

The Official Publication of the Walkill Teachers' Association
NYSUT Local # 13-265
AFT Local #3082 affiliated with NEA * AFL-CIO

June 2022
Volume 33, Issue 1
Jordan Dirago, Editor

IMP@CT

President's Message

WTA Members,


Here we are again! Sometimes the weeks go slow, but the year flew by. It is time to recharge again and enjoy some time away from the day-to-day routine. It is good to get a little separation to clear our heads after another challenging year. The summer also gives us hope that next year will be a bit more normal, and that we all need!

I want to thank Teresa Custy for all her years of service to our union. She is stepping down as Vice President for Member Services. Teresa and I were hired the same year (25 years ago) and early on got pulled in to become active in our union. She has had many different roles in her 25 years and in every role, she always brought great insight, knowledge, integrity, and confidentiality. Her current position has many jobs within the job that many people probably don't realize. She has served as the Chair for Sick Bank and has served on the Trust for the past 11 years. She has put so much of her personal time into ensuring that members have the best information possible to make important personal and family decisions. In all honesty, she IS the HR Department for this district!!

I have appointed LeeAnn Pazoga from the Middle school to finish the end of Teresa's term. LeeAnn will do an excellent job and I anticipate that LeeAnn and Teresa will be talking a lot! Those of you who know LeeAnn, understand how passionate she is about our union and district.

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We have 6 teachers who were awarded tenure this year. Kiersten Bardenette, David Kelso, Kelly Lynch, Nick Mancuso, Kristin Phillips and Joe Pillitteri. Congratulations to you all! We had another great retirement party at Gardiner Brewing Company. Many members spoke to honor our 11 retirees. It was a fantastic night of food, fun and stories. Thank you to all who helped make this a great celebration. We are losing many years of experience and history with this crew! Well wishes to AJ Higby, Barbara Curiale, Chris Canosa, Ed Davis, Edie Duncan, Eileen Dmytry, Kim Vona, Kyle Bird, Marie Mazda, Martha Hill, and Sharon Tramm.

Have a great summer! Please reach out to us over the summer if something comes up. I will leave off with this: a union sometimes gets portrayed as a 3rd person concept, but do not forget, it is all of us. One of the things that makes unions (made up of its members) essential is when one is impacted, all are impacted. They understand it affects all of us. The only way to stay strong is to support each other. We have the best title... educators and unionists, they both imply the heart of what we are and must be about; united, and always moving towards bettering our community.

Sincerely,

Rich Shands

Dear WTA:

A Journey

Submitted by: Teresa Custy

It was in my first year of teaching when Suzy Gaetano asked me to participate in a WTA activity that would begin my journey with the WTA. The Local Action Project was a great experience that allowed us to evaluate our union and create programs and opportunities that would help us grow and give back to the community. I appreciated that it was a safe activity for a new teacher to be a part of.

Once LAP became part of the culture of the WTA, there was a natural transition to create a New Member program that I was tasked to get off the ground. I worked with this program for about 6 years.

For a few years I took a foray into the Building Rep world and represented members in my building.

Eleven years have now passed since Donna Carr asked me to consider taking on the position of Vice President for Member Services. When I agreed, I had no idea of the knowledge I would gain, the relationships I would build, and the personal growth I would experience as I assisted members in a myriad of life changing experiences. It has been a truly humbling experience.

It is time to take a new path in that journey. Therefore, I have decided to step away from the Vice Presidency and give others the opportunity to accept the challenges and rewards of serving and representing our membership. I will remain available to our new Vice President to assist them on their new path, as I was mentored by those who came before us.

It has been an honor to serve you.

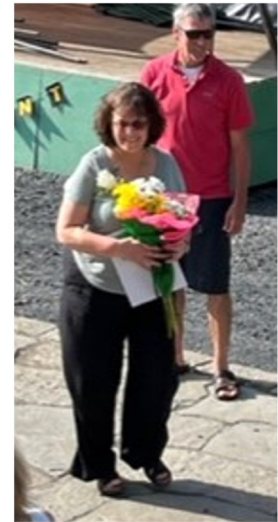
Sincerely,

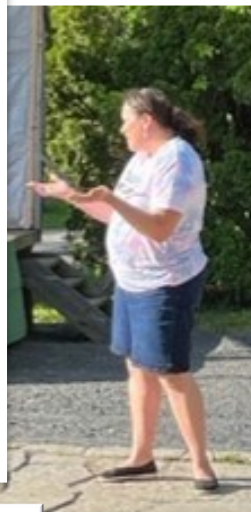
Teresa Custy

WTA Retirement Party

Submitted by: Jordan Dirago









HAPPY
Retirement



WTABT Scholarship

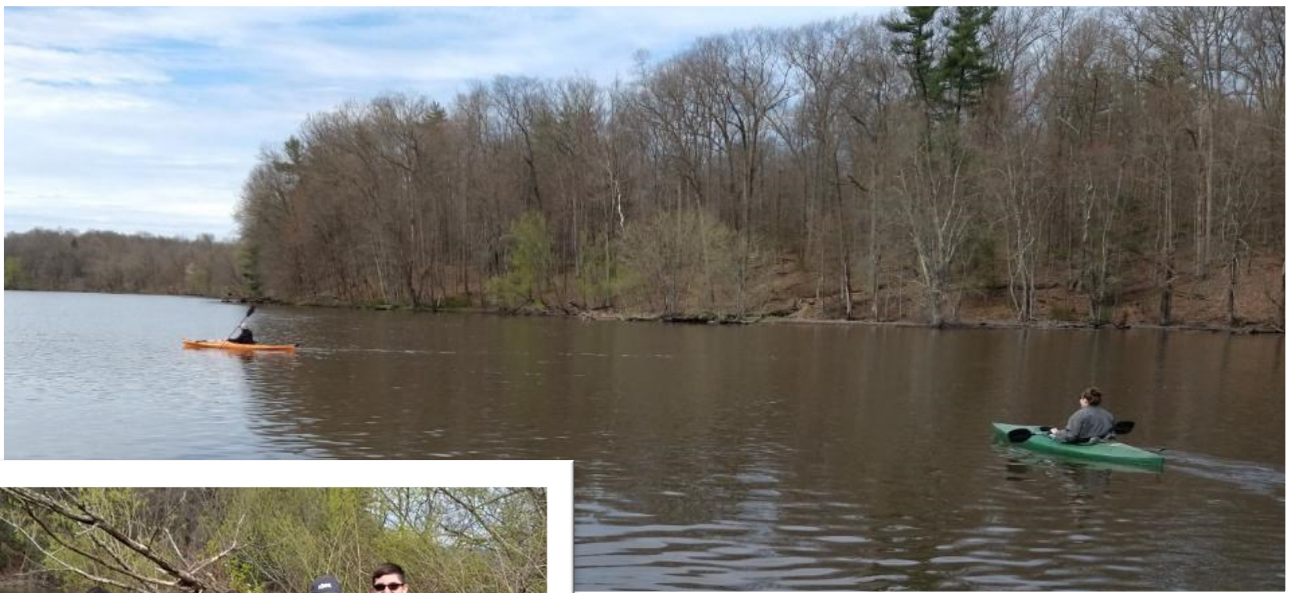
Submitted by: Kathy Winter

The WTA Benefit Trust scholarship recipients were Abigail Giambrone, Cleo Levesque, and Darcy Woodruff. A committee of 15 teachers from all 5 schools volunteered to review the applications. The 13 applicants' goals in 5 years varied from becoming a teacher to obtaining a degree in finance. We would like to wish all of the applicants and the entire class of 2022 a wonderful summer and a bright, fulfilling future in whatever endeavor they choose to pursue.



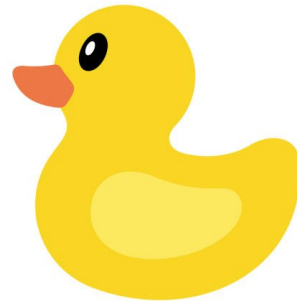
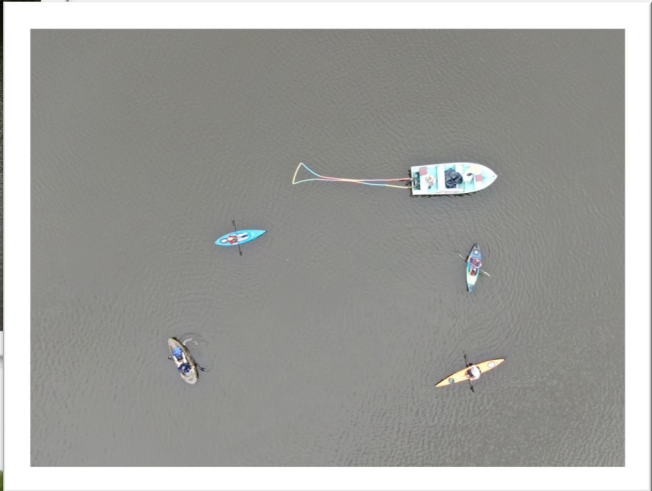
April 12th Annual Clean Sweep Walkill

Submitted by: Adam Selig



Duck Derby 2022

Submitted by: Adam Seelig



Vision of Walkkill Cows

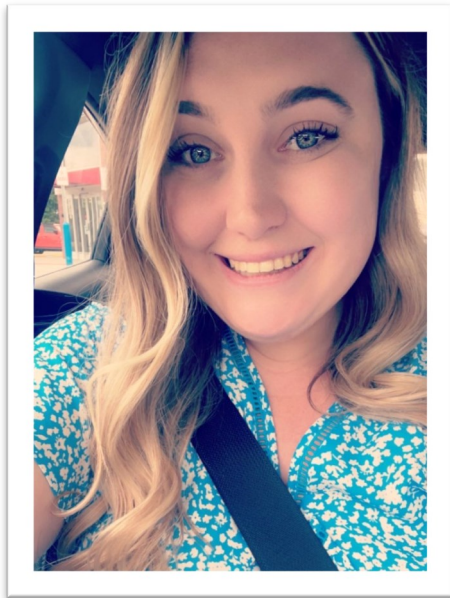
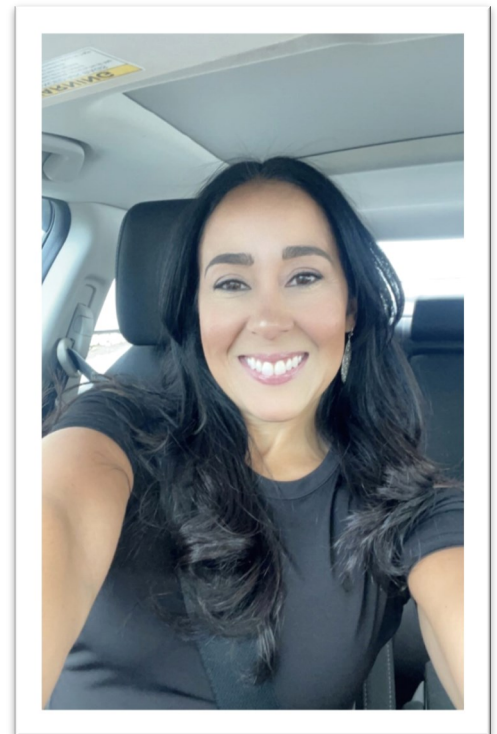
Submitted by: Adam Selig



Introducing New Members

Melissa Velazquez (JGBMS)

Hello, My name is Melissa Velazquez and I am the Blue Team's 8th grade Social Studies teacher at John G. Borden Middle School. I have my Bachelor's in History and my Master's in Adolescent Education with a concentration in Social Studies, both from SUNY New Paltz. Prior to being hired at Wallkill, I worked for the New Paltz Central School District for 4 years. I have two grown daughters, Alyssa (25) and Sophia (20) and a grandson, Logan, who is THE love of my life! You can find me outdoors on most days, especially after school, running or hiking. I am grateful to have been so warmly welcomed into the Wallkill family and want to thank my Blue Team teachers, and mentor, Deb for all their support this first year.



Kara Kucker (High School)

Hi! My name is Kara Kucker. As a Wallkill graduate (2014), I am very excited to be the new Math Teacher at the high school and Varsity Cheerleading Coach. I graduated from Mount Saint Mary College with my BA in 2017 and just graduated from SUNY Albany with my master's degree in May. Prior to being hired at Wallkill, I worked at Liberty High School for 3 years. I am engaged to my high school sweetheart, so we have been very busy planning our wedding! In my free time, I enjoy shopping and spending time with friends and family.

welcome
TO THE
TEAM

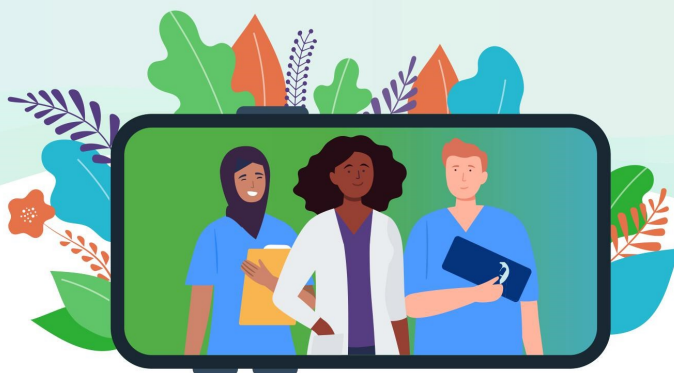
New Delta Dental Benefits

Submitted by: Kathy Winter



Get check-ups remotely with Toothpic!

Brought to you by Delta Dental¹



Toothpic is a photo-based teledentistry platform for Delta Dental PPO™ and Delta Dental Premier® plan members that offers virtual dental assessments

Answer a few questions and take photos of your mouth from your computer, smartphone or tablet to receive a personalized dental report in under 24 hours, including:

- A diagnostic assessment from a Delta Dental dentist²
- A review of your photos with issues marked for concern
- Care and treatment recommendations.



How to register?

- 1 Scan this QR code with your smartphone or visit deltadental.toothpic.com
- 2 Click on **Register Now** to create an account
- 3 Log in and get started

1. Delta Dental of California, Delta Dental of New York, Inc., Delta Dental of Pennsylvania, Delta Dental Insurance Company and affiliated companies. Delta Dental is a registered trademark of Delta Dental Plans Association.

2. Deductibles, annual maximums and coinsurance apply. A Toothpic virtual dental assessment does not count as one of your diagnostic exams. Some Delta Dental plans may not allow you to use your benefits to pay for a Toothpic virtual dental assessment. If your plan is not eligible, or if you choose to not use your benefits, you may still receive a Toothpic assessment for a fee of \$35.

NYSUT Information

Submitted by: Melissa Servant

VOTE IN THE PRIMARY!

TUESDAY JUNE 28TH



- GOVERNOR
- LT. GOVERNOR
- NYS ASSEMBLY

Early Voting:
Saturday, June 18 through
Sunday, June 26

Statewide & Regional NYSUT Endorsements

Governor: Kathy Hochul

Lieutenant Governor: Antonio Delgado

Assembly District 92: Tom Abinanti

School Districts in AD-92: Ardsley, Briarcliff Manor, Byram Hills, Chappaqua, Dobbs Ferry, Eastchester, Elmsford, Greenburgh, Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Mount Pleasant, Pleasantville, Pocantico Hills, Tuckahoe, Tarrytown, Valhalla, and Yonkers.

Assembly District 95: Colin Smith

School Districts in AD-95: Briarcliff Manor, Croton-Harmon, Garrison, Haldane, Hendrick Hudson, Lakeland, Ossining, Peekskill, Putnam Valley, and Yorktown.

Assembly District 103: Kevin Cahill

School Districts in AD-103: Highland, Hyde Park, Kingston, New Paltz, Onteora, Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Rondout Valley, Saugerties, and Walkill.



Not sure where to vote or what the early voting hours are? Check here:

1. Dutchess County

https://elections.dutchessny.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/ev-info.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0mBNJL3fbkKVTrXleemOttXwpueTrZbWmyHk4-N_wc08nrpp6g48VRugU

2. Orange County

https://www.orangecountygov.com/1953/Early-Voting-Information?fbclid=IwAR0mBNJL3fbkKVTrXleemOttXwpueTrZbWmyHk4-N_wc08nrpp6g48VRugU

3. Ulster County

https://elections.ulstercountyny.gov/early-voting/?fbclid=IwAR0KOT7bv0_j3ycRyZrIbOb_o8jYaJg4A2tDb3fkpylsB2BYhsnsIctHte8



At this time, NYSUT and its 600,000 members who work in or are retired from New York's schools, colleges, and healthcare facilities would like to support the families and the community impacted by this devastating attack. We are establishing a scholarship fund that will support the family members of shooting victims as well as high school seniors who live in the neighborhood (ZIP code 14208) and are graduating and heading into higher education now and in the coming years.

Please consider joining this effort to turn tragedy into something positive for the young people who will never forget neither the events of May 14, nor the generosity of those who stepped forward with meaningful support.

NYSUT has chosen Say Yes Buffalo, an education-focused nonprofit in Buffalo that administers a city-wide scholarship program for all graduates of public and charter high schools, to partner with us to administer and this fund.

Donate Online


Visit nysut.cc/buffalomemorial to make an online donation.



Our schools should be sanctuaries for learning. Sadly, violent episodes are commonplace in classrooms across the country. To compound this issue, the scourge of mass shootings continues to infiltrate our schools. We must push our leaders to take action on behalf of our schools and communities.

Part of NYSUT's core mission is to advocate for safe environments for our students and better working conditions for our educators and school staff. We believe that safe, secure, welcoming school environments are essential for effective teaching and learning. Therefore, we must act – and act quickly – to address this current and escalating crisis of safety in our schools.

In addition to the immediate actions and advocacy that NYSUT and our national unions are engaged in in Albany and in Washington, NYSUT is launching a new Safe Schools for All Task Force to hear from our



members on this topic and get your input on next steps. The Task Force is charged with building a list of recommendations for how our state and districts can best support safe public schools at the center of every community. We will focus on several key areas most crucial to building safer school environments:

Addressing Social-Emotional Needs of Students – The social-emotional impacts of the pandemic have led to increased incidences of students acting out, classroom disruption and violence. We must focus on supporting and lifting up our students to root out behaviors that can lead to this disruption and violence. Relying solely on punitive measures will only harm our students in the long run and exacerbate the very problems we are seeking to solve. Properly addressing social-emotional needs is one of the best ways to prevent future acts of violence in our schools.

Ensuring Appropriate Staffing Levels – School staff already are stretched too thinly, to say nothing of the physical injuries and mental health impacts stemming from fights, threats and other forms of disruption. School staffing levels must meet the level of needs. We need more school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, school attendance teachers, resource officers and other support staff. By adequately staffing our schools, we can ensure that all staff should have appropriate caseloads that allow them to focus on preventative work with students.

Fostering Community Partnerships – Schools do not stand alone as islands in our society. Rather, our schools are integral and active parts of our communities. School-community partnerships must be an important part of developing safe and vibrant schools in all of our communities.

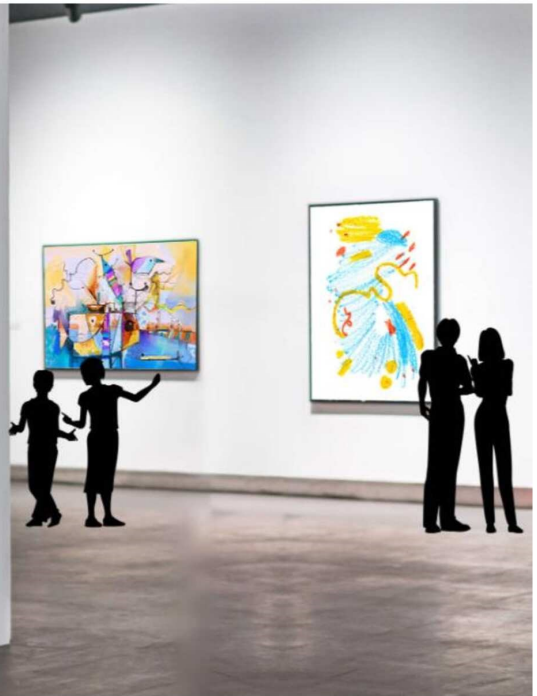
Confronting the Crisis of Mass Violence in Schools – For far too long, schools have been the sites of mass-murder events. The list of schools and towns made infamous by mass shootings is long and grisly. Our educators are thrust on the front lines to help students and families process horrific events, while simultaneously trying to cope with the unthinkable themselves. No student, educator or parent should live in fear of this scourge infecting their communities. This ongoing violence, and the profound threat it poses to the lives and learning of our children, is a national embarrassment that must end.

The Task Force will begin meeting this summer (via zoom) to begin this important work. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Melissa Servant. Our meetings will be starting soon. You can join from the comfort of your home or by the pool, at the beach or from your campsite!

Melissa Servant: 845-234-9755 mservant.ms@gmail.com

Students of the Arts Imagine IF....

A NYSUT sponsored student state-wide exhibit (grades K-12.)
STUDENTS OF THE ARTS IMAGINE IF...
The exhibit includes powerful and refreshing images and statements by students about their work that reveal their out-of-the-box thinking. The exhibit is an occasion for students to see and appreciate the unique work of their peers. As viewers reflect on the work we hope they recognize how important the arts are in the educational program.



You can enjoy the virtual art show here:

<https://www.schoolartshow.com/art-shows/view/4d58043d43f6bf6c22cd6c29b766eb93>

NYSUT Summer ELT Courses are available on MyLearningPlan. Check out what is being offered:

<https://www.mylearningplan.com/webreg/catalog.asp?H=1&D=15191>



NYSUT & NEA Sticks & Stones: Understanding Implicit Bias and Stereotypes

Learn how to promote social unity and increase cultural awareness in your school and community by attending this new NYSUT workshop. The goal is to bridge cultural divides and make our schools and communities more welcoming and inclusive places for people of all abilities and backgrounds, by helping participants see beyond their own personal world view. This PLO strengthens team unity by teaching participants to look at the world from a unique perspective. One that takes in consideration how someone's ethnicity, race, ability, and socio-economic background can impact how they experience our society.

Objectives:

1. Fulfill the NYS Department of Education training grant requirements for the Many Threads, One Fabric NYSUT-led implicit bias training for public school educators.
2. Activate educators to be leaders committed to racial justice, diversity, and equity work.
3. Implicit Bias awareness as a year-round continuing education vehicle for diversity, equity, inclusion work in local affiliates.

Synchronous Online Participants connect for video conference sessions using a computer with microphone & webcam. Phones are not adequate. Full Attendance is earned by participation in discussions, interactions using digital tools, and creation of materials/ resources. It is verified by time on Zoom.

Please Register by 8/3/22

If you enjoyed our presentation on Superintendents Conference Day, consider joining us for the full training. Check it out on MLP:
<https://www.mylearningplan.com/WebReg/ActivityProfile.asp?D=10627&l=4132632>



Supreme Court decision funnels taxpayer dollars to private religious schools

NEA Becky Pringle's statement:

"All students, no matter where they are from or live, deserve access to a great public school. The public education system remains one of our most powerful institutions for maintaining a democratic society and fostering common understanding among our people. With its radical ruling in *Carson v. Makin*, the Supreme Court has once again undermined public schools and the students they serve in favor of providing funding for private religious schools that serve only a few and often discriminate against students and employees. Forcing American taxpayers to fund private religious education — even when those private schools fail to meet education standards, intentionally discriminate against students, or use public funds to promote religious training, worship, and instruction — erodes the foundation of our democracy and harms students.

"The Supreme Court's job is to interpret the Constitution, not invent doctrines to promote radical education policy outcomes. We are witnessing one of the most extreme Supreme Courts in modern history rewrite the most basic social commitments of our society — that publicly-funded education should be free and open to all without discrimination is one of those commitments. Shamefully, today's decision tosses aside that social commitment."



PO Box 305 Gardiner, NY 12525
845-883-3284

Hearing Aid Reimbursement Benefit offered by
Wallkill Teachers' Association Benefit Trust
Effective 3/1/2022

The Benefit

The plan provides hearing aid benefits once every 5 years for you and your eligible family dependents when you receive care from a licensed and certified audiologist. It must be medically substantiated that an aid is required.

The Plan will reimburse charges up to the maximum of \$500 towards the cost of a hearing aid.

The Plan may be used in conjunction with the *Amplifon Hearing Care* (888-432-7464) discount program through Delta Dental.

What You Need to Do

Obtain a referral from your physician or certified audiologist for you or your dependent's hearing exam.

60 days after receiving the aid/device, submit a Hearing Aid Reimbursement Benefit Form to the WTA Benefit Trust for reimbursement of eligible expenses.

Only original paid receipts or bills (NO photocopies) will be considered acceptable documentation.

What is NOT Covered

- Amplifiers
- Battery or parts replacements for hearing aid/device
- Hearing Exam (use other medical insurance for that expense)
- Repairs to hearing aid/device
- Lost, damaged, stolen hearing aid/device

Updated 2/6/22

Explore all your union membership has to offer!



It's never too early
(or too late) to make
plans!

Find out how NYSUT
Member Benefits can
help you make the
most of your summer.

Check out the MB Discounts & Deals program in the Shopping, Travel & Personal section of our website to start planning (and saving) today.

Thinking of your next big adventure? A family trip or summer vacation? Member Benefits Discounts & Deals offers great savings of up to 50% on flights, hotels, car rentals, attractions and more when planning a trip.

Whether you want to explore other countries or the United States, Member Benefits Discounts & Deals has you covered. From London to Miami to Las Vegas to Paris, there are an abundance of other savings available as well! Restaurants, museums, theme parks, walking or bike tours, ziplining, sightseeing cruises, city exploration activities ... the list goes on. You can access these deals either online or through the MB Deals mobile app.



Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org or
calling 800-626-8101.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.

May/June 2022