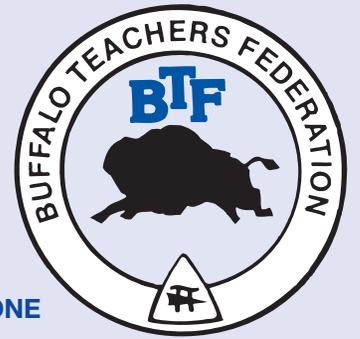


# PROVOCATOR

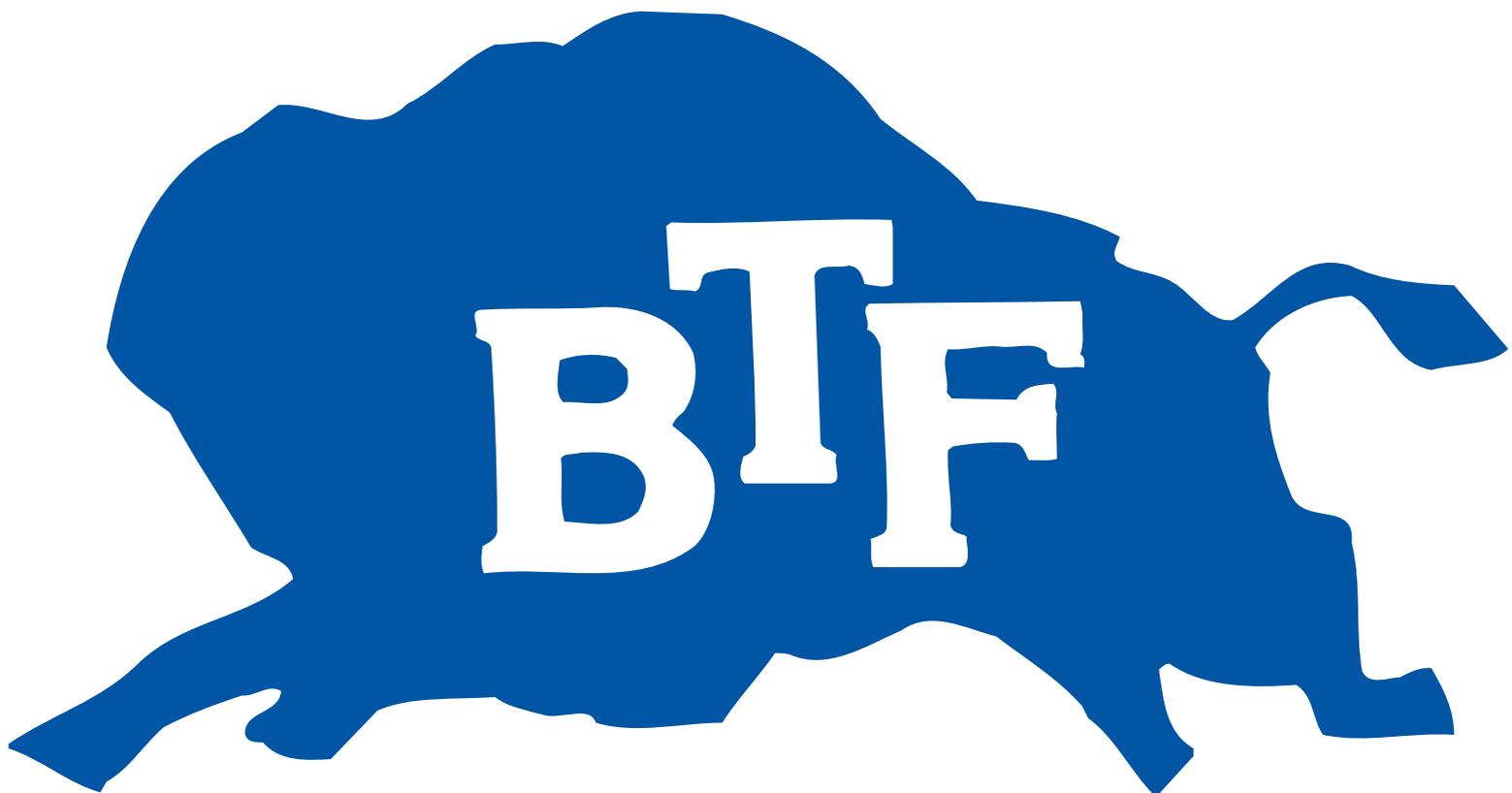
May 2025

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION VOLUME 55/NUMBER 4

DEDICATION  
SOLIDARITY  
PROFESSIONALISM  
PRIDE  
SECOND TO NONE



## VOTE!



*CONVENIENT, EASY, FUN  
VOTE IN YOUR PJ'S*

*100% ACCURATE,  
VERIFIABLE, SECURE*

## **VOTE ONLINE!**

**Email invitation beginning  
May 6, 2025**

*EARTH FRIENDLY,  
ELIMINATING PAPER,  
PRINTING & POSTAGE*

*SECURE ONLINE VOTING  
NO PAPER BALLETTS*

# PRESIDENT / VICE PRESIDENT CANDIDATES



## **RICHARD NIGRO** *PRESIDENT*

As I reflect on the 27 years I've worked as an educator, serving you as president of the BTF these last two years has been my greatest honor. Your belief in Melinda and me to staunchly advocate for and support you and your work is a responsibility we eagerly embrace. Thanks to the trust and confidence you have in us and our vision of growing our union by reaching out to all members, our BTF is moving in a positive direction that will continue to build in strength.

### **I'm proud to share just some of the wins for BTF these last two years:**

- Secured \$30k NYSUT grant
- Secured continuing member engagement grants for the next two years with access up to \$60k
- Created ongoing, comprehensive member and delegate trainings
- Upgraded BTF systems
  - New member information system with tighter cyber security
  - New VoIP phone system (saving BTF over \$2k/year while providing more accessibility functions (e.g., messaging and voicemails))
- Launched BTF app for union communications
- Established Labor/Management meetings yielding many favorable MOUs for our members (e.g., last 2 calendars have teachers working fewer days than the maximum 188 days... something that has NEVER happened in all my years in this district)

- APPR Performance Chart MOU broadening teacher Effective score range
- Held weekly grievance meetings to work through an active grievance backlog that spanned nearly 20 years! Where once the Federation filed 100-200 grievances per year, we now file 35-45 per year. Labor/Management meetings, building committee meetings, and monthly meetings with the superintendent have reduced the paper log jam allowing us to address many problems quickly at the root before we had to grieve them

### **We are currently working on:**

- Contract negotiations (beginning this summer)
- Negotiating APPR 3012-e
- New interactive website (under development)
- Transitioning from paper-only forms to digital form options for changes to Extended Pay, Death Benefits, etc.

We have accomplished many of the goals we set out to achieve these last 22 months and are energized by the increased member involvement. We are eager to build on these successes to continue to tackle the work that lies ahead. So many factors determine the success, strength, and legacy of our union. But none are more important than each member's involvement, engagement, and voice. Your voice! And so, I humbly ask for your continued support and your vote. Let's keep up this momentum and continue to move our union forward together.

### **CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25**

BTF President; Executive Committee; Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee; Teacher Center Policy Board • BTF Committees: Communication/Technology; Community Engagement; Educators of Special Education; Public Relations; Provocator; Retirement Dinner; Retirement Workshop • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Local Action Project; NYSUT Leadership Institute • NEA Convention Delegate; NEA Steering Committee (2024-2025) • AFT Convention Delegate



## **MELINDA MACPHERSON-SULLIVAN** *VICE PRESIDENT*

As a member of this organization for 3 decades, I have held many elected positions: Delegate, Delegate Chair, Executive Committee member, Secretary, and Vice President. I have served on the Action Committee, PAC, Teacher Center Policy Board, NEA/NY Board of Directors, Merged Board of NYSUT, NYSUT and AFT convention delegate. The work we are doing now is what I think you may be interested in.

- We promised you that we would be transparent, and we have. Every step of the way, we have presented you with reality. We have made no decisions without you.
- We promised to hear your concerns in person. We have succeeded in getting to many buildings to hear your concerns, and although the demands of scheduling to meet with 64 schools is challenging, we have managed to make a number of successful visits.
- We have held the first ever Labor/Management meetings with the district to work through issues contractual or otherwise that affect our members.
- We have developed several training opportunities for our members such as Delegate 101, When the Principal Calls, SBMT, Taylor Law and others.
- We have changed office technology. The new upgrades to the computer systems and the upcoming improvements will make our SBF and information systems easier for you to navigate. Our new BTF app has streamlined our interactions with members.

- We secured a grant from NYSUT for the Local Action Project that provided us with funding for many of our internal upgrades.
- We have included many more teachers in the NYSUT committees to engage our members.
- We have made a concerted effort to include all teachers in committees and training courses such as the Kripalu and Social Justice Academy.
- We have enhanced the SBF benefits to teachers and increased activities our Social committee has planned such as Trivia night, Buffalo Bandits game, bowling, Happy Hour at Canalside, and a Miss Buffalo Boat ride, to name a few.
- We successfully helped two candidates who are pro-teacher and pro-education win seats on the school board.
- We have had substantially more participants in our labor movement as evidenced by the fun Labor Day picnic and parade.

I have been so energized by our teachers who volunteer on a regular basis and hope that Rich and I can realize our vision of a proactive union that serves all of us. I am thankful for your trust and humbly ask for your vote. Thank you for your support.

### **MELINDA MACPHERSON-SULLIVAN**

### **CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25**

BTF Vice President; Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board • BTF Committees: Community Engagement; Educators of Special Education; Political Action; Public Relations; Retirement Dinner; Retirement Workshop; Social; Labor Day Parade • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT State Delegate to NEA; NYSUT Policy Committee • NEA Convention Delegate; NEA Steering Committee (2023-2024) • AFT Convention Delegate

# PRESIDENT / VICE PRESIDENT CANDIDATES



## MELISSA KENNEY

### PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

I am seeking your support in my candidacy for BTF President.

Union advocacy has always been part of my life. Raised in a union family, I helped establish a union at my first teaching job and have been an active BTF member serving as a building alternate, delegate, building committee member, SBMT member, and Executive Committee member. Additionally, I represent

educators as a delegate for NYSTRS, NYSUT RA, AFT, and NEA. I also serve as secretary for the Teacher Center Policy Board and co-chair of NYSUT's English Language Arts Subject Area Committee (ELASAC), where I advocate for meaningful classroom changes at the state level.

With 27 years as a secondary English teacher in Buffalo Public Schools (BPS), I understand the growing challenges we face—rising school violence, declining test scores, and a lack of parental and administrative support. We must unite, strengthen our ties with the community, and demand safer schools. When schools are safe, learning improves. But we, as educators, cannot fully support students when our own needs are ignored.

As a lifelong union member, I have always fought for our profession. If elected BTF President, I will work alongside Mel Holden as Vice President to strengthen our union, improve communication, and ensure YOUR voices are heard. Together, we will push for necessary APPR reforms

that allow teachers to focus on teaching while administrators provide real support for our most at-risk students. I've never hesitated to speak up on our behalf when leadership diminishes our work.

The issues in our classrooms—violence, student apathy, inadequate special education placements, and poor working conditions must be addressed. Too often, we teach in filthy classrooms, extreme temperatures, and unsafe conditions with little district accountability. Promises mean nothing without action.

Another critical challenge is our next BTF contract, set for negotiations in Fall 2025. Having served on the previous negotiations team, I am prepared to fight for a strong contract. While our last agreement secured pay increases, many issues remain. I will ensure every member has a voice in shaping our proposals.

If elected, I will ensure BTF leadership is responsive to all members. Your contractual rights will be upheld, grievances will be filed when necessary, and arbitration will be pursued when the district fails us. Our union must be strong, united, and unwavering.

Together, we can create real change. I would be honored to have your support.

In solidarity,

**MELISSA KENNEY**

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Building Delegate; Building Committee (2023-2024); Sick Leave Bank Trustee; Teacher Center Policy Board • BTF Committees: Communication/Tech- nology; Political Action • BTF Interview Committees for Substitute Teachers • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT State Delegate to NEA; NYSUT English Language Arts SAC Co-Chair • NEA Convention Successor • AFT Convention Delegate • NYSTRS Delegate



## MEL HOLDEN

### VICE PRESIDENT

As a dedicated educator and advocate with 25 years in the Buffalo Schools, I am running for Vice President of the BTF because I believe in the power of solidarity. Alongside Melissa Kenney, I'm committed to ensuring that every member has a voice, is informed of their rights, and is empowered to stand together for the respect and support we deserve.

I have worked for 15 years at the building level as a delegate, delegate chair, and

a member of the building committee. For the past two years, I have been on the BTF Executive Committee. I am a member of the social committee as well as the grievance committee. I'm still extremely active at the building level—still working to educate and build more solidarity. We have many newer teachers in our district who may not know what the union does for us and Melissa and I want to draw them in. Stronger together.

In addition to my work on the local level, I am a NYSTRS delegate and attend the annual conference for our NYS Teacher Retirement System. I educate members regularly about their pension benefits and how to prepare for retirement.

Our union is strongest when we are united. We will work to strengthen communication, increase engagement, and ensure that every teacher has access to the knowledge and resources they need to protect their rights. Through workshops, advocacy, and direct action, we will build a culture of empowerment that ensures no member feels unheard or unrepresented.

In addition, Melissa and I will work to ensure that safety is a number 1 priority in our schools. We also want to work to update the teacher evaluation process so that tenured teachers are not evaluated every year, and that newer teachers receive the support needed to become stronger teachers. We plan to engage members, especially our younger less veteran teachers. Melissa and I know that another critical issue for teachers will be the upcoming negotiation of a new contract. We pledge to listen to all members and seek a contract that is worthy of your dedication and hard work.

We are Stronger Together, and with your support, we will build a union that stands firm, informed, and united. Vote for leadership that listens, educates, and fights for you. Vote for a stronger, more united Buffalo Teachers Union!

Melissa and I respectfully ask for your vote. Thank you!

**MEL HOLDEN**

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Grievance; Social • NYSTRS Delegate

***DON'T DELAY!***  
***VOTING BEGINS MAY 6, 2025***

# SECRETARY CANDIDATES



**NICOLE HERKEY**  
**SECRETARY**

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to continue to work with and for you. For seventeen years I worked as a Support Reading Teacher in eight Buffalo Public Schools. My involvement within our union began when harm was done to me and my union wasn't doing anything. I was reminded that I AM the union, we all are, and I needed to do something. I began my union work in 2016. I have held elected roles as a delegate, delegate chair, and an Executive Committee member. In September 2024 I was appointed to my current role as Member

Relations Officer which allows me to continue to use my skills daily.

In May 2018 I attended the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute training. That same year, I was one of two BTF members selected to attend NYSUT's Leadership Institute in Albany, NY. I have taken part in BTF-sponsored events and walked picket lines with my fellow brothers and sisters as we fought for fair contracts. I have made hours of phone calls while phone banking for endorsed candidates. My union work is my passion, and I humbly ask for your support as I run for Secretary.

## CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee (2024-2025); Building Delegate Chairperson (2023-2024); Building Committee Chairperson (2023-2024)
- BTF Committees: Grievance; Political Action; Social; Women's (2024-2025); Labor Day Parade
- BTF Labor Management Teams (2024-2025)
- NYSUT Convention Delegate
- AFT Convention Delegate
- NYSTRS Delegate



**RUYVETTE TOWNSEND**  
**SECRETARY**

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as we embarked on a new contract, we must maintain our union strength by re-braiding the strands that hold us together; Solidarity, unity, and our fight to preserve the best union in the district. BTF is a strong union which we have built together to represent every teacher in every school and throughout the district. I am seeking your support once again to elect me as Secretary of the BTF.

I am a proud product of the Buffalo School system and have dedicated my adult life to working as a Teacher Aide, Elementary Teacher, and Attendance Teacher for over 20 years. I have been a dedicated, hardworking member in the BTF Union for over 20 years serving as a representative of the local, state, and national levels. As a BTF member I have served as a volunteer secretary and elected secretary to the executive committee, as well as the Co-Chair to Public Relation and the Minority Committee. I also served as a building delegate, a delegate to the NEA, NYSUT, NYSTRS, and the AFT conventions.

I look forward to continuing to show my commitment to solidarity.

Thank you for your vote.

## CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee; Teacher Center Policy Board; Building Delegate (2024-2025)
- BTF Committees: Ethnic Minority Involvement; Grievance (2023-2024); Political Action; Public Relations (2023-2024)
- NYSUT Convention Delegate (2024-2025); NYSUT Committee of 100 (2023-2024)
- NYSTRS Delegate

# TREASURER CANDIDATE



**JOSEPH MONTANTE**  
**TREASURER**

It has been my honor to serve as the BTF treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee for the last eight years. During that time, through sound financial management, the BTF's unrestricted assets have more than doubled! Everyone knows of corporations that have crumbled due to mismanagement of money or even malfeasance. That will not happen under my watch. The BTF is in excellent financial shape and I am happy to report that over the past two years we have brought you:

- balanced budgets without local dues increases
- monthly financial reports before the Executive Committee and Council of Delegates

- continued accountability commensurate with accounting standards for reimbursing elected delegates to conventions
- an expected surplus in this year's budget
- annual publication of the CPA audit report of BTF finances

In addition to serving as your treasurer, I also work full time at the BTF office as a Presidential Assistant. In that capacity, I have managed the Extended Pay Plan for over 2000 teachers, assisted members with various problems, and served as managing editor of the Provocator.

This union is important to me and I am asking for your vote as BTF treasurer. Trust in my record of experience, integrity, and accountability.

## CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Treasurer; Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board
- BTF Committees: Finance; Grievance; Membership; Political Action; Labor/Management Team; Labor Day Parade; BTF Retirement Dinner; Retirement Workshop; BTF Provocator
- NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Pension and Retirement Committee
- AFT Convention Delegate

## REMEMBER TO



# VOTE



## VOTING BEGINS MAY 6

# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES

## PREK-6 ELEMENTARY (6 TO BE ELECTED)



### JAMIE STEVENS

Our profession is one of the most important, yet it often goes unrecognized for the long hours, dedication, and passion we put into shaping the minds of future generations. I am running for Executive Office Teachers PreK-6 because I believe it is time for us, as educators, to have the support and resources we deserve to succeed — both in the classroom and in our professional lives.

#### CORE VALUES

- Equity: I believe in equal access to quality education and resources for all students and teachers.
- Respect: Teachers deserve fair pay,

adequate preparation time, and a supportive environment to excel in their profession.

- Solidarity: When we stand united, we are stronger. I will work to ensure every teacher's voice is heard and valued.

#### MY GOALS

- Fair Compensation and Benefits: I will fight for competitive wages, improved healthcare, and retirement benefits that reflect the commitment we bring to our work every day.
- Support for Classrooms: I will advocate for smaller class sizes and increased funding to ensure every teacher has the tools, materials, and resources needed to succeed.
- Teacher Well-being: I will work to address teacher burnout by ensuring adequate prep time, mental health support, and a balanced workload.
- Student Success: I will

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Building Delegate; Building Committee Member; SBMT



### TRISH ROSOKOFF

I am delighted to be nominated again for Executive Committee PreK-6. It will be an honor to continue advocating for our members.

I have been a first-grade Buffalo teacher for well over two decades, where I've been lucky enough to call International School #45 my home.

During my union career, I have served as a BTF building delegate and Executive Committee member. I have represented members at the local, state, and national levels. I've served on numerous committees

and was a member of our Negotiations team for our 2023 contract. In the past two years, little progress has been made with the daily violence

our members continue to face. We are still dealing with inappropriate special education placements, and only one alternative school to place our most at-risk youth. Schools are dirty, and classrooms deal with extreme temperatures.

We have many struggles ahead of us. Upcoming contract/ APPR negotiations, continued violations of our CBA, a new superintendent, and constant national threats to unions and our profession.

My priorities are to help and fight for teachers on all the issues we face and make our BTF strong throughout the district and our community. Thank you for your support!

In Solidarity,

**TRISH ROSOKOFF**

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Building Delegate • NYSUT Convention Delegate • NYSUT English Language Learners SAC • AFT Convention Delegate • NYSTRS Delegate



### CHRISTOPHER STEPHENS

*VOTE CHRIS STEPHENS PREK-6*

I am honored to be nominated for re-election for Executive Committee PK-6. Being a representative of the BTF and all its members is a duty that I am very passionate about. My role as an executive Committee member is to be knowledgeable, firm, and most importantly impartial when representing all my union brothers and sisters. It is my duty to uphold the American Democratic traditions by protecting the rights of every BTF member.

and salary is my vision. Buffalo teachers are the hardest working teachers in the country, and ALL BTF MEMBERS should not settle for anything but the BEST!

As a seasoned teacher of over 25 years, I am very enthusiastic about my profession while always striving to be the best at everything I do. I am a family man vested in the Buffalo Public Schools.

Please allow me to continue to be your voice! If you vote for me for the Executive Committee PK-6, it will be my mission to represent all Buffalo Teachers' interests/wants.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Finance; Social • NYSUT Leadership Summer Convention (2023-2024) • Secured the Lawley Suite Buffalo Sabres/ BTF Suite raising \$1400 for Cancer Awareness



### TARA ROSA

As an active member of the Buffalo Teachers Federation, I'm running for Executive Committee once again to continue advocating for greater transparency, communication, and unity within our union. Through my work on the Women's Committee, I've pushed to better understand and elevate the voices of our members—ensuring that the committee reflects what you want and need.

In the Social Committee, I've focused

on building a more connected BTF by organizing inclusive, engaging events that strengthen our bond as educators and union members.

On the Executive Committee, I have consistently fought for increased training opportunities and open communication from leadership. I believe that the more informed we are, the more empowered we become.

If elected, I will keep working to ensure that every member's voice is heard, respected, and represented.

Please vote Tara Rosa for Executive Committee – let's build a stronger, more united BTF together.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Social; Women's



### RACHEL M. BINDA-LIS

Throughout my 23 years in BPS, I have served my building as a delegate and a member of the building committee. I have also represented Buffalo teachers locally and nationally as a voting delegate for NYSTRS, NYSUT, AFT & NEA. I am privileged to represent PreK-6 teachers as an executive committee member and co-chair the Public Relations Committee currently.

I love being so involved with OUR union. The BTF is one of the strongest collective bargaining units in the state! This didn't just

“happen” overnight. It is because we had a solid foundation built by those who came before us. Now more than ever, we need to work together, and make sure that ALL members play integral parts in the decision-making process. My commitment remains the same- to represent YOU to the best of my abilities, and to make sure YOUR voices are heard!

I look forward to continuing to represent the best educators in WNY! I will always bring the concerns of teachers (both current & retired) to the executive committee, the board, and to the community. I remain excited and look forward to serving YOU in the next term! Thank you in advance for your VOTE!

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee
- BTF Committees: Public Relations Co-Chair
- NYSTRS Delegate



### JANINE SCHUSTER

*RE-ELECT JANINE SCHUSTER FOR PRE-K-6*

I am currently teaching Pre-K at B.E.S.T. #6 where I have also taught Kindergarten and Third Grade for most of my 24 years in BPS. Even with 37 years of experience as a teacher, I find each year presents its own unique challenges! Persevering through adversity enables me to face and solve a myriad of problems...only with the support of my colleagues and the strength of my union sisters and brothers watching my back.

Like many of you, I had a parent active

in a union. My dad served as an officer and longtime member of the union representing Buffalo Water Department laborers. His example inspired me to participate in the formation of the first union in the Diocese of Buffalo Catholic Schools back in the 1990s. Before I was elected to the Executive Committee of the BTF, I was a building delegate and delegate chair. My Executive Committee position allows me to advocate for the entire BTF membership. My focus has primarily been my participation on the Teacher Center Policy Board and the BPS Professional Learning Team, both of which offer professional development opportunities for all Buffalo teachers. We are in constant need of

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board
- BTF Committees: Finance; BPS Professional Learning Team
- NYSUT Convention Delegate (2024-2025); NYSUT State Delegate to NEA (2024-2025)



### KIM PARZYMIESO

I am excited to be nominated for Executive Committee and would be proud to continue to represent PK-6 teachers.

I grew up in Buffalo and graduated from McKinley High School. I have been teaching in Buffalo for 18 years. I spent four years at School 37 before transferring to School #45. I currently teach 2<sup>nd</sup> grade but have also taught Kindergarten and 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Prior to being elected to Executive

Committee in 2023, I served as Delegate Chair and on Building Committee at School #45. I have also served on my school's SBMT for 11 years and served as Delegate for 7. Throughout the years, I have attended several BTF Delegate workshops and have participated in the BTF/ NYSUT/NEA's Buffalo Students Deserve Week of Action. I have also attended many BTF rallies, protests, and pickets. I believe in and donate to NYSUT's Vote Cope fund.

I would like to represent your classroom/building needs and concerns as an Executive Committee member. Thank you for your support.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES 7-12 SECONDARY (7 TO BE ELECTED)



### SUE RAICHILSON

I am a CTE/Business teacher and have been privileged to serve as a member of the BTF Executive Committee (7-12 Secondary) for many years. During my tenure I have fought vigorously for all our members, standing strong and united against those who have tried to threaten our union, contract, profession and students.

Our efforts and goals are to see that our students not only have a safe and secure environment in which to learn and receive a solid education but also have the tools and skills to apply that knowledge to their

future as contributing members of society. We are all aware of the challenges and many attacks on our integrity and ability as professionals as well as the attempts to dismantle education through brutal, unrealistic laws and demands by non-educators. We cannot stand idly and let anyone threaten us to accept

unfair and oppressive practices! We must remain strong, even more united than ever.

Please allow me the privilege to continue to fight for our union, profession and students— to continue my efforts to the best of my ability against those who would try to challenge our commitment and dedication to our students, teachers, schools, parents, community and education.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee
- Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee
- Secretary to the Council of Delegates
- BTF Committees: Retirement Dinner; Retirement Workshop; Women's
- BTF Delegate to the NYSTUT Representative Assembly
- NYSUT Convention Delegate
- NYSUT State Delegate to NEA
- Alternate NYS NEA Director
- NYSUT WNY Women's Committee Co-Founder & Co-Chair
- NYSUT Board of Directors – ex officio
- NYSUT BOCES-CTE Committee
- NYSUT Social Justice/Combating Hate Committee
- NEA Convention Delegate
- NEA Women's Caucus Committee - Treasurer/Steering Committee
- NEA Social Justice Committee
- AFT Convention Delegate
- AFT Women's Committee
- AFT Social Justice Committee
- NYSTRS Delegate



## DENNIS BRANCATO

It is an honor to have served for many years as your voice on the BTF Executive Committee and the Council of Delegates. Teachers' concerns remain at the center of my service on the Council and Executive Committee. All teachers' concerns matter, and I represent everyone. Every teacher is important. As a trustee for the SLB, a Grievance Committee member, PAC Committee member, and an Executive Committee member, I work hard to protect our teachers, make sure our teachers receive their benefits, and to improve working conditions for all BTF members.

My union experiences include BTF and NYSUT Leadership Workshops and serving as a Sick Leave Bank Trustee, a NYSTRS Delegate, a NYSUT Delegate, and an AFT Convention Delegate. I have also served by appointment as Sergeant-at-Arms for the NYSUT Representative Assembly and as the BTF Parliamentarian for the Council of Delegates. Locally, I represent BTF at the NYSUT district meetings and WNY Area Labor Federation (WNYALF) meetings. In these activities, I represent you. It would be an honor to continue to represent you for the challenges ahead and to facilitate BTF improvements that serve you better.

[PLEASE VOTE FOR DENNIS BRANCATO FOR 7-12 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.](#)

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Executive Committee; Sick Leave Bank Trustee; BTF Parliamentarian Council of Delegates • BTF Committees: Communication/Technology; Grievance; Political Action • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Sergeant at Arms (2023-2024) • AFT Convention Delegate; AFT Political Action Committee • NYSTRS Delegate

## RYAN BOWERS



## TOM ANTHONY

Thomas (Tom) Anthony – Candidate for Executive Committee

With 19 years of dedicated service in BPS, I've taught mathematics at International Prep, Futures Academy, and currently at Middle Early College High School. Throughout my career, I've built lasting connections with educators across the district and have remained deeply committed to union advocacy.

My union experience includes serving as a BTF delegate/alternate (2007–2014), Executive Committee member for the past 9 years, NYSUT RA Delegate (2011–2016,

2019–2023), NYSTRS Delegate, and AFT Delegate (2022 convention). I'm also a proud member of the NYSUT Educational Technology Committee and have participated in both BTF and NYSUT Leadership Conferences.

As chair of the BTF Technology Committee, I led efforts to launch the BTF App—creating new ways for members to stay informed and connected. My ongoing mission is to promote transparency, increase member engagement, and strengthen our collective voice through initiatives like member workshops and an annual all-member meeting.

I believe in a strong, united BTF that empowers every educator. Together, we are one union—stronger through collaboration, communication, and shared purpose.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Executive Committee • Building Committee member • BTF Committees: Communication/Technology • NYSUT Convention Delegate (2023-2024) • NYSUT Educational Technology SAC • NYSTRS Delegate



## TIM DORR

I have worked in the Buffalo Public Schools district for 7 years. Last year I was approached by fellow union members and asked to fill in a leadership void that was left when our building's Delegate Chair moved on to new opportunities. After being elected to Delegate Chair, I have since represented our members' interests within my building to the very best of my ability. I have found great intrinsic value in being able to help my fellow Union

Brothers and Sisters.

Currently, I teach 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies at PS #93. I can proudly state that in the two years of doing union work, I have not missed a COD meeting, nor have I missed any training provided by the BTF. I believe that having a professional relationship in conjunction with union strength is the best way forward with regards to working with District leadership. Please support my candidacy for 7-12 Secondary Executive Committee.

Thank you.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Building Delegate Chairperson (2024-2025); Building Committee Chairperson; Delegate (2023-2024) • BTF Committees: SBMT



## JONATHAN ZASOWSKI

My name is Jonathan Zasowski and I have been a math teacher in BPS for 19 years, working at South Park High School, BEST, and my current school City Honors. Since 2016 I have served as a building delegate for two years and have been the Delegate Chair at 195 for the past 7 years. During that time, I have also been serving on the Building Committee and the SBMT.

I am asking for your vote for the executive committee because I believe that our union

can be stronger. I am committed to serving as a dedicated advocate and voice for you. I want to work to strengthen our union by supporting initiatives to help make our union more transparent, improve the flow of communication between leadership and its members, and help educate teachers about their rights. I believe in the power of an informed and engaged membership. Together, we can build a union that not only protects our rights, but also empowers us to grow, thrive, and continue to make a difference in the lives of our students. I would be honored to represent you on the Executive Committee and work towards a stronger, more united teaching community.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

• BTF Building Delegate Chairperson; Building Committee Chairperson; SBMT



### EVE SHIPPENS

I am a 24-year science teacher at Community East High School, actively involved in union work for over 15 years. My roles have included Building Delegate, Delegate Chair, Community Engagement Committee Chair, Executive Committee and Vice-Chair of the Political Action Committee. Throughout this time, I have engaged within our union, collaborated with other unions and community organizations, and organized workers on issue-based campaigns and direct actions to advocate for workers' rights and social justice. Currently, I represent NYSUT as a Delegate and serve on the NYSUT Social Justice

Steering Committee. I helped develop the Social Justice Academy and have guided other locals through this initiative. This year, I am mentoring our own BTF Team! Other experiences include participating in the NYSUT Member Organizing Institute as both a participant and a coach, focusing on one-on-one member organizing for public education, opposing the proposed New York State constitutional convention, and fostering recommitment to the union following the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision. I have completed various union trainings, including the 2016 NYSUT Leadership Institute and various NYSUT Leadership Conferences.

I am seeking re-election for the Executive Committee 7-12 to continue advocating for our union's core values of economic, social, and racial justice.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Community Engagement • Political Action • NYSUT Convention Delegate • NYSUT Civil & Human Rights (Social Justice) Steering Committee • Social Justice Academy mentor & presenter



### SAM FRITZ

Samuel Fritz: Position Statement:

Two years ago, I ran for a position on the Executive Committee promising to build positive relationships while standing up for union values. I have been proud to serve you with those principles in mind. In my first term I served as a Trustee of the Supplemental Benefit Fund, where I have been involved in the process of increasing the amounts of our benefits. As a member of the Political Action Committee, I have

participated in the endorsement process for over a dozen candidates. On the Central Grievance Committee, I worked to expedite the grievance process and clear a large backlog of pending cases. I served on the Ad Hoc Bussing Committee, and have spoken regularly about bussing concerns especially as it impacts our late schools. If elected to a second term I intend to press for a quick but fair contract, ideally a seamless transition into the 2026-27 school year and beyond. I also intend to push for paid family leave separate from sick time, extensions, and FMLA. I ask for your vote so I can continue to serve you as I have. Vote for Fritz!

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee; Supplemental Benefit Fund Trustee • BTF Committees: Grievance; Political Action; Bussing; SBMT Alternate (2024-2025)



### MIKE JEFFERS

I am requesting continued support as an Executive Committee member. I have spent the past decade plus teaching at School 131 (most recently 208). We are at a crossroads in the history of OUR union. We must remain united and strong in this current social environment to best serve the needs of our membership and the students we serve. The rights of educators are under constant attack, and as such, the rights of our students

are in a perilous state. Through solidarity, along with experienced leadership, can we weather this storm.

I have served the BTF as Delegate Chair, Building Committee Chair, SBMT, Delegate to the NYSUT Representative Assembly, Delegate for the AFT Convention, a member of NYSUT's Member Organizing Institute, and my committee involvement includes: Executive, Vote/Cope, Health & Safety, ReVisioning Alternative Programming, Elections, and Donations Committee.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Health & Safety Chair (2024-2025); Donations; Vote Cope • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Member Organizing Institute

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CANDIDATES K-12 ART, MUSIC, OTHER... (7 TO BE ELECTED)



### DESIRÉE BRECKENRIDGE-BARNES

Re-Elect Executive Board Member and K-12 Special Education Teacher!

With over four decades of inclusive service, I have worked with BTF, NYSUT, AFT, SOGI, and NEA. Being a Union Steward of Service and the chairman of the women's committee, and a member special Education committee. My mission continues to be inclusive and to uplift our local in the community. I believe as a BTF community, we need to focus on maintaining a safe learning environment for the protection of our colleagues and the children we teach.

Within the District I have led various inclusion initiatives with union leadership and set BPS community goals that encourage intergenerational communication within our union and in our classroom community. I have experience advocating for teachers and students who identify as LGBTQIA+ and those within our halls who have been affected by the social justice movement. My effort is to help Build a stronger BTF perspective in the Community, and within the district.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee • BTF Committees: Community Engagement; Educators of Special Education; Ethnic Minority Involvement; Women's Committee Chairperson; BTF Vote Cope • NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT State Delegate to NEA; NYSUT SOGI; NYSUT Women's Committee • NEA Convention Delegate; NEA Women's Committee; NEA SOGI • AFT Convention Delegate; AFT Women's Committee; AFT SOGI



### BECKY MODA

My name is Becky Moda. I have been teaching for 14 years. I have taught at IPREP and City Honors School. As an art teacher and dedicated advocate for educators and students, I am honored to run for the Executive Committee of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

I have served as a delegate and currently serve on the building committee at City Honors. Through these roles, I have witnessed firsthand the power of collective action in protecting teachers' rights and

ensuring the best possible learning environment for our students.

I believe unions are a pillar of American democracy, safeguarding fair wages, safe working conditions, and the professional respect educators deserve. In a time when public education faces increasing challenges, our union must remain strong, proactive, and united. If elected, I will work to amplify the voices of all members, fight for equitable resources, and advocate for policies that empower educators and students alike. I am committed to transparency, collaboration, and ensuring that every teacher feels supported and heard. I ask for your support so we can continue building a stronger, more effective union together. I would be honored to have your vote.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Building Delegate (2023-2024) • BTF Building Committee member



### MELISSA JOHNSON

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Building Delegate



### DR. DAPHNE C. MCNAB

Dr. Daphne C. McNab is a dedicated ENL (English as a New Language) educator, instructional leader, and union advocate with extensive experience in K-12 instruction, consulting, and educational leadership. With over a decade of service in Buffalo Public Schools, she has been instrumental in improving instructional methods, fostering student engagement, and collaborating with educators to drive student achievement.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. McNab is a passionate advocate for educators and students through her active involvement in union leadership. She serves as an ATF union representative, a NYSUT Social

Justice Committee member, NYSUT representative, and former Riverside Union alternate, working to advance equitable policies and improve working conditions for educators. Additionally, she contributes to the BTF Women's Committee, the Minority Engagement Committee, and the Safety Committee, sitting on several interview teams representing the BTF while championing initiatives that promote diversity, inclusion, and school safety.

She holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Administration from Walden University, a Master's in TESOL from D'Youville College, Certificate of Advanced Study from Buffalo State University in Leadership with multiple New York State teaching certifications. Committed to fostering equitable learning environments and empowering educators, she continues to advocate for policies that benefit both students and teachers.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Committees: Ethnic Minority Involvement; Social; Women's

• BTF Representative on Interview Teams • NYSUT Convention Delegate (2024-2025); NYSUT Social Justice (2024-2025) • AFT Convention Delegate



### MARY KIBLIN

My name is Mary Kiblin, and I am seeking your support. I have been a Special Education teacher in the district for over 25 years, working with students K-12 in Resource Rooms, Integrated Co-Teach, and Self-Contained classrooms, including 8:1:1 Autism classrooms. I understand the challenges of these settings, the difficulty of reaching every student, and the frustration of inadequate support. I am committed to working with the Union and its members to push for meaningful changes that improve these classrooms for both educators and students.

As a delegate chair and member of the Special Education Committee, I have actively advocated for Autism classrooms and spoken before the Board of Education about our needs. I also teach a class through the Teacher Center and have worked with Anita Martel to present the Procedural Manual for Autism Classrooms.

I am passionate about ensuring our voices are heard and that our classrooms receive the resources and support we deserve. With your vote, I will continue advocating for the changes we need to make our Special Education programs more effective and sustainable.

Please vote for me so I can fight for our students, teachers, and classrooms.

Thank you for your support.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education

Desiree Breckenridge-Barnes

Re- Elect

Executive Board Member and K-12 Special Education Teacher!

With over four decades of inclusive service, I have worked with the BTF, NYSUT, AFT, SOGI, and NEA. Being a Union Steward of Service and the chairman of the women's committee, SOGI, and a member special Education committee.





## GREGORY SAWICKI

THANK YOU for your previous support, electing me since 2015. I am honored to represent and serve Buffalo Teachers on OUR BTF Executive Committee. The experience, cohesiveness and actions of our Executive Committee have kept our Union strong. One of the biggest items coming in the next year will be securing a fair, new contract and I want to continue being a watchdog and advocate for all of US.

I actively participate on our Executive Committee and use my union experience and passion to achieve positive results

for everyone. I currently serve on: BTF Special Education committee (Chairperson), Teacher Center Policy board, NYSUT delegate, NYSTRS delegate, and the NYSUT Special Area subcommittee (Special Education). I volunteer at phone banks and polls during election season and I attend all BTF leadership and NYSUT leadership training events.

I have attended EVERY Council of Delegates meeting since 2011 and have only missed two Executive Committee meetings since I began in 2014. I promise to continue that dedication - for ALL of US.

I humbly ask you for your vote this year, so I can continue to serve you and be a strong advocate for EVERY BUFFALO TEACHER's best interests.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee; Teacher Center Policy Board
- BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education Chairperson
- NYSUT Convention Delegate; NYSUT Special Education Subcommittee
- AFT Convention Delegate
- NYSTRS Delegate



## ELLEN MALONE

My name is Ellen Malone, and for the past 20 years, I've worked as a part-time hourly teacher at School 46, the Adult Learning Center (ALC). I've had the honor of serving two elected terms on the Executive Committee, and last year, I was appointed to a third term when a vacancy arose.

The ALC offers vital programs, including High School Equivalency (GED), English as a Second Language, and Career & Technical Training for individuals 16 and older. Most ALC teachers are part-time hourly with temporary status under our

contract. Like all educators, ALC teachers deserve better pay, improved working conditions, and a more equitable status that reflects the rights and benefits of contract and probationary teachers.

For too long, ALC teachers have faced challenges that are often overlooked in our contract. On the Executive Committee, I've consistently raised concerns about these issues and the negative impacts of the current contract and proposed changes. It's crucial that we have knowledgeable representation to advocate for ALC teachers. During the last negotiations, I had the privilege of representing our teachers and remain committed to advocating for all educators moving forward.

Please re-elect Ellen Malone for K-12!

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Executive Committee (2024-2025)
- BTF Building Delegate Chairperson; Building Committee Chairperson (2023-2024)



## ANDREA MANNA

My name is Andrea Manna and I am excited to be running for Executive Council K-12. This has been a long-term goal of mine, and as a new "empty-nester", I now have time to dedicate to serving on behalf of my brothers and sisters in the BTF.

In my three years as Delegate Chairperson and Building Committee Chair at Community School 53, I have worked hard to become an informed, dynamic, compassionate representative who empowers members to fully enjoy the rights afforded to us by our Collective Bargaining Agreement. I

have attended several hours of union training to become an effective advocate, focusing on making the work environment safe and equitable, while imparting awareness of the benefits of belonging to one of the strongest unions in NY State.

If elected, I will bring 24 years of Special Education experience to the table. I will be a compelling voice for the voiceless, overlooked, and underrepresented teachers and students. Our marginalized populations deserve to be heard loud and clear. I would be grateful for your vote to allow me to bring my passion, conviction, and experience into the room where pivotal decisions are made for all of us at Buffalo Public Schools.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Building Delegate Chairperson; Building Committee Chairperson
- BTF Committees: Social
- BTF trainings: SBMT Procedures; When the Principal Calls; Effective Advocating in Building Committee



## AMY FLYNN

I am a proud union member that has over 14 years of experience in the union. Though I am an experienced BTF Executive Committee member, I have not forgotten my roots as a Delegate Chair. While fighting for all BTF members on the Executive Committee, my building level experiences of successfully standing up for our teachers proves valuable as I stand up for all teachers at the district level.

I am committed to the BTF and to my colleagues in all schools; together, we are the BTF! My dedication on the BTF

Executive Committee has evolved into representing BTF at AFT and NYSUT activities. I am also a member of several BTF committees and spent many days doing phone bank to help ensure a teacher friendly school board.

We continue to stand strong as a union when we stand behind every BTF member. We stand shoulder to shoulder with newly hired teachers, veteran teachers, and our retired colleagues. It would be an honor to continue to serve you on the BTF Executive Committee. Please vote for Amy Flynn for K-12 Executive Committee. Thank you.

### CREDENTIALS 2023-2024, 2024-2025

- BTF Executive Committee
- BTF Committees: Educators of Special Education; Finance; Political Action (2024-2025), Social (2024-2025); APPR (2024-2025); Professional Learning Team; Local Action project (2024-2025)
- NYSUT Convention Delegate
- AFT Convention Delegate
- NYSTRS Delegate

# AT LARGE TEACHERS

## (3 TO BE SELECTED)



### BRIAN MEYER

I sincerely appreciate the nomination to represent you as a member of our executive committee. It is a responsibility that I take very seriously – and I look forward to advocating for you. We've had many successes during my four years on the Committee. The most recent of which was getting the BTF-App off the ground with the Tech Committee – of which I am a part. Increasing communication is critical, and the app provides a great way to reach out to everyone who is on it. We look forward to YOU joining us there – you'll be able to unite with your building

colleagues and your subject area colleagues to share thoughts, learn union-related things, and build camaraderie.

Our union continues to have many challenges, and in the next two years we will have negotiated a new contract. Under our new president and VP, executive committee has been able to have a meaningful impact in myriad ways – permitting us an easier path to espouse the principles of what it means to be a Union. It would be an honor to have your vote.

BTF!

#### Brian Meyer

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Committees: Communication/Technology; Finance
- BTF Building Committee (2024-2025)
- NYSUT Convention Delegate
- NYSTRS Delegate



### TRICIA ANDRZEJEWSKI

The BTF is one of the strongest unions in the area, and I am proud to be a part of it. With all my children grown, I have time to dedicate in helping OUR union grow to be even stronger! I have over twenty years working in the district, and most of them have been as a teacher in the math department.

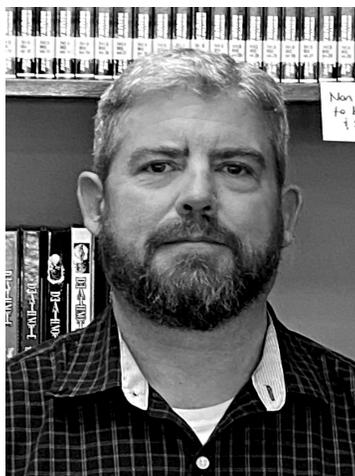
I have served as Building Delegate in different schools and am currently Delegate Chair at Discovery #67. My union experience includes serving on district interview teams, Sick Leave Bank Trustee, APPR Committee, SBMT, Building Committee and recently elected as a NYSUT delegate.

Under the new BTF leadership, several trainings have been offered to help build capacity of OUR union and OUR delegates. Over the last two years, I have attended all of the various BTF trainings such as Delegate 101, SBMT, When the Principal Calls, Taylor Law and Effective Advocacy in Building Committee.

Given my experience, strong work ethic, and ability to work together to get things done, I will be an excellent representative for you, and I humbly ask for your vote.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Sick Leave Bank Trustee (2024-2025)
- BTF Building Delegate Chairperson (2024-2025)
- BTF Building Delegate & Building Committee member (2023-2024)



### JESSE JAMES BRACE

My name is Jesse James Brace and it's an honor to run for the position of Executive Committee at Large in the Buffalo Teachers Federation election of 2025. Though I'm new to the BTF, I think my experience, ethics and core beliefs make me a valuable member of our union and my goal is to strengthen and bring it back to the level it once was.

I work at Lewis J. Bennett as a Library Media Specialist. Prior to that, I worked at Medaille College, for almost 10 years until it's untimely demise. While there,

I saw firsthand how weak and ineffectual management can topple a once thriving institution. Decisions made by conflicted leadership led to the demise of over 400 jobs and sent over 2,500 students looking for their education elsewhere. I was the last person standing in my unit, I saw co-workers weeping at their desks when they lost their jobs. I won't go through that again and I won't allow you to go through anything remotely similar to my past experience.

I look forward to the opportunity to represent my fellow union members. Please consider me as you vote. Thank you for your support!

#### CREDENTIALS

2023-2024, 2024-2025



### DANIELLE HARRIS

I'm Danielle Harris, and I'm running for BTF Executive Committee, At-Large Teacher. As an educator, I'm committed to fighting to uphold and improve the rights provided to us within our contract. My priorities include:

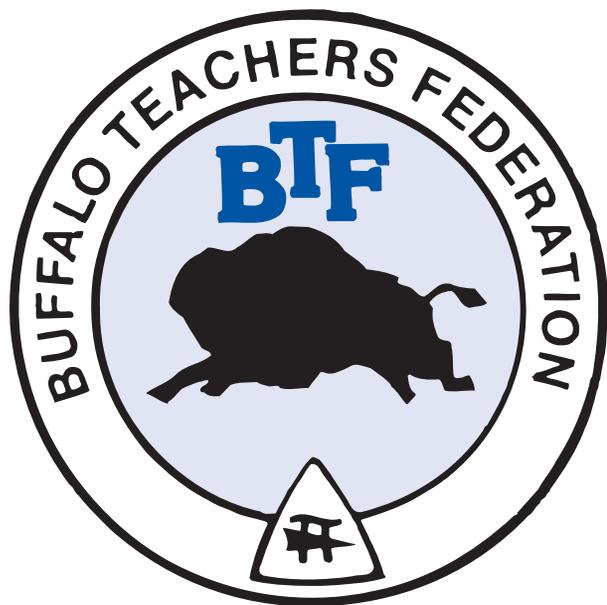
- Fair, and timely, compensation. We deserve competitive salaries and benefits that reflect our hard work and dedication to our students. When we work outside of contractual hours, we deserve to be compensated in a timely manner, not waiting months for 1/200<sup>th</sup> or hourly pay.

- A safe working environment. Teacher and student physical and emotional safety must be a priority to our district. As educators, we know that one must feel safe to reach their highest potential. Safer school environments can lead to higher achievement.
- Fair treatment of all teachers. Every teacher deserves to be treated with respect and dignity by administration and students. This includes fair workloads, fair discipline processes, and involvement in the decision-making processes within each building.

With a father that was actively involved in his union within our district, I learned the value of union activism in the Buffalo Public Schools. We must continue to grow the knowledge of our union members to strengthen our voices in our buildings. Thank you.

#### CREDENTIALS 2023-24, 2024-25

- BTF Building Delegate Chairperson; Building Committee Chairperson
- NYSUT Winter Leadership Conference BTF attendee (2024-2025)
- NYSUT Convention Delegate (2024-2025)



# PROVOCATOR

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 824  
Buffalo, NY

BUFFALO TEACHERS FEDERATION  
271 PORTER AVENUE  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14201  
716-881-5400



Address Service Requested

## THANK YOU TO OUR ADVERTISERS

**Plan.  
Protect.  
Invest.**

Proudly Helping Buffalo School Employees with their 403(b) since 1972

**SGROI Lawley**

- Local family-owned financial firm
- Full transparency on all fees/costs
- Stress-free sign up process

**716.674.6700 | SgroiFinancial.com**

Securities offered through Cadaret, Grant & Co., Inc., member FINRA/SIPC. Advisory services offered through Sgroi Wealth Advisory Group LLC, an SEC Registered Investment Advisor. Sgroi Wealth Advisory Group LLC, Sgroi Lawley Group LLC, and Cadaret, Grant & Co., Inc. are separate entities.

**Elegance Optique**  
EST. 1985

Charles San George  
Charles San George II O.D.

**Sheridan / Delaware Plaza Across From Tops**  
874-4600  
Convenient Parking

**100% Coverage for Teachers and Dependents**

Monday through Fri: 9:30AM – 6:00PM We Supply and Submit Your Forms  
Saturdays: 9:30AM – 2:00PM

Eye Examinations by Appointment - Evenings Available

**Eyewear Unlimited**  
834-3511  
1480 Hertel Avenue @ Sterling Avenue

Greg Mucha  
Optician

Joe Frandina  
Optician

**100% Total Coverage\***

Complete Frame & Lens Coverage for BTF & Dependents

Single Vision or Flat-Top 28  
\* Plastic lenses power to ± .400 SPH. • with ± .200 CYC.  
Choose from a Special Selection of Frames.  
Tints extra. Not Good with other offers.

Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

Call Today for An Appointment With our Optometrist!

*Joe is the Husband of BTF member Barbara Polino Frandina*

**VOTING OPENS: TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025**  
**AND CLOSES: TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025 AT 11:59 P.M.**

### THE BTF ELECTIONS COMMITTEE THANKS ALL THE OFFICER CANDIDATES FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR BTF ELECTIONS

MARY FAVATA • BRIAN HILTON • FRANCES COSTANZO • MOLLY ELDRIDGE • CHERYL GREENE • GABRIELLE LOCKWOOD • CHELSEY WAZ  
Chairperson Secretary

## TAKE THE TIME TO VOTE IT IS BOTH YOUR RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY