



Middletown Teachers' Association

# MTA News

## A Message From Your MTA President Christopher White

### MTA News

Middletown Teachers' Association

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**“Where trade unions are most firmly organized, there are the rights of the people most respected.”**

**-Samuel Gompers**

The above quote, from the founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), has resonated with me in recent months. As president of the Middletown Teachers' Association, I frequently speak with our members, and more often than not, the conversations inevitably drift to the need for a stronger sense of unionism. After each of these conversations, I try to reflect on how can we improve, so that we are stronger with each passing day.

Since becoming MTA president, one goal I've set is to have a stronger more unified association. When building morale is low, it is easy for members to feel isolated. To that end, we are trying to bring in more activities that will foster strength and solidarity among all members from all buildings. For example, we have appointed Jennifer Younghans as our community relations chair, as well as Kastina Owusu-Ansah as our social events committee chair. Both members help foster activities that promote camaraderie while parlaying into our civic duties within our communities. Ultimately, a bonded workforce can work together to promote a change. I think about the steel strikes of 1919 and 1959, the textile strike of 1934, and most recently the Verizon workers strike, in which some of our own MTA members stood in solidarity near route 211. What would happen to those workers if only a handful of members showed up?

The Middletown Teachers' Association is over 650 members strong. I like to envision us all standing together on issues that bond us both locally and nationally. Recently, the MTA held its general assembly meeting regarding the state of our union, and I am thankful to those who attended. When I speak to members individually, they invariably talk about the need for a strong union. How can we achieve this? How can we make it so that our numbers speak strength? Some have suggested separate meetings at each building, so that all may have the opportunity to attend. Although I gave this suggestion serious consideration, I ultimately rejected it. Simply put, having separate meetings only fosters an environment of isolation among the buildings. Individual buildings already know what is happening in their buildings, it is important for us to hear what is happening in other buildings, to listen to the questions and concerns of members in other buildings. With the upcoming vote on the Constitutional Convention, and with the Supreme Court about to hear the Janus case, the threat to unionism is very real.

“There is strength in numbers” might be an overused cliché, but with the political climate being what it currently is in the country, it is not mere hyperbole to suggest that in two years time, we may not even have a union left.

So, I ask each of you: what can we do to become stronger? How can we show that we are stronger together? I leave you with a quote from Dr. King that is just as timely now as it was when he said it: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

### Newsletter Submissions

Newsletter submissions can be

sent to Jennifer Sitko at

[jennsitko@yahoo.com](mailto:jennsitko@yahoo.com) and copied

to Kerry Luba at

[kclubamta@gmail.com](mailto:kclubamta@gmail.com)

The submission deadline for the next newsletter is December 8th.

Please use private emails for newsletter articles.

# MTA in the Community

- Jennifer Younghans

Welcome back! I hope that your school year is off to a great start. As the MTA Community Outreach organizer I would like to take a second to thank all of the MTA members who donated their time to a variety of activities last year. At the end of the school year many of our teachers helped by scooping ice cream at the Kids Celebration hosted by the Middletown Police Department. Summer did not prevent our members from being present in the community. On August 19th, MTA members handed out water to race finishers at Run 4 Downtown. MTA members were then treated with a taste of Middletown by sampling from the many great restaurants Middletown has to offer.

Our participation in these community based events helps to show our students our commitment to their success beyond the classroom. It is a great opportunity for us to interact with students and their families. With a new school year there will be additional opportunities for us to get involved. Please look to your email for upcoming events. In addition, if you have anything you would like the MTA to get involved in, please feel free to reach out to me. The more we get involved the greater our presence will be in the community.

If interested in volunteering or if you have any ideas of how to get more involved, please contact Jennifer Younghans, MTA Community Outreach at [jennifer.younghans@ecsdm.org](mailto:jennifer.younghans@ecsdm.org).

## Benefit Fund Information

- Tom Blon—MTA Benefit Fund Manager

1. Address or name change:

-Keep your information current- contact Benefit Fund Manager Tom Blon at [tantblon@gmail.com](mailto:tantblon@gmail.com) if you have changed your address or name.

2. Legal Plan

- Will packages are available. Contact T. Blon for a copy.

3. Vision Plan

- A voluntary family plan is available for \$395.00. Further information is available at

<http://memberbenefits.nysut.org/program-service/insurance/vision-plan>

# Did You Know?

- Robbyn McCauley

It's the first newsletter of the year and I've been thinking quite a bit about what to write. Our world seems to be so sad these days, filled with loss, violence and disconnect that I wanted to be sure to write in a way that honors all of us. At the same time, there is always work to be done and this article has a deadline. As I thought more and more, the idea of a connection between honor and work, between who we are and what we do started to form. The idea of union and teacher; contract and our daily work lives.

I am so proud to be a union member and your newly elected Vice President. I believe in the union and what it stands for. I believe in the strength of solidarity and honor those that came before us and paved the way. I believe in and rest assured knowing that we can speak up to advocate for our students and don't have to fear we will be fired. I believe in and take a deep breath when a member stands in my doorway, knowing we've got a contract to go to and that together, we'll figure it out. Our contract. Our collectively bargained agreement that affords us so much and yet seems to get put on a shelf or in a drawer and forgotten about, at times.

Our contract is over 60 pages long and filled with negotiated benefits, requirements, and ideas. I'd like to share with you some "did you know" items in each newsletter. Knowing our contract makes us stronger and better able to advocate for ourselves when needed. To that end:

Did you know...

- All teachers are required to participate in one evening Open House

- All Secondary teachers are required to participate in two evening Parent/Teacher Conferences, one during each semester

**\*\*Did you also know in exchange for these above requirements, your union negotiated for **our half day before Thanksgiving?**\*\***

It is my hope that by sharing a piece of our contract in each newsletter, we will continue to get stronger and more unified. After all, we ARE stronger together.

## The MTA Offers Hurricane Relief

In an effort to help those devastated by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, the MTA organized a collection to be delivered to the island. Volunteers Schadrac St. Louis and Adam-Andre Torres DeRosa (MHS), Nicole Fervan (MMS), Evelyn King (TTMS), Julie Galdun, Mildred Martinez, Michelle Ramirez, and Sylvia Hidago-Rivera (PPE), Elizabeth Hluchan (WAC), and Samantha Rodriguez (MH), coordinated, collected, organized, and prepared items for delivery. Donations were delivered to the Goshen Sheriff's Department and will be sent to Puerto Rico for distribution.



In addition to the supply drive, volunteers organized a Puerto Rico Benefit Relief Concert at Middletown High School. The concert was held on October 19 at 6:00. All proceeds went to the Hispanic Federation Unidos Disaster Relief and Recovery.

Along with the aid donated to the citizens of Puerto Rico, the MTA also collected backpacks to donate to those affected by Hurricane Harvey. MTA volunteers donated 131 backpacks, which were sent to Houston last month.

