



UTEA Newsletter

Eagle's Eye

Union Township Education Association

VOLUME XVII, ISSUE 3

OCTOBER 2007

Governor Signs Benefits Bill

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UTEA Officers

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UHS

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Kawameeh

UTEA Website
www.njutea.com

EDITOR
Andrew Pfeifer

We are proud to announce an historic development in NJEA history: In 1988, NJEA secured state-paid health benefits for teacher retirees. The state budgeted money for these benefits on a yearly basis. Benefits were guaranteed for that year. In 1992, we secured the same state-paid health benefits for ESP and higher ed members. In 1997, we secured a legal "lock" (a contractual right) on members' pensions. And in 2007, in a political climate openly hostile to public employees' pensions and health benefits, NJEA has secured a legal guarantee to premium-free retiree health benefits for all members. Now that this legislation is signed, the state, regardless of its fiscal health, can never renege on our retirees' health benefits. Most importantly, the law guarantees that there will be no premium sharing for retirees now or in the future.

On June 21, both houses of the legislature passed S-3004/A-

5005, which guarantees eligible public school employees' post-retirement medical benefits. Governor Corzine signed the legislation into law on June 28.

There will be two Preferred Provider Organizations (PPO) and a few Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs). However, the main health plan will be the School Employees Health Benefit Plan (SEHBP), a PPO with an extensive, national network of doctors. An appointment with a doctor will cost \$10. In the event that a non-network doctor or facility is needed, members will still have access to the doctor or facility of their choice without a gate-keeper. If they choose an out-of-network doctor, their co-pay will be 80/20, although the out-of-pocket maximums will increase for out-of-network services.

In addition, the plan will be governed by a new independent body of nine individuals, with

NJEA having a significant voice on the board. The board will be comprised of the State Treasurer, the Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Insurance, a member appointed by the Governor, a member appointed by the Governor from among three persons nominated by the New Jersey School Boards' Association, three members appointed by the Governor from among five persons nominated by the New Jersey Education Association, a member appointed by the Governor from among three persons nominated by the education section of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO, and a member appointed by the governor with agreement from NJEA who shall be the chairperson.

Eligibility continues to mean public school employees who retire with at least 25 years of service and were eligible for health benefits at the point of retirement. This guarantee

(Continued on page 4)

Executive Committee

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 VICE PRESIDENT – James Grossi, UHS
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 SECRETARY – Marie Krueger, Kaw
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Association Representatives

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UNION HIGH – Gina Calderone
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 KAWAMEEH – Kristen Mellage
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Classified Section

Mausoleum Crypt for Sale: New, (not used) single large crypt (inside location) at Hollywood Memorial Park, Union. Walk-in price of \$9000, yours for only \$4990. A price to die for.

apfeifer@twpunionschools.org

Townhouse for Sale-Sayreville, 2 bedroom, 2.5 bath. New carpeting, freshly painted, new Trex decking with vinyl railings, new stove, counters and sink. Updated bathroom. Pool one block, laundry room includes washer/dryer. Asking price \$295K.

Call Kim or Joe (908)783-4203

Dates to Remember

Columbus Day Monday, October 8
 Children’s Day Sunday, October 14
 United Nations Day .. Wednesday, October 24
 Halloween Wednesday, October 31
 All Saints’ Day Thursday, November 1
 Daylight Savings Sunday, Nov. 4
 Election Day Tuesday, November 6
 Veterans’ Day Sunday, November 11
 Convention Th/Fri., November 8 - 9
 Thanksgiving Thursday, November 22

UTEA Meeting Calendar

October

Thursday	04	Executive Committee
Thursday	11	Rep. Council

November

Thursday	01	Executive Committee
Thursday	15	Rep. Council

December

Thursday	06	Executive Committee
Thursday	13	Rep. Council

UTEA Website Address

www.njutea.com



Newsletter Input

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E-mail TEXT and/or PICTURES

Business Card Advertisement
 Members-free for first issue
 Non-member-\$5.00 per issue

**Please include your e-mail address
 with all correspondence**

UTEA The Eagle’s Eye

EDITOR

Andrew B. Pfeifer



Grievance Chairs

Charlie King
 Union High School
UHS and Middle

Kristin Alvarez
 Livingston School
Elementary

**Grievances... Active...
 Past and Present**

A grievance must be reported and filed
 15 school days from date of incident.

A teacher at Union High School was shoved from behind by a student as she was entering her classroom. This incident could have been avoided if the administration had dealt with this problem student months earlier.

Healthcare Open Enrollment

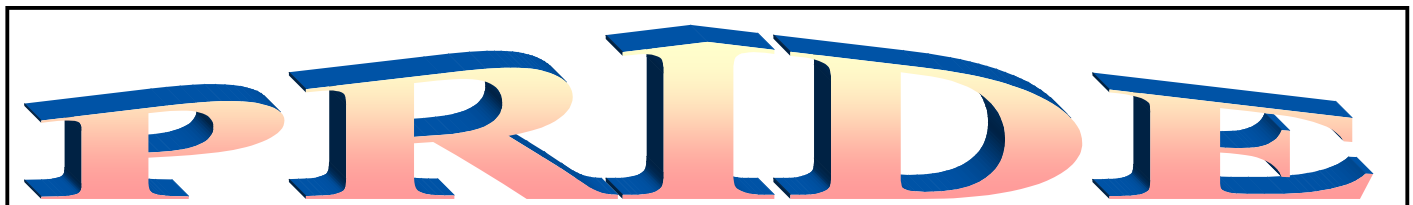
Open enrollment for our Health Benefits will take place during the month of October 2007. Explanation of benefits and change forms are in your building. Changes must be submitted to the payroll department by November 1, 2007. Contact Karen Polinger (X6413) with questions or for change forms.

www.horizonblue.com

Twp. of Union Education Foundation News

Purchase a ticket for Macy's "Shop for a Cause" held at every Macy's on Saturday, October 13, 2007 from 9 am to 10 pm for \$5.00. You will receive an all day coupon which gives 20% off most items; 10% off others. Entertainment and special events are planned. Enter to win a \$500.00 gift certificate! For tickets, make checks payable to "Township of Union Education Foundation" and send to Susan Lipstein, 2569 Jackson Ave. Union, NJ or call 908-851-9869.

Save the date for Menlo Park's annual "Evening of Giving" on Sunday, November 18, 2007 from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Tickets are \$10.00 for this private evening of shopping with special entertainment for adults and children alike to reflect the warmth of the season. Special sales and activities will be featured, as well as the popular "Silent Auction." Mall is open to ticket holders only. Children under one year of age are free. Tickets can be obtained by mailing a check payable to "Township of Union Education Foundation" and mailing it to Barbara Birger, 757 Roessner Drive, Union, NJ call by calling 908-687-5743.



Since 1994, NJEA has conducted the PRIDE in Public Education campaign, a statewide effort to share public education successes with all New Jerseyans and build strong community support and involvement in our public schools. As part of its campaign, NJEA provides grants to its local/county affiliates for projects that bring the public schools out into the community and the community into the public schools.

If you have any suggestions for PRIDE activities, contact Jill Adams at Central 5.

<u>Description of Activity</u>	<u>Date of Event</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Welcome Back to School Ad – Union Leader	September 2007	\$1000.00
Fifth Quarter Club Football Booster	September 2007	\$120.00
Elementary School Open House Giveaways	September 2007	\$1463.00
Burnet, Kawameeh, C5 Open House Giveaways	September 2007	\$2100.00

would apply to school employees when they have made contributions to the pension system and are eligible to vest. It would apply to current and future retirees, including those who are currently employed and those who become employed in the future.

Also as a result of this legislation, the uniformity clause that now requires all local governing bodies, including school districts that are in the State Health Benefits Plan, to receive the same level of benefits as state employees, would no longer apply. Consequently, it prevents school employees' health benefits from being bargained by other unions.

The option for a district not to participate in the state plan will remain as it is now. A district that now has a private plan could remain in that plan.

S-3004/A-5005 also includes changes to the pension system, including a half percent increase in member's contribution to their pension fund, a change that makes the fund more stable, and changes NJEA sought to the State Investment Council.

Pension changes:

- Beginning July 1, 2007, current and future members of the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) and the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) will contribute an additional half percent to their pensions. The new contribution rate will be 5.5% of creditable compensation.
 - Beginning July 1, 2007, school employees new to the pension system whose salaries move above the Social Security wage base limit, which is \$97,500 for 2007, will participate in a defined contribution plan for any amount over that limit. The state will contribute three percent of salary over the social security wage base. The wage base increases from year to year and an increase will be maintained even if the federal government removes the annual escalator. What employee contributions will be permitted to the defined contribution component has yet to be determined. This would not apply to any current employee, regardless of whether they change jobs or districts.
 - Beginning July 1, 2007, new school employees who retire between the ages of 55 and 60 will be penalized one percent per year for immediately drawing a pension. (The current penalty of three percent a year for retiring before 55 would remain the same.)
 - Beginning July 1, 2007, the amount of time new school employees can buy back for their out-of-state service will be reduced from 10 years to five years.
- Changes NJEA has been seeking in the operation of the State Investment Council, which oversees pension investments, will be adopted.

Health Benefit Changes:

- Beginning July 1, 2008, new health plans for school employees and their retirees that are independent of the State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP) will go into place. The new plan will be called the School Employees Health Benefit Plan (SEHBP). School employers will no longer be able to contract with the State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP) for medical and prescription coverage. However, they will be able to contract with the SEHBP.
- These new health benefit plans will be governed by a soon to be formed School Employee Health Benefit Commission. This independent body of nine individuals, will be comprised of the State Treasurer, the Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Insurance, a member appointed by the Governor, a member appointed by the Governor from among three persons nominated by the New Jersey School Boards' Association, three members appointed by the Governor from among five persons nominated by the New Jersey Education Association, a member appointed by the Governor from among three persons nominated by the education section of the New Jersey State AFL-CIO, and a member appointed by the governor with agreement from NJEA who shall be the chairperson.
- The option for a district to participate or not in the School Employees Health Benefit Plan will remain as it is now. A district that now has a private plan could remain in that plan.
- The new health plans will include two Preferred Provider Organizations (PPO) and several Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO).
- Co-payments, deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums in the medical plans cannot be changed for the first five years that the plans are in existence. After the five years, the plan actuaries can recommend changes that must be approved by a majority of the full commission.