



## **PCT PLEDGE**

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## **QUITE A YEAR**

**By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld**

2006-07 has not been the usual year. It has been a year punctuated by changes for both our union and the school district, changes which have and will create opportunities for both to become better.

This was the year of the long sought merger of NEA/New York and NYSUT, an amalgamation championed by the leadership of the PCT. In 1983, a new PCT leadership team going to its first NEA/New York delegate assembly brought to that body a resolution calling on the state union to work cooperatively with other organizations interested in education, our euphemism for NYSUT, a name that evoked in many NEA/New York members visions of a heathen host.

Even as the discussions between the two state unions were moving toward agreement, many continued to hold the view merger would suck us into a tyrannically run, New York City dominated monolith that would stifle our freedom and materially worsen the conditions of our membership.

To the leaders of the PCT, that all sounded foolish at the time. Today, we don't hear a peep of anything like it because the merger has been implemented flawlessly by a NYSUT leadership that has had a keen eye for every detail necessary to make the members of the substantially smaller NEA/New York comfortable in the merged NYSUT. While I know that many had a skillful hand in making this happen, NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi's leadership has been simply outstanding in setting the policy direction and tone of this undertaking, fraught with opportunities for things to go wrong. As a result of the merger, workers in public education now speak with the voice of 575,000 members united in common cause.

This was also the year of successful contract negotiations, albeit successful after a long, unnecessarily complicated and, at times, silly process. For me the best part of the process

was to observe the results of our union training initiative. There was never a time when our buildings were better organized, the membership kept better informed and our resolve more clearly expressed, thanks in large measure to the building leadership teams we have been working hard to develop.

This has also been the year of administrative changes. I can't recall a year when so many administrators left, key among them Superintendent Marty Brooks. I have enjoyed working with Dr. Brooks, both when we were on the same wave length and when we made some static in the district. I grew progressively more concerned about his misreading of the political realities of this community, realities on which his superintendency ultimately foundered.

The same can be said for the changes the voters made in our Board of Education. Three incumbents were defeated this year by a public that wants a change in the direction of our district. With the victorious candidates all advocating the need to elevate the district's academic standards and outcomes, it's clear the voters were not content with the status quo message of the incumbents. For the first time since the PCT launched its academic standards campaign, I'm encouraged to believe that we can make significant progress over the next few years, even though that progress may be stressful at time to the membership. That progress in the end will be better for our students and will restore the confidence of the public in our schools. That will be very good for us.

## **LIBRARY STAFF CONTINUES PROTEST**

The members of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Library Association (POBLA) continue to protest their treatment by the public library's management. Last week their protest took the form of wearing tee shirts with a two dollar bill emblazoned on the front, drawing attention to the mid-year gift of two dollars per hour given to the non-union workers at the library but not to the POBLA membership.

The tumult at the library has stimulated management to look for a remedy to the situation. Negotiations have begun with the library on the "two dollar issue" and others that have poisoned the atmosphere at the library for some time.

POBLA members will be looking to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees for a sense of the direction these negotiations will take.

## **OFFICERS AND BOARD MEET ON MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

On June 14<sup>th</sup>, the officers of the PCT and the Board of Education held their last bi-monthly meeting of the year with middle school as the agenda. Both the current board and the Board Members Elect were present. The meeting came shortly after the Middle School Committee Report, a report that was not universally well received.

Recognizing that there is a great deal of community dissatisfaction with middle school scores on state assessments, the officers wanted to accomplish two things at the meeting: to urge the Board to make no precipitous changes at this late stage of the year other than the minor scheduling changes called for in the Middle School report; and, to begin a discussion on what the PCT has identified as significant issues requiring study.

Among these, the officers identified a school atmosphere that appears to favor student happiness over academic accomplishment, a teacher reward system that does nothing to promote high expectations for students, an academic program that is all too frequently interrupted by programs that do not directly promote achievement, an aversion to recognizing that some students learn faster and better than others and a parent population that has been licensed to make outrageous demands that are often at odds with higher student achievement.

The officers informed the Board that we would be forming our own middle school committee in the fall to study these issues more deeply and make recommendations for action. They invited the Board to partner with us in this endeavor and to meet with us regularly next year to develop a consensus on a plan to improve our middle schools. In response to a question about teacher accountability for the outcomes of our middle school, the officers indicated that we were prepared to be accountable, but we would demand that both management and the parent population be mutually accountable by giving us the support we need to produce better academic outcome.

### **TRACT FACILITATOR NAMED**

The Policy Board of The TRACT Satellite Teacher Center has named Dan Poplawski, art teacher at the POB Middle School, as the next facilitator of the center. Dan was the unanimous choice of the Board who saw in his computer and art background the skills necessary to continue the line of excellent facilitators the center has had.

With Dan's appointment, the TRACT Satellite Center will move to the POB Middle

School. Watch for an announcement in the fall of its days of operation and hours.

### **PCT CONTINUES TO PRESS BOARD ON TAX SHELTER PLAN**

Although the Board of Education has thus far refused to agree to a deferred compensation plan that would permit retiring staff to shelter most, if not all, of their sick leave by-out money, the PCT continues to press for the plan's implementation as a win-win action that the Board should take.

The officers continue to be hopeful that the new Board, at the first meeting in July, will take a fresh look at the issue and come to the same conclusion the union has, that there is no sensible reason to be against helping those who have devoted a career to the district from being able to save more of their sick leave benefit than they would be able to otherwise.

### **NEA DELEGATES ELECTED**

The PCT Executive Board has elected Morty Rosenfeld, Cindy Feldman, Judi Alexanderson and Lillian Feigenbaum to be delegates to the NEA Convention to be held in Philadelphia during the week of July 4. The PCT constitution calls for NEA delegates to be elected by the Executive Board from among the officers of our union.

### **PCT OFFICE SUMMER HOURS**

Beginning the week of June 25 and continuing through August the office hours of the PCT and PFT Welfare Fund will be 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Thursday.

### **IN MEMORIAM**

We mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague, Cynthia Kushner, who passed way on May 28, 2007. Cynthia started her career in Plainview in 1965 as an elementary school teacher. In 1967, Cynthia became a counselor at Mattlin Middle School where she remained until retirement in 1987. Cynthia was dedicated to the students she taught and counseled. She will be remembered by colleagues and friends for her warmth and enthusiasm for life. She had resided in Jupiter, FL with her husband Bob.