his retirement. Phil you will be missed dearly!!

Sheri Viggiano

**Linda Thompson** has been a member of the Nyack family for almost 20 years. She began her career in the "old high school" and has worked with Phil Ingber in the computer lab for most of those years. When she began her career she had no knowledge of computers. She has distinguished herself as a teacher of students and staff alike. She is always ready, willing and able to help her colleagues and of course the students.

For 12 years of her career she has been a building rep. for the SRP'S at the high school. She is a strong advocate of the importance of having a union. She has counseled many colleagues over the years. When appropriate she has directed them to seek counsel from their union leaders. Linda has marched to the main office countless times to respectfully clear up misunderstandings.

Linda is a valuable asset to the high school. She is a well respected colleague and her happy smiling face



will be sorely missed by students and staff alike. Linda, I wish you good health and much happiness in your retirement. Keep living life to the fullest!

Elaine Petersen



**Sandy Connolly** has dedicated her life to working with children. She has taught for the past 36 years. Sandy taught creative movement dance to 3-6 year olds, co-directed her own private school, was the educational director of a pre-school, and she taught in a lock-down facility. Then, Sandy joined the Nyack family, where she spent the last 20 years. Sandy worked in Upper Nyack for 3 years, the middle school for

7 years, and Liberty for the last 10 years.

Sandy has always gone above and beyond for her students and their families. Sandy has been a loving sandy dedicated educator, and we wish her well in her retirement. She deserves it.

**Sharon D'Amore** has been a member of the Nyack family for 14 years. Throughout those years she has worked in The Center For Success. For the first 11 years she worked with Anna Silverman. For the past 3 years she has worked with Jodi Skidd. Sharon has helped a great number of students to become successful adults. To quote Jodi "Sharon has distinguished herself as an excellent teacher, a respected colleague and a loyal friend." I have to agree wholeheartedly!

For 10 of those years Sharon has also held the office of secretary for The SRP Chapter of the NTA. She has also served on many negotiating committees. As union president, Sharon has been a pillar of strength for me. She has been my sounding board and my counselor. She is a calming force in a storm and I have relied on her strength many times throughout these years. Sharon, I will miss your words of wisdom your calming influence and your professionalism.

On behalf of all of the SRP'S I wish you the best of health and happiness. Enjoy your retirement. You will be sorely missed by the students and staff of Nyack High School and by your fellow union members.



Elaine Petersen

**Susan Klein** has been teaching at Upper Nyack for 18 years, mostly in grades 4 and 5. Before that, she taught for 13 years at Walden School in Manhattan. She also taught for 5 years in Englewood, NJ. In all of these



touching, engaging, feeling and doing. Susan never stops learning herself. Even in this, her last year, she was actively engaged with new ideas and new technology.

Susan got her MS at Bank Street College in reading and special ed. Her undergrad work was at Washington Univeristy in St. Louis. One of only two Upper Nyack teachers who wasn't raised in New York, Susan lives here now with her husband, Lawrence Pringle, and sometimes, her grown son and daughter. She also lives with 4 cats, one of whom plays

fetch, though what she really wanted was a dog. Susan loves to cook and eat, travel, shop, read and enjoy nature. Lucky for her, she'll have more time to do all of those things now! Enjoy, Susan, we wish you the best and we'll really miss you.

**We think of the effective teachers we have Had over the years with a sense of recognition, But those who have touched our humanity we Remember with a sense of deep gratitude.**

**- Anonymous Writer (Student)**

**JUST KIDDING**



# This and That...

## Babies, Babies, and More Babies



Carol and Skip Russell (Liberty) were excited to welcome new grandchildren. Melissa and her husband were blessed with their sons Pierce and Wyatt. While Craig and his wife added Eliana Sage to their family.

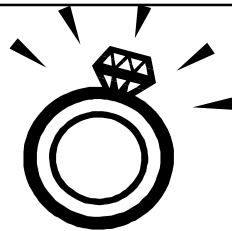
Peggie Desimone (Liberty) has 2 bits of great news to share; Carrie & Edwil gave them their third grandchild...and first grandson. His name is William Daniel aka BillyD. On Mother's day she learned that Matthew and Stephanie are expecting a child. This will make it grandchild #4 in December.

Congratulations to Mr. John Langone, Mrs.

Julie Waitkus, Mrs. Nina Labrada, Mrs. Theresa Holland and Mr. Vince Gabriel (all from the middle school) who are expecting precious new additions to their families in the coming months.

Marie Hussey (HS) had a baby girl Jacklyn Shae born in May. She was 7 lbs 4 oz. Everyone is doing well.

## Engagements & Weddings



Heidi Grajcar (Liberty) is engaged! Luke Illian proposed to her on a beautiful sunny Sunday (May 24th) on the banks of the Hudson River! Wedding will soon follow.

Adam Beirlein (VCE) proposed to Jenna DeLeonardis (a '03 graduate of the Nyack Public Schools) on Valentines Day. Of course she said yes! The happy couple will tie the knot in 2010.

Connie Rubi (HS) has good news to share: her daughter, who is a U.S. diplomat, is getting married in July and will be having her wedding in Louisiana. After, she and her husband, who is also a diplomat, will be sent to Columbia Bogotá after their honeymoon.

## The Running Scene

The George Wodicka Hook Mountain Half Marathon was held at Rockland Lake State Park on August 26. The race was a benefit for United Hospice of Rockland. Congratulations to Gloria Ramashar of Upper Nyack for braving the 90 degree plus temperatures at the finish of the race to complete this event, despite being without her training partner, Mrs. Pat Fetner, also of Upper Nyack Elementary.

The George Wodicka Hook Moun-

## Talented Staff

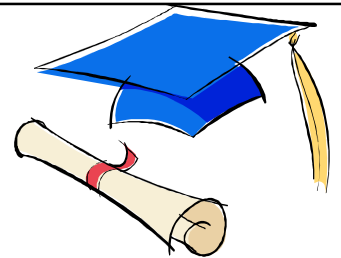
Joe Fusaro is having an art exhibit entitled

plumgoneperhappsfar  
Works by Joe Fusaro  
GAGA Arts Center

55 West Railroad Ave  
Garnerville, New York

For directions go to [gagaartscenter.org](http://gagaartscenter.org)

## Graduations



Linda and John Gabriele's daughter Jaclyn is graduating from Yorktown High School and will be attending the University of Rhode Island in the fall. She is a member of the National Honor Society and received an academic scholarship!

Kristin Bonnici, daughter of Janice Bonnici (VCE) graduated from St. Joseph's University, cum laude with honors. Her family is very proud of her

and all that she has accomplished.

Irene Schlanger's daughter, Alexandra, graduated from the University of Michigan with a major in Political Science and a Minor in Middle East Studies! Great going girl!



## Honors

Colette Tiktin's (Liberty) son, Jaques-Laurent Tiktin, achieved the rank of second place in the nation in "Le Grand Concours" [National French Contest] for students who grew up hearing the French language in the U.S.

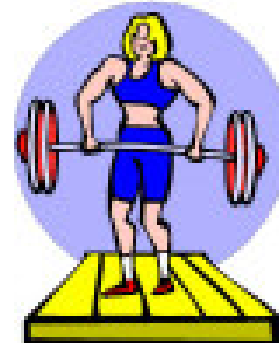
Cameron Travers (NHS Class of '08), son of Carolyn Travers, librarian at Valley Cottage, had a wonderful first year of smooth sailing at SUNY Maritime. He made the Admirals List both semesters. At this very moment Cameron is on the Empire State Training Ship, traveling to the Azores, Gibraltar, Iceland, and Germany with a trip to the Arctic Circle before arriving home in July. Mom, Dad and Caileigh (4<sup>th</sup> grader at Lib-

erty, who has worked hard this year too), couldn't be more proud. Anchors Away!!

Wendy Gottlieb's daughter, Jodi was honored at Clarkstown HS North's Academic Banquet for being one of the top 50 students in her freshman class. Wendy and Jeff are so proud of Jodi's hard work and achievement.

Kathy Prisco, a teaching assistant at VCE, is very proud of her daughter Kelly. Kelly is a student at Springfield College, majoring in English and education. Congratulations are in order because Kelly has made the dean's list. Kathy hopes that maybe one day, her daughter will become a part of the VCE family.

## Body Building



Our very own Dawn Brega (UN) has something to be proud of. She competed in the 2009 M.H.P NPC Mid-Atlantic Body Building & Figure Championship in East Brunswick, N.J. on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Brega through hard work, following a healthy diet, and engaging in a disciplined weight training program won first place in the Heavyweight Open Women's Bodybuilding Division as well as the overall Women's Bodybuilding Title. Kudos goes out to Ms. Brega on her accomplishment!!!!

## Our Students are Awesome

The Middle School is performed the musical "Once on This Island" in April. The show was a huge success. Many thanks to the producers, Theresa Holland one of our fabulous secretaries at the Middle School and Valley Cottage Teacher Assistant Lisa Demarest, Production Assistant and former Nurses Aide at the Middle School Lee Wise, and Director Jennifer Bauer-Conley for their incredible hard work and dedication in putting this event on.

The Tech Ed department completed the egg protection system project for its seventh grade classes. The purpose of this activity is to foster analytical, critical and creative thinking as students problem solve via their design, planning, construction and testing of a three inch by three by two inch structure made from 20 wooden coffee stirrers. After the students build the structures they are tested in a hydraulic press to determine the most vertical pressure they can withstand. As the students use the technology of structural design they turn these very weak stirrers into structures that can withstand thousands of pounds. The record this year was seven hundred pounds. Congratulations to Mr. Cassuto and the young engineers in the Middle School for their exciting work.

The Fourth Grade Chorus (Liberty) performed at the Empire State Plaza in Albany on March 17th, as part of the NYSSMA Music in Our Schools Month Celebration.

On May 20th the Nyack High School String Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra performed at the 2009 NYSSMA Majors Festival at Monroe Woodbury. The String Orchestra received a "Gold Award" and the Chamber Orchestra won a "Gold with Distinction."

To all faculty that is moving to another building, or moving on to another place we wish you the best of luck at your new place. You will be missed greatly.





# 1<sup>st</sup> Annual NTA Golf Outing

What better way to end the school year then to go out for a  
Round of golf with your friends and colleagues.

Sponsor a hole:

\$250 or co-sponsor a hole at \$125.00

Proceeds will go to:

The NTA Scholarship fund for seniors at Nyack High School

And

Contributions to United Way of Rockland

Checks made out to NTA and

mailed to

Nyack Teachers Association

15 N. Mill Street

Nyack, NY 10960

**Location:** Patriot Hills Golf Club

**Date:** Tuesday, June 30, 2009

**Time:** Check in at 9 AM, tee off time 10 AM

**Food:** Following your round of golf. . .

BBQ dinner with raffles and prizes

Cash bar

**Cost:** \$75 (checks made out to NTA)

**RSVP:** by June 1, 2009 to Kevin Sullivan at the high school



**Nyack Teachers  
Association**

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Nyack, NY 10960

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**Reporters**

Eileen Caclaterra - Upper Nyack

Pam Lima - Valley Cottage

Pat Parietti - Middle School

Marjan Perry - Liberty

Jody Skidd - High School

# Nyack Teachers Association

We are a union of 292 professionals dedicated to serving all children attending Nyack public schools. Our membership includes teachers, guidance counselors, library media specialists, social workers, speech therapists, psychologists, registered nurses. Our history as an organization dates way back. Our local is part of the 525,000 member New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). We are affiliated nationally with the American Federation of Teachers, and are proud to be part of the AFL-CIO.

**Our MISSION** is dedicated to maintaining a fair and professional relationship with the Nyack Public Schools with the goals of ensuring the most productive instructional conditions for teachers and the best possible learning opportunities for our students. Also, we are dedicated to improving not only our working conditions, but also our profession. As Nyack educators, we recognize the need to maintain and build a healthy and meaningful relationship with the community we serve. We believe that communication between parents and teachers creates an atmosphere of cooperation and unity of purpose that ensures the highest level of achievement for our students.

## We are Finally on the Web!!!

**Finally**, after almost a year of getting the information on the website correct, it is up and running. Please take a look at it. The web address is [ny.aft.org/nyackta](http://ny.aft.org/nyackta)

Once you are on the webpage, you will notice a menu on the left side of the page. You can look at our calendar of events, there is information about us (the NTA), a link for recent news, member benefits, political action, publication and reports, etc.

On the publications and reports page, you will be able to find a color copy of our newsletter, The Bridge. We would eventually like to go paperless and just have our newsletter on the web page for all to view.

**Web address:  
[ny.aft.org/nyackta](http://ny.aft.org/nyackta)**

There is also a link that says Contact Us, which is where you can see all of your representatives and their position within the union.

Please check out the website, and as always, if you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

