

# PROVOCATOR

December 2021

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 52/NUMBER 2

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## 25th Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive Provides Food to More than 100 Families

For the 25th consecutive year, the Buffalo Teachers Federation has made Thanksgiving “a day of thanks” for needy families in the Buffalo School District.

Thousands of dollars in food and gift certificates were donated by BTF staff, teachers and students and were distributed through several charitable and non-profit groups. The annual event is held each year to “make sure those families enjoy a ‘meal of thanks’ on Thanksgiving Day”, BTF President Phil Rumore explained.

“As we do each year, this bounty of food before us was donated by Buffalo teachers and students who want to do their part to make sure families, who might otherwise go without, would enjoy their Thanksgiving Day meal”, Phil said. “This is our 25th Annual Thanksgiving Food Drive where canned and packaged goods and monetary donations were made by Buffalo teachers and students. This is a wonderful way for all of us to give thanks for what we have. After all, isn’t that what Thanksgiving is all about?”, Phil continued.

He said more than 3,500 families have benefited from the BTF Thanksgiving Food Drive throughout the years.

In years past, after the food was collected, volunteers met at the BTF office where they stuffed shopping bags with all the traditional foods for a Thanksgiving feast: corn, green beans, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, dinner rolls, stuffing mix, and a \$10 gift card for Tops Supermarkets to purchase a turkey.

However, due to Covid, individual dinner bags were not assembled. Instead, the BTF donated 125 \$25 Tops gift certificates and dozens of boxes of food items to area non-profit organizations for distribution to the needy.

Among the donations were three truckloads of food collected at Hutch Tech High School.

The agencies distributing the food and gift certificates were: Gloria Parks Community Center, 3242 Main Street; Native American Community Services, 1005 Grant Street; Buffalo City Mission, 100 E. Tupper Street; and Fulgham Family Foundation, 965 Union Road, West Seneca.



1. With a box of canned goods in hand, Hutch Tech teacher Eric Eshberger helps to fill the BTF garage with food.
2. Unloading the first of 3 trucks full of food, Hutch Tech teacher Dan Stumpf assists in feeding the needy.
3. BTF President Phil Rumore presents \$25 gift certificates for each needy family to the Gloria Parks Community Center for distribution.
- 4 & 5. Boxes of food donated by teachers fill the garage at the BTF office.
6. BTF President Phil Rumore and VP Becky Pordum help load food into a vehicle to bring back to City Mission.

*Hardly one day goes by that you, probably one of the most important people in your students' lives, don't give gifts more precious and more important than many they will receive — you in your own way shape knowledge and provide encouragement. Indeed, through your caring, you become an important part of your children's lives. Every one of us can remember an important teacher in our life. That important teacher is and will be you for someone. On behalf of the Buffalo Teachers Federation and Staff, may the precious gifts that you give so freely enrich your lives and be returned to you one hundred fold during this holiday season and throughout the New Year.*



## Three Gifts

by PHIL RUMORE

The snow swirling outside the classroom window seemed to be affirming the children's belief that the winter holiday season is the time for anything but school work.

"Talk about conspiracies", thought Terry Hastings, the first-year third grade teacher, "even the weather's against me. The last day of school before the winter holiday vacation is tough enough without that constant reminder brushing against the windows."

"Thomas, please pay attention up here. There are no math facts written in the snow."

Terry had to admit that there was more action outside, but she was troubled. Tommy had been a problem all year. He was in class, but his thoughts weren't. Today he was more distracted than ever.

After a home visit with Mrs. Casey, Tommy's mother, Terry understood the meaning of "impoverished". She had seen a house that was certainly clean, but one that had only the barest

of furnishings. She remembered that there was a color television, or rather color on the television. The colors on the set in no way represented the real world. The half green faces and flesh colored grass had given a surrealistic appearance to the "ring around the collar" commercial blaring on the television.

"What kind of Christmas will Tommy have?" thought Terry. "I wonder if he's upset because he knows he won't be getting many of the things he wants for Christmas."

The morning passed (as did Tommy's attention). Now back from lunch, the children were barely able to contain their excitement. Not so for Tommy. As the children readied their presents and snacks, Terry had a private talk with Tommy which proved useless.

After the snacks were passed out, the children decided to exchange holiday gifts. They had written notes home asking if they could either make a gift or spend a dollar for one. Each parent had been agreeable. They had drawn names, and now the big moment had arrived.

Terry sat down and proceeded to let groups exchange their gifts. By the time Charles, the boy who was to exchange gifts with Tommy, reached Tommy's desk, tears were streaming down Tommy's cheeks.

"My mother didn't come home last night..." he cried, almost unable to speak. "...and she forgot to leave any money." Poor Charles was almost crying himself.

"And my brother wouldn't give me any. I'm sorry Charles. I don't have anything for you." By this time Tommy was almost hysterical. He could say no more even if he wanted to.

Charles finally spoke up. "Tommy don't be sad; you don't have to give me anything." There was what seemed like a suspension of time

for a few seconds.

"Remember when you gave me some of your lunch when mine got knocked down", Charles blurted. "And how Miss Hastings tells us stories about sharing...and about how we're friends?"

Tommy looked up from his desk. His face was steaming with the paths left by his tears.

Charles, apprehensively, handed Tommy a red construction paper card which he had obviously spent much time making. It was beautifully colored, with sparkles, evergreen needles and tinsel pasted on the front.

"Please take my present", Charles implored.

Just how tears of sadness could at once be transformed to tears of joy was a mystery that only a child's understanding could have solved.

Terry cleaned up her room that Christmas. She knew the warmth and feeling of togetherness felt by the class as Tommy's eyes lit up, overjoyed with his gift, would be remembered by them all. Nor would she forget the radiance of his face as he left for home.

Finally, just a few pieces of wrapping paper remained on her desk before she could call it a day. And one last gift...wrapped in school writing paper no less.

"To Miss Hastings." She opened the paper..."From Tommy." In her hand Terry held the red card that meant so much to him. She just couldn't believe it.

Now in the warmth of a June day, 30 years later, Mrs. Teresa Powell removed the red construction paper card from her desk drawer. It was her last day before retirement. She thought about how the everyday realities of teaching sometimes displaced her belief in the rewards of teaching. Tommy, Charles, and the card had been a reminder of that belief for the last 30 years. She was happy. She had been right.

As she walked to the office to turn in her keys for the last time, she thought to herself.

Thank you Charles.

Thank you Tommy.

I'll never forget.

And she never did.  
She was a teacher.



# Letters to the Editor

## Mental Illness Help Possible Through Donations

On behalf of tens of thousands of Western New York residents who are dealing with mental illness-and the rest of us who realize the fragile nature of mental health-thank you for your generous sponsorship of \$250 to support the Mental Health Advocates of WNY. Your generosity allows us to deliver essential services to many of the most vulnerable and often overlooked members of our community.

Thanks to your support:

- We help children, especially those at risk, develop healthy social and emotional skills
- We operate the only local advocacy program that provides legal help exclusively to mentally ill, disabled individuals
- We offer support, education and advocacy to families with a child or adolescent suffering from a mental illness
- Our CASA volunteers are assigned by a judge to help the court determine the best interests of children involved in child welfare proceedings
- We provide valuable information and community resources to individuals and families, and referrals to mental health clinics, professionals and support groups
- We provide workplace well-being programs to help employers build an atmosphere that respects the importance of workplace mental wellness and keeps employees focused, motivated, productive and present

Every day, we help Western New York residents through difficult times, providing the support people need to repair their lives and get back on track.

## BBQ Fundraiser Supported by BTF

I am writing today to say “thank you” for your generous support of my annual Chicken BBQ event. It was our first in person event in over a year and it was great to see so many people.

2020 was a difficult year for all. I know many in our community have struggled. As we see the light at the end of the tunnel, I am humbled by your support and appreciate it now more than ever.

Once again, thank you for your support. I am honored to have it.

Cordially,  
Mark C. Poloncarz  
Erie County Executive

Thanks to you, we are there for people who are struggling, and we are also there to help prevent people from getting to that point. By providing a comprehensive range of vital services, the MHA is helping to break the stigma associated with mental illness.

Heartfelt thanks for your support,  
Melinda DuBois  
Executive Director

## Nurses Thank BTF

Thank you for the generosity you have shown us in our time of need. It is with your support we were given the strength to continue the fight for a fair contract. Which in turn, will allow us to give our patients the care they deserve.

In Solidarity,  
Mercy United  
CWA 1133 Membership

## BTF Supports American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Buffalo Walk

Thank you for your contribution of \$1,000 to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) Buffalo Walk. We are honored to partner with you in fulfilling our mission of saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. Your investment allows us to continue to create a culture that is smart about mental health and build initiatives to further understand and prevent suicide.

More than 48,000 people die by suicide in the US each year, making it the 10th leading cause of death. Through our research, education, advocacy, and loss support programs, AFSP has become the leading national organization dedicated to preventing loss of life by suicide. Our current Project 2025 initiative is an aggressive step toward increasing prevention efforts by focusing on critical areas by 2025. With the support of the community and donors like you, AFSP is able to develop and implement life-saving strategies that will have the greatest impact.

As the leading private funder of suicide research, we recently invested in 38 new research studies, bringing our currently funded research to more than \$20 million. We also continue to meet the needs of the community through

## BTF Donation Buys School Supplies for BPS students

Thank you for your generous donation to the Back to School Backpack Giveaway, co-sponsored by the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization, (BPTO).

Donors like you are vital to the continued success of our mission to support the education of children in Buffalo Public Schools by fostering relationships among parents, administrators, all school staff and community members, and we are grateful for your support.

We received your donation of \$1,110 which we used to purchase folders, composition notebooks and pencil cases for 500 backpacks that we distributed to BPS students.

Thank you again for your generous donation and your dedication to Buffalo Public School students and the mission of the Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization.

Sincerely,  
Executive Board of the BPTO

a nationwide network of 73 chapters, with chapters in all 50 states. Staff and volunteers across the country tirelessly work to support those affected by suicide loss, deliver an array of local educational programs and resources to better understand mental health and suicide prevention, and participate in our advocacy efforts.

AFSP's incredible growth during our first 30 years is due to the support of our donors. We make it a priority to maximize funds contributed to prevent suicide by utilizing 83% of every donor dollar on our research and program initiatives, well above industry standards. Your gift to AFSP is valued and a sound investment as we receive an “A” rating from Charity Watch and the highest rating of four stars from Charity Navigator, as well as meet the National Health Council's standards of excellence.

Our vision is to build a world without suicide. The vision is not possible without your continued involvement. Thank you for your support of AFSP and if you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact us at 888-333-AFSP, ext. 2048.

Sincerely,  
Michael Lamma  
Senior Vice President  
Development & Field Management

# Steve McDuffie Named Coach of the Week

Steve McDuffie, longtime head coach of the Bennett Tigers football team, was named Buffalo Region Coach of the Week during the fifth week of the season by the Buffalo Bills and ADPRO Sports.

The Bills and ADPRO partner to recognize some of the best Western New York coaches through the 2021 High School Football Coach of the Week Program.

The Coach of the Week Award is given to varsity head coaches to highlight their team's achievements on the field and their work in their communities.

Winners from the Buffalo and Rochester regions over the course of 11 weeks will then be considered for Coach of the Year. That coach will be named at halftime during the Bills vs. Falcons game on January 2 at Highmark Stadium.

Each Coach of the Week winner received a \$1,000 grant from the Buffalo Bills and ADPRO Sports. The Coach of the Year winners will receive an additional \$1,000 for their programs.

McDuffie was named the Coach of the Week after the Tigers beat the Lancaster Legends 48-24 in the last five minutes of the game.

It was a sweet victory for the Tigers who had to forfeit the game against

Lancaster last season when several of their players came down with Covid-19.

The Legends, Section VI Class AA's five-time defending sectional champions, entered the game this year ranked No. 4 in New York State in AA.

McDuffie, who has been head coach for the Bennett Tigers since 2010, played football for Grover Cleveland High School where he was an All-Western New York player when he graduated in 1991. He also played linebacker and defensive end for the UB Bulls for four seasons. After graduating from UB, McDuffie was a volunteer coach at Grover Cleveland before moving to St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute as an assistant coach.

He then returned to Grover Cleveland for two seasons as an assistant coach before being hired as defensive coordinator at Erie Community College.

Since being named Bennett's head coach, McDuffie has led the Tigers to several league titles and one Section VI championship in 2016.

In the community, McDuffie, his staff and players all contribute to the Archie L. Hunter community outreach and mentoring program with the YMCA Buffalo-Niagara.

Steve and his wife Melissa reside in Buffalo. They have three children, Isaiah, 22, who played for Bennett under his father's leadership and is now playing with the Green Bay Packers; Gabrielle, 20, an All-American basketball player at NCCC; and Noah, 15, a freshman on the Tigers' roster.

The Bennett Tigers are housed at the Lewis J. Bennett School of Innovative Technology and include players from that school, Early Middle College, Olmsted, and East High Schools.



Steve McDuffie

## BTF Concerned with Rising Covid Numbers as District Requests Vaccines

With Covid numbers in Erie County the highest in the state and still rising, the BTF has raised concern with state, county, and school officials. In a recent letter to Superintendent Dr. Kriner Cash, Buffalo Board of Education members, and Dr. Gale R. Burstein, MD, MPH, FAAP, Erie County Commissioner of Health, the BTF outlined the increasing number of cases in Buffalo Schools.

In his letter, BTF President Phil Rumore called the number of reported student and staff Covid cases "alarming".

He said from the beginning of the school year through November 15, there were 560 student cases and 191 staff cases of Covid reported. The numbers, he said, "raise serious concerns".

"Teachers are also alarmed that they are usually not notified of an identified case at their school for three to six days after the student or adult case was reported", Phil added.

"We know that you share our concerns for our students, adults and Community", Phil said.

He added, "earlier notification, more preventative actions, enforcement of

protocols, greater availability of testing and vaccinations are necessary as we move into the holiday and winter months".

Meanwhile, Affinity Empowering, the Covid-19 testing provider for the District, abruptly ceased operations without notifying the superintendent and School Board. Superintendent Cash said he was notified by building principals that the company was pulling out.

The departure of the federally-funded testing program came days after Erie County reported an all-time high in the number of Covid-19 cases among students and staff in local schools.

The Erie County Department of Health, which recommended the company, is helping to find a replacement.

Cash, however, indicated that he would like the District to administer its own vaccinations, cutting back on the need for testing.

To that end, he met with state and local health officials to secure thousands

of doses of the vaccine for District distribution.

"While our Medical Advisory Team is working to find a suitable alternate testing provider, our lead strategy at this time is to mitigate the Delta variant of Covid-19 by receiving consent to vaccinate more 5 to 18-year-olds each week", he said in a letter to the BPS Community.

"The more Covid vaccines that are administered, the more Covid testing becomes moot", he added.

Cash said schools in large urban districts such as Buffalo are "the epicenters of their communities" and are best positioned to vaccinate school children because parents trust them.

"We have the facilities, the pediatricians, the school nurses, the cleaning staff, the transportation systems, the communication systems, the security teams, and the necessary refrigeration to get the job done effectively", Cash said.

He said the District could administer 50,000 vaccines "with greater equity" within two weeks.

"This is a critical issue, and we are at a critical juncture", Cash stressed.

# BTF Praises, Rewards Bennett Tigers for Actions During Football Controversy

High praise and a \$500 reward were given to the Lewis J. Bennett School of Innovative Technology football team by the Executive Committee of the Buffalo Teachers Federation after the team advanced to the Class AA state championship game on November 27.

“We are proud of you”, BTF President Phil Rumore wrote in a letter to the Bennett Tigers Football Team and coaches.

“First, congratulations on your victory Saturday, November 27, 2021. You showed what a great team you are. Also of great importance was your victory on Tuesday, November 23, 2021. What you demonstrated at that game was an inner strength that showed all that you, regardless of any score, are champions”, Phil wrote.

A motion authorizing the check for \$500 “to celebrate how together you prevailed and overcame wrong and unprecedented obstacles on November 23” was moved by President Rumore, seconded by Vice President Rebecca Pordum, and approved by the Executive Committee.

The obstacles the team faced on November 23 included the postponement of its game against McQuaid Jesuit after several of that team’s players and coaches tested positive for Covid. The team went to court and that game was ultimately played three days later than scheduled.

But the court’s decision resulted in Buffalo Schools Superintendent Kriner

Cash calling the decision a “racial injustice and equity issue”.

Cash said the game should have been forfeited because when the same thing happened to the Bennett Tigers last May, their season was ended after appeals to play were denied.

Section VI denied Bennett the opportunity to reschedule their semifinal playoff game against Lancaster, which advanced to the championship.

This season, Bennett High School defeated Lancaster in the Section VI championship game at Highmark Stadium to advance and face McQuaid.

The Bennett Tigers, led by Head Coach Steve McDuffie, a McKinley High School Social Studies teacher, beat McQuaid in the rescheduled game and advanced to the title game on December 4 with an 11-1 record

The final score was 42-14 at the State Championship game held at the Carrier Dome in Syracuse against Carmel. They did not lose. They were outscored this time. The young team has much to be proud of and will be back in the hunt next season.

To demonstrate the teachers’ pride for how the team conducted itself during this controversy and for their hard work, the BTF authorized its award.

“The money is to be spent”, according to Phil, “as your great team decides... jackets, trophies, a victory celebration, or any way you decide. We, Buffalo teachers, are not only proud of what you have already accomplished as a team,

but who you are as a person.”

In addition to McDuffie, the team was coached by the following assistant coaches:

- Khalil Cottman, a Computer Science teacher at Bennett
- Patrick Foster, Social Studies Teacher at International Prep High School
- Arthur Jordan
- D’Juan Todd, a BPS teacher
- Aaron Young, a Buffalo Police chief and former Bennett High School football star.

## Teachers Needed for Interview Teams

At various times during the 2021-2022 school year, the Buffalo Board of Education will conduct interviews for placement of candidates on hiring lists for probationary, future temporary appointments and certain other positions.

Tenured teachers are needed in all areas to serve as members of these interview teams.

However, not all tenure areas may conduct interviews. Interviews may be scheduled during the school day, after school hours or on Saturdays.

If you wish to serve on an interview team, please clip the form below and submit it to Rebecca Pordum at the BTF Office, 271 Porter Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201.

### Interview Teams

I am interested in serving on an interview team. I have tenured status in the tenure area listed below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_

Phone(cell/home) \_\_\_\_\_

Personal email \_\_\_\_\_

**I AM A TENURED TEACHER AND MY TENURE AREA IS:**

\_\_\_\_\_



Bennett coaches with some of their players. TOP ROW L-R: Khalil Cottman, Patrick Foster, Steve McDuffie, Aaron Young, Arthur Jordan, and D’Juan Todd

## Scholarships Available For Teachers' Children

Scholarships, funded by a BTF settlement and earmarked for the children of Buffalo teachers first, are being administered by The Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo.

Scholarships for the 2022-23 academic year will be awarded in the spring.

Students who are currently high school seniors or are already enrolled in an accredited program, are encouraged to apply.

Awards range from \$1000-\$6000 and the funds are allocated to the children of Buffalo teachers before other applicants.

The application process opens on January 1 and closes May 1.

To apply, visit [www.cfgb.org](http://www.cfgb.org) and click on the 'Scholarships' tab. You also may call the CFGB at 852-2857.

## Reimbursement for Rx Co-Pay Available

Did you know that you can receive a reimbursement for prescriptions you and your immediate family had filled in 2021?

The Supplemental Benefit Fund will pay you \$2 per script for yourself and members of your immediate family who are covered by your insurance, up to \$100 per person.

To receive the reimbursement, you must obtain a computer-generated roster from your pharmacist and complete the Rx Co-Pay Claim Form available from your building delegate, the SBF Office, or from our website, [www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org), under forms.

The deadline for submitting the form is Friday, March 4th at 5:00 PM.

## NYSUT Retirees Offer Teachers Mini-Grants

Mini-Grants, provided by the NYSUT Retirees of WNY, are available to teachers who want to develop projects that will benefit students in their classroom.

In general, requests should be made for grants under \$500.

The NYSUT Retirees of WNY have supported public education and active teachers through political activity, educational opportunities, and scholarship

incentives made possible through fundraising and donations.

For more information on these mini-grants, or to receive an application, contact Arlene Reese at (716) 432-2237 or [areese234@yahoo.com](mailto:areese234@yahoo.com).

Applications must be postmarked by January 14, 2022 and winners will be notified in February 2022.

## BTF Social Committee Seeking Future Ideas

Although the pandemic has put a hold on BTF social activities, the Social Committee is looking for suggestions for when activities resume. Please complete this form with your ideas and return it to the BTF office, c/o Nicole Herkey.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Idea: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Time Available for Cancer Screening

Getting screened for cancer is extremely important as it could save your life! As per New York State law, Buffalo Public School employees are entitled to four hours of leave per year to have a screening test done for any type of cancer.

To take advantage of this health care opportunity, enter your absence into AESOP as a cancer screening.

A verification form, available from your building clerk or representative, must also be completed by the health care provider. This form is turned into the clerk for payroll purposes.

## Did You Know...

That satisfactory military service, up to a maximum of two (2) years, may be granted for salary credit?

Military service means active duty service with the U.S. armed forces or active duty status, in time of war, with a nation allied with the U.S.

The details of this provision can be found in Article XXV, E (2) of the contract, which is on page 53.

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Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina



Joe Frandina  
Optician

Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

# BTF Women's Empowerment Committee Collecting Hats, Gloves, Mittens & Socks

Despite the challenges faced daily in our schools, two Buffalo teachers gave up their last weekend in November to attend NYSUT's 2021 Women's Committee Meeting in Latham, NY.

NYSUT, the New York State United Teachers, is the state affiliate of the BTF.

Lynn Garcia, chair of the BTF's newly-formed Women's Empowerment Committee, and Sue Raichilson, a member of the committee, met with NYSUT women from around the state at NYSUT's Headquarters in Latham, NY. It was the first in-person meeting of the Committee in two years, due to Covid restrictions.

Garcia and Raichilson, long-time champions of women's rights, are also members of the BTF Executive Committee and officers in the National Education Association's Women's Caucus.

Jolene DiBrango, NYSUT Executive Vice President, whose office oversees the NYSUT Women's Committee, encouraged attendees at the meeting to use their collective strength to stand together in their communities, build coalitions and make their voices heard.

"The loss of jobs, wages and childcare has set women back

financially for decades, and by association, women's equity and equality", she said noting that women must assume positions of prominence equal to men to "change the power paradigm" and make real change.

The meeting included workshops on:

- Implicit bias training
- Women's Empowerment
- Women's Health
- Examining curriculum

Garcia said she and Raichilson gained a lot of insight during the 2-day meeting. They plan to share that information with members of the BTF Women's Empowerment Committee when they meet again.

The BTF Committee was proposed by Lynn Garcia and approved by BTF President Philip Rumore in December 2019. However, due to Covid it didn't get off the ground until recently.

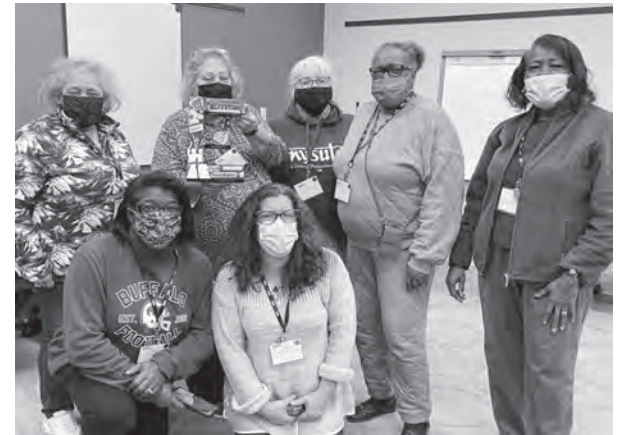
Garcia said the committee has only had two meetings so far, but membership has doubled in that time. Membership, she stressed, is "open to men and women... anyone who wants to empower women".

Their first event is the collection of new hats, mittens, gloves and socks in all sizes from child to adult.

The items will be given to the City Mission, Mona's House and Haven House for distribution to their clients.

Donations are be collected December 14 and 15 at the BTF garage, located behind the BTF office, 271 Porter Avenue, Buffalo.

Future meetings of the BTF Women's Empowerment Committee will be scheduled on Zoom and interested people can email Lynn Garcia for a link at [garcia1661@aol.com](mailto:garcia1661@aol.com)



*Buffalo teachers Sue Raichilson, top row, far left and Lynn Garcia, standing next to her, pose with other NYSUT women during a group activity.*

## Welcome New Members

The following 47 teachers have joined the Buffalo Teachers Federation since the last printing of the Provocator. Welcome to the union!

Barbara Armon  
Kelsey Barrett  
Lisa Barthelme  
Amy Bishop  
\*Yvonne Bratton  
Izeal Bullock  
Kristina Bulera  
Samantha Burgio  
Ian Burns  
Nicole Bycina  
Colleen Dillon-Bartz  
Laura Casadiego  
Gary Crump  
Nicole Dingman  
Cynthia Ford  
Brittney Gallagher

Veronica Golden  
Gina Humbert  
MaryLynn Iglesias  
Tanja Ilic  
Jacob Jaroszewski  
Berkeley Kozuch  
Rebecca Krull  
Emily Lyons  
Natalie Maida  
Colette McDonald  
Jane McGiveron  
Hannah McGrath  
Tyler Minnick  
Bailey Monin  
Valerie Morgan  
Janamarie Myrie

Jenna O'Connell  
Brianna Pumputis  
Lauren Reber  
Rachel Reitano  
Elaine Rokitka  
Alicia Sahr  
Julie Schaefer  
Samantha Schultz  
Heather Smith  
Diane Socie  
Ricardo Taylor  
Celeste Wise  
Lindsey Wisniewski  
Brandy Yates  
Laci Zywar

## BTF at a Glance

### BTF President

Philip Rumore

### BTF Vice President

Rebecca Pordum

### BTF Treasurer

Joseph Montante

### BTF Secretary

Melinda MacPherson-Sullivan



### BTF Executive Committee Members

#### Pre-K-6

Rachel Binda-Lis, April Hall,  
Sophia Howard-Johnson,  
Trisha Rosokoff, Janine Schuster,  
Ruyvette Townsend

#### 7-12

Dennis Brancato, Lynn Garcia,  
Mike Jeffers, Melissa Kenney,  
Rich Nigro, M. Sue Raichilson,  
Eve Shippens

#### K-12

Susan Baker,  
Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes, Amy Flynn,  
Nicole Herkey, Ellen Malone,  
Mark Mecca, Gregory Sawicki

#### At Large

Tom Anthony, Mike Mecca, Brian Meyer

### BTF Headquarters Staff

Philip Rumore, *President*

Joseph Montante, *Presidential Assistant*

Rebecca Pordum, *Presidential Assistant*

Tim Connick, *NYSUT Counsel*

Jenna Burke, *NYSUT Labor Relations  
Specialist*

Matthew Kibler, *NYSUT*

*Labor Relations Specialist*

Robert Mueller, *NYSUT*

*Labor Relations Specialist*

Visit Our Updated Website  
[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)

## PROVOCATOR

### BTF Provocator Staff

Joseph Montante, *managing editor, photo editor*  
Chris Salamone, *editor*

The **Provocator** is the official publication of the Buffalo Teachers Federation. It will be published five times during the 2021-2022 school year as a service to BTF members and interested parties in the community. Subscription price is included in BTF dues.

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# PROVOCATOR

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## Know Your Contract:

# Severe Weather Conditions

**Q:** Do I call in sick or take a personal day if I cannot make it to work because of severe weather conditions?

**A: DO NOT** call in sick and **DO NOT** use a personal day. You should **NOT** be charged a day for the inability to make it to work due to inclement weather.

**Article XXXIII, A** of our contract states: Teachers shall receive pay for absence on account of abnormally severe weather conditions in the Buffalo Metropolitan Area when certified by the Principal or Division Head and approved by the Superintendent of Schools.

The above provision means that you should not lose sick or personal time **NOR** should you be docked pay.

When you report to school, submit an "Application for Short-Term Absence/Leave From Regular Duty" form (personal leave form).

Complete the top part and check the boxes "With no absence charged, away on Board Business" and "Without Loss of Pay".

Under the Reason for Request, describe your particular circumstances. For example, "There was a travel ban and drifts preventing me from getting out of my driveway" or "I ran off the road within 100 feet of my house", etc.

Roads do not necessarily have to be closed or impassable.

However, the weather has to be severe enough to prevent your safe passage to your Buffalo Schools assignment.

Schools being closed in your home district, in and of itself, is **NOT** a valid reason for your absence from duty.

Over the years, there have been many grievances that have ended up in front of an impartial arbitrator.

Below is part of an arbitrator's award on a "snow day" grievance. It has set a precedent for several years.

"In particular, the precise issue is whether a snowdrift which makes it impossible for the Grievant to get out of his driveway comes within the 'severe weather conditions' provision. Undoubtedly, [the teacher's]\* absence on the day in question would seem to fall under any reasonable interpretation of the phrase 'abnormally severe weather conditions'. A four-foot high snowdrift is obviously caused by 'weather conditions' and the fact that [this teacher]\* could not ... extricate himself from his driveway would certainly indicate that the condition was 'severe'. This argument is strengthened by the fact that the Pembroke School System, the district in which [the teacher]\* lives, was closed on the day in question. Moreover, the closing of nearby school systems also supports the argument that there was 'severe weather conditions'.

Thus, the grievance is sustained and the District is ordered to grant [this teacher's]\* request for 'severe weather conditions' pay under Article XXXIII, A. Furthermore, the personal day which he was forced to take should be returned to him."

In the years that followed this decision, hundreds of teachers have had days restored to their accrual accounts for snow day absences.

If you have any questions, call the BTF before you submit your personal leave form. Please keep a copy of your completed form for your records and send a copy to your LRS.

\*Teacher's name was not used to protect privacy.

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[www.btfny.org](http://www.btfny.org)