

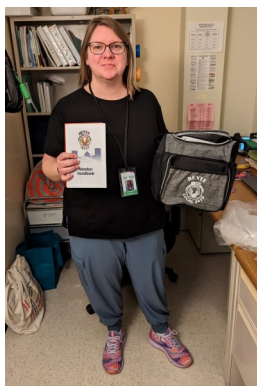
# THE BENTE INFORMER

VOLUME 20, EDITION 2

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

Winter 2023

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



Newly hired Occupational Therapist Teneal Eardman holds up her new Collective Bargaining Agreement and BENTE lunch bag.



Binion wins a gift card.

## BENTE UNION PROPOSES RECRUITMENT/RETENTION INCENTIVES

*Vacancies in the bargaining unit have proven hard to fill while some employees are leaving for better jobs with more pay, less stress, flexibility*

"We tried to get the District to see the value of our workers during COVID and encouraged the administration at the time to utilize some of the American Rescue Plan funds to reward workers who put themselves at risk during the pandemic with Covid pay," BENTE Union President Dan DiClemente said. "They had no interest in it, which was remarkable given the fact that they laid off school security and food service workers, slashed the hours of remaining food service workers, and refused to pay health care for laid off workers in the midst of a pandemic."

Others who came in to work did

so without a lot of knowledge of how dangerous the conditions were at the time the pandemic was just ramping up.

"It would have been a perfect opportunity for the administration and the Board of Education to step up and show their appreciation for the workers, but they chose not to," added Vice President Ange Palmerini. "Unfortunately, we can only file a grievance on a contractual violation; it is up to them if there is no contractual violation to morally do the right thing."

"We are taking a different angle now based upon the fact that we have a different climate due to an abundance of vacancies, cou-

pled with inflation and a competitive job market," Palmerini said.

"And we have a new administration under a different superintendent," DiClemente added. "We are proposing new incentives that will reward workers for remaining an employee at the District for a specific period of time while trying to attract better candidates as new employees."

The Union was successful last year in securing incentives for school security staff and bus drivers. Due to the large number of vacancies in those units, the District agreed. "They need to do something for everyone."

## AFSCME CONTINUES TO PUSH FOR TIER VI PENSION REFORM

AFSCME Representatives in Albany are continuing to lobby for reforms to the Tier VI pension system by utilizing the fact that the public sector continues to experience problems filling vacancies.

"We are doing everything we

can to make the benefits in the public sector more lucrative and right now, the differences between Tier 4 and Tier 6 are startling," said DiClemente, who is also President of AFSCME Council 66 (representing 8,500 workers across the state) and Interna-

tional Vice President for AFSCME (representing 1.3 million workers in the United States and Puerto Rico).

Changes to Tier VI are a legislative priority for us this year. We made some headway last year by lowering the vest-

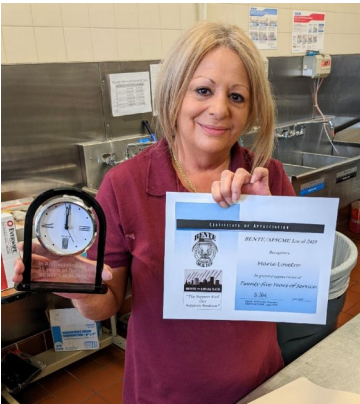
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## Be a BENTE Day Winner



If you are wearing your BENTE Union tee shirt on the first Friday of the month, please contact the union office to let us know and you will have an opportunity to win a gift card. “BENTE Day” was created over a decade ago in an effort to give members a sense of pride in their union; a day when members

express their solidarity by wearing BENTE paraphernalia, encouraged by a chance to win a gift card in the process. Remember to contact the office or send an e-mail to any of the staff to let us know you are wearing BENTE and we will enter you into the random drawing and notify you if you win.



Marie Lovetro, Food Services.



Sheila Smith, Food Services.



Janice Mangus, Food Services.



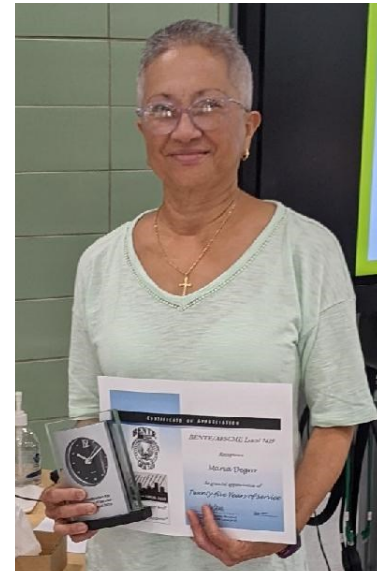
Mary Martinez, Clerical.

## 25-Year Award Winners

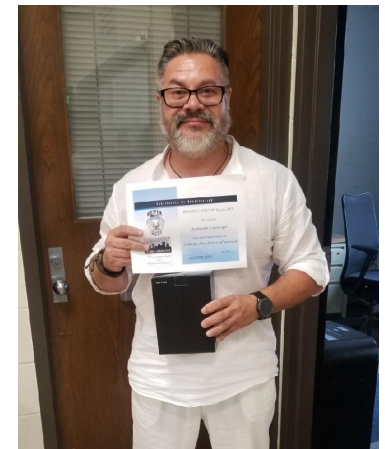
Continuing with the tradition that was picked up after the Board of Education ceased a longtime tradition of honoring employees who have completed 25-years of service, the BENTE Union continues to acknowledge those members who have completed 25-years in the district and the union.

A certificate and a clock are given at a membership meeting to recognize recipients for their years of service.

Unfortunately, due to COVID, membership meetings were suspended and some members as a result were missed. If you feel you were one of them, please contact the union office at 458-8670.



Maria Degro, Food Services.



Roberto Lorenzo, Transportation.



Ron Chandler, School Security.



Billy Griffin, School Security.



## Dues Increase

The annual union dues rate increase is based upon a formula that takes the average raise received by members throughout AFSCME and applies it to the percentage the rates are increased per month. This year, that rate was 3.9%, which will be an increase of \$1.55 **per month** for full-time workers.

The rates are set by the International according to the AFSCME Constitution, which states:

“Effective January 1, 2015 and annually thereafter, the dues of each local union shall be adjusted by applying the average percentage increase to its established

dues rate: provided however, that the increase in the local union dues rates shall be no less than the minimum dues rate increase established above by the International Union and allocated to local unions. The established per capita tax of councils shall be adjusted by applying the average percentage increase to its established per capita tax rates; provided however, that the increase in the council per capita rate shall be no less than the Council’s share of the minimum dues increase established above by the International Union and allocated to councils.”

## Tier VI Pension Reform

(Continued from Page 1)

ing time to five years and removing overtime calculations from the percentage workers paid during the pandemic. Because there is a lag in reporting earnings, those savings will be seen in the next couple of years.

DiClemente said that legislative changes can be made over time and that when he started in Tier IV everyone was required to pay into the system 3% until retirement. Later, the NYS legislature, based upon the health of the pension fund, decided that after ten years in the system, everyone in Tier IV no longer had to pay.

The problem at this time is the volatility of the stock market and the rate of inflation that could cause some concern in making changes to the revenue of the pension fund. It is a difficult balance to strike.

“We have a long term goal to get this done and will not give up on it even if we are unable to achieve it this budget year,” DiClemente said. “Our political action representatives in Albany are hot on getting some progress on this.”

**Congratulations to the following retirees:** Cleodis Beaty, Michael Bullard, Samuel Morales, Oscar Rayam, Kenneth Reed, Thomas Madison, Jose Illaraza, Lisa Travick-Elim, Jasmine Vazquez, Carol Bednick-Carmel, Richard Harrison, Sara Carasquillo, Christine Moffatt, Dana Michaud, Alicia Coniglio, Gwendolyn James, Rohan Ramsahi, Michelle Griffin, Richard Garbutt, Lori Smith, Antonio Williams, Robert Bartholomay, Andrea Hyrhorenko, Kathleen Tkac, Sheila Wall, Patricia Walker, Timothy Seward, Deborah Tarantello, Elba Jimenez, Karen Cottorone-Young, Eric Peterson, Wanda Martell, Barb Hewa, and Elton Smith.



## Rich Iles, Retired Messenger, Custodial Worker



Former Messenger and custodial worker Rich Iles passed away on November 7th 2022. He was born on September 28, 1964 at Rochester General Hospital. Rich is survived by his loving wife Kathryn

Iles and their son, Jacob Stewart. He was a beloved Uncle "Fun-cle Rich" to many nieces and nephews, along with great-nieces and great-nephews who loved him dearly.

Rich graduated from Gates-Chili high school and was a retiree of the Rochester City School District after 32 years. He loved to hunt and fish with several close friends and family. He was an avid fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Philadelphia Flyers.

Contributions may be made to: St. Jude Children's Hospital in his memory.

***"Wherever you find me, you'll find me with a smile"***



## Gene P. Scialdone. Retired Bus Driver

Holley - Suddenly on February 15, 2022 @ age 72

Survived by wife Sherry of almost 52 years. Daughter Kristine (Christopher) Barrett, son Mark (Trista Mosher) Scialdone, Twin grandsons Jacob & Joshua (Kevin Tracey) Barrett. Brother-in-law Thomas Gasser, many nieces, nephews, cousins, & very dear friends.

Gene was a retiree of Eastman Kodak Co. and the Rochester City School District. He was a former 10 yr member of the Holley Volunteer Fire Dept. & Ambulance Corp. Gene had a soft heart for the children at Mary Cariola that he transported everyday and had developed personal relationships with them and their families. As a kind & caring gentleman, he was always ready to help and lend a hand to anyone in need. "Gentle Gene" is and will always be sadly missed. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on May 12th, 11:00am at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Brockport.



## Miss Jackie Scott. Food Service Helper, East, seen above with Roland Williams

An active Food Service Helper for 23 years at the RCSD, "Miss Jackie" as she was affectionately called, passed away on December 10, 2022, leaving a legacy behind at East High in the cafeteria, where she was beloved by her coworkers, students and other staff alike.

"Miss Jackie was an inspiration to all," said John Pelc, Cafeteria Manager at East High. "Jackie loved her students and they loved her. Grandma, Mom and Friend to all who ate here at East. Her smile lit up the cafeteria, as she was dedicated to the children of East High School and she will be greatly missed."



## OT/PT Unit Chair Anna Yager Appointed to Health Care Committee



BENTE President Dan DiClemente has appointed Occupational and Physical Therapist (OT/PT) Unit Chairperson as a representative to the RCSD/UNION Health Care Committee.

Yager will join President DiClemente, Vice President Ange Palmerini, and Chief Steward Jessica Rinebold as committee members from BENTE. Every bargaining unit has representation on the committee and each union gets one vote. The members are there to ensure adequate coverage and representation when issues are brought up regarding any changes in benefits.

“We wanted someone who is involved in the union, but not in a union leadership role to gain a different perspective. Anna is well respected and she is a person who is steadfast in protecting the health care for all of the members we have fought so hard to achieve. I was happy she did not hesitate to accept the appointment when asked.”

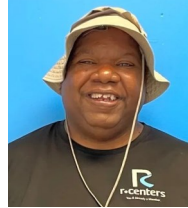
## AFSCME Council 66 Communications Director Maria Fisher spotlighting AFSCME members



Newly hired AFSCME NY Council 66 Communications Director and Political Action Coordinator Maria Fisher has been spotlighting AFSCME NY Council 66 members by reporting on their personal stories.

The story on the right about City Worker Jeff Reese is an example of her work. We are looking for BENTE members who wish to tell their story.

If interested in being considered to be featured in Member Spotlight, please e-mail Maria at [MFisher@afscmecouncil66.org](mailto:MFisher@afscmecouncil66.org).



## Member Spotlight, Jeff Reese, City Local 1635

If you ask AFSCME Council 66 local 1635 member Jeff Reese what it's like to hold onto hope, his answer might be a surprising one. Some say Jeff is a medical miracle. Others might say that Jeff is a miraculous force in our community.

In Jeff's words, “I'm just real.” Jeff has worked for the City of Rochester recreation department for over 25 years. He started as a Day Camp Supervisor at Lake Riley Lodge and now works as a Recreation Youth Development Specialist at Carter Street Recreation Center.

Jeff sees recreation centers as second homes and safe havens; special places in our community where kids can just be healthy and happy. “Rec staff don't receive IEPs or dossiers on youth,” he says. “We just meet young people where they are and get to know them. We earn those relationships with them and their families.”

During the school year, many young people will come to a Rec center mid-afternoon and stay well into the evening, spending hours playing, talking, eating and being supported by the adults on-staff.

In the summer, the Rec centers are open daily at no cost to families — a service many families desperately need. Jeff recalls one particular Rec participant who was spending a lot of time at the center. Through their conversations, Jeff learned that the reason this young person was at the center so often was because the electricity had been turned off at their home.

Jeff, in turn, connected the family with services to get their power back on. That — in his eyes — is where hope combined with action to make great things happen. Hope, though, can often come at a high cost. Throughout his career, Jeff has mournfully watched young people who were once so full of life suddenly become the victims of violence.

“I constantly worry about them and the ever-present violence in their lives. I've been to more funerals for young people than I can count,” he said. Still, he holds onto hope while he works diligently to do his part in helping young people to not only survive, but also thrive.

Jeff's fortitude was most challenged by his own battle with Covid in 2020. Hospitalized for over 20 days and connected to a ventilator, Jeff had to fight for his life.

Just before being diagnosed, he was working nonstop alongside Rec center staff to support the community with access to food, despite all centers being shut down due to the pandemic. At one point during his recovery, one of Jeff's lungs collapsed, his heart stopped, he “coded” and had to be resuscitated.

Awakening later from a coma, he witnessed a nurse in his room sobbing with joy, grateful that — in her words — “one of the sickest patients in Rochester was alive.”

Recovery took a lot of hard work. Jeff had to relearn walking, talking and using his hands again. Being on the ventilator for so long depleted many of his abilities. However, Jeff was determined to not let Covid defeat him. He credits family, prayer and his care team at University of Rochester Strong Memorial Hospital for his survival.

Now, Jeff is back to serving our community. When asked why he decided to come back to an emotionally and physically challenging job after a near death experience, he described it like this:

“There are multi-millionaires who will never ever feel what I feel when I do this work. They will never know what it is to have a suffering young person trust you because they know you're real.”

Maybe the miracle in Jeff's story isn't just a medical one. Maybe in a hurting community, it is miraculous that there are people like him still dedicated to using their lives to ease so much pain, still filled with so much hope.



## Unit Vacancies Available

**Shawn Ovington** by virtue of leaving the RCSD for another job has opened up a vacancy as Unit Chairperson of School Food Services. **Karl Hardy** has also departed the RCSD and this has opened up a vacant position as Unit Chairperson for the Custodial unit. Both the Food Service and Custodial Unit Chairperson positions are voting seats on the BENTE/AFSCME Executive Board, which meets 9 months out of the year, mostly on zoom. Anyone interested in these positions should contact the union office at 458-8670 or you can e-mail dan@bentelocal2419.org. You must be a member of the unit where the vacancy exists.

There is also a Unit Vice Chairperson vacancy in Secondary Schools (clerical) and a Unit Secretary position available in Security.

## UNIT OFFICERS

### ATTENDANCE

Unit Chair Kenneth Davis  
Vice Chair Leslie Hunter  
Unit Secretary Jeanette Gonzalez  
Unit Steward Sertzai Weld

### CENTRAL OFFICE

Unit Chair Louise Landry  
Vice Chair Bob Kwiecien  
Unit Secretary Ana Burgos  
Unit Steward Jessica Rinebold

### CLERICAL UNIT STEWARD

Laura Kuhn

### CUSTODIAL

Unit Chair Vacant  
Vice Chair Vacant  
Unit Secretary Curtis Skinner  
Unit Steward Chris Capone  
Unit Steward Vic Wilson



### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Unit Chair Angelic Mendez  
Vice Chair Abigail Fuentes  
Unit Secretary Laura Stam

### FOOD SERVICES

Unit Chair Vacant  
Vice Chair Debra Bowen  
Unit Secretary Traci Darrisaw  
Unit Steward Leonela Malinao

### OT-PT

Unit Chair Anna Yager  
Vice Chair Heather Monette  
Unit Secretary Stephanie Malone

### PLANT MAINTENANCE

Unit Chair Patrick Soto  
Vice Chair Miguel Gonzalez  
Unit Secretary David Breeding

### SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Unit Chair Jill Harold  
Vice Chair Vacant  
Unit Secretary Kim Montana

### SECURITY

Unit Chair Roosevelt Murray  
Vice Chair Sandra Beasley  
Unit Secretary Vacant  
Unit Steward Rickey Hepburn

### TRANSPORTATION

Unit Chair April Terrigino  
Vice Chair Robin Fogle  
Unit Secretary Edith Sanders  
Unit Steward A.J. Williams

### CHAIR OFFICERS

Dan DiClemente President  
Ange Palmerini Vice President  
Barb Zarpentine Sec./Treasurer  
Sonia Alvarado Rec. Secretary  
Wayne Collom Sgt.-at-Arms  
Zelder Bice Sgt.-at-Arms

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Kenneth Davis Attendance  
Weezy Landry Central Office  
Vacant Custodial  
Angelic Mendez Elementary  
Vacant Food Service  
Patrick Soto Maintenance  
Anna Yager OT/PT's  
Jill Harold Secondary  
Roosevelt Murray Security  
April Terrigino Transportation

### TRUSTEES

Pete DiBenedetto  
Noelia Garcia  
Stacia Goldberg

### STEWARDS

Sertzai Weld Attendance  
Laura Kuhn Clerical  
Chris Capone Custodial  
Vic Wilson Custodial  
Leonela Malinao Food Service  
Rickey Hepburn Sentries  
AJ Williams Transportation

### CHIEF STEWARD

Jessica Rinebold

### EDUCATIONAL COORDINATOR, EAP & STEWARD COORDINATOR

Weezy Landry

### ORIENTATION COORDINATOR

Veldra Simmons

### WEBSITE COORDINATOR

Laura Kuhn





AFSCME International Vice President Dan DiClemente had the distinct honor of meeting Georgia ICON Stacey Abrams at the AFSCME International Convention in Philadelphia.



AFSCME International President Lee Saunders with BENTE Sergeant-at-Arms Zelder Bice and BENTE Recording Secretary Sonia Alvarado at a dinner held by AFSCME Council 66.



AFSCME Council 66 Communications Director Maria Fisher, BENTE Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Zarpentine, Recording Secretary Sonia Alvarado, and Vice President Ange Palmerini.





## Health Insurance Rates Decrease 1.3% for BENTE Members in 2023

Due to the BENTE Union and the other unions banding together to push back on former CFO Carleen Pierce's attempt to move a surplus in the Health Insurance fund to the RCSD General fund, the surplus was used to offset any increase in insurance rates for 2023.

In fact, for BENTE Members, due to the fact that Healthy Rewards was given up during the last round of contract negotiations, the union made the argument that it lowered health care costs and therefore the members should share in that savings. As a result, the rates for active employees paying 5% for the Core Plan or 15% for the Enhanced Plan will actually see a decrease of 1.3% in the rates for 2023.



Anthony DiBenedetto & Miguel Gonzalez (Glazing); Jason Rodriguez, Alvin DeLeon, Sheldon Demarco, Miguel Negron and Wilfredo Cruz (Grounds).

## Lead School Safety Officers Attend Leadership Training in November 2022 at MCC Amidst Increasing School Safety and Security Concerns



**Top Row:** Ron Chandler, Alfonso Hilliard, Kasheen Kirkland, James Reeves, Ronnie Crawford, Yahaira Navarro, Willie Mason, Israel Rodriguez, Diego Ortiz, Sixto Bermudez, Ronald Johnson, Herman Humphries.

**Bottom Row:** Darrick Blue, Jameson Salter, Roosevelt Murray, Gabriel Gonzalez, Deverin Dillon, Joe Jackson, and Jonathan Robinson.

### BENTE Monthly Lead SSO Meetings to Resume

The BENTE leadership will resume meetings with the Lead SSO's in an effort to better understand the safety concerns that the security

staff is facing due to the increase in violence that is spilling from the city into the schools.

The first meeting will involve members of City Council, who are interested in getting the perspective of the workers who are directly involved with the problems that exist with school security.

"There isn't enough of an effort to go to the people who do these jobs and understand first hand the challenges that are faced in keeping schools safe," BENTE President Dan DiClemente said. "That needs to be changed. These are the people in the field dealing with the violence under extreme physical and emotional stress. They need to be taken seriously and not dismissed because some politicians have their own perspective on how they want to be perceived on issues involving police and counseling.

Students and staff need to feel safe in an environment that should consider safety the most important factor in allowing students the ability to learn. And staff members should not feel threatened to go to work.

Our members, especially in security, are being asked to place themselves in dangerous situations, whether it be violence or during COVID, and we are advocating for better pay and/or incentives, but safety is our first and foremost concern.

We are looking forward to reconvening the meetings and to involve others who are willing to listen to the rank and file and are able to help.

### MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

- February 7, 2023
- March 7, 2023
- April 4, 2023
- May 2, 2023

5:30 pm 3545 Buffalo Rd,  
Suite 9

**LABEL**



This publication was printed at the BENTE union office