



VIEWPOINTS

Garden City Teachers
Association

May/June 2012

GCTA OFFICERS ELECTION

NEW BALLOTING PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED

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A secret ballot election for the offices of President, Vice President for Personnel (MS/HS), Vice President for Personnel (Primary/Elementary), Vice President of Benefits, Treasurer/Membership Coordinator, and Recording/Corresponding Secretary will be conducted by the Garden City Teachers' Association (GCTA) during the dates, times, and places indicated below. In addition, the Chairperson of the New Member/Mentor Committee shall also be on the ballot. The GCTA Executive Council has established the following procedures for the election:

Dates: *Begins June 1, 2012 (Monday) - Ends June 7, 2012 (Thursday) at 2:45 pm.*

Time: *During workday hours*

Place: *At the place where the member receives their paycheck.*

Procedures for voting:

- Official GCTA ballots will be distributed the first morning of balloting by a building rep in a neutral location to be determined by the rep (*each building will be notified via e-mail from a building rep of the time in which distribution will begin, and where a member can get their ballot if they can not get it on the morning of June 1st*)
- Members are required to go to the location indicated by the building rep to obtain their ballot – the building rep will not be expected to seek members who didn't get their ballot
- Using a voter eligibility list, members will be required to sign for their ballot in their home school, defined as the school in which a member gets their paycheck
- Members will receive only **ONE** ballot, and should vote in their home school – **IF YOU LOSE YOUR BALLOT, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO VOTE**
- Ballot boxes will be located in the main office of each school and remain there until 2:45pm on June 7, 2012. At 2:45pm, a building rep will remove the ballot box and transport it to the GCTA secretary for inspection before tabulating votes.

Ballot boxes will be locked prior to the distribution of ballots, and will be unlocked by the GCTA secretary at the end of the election period following an inspection of each ballot box for tampering.

Any eligible member who is out on a leave must come to their home school to obtain a ballot if they wish to vote.

In the event that a person's eligibility to vote is challenged, the GCTA will use the LMRDA provisions for challenged ballots.



MEET THE CANDIDATE

JOHN W. CRONIN - PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY V.P.

I seek the honor of continuing to serve you as GCTA Vice-President for Primary/Elementary Schools. Below are my credentials and my accomplishments for our union.

Qualifications for Office:

1. 100% dedication to a demanding job. I have been available to you and your needs 24/7. I dedicate all my time and energy to strengthening our union. I will continue to do so, and respond to all your concerns as they arise.

2. I am a lawyer with extensive knowledge of Education Law. This, coupled with my past role as Chairman of the GCTA Constitution Amendment Committee (which drafted our current Constitution), enables me to understand both our rights and duties under the law and the inner workings of our union. I have sixteen years (16) public teaching service, one year as a 5th grade classroom teacher in the Hempstead UFSD, and the last fifteen (15) years here as both Elementary Science Teacher and AIS Math Teacher.

3. I have served the union in the following ways:

- *Viewpoints* Editor (2001-04)
- Elected negotiator for Stewart School –2002 Contract negotiations
- Chairman, GCTA Constitution Amendment Committee (2003-04)
- GCTA Parliamentarian (2002-04 and 2010-present)
- Member of Sick Bank Committee (2004)
- Member of benefits Trust Fund (2004)
- *Viewpoints* columnist, *Education and the Law* (2007-08; and 2010-present)
- Vice-President, Primary/Elementary Schools (2010-present)
- Member of Negotiating Team and Committee for our latest contract (2012)

4. Strengthening union reforms ***I have delivered*** :

I researched and presented a comprehensive negotiating plan to the Executive Council. I did this in conjunction with my good friend NYS Assemblyman Tom McKevitt and law professor Richard Bock. One of the most important issues was to have a provision incorporating the current seniority law of “last in, first out” in our contract. As a member of the Negotiating Team and Committee, **I was able to help advance the idea and made Garden City one of the very few locals in the State to have such comprehensive job protection.**

I did not stop fighting until the Executive Council agreed to issue a Memorandum of Support for the Healthy Workplace Bill, which would put an end to abusive supervision for all teachers in the State, and further strengthen our job security. **As a result, an Assemblyman is rethinking his position and we are only three votes away from having this additional job protection.** (continued on pg. 4)



MEET THE CANDIDATE

AMY SULLIVAN - PRIMARY/ELEMENTARY V.P.

Article II, section 1a of the GCTA constitution states that ***“It shall be the purpose and function of this Association to promote a feeling of fellowship and understanding among the members of the Association.”*** During my tenure as a Lead Building Representative I have tried to model this principle; further, I feel that as VP for Personnel (Elementary/Primary) I will be able to lead by example and continue to foster such fellowship among our members.

The GCTA constitution does not mandate specific qualifications for any office - however, I believe there are certain fundamental traits which should reasonably be expected of any member who hopes to serve the GCTA in a leadership role. These traits include, but are not limited to, the **ability and the willingness to communicate, collaborate and contribute**.

Communication is important in all facets of life, but a critical skill needed by anyone who has the responsibility to rectify and/or find solutions to the problems/concerns of our members. As the lead building representative at Hemlock School for the past four years, I have demonstrated my ability to effectively communicate the needs and concerns of members to both the building administration and the leadership/executive council of the GCTA. **Effective communication, not infighting, leads to solutions** – solutions which benefit the membership.

Collaboration is equally important – without it a “feeling of fellowship” will not exist. The office of VP for Personnel, in my opinion, should set an example of how every member should work together for the common good of the membership. The VP for Personnel is a member of the Executive Council, the governing board of the GCTA, and when an idea is brought to the council, it is discussed in-depth before a decision is made. I currently sit on the Executive Council as the lead building representative from Hemlock School, and respect the difficult decisions the council is sometimes asked to make, even if I do not personally agree with the majority. I recognize that a personal agenda does not always address the needs of our entire membership.

Lastly, the individual contributions that we each make to the GCTA set an example for union involvement to our entire membership. During my fourteen years in Garden City, I have contributed in the following capacities:

- Negotiating Committee (2002 & 2012)
- Public Relations Committee (2003 - 2006, 2010-present)
- Constitutional Review Committee (2010-2011)
- GCTA Buddy Program (2004-2005)
- Volunteered at all three “GC for a Cure” events
- Lead Building Rep – Hemlock (2008-present)
- Sick Bank Committee – (2008 – present)

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MEET THE CANDIDATE - JOHN CRONIN

I can deliver free and discounted education and labor law representation from one of the best law firms which can take us above and beyond the help NYSUT gives whenever we need it.

My good friend Assemblyman McKeivitt has spoken to the Executive Council via phone from Albany. He keeps me updated on all the latest legislation affecting education so I can pass it on and we can be prepared. He will also work with our Political Action Committee to give us the most effective lobbying power possible. This he has done *pro bono*, and will continue to do so.

I have worked hard to resolve personnel issues and don't stop fighting for our rights. I will continue to fight for you and strengthening reforms if reelected.

I hope you will consider giving me your vote. Thank you.

'GC FOR A CURE' A GREAT SUCCESS

As most of us are aware, the third annual GC For A Cure race/walk event was held a few weeks ago, on Saturday the 21st of April. Despite the threat of an impending nor'easter, the event went off without a hitch, attracting almost 1,200 participants and continuing our fundraising efforts for the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

In fact, those efforts were so successful that we were subsequently able to deliver a check to Sloan in the amount of **\$30,041.34**. This brings out three-year fundraising total to over **\$67,000**. In addition, and not at all incidentally, we were able to raise an additional \$2,000 through Uniting Against Lung Cancer's 'Kites For A Cure' program. The GCTA, in turn, was recently awarded a Citation of Merit from Memorial Sloan-Kettering, which was accepted for all of us by organizer/committee members Kerry Calvert, Donna Welch and Robyn Madden, along with former student Monika Mohacsi.

Successful events of this magnitude are a group effort, and thanks are due to many people. These include, but are certainly not limited to: Kerry Calvert and GC For A Cure committee members Robyn Madden, Elizabeth Dukeman, Stacey DeCillis, Donna Welch, Paul Cutter, Tom Biggers, Terry Bi-

sogno, and to former GC students Monika Mohacsi, Paulette Mohacsi and Walter Levchuck.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Feirsen and the administration, Patrick Mehr and the Grounds crew (Eddie and Mike), to Nancy Kalafus, Dave Perrotta, Kevin Steingruebner, Gail Madigan and the GCPTA, GCREA, The Village of Garden City, GC Police Department, Kevin Pollitt, Christine Fusci, Rich Madden, Sue Shea, David Hakes, and the entire *GCTA*.

Congratulations to all on another successful event!





MEET THE CANDIDATE - AMY SULLIVAN

In addition to serving on these committees, I participate in Vote-COPE, participate in the GCTA organized phone banks during budget time, have attended various NYSUT conferences, attend all general membership meetings, attend the annual PTA dinner/fundraiser, and have volunteered at the high school graduation reception hosted by the GCTA and PTA. I may not be able to say I am available 24/7, but I believe my track record puts me pretty close.

I make a point to attend a majority of the union's social events, as I believe that my presence on such occasions visibly demonstrates my support for our association to the community, the administration and to other union members; **we are a union, and I think it's important that we appear united.** In a similar vein, I currently organize the Hemlock school's hospitality group, which provides lunches and functions for faculty, staff, bus drivers, nurses, and administrative assistants, as another facet of an ongoing effort to foster collegiality and fellowship. The organizational skills which I bring to these tasks also give me the ability to be efficient and orderly when addressing the needs and concerns of our members. Perhaps most importantly, I consider myself to be a team player (an assessment with which I think my colleagues would agree); I am always ready to give my time and my efforts in a spirit of cooperation, rather than divisiveness.

In closing, I firmly believe that a change in leadership for the elementary and primary schools is necessary for the good of the membership, and I hope you consider giving me your vote.

Thank you.

ALBANY PASSES RETIREMENT TIER VI

Is there any way Tier 6 can be imposed on current employees? Can the Legislature and governor make a law that would reduce my retirement benefits down the road? I still have 10 years to go!

A: By law, the pension you receive cannot be reduced or diminished — this includes in-service members and retirees.

In 1935, New York's highest court, the Court of Appeals, ruled that pensions of retired public employees cannot be diminished or impaired. That principle was subsequently preserved in Article V, Section 7, of the New York state Constitution, which states membership in a public employee retirement system “shall be a contractual relationship, the benefits of which shall not be diminished or impaired.” For re-

tired teachers, that means pensions must be paid on schedule and in full.

And for in-service members, your benefits are locked in, depending on which tier you are in. Tier 6 will only affect the contributions and benefits of members who join a New York state public retirement system on or after April 1, 2012.

Tier 6 is unique because contributions are determined on a sliding scale. Specifically, Tier 6 members will pay 3.5 percent in contributions regardless of salary up to April 1, 2013. After that, the contribution rate in a given school year is based upon regular compensation in the school year two years previous, on a scale ranging from a low of 3.5 percent up to a maximum of 6 percent.

RETIREMENT Q & A

HOW IS MY PENSION BENEFIT CALCULATED?

Every year the Employees' Retirement System mails you a valuable retirement planning document — your Member Annual Statement. Your statement contains important information about all aspects of your ERS membership. Perhaps most important of all, it can give you a good idea of what your pension will be.

For most members, page six of the statement includes a projection of your pension at different ages for the various payment options available. These projected pension benefits are calculated using current information which is on file for you, including your beneficiaries, retirement plan, tier, service credit and Final Average Salary (FAS). There are some members who do not receive projections; for example, members who have less than three years of service credit.

Q: How is the FAS on my statement calculated?

A: The FAS on your statement is an automated calculation that only uses the current salary information which is on file for you and does not assume increases in salary. The FAS on your statement also does not include estimates for lump sum payments such as unused vacation pay.

Since there are different ways to calculate the FAS based on employment (i.e., 10-month academic schedule or 12-month schedule), you should review your retirement plan book (www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/publications) or contact NYSTRS with any questions you might have about your FAS.

Q: Why is the projected benefit on my Member Annual Statement different from the projection I received at a consultation site?

A: The statement projection is an automated calculation that only uses information which is on file for you as of March 31 — the end of the fiscal year. Representatives at other consultation sites may add information supplied by you that has not yet been verified with your employer, such as sick leave accruals and lump sum payments, to the calculation of your projection. This information is not included in your statement.

Since retirement system staff can't review all statement projections for accuracy, they are not a guarantee. However, they are an excellent retirement planning tool.

Q: When are the statements mailed?

A: The mailing begins in mid-May and takes approximately six to eight weeks to complete. Mailings go to school districts first so 10-month school employees can receive their statements before summer break; most members will receive their statements by mid-July.

Q: What if I have other questions about my statement?

A: There exists a special interactive, online presentation about the Member Annual Statement. It offers a page-by-page explanation of your statement and contains answers to Frequently Asked Questions. You can view the entire presentation, or go directly to the information, at: www.osc.state.ny.us/retire/members/mas_tutorial.

A large, colorful graphic with the words "Happy Summer!" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are filled with a gradient of colors, including shades of pink, orange, and yellow, giving it a vibrant, summery appearance.