

The Short FUSE

A publication of the New Rochelle Federation of United School Employees



October 2020



**PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE**



**THE WELFARE
FUND**



**KNOW YOUR
CONTRACT**



**FOCUS on a MEMBER
ROSE COLASUONNA**

THE SHORT FUSE

The President's Message

We are facing a year without parallel. The challenges we face are unlike any before, and there is little in the way of history to guide our direction. FUSE has relied on science and solidarity to guide us. What matters to one of us must matter to all of us and that is how we have approached each and every issue... personal health issues, family health issues, child care, ventilation, PPE equipment, protocols for adults and students. We have made progress on many of these issues, and we continue to work toward resolutions of these and others. We will continue to keep you updated. Below are links to several of the emails sent that may address information you need.

Information addressed in August and September emails

[August 7, 2020](#)

[August 25, 2020](#)

[Sept 3, 2020](#)

[Sept 8, 2020](#)

Not everything that we have worked on has resulted in resolution. Some are still ongoing. We have spent significant time on the issue of medical accommodations. We continue to insist that the district allow the necessary accommodations to qualified members. In this regard, we have recently sent a google form questionnaire in order to gather the data and continue to advocate on individuals' behalf.

Child care also continues to be an issue of grave concern as parents who are educators must balance their child's remote or hybrid schedule with their own work obligations. In this regard, FUSE has enforced a long dormant contractual obligation on the part of the district to form a committee to address child care needs. As of this writing, the committee is meeting and working toward a recommendation and what we hope will be a solution.

Know your contract

The Welfare Fund

In each year, the District sends an annual contribution per employee, unless otherwise negotiated. These contributions are sent to the Welfare Fund in order for it to provide for benefits for our members. The FUSE Welfare Fund has continuously expanded and improved the benefits that favorable claims experience, sound actuarial projections and finances permit. The Trustees, in consultation with the Union, and through careful management provide the benefits listed to members at no cost to our active members. Contributions to the Welfare Fund are negotiated through collective bargaining. It is crucial for Union members to support FUSE in its struggle to improve and expand benefits and rights.

WELFARE FUND BENEFITS

Dental
Vision
Hearing
\$500 annual medical reimbursement
\$50,000 term life insurance
\$50,000 accidental death /
dismemberment
AFLAC Critical Illness Insurance
Telemedicine
Employee Assistance Program Stacey
Braun Financial Counseling
Supplemental Coverages

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Click on this link to review your
Benefits in greater detail

The Welfare Fund Manager's Message

Welcome back to a new, and very unusual school year. This year promises many challenges for our members. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all of the members of the Welfare Fund of something I was told many years ago as a new teacher. It is impossible to take care of other people's children if you are not taking care of yourself and your families.

The FUSE Welfare Fund is committed to continually working to see to the welfare of our members. As of June, 2020 we have added two new benefits; a Telemedicine Benefit through 1800MD and through AFLAC a Critical Illness Benefit. We will be continuing our Financial Counseling Program through Stacy Braun, Inc as well as working to gather information on trying to add a Wellness Benefit for our members.

We have been able to extend some of our new benefits to Retirees and have worked through the summer to get information out to all of our members.

I would also like to remind our members that through our UNUM Life Insurance policy, you have access to an EAP (Employee Assistance Program) which can help guide you through many of the stressful issues of life including substance abuse, elder care, child care and depression.

Please visit our new and improved web site and see all that the Fund offers its members. As always, Rose and I are available to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Stay well and good luck with the upcoming year.

Best Regards,

Diane

Contract Negotiations Update

Since no contract agreement was reached, it is important to note that our agreement on high school study hall and hall coverages has also sunset. No one should be required to serve in these capacities. At the middle school level, agreement for teacher coverages has also sunset. Initially, if you are asked, you must comply, but immediately let us know and we will file a grievance. We will not offer accommodations while we are unable to reach an understanding on the contract.

Our unity matters to negotiations going forward. In this regard, an action committee has been formed and is meeting. These actions are designed to bring pressure to bear. They will be contacting you with specific actions that you should participate in order to make the public and Board aware that staff are working without a fair and equitable settlement.

Having previously declared impasse, FUSE met with the mediator in early September. The mediator requested and both parties have agreed to return to the negotiations table and work toward a fair and equitable three year settlement. If necessary, FUSE may declare impasse again at another point.

Focus on a member Rose Colasuonno

Although Rose Colasuonno is not technically a member of FUSE, she certainly is the heart of the FUSE office. She is the Office Manager/Administrative Assistant to the Welfare Fund and has served in that position for over 25 years. Rose is a graduate of the New Rochelle Schools and a lifelong member of the New Rochelle community. She goes above and beyond for members when they have questions whether it is about their Welfare Fund benefits or how to get in touch with a member of the leadership team. Rose is the reason why everything works smoothly. She knows everything you might want to know about when you come up to the office, and if you're lucky, you might be there when she breaks out in Italian song. We are pleased to highlight her in our first issue.



The Executive Vice President's Message

Welcome to all of the SRPS who had off this summer, and I want to acknowledge those of you who did not have off and especially those who worked out of your job titles this summer.

When they call us "essential workers" it is because we are... whether we provide custodial, maintenance, nursing, food service, clerical, general school aide or security service, we keep this district going. I hope you know how important our work is to the health and well being of this community and this district I am proud to be among you.

This year, we find ourselves in the same unusual circumstances that ended last year. This has put a lot of pressure on our members and particularly on SRPs as we work to secure safety for our community and ourselves. We will continue working to ensure that SRPs have a voice and that our working conditions are fair and equitable. Please reach out to your building reps and consider attending the SRP Leadership convention which will be held virtually this year.

Billy Coleman

The 42nd Annual SRP Leadership Conference

Usually about 275 members from around the state attend some 26 different workshops over two days. It's a good way to get information. Past topics include everything from Negotiating Your Contract like a Ninja to Communication: Public Relations and Your Varied Audiences, Protocols for Medically Fragile Students, Standing Up to Workplace Bullying; How to Handle a Challenging Administration.

This year, the conference was scheduled to be held in Saratoga Springs, Oct 24-25. Due to COVID, we expect to hold a virtual conference instead. I'd like to encourage anyone who is interested in leadership roles to attend this virtual event.

NYSUT Voter's Guide

Your vote is our voice for our union and our values.

Our state and our country are clearly at a crossroads as we continue to face the challenges of a world wide pandemic. The decisions we make this fall will impact what happens from the halls of power in Washington, D.C., to the capitol in Albany and in each and every community in New York and the country. Up and down the ballot, there are candidates who will support students and public education, who will stand with working families, and who will fight for the issues and values that we share.

The attached [Voter's Guide from NYSUT](#) provides the complete list of NYSUT-endorsed candidates, however, many of these candidates are also listed on the Working Family Party (WFP) line. If your candidate of choice is listed on the WFP line, please consider casting your vote for them there. The Working Family Party is a union aligned party that advocates for union rights. A vote on this line sends a message to the candidate that this is where our values lie.

President's Message Continued...

Ventilation continues to be an issue. Because of this lack of ventilation, FUSE insisted that the district begin with remote instruction and a phased reopening and that City Hall members not be returning to 100% in person work and continue rotation of work and home.

As you may be aware, we have been at an impasse in negotiations but are coming back to the table. We feel that the impasse was largely due to their new legal representation who has negotiated in bad faith, seemingly with a goal of creating controversy where it is not needed. It is our belief that the fee schedule that the district agreed to creates a conflict of interest in which the primary beneficiary of continued hostility is their attorney's wallet. We are in the process of interviewing for a FUSE attorney and hope that more sensible and practical heads will prevail. In the meantime, all one year agreements have sunset and we will wait upon their willingness to negotiate in good faith before moving forward on anything of interest to them. We will keep you updated.

There are many ongoing issues, as well as new issues that will arise during this pandemic year. They will not all be solved easily. However, FUSE continues to advocate for solutions that will support and benefit our members and will never compromise on member safety or fair treatment.

On a happier note, we would like to draw your attention to our new website and newsletter. The website has important information that you will need. We will be continuing to update the website and provide additional information to you as we move forward. We hope you will find it accessible and useful. We especially want to draw your attention to the benefits that are afforded you through The Welfare Fund. We hope you will take the time to look at these. There are several really important benefits that have been afforded you. One new and especially important benefit during COVID is your access to telemedicine. This provides you with the ability to see a medical professional free of charge from your home. **This access will also provide you with acceptable documentation to be used for a doctor's note when needed.** Another new benefit is access to AFLAC resources free of charge while you are a member. These benefits are portable if you retire or resign from the district. Please make sure to review these benefits and offerings by the union on your behalf. **Know what you have before you need it.**

Another thing of note is that we have elected representatives for all buildings this year. Building representation is a vital link in communication with FUSE leadership. This is especially important in these new and every changing circumstances. We are grateful to the members who have volunteered to represent their buildings and keep us informed so that we can better serve your interests. Please take a moment to click the link and scroll down to view the [2020-2021 Building Representatives](#).

Thank you again for your confidence in me in this first year of my service to you as your President. I look forward to doing everything I can to make sure that all our members are safe and fairly dealt with.

MCB