

# OCTA Advocate

A newsletter for members and friends of the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association

April 2020



APRIL 25, 2020

## In a crisis, the fight for fairness continues

Author: Ned Hoskin

Source: NYSUT United



Caption: NYSUT President Andy Pallotta joins members from the union's Committee of 100 and lawmakers at a rally to press for much-needed education funds.  
Photo by El-Wise Noisette.

The effort was unprecedented, as hundreds of union activists and NYSUT's legislative team traveled the state and swarmed the Capitol for weeks to make the case that this is the year to fully Fund Our Future.

Even with a \$6 billion deficit, the union and a full complement of coalition partners — with the support of the vast majority of voters — argued the investment in public education was essential, and easily affordable with new revenues from proposed taxes on

the wealthiest New Yorkers. Momentum grew every week.

Then came COVID-19. The economy spiraled out of control and further budget discussions stalled.

The projected deficit in the state's 2020–21 budget grew from \$6 billion to more than \$10 billion. Lawmakers began planning reductions they justified under the term "pandemic adjustments." We fought back against proposed cuts that would hurt students and communities and were able to secure flat funding.

"The economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic makes public services like education, higher education and health care more important now than ever before," said President Andy Pallotta. "Flat funding for K–12 schools and higher education will be tough."

The fight for fair and long overdue funding will continue . . . [READ THE REST](#)



**THANK YOU to ALL OCTA VOLUNTEERS at Food Service sights across the Oswego City School District! This month's spotlight belongs to YOU!!**



For the last two months, OCTA volunteers have been ensuring that students and families receive the food they need. From making sandwiches and cutting vegetables to driving bagged meals to houses across the county, OCTA volunteers have been ready and willing to get the job done! *ABOVE (left): OCTA Members Michelle Cooper and Sarah Davis bag, pack and deliver food to students and families across the county. ABOVE (right): Michelle McManus receives gift certificates donated by Cs Farms. Gift certificates were presented to essential staff at the Oswego Hospital and the Oswego City School District. (See more pics on the OCTA WEBSITE!).*

*Know an educator in the Oswego City School District who deserves the OCTA Spotlight? Email a picture and brief description to [drose@oswego.org](mailto:drose@oswego.org). Nominees should be OCTA members in good standing. All nominators and nominees receive a special gift courtesy of the OCTA! Thanks in advance for the support.*



## **MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES!**

In an effort to help support the small business owners of Oswego who have generously supported our students through their donations, we (the OCTA) are continuing our fundraising campaign which will put books in the hands of our students while also highlighting and helping one community business each week. Last week, we raised over \$1000 dollars for The Big M food market!! This week, please donate to another very important local business - [The Fajita Grill](#) (and Oswego Postal Employees)! [Please CLICK HERE TO DONATE \(and ENTER THE RAFFLE!\)](#)

## Members show what 'NYSUT Strong' means

Author: Sylvia Saunders

Source: NYSUT Communications

Share This Article...



**In ways big and small, NYSUT members across the state are rising up to meet the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.**

They're scouring science labs to donate much-needed protective gear for health care workers. They're making meals-to-go and riding school buses to deliver food packages along with schoolwork. Others are posting creative videos to entertain — and engage — students, whether it's dressing up in a silly costume to read a story or demonstrating a very cool science experiment from their kitchen table.

“Over and over again, this crisis has shown the vital role public schools, higher education and health care institutions play in communities throughout the state,” said NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. “Our members have so much heart. And I know we'll continue to work together and be there for one another in the days and weeks ahead.”

To showcase our members' tremendous dedication to our communities and kids, [we've launched a new website called NYSUT Strong](#). It's filled with videos, photos, articles and social media posts that exemplify the spirit and strength of NYSUT members.

We thank everyone who has taken the time to send us their stories. It's amazing how many communities have sponsored “car parades,” where kids wave “we miss you signs” and educators wave back — from a safe distance, of course.



## Tell Us YOUR Story

**We want to hear more about how you're coping with this public health crisis, how you're helping your community and kids.**

You can share your story, photos or social media [using this online form](#); on social media, be sure to tag @NYSUT and use the hashtag #NYSUTStrong.

Learn more: visit [nysut.org/nysutstrong](https://nysut.org/nysutstrong).

## A Message from your OCTA President, Carrie Patane

Thanks goes out to Dr. Goewey for his continued support and guidance. Dr. Goewey's desire to put the wellbeing of our students as his top priority is clear and is appreciated.

**I want to stress one very important statement that Dr. Goewey has made. Recently, he said "As we move into Phase III... please continue to be mindful of the social and emotional well-being of our students and families. Strike a delicate balance between providing educational experiences and activities for our students and the challenges associated with children learning at home without the direct face to face support of teachers."**



We are all doing our best to "teach" but we all know our current digital learning environment is clearly not as effective as face to face instruction. This is a crisis and no matter how much time, energy, and effort we put into our digital instruction we know how trauma impacts learning. Be kind, be gracious, and be mindful of the many levels of stress these children are dealing with right now. I am appreciative that students will be held harmless if they are not able to complete the work as they take care of their families in a whole new way. Many of our students will not be able to complete the work we provide. There is no pressure on us (state exams and final exams are cancelled) and there is no pressure on the kids to perform miracles. **We can, however, help create a sense of normal and even more importantly, a sense of community who are in this together to support one another.** Our students, our families, and even our fellow OCSD family is coming together (apart) like never before. We can ride out the wave and land firmly in the fall.

Be well, breathe, and stay home.

PS - if you have questions, please do not reply to all. We are all receiving a plethora of important email correspondences and I do not want to overwhelm any inboxes. I am always happy to assist each of you individually if need be, and the rest of the OCTA officers are also eager and willing to help you with any questions you have as you move forward.

# TEACHERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM INFO

submitted by Dan Rose ([drose@oswego.org](mailto:drose@oswego.org))


[Active Members](#)
[Retirees](#)
[Delegates](#)
[Employers](#)
[MyNYSTRS Login](#)
[I'm looking for...](#)
[FORMS](#)
[LIBRARY](#)
[CONTACT US](#)

[Home](#) > [Library](#) > [Videos](#) > [Member Information](#) > [A Two-Minute Tutorial for New Members](#)

✉ 🖨 A A A

## A Two-Minute Tutorial for New Members



Run Time:  
2 Minutes

[Download Transcript](#)

### Library

+ Pension Education Toolkit

+ General Reference

+ Publications

— Videos

Member Information

General Education

Infographics

Are you new to NYSTRS? Give us two minutes and we'll tell you what you need to know about your membership.

[BENEFITS](#)
[RETIREMENT PLANNING](#)
[ABOUT US](#)
[LEGISLATION](#)
[HEADLINES](#)
[SEARCH](#)

[Active Members](#)
[Retirees](#)
[Delegates](#)
[Employers](#)
[MyNYSTRS Login](#)
[I'm looking for...](#)
[FORMS](#)
[LIBRARY](#)
[CONTACT US](#)

[Home](#) > [About Us](#) > [Press Room](#) > [Headlines](#) > [COVID-19 Update & FAQs](#)

✉ 🖨 A A A

## COVID-19 Update & FAQs

04/22/2020

NYSTRS has implemented a variety of measures related to the coronavirus (COVID-19). Large meetings and events, including our PREP seminars, are canceled until further notice. Benefit consultations are being conducted by telephone. A large percentage of staff are telecommuting. Our building is closed to the public but our phone lines remain open at (800) 348-7298 to answer your questions and we are still receiving mail.

We thank you for understanding that the health, safety and welfare of our members and staff are our utmost concern. We will continue to monitor the evolving situation as well as the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the New York State Health Department, and we will continue to adjust our plans as needed.

To ensure members have the information needed to make informed decisions, we have put in place alternative communication methods. Please read on for more information. We also urge you to use the self-service tools and secure messaging function available through your online [MyNYSTRS](#) account.

### 1. Will there be delays in processing forms, requests or benefit payments?

A large percentage of NYSTRS staff are telecommuting until further notice to facilitate social distancing. We are prioritizing transactions such as pension payments, direct deposit changes, disability retirements, death benefits and loans. (**Note:** We encourage members to apply for a loan via MyNYSTRS and request direct deposit payment as there will be a delay in processing paper loan checks.) All other transactions will be processed as expeditiously as possible. Throughout this challenging time, NYSTRS staff will work diligently to maintain the highest level of customer service.

If you are filing time-sensitive forms or submitting critical documents to NYSTRS, we strongly recommend that you use registered or certified mail through the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) to do so. The Postal Service is reporting delays in standard mail delivery times due to staff shortages related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more in our headline [Consider U.S. Mail Alternatives](#).

[CONTINUE READING- CLICK HERE](#)



## Duty-Free Lunch Breaks Boost Mental and Physical Health

By Cindy Long

For many educators around the country, a lunch break is anything but a break. After a mad dash to the restroom, they give extra help to struggling students, answer parent emails, catch up on lesson planning, monitor the playground or cafeteria, or attend meetings called by their principal. Rarely do they take time to actually sit and eat.

All of this takes a toll on their physical and mental health, which is why Manny Lopez, a third-grade teacher from California, is a strong advocate for duty-free lunches. NEA Today sat down with Lopez to talk about the importance of duty-free lunches:

### Why are duty-free lunches important?

**Manny Lopez:** As educators, we're on our feet for most of the day and have to be "on" for hours at a time. We need an opportunity to power down and reflect. It's physically exhausting to be front and center all day long. The body literally needs a break.

It's also a mental health issue. Teaching is a very isolating job. You are with a community of students, but adult interaction is critical. Professionals need to talk to colleagues about what they're doing in the classroom, reflect with others, or just have a relaxing chat with a friend before heading back to class.

### Why are you passionate about this issue?

**ML:** I'm passionate about a lot of issues—I'm a longtime union activist—and I want more people to know that they have the right to a duty-free lunch, and if they don't, they should fight for one. When a colleague was a new mother, she used her lunch break to pump breast milk. But her principal regularly called meetings with her during her break. When could she pump? Another colleague works at a school in Tennessee where educators get only 20 minutes for lunch and have to eat with their students, so it's not at all duty free.

### Is this also a problem for education support professionals?

**ML:** Absolutely, especially those who work with special needs students. It's very hard to find people to do that challenging work, and there is often nobody to take over during an educator's lunch period, but the school and the district must find a way. Special educators will burn out without a break.

Many educators today are experiencing secondary trauma—when a person is continuously exposed to descriptions of traumatic events experienced by someone close to them, such as students, and absorbs some of that trauma. How does a duty-free lunch help them cope?

**ML:** I have three homeless children in my class right now. I've had students whose parents were murdered. These kids come in with terrible stories. We absorb all of that and are often not able to do enough to help them. It's impossible to shake that off, but it helps to get a hug from a colleague or just vent about what's going on. It's critical that we have time to connect with colleagues. It's self-care.

### How can educators advocate for a duty-free lunch?

**ML:** Get your colleagues worked up! Make it an issue—everyone wants to have a break during the day. Make copies of this article and pass them around. Seek help from the principal and superintendent. If they see your solidarity and your power, they will have to listen. Go to board meetings, involve parents, get them trained. Parents often want to be involved in their childrens' schools. Let them have lunch duty. Or create jobs for other community members to be bus, playground, and cafeteria monitors. There are ways to do this. Make it a reality. Educators need sustenance, nutrition, a few moments to reflect and collect themselves. They need to break bread with colleagues. Only then can they go back to the classroom refreshed and ready to be their best.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MANNY LOPEZ

READ MORE ARTICLES LIKE THIS @ [NEA TODAY MAGAZINE](#)

Millennials: A Pro-Union Generation

# MILLENNIALS



## A PRO-UNION GENERATION

A TIDAL WAVE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BECOMING MEMBERS—AND MANY LOCALS ARE MAKING SPACE FOR THEM TO LEAD.

By Brenda Álvarez

Younger workers are joining unions at a historic rate. A whopping three-quarters of people who joined labor unions in 2017—the most recent year for which data is available—were under the age of 35, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. That's a significant change. In the past, younger workers have been less likely to join unions than older members, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) reports. So what's causing this seismic shift? [READ THE REST- CLICK HERE](#)

---

## OCTA News Blast March/ April 2020

### Highlights from our March and April OCTA Meetings

Submitted by OCTA Secretary, Michelle McManus

**It's a Voting YEAR! This is a GREAT opportunity to GET INVOLVED in your local union!! All OCTA building positions will be open for the 2020-2021 school year.**

These positions are: Building President, Building Vice President and Building Reps. In addition, four OCTA Executive Board Positions will be up as well. These positions are: President, 2nd VP, 4th VP & Secretary. If you wish to nominate someone to run for one of these offices please give this to your building president who will then bring it back to the Board of Directors. Due to the need to vote at our May meeting, all nominations need to be received by Friday, May 8th at 12:00pm. If interested in running or joining your building leadership, please send an email to [drose@oswego.org](mailto:drose@oswego.org)





## Union-endorsed benefits designed for NYSUT members

Whether it's our endorsed homeowners or auto insurance plans, life or disability insurance, financial or legal service plans, or any of our travel, entertainment or shopping offerings, NYSUT members have the "Power of the Union" behind them when participating in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

There's no need to go it alone when Member Benefits has your back! Member Benefits acts as your advocate for any program you participate in, and we'll do our best to quickly resolve any issues or concerns you may have.

**The following is just a sampling of the dozens of endorsed programs & services available to NYSUT members and their families:**

- Auto, Home & Life Insurance
- Vision & Dental Plans
- Legal & Financial Services
- Hotel & Vacation Discounts
- Member Shopping Program
- Car & Truck Rental Discounts
- Competitive Savings Rates
- Retail Store Discounts
- Sports & Concert Tickets
- Theme Park Discounts
- Car Buying Service
- Heating Oil & Propane Savings

**We encourage you to take the time to explore the Member Benefits website by scanning the QR code to the right. Find out all we have to offer NYSUT members!**

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit [memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://memberbenefits.nysut.org) or call 800-626-8101.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

## THE OCTA LENDS A HAND TO OSWEGO BUSINESSES DURING PANDEMIC

**Thanks again to OCTA member Nick Little who is helping to promote one Oswego business throughout the week. Each Monday a new business is named and promoted and a new Raffle begins. Proceeds go back to the local business at the end of the week!**

### DAILY SCHEDULE:

Mon, Tues & Wed - Members will be able to buy raffle chances (pay through paypal or Venmo by midnight on Wed.)

Thursday - NO MORE RAFFLE ENTRIES... We will finalize the Raffle entries in the comments section and will draw the winner LIVE at approximately 7pm.

Friday - OCTA President Carrie Patane will personally contact each winner to arrange for delivery of their \$40 gift card.

Members are able to purchase “chances” to win the gift card for \$5 (per chance). Members can purchase an unlimited amount of chances. Payment will be made directly to Carrie Patane through PayPal at <https://www.paypal.com/pools/c/8oGPZd9eRE> (Carrie will also provide links on [OCTA Facebook page](#).)

Carrie will put the buyer's name in the comments and will assign them a number (or numbers - depending on the number of chances you purchased). The person who is assigned the winning number is the winner of the raffle. I will reach out to them with directions for using their gift certificate - depending on the criteria the vendor has in place for online gift cards. (Hoping the businesses will Have E gift cards so you can make purchases online.)



### [Fajita Grill Spotlight](#)

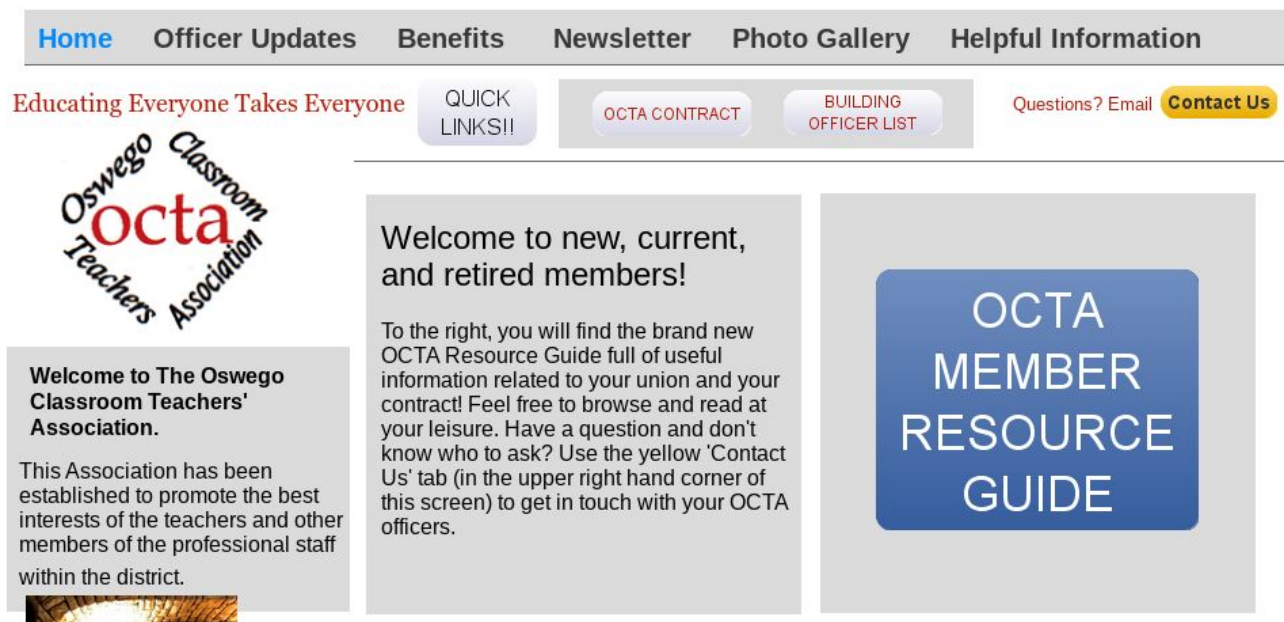
[CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW!!](#)

This week we are highlighting [Fajita Grill](#) for all they have done for our students and our District. Every \$15 raised will go toward gift cards for the Oswego Post Office Essential Employees. [Win a \\$40 Gift Certificate](#) for you and your family by purchasing chances to win the raffle. Get One chance to win for every \$5 you [donate](#).

## Have you visited the OCTA website yet? What are you waiting for!!??

Click on the screenshot of the homepage below to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide!

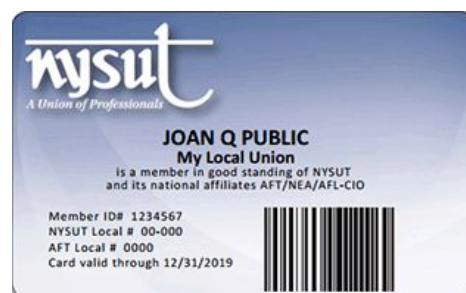
### Oswego Classroom Teachers' Association



## Need A Quick NYSUT Membership Card?

[Login here and download a PDF of your membership card.](#)

To request a replacement for this card, call NYSUT at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6224



*OCTA Advocate* is published by the Oswego Classroom Teachers Association, West 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Oswego, NY. **President:** Carrie Patane, **VP Grievance:** Kim LeRoy **VP Negotiations:** Gretchen Coakley **VP Political Action:** Jenn Cahill, **VP Newsletter:** Dan Rose, **Secretary:** Michelle McManus, **Treasurer:** Mike Patane. Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO.

