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# UFT *ParaScope* Paraprofessionals

## CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Dear Friend,

As the end of the year draws near, I wanted to say thank you for all your hard work. This year, we've seen a number of changes in our chapter.

Our roles as professionals are expanding with our Lead Teacher Assistants thriving and paraprofessionals all across the city going above and beyond to fully support students in their academic pursuits.

We've faced many challenges this year including battling U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who took her lifelong support of vouchers to Washington D.C. Vouchers are public dollars spent on tuition at private schools. We've also seen the White House criminalize immigrant students and families to no end. These challenges, and more, have affected our classrooms, our jobs and education across the country and we must fight back because our lives really do depend on it.

If we fail to act, public education will suffer. I encourage you to speak up, get involved and commit to our union's belief that every child has a right to free and fair education in the least restrictive environment and without fear of punishment. All communities and individuals within our school communities deserve respect and dignity. Together, we will fight to preserve what we've forged in this city and nation.

In this newsletter, I've included information that will help you on the job. Reach out to Reggie Colvin at [rcolvin@uft.org](mailto:rcolvin@uft.org) if you have any questions.

As a reminder, summer hours are in effect in all borough offices starting July 5. I hope you have a wonderful summer, and remember to keep in touch!

Sincerely,

Shelvy Young-Abrams  
Paraprofessionals Chapter Leader



## Our Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon



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Melba Perry (second from right), the treasurer of the UFT Paraprofessional Chapter, was honored with a special surprise award for her 50 years of service to the union.

We had a wonderful 36th annual Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon on March 18 at the New York Hilton Midtown. UFT President Michael Mulgrew joined us and together we honored 15 outstanding paraprofessionals. This year's awardees were singled out for their commitment to their schools, their communities and their union. More than 1,000 of you enjoyed a great day of workshops, a health fair and a chance to network with fellow members.

Mulgrew noted the importance of paraprofessionals's work do with students with disabilities. "Why is New York City outperforming everyone in students with special needs? Because we have 29,000 paras who are making it happen," he said. City Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland, who chairs the finance committee, was our keynote speaker. Thank you for helping to make this year's awards luncheon a success once again! If you couldn't make it this year, I hope to see you there next year.

[See more photos in the gallery »](#)

[Read the story in the \*New York Teacher\* »](#)

We offer our congratulations to:

Ann Marie Glover, a paraprofessional at PS 29 on Staten Island, who received the Humanitarian of the Year Award.

Outstanding paraprofessionals of the year:

- Bronx: Lourdes Suarez, PS 160; Lourdes Urbaez, PS 314.
- Brooklyn: Shirl Simons, PS 8; Margaret Ward, PS 146.
- Manhattan: June McKeiver, PS 146; Mauritania Romano, PS 112.
- Queens: Stephanie Forbes-Watts, PS 99; Milagros Noemi Gonzalez, PS 7, Queens.
- Staten Island: Ann Marie Toro, PS 56; Ana Crisano, the Petrides School.
- District 75 (special education): Joanna Brown, P94 at 188, Manhattan.
- Junion High School: Archie W. Fraser, P77 at Shellbank JHS, Brooklyn.
- High School: Renee Y. Freeman, George Washington Carver HS, Queens; Natalie Farrell, Richmond Hill HS, Queens.

## Certification reminder for Level III paras



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the State Education Department introduced a staggered registration process that ensured everyone entered the new five-year cycle efficiently. The registration period began last July and runs through this month, June. If you didn't register in the month of your birth, you have until July 1 to do so. If you were hired prior to 2004, you do not need to hold any certificates or participate in the registration process.

2. Your new five-year professional development cycle began the month in which you completed your registration, i.e. your birth month. (Those with June birthdates, or have not registered, have until July 1 to register.)
3. Login to your TEACH account to register – Login to your TEACH account on the [New York State Education Department website](#) and enter your username and password.

Follow the directions to complete the registration process.

If you have any questions about this new process, you can call 1-212-420-1830 or your educational liaison at your UFT borough office. You can also contact Nanette Rosario-Sanchez, the UFT special representative for certification and licensing, by email at [nrosario@uft.org](mailto:nrosario@uft.org).

[Read a Q&A about the new requirements »](#)

[See our easy-to-read chart »](#) Questions?

[Contact an educational liaison in your UFT borough office »](#)

## Why we must vote 'NO' to a constitutional convention

New York voters will be asked on Nov. 7, as they are every 20 years, if they want to hold a convention to revise and amend our state constitution.

We need to educate our colleagues about what this could mean to us. Opening the constitution for revision could jeopardize our pension benefits, our right to collective bargaining, our right to Workers' Compensation, our right to a safe workplace and health benefits, and our right to have the state fund public education. Many of the rights we enjoy as New York State citizens could be fair game for revision by anti-unionists and so-called education reformers.

### What's at risk?

- A guaranteed free public education (Article 11, §1);
- Reductions in public pension benefits (Article 5, §7);
- The elimination or curtailing of Workers' Compensation (Article 1, §18);
- The right to be a union member and bargain collectively (Article 1, §17); and
- State-guaranteed social safety net (Article 27, §1).

Please remember to vote "no" in November and ask your colleagues, family and friends to vote "no" as well. For more information on what's at risk, read this New York State United Teachers article.

## 4.5 percent pay increases took effect May 1



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forward and securing the retroactive pay members were owed.

All teachers and other pedagogues including paraprofessionals on the Q Bank payroll should have received the 4.5 percent increase in their May 15 paycheck. Members received a regular wage increase of 2.5 percent coupled with a 2 percent wage increase that is the third step of the phase-in of the 8 percent retroactive rate increase arising from the 2009-11 period. Nurses, therapists, education officers, education analysts and other employees who are on the H Bank payroll saw the 4.5 percent increase in their May 19 paycheck (for 13 days, May 1 to May 13).

The June 2 check will be the first to reflect the 4.5 percent for the entire pay period. All teachers and other pedagogues who work per diem or per session will first see the new pay rate in the June 1 paycheck for any days worked from May 1 to May 15. Paras working per session and para substitutes will see their increase based on the new salary rate in their regular semimonthly paycheck dated May 31. If you have any questions, please contact a salary rep in your UFT borough office.

## Upcoming professional development opportunities

It is important to expand your skills as a paraprofessional and take the right steps to ensure that you meet state requirements for certification. For those of you who still need the required training, I want to alert you to two upcoming training sessions. To register for either workshop, you must sign up on the [UFT's course calendar](#).

(NOTE: You must be logged in to see courses and registration details.)

### Violence prevention

This workshop will teach you techniques and practical approaches to avoid and diffuse violent situations in school. It will also provide you with a better understanding of aggressive behaviors and give you the tools to avoid becoming victimized in school. It meets the New York State Department of Education violence prevention training requirement for state certification. Enrollment is limited to 35 participants. For information, call 1-212-701-9413.

Upcoming dates:

- UFT Bronx borough office at 2500 Halsey St. [Directions »](#)  
Thursday, June 15, from 4 to 6 p.m.
- UFT headquarters at 52 Broadway. [Directions »](#)  
Thursday, July 6, from 3 to 5 p.m.

### Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

This training session will focus on harassment, bullying, cyberbullying and discrimination in schools. All teachers and school-related professionals applying for New York State certification must take this state mandated six-hour workshop. All attendees will learn to understand the intent components and operational definitions of the Dignity Act as well as develop sensitivity to the experience of specific student populations. You will also learn to better understand school climates, early warning signs, prevention techniques and more. Enrollment is limited. For further information, call 1-212-701-9413.

Upcoming dates:

- UFT headquarters at 52 Broadway. [Directions »](#)  
Saturday, June 10, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Sunday, June 18, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Featured article: How far we've come



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Newsman Geraldo Rivera (standing, center) and former Willowbrook State School resident Bernard Carabello are flanked by Hungerford School paraprofessionals (from left) Janine Vecchio, Aideen Taylor and Jean Kelley.

Those with disabilities today have “a world of opportunity ahead of them,” said Dr. Mary McInerney, the principal of the Richard H. Hungerford School on Staten Island, speaking of people including like Marianna Pastena, a graduate of the District 75 school and now a paraprofessional there.

But it was not always so.

Willowbrook State School on Staten Island gained infamy in the 1960s and early 1970s when it was exposed as an inhumane, severely overcrowded, filthy warehouse for people with challenges. Pastena acknowledges that she feels “blessed when I think of what the people who lived at the Willowbrook State School had to endure.”

The Hungerford faculty celebrated their school’s 50th anniversary on April 1 by remembering that shameful history and reflecting on the transformation since their school’s founding in the treatment and education of people with special needs. The featured speaker was Geraldo Rivera, who, as a young local TV reporter in 1972, helped uncover the atrocities. His exposé of Willowbrook was the catalyst that helped fast track improvements to an education system which today helps special needs individuals reach their potential and, in many cases, gain their independence.

“While Geraldo was not directly linked to our school’s founding, populations we serve today may never have had the opportunity to go to school or even be part of the community had it not been for his exposé,” Chapter Leader Al Vota said.

Educator Richard H. Hungerford was recruited in 1960 to bring occupational education to the city’s five boroughs. The first site, in Manhattan, opened in 1961; the Staten Island site was the last to open, in 1967. And when Willowbrook closed in 1987, some of its residents went to Hungerford, which today serves more than 450 students.

Almost 200 people attended the conference including former Willowbrook residents and Hungerford students, special needs experts, educators and parents to hear about and attest to the horrors of the past and insist they never be forgotten.

[Read the full \*New York Teacher\* story here »](#)

## A guide for supporting immigrant and refugee children

Our schools should be safe havens for our students and their families. They should be dynamic places of learning that embrace the differences and similarities of all, regardless of citizenship and national origin including unaccompanied and refugee children.



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case *Plyler v. Doe*, in which the Court ruled undocumented children have a constitutional right to receive a free public K-12 education. However, in today's political climate, it is my belief that undocumented youth in this country risk losing these rights.

Many of us are seeing the effects of fear of deportation in our classrooms. I encourage you to stand with the AFT and the UFT to end the criminalization, detention and deportation of students and families. We understand their sacrifices and we honor their hard work and dedication to their families and communities. We do not believe that they should have to suffer at the hands of an administration that means them harm.



[See the AFT's helpful guide for educators and school staff »](#)

Here are 14 things schools can do:

1. Inform students and their families of their rights.
2. Stress the importance of taking proactive steps to ensure the safety and well-being of children and entire communities.
3. Distribute “know your rights” materials to students and communities about what to do if a raid occurs or an individual is detained.
4. Find out if there is a local immigration raid rapid response team. These teams usually consist of attorneys, media personnel and community leaders who may be able to provide support.
5. Partner with a pro bono attorney, legal aid organization or immigrant rights organization to schedule a “know your rights” workshop on campus to inform students and families about their rights.
6. Provide a safe place for students to wait if a parent or sibling has been detained.
7. Provide counseling for students who have had a family member detained by ICE.
8. Maintain a list of resources, including the names of social workers, pro bono attorneys and local immigration advocates and organizations, to share with your students and their families.
9. Identify someone at your school who can serve as the immigration resource advocate in your building or on your campus.
10. Work with parents to develop a family immigration raid emergency plan.
11. Make your school an ICE-free zone/sanctuary school.
12. Work with your school board to pass a resolution affirming schools as welcoming places of learning for all students, distancing the schools from enforcement actions that separate families.
13. Issue statements condemning raids and calling for the immediate release of students.
14. Participate in [National Educators Coming Out Day](#), held annually on Nov. 12, and “come out” in support of undocumented students.

For additional tools and model resolutions to create safe, welcoming environments for all students, visit the [American Federation of Teachers website](#).





You need to regularly check the DOE website and your schools.nyc.gov email address for information related to your role. You should also check your personal email for UFT chapter updates and important union news. Please note: We will only send UFT emails to your personal, non-DOE email address.

To update your information, you can download and fill out the UFT [Personal Information Change Form](#). Send to the Membership Department at UFT, 52 Broadway, NY, NY 10004. You can also contact the UFT Membership Department by phone at 1-212-598-6855 or by email at [membership@uft.org](mailto:membership@uft.org).

If you are currently signed up as a union member on the website, you can update your information online on the [UFT website](#).

## Sign up for text messages

The UFT is now sending text messages to members’ mobile phones to get you information you need fast. This includes updates on weather emergencies, reminders about rallies and other union actions; and updates on vital news. We promise not to inundate you. We’ll still send most of our messages via email.

[Sign up to receive UFT text messages »](#)

## Honor roll

Congratulations to our chapter's newest graduates!

*(To be listed on the honor roll, call 1-212-598-9295 or send a fax to 1-212-785-4639 with your name, the school you work at, the type of degree you received, i.e associate of arts, associate of science, or bachelor’s degree and the college you attended.)*

|                  |              |    |                          |
|------------------|--------------|----|--------------------------|
| Radwa Ahmed      | R68          | BA | College of Staten Island |
| Quesada Alvaro   | Q127         | BA | Touro College            |
| Ariani Astacio   | X176 at X153 | BA | Lehman College           |
| Rosely Astacio   | X176 at X153 | BA | Lehman College           |
| Meghan Blackwood | X176 at X153 | MS | Mercy College            |
| Orell Bruce      | X176 at X153 | BA | College of New Rochelle  |
| Chrissy Carone   | New Dorp HS  | BS | Touro College            |
| Ana E. Castro    | K118         | AA | Boricua College          |
|                  |              |    |                          |
| Alma Cintron     | X121         | BA | Lehman College           |



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|                    |              |     |                          |
| Cadecia Lowe       | Q255 at Q154 | BA  | York College             |
|                    |              |     |                          |
| Claudia Loverdi    | R721         | BA  | Empire State College     |
| Martha MacRini     | Q4 at Q179   | BS  | Mercy College            |
| Annette Maresca    | K222         | BS  | Touro College            |
| Marilyn Noa        | M332         | BS  | Touro College            |
| Ivory Obey         | K222         | BS  | Touro College            |
| Camille Ralph      | K91          | MS  | Mercy College            |
| Alecia Robinson    | K327         | BA  | College of New Rochelle  |
| Donette Ross       | K138         | MS  | Mercy College            |
| Sonya Taylor       | Q9           | BA  | City College of New York |
| Roxanne Valdez     | Q993 at Q208 | MA  | Touro College            |
| Octavia Wadesworth | K272         | MPA | Liberty University       |

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