

PA Panorama



THE AWARD-WINNING NEWSLETTER
MOHAWK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION
"UNITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION"



PA Endorses 11 Oneida County Candidates

The Professional Association has announced its endorsement of candidates running for election to Oneida County offices in November.

Anthony J. Picente, Jr. (R) was endorsed for County Executive. In addition, candidates in ten Oneida County districts have been endorsed: Michael J. Hennessy (D, District 2), Michael B. Waterman (R, District 5), Martin J. Kernan (D, District 11), Kenneth G. Brewer (R, District 12), Michael D. Damsky (R, District 14), Brian D. Miller (R, District 16), Stephen A. Roefaro (R, District 19), Edward P. Welsh (R, District 21), Rose Ann Convertino (D, District 23), and Emil R. Paparella (R, District 24).



upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/f/f0/...

These selections were approved by the PA's Executive Board upon the recommendation of the Political Outreach Committee.

During August, Political Outreach Committee Chair David Katz and PA President Ellis Gage Searles, with the help of committee member Lorie Phillips, invited those interested in seeking a PA endorsement to meet with the committee and, then, along with committee members Lorie Phillips, Bill Perrotti, Dan Ianno, Lew Kahler, and Bill Zogby, conducted interviews of candidates who responded.

Endorsement screenings took place at the NYSUT Utica Regional Office and on the MVCC campus on four separate evenings beginning August 21. Candidates were provided with information about issues of concern, especially the impact of under-funding on MVCC—the institution, the students, and the PA membership. A dialogue took place in which the candidates' views on education and the role MVCC plays in Oneida County were sought.

In accordance with its mission to address issues and forces affecting the professional lives of those it represents, the PA supports candidates who demonstrate a strong commitment to education and who recognize MVCC as an important academic and community asset and an essential component of the economic development of Oneida County. (PA endorsements guidelines and policies are reprinted on p. 5.)

Oneida County residents will be informed of Professional Association support of these candidates through press releases sent to the *Observer-Dispatch* and the

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PAnorama's Editorial Policy

PAnorama is the voice of our local. In addition to the PA website (www.mvccpa.org), email, and bulletin boards, *PAnorama* is a principal vehicle for bringing you, on a regular basis, information on the views and activities of our members.

We welcome articles by, for, and about PA members on union-related issues and concerns as reflected in NYSUT and AFT activities as well as in the purpose and functions of the PA's standing committees: Community Outreach, Education & Training, Grievance, Internal Communications, Member Services, Negotiations, Political Action, and Research and Records.

All submissions are subject to the review and acceptance of the Editor and/or Internal Communications Committee. We do not accept articles that make personal attacks and we reserve the right to edit articles for length. We look forward to hearing from you.

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PA Endorses...

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Rome Sentinel. In addition, with the aid of VOTE-COPE funds, the PA will distribute letters and postcards to many of the Association's more than 4,000 K-12 colleagues who live in various districts throughout Oneida County. These active members and an equal number of local NYSUT retirees will see our announcement published in *New York Teacher*. Through the PA's participation in the Central New York AFL-CIO Labor Council, the rest of the local labor community will be informed as well.

These announcements and communications take place through the combined efforts of the Political Outreach Committee and several other members, including PA Secretary Marie Czarnecki, Webmaster and Database Manager Norma Chrisman, and Internal Communications Committee member George Zook.

The Professional Association has made endorsements in local elections each year since 2002. Of the nineteen candidates endorsed so far, seventeen have been elected.

Retirees Can Maintain NYSUT Benefits!

If members are retiring, they must maintain NYSUT membership as a retiree in order to continue participating in NYSUT Member Benefits programs. There are a couple of ways to accomplish this.

Individuals can continue as at-large retiree members of NYSUT through the retiree council in their region.

If a retiree has questions about continuing NYSUT Member Benefits programs or payroll/pension deductions, please contact the Member Benefits Department at (800) 626-8101.

You may also contact our local Retiree Service Consultant, Carole Gehrig, at (315) 431-4040.

From the people who brought you the weekend...

+ **Books to curl up with**



A Union of Professionals

**AFT +
Member Benefits**

buy where it counts!
www.aftplus.org

AFT has an expense reimbursement and/or endorsement arrangement for marketing this program. For more information, please contact AFT Financial Services at 800/238-1133, ext. 4493; send an e-mail to disclosureinfo@aft.org; or visit www.aftplus.org/disclosure.



From the President's Desk

Seven is a Lucky Number

by Ells Gage Searles



I've never been superstitious or much of a gambler, so I was surprised when this came to mind recently. After all, it's been 2007 for some time, and I've known all along that this would be my seventh year as PA president. But the more I thought about it, the less surprising it seemed.

First of all, beginning a new academic year always makes me appreciate once more my ongoing good fortune to be able to do work I deeply value with students I truly enjoy, alongside colleagues I respect and admire. After 37 times, I still feel lucky to be doing it.

Also, for seven Septembers as Association president I've found myself looking forward to a positive, productive year for the PA—even last year, when one might have wondered why.

And it's always turned out to be true.

So, if seven is a charm, what might the remaining months of 2007 hold?

Our contract in place, we're already focusing our attention more fully on how the Association can continue to develop as an organization. Our union has ideas in abundance. As always, we'll go on devoting our energies to making good things happen.

In fact, in just a few weeks, we'll have our first such opportunity of the year with a weekend-long meeting of the PA's Executive Board for strategic planning and leadership development. As we've done in the past, we'll take advantage of the NYSUT Regional Leadership Conference in early October to combine networking with our K-12 colleagues and brainstorming about our own local's future.

This is an important kind of luck for our union, that its leaders give so freely of their time, that they dedicate themselves to keeping it strong.

What's more, we're lucky that PA membership continues to grow both in numbers and in active engagement, as new committee members step up to do more for the Association. The evidence—of our ever-

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improving communication, services and support for members, benefits management, contract enforcement, and political and community outreach—can be found throughout this issue of *PAnorama*.

Yes, the year ahead seems full of potential and possibility for our union and for us as members.

At the same time, it seems full of hope for our beloved college as well. Surely, 2007 will be remembered as a year of major transition for MVCC. Although it will take time before we can know entirely what that will mean, there are some things we can see right now: A new spirit of cooperation and optimism is growing on campus, and positive change is in the air.

No wonder I'm thinking about luck.



Political Outreach

Mohawk Valley Community College Professional Association Endorsements Policies and Guidelines

The MVCC Professional Association is “a vehicle to address issues and forces affecting the professional lives of the employees it represents.” Central to this mission must be an awareness of the fact that, as public community college faculty and professional staff, we cannot stand apart from the political process. Essential elements of our professional lives, such as compensation, working conditions, and retirement benefits, are affected by what happens in the legislature. To have a positive impact on our future, therefore, we must be active in politics locally, statewide, and nationally. We must alert policymakers to issues that are important to us, and we must support those who vote in favor of legislation that has an impact on the PA and on Mohawk Valley Community College.

On the state and federal level, political action on our behalf is coordinated by our affiliates, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). At the same time, with their support and guidance, the MVCC Professional Association participates independently in the political process on the local level. Accordingly, endorsements of candidates seeking office are handled by each of these organizations respectively, with local races—those in Oneida County—the responsibility of the Professional Association.



The PA will make endorsements according to the following guidelines:

- The endorsement process will consider candidates running for office in Oneida County.
- The endorsement process is non-partisan. A candidate's political party affiliation will not be a consideration.
- Candidates will be invited to meet with members of the PA Political Action Committee and/or Executive Board. Those who do not attend such a meeting will not be considered for endorsement. These meetings will provide opportunities for discussion of issues important to the PA and to the College. Candidates' views on these issues will be sought. In open races, the PA will remain neutral unless there is a compelling reason to make an endorsement.
- Recommendations for political endorsement will be based upon

1. Consideration foremost of endorsement of those incumbents whose records have been substantially in support of the

legislative issues affecting the Professional Association and the College, such as the MVCC budget, the PA contract, and MVCC capital projects.

2. Consideration of endorsement of candidates whose statements reflect knowledge of the value of MVCC to Oneida County and the College's role in economic development.
 3. Consideration of endorsement of candidates who demonstrate awareness of the need to recruit and retain highly qualified faculty and staff and the impact that has on the College's reputation and its competitiveness in the education marketplace.
 4. Consideration of making an endorsement or remaining neutral in open races when both candidates support the College's and the PA's interests.
- After such consideration, the PA Political Action Committee will present recommendations regarding endorsements to the Executive Board for a vote. This will be done in time for action in either a primary campaign or in the November election.
 - Once the PA Executive Board has endorsed a candidate, an

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Community Outreach

PA Helps Raise Parkinson's Awareness

By Steve Getchell



I would like to sincerely thank everyone who was involved in any way with making the Park-

inson's Awareness Walk (PAW) at the Presbyterian Home on September 8, 2007 a great success.

It was a great morning with hundreds of walkers, including a great contingent from MVCC making the circuit at the home.

President VanWagoner and family led the way as PA

members (see photo below) joined forces with others from the MV family to form the First Mohawk Valley Community College P.A.W. Team.

According to the latest *Communitas*, the "MVCC communities raised more than \$1000 for the Home's Parkinson's Residence," and more than \$50,000 was raised, "the highest total in the event's five-year history."

MVCC trustee Michael Austin, diagnosed with Parkinson's in 2005, extended a special thanks to everyone from MVCC who contributed in any way.

Please put this on your calendars for next fall as we hope for an even better turnout.

"Making Strides" on Oct. 14

The next big event coming up is the "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" Walk on Sunday, October 14th, 2007 at SUNY Institute of Technology. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the main event begins at 10:a.m.

Please consider signing up on the day of the event, registering online at www.cancer.org/stridesonline, or obtaining a brochure from myself or other members of the Community Outreach Committee (Mallory Anyango, Colleen Bolton, Christi Harrington, and Greg Sydoriw).

COC members will also be selling raffle tickets. More information will be forthcoming.



The MVCC P.A.W. Team. Clockwise from front left: Emily VanWagoner, Lauren VanWagoner, Jennifer and Randy VanWagoner, Marie Czarnecki, Ellis Gage Searles, George Searles, Don Willner, Colleen Bolton, Mallory Anyango, John Bolton, Paul Andrews, Megan Andrews, Anne Ichihana, Julie Dewan, and Steve Getchell.

Not pictured: Patty Fox, Chris Fox, and Rob Ichihana.



Photo courtesy of Rob Ichihana

Endorsement Policies

Continued from p. 4

announcement will be made to the entire membership of the Professional Association through e-mail, *PAorama*, and www.mvccpa.org.

- Letters of support for endorsed candidates will be sent to all our NYSUT colleagues in Oneida County through the presidents of K-12 locals. Flyers will be provided for posting and duplicating.
- PA endorsements will also be published in New York Teacher prior to Election Day.
- Other support—phone banks, assistance with campaigns, etc.—will be offered when possible.
- Costs associated with candidate screenings, postage, and duplication will be reimbursed through VOTE/COPE funds.
- No changes in endorsement will be undertaken except for the most serious reasons.
- There shall be an automatic review of the endorsement of any candidate who loses a major political party primary.

Adopted, MVCCPA Executive Board, August 20, 2003

Paul Halko Honored at NYSUT Awards Dinner



Nominated by the PA Executive Board, Paul Halko received an Outstanding Service Award from the NYSUT

Regional Office at its Fifth Annual Recognition Dinner this past June. The following appeared in the recognition booklet:

A true ambassador for the PA, Paul Halko first became active on the Member Services Committee, recruiting new hires. He has since devoted countless hours serving on negotiating teams during two intensive rounds of bargaining.

From its inception, he has chaired the PA Benefits Fund, taking care of the endless details of the day-to-day operation of the Fund, including handling questions from members, sign-

ing up new members, staying on top of COBRA and HIPAA regulations, dealing with providers and the human resources office at our college, consulting with NYSUT, and coordinating Fund staff. What most members don't realize is that there's never a glitch because Paul is always anticipating potential problems and figuring out solutions before members suffer. Indeed, Paul often says, "I couldn't sleep last night because I was thinking about ... but here's what we can do..."

In addition, Paul serves on the PA Executive Board and regularly represents the PA at MVCC Foundation fundraisers.

He does it all with the Paul-Halko brand of humor and unflappable charm. His good judgment, creativity, and tireless efforts have made a positive difference in the lives of PA members. And for this we honor him today.

A Message from NYSUT: NYSUT Social Services: A Helping Hand for Life

Do you know you have a benefit from NYSUT that can help you with everyday concerns? It is as simple as a telephone call to our office, where you will speak to Scott, Laurie, or Ani about your concerns, about yourself or your loved one. Together, we will figure out a plan that helps. Nobody will know you called; your conversation with us is confidential. Why wait?

Call (800) 342-9810, ext. 6206, or e-mail: socsvcs@nysutmail.org

Scott Hicks, LCSW; Laurie Kupperstein, MS; Ani Shahinian, LCSW-R; Andrea Tersigni, administrative assistant



What's all the buzz about?



You might have heard your colleagues talking about MAP, the Member Assistance Program available from NYSUT Member Benefits Trust. Or maybe you've already joined. But if you haven't, you may want to once you read about MAP's benefits.

By joining MAP, an e-mail based program, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers from Member Benefits or from providers of its endorsed programs. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration for endorsement. When possible, you'll help Member Benefits test potential new programs and provide feedback.



Frequently, MAPers are entered into drawings for prizes donated by providers of endorsed programs and Member Benefits. Since MAP's introduction last spring, MAPers have entered drawings for Bose® Quiet Comfort 3 Acoustic Noise Cancelling Headphones, free admissions to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, a summer fun pack filled with a variety of items, and an OfficeMax gift card worth \$100. In addition, new MAP enrollees and existing MAPers are automatically entered into quarterly raffles; to date, prizes included digital cameras and an iPod nano.

MAPers receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from

its providers of endorsed programs. Member Benefits oversees the frequency of e-mail communications to ensure you will not be bombarded. On average, a MAP e-mail alert is sent once every three weeks.

Rest assured, Member Benefits does not share your e-mail address with outside interests other than endorsed program providers and then only under controlled circumstances. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.



This exciting, new program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member. Enroll on our secure page by logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org and see the feature on our home page.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.



Member Services

PA Celebrates New Members

New and returning PA members mingled and welcomed the new semester on August 21.



Robert Huyck and Jack Susenberger chat over Utica's finest



Ibrahim Rosic enjoys the snacks



Humanities faculty members Andrea Steifvater and Dayton Elseth smile radiantly



Some of the many attendees at this year's fall new member reception



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