

RETIREE



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THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS RETIRED TEACHERS CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

UFT Activism Takes on Major Challenges

BY TOM MURPHY, UFT/RTC CHAPTER LEADER

The end of 2012 brought great highs and awful lows to us. The election victories nationwide, while nail-biting at the end, were verifications and affirmations of the efforts we all put into the campaigns across the country and here in New York. And we helped out in Florida, Ohio and all the battleground states.

Super Storm Sandy came crashing. Approximately 10,000 UFTers lived in Zone A of the Hurricane. Over 2,000 UFTers notified the union that they were badly affected. The call for help elicited the best in our nature from both in-service and retiree members. Retirees helped fill and distribute 30,000 backpacks for children in schools that had major losses. "The looks on these students' faces were priceless when they opened them to see the new supplies provided in

an attempt to replace the ones they lost," said Karen Alford, UFT Vice-President for Elementary Schools. Retirees volunteered to call all the UFTers who registered for help and at least offer them some sympathy and guidance.

The tragic shootings at Sandy Hook in Newtown cast a pale over the holidays in a way that touched so many of us. We know that two American Federation of Teachers colleagues were killed trying to protect their students. We spent our working careers in school buildings. Could any of us have envisioned such a violation of the sanctity of a school building? We all had safety concerns, but it boggles the mind to think of being in such circumstances. In the past it seemed as though such tragedies always happened someplace distant and perhaps foreign to our New York City state of mind. All plaudits go to Albany. The governor and elected officials of both political parties in New York State



passed the strongest gun control legislation in the nation. May the Congress exercise the same sanity.

The UFT has always been a political union. As a borough political action coordinator and perhaps, at 16 years, the longest serving UFT Political/Legislative Director, and now as RTC Chapter Leader, I've played a part in our union's politics under UFT Presidents from Al Shanker through each of his successors. Remember

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WELFARE FUND BENEFIT ENHANCEMENTS A Message from Michael Mulgrew

For the past several months, we have been carefully monitoring the outcome of two extremely important events. The first being

the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on the challenges to the health care reform law. The second is the re-election of President Obama. Both of these events have a direct impact on the Welfare Fund and the

benefits that are provided. We were extremely pleased with the Supreme Court's decision and, of course, the re-election of President Obama. Now we are able to address some benefit enhancements for our members.

The past few weeks have presented many of our members with unthinkable challenges, and the trustees recognized the need to assist our members and their families in any way possible. The trustees have made improvements to the following benefits:

- **RETIREE OPTIONAL RIDER REIMBURSEMENT:** Effective with the processing of the 2012 reimbursements (which retirees

will receive in February and March), the new reimbursement has increased to up to \$780 annually.

- **OPTICAL BENEFIT:** Effective April 1, 2013, we have increased the optical benefit to \$125.00 every two years.
- **DISABILITY BENEFIT:** Effective April 1, 2013 - **In-service pedagogues** will now be eligible to receive up to \$475.00 per week for up to 52 weeks. **Paraprofessionals** will now be eligible to receive up to \$375.00 per week for up to 52 weeks. (Currently the benefit is \$350.00 for Pedagogues and \$250.00 for Paraprofessionals).

SHIP (SUPPLEMENTAL HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM) ENHANCED BENEFITS - A Message from Irene Lospenuso

In order to offset growing costs of health care, UFT President Michael Mulgrew, along with Tom Pappas, Tom Murphy and the members of the SHIP Board of Trustees, announced benefit enhancements to your SHIP coverage effective January 1, 2013.

The enhancements implemented are:

- **DENTAL STIPEND:** Benefit increased to \$300 annually from \$300 every other year. This benefit alone can reimburse more than double your annual premium.
- **HEARING AID:** Benefit increased to \$1,000 every three years from \$500. This offsets the tremendous cost of a new hearing aid. Taking into consideration the UFT Welfare Fund also provides \$1,000 for a new hearing aid, this SHIP increase means you can receive a total of up to \$2,000 between the two carriers.
- **ORTHOPEDIC SHOES/ORTHOTICS:** Benefit changed \$300 annually from \$200 annually

each for orthopedic shoes and/or an orthotic. Most enrollees purchased one item and received \$200. SHIP now reimburses \$300. In addition, each item had a separate \$1,000 Lifetime Maximum benefit. The Lifetime Maximum now is \$2,000.

- **CHIROPRACTER/PODIATRY:** Benefits have been **ELIMINATED**. SHIP eliminated these benefits to compensate enrollees by providing two NEW benefits.

The new benefits being provided by SHIP are as follows:

- **SURVIVOR BENEFIT (COBRA premium coverage):** When a member dies his or her eligible surviving spouse/domestic partner may continue the SHIP coverage for 36 months in accordance with COBRA. SHIP will pay the SHIP COBRA premium on behalf of the surviving spouse/domestic partner. Beyond the 36 month period your surviving spouse/domestic partner may purchase SHIP at prevailing premium

rates INDEFINITELY. You must meet SHIP's eligibility criteria to receive coverage.

- **EMERGENCY ALERT SYSTEM (NEW benefit):** SHIP and Voicecare Personal Response System have arranged for SHIP enrollees to purchase the 24-hour nationwide monitoring system at a discount. Enrollees can purchase this service for \$25 per month with two activation devices and free installation. SHIP enrollees save at least \$5 per month on service, \$10 per month on the second device and \$75 on installation. In addition, SHIP will reimburse out-of-pocket expenses up to \$25 per month for a maximum of three consecutive months in the event of an in-patient (admitted overnight) hospital stay under certain conditions. Call Voicecare at 1-800-286-2622 ext. 3106 and mention code "UFT" for further details and information brochures). All other benefits stay the same.

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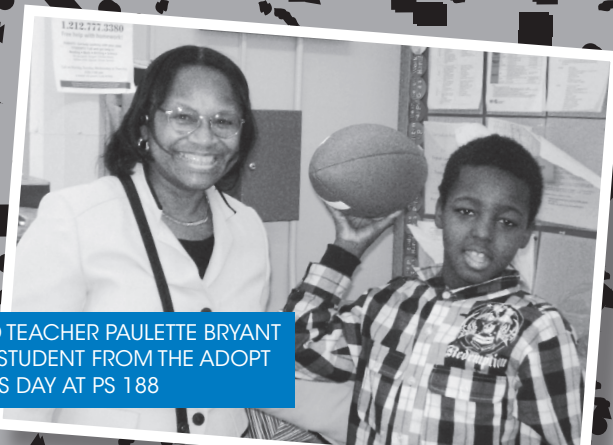
Al's political advice: Support your friends and oppose your enemies. And how about a Murphy corollary: Hold their feet to the fire! Friends, foes and neutrals alike!

After the successful 2012 elections, the RTC General Membership met on November 27th and passed an omnibus resolution entitled "Keep the Promise." The December Delegate Assembly subsequently passed the resolution at our request. Meant to be an extensive document, it catalogued the commitments that our victorious candidates made to us and the rest of progressive labor, from the President on down to local officials.

The first test of holding their feet to the fire came when Randi Weingarten asked Sandra March and I to be on a conference call with her

and the AFT legislative staff. With Michael Mulgrew's full support, we proceeded to lobby members of Congress on the impending "fiscal cliff" negotiations that ultimately passed with a favorable interim agreement on New Year's Day. Not only did we lead a delegation to Washington, meeting with such notables as Charlie Rangel, Joe Crowley and representatives of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, we launched an intense 10-day schedule of meetings with every congressional office from Suffolk/Nassau through NYC, up through the Hudson Valley and in New Jersey. We also sent to all of our members on the RTC e-mail list-serve a mechanism for online lobbying. Our message? We are willing to do our fair share but don't scapegoat

retirees and the middle-working classes on the altar of so-called entitlement reform. In the lead up to compromise, we said, "Be as strong as you can for as long as you can" so the end agreement reflects an across-the-board settlement in which all equally sacrifice and all equally benefit. Two items: 1) the upper 1% will pay their fair share in taxes and 2) scheduled cuts to Medicare doctors of 27% were prevented. (Crucial to keeping them in Medicare to serve our members!) Much more was prevented and much more must be guarded against and advocated. But we are prepared. When we need more action, we'll be calling on you. I know you will join the cause because you have done so your whole life.



RETIRED TEACHER PAULETTE BRYANT AND A STUDENT FROM THE ADOPT A CLASS DAY AT PS 188



HAROLYN FRITZ HOSTED A MOBILE PHONE BANK



RICHARD MILLER, UFTW RETIREE PROGRAMS LAS VEGAS COORDINATOR (FRONT, FOURTH FROM RIGHT) WITH RETIREES AT THE LAS VEGAS PHONE BANKS



RETIRES AT THE TOLEDO OHIO OBAMA CAMPAIGN



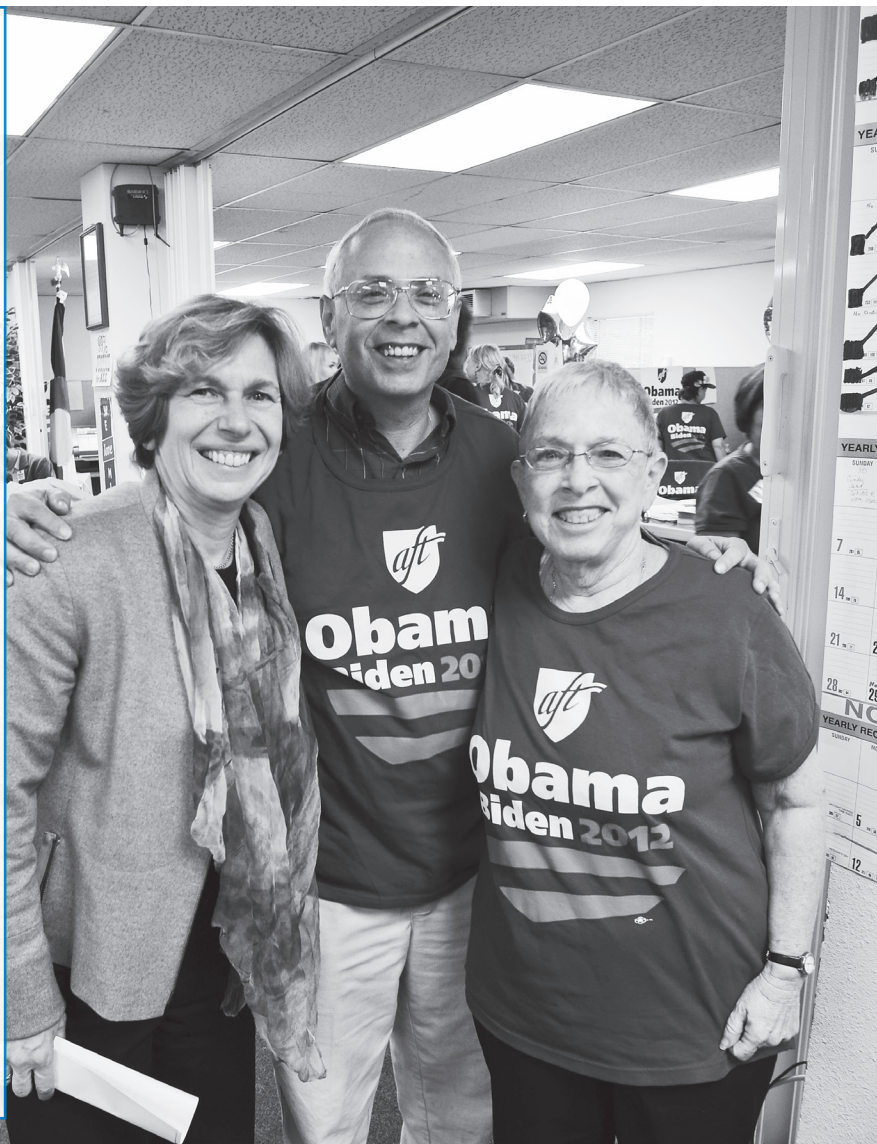
FLORIDA WEST COAST RETIREES IN SUPPORT OF OBAMA BEFORE THE ELECTIONS



RANDI WEINGARTEN WITH THE UFT FLORIDA RETIREES

Many areas around the country where UFT retirees now reside, including Denver, Colorado want to stay in touch with the RTC and establish contact with one another when possible. Over the last year or so, some of our members in the greater Denver area reached out to us, asking for a closer contact and a way to be locally active both socially, union-wise and politically. As we have done elsewhere, we reached out to both UFT and NYSUT retirees living within a 50 mile radius around Denver and came up with a number approaching 100 members. Last fall, when we heard that Randi Weingarten would participate in hosting an AFT Presidential Debate Watch/Action Event there during the first debate, we informed our Denver folks and several members attended including Ira and Susan Schulman who are with Randi in the photo.

I was able to tag on a visit there on my way to our Annual Meeting presentations in Northern and Southern California, Phoenix and Las Vegas. At a luncheon there on January 31st, we also invited local labor leaders to participate in the meeting. AFT State President Brenda Smith and Douglas County retiree representatives, AFL-CIO and Alliance For Retired Americans (ARA) spoke and offered many ways for our members to be involved in social, labor and political activism. It is an example of bottom up, rank and file interest and enthusiasm. We all intend to follow up with contact information members shared amongst themselves and offer paths to active local participation in Denver and its environs. I think much good will come of it, even miles from New York's home base. You can take a UFTer out of New York but you can't take the New York out of our UFTers.



UFT RETIREE

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