



THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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Union Victories Highlighted 2023

Recently the *New York Times* ran an article with the first sentence "This year has been a good one for labor unions." While they didn't deign it quite important enough to include mention of the great contract that the ATA received this year, they had many other examples of positive news from diverse labor unions across the country.

Twenty twenty-three saw the ends of the Hollywood actors and writers strikes, with gains in favor of the strikers' demands.

The United Auto Workers won their fight for increased salary and other improvements to working conditions, as did UPS workers. Hundreds more Starbucks stores became unionized.

Closer to home, both the

Poughkeepsie and Newburgh teachers settled contracts after contentious negotiations. Both had resorted to marches and rallies to draw attention to their causes.

When labor unions win, it's the workers that win. And, in our case, when we win, our students also win. Feeling more protected and more valued in their jobs allows educators the freedom of mind to focus on using their professional skills and doing what is best for their students.

Here at the ATA, not only did we get a new contract in 2023 with many benefits to our members, but we are expanding our ranks with the addition of a new segment of Arlington—occupational and physical therapists (OTs and

PTs).

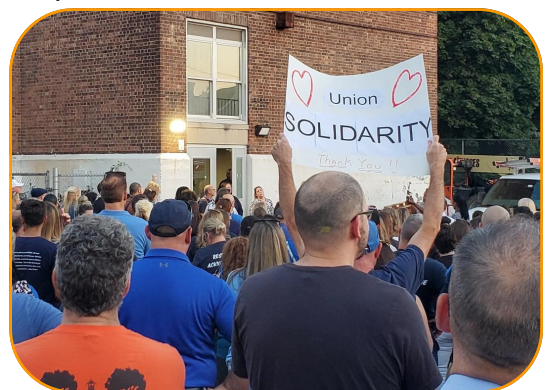
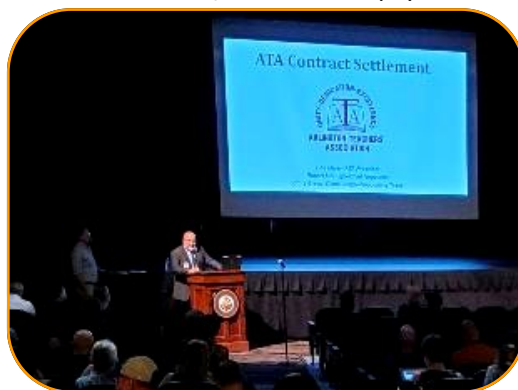
As you will read on page four of this newsletter, the OTs and PTs met with ATA and CAO leadership on December 12 to sign their official

union paperwork and hear about the contractual benefits they will now enjoy as ATA members. It is exciting to see the growth of our union.

When labor unions win, it's the workers that win. And, in our case, when we win, our students also win. Feeling more protected and more valued in their jobs allows educators the freedom of mind to

focus on using their professional skills and doing what is best for their students. Here at Arlington we're able to do that every day.

-Sam Falk,
ATA Communications Chair



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Member Spotlight: Phil DeMartino

Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could be the proud winner of ATA gear!

What decade saw peak union membership in the U.S.?

Last month's winner was Cristina VanderWoude from TRP. She correctly identified **Traver Road Primary** as the oldest of Arlington's current school buildings. She will be the proud owner of ATA gear. Answer this month's question and you could win ATA gear too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to sfalk@acsdny.org by December 31. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.



Photo by David McIntyre for *Chronogram*

This photo of Noxon Road AIS math teacher Phil DeMartino appeared in the October 2023 issue of *Chronogram* magazine.

Phil DeMartino has been with Arlington since 1999. He taught second grade for 20 years, and is now an AIS math teacher at Noxon Road Elementary. To his colleagues, his passion for the job is evident. According to Noxon Road Senior Building Representative Lynette Battle, "He really sees students with a wider perspective, appreciating all that they bring to school each day, not just learners of academics".

This is evident when DeMartino talks about his job: "My lessons from working with children have left me with three certainties. We are all born with the impulse to create and tell a story. Expressing oneself creatively builds confidence and courage to take healthy risks. And most importantly, stick figures are beautiful."

With this appreciation for the creativity of his students, it

is no wonder that DeMartino likes to express his own creative side. Outside of school he is an accomplished multimedia artist, exhibiting his work in different venues. As he describes it, "Being open to possibilities, I found myself being involved in the street-art sticker culture. My involvement in sticker culture has led to my inclusion in street-art/sticker shows across the globe. I have even had one of my sticker images included in a book about sticker culture." DeMartino's art can be seen on Instagram at [@wheremyeyesland](https://www.instagram.com/wheremyeyesland).

As DeMartino nears the end of his teaching career he leaves ATA members with this advice: "Remember that to become the best teacher that you want to become, you must first become the best person you can be. For me, that meant honoring my creative self. It is also necessary to be committed to being a lifelong learner. I know I became a better teacher of writing when I began participating in open mic reading performances of my own writing. The bottom line - know your passions and keep them alive because it will help you to keep perspective when you have inevitable frustrations as a teacher. Also, you'll find it easier to relate and connect to your students since they are daily preoccupied with discovering who they are as individuals. And if I may suggest one more bit of advice, remember to laugh and see humor with your students - they'll appreciate you for being genuine with them."

Which ATA member should we feature next month? Please email Sam Falk at sfalk@acsdny.org with your suggestions.

PR Committee Supports Our Community



Photos by Kristine Jackson

Grace Smith House offers free educational services to local districts, including Arlington, where they come into classrooms to discuss issues such as cyberbullying, healthy friendships, and teen dating.

We are also thrilled to report we were able to hold our Morning Movie fundraiser at the Hyde Park theater with a screening of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. We had over 180 people attend, and we raised over \$2500 for the Arlington Education Foundation. In addition to revenue raised by ticket sales, local businesses, union leadership, and schools' PTA/PTOs pledged or donated raffle prizes to this event. It truly was a successful day, and we could not have done it without the efforts of our volunteers.

As we transition to a new year, be on the lookout for other opportunities you can be a part of, including our largest events, the annual Jackie Higgins DCSPCA drive in late February/ early March and Rebuilding Together in April. Take time for yourselves this season, and don't

Over 180 people attended the ATA's Morning Movie in Hyde Park on December 3.

Our ATA members continue to spread good tidings and cheer during this very busy time of year. We have so much to be thankful for, and our members are definitely among them.

Recently, the ATA sponsored a

dress-down day to support the Grace Smith House in Poughkeepsie where we were able to donate \$2,041 to them. Grace Smith House is a private not-for-profit domestic violence agency, which provides both residential and non-residential services to victims of domestic violence and their children. Today, Grace Smith House has grown from one crisis shelter at its inception in 1981, to two shelters, one second stage housing and a follow-up and non-residential program. Their programs provide adult & child counseling, family court advocacy, Child Protective Services, Social Services advocacy, life skills training, continuing support groups and education about domestic violence. In addition,

forget to put a spoon under your pillow for a much-needed snow day!
-Kristine Jackson, ATA PR Chair



Christie Boydston (BES) and her children take a look at the raffle table at the Morning Movie event.



From R: Beth and ATA President Bob Maier (AHS) and First Vice Presidents Greg Nieman (AHS) and Nicolle McMorris (NOX) attend the Movie Morning event.

ATA Welcomes OTs and PTs

For the first time in the history of the ATA, we have added to our ranks with the induction of a new segment of the Arlington population. As of January 2023 the district's occupational and physical therapists will be joining the ATA and enjoying the benefits of a union contract. Please welcome the following new members to the ATA:



Photo by Sam Falk

Arlington OTs and PTs were invited to CAO on December 12 to sign the paperwork to officially join NYSUT and the ATA.

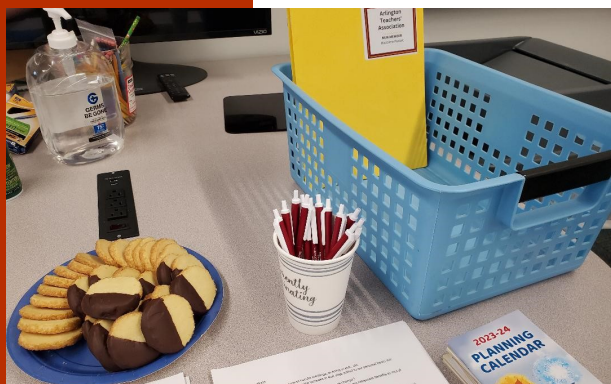


Photo by Sam Falk

Julianne DeCicco • Occupational Therapist
NOX and JDWR

Tara Filancia • Occupational Therapist
TRP and Non-Public

Nicole Fitzpatrick • Occupational Therapist
ASM

Olivia Fitzpatrick • Occupational Therapist
TRP

Brian Fogarty • Physical Therapist
NOX, TRP, and JDWR

Susan Geiger • Physical Therapist
ASM

Sandi Grafmuller • Physical Therapist
AHS, LMS, and UVMS

Lindsay Haskell • Occupational Therapist
UVMS

Elizabeth Kuhn • Occupational Therapist
OPS and TIS

Nicole Laurita • Occupational Therapist
BES

Joanne Lundstedt • Physical Therapist
BES, OPS, and TIS

Shannon Madden • Occupational Therapist
AHS and UVMS

Bridget Marrine • Occupational Therapist
ASM

Amanda Minichino • Physical Therapist
VF and Non-Public

Diane Pedevillano • Physical Therapist
AHS

Kelly Tabor • Occupational Therapist
VF

Frank Zalesny • Physical Therapist
VF

Additional Stipend Funds Allocated for 24-25

Although we settled the contract back in August and the membership voted to ratify the agreement in September, there were a few outstanding issues that still had to be negotiated with the district. One of these was an additional \$100,000 to be added to the extracurricular schedule for the 2024-25 school year. After a number of meetings over the past few months, we have now come to an agreement with the district about how this money should be allocated. Here are some of the highlights:

- The generic club stipend at the high school is \$1010 while the generic club stipend at the elementary and middle schools is currently \$761. Starting next year, the generic club stipends will be equal across all levels at \$1038 (i. e. \$1010 increased by 2.75%).
- Last year there were 27 clubs at the high school that were board approved, but whose advisors did not receive stipends. An additional 18 paid

generic stipends will be added at the high school to address this.

- In the past, all middle school clubs that were board approved had stipends attached to them. A few years ago the district decided to limit the number of paid stipends at the middle schools to the number listed in the contract (i. e. 15). Six new generic stipends will be added at each middle school.
- The number of generic club stipends at the elementary schools will be modified based on student enrollment. Each K-2 and 3-5 school will continue to have a minimum of 6 stipends and each K-5 school a minimum of 8. Schools with the largest student enrollments will receive additional stipends beyond that.
- There were also adjustments made to some stipends for music and drama positions at the high school and middle schools, to Middle School

Athletic Liaison pay, and, at the district’s initiative, to stipends for Elementary Student Council and Middle School Yearbook.

In addition to this, we have worked with the district to add clubs and positions that are currently being paid to the contract if they do not appear there. Currently, these positions are referenced in side letters between the ATA and district or were simply created unilaterally by the district, but do not appear in the formal contract. For example, there is a Unified Basketball Coach stipend that has existed for a number of years, but is not listed in the extracurricular schedule. Adding it will allow the person in that position to receive longevity pay like other coaches and advisors. Additionally, positions like Elementary Literacy, Math, and Science Leaders and Middle School Team Leaders will now be listed in the contract.

-Robert McHugh
ATA Chief Negotiator

Remember Wisconsin?

If you were a member of the teaching profession in 2011 you will recall the saga that developed in Wisconsin that drew the support of unions across the country.

As Governor Scott Walker and the Wisconsin legislature worked to pass Act 10, a law that effectively ended collective bargaining for most public unions, we at the ATA wore red to support our Wisconsin brothers and sisters (as seen top right at Traver Road Primary, and bottom right at Union Vale Middle), and

attended numerous rallies.

Although their have been several failed challenges to the law over the years, a new one holds promise since it is the first one since Wisconsin’s Supreme Court has a liberal majority. The seven unions filing the lawsuit on November 30 allege that Act 10’s exemption of unions that had endorsed Walker for Governor violates the Wisconsin constitution’s equal protection guarantee.



2023 — 2024 ATA Officers

President

Bob Maier

Elementary Vice President

Nicolle McMorris

Secondary Vice President

Greg Nieman

Vice President For Membership

Steve Hertzog

Treasurer

Dave Cordella

Chief Negotiator

Robert McHugh

PR Committee Chair

Kristine Jackson

Community Action Chairs

Brendan Lawlor

Bill Mueller

Welfare Trust Chair

Ron Higgins

Communications Chair

Sam Falk

Senior Building Representatives

ASM — A'Rehema Leach

BES — Christie Boydston

NOX— Lynette Battle

VFES— Gwen Moschetto

OPS — Nancy Thomas

TRP— Diana Judge

JDWR—Barbara Mackey

TIS — Heather Blatz

LMS — Bill Mueller

UVMS — Jim DeBonis

AHS — John Filor

AHS — Theresa Daleo-Stock

What's Going On?

"What's Going on" is a monthly feature of The Educator. It highlights noteworthy accomplishments by ATA members. Do you know of a colleague who deserves recognition? Let The Educator know by emailing sfalk@acsdny.org. We can't know what's going on at all of your schools without your help!

Congratulations to the following ATA members for their contributions to the Arlington community and beyond.

Arlington High

Science teachers Brittany Tompkins and Kristy Zukswert were recently selected to be a part of the newest cohort of New York State Master Teachers.

This fall, reading teacher Eleni Anemelos was recognized as one of the 13 kindness champions for United Way of the Dutchess and Orange Region.

Arlington Music

Many Arlington teachers, former students, and retirees were involved in the Northern Dutchess Symphony Orchestra's Winter Wonderland concert on December 2. William Stevens (UVMS) was the guest conductor, Mia Chong (UVMS) and Stephen Ryan (LMS) played the trumpet, Gina Garabedian (UVMS) played the bass trombone, and Matt Zydel (TIS) played the clarinet. Retired ATA members Laura Taravella and Dana White-Marks also participated.

Arthur S. May

On November 19 kindergarten teacher Rebecca Maroney ran the Philadelphia Marathon. This was her 6th marathon. The race raises money for cancer research, which is a cause near and dear to her.



Photo Courtesy of Michele Simonetty

Union Vale Middle

Sixth grade special education teacher Michele Simonetty is a volunteer with the USO at West Point. She is pictured here reading the monthly book during USO Storytime. Each family gets to take a copy of the book home. Simonetty is volunteering in honor of her son, Jesse, a 2021 Arlington graduate who is currently deployed to a 9-month mission to the Middle East.



Photo Courtesy of Amanda Buhler

Arlington Art

AHS art teacher Amanda Buhler reports: "Jill Freeswick (UVMS) was honored by New York State Art Teachers Association as Region 7 Middle Level Art Educator of the Year 2023-2024. Recognized as going beyond her call of duty in the classroom, Jill advocates for students and the visual arts in our community. Nominated by the Arlington Art Department and former students, we are all thrilled to celebrate this well-deserved award with her!" Freeswick (fourth from right) is pictured above with New York State Art Teachers Association Region 7 Co-Chair and Representative Sheryl Levine (second from right) and members of the Arlington Art Department.

Saturday Seminar Educates About ELLs

I had the privilege of attending the Hudson Valley Writing Project's Saturday Seminar at SUNY New Paltz on Saturday, December 2, 2023. The title of this seminar was "Supporting Multilingual Learners", and I attended looking for new ways to support the ELL's (English Language Learners) I have in my classroom.

The seminar started with a keynote address and workshop by Beth Clark-Gareca. She is an associate professor, and Director of ESOL programs at SUNY Binghamton. Her latest research centers around LTELs (Long Term English Learners), and the effects of the labeling of LTELs on academic performance, morale, and engagement in school. Her research has included English as a New Language (ENL) teachers across New York State, and their students. She has found that teachers, as well as students that have been labeled as LTELs, have grown increasingly frustrated with the NYSESLAT, and the cycle it perpetuates. She spoke to how often teachers and students alike were left to feel helpless in this cycle.

She also spoke to how positive it is that many states (including California and Texas) are conducting research to attempt to pinpoint why so many ELLs

are being labeled later on as LTELs. This statistic was somewhat shocking, according to the study being done in Texas: "Between the 2000-01 and 2014-15 school years, the percentage of first graders who began school as ELs has increased slightly. In contrast, the percentage of ELs who go on to become

I strongly encourage anyone that hasn't been to a Hudson Valley Writing Project Saturday Seminar to attend one. They're very cheap (usually between 10-20 dollars), and they offer a variety of themes for the seminars throughout the year.

LTELs during this same time frame has increased by almost 90 percent." Clark-Gareca spoke with optimism about how many teachers, and researchers are now aware of this trend, and advocating for policy reform to address this troubling statistic.

After the keynote address, I attended the "Empowering Multilingual Language Learners With Quick Write: Short, Ungraded Writing Activities as Entry Points for All Students" workshop with Deborah

Van Duren, a fifth grade teacher at Pawling Middle School. She presented to us an easily adaptable, and differentiated way of using quick writes (5-10 minute writing assignments) to engage ELL's (and all students) in writing. It was incredible to see some of the written work her ELL's were engaged in, and how they were applying writing conventions and strategies to their work. It was also quite interesting to see the writing stamina that was present in so much of the writing. She spoke about how important it is to give students a choice of prompts when giving quick write prompts, and how this is a great opportunity to differentiate the assignment for students. She also spoke to the importance of writing alongside your students, and how important it is for your students to see you as a writer. This strategy is a great technique that can be applied to any content area, and can serve as an entry point, and a reflection piece for any lesson.

I strongly encourage anyone that hasn't been to a Hudson Valley Writing Project Saturday Seminar to attend one. They're very cheap (usually between 10-20 dollars), and they offer a variety of themes for the seminars throughout the year.

-Mike Ferrara,
JDWR 5th Grade Teacher

AEF Educator Grants Are Now Available

The Arlington Education Foundation is excited to announce that the Arlington Mini Grant application is now open. As valued members of our educational community, all Arlington staff are eligible to apply.

Do you have an idea that could enhance the educational experience of Arlington students?

Whether it's a new computer program, sensory furniture, or any innovative resource, we want to hear from you!

Why Apply for an Arlington Mini Grant?

Empower Your Classroom: Bring your creative ideas to life and make a direct impact on your students' learning environment.

Support for Innovation: Whether it's technology, classroom materials, or unique projects, we're here to support your vision.

Invest in Education: Your initiative could contribute to a more enriching and inclusive educational experience for Arlington students.

Deadline is February 29, 2024. For more information go to <https://tinyurl.com/AEFgrant>

Dates to Remember

DECEMBER

- 15th—ATA Children's Holiday Party, 4-6:30 p.m., AHS
- 22-29th—Winter Recess - No School



JANUARY

- 1-2nd—Winter Recess - No School
- 9th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., LMS
- 10th—Deadline for June 2024 Retirement Decisions
- 15th—Martin Luther King Day - No School
- 16th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 23rd—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO
- 23-26th—Regents Week



FEBRUARY

- 13th—Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., TRP
- 16th—Professional Development Half Day
- 19-20th—Presidents' Day - No School
- 24th—MST Fair, 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m., AHS
- 27th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- Board of Education Meeting, 7 p.m., CAO



Announcements

Looking to get a start on your taxes before you receive your W2 form from the district? Make sure to save your December 22 pay stub. It will contain your yearly totals for salary and paycheck deductions.

Make sure to check out our web page for photos of the annual ATA holiday party that took place on December 15!

Stay informed! Follow us on Facebook and Twitter, or check out www.arlingtonteachers.com for forms, photos, calendars, and more.