

panorama

UNITED FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



PA to welcome new members at happy hour

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS

Dylan Blier
 Abbie Bohling
 Sara Cutright
 Beth Dubeck
 Qamar Fahmi
 Chelli Kaufman
 Rachel Maiolo
 Daniel Michaels
 Kathleen Montague
 Kenny Stover

The PA New Member Happy Hour will be held from 4:30 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 15, in Alumni College Center 116.

All PA members are invited to stop by for some pizza, beer, and wine while meeting our new PA members and welcoming them to the College.

Please RSVP by Nov. 10 at this link: <https://forms.gle/XKDXtcAxHpLxoHpw6>

This year, the PA is asking for food donations for Kernan Elementary School, including easy-to-prepare meals and snacks, such as mac and cheese cups, fruit cups, snack crackers, granola/cereal bars, and Ramen cups. You also can donate to the PA PayPal account — mvccpa1@gmail.com — and Robin Saxe has volunteered to do the shopping. Just click the “paying a friend” option.

CONTENTS

Prez Desk	2
PA Finance Update	3
Ajar information	3
Community Outreach Committee	
Updates	4
Trick-or-Treat	5
United Way Drive	5
Wittenberg wins Gompers Award	6
Benefits Fund Update	7
PA Scholarship	7

panorama

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 of 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, Political Action, and Research & 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.

PUBLISHER

MVCC Professional Association

PRESIDENT

Norma Chrisman

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Robin Saxe

EDITION

October 2023
Vol. XXVI No. 1

WEBSITE

www.mvccpa.org

Prez Desk

With November 7 being Election Day, it is important that you educate yourself — not about just the candidates but also the various state and local propositions that are on the 2023 ballot. You can expect to see two state propositions on this year's ballot.

Proposal number one is an amendment for the "Removal of Small City School Districts from Special Constitutional Debt Limitation." Per the New York State Election website, approval of this amendment will remove the special debt limit for small city school districts. A small city school district is a city with less than 125,000 people, which would include Utica City School District. Currently the state constitution limits how much debt a small school can incur, restricting their debt to five percent or less of the value of taxable real estate in the district. Other school districts do not have a constitutional restriction, but rather are mandated by state law to ten percent or less of the value of taxable real property. If this proposition passes, all districts (regardless of their size) would be eligible to have the same debt limit via legislative action.

NYSUT President Melinda Pearson sent communication on October 6 requesting that the NYSUT membership support this proposal as it will "allow the 57 small city school districts across New York equal opportunities as their rural and suburban counterparts by giving them the flexibility they need when planning their annual budgets. It's time for New York State to give the same opportunities to small city schools that most other districts enjoy."

Proposition number two is an amendment for "Extending Sewage Project Debt Exclusion from Debt Limit." This amendment proposal to Article 8, section 5 of the Constitution extends for 10 years the authority of counties, cities, towns, and villages to remove their constitutional debt limits debt for the construction of sewage facilities. While this language already exists in the Constitution, the current sewer debt exception expires on January 1, 2024. If this proposal is approved the new expiration date will be January 1, 2034.

Exact wording for each proposal can be found on the New York State Election website at <https://www.elections.ny.gov/2023BallotProposals.html>.

In solidarity,
Norma



Norma Chrisman

PA Finances

Ross Wittenberg, PA Treasurer

The following is a brief overview of the current dues structure and a report as to the actual financial results for our prior academic year.

Dues Structure for 2023-24

Dues are paid by all members, including teaching faculty and professional staff. The bulk of our local union budget is paid for by membership dues. Our budget consists of expected expenditures for community outreach, member engagement, training, and negotiations and grievances with the college. A portion of dues collected are paid to our affiliates, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Our affiliations date back to 1970 and we receive numerous benefits resulting from these affiliations, such as training for Executive Board members, legal advice, and guidance for our local PA leaders. During arbitration and legal matters, NYSUT's labor relations specialist and legal staff are available to assist the PA as part of the affiliation. In addition, we have the support of a multitude of professionals within the NYSUT office that welcome questions as they arise.

Dues that are paid by members are set nationally, statewide, and locally. AFT is responsible for national dues, NYSUT dues are set by delegates from colleges across New York State, and local dues are proposed by the PA Executive Board and approved by you, our members. The approved dues structure is then submitted to payroll. The dues structure for the 2023-24 academic year was approved at our

membership meeting in May. AFT increased national member dues, but the PA Executive Board proposed offsetting the AFT increase by decreasing our local portion of dues. As a result, there was no net change to member dues for this year. After decreasing local dues by over \$50 in 2022, we will continue to monitor our fund balance to determine if any additional changes should be made to the dues structure.

Financial Results for 2022-23

In 2022, the membership approved a local budget of \$215,616.48. During the 2022-23 academic year, we underspent the budget by \$23,252.80, but due to the decrease in local member dues, that still resulted in a net decrease to our fund balance of \$749.15. The variance in expenditures was primarily caused by fewer grievances against the college, resulting in less spent on arbitration.

Financial records for the 2022-23 fiscal year were examined by the PA Audit Committee in June. The committee found proper financial documentation and reporting had occurred throughout the year and had no recommendations.

If you have any questions related to the budget or dues structure, please feel free to contact me or plan to attend our next membership meeting. Thank you for your continued support and I look forward to continuing in my role as Treasurer this year. I wish you all the best this semester.

In Solidarity,
Ross

Holiday ajar information for full-time employees

Please be advised that most College offices will be closed for the ajar period beginning Friday, Dec. 22, 2023, and will re-open on Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2024.

For PA and AMVA members, Columbus Day, Election Day, Veterans Day, and Lincoln's and

Washington's birthdays have been designated as in-lieu-of days for the academic year 2023-24 and will be observed during the ajar period. Excluded Administrative Staff and UPSEU members who wish to take time off during the ajar period may use accrued and unused vacation time, compensatory, and personal time.

Community Outreach Committee

Robin Saxe, Community Outreach

While dropping off the school supplies collected during our fall luncheon, Dan Eddy and I were able to meet with a few Kernan students again this year. They were so happy to see us and excited to have school supplies available for classmates who may not have what they need. They also asked if the PA could again assist in collecting food for their growing school pantry.

When we met with the students who ran the Kernan pantry last year, they had a stock of food in the corner of one of the classrooms. This trip, they took us on a tour of their pantry with sorted and stocked shelves floor to ceiling. They were so proud to show us the work they had done and the improvement they made in their storage space. We asked them questions about the number of students using the pantry, “a lot,” and what was most popular item, “mac and cheese.” We let them know that, yes, we were happy to collect food during the upcoming New Member Reception (Wednesday, Nov. 15) and would get supplies to them before Thanksgiving break. I asked that they email me a wish list, but it is safe to say that microwavable Mac and Cheese, fruit cups, and snack/granola bars are popular.

In other Community Outreach news:

- The PA was awarded the NYSUT Community



Service Award during the NYSUT Representative Assembly

- Lindsey Williams and I dropped off donations to the Anita's Stevens Swan Humane Society and had the opportunity to hang out with a very sweet and excited dog named Bianca.
- We donated keychain survivor gifts to the Relay for Life event. We also had PA members volunteer to serve survivors treats during the survivor reception.
- PA members served drinks for the United Way during a Saranac concert series event.

Watch your email for upcoming events and opportunities to help community organizations.



Trick-or-Treat Street a hit in Rome

Bella Theal, Community Outreach

On Oct. 26, the Rome Grassroots Initiative Group put on its first Trick-or-Treat Street for the community in the Plumley Complex Atrium. More than 800 people attended the indoor trick-or-treating event, which included a visit from Mo, music, photo-ops, face painting, and lots of candy!

Nine MVCC offices and 15 community partners participated in greeting families at their tables and handing out goodies.

The Professional Association table won the Best Giveaway trophy for providing face-painting by the talented Robin Saxe! Kids were lined up throughout the event, waiting to get spooky artwork painted on their cheeks in between trick-or-treating. They left the table with some fresh paint and candy.



Help us help others in need

PA accepting donations for annual United Way Hygiene Drive

Join us in supporting the United Way of the Mohawk Valley's sixth annual Hygiene Drive to benefit local programs that directly serve individuals and families in need.

Requested items include:

- Baby wipes
- Body wash and bar soap
- Deoderant
- Diapers (all sizes)

- Disposable razors
- Feminine care products
- Laundry soap
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Shaving cream
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste

Please note that only full-sized items in their original packaging can be accepted. Travel-sized items will not be accepted.

Donations can be dropped off with PA President Norma Chrisman in Payne Hall 379.

Ross Wittenberg honored with Gompers Award



Award recognizes dedication and efforts to keep unions strong

On October 19, 2023, nine union/community members received the Samuel Gompers Distinguished Service Award at the 16th Annual Award dinner. The Samuel Gompers Distinguished Service Award is intended to recognize and thank those individuals whose devotion and effort have helped keep our unions strong. It is also an opportunity to model those traits that serve our movement and our communities so well: selfless dedication, belief in solidarity of collective action, practicing the ideals of democratic unionism, and helping to create a better life for our members.

Colleen Jennings (1199SEIU), Karen Henry (CSEA Local 869), Susan Fobare (CWA Local 1126), Ross Wittenberg (MVCC Professional Association), John Zoccali (PPPW), Renee O'Neill (Utica Teachers' Association), Joe LaPaglia (UFCW Local One), Delores Caruso (NYS Department of Labor and former MVCC employee), and Marianne Buttenschon (119th Assemblywoman and former MVCC employee) were all honored with the service award.

The commonality amongst all honorees was their dedication to those that they serve. MVCCPA President Norma Chrisman served as the emcee of the event. She spoke about the honorees being dedicated leaders, serving as resources for their members, and understanding the importance of being part of a union.

President Chrisman said that through Ross's meticulous record keeping, the PA has received clean audit reports from our Audit Committee. Ross excels at analyzing our union's budget and reviewing what each committee has used throughout the year. His projections for the upcoming budget are what he feels is best for the union and our members, resulting in a reduction of annual dues to our membership. If you know anything about Ross, he's not a stuffy accountant, but rather a good natured, light-hearted person who is enjoyable to work with.

The MVCCPA is honored to present Ross with the 2023 Samuel Gompers Distinguished Service Award!

PA to award 2 scholarships this year

Robin Saxe, Internal Communications Committee

We are excited to announce that we will be presenting two \$1,000 scholarships this December.

Please spread the word and encourage students you work with to apply by Dec. 1.

Application Process

Scholarship application forms are available at the Office of Institutional Advancement, Payne Hall 220, Mohawk Valley Community College, 1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, NY 13501-5349.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the scholarship, applicants must:

- Have completed at least 30 credit hours at MVCC at the time of application,
- Submit a current MVCC transcript reflecting a minimum 3.00 GPA,
- Include two letters of recommendation, and



- Write a 500-word essay on either The Importance of Labor Unions in American Society or The Value of a Community College Education.

The PA's Internal Communications Committee will review all completed applications, select the scholarship recipients, and forward the students' names to the PA Executive Board for approval.

The essays of the scholarship winners will be published in an upcoming issue of PANorama.

The scholarships will be awarded during the Professional Association's annual January luncheon, with further recognition being cited during the MVCC college-wide scholarship luncheon in May.

PA Benefits Update

Christine VanNamee, Benefits Fund Chair

My name is Christine VanNamee and I am your new Chair of the Benefits Trust Fund. Together with the other Fund Trustees and Officials, I look forward to working with PA members in the coordination of all things benefits!

Did you know that in addition to vision coverage your dues help pay for important benefits such as life insurance? The Benefits Fund provides each PA member with a \$50,000 term life insurance policy to help protect your family should the unthinkable happen. Members

are automatically covered once they meet the eligibility requirements, but it is important that you name your beneficiaries. Visit the PA website at mvccpa.org. Look for the bullet on the benefits page that says "How can I sign up for the UNUMProvident Life Insurance?" and click the link to complete the online beneficiary form. It's simple and is just one quick step, complete it today!

For help with your questions, feel free to contact me via email at cvannamee@mvcc.edu.

In solidarity,
Christine