

# THE BENTE INFORMER

VOLUME 18, EDITION 3

“Official publication for the Board of Education Non-Teaching Employees Union”

FALL 2020

[www.bentelocal2419.org](http://www.bentelocal2419.org)



## BENTE Holds “Do the Right Thing” Rally

Over one hundred members attended the “Do the Right Thing” BENTE Support Staff Rally held across from the Family Learning Center on Hart Street to protest over 200 projected layoffs.

The rally came soon after President DiClemente sent a detailed seventeen page plan to Superintendent Lesli Myers-Small and Members of the Board of Education that outlined how members could remain employed during the minimum ten week shutdown.

In addition to President DiClemente, five members painted a picture of how devastating layoffs will be to some of the lowest paid people in the District, many of them city residents who are already living paycheck to paycheck.

Food Service Unit Steward

Sonia Alvarado, Security Unit Steward Rickey Hepburn, SSO Christine Eldridge, Bilingual Cook Manager Wanda Mercado, and Recording Secretary Bonnie Ferrari all gave speeches to the media with a crowd of BENTE members cheering them on.

“When these young people come into the Rochester City School District. We protect them,” said SSO Rickey Hepburn. Our life is in danger every day.”

“I thought this was a family place to work,” Bonnie Ferrari said, referencing the fact that students are being dropped off at recreation centers as opposed to schools. “What can I say now? Students are our extended families. How could we shut the door on them?”

“These kids,” said Wanda

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Food Service Unit Steward Sonia Alvarado spoke to the press with members behind her at the “Do the Right Thing” Rally. Her entire speech in Spanish can be found on page 6.

## Election for BENTE President To Take Place On September 22

An election for the position of BENTE union president will take place on Tuesday, September 22nd at the BENTE union office located at 1600 Lyell Avenue.

The candidates for president include incumbent Dan DiClemente and challenger Embola Ekiller.

An election for sergeant-at-arms will no longer be needed since Debra Bowen decided not to run for the position and Joe Sansone was disqualified due to the fact that he does not have the required three years of union membership.

**Voting will take place from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00**

**p.m. on Tuesday, September 22, at the BENTE union office.**

Nominations for unit officers will take place at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 20th at the BENTE Union Office. A mailing recently went out to every member’s last known address.

Members are encouraged to come out and exercise their right to vote.

Larry Profetta (vice president), Barbara Zarpentine (secretary-treasurer), Bonnie Ferrari (recording secretary), and Zelder Bice (trustee) all ran unopposed and therefore were all deemed elected.

**2020-2021 BENTE UNION MEETING SCHEDULE**

**MEMBERSHIP** meetings take place at the BENTE Union office at 6:00PM

**MEMBERSHIP** meetings for night staff take place at the BENTE Union office on the following Thursday at 10:00AM

**Membership Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday, September 29, 2020**
- Tuesday, October 20, 2020**
- Tuesday, November 17, 2020**
- Tuesday, January 19, 2021**
- Tuesday, February 9, 2021**
- Tuesday, March 23, 2021**
- Tuesday, April 13, 2021**
- Tuesday, May 18, 2021**
- Tuesday, June 15, 2021**



**ELECTION FOR PRESIDENT WILL TAKE PLACE ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22nd!**



## Central Office

Unit Chair Louise “Weezy” Landry  
 Unit Vice Chair Robert Kwiecien  
 Unit Secretary Ana Burgos  
 Unit Steward Angelo Palmerini

## Elementary Clerical

Unit Chair Jessica Rinebold  
 Unit Vice Chair Judy Browne  
 Unit Secretary Veldra Simmons

## Food Service

Unit Chair Leonela Malinao  
 Unit Vice Chair Michele Niger  
 Unit Secretary Traci Darrisaw  
 Unit Steward Sonia Alvarado

## Plant Maintenance

Unit Chair Vacant  
 Unit Vice Chair Vacant  
 Unit Secretary David Breeding  
 Unit Steward Chris Capone

## Security

Unit Chair Roosevelt Murray  
 Unit Vice Chair Mary Graham  
 Unit Secretary Joe Jackson Jr.  
 Unit Steward Rickey Hepburn

## Custodial

Unit Chair Pete Torchia  
 Unit Vice Chair Karl Hardy  
 Unit Secretary Curtis Skinner  
 Unit Steward Vic Wilson

## Secondary Clerical

Unit Chair Jill Harold  
 Unit Vice Chair Lisa Poinan  
 Unit Secretary Kim Montana  
 Unit Steward Laura Kuhn

## OT/PT'S

Unit Chair Lynette Costello  
 Unit Vice Chair Carol Bednick-Carmel  
 Unit Secretary Wendy Irwin

## Attendance

Unit Chair Kenneth Davis  
 Unit Vice Chair Leslie Hunter  
 Unit Secretary Vacant  
 Unit Steward Sertzai Weld

## Transportation

Unit Chair William Hebbs  
 Unit Vice Chair Vacant  
 Unit Secretary Robin Fogle  
 Unit Steward April Terrigno



**Home School Assistants Kenneth Davis and Renee Joyner attended the BENTE Support Staff Rally holding signs “Essential Then, Essential Now” in support of several speakers from BENTE asking the BOE to Do the Right Thing!**



**BENTE PRIDE: #15 School Assistant Custodian Engineer Mark Rogers and Custodian Engineer Jamie Prescott with School Safety Officer Tamiko Matthews.**



## BENTE Pushes Back On City Councilman Gruber's Scheme



*For the second year in a row, Gruber tries to steer summer feeding at city recreation centers to Foodlink, where he is the Chief Strategy Officer*



For the second year in a row, City Councilman Mitch Gruber tried to take work away from RCSD Food Service workers to steer more business to his own employer, Foodlink.

though the District didn't want to feed the kids."

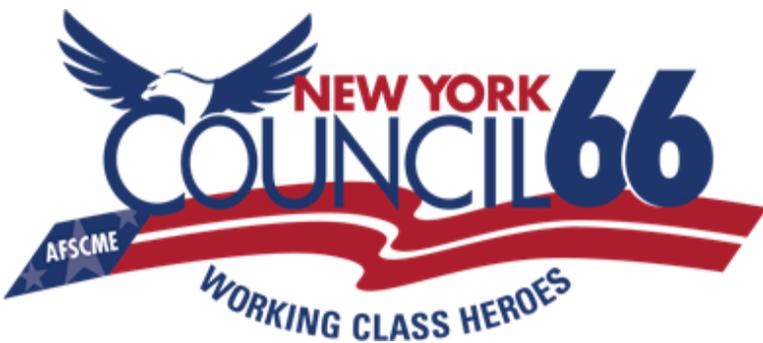
"It is an obvious conflict of interest for this guy to be actively involved in taking jobs away from our members in order to obtain a contract for his own employer," President DiClemente stated. "Our members count on this work to keep them employed during the summer, and Councilman Gruber obviously has no regard for their economic well-being."

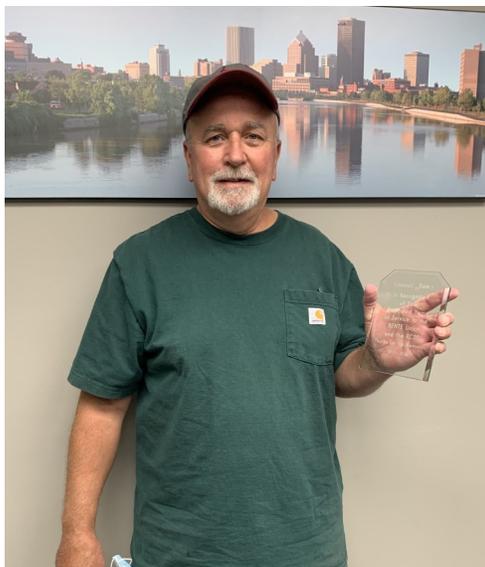
Gruber tried to convince other City Councilmembers at the meeting that the RCSD had no interest in feeding the kids over the summer, so it left the City no choice but to enter into an "emergency" contract with Foodlink, who just so happens to be his employer.

"We have nothing against Foodlink and the good work that they do for the community," DiClemente said. "But our members have been feeding kids in the summer city recreation sites for over thirty years. These are dedicated city residents who rely on summer work to feed their families. Now, all of a sudden, after thirty years the work is being taken away and you just happen to work for the same company who received the bid last year?"

"Disgusted," Recording Secretary and Cook Manager Bonnie Ferrari said when asked to describe how she felt after watching the public meeting that was held by City Council to discuss summer feeding. "It was beyond obvious how he tried to make it appear as

Gruber's term is up in November of 2021.





Trustee Jones (Don), a Mechanic in the Transportation Department and Lynette Costello, an Occupational Therapist and the Unit Chairperson for the Occupational, Physical, and COTA unit retired this year and were thanked by the Executive Board for their years of service to the union.

**Congratulations to the following retirees:** Leroy Kendrick, Willie Bogan, Don Jones, Jose Navedo, Domenica Gustke, Ronnie Green, Danya Turner, Wayne Bence, Jerome Trippe, Julie Froehlich, Cheryl Graves, Lisa Billet, Gina Volk, Coy Williams, Noreen McGrath, Joan Perrone, Diane George, David Douglas, Patricia Pierce, Albert Butts.



**Deb Bence**

Deb Bence, a clerk at Edison, passed away unexpectedly on July 29 at the early age of 51. Her fighting spirit will be sorely missed as she embodied the meaning of a union sister. Her husband, Wayne, said the following: "I will always hold you in my heart: you were my love, my motivator, the lady that kept me going when the times were hard. I'm glad you married me, it was the best 30 years of my life." **Rest in peace, Sister.**



**Kelvin Young**

Kelvin Young passed away peacefully in the afternoon of August 28, 2020 at the age of 65. Kelvin graduated from Franklin, where he worked as the Assistant Custodian, serving 36 years with the RCSD. He was always happy, fun-loving, and genuinely cared about people. His easy smile, humor, charm, and charity to others, earned him the love of many family members and friends. **Rest in peace, Brother.**

**LIFE INSURANCE POLICY:** All active BENTE members who are entitled to receive health insurance coverage are entitled to receive a **FREE** fully paid life insurance policy in the amount of \$10,000. **You must enroll with the RCSD in order to receive this benefit.** You should also make certain your beneficiary is up to date.

Please be advised that you also need to enroll in life insurance after an unpaid leave. Employees on an unpaid leave of absence shall be responsible for all life insurance premiums while on unpaid leave status in order to maintain coverage. Bargaining unit employees who retire shall be eligible to continue such life insurance coverage at their own expense.



## TELEMEDICINE CAN BE HELPFUL DURING COVID-19:

### What is telemedicine?

This is a benefit feature added to your Excellus BCBS medical plan. It provides 24/7 365 day on-demand access to U.S. board certified doctors and pediatricians—anytime, anywhere within the USA. This year, behavioral health coverage is an added benefit feature.

### Common conditions treated:

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Joint Ache
- Respiratory Infections
- Sinus Infections
- Cold & Flu
- Ear Aches
- Constipation
- Nausea
- Pink Eye
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Substance Use
- Stress
- Grief

**You can register online at: [ExcellusBCBS.com/Telemedicine](https://www.excellusbcbs.com/Telemedicine) or by calling 1-866-692-5045.**



Hola mi nombre es Sonia Alvarado. He sido una empleada del Distrito Escolar de Rochester por 25 años.

Actualmente trabajo como Gerente de la cafetería de la escuela Monroe High School. Empeze trabajando como ayudante en la cocina en la escuela Wilson Magnet High School en Genesee St. en el año 1995. Trabajé fuerte hasta lograr un nivel mas alto en nuestro departamento.

Soy madre de dos hijas hermosas y exitosas. Ellas estudiaron en la escuela Edison Tech. Actualmente una de ellas es maestra en la escuela #35. Nunca me imagine que ella llegaría a ser maestra. Estoy muy orgullosa de mis hijas. Soy abuela de un niño de 4 años y una niña que acaba de nacer hace 2 días. Vivo con mi esposo que también es empleado del distrito escolar. Mi yerno trabaja como cook-manager en la cocina central.

Mi trabajo es mi familia. Mi familia y yo encontramos mucho valor y satisfacción en lo que hacemos y para quien lo hacemos.

Me encantan los niños. Saber que puedo estar ahí para ellos me llena de mucha alegría. Para muchos de estos niños su único alimento es el que nosotros le brindamos. Sus sonrisas son muy valiosas. Saber que puedo contribuir en proveerles ese alimento me satisface. Hay mucha necesidad en nuestro distrito escolar. Me siento bien al saber que puedo aportar en darles un alimento nutritivo que les ayudara cada día. Ellos necesitan ese alimento para poder ser productivos en su aprendizaje y desarrollo. Muchos de estos niños se acercan a nosotros y nos abrazan.

Mis hermanas y hermanos miembros de nuestra Union de Bente estamos aquí reunidos para demostrar que hemos dado el todo y entregado nuestro corazón y esfuerzo a nuestros trabajos. Juntos hemos trabajado arduamente tomando todas las medidas necesarias durante la pandemia y lo seguiremos haciendo.

Saber que los estudiantes tienen un lugar seguro para ir a buscar su alimento diariamente es nuestra prioridad y satisfacción.

Estoy pidiendo a la Junta Escolar y a la Superintendente Dra. Leslie Myers-Small que mantenga las cafeterías abiertas para todo estudiante durante el periodo de aprendizaje remoto. Como van a cerrar las puertas del segundo hogar de muchos estudiantes? La escuela es su refugio y es donde pueden buscar su única comida.

Soy residente de la ciudad de Rochester al igual que muchos de mis compañeros.

Estamos dispuestos a trabajar durante la pandemia y apoyar los estudiantes que nos necesitan.

Gracias,

Sonia Alvarado



## BENTE Holds Rally (Continued from Page 1)

Mercado. “We could see the sadness in their eyes. Some of these children live in turmoil and now they have to face that turmoil 24/7. I am so afraid for them. We food service workers are their backbone. We are there to feed them. To make sure they are ok. We know their allergies. Don't give this one peanuts...or don't give him wheat or milk. We know them.”

“Just a short four years I have been with the RCSD and I have truly found my place,” said SSO Chris Eldridge. “I work with the same people that looked out for me when I was a student. I am a City resident. We do not need any more residents on unemployment. Our community cannot survive it.”

The rally ended with DiClemente exclaiming that the workers the District was looking to lay off are the same workers that were deemed essential. “They were essential then, and they're essential now,” he said. “Students need Support Staff!”

## Union Pushes Back On 200 Plus Layoffs

The BENTE Union continues to push back on more than 200 proposed layoffs to bargaining unit positions in food services and school security.

A proposal was sent to the District on August 23rd, outlining tasks that BENTE members could perform in order to remain employed.

“I can't for the life of me understand how teachers and staff are being allowed in schools but students cannot go there for remote learning,” President DiClemente stated. “Instead, they have these children congregating at recreation centers to learn remotely?”

The union also proposed home meal delivery and more student outreach through home visits and the delivery of chromebooks and care packages. The proposal pointed to over two million dollars in savings through vacancies not being filled over ten weeks, the loss of 10% night differential due to custodial staff remaining on days, and the reduction in overtime and substitute costs.

Talks began with the RCSD on Friday, September 4th to discuss the union's proposal. Members are encouraged to check their district e-mail and/or the BENTE website regularly for updates.



Jessica Rinebold (far right) with Congressman Jerry Nadler and attendees at the AFSCME conference for Civil Service in Washington DC.





School Security Unit Steward Rickey Hepburn took the crowd and the media by storm as he preached about how SSO's put their lives in danger every day to protect the kids, providing them with love and security.



## THE UNION DIFFERENCE

Life is better in a union. Having a voice on the job means better pay, better health care, a secure retirement and so much more. It means having a say in safety, staffing and other important issues that help us do our jobs and keep America running.

Being in a union means you have the right to be heard – and it means your coworkers have your back.

We have the power we need to fight for safe, effective workplac-

es. We make our communities stronger because our union is strong. Union members win. We earn more money. We have access to better health care. We're more likely to retire with a pension. We are better trained, have workplaces with higher safety standards and are more likely to have the resources we need to serve our communities.

We know how to win raises, secure health care, and fight for rights and respect at the bargaining table.

Thank you for being a union member and for being union proud!

### CHAIR OFFICERS

Dan DiClemente	President
Larry Profetta	Vice President
Barb Zarpentine	Sec./Treasurer
Bonnie Ferrari	Rec. Secretary
Wayne Collom	Sgt.-at-Arms
Wilbert Navedo	Sgt.-at-Arms

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Kenneth Davis	Attendance
Weezy Landry	Central Office
Pete Torchia	Custodial
Jessica Rinebold	Elementary
Leonela Malinao	Food Service
Jason Bayley	Maintenance
Lynette Costello	OT/PT's
Jill Harold	Secondary
Roosevelt Murray	Sentries
Robin Fogle	Transportation

### TRUSTEES

Zelder Bice
Pete DiBenedetto
Donald Jones

### STEWARDS

Sertzai Weld	Attendance
Laura Kuhn	Clerical
Vic Wilson	Custodial
Sonia Alvarado	Food Service
Chris Capone	Maintenance
Rickey Hepburn	Sentries
April Terrigno	Transportation

### CHIEF STEWARD

Ange Palmerini

### EDUCATIONAL COORDINATOR, EAP & STEWARD COORDINATOR

Weezy Landry

### ORIENTATION COORDINATOR

Veldra Simmons

### WEBSITE COORDINATOR

Laura Kuhn