



# MTA News

## A Message From Your MTA President

Christopher White

### MTA News

Middletown Teachers' Association

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### Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

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to Stephanie Stopa at

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The submission deadline for the next newsletter is October 26th.

Please use private emails for newsletter articles.

Happy 2015/16 school year! As the new school year begins and we reacquaint ourselves with colleagues, I hope you all possess a well-rested mind and body.

I am sure many of you have questions regarding the state of our union. You know that Sheila stepped down as president last year, but you may be asking: What's going to happen to our union? Did Sheila really retire? Who is Chris White? Who are my reps? Are we really going mobile? I hope I can answer a few of your questions as we begin this school year.

Where is Sheila? Hopefully, she is in Bermuda enjoying some sun and relaxation! I would like to acknowledge all of the hard work and dedication that Sheila Esposito has given to this union throughout her years. Sheila worked countless hours, fought hard, and stood staunch on so many levels to protect all of our members. Having worked side-by-side with her, I know firsthand that she is ethically and morally incorruptible. She has taught me to be understanding, patient, and perhaps most importantly, how to stay strong in the face of adversity. In short, she has left a strong legacy, and some pretty big shoes for me to fill, but I could not have asked for a better mentor and friend, and our union owes her a debt of gratitude. Now, a bit about me...

This is my sixteenth year teaching English at Middletown High School, but I did not get seriously involved in our union until five years ago. We were short on reps that year, and I agreed to be a "write-in" rep. I was a building rep for a couple of years, and then Senior Building Rep for a little over a year. When the vice-president position became vacant two years ago, I ran for that position. And now here I sit, as your union president.

A few weeks ago, I was asked during the NYSUT Leadership Conference: "Why did you run for President?" I must admit I was stumped. I asked myself... Was it for personal or monetary gains? That would be a resounding NO! Was it for release time? No, I will miss the classroom. Then, why am I doing this? The truest answer is that I did it because the position was there. I did it because someone has to fight for the rights of our union members. I did it to preserve what has been hard fought through our history. Will I be successful? I sure hope so! If I am not, I have no doubt that the Middletown teachers will let me know...

This will be an interesting year for us as teachers in Middletown as we move towards the district initiative of going mobile. It will be an interesting year for NYSUT as we continue to fight our own politicians over the privation of public education. We are in for the fight of our lives this year, but I believe that this is the year NYSUT will create an even more powerful union. The key, of course, is you! I will be asking for your help as we move forward as a union under new leadership, and as we look to fight for all public sector workers state wide. As your new MTA President, please know that my door will always be open. With that being said, I and my fellow officers plan to visit each building in the fall to introduce ourselves personally.

I wish you all a wonderful year!

## The MTA Steps up to Support our Community

- Stephanie Stopa

On Tuesday, August 4th, the MTA participated in **Night Out Against Crime** at Davidge Park. The event included a varied representation of community support services and local businesses as well as activities sponsored by the City of Middletown Police Department and fireworks. The MTA table was buzzing with volunteers handing out raffle tickets to eager students and parents for our Book-bag Giveaway with one winner from each level-primary, intermediate, middle school and high school. Thanks to Shannon Craig, Dave DiBlanca, Sherri Heil, Kerry Luba, and Stephanie Stopa for shopping for the book-bags and school supplies. Also thanks to Katy Crawford, Allison Hauser, Sarah Lawlor, Lori Lawrence, Stephanie Stopa, Chris White and Kelly White for participating in the event.



Allison Hauser, Katie Crawford, Lori Lawrence, Chris White

MTA volunteers also participated in the **Orange Regional Medical Center Run for Downtown (ORMC R4DT)** on Saturday, August 15th. They were charged with maintaining the end-of-race water station in the heart of downtown Middletown. MTA volunteers included Tom Blon, Katy Crawford, Shadrac St. Louis, Kelly Quinn, Chris White, Kelly White, Denise Woolsey, and Jenn Younghans. MTA President, Chris White, also reached out for help from MHS National Honor Society. NHS members Sheila Adjei-Mensah, Nicole Cioffe, Amy Gonzalez, Ashley Gonzalez, Jillian Kelly, Andre Marin, Leandra McDonald, Rose Alicea Oliveras, Mariela Pichardo, Kyla Savino, Catherina Vargas, Sarina Wallace, and Jennifer Zepeda volunteered to assist. All volunteers received a complimentary R4DT t-shirt and free entry to the Taste of the Town, which included samples of food and drink from local restaurants, breweries, and wineries.



To read more about what the MTA has done to help our community, turn to page 4

# Stay Informed! Did You Know...

- Stephanie Stopa

**about longer probationary periods?** Teachers appointed to probationary positions on or after July 1, 2015, must serve a ***four-year probationary period (rather than three)***. *The law provides some exceptions for teachers who served as long-term substitutes. Teachers who have been previously tenured in another district or tenure area will now serve a shortened three-year probationary period (rather than two).*  
<http://www.harrisbeach.com/media-news/changes-to-new-york-state-teacher-tenure>

**about the impact of APPR ratings on untenured teachers?** A teacher appointed to a probationary term on or after July 1, 2015 must earn effective or highly effective APPR ratings in three of the four years preceding a grant of tenure. However, a recommendation for tenure is contingent upon an effective or highly effective rating in the final year. A teacher who receives an ineffective rating in his/her final year cannot be appointed to tenure *unless the ineffective rating is successfully appealed through the APPR process. Superintendents are required to provide a written report to the board as to a tenure recommendation for a teacher within the six month period preceding the expiration of the probationary term.*  
<http://www.harrisbeach.com/media-news/changes-to-new-york-state-teacher-tenure>

**about the new APPR regulations?** The new system replaces the three subcomponent system (20% state growth or Student Learning Objectives (SLO), 20% student achievement or growth on locally selected measures, 60% evidence of teaching practice) with a two category matrix system that includes student performance and teacher observation. The application of the new law begins with 2015-2016 evaluations. New plans must be locally negotiated and approved by SED by November 15, 2015, or the district will receive no increase in state aid for the 2015-2016 school year and thereafter until a new plan is in place. SED will offer a four month hardship waiver that will extend the November 15th deadline for plan approval based on a district's demonstration of good-faith efforts to negotiate a new APPR plan. New APPR plans approved prior to March 1, 2016 will apply to the 2015-2016 school year. New Plans approved after March 1, 2016 will apply to the 2016-2017 school year. APPR plans that were in effect on April 1, 2015 remain in place until a new plan is agreed to by the district and local. Every district will be eligible to receive a waiver. Districts may receive additional waivers to extend the deadline to September 1, 2016. This is the final deadline for plan approval to secure 2015-2016 state aid increases.  
<http://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/2015/june/fact-sheet-15-13-annual-professional-performance-review>

**about your rights and responsibilities when on FMLA?** The District will require periodic reports of a teacher's status and intent to return to work. The District will also inform a teacher of any requirements to make health benefits premium payments during the leave and potential liability for payment of health insurance premiums paid by the District if the teacher fails to return to work at the end of the leave. The teacher is responsible to maintain ongoing communications with the District to ensure it receives timely notice of a his/her intention. Be advised, that the District will pursue the recovery of its share of health plan premiums paid during any period of unpaid FMLA leave if the teacher does not return to work. If at any time during the leave the teacher advises the District that he or she does not intend to return to work, the teacher will be required to submit either a letter of resignation or other formal documentation before initiating the termination of employment and benefits.

**about the payout of unused sick days when resigning?** The District may take up to one year to pay a teacher for his/her unused sick days when he/she has resigned.

## Negotiations Update

- Dana Fontanez, Negotiations Committee Chair

The Negotiations Committee has met numerous times this summer to finalize its proposal. JR Wilson, our NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist, supported and guided us through the process.

The Negotiations Team has recently met with the District to exchange proposals. The committee will continue to proceed with negotiations and keep everyone updated as the process moves forward.

## Beyond the District: Education in the News

- Sheri Lederman, a 4th grade teacher from Long Island, is suing NYS over its evaluation system. The case is currently being argued in NYS Supreme Court. A win for Ms. Lederman could be a black eye for NYSED and its VAM and a win for teachers in NYS!

- The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) has agreed to decide whether public-sector unions can require workers to pay agency fees. The arguments for this case, *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association (CTA)*, No. 14-915, will begin in October. A ruling may come down as early as December 2015. A ruling against the CTA could decimate unions across the country.

## Streamlined Communication Coming Soon!

One of our goals for this year is to update the ways in which we share information with our members. Starting with this school year, there will be six issues of the newsletter and a new website supported by the AFT's domain. We will also be working on a Facebook page and a quick and efficient way to contact our members by text using the new app, Celly. Look for updates from your Senior Building Reps, as we move forward.

### Dates to Remember

9/2 Exec. Board Meeting  
 9/7 Labor Day  
 9/9 Rep. Council  
 9/14-9/15 Rosh Hashanah  
 9/17 Early Dismissal Drill  
 9/23 Yom Kippur  
 9/30 Elem. Rep. Council Elections  
     Exec. Board Meeting  
 10/7 Elementary SBR Elections  
     Exec. Board Meeting  
 10/12 Columbus Day  
 10/14 Rep. Council  
 10/18 Making Strides Walk  
 10/21 Exec. Board Meeting  
 10/30 Supt. Conf. Day (Contractual)

### NYSUT Summer Leadership

Eight of our members: Chris White, Stephanie Stopa, Kristine Savarese, Heather Aurori, Nicole Chaluian, Pat DeCosta, Shari DeLeon, and Lori Price attended NYSUT Summer Leadership in Parsippany, NJ on August 11-13. Look for articles detailing their workshops in upcoming newsletters.

### MTA in our Community

continued from page 2

In a continued effort to support community and school activities, at its summer meetings the Executive Board unanimously voted to make the following donations: \$560 to the Middletown Parks and Recreation Department to support the funding for eight Middletown students to attend **Summer Sport's Camp** (The students were selected by Christine Brinckerhoff, Superintendent of Recreation for the city of Middletown, based on individual student needs) and \$175 to support the **MHS Marching Middies**.

**Do you have items you are interested in donating, but you are not sure where to go? Think about contacting Big Brothers Big Sisters. Visit: [bbbsdonaate.org](http://bbbsdonaate.org) to schedule a convenient pick-up from your home or to find the drop-off location nearest to you.**