Letter from the chair:  
Shelvy Young-Abrams

I swelled with pride as your numbers swelled at the big “Save Our City” rally on June 16.

It was the crowning glory of a year-long fight against budget cuts that would turn back the clock to the 1970s, when our city’s schools were destitute.

We have not worked so hard for so long to watch our achievements go down the drain, our professionalism undermined and our precious children slip through the cracks.

Thank you so much for turning out with such energy and conviction.

As I write this the city budget has been settled and the state budget is expected to be settled soon.

So while I’m hanging up my UFT rally hat for now, no way am I hanging up my boxing gloves. Unfortunately, lean economic times will be with us next year and probably for several years. Again we will be asked to do everything we can to protect our kids from losing class-size limits, afterschool programs, music and art classes and tutoring. Our children did not cause the economic downturn and must not be asked to cure it by sacrificing their futures.

As always, you have earned a great summer, a time to rejuvenate after many months of giving the best you’ve got to our students, so many of whom are among the highest-needs kids in the school system.

You know, one of my summer resolutions is to get healthier and more fit. Summer’s a great time to do it, with warm weather and plenty of opportunities to get moving — walking, hiking, playing volleyball, dunking into the water — whatever your definition of outdoor fun is (in addition to sitting around the backyard barbecue, one of my own favorites).

This summer, I want all of us to keep union-fit. Let’s get our arms strong for holding up posters, our legs strong for rallies and marches, and our lungs strong so we can yell loud and clear for the battles ahead.

In Solidarity,
Shelvy Young-Abrams

Para Spotlight

“It’s very simple. I’m an old lady who loves her job,” says Johanna Pontillo of Brooklyn’s Franklin D. Roosevelt HS.

We think she’s simply being modest.

Winner of a 2010 UFT Award for Outstanding Paraprofessional, Johanna is a force of nature and a world-class para, who just happens to be 83.

So why does she love her job?
“I love the kids, I really do,” Johanna says. “The bigger they are, the tougher they are, the more respectful they are to me — of course I remind them I have a black belt in karate,” the 5’2” Brooklyn native says tongue-in-cheek.

The former para rep is active in her chapter and can be counted on to show up for rallies, phone banks and other union actions with many other union members in tow.

Her first job was working for Brooklyn’s one special education supervisor in 1974. When she started at FDR in 1978, there were only three teachers, two paras and 25 students in the special education department.

“People tell me, ‘You don’t look your age.’ I tell them, ‘That’s makeup.’ But hey, God’s been good to me. I’m staying right where I am. They gave me a big birthday when I was 70, then at 80, and they promised me one on my 90th. So I’m going to stick around till I get it!”

When telling tales out of school is cool

A useful and touching tale by Annette Perez reaches many

Paraprofessional Annette Perez’s book My Brain Won’t Float Away (Campanita Books) is finding its way into the hands of children and adults who want to know all about living with hydrocephalus.

The congenital condition is mistakenly referred to as water on the brain, which is why Perez, as a child, wanted to know if her brain was going to float away. She was born with hydrocephalus.

Her triumph as an educator and writer is living testimony that the condition is not always as severe as people assume.

“I’m one of the lucky ones,” said the pre-K educator from Manhattan’s PS 198. “My

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left arm and left leg are weaker than the right side. Sometimes people ask me how I tie my shoelaces!”

Perez can tie her shoelaces just fine — with her right hand — and do a lot of other things, like teaching, going to college, and writing.

What is it like to have a book published? “Overwhelming in a totally good way,” said Perez, who is now working on her second book.

The bilingual book with charming illustrations is informative, positive and full of hope. You can take a peek at it on www.amazon.com. Or, for more information or to talk with the author, Perez invites you to call her at 646-256-9615 or e-mail her at ardi-la2760@aol.com.

Know your rights

It is your right and obligation under the UFT contract to be under the direct supervision of a licensed teacher. If you are a District 75 para, the IEP (Individualized Education Program) serves as a mini job-description in terms of your responsibilities to the child in your care. Allowing anyone at school to blur the lines is not only illegal; it’s not in your best interests and is not fair to the student.

Telling tales out of school continued from page 1

Got pay stubs?

If not, how to get them online

If you opted for your paycheck to be directly deposited via Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) into your bank account but missed the deadline to request getting pay stubs at your school, you can print them out by going to the DOE payroll portal at https://payrollportal.nycboe.net/payrollportalweb/main.aspx.

Here’s what to do:

• Log On to the payroll portal
• Select Employee Self Service on left
• Below that, select EFT/Direct Deposit
• If you’re in more than one Payroll Bank, Select appropriate one from list of buttons
• Select Update from list of actions and click Continue
• Verify your User and EFT/Direct Deposit Information and click Continue
• Select the Yes button next to Print Pay Stub and click Continue
• Confirm your update
• This completes the Print Pay Stub action.

Release time

Remember to submit course documentation within one month following completion of the semester. It is the responsibility of each participating paraprofessional to submit to the principal or designee a copy of the transcript, grade report or other substantiating documentation indicating completion of the course(s) for which release time was granted.