

May 2018

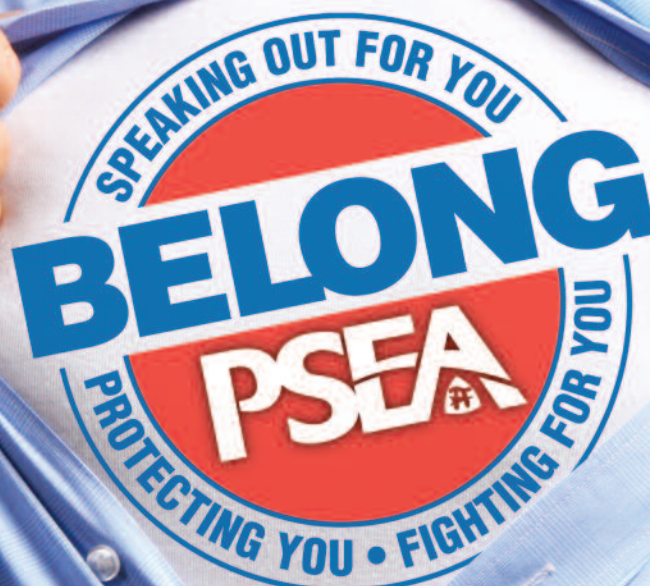
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# Voice



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Our Strength  
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### PSEA Mission

We are members who promote, protect, and advocate for our schools, students, and professions.

## The Voice for Education

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May 2018

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### Our Story and Our Strength is You

Since its founding in 1852, PSEA has been fighting for public education. Since 20,000 members marched on the state Capitol in 1968 for better working conditions, PSEA has delivered. That is a great story – one that is important to tell.



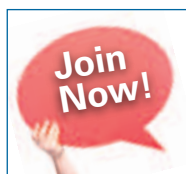
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# WIN

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## What our opponents fail to understand

**M**y fellow PSEA officers and I have been working the phones.

The three of us have called every local association president in PSEA this spring to update them on a case now before the Supreme Court called *Janus v. AFSCME*.

Deep-pocketed special interests are waging this court battle to prevent unions like PSEA from charging fees for the services unions provide. It's part of a larger campaign to further rig the rules against working people.

Our opponents are doing this because they know what we know – that strong unions are the best vehicle that working people have to level the economic playing field for all Americans.

What they fail to understand is that when we stick together, nothing can stop us.

In recent weeks, we have been reminded just how true this is.

The brave educators in West Virginia stuck together in their fight for fair family wages. A nine-day strike in the Mountain State ended in early March with state officials approving a 5 percent pay raise, boosting the salaries of some of the lowest-paid educators in the nation.

Against all odds, the West Virginia teachers won – by standing shoulder to shoulder and making their collective voices heard.

Inspired by West Virginia, educators and support professionals in Okla-

homa and Kentucky are now taking a stand for themselves and their students – fighting back against funding cuts, large class sizes, inadequate pay, and attacks on their pensions.

Meanwhile, there is growing momentum among graduate assistants at colleges and universities across the country to organize into unions to ad-



**What they fail to understand is that when we stick together, nothing can stop us.**

vocate for the salaries and benefits they deserve.

In each case, individuals are recognizing that they can do more together than they can apart.

In the same way, PSEA is only as strong as the members who belong. We all need to belong to effectively negotiate our salaries, benefits, and working conditions. Membership is strength.

The forces behind the *Janus* case may have the money advantage, and

they are using it to try to undermine our strength.

But they will fail, even if the Supreme Court rules in their favor.

Why? Because we will stick together.

It's our secret weapon.

It's what makes PSEA a force to be reckoned with.

It is our solidarity that will allow us to weather the coming storm. 🍀

Email Dolores McCracken:  
[dmccracken@psea.org](mailto:dmccracken@psea.org)

### Jobs at PSEA

For a list of all PSEA job vacancies, visit [www.psea.org/jobs](http://www.psea.org/jobs)



## Connect with PSEA

Do you want to learn about standardized testing reforms? Share a great photo with your colleagues? Tell a story about how a student called you a hero? PSEA's Facebook page is a great place to do it.

**Join our community today and connect with members just like you.**

## Bills take aim at subcontracting

One of the biggest threats education support professionals face is the loss of their jobs through subcontracting.

It is also one of the worst moves school districts can make. Subcontracting to private companies rarely saves money, it negatively impacts the quality of support services to public schools, and it harms communities since the vast majority of ESPs live in the school districts that they serve.

Two state lawmakers have introduced bipartisan legislation to make subcontracting attempts more transparent and open to public scrutiny.

“If we get the facts out about the downside of subcontracting, school board members who push to subcontract our jobs will think twice about it,” said Dawn Bandle, ESP Region presi-

dent. “Subcontracting is a bad idea, and it makes no sense.”

The bills introduced by Sen. John Blake, D-Lackawanna/Luzerne/Monroe, and Rep. Aaron Kaufer, R-Luzerne, would prohibit school entities from subcontracting services currently provided by school employees unless the school entities:

- First solicit proposals for public review.
- Identify three-year cost projections.
- Disclose cost comparisons between the services provided by school employees and the for-profit company.
- Hold a public hearing to present the selected proposal and receive public input.

“ESP members’ contributions are too important to sacrifice,” said PSEA Treasurer Jeff Ney. “We need to honor

the incredible work that they do in our schools every day – and these bills are a good way to do it.”

He added that subcontracting is not just an issue facing ESPs, it is one that affects the entire Association and public education in general.

“These are hardworking employees who care deeply about the school districts they serve. Most of them live in the districts where they work, and many of them send their own children to these schools,” Ney said. “Unlike a private company, they are focused on much more than the bottom line.

“The bills introduced by Sen. Blake and Rep. Kaufer are a top priority for PSEA, and I urge all members to advocate on their behalf.”

# PSEAWEAR

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# Wolf makes education top priority

Since he took office, Gov. Wolf has made reversing nearly \$1 billion in school funding cuts his top priority. His 2018-19 proposed budget continues that commitment.

"Over the last three years, we've invested in our schools and reversed the billion dollars in cuts that were made under the previous administration, cuts that led to larger class sizes, mass layoffs of educators, and cuts to programs like full-day kindergarten."

- Gov. Tom Wolf

**\$100 million**

increase in basic education funding.

**\$20 million**

increase in special education funding.

**\$40 million**

increase in pre-kindergarten and Head Start funding.

**\$60 million**

increase in career and technical education initiatives, including a \$10 million increase in the career and technical education subsidy.



**W**ith the general election just months away, it's not too early to ask this question: Are public schools and educators better off now than they were four years ago?

For most, the answer is a resounding "Yes!" And that's why PSEA wants Gov. Tom Wolf to spend another four years in the governor's office.

"When we recommend candidates, we look at where they stand on issues that make a difference for our schools, our students, and our members," said PSEA Vice President Rich Askey. "That's why we support Gov. Wolf. He's made public education his top priority, and he's delivered."

Askey pointed to Wolf's accom-

plishments: reversing nearly \$1 billion in school funding cuts, signing a bill that protects PSEA members' pensions, reducing the length of standardized tests in grades three through eight by an average of 20 percent, and asking PSEA members to help him write Pennsylvania's plan to implement the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

"Tom Wolf has been a friend to public education from day one," Askey said. "Whether he's fighting for school funding, reducing standardized testing, or just listening to PSEA members like us, he's put public schools front and center – and he'll keep doing that in his second term."

Askey warned that PSEA members

shouldn't take Wolf's re-election for granted. Despite Wolf's successes, the race will be competitive, and public education issues could decide it – one way or the other.

"Are we better off now than we were four years ago?" he asked. "The answer is clearly 'yes.' Now, we need to get ready to vote to make sure that we continue this progress – and make sure that we don't lose everything we've gained in the past four years. That's why we need to vote for Tom Wolf."

*For more on the election, see Pages 15-17. 📖*

## More graduation options proposed

**P**SEA is supporting a bill that would give high school students additional options to fulfill graduation requirements.

Senate Bill 1095, introduced by state Sen. Tom McGarrigle, R-Chester/Delaware, would allow students who do not score proficient on the Keystone exams to demonstrate their readiness to graduate through alternative routes.

"Standardized tests aren't the only way to measure students' abilities, and they're certainly not the best way to do it," said PSEA President Dolores McCracken. "Sen. McGarrigle's bill recognizes there are several valid and rigorous options to measure students' postsecondary readiness."

Under the proposed legislation, students not scoring proficient on the Keystone exams could fulfill graduation

requirements by:


- Meeting or exceeding a composite score across Keystone exams in algebra I, biology, and literature, and demonstrating at least "basic" performance on each of the three exams.
- Meeting or exceeding local grade requirements in subjects tested by the Keystone exams and completing a subject-specific advanced placement, international baccalaureate, or armed services vocational aptitude test, gaining acceptance in a registered apprenticeship program, or attaining a career readiness certificate.
- Meeting or exceeding local grade requirements in subjects tested by the Keystone exams and presenting at least three pieces of evidence from the student's career portfolio, which is required for federal accountability under

the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The bill would take effect when the delay in using the Keystone exams as a graduation requirement expires during the 2019-20 school year.

It comes on the heels of legislation passed by the General Assembly last year, and also supported by PSEA, to allow career and technical education students to demonstrate their competency to graduate through their grades, alternative assessments, and industry-based certifications.

PSEA also supported the legislation for career and technical education students, and McCracken said additional steps are needed.

"I applaud Sen. McGarrigle for recognizing more work needs to be done, and more options need to be available to all students," McCracken said. 

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## Governor turns to PSEA for school safety

If you want to address issues in schools, it stands to reason that you talk to people who work in schools.

That is exactly what Gov. Tom Wolf did in the aftermath of the shooting deaths of 17 students and staff in Parkland, Florida – the latest in a string of shootings that has reignited the debate about school safety.

Wolf approached PSEA for suggestions, and PSEA asked members to offer their views. Nearly 1,000 members responded, and their comments were the basis for recommendations presented by PSEA President Dolores McCracken before the state House Education Committee in March. Her testimony and PSEA's school safety report can be viewed at

[www.psea.org/schoolsafety](http://www.psea.org/schoolsafety).

"Students and educators should be able to walk into their schools without the threat of violence hanging over their heads," McCracken said. "But it is going to take action, and we applaud Gov. Wolf for taking the lead on this discussion in Pennsylvania, and for seeking the opinions of those who are closest to students.

"I'm deeply appreciative of our members for their thoughtful and passionate suggestions on steps to prevent these tragedies."

McCracken noted that addressing the physical safety of buildings was one of the most common suggestions from members. Other suggestions included more student support services

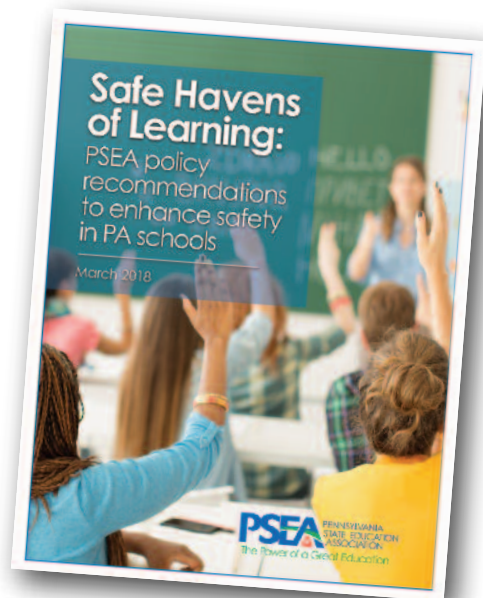
and more personnel who provide these services.

She told lawmakers that the horrific shootings at Parkland, and previous ones in Sandy Hook in Connecticut in 2012 and in Columbine in Colorado in 1999 "aren't going to stop on their own."

"I know it is challenging to find consensus to find the resources," McCracken said. "Yes, making our schools safe will require investments. But think of the people of Florida, Connecticut, or Colorado having to look back with regret ... Let us not look back with regret. Let us not wait for it to be our turn before we act when we could act now." 🍎

### PSEA President Dolores McCracken highlighted the following school safety priorities before the House Education Committee:

- Increase appropriations for school safety grants.
- Focus on student wellness.
- Establish threat assessment and crisis teams.
- Work with Congress to protect the Title I, II, and IV funding designed to provide healthy and secure learning environments.
- Provide space and opportunity for school districts to work together to find customized solutions.



Read the full report at [www.psea.org/schoolsafety](http://www.psea.org/schoolsafety)



Our Story and  
Our Strength  
is **You**





It's a great story.

From PSEA's origins in 1852, the Association has been fighting for public education. And since that cold March day in 1968, when nearly 20,000 educators flooded the Capitol steps in Harrisburg to demand better salaries, benefits, and working conditions, that's what PSEA has delivered.

That is a great story.

And, across Pennsylvania, local leaders are reminding their members about how important it is to belong to PSEA.

Why?

Before the end of

June, the U.S.

Supreme Court will issue an opinion in *Janus v. AF-SCME*, a case designed to reverse 40 years of legal precedent and aimed at crippling public sector unions like ours.

The theory behind it, pushed hard by well-funded union adversaries, is that non-union employees cov-

ered by union contract protections shouldn't have to pay "fair share" fees for the union-negotiated and union-provided services they enjoy.

In other words, *Janus* proponents argue, non-union employees should get those services for free.

"PSEA's strength comes from our membership," said PSEA President Dolores McCracken. "Because we have so many members in so many local associations, we can bargain for the salaries, benefits, and working conditions our members deserve. Without those numbers, we could lose that leverage."

As McCracken has said time and time again, PSEA's suc-

cess in ensuring that members earn what they deserve and are treated with respect is a great story. She and PSEA's other executive officers – Vice President Rich Askey and Treasurer Jeff Ney – are urging every local leader to tell it.

"Rich, Jeff, and I have personally called every PSEA local

president and asked them to hold one-on-one conversations with their members to remind them how important it is to belong to PSEA," McCracken said. "That's 1,044 phone calls. And we were

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**The point is that we're all in this together – and our strength is in our numbers. The key word is 'we.' Together and united, we're strong.**

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happy to make each and every one of them."

The response has been overwhelmingly positive, according to McCracken.

Across Pennsylvania, members are also having conversations about the importance of belonging to their local associations and PSEA, and how one strong state Association helps all locals.

"The point is that we're all in this together – and our strength is in our numbers," she said. "The key word is 'we.' Together and united, we're strong."

That strength not only helps to secure strong local contracts, salaries, benefits, and working conditions, but also translates into pro-public education policies that keep class sizes low, ensure that state funding flows into public schools, and reduce the time kids spend on standardized tests.

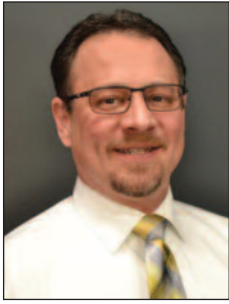
None of that is possible without a strong membership – the kind of strong membership PSEA has enjoyed for decades.

"I really believe in this Association," McCracken said. "And I know that our members believe in it, too. They understand just how crucial it is to belong. And they understand that choosing not to belong will make it tougher to get the compensation and protections we all deserve."

McCracken has said that PSEA can't do much to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court justices in the *Janus* case, but they can tell PSEA's story.

A story this great is a powerful tool.

*Here's how some local leaders are telling it:*



## A personal touch

**T**he digital age has greatly enhanced communications, but there is still nothing like personal conversations.

That is the approach being taken in the Indiana Area Education Association, Indiana County, this spring.

For the 230-member local's membership retention drive, EA President Mike Tshudy, Vice President Paul McCue, and Membership Chair Jason Rougeaux planned a sort of "world building tour."

Their goal was to visit groups of 10 to 12 teachers in all of the Indiana Area School District's six buildings.

"We thought this was a more efficient and non-confrontational way to reach members," Tshudy said. "Rather than just the union president or another officer approaching a member about the benefits of the union, the roundtable format encourages more interaction. We can ask them what they see as the benefits of union membership and go from there. If anyone starts questioning the value of membership, we address that."

The officers make sure various points are touched on – representation on negotiations, grievances, and arbitration; the importance of PSEA's UniServs, other staff members, and the Association's various divisions; and member benefits programs.

"We particularly note the \$1 million in liability insurance that they get as members that non-members don't," Tshudy said.

Bargaining unit members are covered by the contract and the union's duty of fair representation. Association members have additional benefits such as legal representation in licensure and certification matters, and for unemployment compensation or retirement benefits.

As the *Janus* ruling awaits, Tshudy said the officers stress that if all locals across the state lose members it will have a trickle-down effect to all locals.

"If locals lose membership, that has an impact on the state Association in terms of staff, and less staff makes it more difficult for local leaders to do our jobs," he said. "Members need to realize the importance of the link between the state and local levels." 🟢

## Your job insurance

**W**hen leaders of the Parkland EA hold a luncheon with potential new members before the start of every school year, they do two things.

They talk about the advantages of union membership, and the rights and representation they attain. Then, they show the EA's contract with the Parkland School District, Lehigh County, and compare it to one from North Carolina, a non-union friendly state. Parkland's contract covers 92 pages. The one from North Carolina is a single page.

"Most sign right there," said Sandi Gackebach, Parkland EA president for the past 10 years.

But the EA's engagement with its 640 members doesn't end there. It is an ongoing process.

As part of an emphasis on personal engagement, there is a building representative for every 15 members. The building reps make contact with new teachers right away, and they are continually in touch with all members.

"This puts a face to a name, and members know they have someone they can contact directly if they have questions or concerns," Gackebach said. "Having a person they can talk to directly is very important."

Gackebach herself also makes it a point to make one-on-one contact with members, and when there is a major issue she makes a video that is digitally distributed to all members.

The local has only six non-members, but she admits the pending *Janus* ruling has her on edge.

A major point she and other leaders in the local are making is that their union dues are really no different than what members pay for insurance in their personal lives.

"You pay homeowners insurance, you pay car insurance. Well, this is your job insurance," Gackebach said.

And when it comes to insurance, Parkland EA leaders are emphasizing the liability insurance PSEA members get.

Gackebach said the local shares statistics on Parkland teachers, including three in the past year, who have had what proved to be unfounded claims against them for alleged mishandling of students.

"One children and youth claim will cost \$2,500 just to talk to a lawyer," she said. "Even if the charges are unfounded, they still have to be defended."

Local leaders also note PSEA is not just a union but a professional organization that lobbies on professional issues and provides benefits such as Act 48 credits.

"We emphasize that the union is them," Gackebach said. "It's not just their leadership." 🟢





# Working for educators and public education

**A**n approach to member engagement the State College EA adopted five years ago is paying off today, as the local's leaders emphasize how important it is to continue to belong to their association.

State College EA President Eugene Ruocchio commended PSEA for being proactive in the face of the *Janus* case and has made it clear to his membership that State College is going to do its part to tell PSEA's story.

One approach has been soliciting emails from teachers in states without strong collective bargaining rights and sharing them within the local.

"That has been helpful," Ruocchio said. "A lot of members really don't know what it's like to work in a right-to-work state.

"This is another example of why it is so important to support the Association, and we are sharing that with members and noting this is where their dues go. PSEA is supporting the profession and public education."

The EA started making member communications a top priority after the negotiating team had dinner five years ago and talked about the importance of having engaged members.

In addition to being involved in lengthy negotiations with the State College Area School District, Centre County, the EA was soon facing a leadership void – its president of 12 years was stepping down.

"We were talking about the importance of not only being a member, but also an active member, and our lead negotiator, Tod McPherson, came up with the idea of changing our leadership structure," said Ruocchio.

Rather than a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, the idea was to have three vice presidents – one each at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

"Not only did we think the new president could use additional support, it increased the number of people who are in the know," Ruocchio said.

And as the new president at the time, Ruocchio decided to put the extra people to good use in the 600-member local.

The intensity of the local's communications with members has steadily ratcheted up.

"I took it upon myself to say, 'we need to be in our members' faces as much as the district is,'" Ruocchio said. "This district has a logo that it puts on all of its communications. We needed to be doing the same thing with SCEA."

Listserves were created and designed so that in addition to blanket ones for all members, they could also be broken down for individual buildings. After each faculty meeting, 10-minute EA meetings started to be held.

"As issues like payroll deduction surfaced we made sure we had enough people on board to let members know SCEA is working on this; PSEA is working on this," Ruocchio said. 🟢



A person with long brown hair, seen from behind, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt and a bright red cape. The word "BELONG" is printed in large, bold, blue capital letters across the back of the cape. They are standing in a classroom with other students at desks in the background.

# Crucial Supreme Court ruling looms

**T**he U.S. Supreme Court will soon be ruling on a case that holds enormous implications for PSEA and all public sector unions.

The issue at stake in *Janus v. AFSCME* is whether public sector unions can continue to charge non-members "fair share fees" for the representation and benefits they receive under collective bargaining agreements. The fees are lower than members' dues.

The Supreme Court ruled in 1977 that since unions must provide representation to non-members in a bargaining unit, it is fair to charge fees to cover that representation.

However, the court agreed to hear a case brought by Illinois state employee Mark Janus who says he does not want to pay a fair share "representation" fee to the union.

Janus disagrees with AFSCME's legislative positions but does not acknowledge that the representation fee excludes any costs for lobbying and reflects only costs related to collective bargaining.

His case is the latest attack on organized labor by well-heeled, anti-union forces.

"This is a blatant, full frontal assault on the hard-earned collective bargaining rights of working families," said PSEA President Dolores McCracken. "There is a large and well-financed anti-union faction that has anti-union political agendas.

"But we will not back down, and one of our best defenses is to tell the story of what PSEA does for its members."

The court heard oral arguments on Feb. 26 and will render a decision by the end of June. 🟢



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# Who ...

- Reversed nearly \$1 billion in school funding cuts?
- Protected our pensions?
- Reduced standardized testing?



# Gov. Tom Wolf

- He's been fighting for our schools, our students, and our professions.
- And he needs four more years to finish the job.

**Vote** Tom Wolf  
for Governor!









# Learning Lessons

## *Great ideas, Great schools*

This story is part of a regular series, “Learning Lessons: Great ideas, Great schools,” that features educators who are doing great things or conducting great programs in Pennsylvania’s public schools. For other stories in the series go to [www.psea.org/learninglessons](http://www.psea.org/learninglessons).

**W**hen you walk into the Discovery Room at Conewago Township Elementary you’re transported into a bustling town.

A doctor checks out a patient as she tries out some crutches.

The mayor sits at her desk taking an important phone call. Theater participants are preparing for a show. Groceries are being collected in a basket. And in the center of this “town,” boys and girls relax in the shade of a large tree.

“The Discovery Room allows students to learn and discover through imaginative play,” said kindergarten teacher Jessica Miller.

### An idea shared

When the Conewago Valley School District, Adams County, moved to a full-day kindergarten program, Miller and her colleagues knew they needed to incorporate as many opportunities as possible for children to learn in ways that were developmentally appropriate.

“As parents and teachers know, young children learn

through play,” she said. “However, we, as kindergarten teachers, were finding it challenging to incorporate purposeful play into our rigorous academic program.”

After her colleague, Marcy Whitcomb, learned about a local school with a developmental room encouraging this type of learning, she visited with the building principal, Larry Sanders.

The information shared that day sparked enthusiasm that Whitcomb and Sanders brought back to the team of six kindergarten teachers at Conewago Township Elementary, and they began plans for their own imaginative playroom.



*Kindergarten teacher Jessica Miller talks with a student in the school play area of the Discovery Room.*

### A small town in school

Through donations of items and funding, the teachers were able to create a robust town for the students to explore.

“The focal point of the town is a large tree located at a park in the center of town,” Miller said. “As you follow the road around the town, you can stop off at the mayor’s office, a house, Playland, grocery store, STEM lab, construction zone, post of-



## Tip Sheet

fice, school, theater, traffic center, doctor's office, toy store, or park."

In its second year, the Discovery Room continues to grow in details as time progresses.

"It has quickly become the favorite part of many students' days," Miller said.

### Learning through play

While the students are having fun pretending to deliver mail or cook in the kitchen, they are honing important skills.

"Instead of students' being passive learners receiving knowledge passed on by the teacher, the Discovery Room allows the children to be actively engaged in their learning," Miller said. "They are able to problem-solve and develop a deeper understanding of how the world around them works."

Miller noted one of the greatest benefits is seeing the social interactions and the progress students make in this important area of development.



*A student pretending to be a doctor checks out her patient.*

"The children are problem-solving, developing conflict resolution skills, practicing oral language skills, and applying what they are learning in the classroom into a real-world situation in the Discovery Room," she said.

She also believes an important part of the Discovery Room is allowing children to take the lead.

"As teachers, we want to step in and lead, but in this case, we need to step back," she said. "The children need to be the

*Conewago Valley EA member Jessica Miller provides the following advice for those looking to start their own Discovery Room.*

- **Plan ahead.** Develop a plan of what you want the room to look like. We chose a town theme, but other themes could work as well.
- **Research ideas.** Pinterest is a great place to find ideas. Brainstorm with your colleagues. Figure out what materials you will need to make your ideas come to life.
- **Ask for help.** Don't be afraid to ask parents, teachers, and community members to donate items. A lot of people want to help; they just need to be asked.

ones interacting and creating. The children need the freedom to find out what works and what does not."

### A positive addition

Parents and students alike enjoy the benefits of the Discovery Room.

"There has been an overwhelmingly positive response to the addition of the Discovery Room," Miller said. "The parents have been extremely helpful in getting the Discovery Room up and running. Almost all of the items in the Discovery Room were donated by parents, teachers, and families."

And the opportunity to learn through play is welcome.

"Parents have shared that they believe allowing the children a chance to play is important to kindergarten students," Miller said.

The students are just as thrilled as their parents about the opportunity.

"The look on the children's faces the first time they visit the Discovery Room is priceless," Miller said. "Their mouths drop open, and their eyes get big. They love to visit the Discovery Room." 🟢



### See it for yourself!

Watch this program in action at  
[www.psea.org/LearningLessons](http://www.psea.org/LearningLessons)

**Got a story?** If you know about a program that would make a good feature for "Learning Lessons: Great ideas, Great schools," please email Cassandra Davis at [cdavis@psea.org](mailto:cdavis@psea.org).



## Take care of one another, Teacher of Year says

*This article was written by Jennifer Wahl, Pennsylvania 2018 Teacher of the Year. Wahl is a high school world history and psychology teacher in the Loy-alsock Township School District, Lycoming County.*



that there was an entire team of people with different skills who were all prepared to help the flustered new person have organization and a voice. This was the day that unity became part of my teaching experience, and I never once forgot it.

Quickly, I learned to become united with other faculty members to solve problems and have my voice heard when necessary.

As I ran into complicated issues, this union of folks who helped me find erasers and pencils also helped me rein in problems I encountered.

Too often teachers stay in their rooms and keep quiet when something goes awry. This phenomenon is unfortunate, but it is all too common. We are unusually lucky to work as public school employees in Pennsylvania. We have a voice.

Just as I needed aid on my first day of school, many teachers across the state are in this scenario regularly. When teachers unite, help one another, and stand up for each other, we have power in what we say, how we say it, and for what we choose to advocate. We are better when we work together.

As I grew in my career, I often sought out the new teachers to remind them that they were not working alone. Perhaps I did not show up with supplies and a cheery face, but I disseminated a reminder that seeking help if something

is wrong is not only acceptable, but encouraged. I pass along the advice that was given to me during my first week: ask for help and get involved. I did. The more we help each other, the stronger we will be.

Strength in helping one another and a collective voice is not only true on a micro level, but a macro one as well. As educators, we need not work in isolation in our buildings, our districts, or our regions. When we become involved cooperatively, we are impossible to ignore. We have a voice beyond every other profession that does not work in a united manner.

Since teaching is the profession that teaches every other profession, it is important that we continually advocate for one another and take care of each other in the most positive way possible. If we take care of education, we essentially take care of everyone.

On that first day of school, I encourage you to seek out the new teachers. Remind them they are not alone. Bring along some friendly advice and practical tools. Show them the unity that exists and encourage them to join that collectively.

When we work together, we gain a strong voice, and to keep that voice, we must make sure the newest members of our profession are supported and understand the value in togetherness. 🍎

I had no idea what I was doing.

It was my first job. It was the first day of school. I knew my subject. I read all the materials ahead of time. I had beautiful lesson plans. I thought I was prepared. I was not.

Teaching is a unique profession in that we work in complete isolation with a captive audience almost all of the time. Your colleagues very seldom know when you struggle unless you reach out and tell them.

On the second day of school, I became desperate and asked for help. By the end of the day, I received an incredible amount of help. The science teacher arrived to show me how to use the new electronic grading system, the math teacher stopped by to hand off some supplies, the art teacher came to my door with some humor, and the school counselor helped me sort through the local politics.

Within two days, I realized I was not working alone. It became evident

### ESSA advisories posted

PSEA's Education Services Division has posted advisories pertaining to Pennsylvania's plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act at [www.psea.org/essa](http://www.psea.org/essa).

Implementation of the state's plan will begin in the 2018-19 school year. It was approved by the U.S. Department of Education in January. Key components of the plan include accountability systems and indicators, support for schools in need of improvement, initiatives to support all students, and programs and activities to strengthen the educator workforce.

The advisories explain these key components and also provide an overview of ESSA as the successor of No Child Left Behind.



## Windy City idea blows into rural PA district

Chicago and a rural school district nestled amid Pennsylvania's central mountains are worlds apart, but they now have something in common when it comes to getting younger students to think about college.

Janelle Lowe, a middle school teacher in the Chestnut Ridge School District, Bedford County, was watching television one evening when she learned that Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel placed college pennants in kindergarten classes to plant the seeds of higher education at a very young age.

"I thought, 'that is a cool idea. I could do that,'" said Lowe, who noted that like inner cities, there are major issues in rural America when it comes to students going on to higher education.

She thought the third-through seventh-grade makeup of the Chestnut Ridge Middle School, where she is a reading specialist, an English learner program specialist, and a hearing-impaired support teacher, was perfect to start touting college careers.

With the approval of the Chestnut Ridge administration and thanks to a \$1,000 grant from the Chestnut Ridge Education Foundation, there are now 130 pennants of various colleges adorning the school cafeteria, a number that was still growing as of this writing.

"As a reading specialist, I know that the third-grade reading level is a significant predictor of the eighth-grade reading level and of ninth-grade

performance. It is even known to be a predictor of graduation rates," Lowe said. "So, being in a middle school that serves grades three through seven, I felt it was a prime target for starting to create

knew about rural school districts – they educate 6.5 million students, more than the 20 largest urban districts combined, but they have low percentages of students going on to higher education.

In addition to the pennants in the cafeteria, she also has U.S. and Pennsylvania maps that mark locations of the various colleges students expressed an interest in through a survey Lowe conducted, along with the colleges attended by the school staff.

The idea was to create a strong visual image, an important concept in education, and then follow it up with what Lowe calls the "nitty gritty work."

A math teacher is using statistics on the value of higher education, and an art teacher is adding drawings to the visual images in the cafeteria. The school counselor started handing out materials that include a "College Bound" magnet that kids place on their lockers.

"We are trying to get them to see, by using real-world concepts, how post-secondary education is

important," Lowe said. "We want them to think big and to start dreaming big. And we are trying to impress upon them that, with greater effort and achievement on their part, they may go to college for free or with significant financial assistance." ▀



*Janelle Lowe, fourth from left, and her students stand in front of college pennants.*

dreams of post-secondary education."

But she took Chicago's idea well beyond pennants.

Lowe, who is retiring after the 2017-18 school year after 39 years of teaching, took up the concept for a differentiated research project for her evaluation.

Research confirmed what she already

## Tell Voice about it

We all know there are many good things going on in our public schools. Teachers and support professionals are doing wonderful things, both in schools and in the community. Please pass along items to Voice Editor John Troutman at [jtroutman@psea.org](mailto:jtroutman@psea.org).

## An elementary lesson in civics

Student councils provide hands-on experience with democracy. But there aren't many of them at the elementary school level.

Why? A thriving student council at Culbertson Elementary School in the Marple Newtown School District, Delaware County, asks "why not?"

Culbertson teacher Allison Hostutler came up with the idea of a student council composed of third- through fifth-graders last year, and it has been a rousing success for both the school and the community.

"It has helped spirit and morale, and we are grooming the future leaders of our world," said Hostutler, who credits other teachers and the school administration for enthusiastically getting involved.

Fifth-graders run for the officers' positions, a process that involves public speaking before the entire school, campaign posters, and other political messaging. The elections have been made a part of the school's social studies curriculum.

Good ideas and deeds generated by the council both within the school and the community have been blended with Culbertson's Character Education Program, and it's "Tigers' Traits" named after the school mascot – T, trust; I, integrity; G, gratitude; E, empathy; R, respect; and S, self-esteem.

"The members of council and the officers have a lot of pride in what they do, and all the students in the school have a voice through council," Hostutler said. "They really look for ways to help the school and the community."

One recent example was a student-generated idea to expand the school's annual Thanksgiving food drive from just a collection within the school to soliciting donations from the community. Fliers were posted throughout the area, and businesses and organizations were asked to donate items.

The results were 10 Thanksgiving gift baskets with food items, a \$70 grocery store gift card, and 1,900 donated items for the Saint Mark's Food Bank.

The student council has also successfully organized projects and events to raise

*Allison Hostutler and student council members collect items for food banks.*

third- through fifth-grade rooms, and five officers – president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and historian. The room representatives are selected by a teachers committee, but students have a rigorous application and essay process they must go through. The entire school votes on the fifth-grade officers.



"Those running for office go through a campaign week in which they make posters, and do a two-minute speech before the school," Hostutler said. "The election is used in the social studies curriculum to discuss things like the right to vote and exercising that right."

The student council holds regular monthly meetings which the principal attends, and council members also give reports to each room. A monthly newsletter and calendar of events are sent home to parents, and there is a council website, [www.culbertsonstudentcouncil.weebly.com](http://www.culbertsonstudentcouncil.weebly.com).

[culbertsonstudentcouncil.weebly.com](http://www.culbertsonstudentcouncil.weebly.com).

"Council members have to exercise skills like note-taking and public speaking that they will need in life," Hostutler said. "It's a good thing to do, and not many elementary schools are doing it." 🌱

money for the Ronald McDonald House, the Delaware County Food Bank, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and various community social organizations. More than \$400 was raised for playground equipment.

The 23-member council is made up of two representatives from the six



## Kidney donation provides teachable moment

**T**alk about seizing a teachable moment.

What started out as a teacher wanting to help a fellow teacher by donating her kidney evolved into major organ donation programs in the Homer-Center School District, Indiana County.

Cindy Scott, a special education learning support teacher and vice president of the Homer-Center EA, has had kidney issues all her life. The day is approaching when she will need a new kidney and her colleague and friend, Lisa Adams, a science and biology teacher and EA president, wanted to be the one to donate.

“She kept asking and asking, but I was reluctant,” Scott said. “I’m a pretty independent woman, and I don’t like to ask anybody for anything.”

Finally, she relented and the two went to Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh for testing in February 2017. It was determined that Adams was not a match for Scott.

“But they mentioned a program in which I would be matched with a suitable donor, and when I donated Cindy would go to the top of the list for a donor when her time comes,” Adams said. “It’s sort of like a coupon or a voucher.”

Adams went on the national registry, and in September 2017 she was notified of a 29-year-old man in Minnesota whose kidney functions were destroyed by a genetic condition.

The surgery was performed last January. Now, Cindy won’t be waiting in line when she needs her new kidney.

### Recruiting future donors

Around the same time that Adams and Scott were being tested, they

learned of the Center for Organ Recovery & Education in Pittsburgh. They took a group of students on a field trip to the center, known as CORE, where they heard from living organ recipients and donors.

“It was a very inspirational and moving experience,” Scott said.

They then learned of grants that were available from the \$1 people may donate to the Governor Robert P. Casey Memorial Organ and Tissue

to be organ donors.

In November, Adams and Scott led the 10th-grade class on a field trip to CORE. They focused on sophomores because they are becoming legal drivers at that age and can become organ donors when they get their licenses.

A Christmas event gave students in grades seven to nine the opportunity to place their handprints on posters in hallways if they pledge to be organ donors when they get their drivers’ licenses.

This was all topped off by a symposium in March that included 100 Homer-Center students and 135 students from five Indiana County schools. The highlight was an online autopsy conducted on a cadaver at the University of Saint Louis Medical School to show what organs look like and what they do.

Through all of this, local radio stations and newspapers picked up

the story and helped promote organ donation.

### True friendship

The friendship between Adams and Scott started 13 years ago, when they both arrived at Homer-Center during teaching careers that have spanned 19 and 22 years, respectively.

It’s a bit of an understatement to say a strong personal bond developed.

“I like to help people and to solve problems, and that is one reason I’m involved with the union,” Adams said. “This just all fit my personality.”

Added Scott, “I feel blessed to have a colleague and a friend who was willing, basically, to have her body sliced open for me.” 🍷



*Cindy Scott, left, and Lisa Adams*

Donation Awareness Trust Fund when they renew their drivers’ licenses.

They applied and received a \$3,400 grant, and they wasted no time putting the money toward organ donation education when the 2017-18 school year started last September.

They held a program for the seventh- through 12th-grade students at Homer-Center High School, where they teach, that included talks by an elementary teacher whose husband’s life was saved through organ donation, and the family of a Homer-Center student whose tissue was donated after he was killed in a car accident.

The teachers then created a “Homer’s Heroes” wall featuring pictures of community members and school district employees who sign up

# Student PSEA

STUDENT PENNSYLVANIA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

## 2018 Outreach to Teach Project

*More than 400 aspiring educators, EA members, and ESPs took part in the 2018 Outreach to Teach Project at the Tyrone Area School District, Blair and Huntingdon counties.*





## Slippery Rock teacher receives Milken award

**R**egardless of whether students are heading to the workforce after high school or to post-secondary education, Melanie Cole feels they all have unique skills and talents.

And Cole is so successful at finding them in her students that she is one of 44 educators nationally, and the only one from Pennsylvania, to receive the prestigious 2018 Milken Educator Award, the so-called “Oscar of Teaching.”

“There are no disabilities; there are only abilities,” said Cole, high school special education teacher and transition coordinator in the Slippery Rock School District, Butler County.

The Milken Foundation, which gives the \$25,000 award to educators in early to mid-careers, noted that Cole is known throughout the community as “a champion of the district’s students.”

Cole, who is in her 11th year of teaching and is also the girls’ varsity soccer coach, said she tries to foster an environment where all students are



respected and have a chance to succeed.

She got Slippery Rock students with special needs and other students jointly involved in interscholastic team competitions in soccer, bocce, and track.

It started with a team from Slippery Rock playing a similar team from the nearby Sharpsville School District, Mercer County.

“We just played a game, and then Interscholastic Unified Sports and Special Olympics took notice and noted the national programs they operate,” Cole said. “From there it got a lot bigger than we ever expected, but it certainly has been very positive.”

As transition coordinator, Cole tries to find what will be good fits for



*Melanie Cole reacts to surprise announcement that she is a 2018 Milken Educator Award recipient.*

students with special needs in their postsecondary lives, whether it be a retail environment, or postsecondary education. On that front, she has formed partnerships with local businesses.

“I take students and try to figure out what they excel at and what they enjoy doing,” she said. “We set goals that are realistic for them to be successful. There are different levels of ability, and I love that I get to explore that with them.”

“I love my job, I love getting up in the morning, and I try to find that for my students as well.” 🍎

## Bridge the summer learning gap

Teachers in the Parks can help bridge the summer learning gap for your students.

Learn more at [www.teachersintheparks.com](http://www.teachersintheparks.com).



**Call 1-800-286-6149**  
to register for your HEAR In America family  
hearing benefits, courtesy of PSEA.

*“Since HEAR in America helped me get hearing aids that really work I don’t feel left out anymore. And I saved over a thousand dollars, too!”*

- Mary



\* A PSEA endorsed benefit provider \*

## Early Enrollment Period organizing opportunity

**N**EA's Early Enrollment Period for 2018-19 is running now through June 30 – a great opportunity to enroll new PSEA members while also providing them with some advance benefits.


Those who sign up for the 2018-19 membership year between now and June 30 pay no dues until Sept. 1 and will be eligible for discounts and savings through NEA Mem-

ber Benefits at [www.neamb.com](http://www.neamb.com), and through PSEA Member Benefits at [www.psea.org/mb](http://www.psea.org/mb).

**This is a great organizing tool to bring non-members into the NEA-PSEA family.**

Early enrollees are also immediately eligible for up to \$1 million in educator employment liability coverage

and two free 30-minute consultations with a participating attorney every year.

"This is a great organizing tool to bring non-members into the NEA-PSEA family," said PSEA Treasurer Jeff Ney. "It's also a win for new members themselves." 

**Join Now!**

## Retiring? Join PSEA Retired

A membership in PSEA-Retired not only continues retirees' involvement in public education, it also provides an avenue to advocate for issues affecting retirees and offers many benefits.

"With more than 30,000 members, PSEA-Retired is one of NEA's strongest retired affiliates," said PSEA-Retired President Mary Moran. "It's a great way to stay involved, not only on issues affecting retirees, but also in the futures of students and public schools."

For more information, visit [www.psea.org/retired](http://www.psea.org/retired).

### The Benefits

- Dental and vision insurance
- Verizon Wireless discounts
- Hearing aid discounts
- Discount Prescription Drug Card
- Life insurance
- Auto and homeowners' insurance
- Home equity loans
- Credit cards
- Investment and retirement planning
- Legal services
- Mortgages
- Personal line of credit
- Access Discount Program which provides savings on travel, car rentals, dining, shopping, and much more

### How to Join

**Online at [www.psea.org/retired](http://www.psea.org/retired)**

Contact the Retired Division of PSEA at (800) 944-7732 to have an enrollment form sent USPS.



## PSEA airing new digital ads

In January, PSEA took the next step in its public media campaign, airing new digital ads on Facebook and key websites aimed at promoting both PSEA and Pennsylvania's great public schools.

The yearlong campaign grew out of a successful four-week pilot program in April 2017. During the pilot, four PSEA digital ads were viewed more than 4.2 million times.

"This is a great way to communicate about how great our schools are and how much PSEA members contribute to them," said PSEA Vice President Rich Askey. "We need to keep getting that message out, and digital

media is one of the most powerful and cost-effective ways to do it."

The ads feature PSEA members in their classrooms and remind viewers that PSEA's goal is to help every student succeed.

Members discussed a new business item during the December 2016 House of Delegates, encouraging the Association to develop a public media campaign. The April 2017 pilot program tested approaches to a public media effort. When members saw how successful it was, they

approved a broader campaign during the May 2017 House of Delegates.

"Our members recognize how important it is to have a strong public message," Askey said. "We just have a really incredible story to tell."

Members can view the ads at [www.psea.org/ourstory](http://www.psea.org/ourstory). 📺



## Get ready for Gettysburg

There is no better opportunity for PSEA members to hone their leadership skills than the annual

### Gettysburg Summer Leadership Conference July 22-27.

Training is offered on engagement organizing, negotiations, grievances, building local capacity, communications, leadership, government relations, and professional issues.

Registration and more information are available at

[www.psea.org/gettysburg](http://www.psea.org/gettysburg).



## Membership/Treasurers Workshops

PSEA's annual Membership and Treasurers Workshops are scheduled in July and August. The workshops, which are conducted by PSEA's financial management staff for local presidents, treasurers, membership contacts, chairpersons, and other officers, are on:

- **July 31**, New Castle office, Midwestern Region
- **Aug. 1**, Doubletree Pittsburgh Meadow Lands Hotel, Southwestern Region
- **Aug. 2**, State College Best Western Plus Hotel, Central Region
- **Aug. 6**, Wilkes-Barre office, Northeastern Region
- **Aug. 7**, Montgomeryville office, Mideastern Region
- **Aug. 9**, Harrisburg Red Lion Hotel, Southern Region.
- **Aug. 14**, Webinar. Participate in this online workshop from any computer with high-speed internet. 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- **Aug. 16**, "What's New" webinar. Intended for experienced membership chairs and treasurers to provide an update on information that is new for the year. 5 to 6 p.m.

Membership training is held from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and Treasurer training is from 10:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Participants may register for either or both sessions. Lunch is provided. Register online at [www.psea.org/mtw](http://www.psea.org/mtw) by July 6.

# Proposed Amendment to PSEA Constitution

The PSEA Board of Directors at its November 30, 2017, meeting endorsed for presentation to the May 2018 PSEA House of Delegates a proposed amendment to Article VI, Section 3 of the PSEA Constitution.

Pursuant to Article XI, the proposed amendment must be published in two issues of *Voice* preceding the House. A two-thirds majority of the delegates voting at the May 2018 House is required for approval of the amendment.

The proposed amendment would provide that every local association is entitled to at least one delegate to the PSEA House of Delegates irrespective of size. Currently, all local associations are entitled to one delegate for every 67 members or major portion thereof, but only “All-inclusive” and “teacher-only” local associations are entitled to at least one delegate irrespective of size: Education Support Professional, Higher Education, and Administrator-only local associations with less than 34 members must combine their memberships with other like local associations to secure representation at the PSEA House. The proposed amendment would eliminate the burden on small local associations that are not “teacher-only” to cluster for participation in the PSEA governance process.

The proposed amendment with additions **underlined bold italic** and deletions in ~~**bracketed struck through bold italic**~~:

## Article VI—House of Delegates

1. Local association delegates, at large delegates and officers shall comprise the voting delegates at the House of Delegates, subject to the conditions described in Article V, paragraph 5. PSEA-Retired delegates shall be entitled to vote at the House of Delegates on all matters except dues and election of the National Education Association board of directors, subject to the conditions described in paragraph 6 of this Article. Executive officers, Association representatives on the National Education Association board of directors, and Student PSEA delegates shall also be entitled to vote at the House of Delegates on all matters except dues and election of the Association executive officers and of the National Education Association board of directors.

2. Nonvoting delegate status at the House of Delegates shall be accorded to a region officer from each region who is not an officer of the Association, a representative from each coordinating council and department, and members of the IPD Council, resolutions committee, and legislative committee.

### 3. Local Association Delegates

a. Each local association shall be entitled to one delegate for every 67 active and reserve members or major fraction thereof within the Association; provided that for purposes of this section education support professional members

of an all-inclusive local association shall be considered a separate local association. Irrespective of size every ~~**fall-inclusive or teacher-only**~~ local association shall be entitled to at least one delegate.

~~**{b. Administrator-only local associations as well as higher education and education support professional local associations may combine their memberships for purposes of securing administrator and higher education and education support professional delegate representation.}**~~

~~**{e.}**~~ **b.** An all-inclusive local association may choose to elect delegates either by separate vote of members in each category of membership for the number of delegates in that membership category, or by general vote of all members for the number of delegates proportionate in each membership category. The education support professional region shall include all education support professional delegates.

### 4. At Large Delegates

a. Active members of the Association other than administrators and supervisors for whom membership in a local association is not available shall be entitled to one delegate for every 67 such members or major fraction thereof.

b. Active members of the Association that are administrators and supervisors for whom membership in a local association is not available shall be entitled to one delegate for every 67 such members or major fraction thereof.

5. Student PSEA shall be entitled to one delegate for every 375 Student PSEA members.

6. PSEA-Retired shall be entitled to the following delegates:

a. The PSEA-Retired president, vice president and second vice president; provided that, if not elected as a delegate pursuant to subparagraph b of this paragraph or by direct vote of the PSEA-Retired membership the PSEA-Retired president, vice president or second vice president may vote at the House of Delegates on all matters except dues and election of the Association executive officers and of the National Education Association board of directors.

b. Each region shall be entitled to one delegate for every 1,000 PSEA-Retired members. Irrespective of size, every region shall be entitled to at least two delegates.

7. Unless otherwise provided in the Association governing documents, voting delegates shall be elected in conformity with the one-person one-vote principle through open nominations, by majority vote, and by secret ballot.

8. The House of Delegates shall meet at least annually in the spring, except in cases of emergency. The spring meetings shall be known as the annual meeting of the House of Delegates. The president shall call special meetings of the House of Delegates in the manner and under the conditions prescribed in the bylaws.



## School Nurses Day

May 9 is National School Nurse Day, a day set aside by the National Association of School Nurses to recognize the critical role nurses play in education.

They aid and monitor students with chronic and acute health conditions, provide health education, and sometimes are first responders in emergency situations.

Read about life-saving measures taken by three nurses who are members of PSEA's School Nurse Section at [www.psea.org/nurses](http://www.psea.org/nurses).



## ESP unit organized in Saint Marys

Support professionals in the Saint Marys Area School District have joined the PSEA family.

The Saint Marys Education Support Professionals Association in Elk County has elected a slate of officers since forming last June and is currently in negotiations on its first contract.

"We wanted to have a voice in decisions that affect our jobs and to have representation on various issues," said President Christine Gavazzi. "We are pleased to be with PSEA."

The new local has about 70 bargaining unit members – paraprofessionals, tech support workers, secretaries, tu-

**We wanted to have a voice in decisions that affect our jobs.**

tors, health aides, monitors, cafeteria workers, library aides, and facilitators. Other officers are Mark Badtorff, vice

president; Michele Burdick, treasurer; and Tracy Carnavale, secretary.

"We are thrilled to have the Saint Marys support staff as part of the PSEA family," said PSEA Vice President Rich Askey. "They and all support professionals are the people who keep our schools operating efficiently and who work closely with our children every day. They deserve to be respected and treated fairly for the important work that they do." ▀

## Nominations for ESP of the year

Each year PSEA recognizes the hard work, dedication, and community service of education support professionals through the annual ESP Member of the Year Award.

Nominations are now being accepted for the award, which is presented to a PSEA member who demonstrates the many contributions ESPs make to public education and to the community. PSEA's recipient is then nominated for the National Education Association ESP of the Year Award.

Please take time to consider all of the outstanding ESPs you know. A nominee must have been a PSEA member for at least three years as of September 2018. Any PSEA member in good standing, any PSEA local, or the ESP Executive Board can make a nomination for the award.

Nominations should be submitted to Candace Kuba at [ckuba@psea.org](mailto:ckuba@psea.org), or mailed to her attention at PSEA, 400 N. Third St., Harrisburg PA, 17101. They should be postmarked no later than Sept. 14. For nomination forms, please contact your division president, or visit [www.psea.org/espoftheyear](http://www.psea.org/espoftheyear).



## ESPs extend comfort

ESP members in the Freeport School District, Armstrong and Butler counties, prepared comfort bags for cancer patients at Armstrong Memorial Hospital. The bags included lip balm, crackers, potato chips, tablets, and tissues.

## In Memoriam: Francis 'Butch' Santicola

PSEA has lost an Association legend with the recent passing of Francis "Butch" Santicola.

A tireless and passionate advocate for educators, public schools, and collective bargaining, Santicola started his 43-year PSEA career in 1970 as one of the original UniServ representatives.

He retired in 2013, but even before joining the PSEA staff, Santicola had made a name

for himself in advocating for teachers. As a young teacher in the Aliquippa School District in the late 1960s, he was a major activist in the teachers' movement that led to passage of Act 195 in 1970, the legislation that gave teachers the right to collective bargaining.

"The word 'legend' is sometimes overstated, but not in the case of Butch Santicola," said PSEA President Dolores Mc-

Cracken. "His passion and commitment to public education and unionism spanned nearly five decades. He was an inspiration to all of us. Even in retirement, he continued to speak out on behalf of educators and working families."

For his dedication and

**PSEA has lost an Association legend with the recent passing of Francis "Butch" Santicola.**



service, Santicola received PSEA's prestigious Adler Friend of Education Award in May 2017.

During his career, he was also president and vice president of the PSEA Staff Organization and was active in the National Staff Organization.

## Member Spotlight

### Nicole Belick Kratz Council Rock EA

Council Rock EA member Nicole Belick Kratz was in her second year of teaching family and consumer science at Holland Middle School when she learned that due to district renovations, she would not have use of a kitchen – for two years.

How do you teach a cooking curriculum without a kitchen? With a little planning, creativity, and innovation.

With the construction inevitable, Kratz knew she wanted to still provide her seventh- and eighth-graders with a valuable learning experience.

"My students benefit from my teaching choices and deserve the same opportunities that are given to students in the other middle schools," she said.

Kratz asked the Bucks County school to invest in some small kitchen appliances so her students could still independently create food items. Using blenders, waffle irons, panini presses, and microwaves, her students found success in their makeshift kitchen.



Creating fruit smoothies, pizza waffles and homemade waffles, panini sandwiches, and cinnamon buns in mugs, they learned valuable skills with limited resources.

Kratz even collected coffee cans from her colleagues at Holland Middle School and taught students how to make homemade ice cream in the coffee cans while creating chocolate sprinkle bowls with balloons.

The opportunity to learn different cooking techniques was a fun challenge for Kratz's students. And while many may not have access to a full kitchen stocked with appliances, at school they were able to try new ways of cooking in

an encouraging environment.

The skills learned through Kratz's innovation will serve them well in their future – whether it's in a dorm room or their first apartment. As Kratz has set the example, her students will have the resources to make the best of the tools they have on hand.



## We are stronger together

In the pages of this edition of *Voice*, you've read about all kinds of good reasons to belong to PSEA.

And I hope that you value your PSEA membership as much as I value your decision to become a member in the first place.

We are stronger together.

And, because of the strength of PSEA's membership, we have the

about all manner of issues.

We have other staff members, too, who perform all kinds of important work to further your interests.

Our legal team helps our Uni-Servs with grievances and arbitrations – and goes to court for you when you need it. Our government relations staff lobbies the General Assembly on issues that are essential to your

our organization run smoothly – and save you money on things you buy every day.

In the next few months, you'll be hearing more about why it is important to belong to PSEA. As you've read in these pages, the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Janus* case could have lasting implications for this Association.



leverage to bargain for the salaries, benefits, and working conditions you deserve.

But behind PSEA's 181,000 members is a talented, hardworking staff – 250 strong – who strive, every day, to help you achieve these goals. Some are pictured above.

We have UniServ staff members who are out in your local associations all the time.

They're the union representatives who help local leaders bargain contracts, work on grievances, give advice about how to handle problems in school buildings, and engage in thousands of conversations with members

schools, your students, and your professions. Our researchers help prepare detailed analyses of contract propos-

## Our talented, hardworking staff stands behind PSEA's 181,000 members.

als and fact-findings to make sure you get the best possible agreement.

We have a communications team that works with the media, develops advertising, and tells your stories to the public and to other PSEA members. And we have financial, IT, and member benefits staff who help make

But I'm confident you see the value in your membership.

I'm proud of each and every member of the PSEA staff team.

And I want you to know that the PSEA staff who work to further your interests every day will be working harder than ever to make sure that your membership translates into the salaries, benefits,

working conditions, and respect that you deserve.

That's what we do. And we look forward to continuing to do it – with you. 🍎

Email Jim Vaughan:  
[jvaughan@psea.org](mailto:jvaughan@psea.org)

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**Vandalism Loss Protection.** If your vehicle is vandalized on school property or during school-related events, there is a \$0 deductible

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What's more, you'll continue to receive exclusive savings on auto and home insurance.<sup>2</sup> It's our way of showing appreciation for the difference you make.

**For a free quote, call 800-216-0717 or visit [libertymutual.com/psea-members](http://libertymutual.com/psea-members)**

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