

CITATION

CENTRAL ISLIP TEACHERS ASSOCIATION, LOCAL 2552, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO
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A Holiday Gift for Parents

by Jennifer Cicero

Since January was never kind to us weather wise, we decided to move the first Awards Night to December this year. While it is a hectic time of year, I thought it was a perfect night! The turnout was amazing, not only by the students and their parents, but by CITA volunteers as well. We had more volunteers at this Awards Night than any other that I could remember. That is what made it a perfect night!! Having the kids receive their awards

while their parents and teachers looked on was priceless. We will definitely have to order more cake next time, but all in all it was a great night and a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season. We will be conducting two more Awards Nights this school year. They will be held on March 26th and May 14th at 7pm in the High School Auditorium. Please mark your calendars. The more teacher volunteers that come out, the better.





From the President's Desk

Michael Romano, President
Central Islip Teachers Association

United We Stand Divided We Fall

Happy New Year!!

Please let me take this opportunity to wish each and every CITA sister and brother a happy, healthy, and successful 2018!

I do believe that I can actually avoid writing one of my "gloom and doom" articles for this issue. As 2018 opens we, as a local, are sitting on the best contract and working conditions in the entire state. We have as good a working relationship with both Central Administration and the Board of Education as has ever existed in the district! We avoided the constitutional convention by working together, both locally and on the state level, with the various other public sector unions. This effort showed beyond a shadow of a doubt that the union movement is alive and kicking in New York. The anti-union activists had been ringing our death knell. They now have a true measure of our resolve when faced with unacceptable events!

Another pleasant occurrence has been the refreshing invisibility of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos in New York.

While we are dealing with the often irritating day-to-day minutiae in Central Islip, we are not one of the districts who have been without a contract for years!

We are not in a district that is in severe financial stress, nor are we looking to excess professionals. Taken as a whole we are in a nice place entering 2018!

The price for all of this good news is our ongoing and eternal vigilance. Our profession is under attack nationwide from those who would coopt education for their own personal gain as well as from those who believe that they know better than the trained professionals in the field. Both segments are dangerous, combined even more so, but they can be defeated. Their defeat can only come at the hands of unified educators. Unified educators are without exception unionized educators. While we will be facing yet another challenge in the Supreme Court this year we, as a local, will stay the course that has been so successful for us through the years. While there certainly exists differences between individuals, I am confident that every single one of you fully understands the losses that you will experience in your everyday personal and professional life if we do not all follow the blueprint set down by the amazing CITA leaders in whose footprints we all follow.



Michael Romano, President
Thomas Kuhn, Vice President
Amy Harrington, Treasurer
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Teacher Education and Professional Standing

Michele Celenza



A F L • C I O

Your NYSTRS Benefit Profile

by Tom Kuhn, Vice President



It's neither a scrapbook of your past nor a playbook for your future, but the NYSTRS Benefit Profile that you receive annually tells the story of your working career and provides a glimpse of your financial future once you leave the classroom.

By now you should have received your Benefit Profile if your date of membership is June 30, 2017 or earlier. At minimum, you'll want to review the first few pages to verify that the service and salary information reported to NYSTRS is accurate. If you find errors, contact the business office so that corrections can be submitted to the Retirement System.

The Benefit Profile also provides a complete service credit history; it's essentially a recap of your time in the classroom and, if

you've purchased prior service, your total New York State public service. Service is a major component to the formula used to calculate your retirement benefit, so you'll want to make sure their records are accurate well before you plan to stop working.

Even for new members with little or no service earned through June 30, 2017, the Benefit Profile has value. It's a chance to verify that beneficiary information is accurate and a place to find your unique NYSTRS employee identification number or EmplID. In today's security-conscious world, using your EmplID to communicate with NYSTRS is more secure than using your Social Security Number.

The Benefit Profile also helps you plan for the future. Depending on your membership status and eligibility, the document may also include:

- Projections of service retirement benefits under different scenarios;

- Disability and death benefit projections;

- A summary of contributions and loan information (if applicable);

- Descriptions of benefit payment options

Distribution of your Benefit Profile begins in early November of each year. If you elect to receive it electronically via your MyNYSTRS account, you have the advantage of reviewing it well ahead of those who chose to receive a paper in the mail. If you need to update your email or home address, now is the perfect time to do so. Address changes can be done online with a MyNYSTRS account. Alternatively, you may submit a change with a Member Name/Address Change (GRE-50) form or a signed letter that includes your NYSTRS EmplID and signature. The form can be found on their website or by calling their hotline at (800) 782-0289.

Proud to be CITA

by Maureen Esposito



First and foremost, I'd like to wish each and every one of you a Happy, Healthy 2018! It's hard to believe we're almost halfway through the 2017-18 school year. We all work so hard, day in and day out, teaching, nurturing, planning and interacting with our students, but we do so much more for the children of Central Islip.

From our annual CITA Scholarship Fund Drive (\$83,000) last year (unbelievable), to donations

at Thanksgiving and Christmas, to food drives, buying raffles, clothing drives, supporting PTA Council for scholarships, donating money, gift cards and items to our individual PTA units to benefit our kids, CITA members give back again and again.

Many of you give up your precious spare time to attend the CITA Safe Halloween at the HS, Standard Scholar Awards Night to honor your standard scholar, CITA Books Giveaway at the CI Fire Department, and CITA Movie Night in the Spring. When your students see you at these events, their faces light

up with excitement and pride. Your presence means so much to them and their parents.

Even little things like buying supplies, treats, notebooks, pencils, snacks..... is very much appreciated. I am amazed year after year at the generosity and kindness of our members. CITA is comprised of exceptionally caring, kind, giving professionals, and I am so proud to be a member of the Central Islip Teachers Association!

**Sign up for CITA Remind texts.
Text @citeachers to 81010.**

Scholarship Campaign 2018

by Jennifer Cicero



Every year in September, my article is not written by me. It is written by the senior scholarship recipients from the previous year with heartfelt thank you's to all the members who contributed to the Scholarship Drive. Their words say it better than anything I could ever write or say. So when a member of the

Scholarship Committee comes to you asking for your donation, I would like you to think about those thank you letters. I would like you to think about how difficult it will be for our students to afford college in the fall.

The Scholarship Committee will begin the annual Scholarship Drive very soon. Our goal this year is \$83,000 and I know we can do it. The Scholarship Committee is still asking for \$30 per member, but we would also like you to consider more if that is possible. I know we can do it. You may believe that your donation

will not make a difference, or that your donation won't be missed. However, imagine what would happen if everyone thought like that?

Below is a list of the scholarship committee members in each building who are collecting the donations. Let's have another record-breaking year of contributions! Our students deserve it! And remember, every donation counts!!

The scholarship committee members are: Charlene Murphy – ECC, Yanick C. Frederic - Cordello, Yvette Liburd & Jill Esposito – O'Neill, Christine Wesnofske – Mulvey, Siobhan Brunkard and Jill Esposito – Morrow, Marlene L'Hommedieu and Gwen Jacobowitz – Mulligan, Maria LaRocca and Allison Dorn – Reed, and Jennifer Cicero, Fran Alabau, Greg Alpers, Bob Bonfe, Orlando Diaz, Amy Harrington and Sandy Morrow – High School.

'Tis the Season

by Jennifer Cicero

There are numerous things that the Central Islip Civic Council does to help our community. One way they help during the holiday season is by adopting many families that might need some help. They try to help as many families as they can, but they can't do it alone. For the seventh year in a row, the Central Islip Teachers Association went shopping!! We donated \$300 worth of kids and teenager clothes including pajamas, pants, shirts, and coats to help these families. The ladies at the Civic Council were overjoyed and said that these items would make a lot of families very happy during the holidays! The holiday season is all about giving and that's just what the CITA did! Thank you to the Civic Council for all that you do for our community!



Welcome to 2018

by Michele Celenza



Happy New Year! I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays with family and friends. It is wonderful to be able to relax and recharge our batteries leaving workplace stress behind. What will 2018 look like? Who knows? What I do know is that it is up to each one of us to make it the best we can. We always have a choice. Whine and complain or be optimistic and proactive. History has shown us that the latter combination will result in better outcomes.

A new year brings the opportunity to reflect on our past successes in our classrooms and map out future endeavors. Take the time to explore possibilities and disregard any negativity in the air. Our students look to us for guidance and direction. Our philosophies and attitudes can have a direct impact on them. Being a positive role model is a huge responsibility that we agree to take on when becoming an educator. It is easy

to close your door and continue on as you always have, but that isn't what we teach our students. We tell them to reach for the stars, work hard, and be risk takers.

Stepping out of our comfort zones and trying a new lesson or approach could engage more students. Open dialogue with colleagues can lead to sharing innovative ideas for our classrooms. We strive to have our students work collaboratively and so should we. Learning is a lifelong pursuit.

For anyone who has not yet had their 20 minute unannounced observation, the Engage NY website has a video library tab which offers 3 video observations focused on Domain 2. They are short clips from different grade levels which may be helpful to some. If there is anything you use in your planning or instruction that you would like to share, send it to mcelenzacita@gmail.com to be published in the "Hot Topics" section. Don't hesitate, we all do wonderful things!

2018: The Year of Janus

by Vincent Ruggiero



Even though 2018 is only a few days old, it will eventually be remembered as the year of Janus. By the end of February, the Supreme Court will begin hearing a case that unions across the country will look back on as a watershed moment in labor history: Janus v. AFSCME.

Mark Janus, an Illinois state child care worker, believes he should not be required to pay union dues to the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) even though the parent labor organization represents him along with hundreds of other public workers. The case, which will undoubtedly capture national attention, is a direct effort to reverse the 1977 Abood v. Detroit Board of Education case. In the Abood case, the Supreme Court supported the position that public sector labor unions can collect fees from organized affiliated employees.

Over the last few years, the Supreme Court's conservative justices have repeatedly voiced their willingness to reexamine the Abood ruling; the first such opportunity came in 2015 when the Supreme Court

agreed to hear Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association. The plaintiff, elementary school teacher Rebecca Friedrichs, argued the California Teachers Association fee requirements violated her First Amendment rights. Many expected the outcome of the Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association case to reverse the 40 year old precedent ruling until conservative Justice Antonin Scalia died resulting in a 4 - 4 decision, allowing the Abood case to remain law. The 4 - 4 impasse proved to be motivation for others to advance similar legal challenges throughout the country - enter Mark Janus.

Initial arguments in the Janus v. AFSCME case will be heard by the Supreme Court next month. There is, however, little doubt that President Trump appointed Supreme Court Justice Neil Gorsuch will provide the needed 5th vote to support Janus while simultaneously toppling the Abood decision.



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Make America Dumb Again

by Christian Pisano



As you already know, low salt diets are usually good for you, except for the one that the Republicans are putting us on. The Republicans and Donald Trump just gave corporations and very wealthy individuals a “big beautiful tax cut.”

The marginal corporate tax rate went from 39% down to 21%. No corporation actually pays 39%. What they actually pay, after deductions known as the effective rate, is about 18%. Their new rate, after deductions, will be around 4 or 5%. Wouldn't you love that rate for yourself? The poor and the middle class got practically nothing. In fact in 2026 almost all of our taxes will be going up to pay for this reverse trickle down. This give away was financed by mostly repealing our state and local tax deduction better known as SALT.

The blue states with their higher wages, more unions, and better financed, higher ranking schools already send well over \$100 billion per year in federal revenue to the lower taxed, lower wage, anti-union, red states. This welfare subsidy of the red states will be increased further as a result of capping our SALT intake. Our State And Local Taxes will now be capped at a to-

tal of \$10,000. This capping will increase our federal taxes but have no corresponding increase in red America. Trump and the Republicans are trying to push the blue state schools down to the bottom with red states.

How does this affect my school you may ask? Well if you cut the budget in one area you usually have to make up for it in another by reducing spending. To appear fiscally sane, immediately after the \$1.4 trillion tax cut was passed, the Republicans in congress began talking about entitlement reform and cuts to social spending. Even though the federal government accounts for less than 10% of school spending it creates a domino effect and a belt tightening culture for schools. Republicans don't look at public schools as investments anymore but as places to destroy.

The capping of SALT will cause some tax bills to rise in NY and the rest of blue America. Most politicians, especially our “beloved” governor who lacks any courage, will be inclined to try and ease this increase in federal taxes by cutting state taxes, further pressuring our budgets. The real name of this tax bill should be “Make America Dumb Again.”

CITA 2018 Save the Dates

-Friday, February 2nd ~ CITA Tee Order Due to Tara Maguire @ O'Neill



-Tuesday, April 10th and Thursday, April 12th ~ Spring Driver Safety Course at the ECC Multipurpose Room from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm



-Friday, June 1st ~ CITA End of the Year Party RSVPs and Payment Due to Tara Maguire @ O'Neill



-Thursday, June 14th ~ CITA End of the Year Party at Stonebridge Country Club in Smithtown from 5:30 pm — 10:30 pm



Continue to Stand Together

by Adrian Gonzalez



On behalf of the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee, I would like to take the opportunity to wish each and every one of you a happy and healthy new year. It is our hope that you enjoyed the holidays, that you had the opportunity to spend time with your loved ones, and that you had time to rest.

As we embark on a new calendar year and the remainder of the school year, there are some things that we must keep in mind and news that we must follow. On November 7, 2017, New Yorkers went to the polls and voted against a Constitutional Convention. A remarkable 80% of voters voted against holding a convention. This was a tremendous victory, not only for union members, but for all of New Yorkers. This type of victory is only possible when we band together and support one another for a common cause. With Con-Con behind us, we are now faced with a case being heard by the United States Supreme Court.

In September 2017 the Supreme Court announced that it will hear the case Janus v. AFSCME (American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees). In short, Mark Janus is an employee of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. His union dues amount to \$44.58 per month. This amount entitles him to job security, due process, and the right to belong to a union that negotiates on his behalf and provides safe and fair working conditions. He believes that this deduction from his paycheck violates his First Amendment Right. The Supreme Court is expected to rule on the case by June 2018. The result of this case will have major repercussions throughout the country. As we move forward and hope that the Supreme Court rules against Janus, please keep in mind how fortunate we are and how coming together as union brothers and sisters has helped us to get through some of the roughest times of our careers.

Have a great new year!



Sip, Dine, & Dance

by Tara Maguire



The school year seems to be passing by in the blink of an eye. I am excited to announce that this year we will once again be celebrating the end of the school year at The Stonebridge Country Club on Raynor's Way in Smithtown on Thursday, June 14th from 5:30 pm to 10:30 pm. Save the date, and consider attending this event to celebrate the fine work that we do each year and to honor our upcoming CITA retirees. Be sure to bring a pocketful of money to the event and take a chance at winning the CITA 50/50 Scholarship Raffle while supporting the CITA Scholarship fund for the 2018/2019 school year.

Along with taking a chance at winning the raffles, take a role in selecting our playlist for the night. Have a favorite song that will get you and your friends on the dance floor to create a memorable night? Tear off the slip below and return it to me @ the O'Neill School no later than Friday, June 2nd, or email your song request to me at citamemberservices@gmail.com.

We look forward to celebrating with you!

Name: _____

Song Request: _____



CITA Holiday Happenings

by Tara Maguire



With hard work, preparation, dedication, and love, many students felt the spirit of the holidays through the festivities that their classroom teachers planned. Take time to see the sparkle in the students' eyes and the joy in our colleagues' faces that were captured in the photos on the next few pages. On behalf of the CITA leadership I hope you all had a magical holiday season with your beloved students and families. I hope you all enjoyed your well-deserved break and have returned to the classroom revived and refreshed. Happy New Year!



Fifth graders from Mrs. Megan Grabowski's class and their first grade buddies from Mrs. Diane Carpeck's class build gingerbread houses!



Miss Wesnofske's class made holiday headbands.



Mrs. Jennifer Cicero, Mrs. Jan Holden & Mrs. Tara Cudak participate in Ugly Sweater Day at the High School.



Mrs. Lisa Moran's class at Mulligan made Gingerbread Houses.



Mr. Dave Ehrhardt's class enjoyed ice skating in Manhattan.



Mrs. Torres' Class dressed for Holiday Week at ECC.



Mrs. Morezzi's Kindergarten class is full of holiday cheer!



Mrs. Torres' class making Christmas trees at the ECC.



Ms. Brunkard's class enjoyed making gingerbread houses.



Michele Celenza and Jodi Failla getting their Elf on as Mulvey visits the city to see the musical, "Elf."



Feliz Navidad from Mrs. Gutierrez's 3rd grade class at Mulvey.



It looks like Mrs. Burhart and Mrs. Venturi's little sugar plums made the nice list!



Legislator Monica Martinez visited the "Hi & Buy" holiday boutique, where she observed CIHS students using their "Life Skills" in action! Photo submitted by Mrs. Penny Schiano.



Pajama day in Mrs. Giler's Kindergarten Class



Polar Express Day and Pajama Day in Ms. Prince's Class.



Mrs. Colon's kindergarteners making candy houses with trees.





Mrs. Calvi's, Mrs. D'Ambrosio's and Ms. Hoda's students attended a field trip as a holiday treat by solving DNA mysteries at Cold Spring Harbor DNA Learning Center.



Cordello Holiday Happenings included a staff breakfast and an assembly with Erik, the reptile guy.



Mrs. Donna Tanzi's Class was full of cheer as students celebrated Polar Express Day and made Christmas trees with sweet treats.



Mrs. Maguire's 5th grade class at O'Neill School enjoyed sweet treats as they made gingerbread houses for the holidays.





The CI High School Wind Ensemble, under the direction of music teachers Jeremiah Ryan and Steve Muller, caroled through all of the schools spreading some Holiday Cheer. They were joined by CIHS teachers/guidance counselor Dennis Giordano (Santa), Nicole Keilitz (Mrs. Claus), Frank DeModna (Rudolph), and Matthew Hawker (Frosty).



Planning on Retiring? CITA Retiree Reflections

Are you planning on retiring? Contact Tara Maguire @ citamemberservices@gmail.com to request the CITA Retiree Reflection Questionnaire. Your responses to the questionnaire will be published in an article recognizing CITA's 2018 retirees in the May/June Citation. You may submit this questionnaire along with a photo that you would like to be published in the CITation by Friday, April 20th to Tara Maguire at O'Neill School, or you may email your responses to me at citamemberservices@gmail.com.



The CIRTA Retiree

CENTRAL ISLIP RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
AFFILIATED WITH NYSUT RETIREE COUNCIL ED #21,

LOCAL 9521R

by Nancy Porta Libert

The Unreal Gets Real

The term itself, “artificial intelligence” is low key and seemingly self-deprecating, yet its implications for the future, according to many, are revolutionary. Although the concept is not new, I, perhaps unlike most of you, haven’t given artificial intelligence much thought. The subject came up over the holidays during a conversation with daughter Leslie’s husband, a comptroller at the large, international United Food and Commercial Workers union based in Washington, D.C.

Usually our union conversations touch on legislation to promote right-to-work laws — or other attempts at union-busting — and protecting jobs in an automated world. When I described my feelings about AI as futuristic fantasy he said, “It takes people’s jobs.” In some areas of physical labor and services, I learned, replacing human workers with AI is well underway.

While some of us spend our time worrying about the steady erosion of human interaction and social intercourse attributed to the 24-hour-a-day use of smart phones (which might be a quaint worry by comparison), robots have been quietly and steadily replacing humans at a variety of chores, most alarmingly in areas that represent the fastest growing job categories in the country — the restaurant, hotel, and entertainment industries. Robotic “workers,” already successful in warehouse and factory settings, are now ready to check your bags, register you at a hotel, and serve as cashier when you pay your bill. My son-in-law referred me to an article in January’s *The Atlantic* that describes a robot that can flip 150 burgers an hour, among other things.

Reasons to automate are not hard to understand: the price of machines has dropped dramatically in recent years, customer’s former preference for human labor may be overshadowed by greater mechanical speed and efficiency, and robots have no personal needs or undesirable habits. I was reminded by my daughter that artificial intelligence has been providing services for us for some time now. As examples she cited banking opportunities and GPS use.

“And, how about the fact that I can give ‘Alexa’ a verbal command to put on a specific play list while I’m busy

making dinner?”

A comprehensive picture was forming in my mind. Even without technological imagination or interest, I began to see where we, as a civilization, might be headed. It gave me a lot to think about, but those thoughts were not the ones I wished to carry into a new year.

Capers, Creativity, And Being Human

The AI discussion described above occurred the afternoon of New Year’s Eve. Fortunately, a few pre-prandial indulgences took the edge off the grim realities of the moment. Left alone the next day while visiting family went sightseeing, I wanted to connect with something, anything that exemplified the uniqueness of human behavior. While gathering up the Christmas cards sent by old friends and acquaintances, inevitable memories surfaced. I recalled a favorite story I told on this page many years ago and ran to find it. It is rerun here as a needed reminder of what the human body and mind, ever creative and ever merry, can rise to:

One Friday night during my junior year in high school, I was “out on the town” with a few, like-minded classmates — all of whom were boys of course, because boys were the only ones who ever did anything worth doing. We were walking along the western part of Main Street in our village of Islip and glanced across the street at the local carvel stand. A large sign about 12 feet high on the front side of the parking lot caught our eyes. It was an inspired moment. We hardly had to discuss our intentions. Crossing the street and climbing a wooden fence behind the sign, we removed screws, washers and wing nuts and placed them carefully on the now- barren crossbar for reattachment. Then, removing the sign, we carried it over to an adjoining property.

The next morning, a Saturday, people driving along Main Street were startled to see a huge, new placard hanging in front of Overton’s Funeral Home proclaiming: “We have served over one million satisfied customers.”)

The recollection warmed my heart and filled my soul with hope. Artificial intelligence may win the century, but it will never rival the incomparable vagaries of the human spirit.