

OCTA Advocate

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



SEPTEMBER 2024

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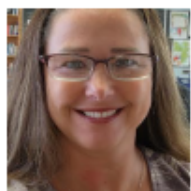
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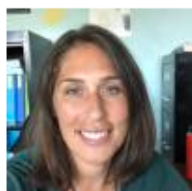
Meet your 2024-2025 OCTA Officers!



Carrie Patane
OCTA President



Kim LeRoy
VP Grievance



Jess Burrige
VP Negotiations



Jenn Cahill
VP Pol. Action



Mike Patane
Treasurer



Michelle McManus
Secretary



Dan Rose
VP Newsletter



Message from your OCTA President - Carrie Patane

I am hopeful that you were able to use your summer days (and nights) for some well-deserved relaxation and stress release. This summer your OCTA leaders worked to update our resource guide, hosted our new teachers and their mentors in August, and continued to negotiate on your behalf for a new contract. We also had UNION STRONG solidarity Tees made for all members who filled out the contact information form. We hope you are enjoying them! **Payday**

Fridays are now SOLIDARITY DAYS! If you don't have one yet, you can get yours by filling out this [Contact Information Form](#).

We have also worked to secure access for all OCTA members to a [Legal Service Plan](#). It is a comprehension plan that allows participants to create and store important legal documents for **FREE**, including a Simple Will, a Power of Attorney, a Living Will, and a Health Care Proxy. This legal plan also offers discounted legal advice through a nationwide network of licensed, referral attorneys concerning member issues like identity theft, debt consolidation, elder care, mortgage foreclosure, and personal injury cases. For a member to enroll in this plan on their own through NYSUT Member Benefits, the cost would be \$80-\$85 a per year, which is a fantastic rate. However, **OCTA is purchasing this membership for ALL of our members this year! You should have received a packet in the mail over the summer with your membership card (see image below).**

On October 2nd, there will be an informational meeting (over Google Meet) so you can find out exactly how the plan works. Building leaders will be distributing hard copies of the [Legal Security Package Forms](#) that you will need to fill out prior to attending Will Day meetings in November. This spring, a group of legal professionals will visit each building to finalize/notarize/sign the documents!

Until then, take some time to look the plan over by clicking the links below. I truly believe this will be a useful and valuable resource to our membership.

Here is a link to download the full brochure: [Brochure](#)

Here is a link to the NYSUT Member Benefits site: [Webpage](#)

Plan Features: [Webpage](#)

In solidarity,

Carrie

IMPORTANT REMINDER: If you completed a graduate course you need to send an official unopened transcript to Rachel Enos in the Personnel office by October 1st AND mark the course "completed" in Frontline.

Congratulations to our most recent OCTA Spotlight Recipients!

Fitzhugh Park would like to recognize Mrs. Jamie Brancato and Mrs. Kathy Forger for their years of service at Fitzhugh Park Elementary and wish them well in retirement!



Mrs. Brancato has spent 30 years in our district. In retirement Jamie excitedly says that she “looks forward to babysitting her FIRST EVER grandchild, tutoring, possibly subbing, beginning her mornings at the gym and just having a more open schedule.” In the meantime, you will find Jamie encouraging our many students to keep doing their best reading and supporting our staff with her many words of wisdom.

Mrs. Kathy Forger has dedicated the last 18 years to our school. About teaching, Mrs Forger says, “I love working with my first graders and building relationships with them...seeing their growth throughout the year is just amazing! My team and coworkers are the best. I am lucky to work with such kind and supportive people!” We feel the same about Kathy. In retirement, Kathy will be moving with her family to Aiken, South Carolina where she will be enjoying new adventures in the beautiful warm Carolina-sunshine. For now, you can often find Kathy holding a hand or hear her quietly working with her students and getting them excited to do their best. These two ladies will be missed tremendously. Congratulations Jamie and Kathy!

Elaine Lee has been a Teaching Assistant at OMS for 5 years, starting out supporting the 8 east team in the areas of science and social studies. She was a substitute teacher and sub teaching assistant prior to working full time at OMS. In that role Elaine was employed all over the district, from Kindergarten through high school. Elaine says that she is inspired by a love of learning and hopes to spread that joy to her students! Elaine loves walking in the woods, fishing, collecting rocks, photography, gardening, making jewelry and spending time with her family. She spent much of her childhood in her mother’s native country Panama, and her early teen years on the island of Guam.





Rachel (Henderson) Porter was a School Counselor for OCSD for over 30 years, until she retired in November of 2023. She began her career at The Academy, the former Alternative School run by OCSD. She spent the rest of her career at Oswego High School, where she also led the Counseling Department for many years as team leader. Rachel gave so much of herself to her students and colleagues, and her goal was always to help others however she could.

Rachel is originally from Orchard Park, NY, but attending SUNY Oswego brought her to the area, where she lived for the majority of her career. Rachel has two daughters, Emily and Allie, and two step-children, Taylor and Bryce, with her husband Dave Porter. She has one granddaughter named Ivy. Rachel lives her life full of adventure and hope, and can be found (these days) playing pickleball, biking, hiking, kayaking, listening to live music, collecting sea glass, or trying out a new restaurant. She is always making new friends and asking people about their lives. She is very missed at OHS, but her colleagues are so very happy for this new chapter in her life and continue to live vicariously through her many adventures.

Chris Mangano will be retiring this year after being with us (OHS) since 1998.

Prior to his time in Oswego, he taught in Fulton schools. Chris has taught essentially every technology class that OHS has to offer throughout his career. Some of the courses he's taught include Principles of Engineering, WBUC, DDP, Yearbook, Photography, Advanced Photography, Woodworking, and Structures, among many others. Chris entered the OHS Paradox Yearbook into competitions at Syracuse University and Columbia University, bringing home many awards. He also taught at the college level for many years while teaching at OHS. Chris has been a mentor to many students and inspired countless young minds during his time here. Chris helped to organize the battle of the bands for several years, as well. Outside of school, Chris enjoys hiking and mountain biking. In his retirement, he plans to do more hiking and biking, as well as more fishing. Chris also plans to spend quality time with his granddaughter in retirement! Thank you for your many years of service to the students of OHS, and enjoy your well deserved retirement, Chris!



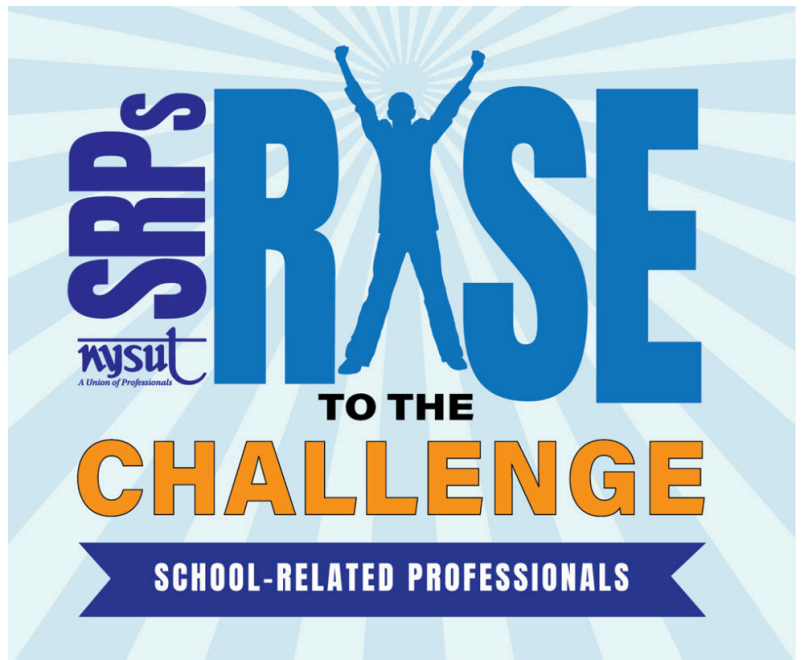
Nov. 19 is New York State SRP Recognition Day

Since 2007, the third Tuesday in November has been set aside to recognize those professionals who are often in the background, but whose work allows schools to run — custodial and maintenance workers, food service personnel, transportation staff, teacher aides and teaching assistants, technical staff, clerical staff and many more.

SRP Recognition Day, celebrated this year on Nov. 19, is the direct result of years of advocacy by volunteer lobbyists and NYSUT staff. The day is a great way to acknowledge the contributions SRPs make in helping to educate the whole student.

“This year’s theme is ‘SRPs Rise to the Challenge: Our Work Matters,’” said NYSUT Second Vice President Ron Gross, whose office coordinates SRP concerns for the union. “The work our SRPs do contributes so much to a successful educational experience for all students.”

Whether your SRP unit decides to create its own celebration, to work collaboratively with your affiliated teacher unit, and/or to work with your district and parent teacher association, visit nysut.org/srpday for celebration ideas and to order your celebration kit. Nov. 12 is the deadline to order materials, including buttons for SRPs and stickers for teachers to wear in support of SRPs.





DENTAL INFO!

Dental Administrator Lindsay Voigt octadentalplan@gmail.com



 **Resources at
your fingertips**
Go online to manage your plan

Whether you need to check your benefits or select a new dentist, you can do it all with Delta Dental's online tools.

Create an account

What you can do:

- Check your plan details and eligibility.
- Browse claim history.
- Download plan documents.
- Find an in-network dentist.
 - View your member ID card or print a paper copy.
 - Update your settings to paperless.



Try it out: Go to deltadentalins.com and choose Login to create an account or log in to your existing account. (Your ID number is your Social Security #)
Tip: Access your benefits info on mobile, tablet or desktop!

[Click HERE to create an account with Delta Dental or log in to your existing Delta Dental account!](#)

VOLLEYBALL SUCCESS!

Submitted by OCTA President, Carrie Patane

A HUGE THANK YOU to Julie Tubolino for coordinating this end-of-year event and to everyone who participated. I LOVE that we have created an event that brings our entire district together and unites at the end of the year as we begin our Summer! (CER, WE MISSED YOU!)

2025 will mark 20 years since our FIRST tournament in 2005!!

SAVE THE DATE:

VOLLEYBALL TOURNEY: Friday, June 20th, 2025 at Cheap Seats!



(Above photo of winning team made up of OMS teachers - CONGRATS!)

Thank you to this year's OCTA RETIREES!!

NAME	BLDG.	POSITION
Kathleen Audlin	OHS	Teaching Assistant
Jamie Brancato	FPS	Literacy/Reading Teacher
Catherine Celeste	OMS	Science Teacher
Marie Clark	CER	Library Media Specialist
Jacqueline Clarke	MIN	Literacy Specialist
Lisa Edwards	FLS	Teaching Assistant
Kathleen Forger	FPS	Teaching Assistant
Margaret (Peg) Holt	OMS	Special Ed Teacher
Joseph Houppert	OHS	Science Teacher
Carole Lloyd	OMS	Math Teacher
Christopher Mangano	OHS	Technology Teacher
Catherine Pepper	MIN	Teaching Assistant
Leanne Perry	MIN	Elementary Teacher
Sarah Rector	OMS	Health Teacher
Susan Roik	OMS	Math Teacher
Terri Cullen Stacy	CER	Elementary Teacher
Gretchen Coakley	KPS	Elementary Teacher

OCTA NEWSBLAST - Submitted by Michelle McManus (OCTA Secretary)



OCTA Blast September 2024

Highlights from our September 2024 OCTA Meeting

Voting:

[You need to be registered to vote.](#)

[Please take a few minutes to confirm that you're registered to vote here, and share the link with your friends and family so they can make sure they are too.](#)

OCTA Dues: From Meghan Wilson When we roll into the new year, the dues deduction can be funky and will fall off of a profile. I need you to please look at your stub and make sure it is there. I check as best I can but it requires me to open every single teacher and TA profile to look for it. Checking your stub quickly would be a great help! You should see a deduction that says either OCTA 14+, OCTA 21+, or OCTA 28+. If you have more than one but one has \$0, you're good! It just means that was your election last school year. If this deduction is missing from your stub, please let me know. If you are a member and not having the deduction taken out, we will have to pull the past due amount so I want to make sure we're good right from the start.

Health Insurance: If you are having difficulties with Aetna be sure to reach out to Assured Partners (was ENV) at (315) 641-5848. They can help you



with Benefit questions, claims issues, finding providers, etc. You should also inform Amanda Hamilton at the EDC and Carrie Patane of claim issues so they can pass the information on to the members of the Healthcare Committee. IF you have reached out to Assured Partners and you still

have concerns, please let us know that too. **Make sure you are using Teledoc and Express Scripts when possible to help reduce plan costs and to lower our premiums.**

Don't Forget NYS Mandated Reporter Training: - REQUIRED for **ALL** members by April 2025.

NYS Mandated Reporter Training

Blessings In A Backpack: Making a Difference, One Child at a Time

Blessings In A Backpack provides essential food supplies to over 400 children each week. For just \$114, you can sponsor a child for the entire school year!

Our OCTA member, Melissa Russell (OMS), leads our local Blessings Chapter. Here's how you can get involved and make a difference:

Make a Monetary Donation

- Reach out to Michelle McManus at mmcmanu2@oswego.org or Melissa Russell at mrussell@oswego.org to find out how to contribute.

Join Us for Trivia Night

- **Date:** November 8th
- **Time:** 6:30 PM
- **Location:** Elks Club
- **Details:** Teams of up to 8 people, \$30 per person
- [Registration Form](#)

Donate a Raffle Basket for Trivia Night

- Contact Michelle McManus at mmcmanu2@oswego.org or Melissa Russell at mrussell@oswego.org to contribute a raffle basket.

Your support can help ensure that no child goes hungry. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to this important cause!

Donate your cans and bottles

- Bring your cans and bottles to Great Lakes Recycling at 159 East Bridge Street or 181 Gardenier Road.

Free Speech Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lhs5fMqfKOk>

This is a MUST WATCH video from NYSUT! In this time of political division, it is VERY important to know your rights about free speech as a public school teacher. There are a plethora of examples of educators being disciplined for what they post on social media. Your certification has a moral turpitude clause regarding "conduct unbecoming of an educator" that can be used against you when you are off duty. Please limit your social media posts and do not engage in arguments online... especially if one of your "friends" is someone you met because of your role as a district employee. I would strongly encourage you to watch this 12 minute video about one of the most common, but often misunderstood topics: Free speech. Freedom of speech for public employees is very complicated. Speech can take many forms; it can include oral or written statements, clothing, buttons, flags, or even campaign contributions. Any expressive act is speech.

Discussion topics include:

When is a teacher's speech considered government speech and not protected?

Is a teacher's speech protected when they discuss personal grievances in public forums?

When is a teacher's speech considered government speech and not protected?
Is a teacher's speech protected when they discuss personal grievances in public forums?
When might a teacher's speech be protected when speaking as a private citizen on public concerns?
How does the freedom of speech for public sector employees differ when speaking as private citizens versus representatives of their school?
What is the key question in determining whether the speech is protected? Is it the speech of a private citizen or the school?

***OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE:** [2024-2025 Resource Guide](#)

FIX TIER 6 - [How bad is it?](#) [Get involved!!](#) [Watch a Video](#)
[Visit Fixtier6.org](#)- Visit this website to learn more about supporting fixing tier 6.

***Know Your Paycheck Deductions:**

Check your stub to make sure you are receiving the appropriate deductions for each paycheck:

FICA is social security
MEDI is Medicare
FEDERAL is federal tax
STATE is state tax
D/I OCTA is disability insurance
HI10F15% is 10 month family/single health
MED/DENT is your flex spending account
DFBOCTIN is your OCTA Dental Insurance
VISFIND = Vision individual
OCTA28+ is your union dues
OPL is city library contribution
NYSUT = member benefits (Life ins, legal, etc.)
INSREIMB = Insurance Reimbursement (in Dec) for those off step
TRS= money you pay into NYS Teachers Retirement

THANK YOU to our OCTA Building Leadership 24-25



CER Ted Beers Holly Babcock	FPS Erin Wilder Julie Tubolino	KPS Mary Lynne Maxwell Hope Mazuroski	FLS Meghan Harrison Amy Armet	MIN Keri Hunter Stacie Waterhouse- Roberts
OHS Gina Iorio Heather Sugar Robert Dumas	OMS Jeff Brown Clare Donovan	Substitutes Ed Stacy		

Oswego Federal Teachers Credit Union

Please remember that you can also choose to open an account at the Oswego Teachers Employees Credit Union and make direct deposits to your account there IN ADDITION to a 2nd bank. That would allow you to "pay yourself" 5 paychecks biweekly over the summer from a "summer savings account" rather than receive 6 paychecks from the OCSD the last week of June that need to last you the summer.

<https://www.oswegoteacherscu.org/>

Student Loan Sale!



Private Student
Loan Sale

Exclusively for Members
of the
Oswego County Teachers' Association

Tuition for the 2024-2025 School Year*

6.49%** Fixed APR

Interest Only While in School (plus 6 months).
10-year payment term loan

APPLY NOW

Stuff-A-Bus Success!

Submitted by OCTA VP Kim LeRoy



This past June, thanks to the help of OCTA volunteers Laurie Kelly, Heather Wood, Allison Adkins, Maddie LeRoy and Kim LeRoy, over 280 Oswego City School District students were served. Over 9,000 pencils were purchased by the Oswego County Teachers Association, and distributed to all 9 districts in the county. In case you were wondering, 9,504 pencils (the exact number that was purchased and distributed) can write for over 330,000 miles! Additional

thanks goes out to the Oswego High School NHS who provided additional helpers during this time of need. Stuff-A-Bus is a great way to get involved in community activism and give back to our community. Please look for opportunities to help later this school year!

Check out the OCTA RESOURCE GUIDE!



Resource Guide 24-25



OCTA Contract 21-24



OCTA Facebook Group

NOTE: [Contract](#) expired June 2024

****To join the OCTA Facebook Group, use the QR code or search OCTA.**

Send a request for approval** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/650368071734949/>

Congratulations to this year's OCTA Scholarship recipients!!



The 2024 OCTA Scholarship Committee selected **11** recipients of this year's scholarship.

Below are recipients of the 2024 OCTA Scholarship:

- ❖ Ian Cady
- ❖ Alyssa Carr
- ❖ John DelConte
- ❖ Leah Dykas
- ❖ Mason Hall
- ❖ Ian MacKenzie
- ❖ Meghan McManus
- ❖ Teigen Patane
- ❖ Beatrice Rastley
- ❖ Louis Roman
- ❖ Addison Stepien

Keep up-to-date on union news!

NYSUT UNITED



September/October 2024

Teachers are struggling with divisive and polarizing issues nationwide. Recent polls show that members of both political parties view one another not just as misguided but increasingly as evil, using adjectives like “immoral” and “dishonest.” Roughly one-third of Americans say political differences have damaged their family relationships. Fear and distrust are being stoked by unprecedented polarization in our public debate and demonization of those who disagree. But it does not have to be that way. Our members and public education can be a big part of the solution. Educators are skilled in helping students learn to discern fact from fiction and to engage in civil discussions.

[Disagreement doesn't need to make us enemies.](#)

The 2024 legislative session wrapped up last June, and it was a resounding success for NYSUT members, our students and our public schools.

[You helped it happen!](#) (read more here)

In just the past few months, NYSUT activists sent over 135,000 emails to legislators in support of our issues. You also turned out to rally for key issues like school funding and fixing Tier 6.

Read on for a quick overview of some of the victories we came together to achieve. Now that the legislature has passed these bills, our focus shifts to encouraging the governor to sign them into law.





This summer, New York state made history by [enacting the nation's first laws to protect children from social media's harmful effects](#). NYSUT has supported [two proposed bills since last fall](#). NYSUT President Melinda Person joined Governor Hochul, Attorney General James and other lawmakers, parents and advocates to [witness these historic bills being signed into law](#). "Protecting children online in the midst of a mental health crisis is common sense, and we are proud that New York is leading the way," said President Melinda Person. "NYSUT educators across the state made their voices heard to support these bills, and we will continue to do everything in our power to safeguard the mental health of our students." *Pictured above: NYSUT President Melinda Person joins lawmakers and advocates at the signing ceremony for the Stop Addictive Feeds Exploitation (SAFE) for Kids and The New York Child Data Protection Acts.*

LIFE INSURANCE: *Crucial for protecting your loved ones*



Life insurance is a topic many people find confusing, complicated, and uncomfortable to think about. It is undoubtedly one of the most vital types of insurance products you can purchase, though. Whether you're looking into your first policy or to upgrade existing coverage, it's important to determine how much life insurance you need and which type is right for you.

One key fact about life insurance you may not be aware of is premiums are likely to be less expensive if you purchase it earlier in life. For those of you who currently have policies, what you purchased 10 years ago, five years ago, or even last year may not be enough to replace your income and all you provide for your family. And if you are part of the 30% of Americans who don't have any life insurance at all,* you could be putting your family at great financial risk.

There are a variety of options to consider when it comes to life insurance, including:

- 1. Term Life** – this product pays a benefit in the event of the death of the insured during a specific timeframe but offers no cash value.
- 2. Level Term Life** – this insurance is similar to term life but is normally for a set period of time such as 10, 15, or 20 years; it also offers no cash value.
- 3. Universal Life** – this option offers a way to protect your family while building tax-deferred cash value; policyholders can usually access a portion of the balance without impacting the guaranteed death benefit.

NYSUT Member Benefits endorses a number of competitive life insurance programs (those listed to the left and others) available to NYSUT members and their spouse/certified domestic partner. Many of these plans offer reduced rates not available to the general public along with additional convenience and savings opportunities through payroll or pension deduction.

**Learn more about Member Benefits-
endorsed life insurance programs
by scanning the QR code, visiting
memberbenefits.nysut.org, or
calling 800-626-8101.**



**MEMBER
BENEFITS**
nysut
Working to Benefit You
September/October 2024

* Source: USA Today - <https://www.usatoday.com/money/blueprint/life-insurance/life-insurance-statistics>

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

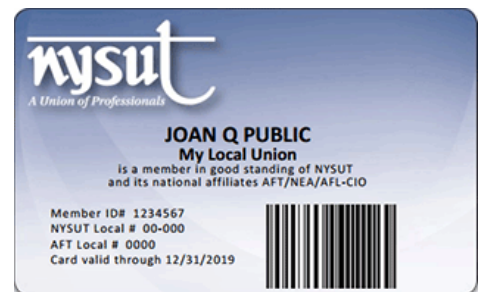
Click on the screenshot of the homepage below to explore the site! Find quick links to important union documents like the new OCTA Contract, the OCTA building officer list, and the new OCTA resources guide! Click on the image below to link to the website!



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 1st Street, Oswego, NY. **President:** Carrie Patane, **VP Grievance:** Kim LeRoy **VP Negotiations:** Jessica Burrridge **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.

