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UFT *ParaScope* Paraprofessionals

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Dear Friend,

As the school year begins to wind down, a major fight for our workers rights heats up.

Before I moved to New York City from the farm in the south where I grew up, my mother told me to join a union. I was a mother of two living on the Lower East Side, surviving first on welfare, then on my \$2.30 hourly wage when I first started work as a paraprofessional. I had no benefits and no summer pay; I waited three weeks for my first paycheck.



But then, Albert Shanker, who was the UFT president at the time, began working to bring paras into the union. I took my mother's advice and became one of the first organizers. Everything started to change. We got benefits, better pay and opportunities to advance our careers. I could finally support my two daughters the way they deserved.

We won that fight for our first contract. Now, we have another pivotal fight on our hands. The Janus case Supreme Court decision is expected to weaken public sector unions like ours. Without needed funding, unions could lose the strength to advocate for quality education for our students and a decent livelihood for members. I know you'll do whatever is in your power to protect our profession.

So, if a UFT volunteer comes knocking at your door to talk about Janus, sign the pledge! We're asking members to promise that, should our opponents prevail in Janus, they'll continue to be proud UFT members.

And, make sure you're registered to vote! The midterm elections on Nov. 6 will be crucial to restore sanity and compassion to our elected offices. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Our weapon is our vote."

Thank you for your passion and unity in the face of this threat. I know I can count on you!

Sincerely,

Shelvy Young-Abrams
Paraprofessionals Chapter Leader

Our Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon

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A rousing luncheon speech from Paraprofessionals Chapter Leader Shelvy Young-Abrams brings (from left) Ivetzy Sosa of the Manhattan Academy for Arts and Language, Janet Rosario of MS 77 in Manhattan, Zina Young of Roosevelt High School and Shelvy's niece, Michelle Rivera, to their feet at the luncheon.

Nearly 1,000 paraprofessionals joined the UFT for a wonderful 37th annual Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon on March 10 at the New York Hilton Midtown. UFT President Michael Mulgrew joined us to honor 15 outstanding paraprofessionals. We also enjoyed a day of workshops and speeches from NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, Assemblywoman Stacey Amato and Chapter Leader Shelvy Young-Abrams.

Thank you for helping to make this year's awards luncheon such a success. If you couldn't make it this year, we hope to see you there next year.

[See more photos in the gallery »](#)

Congratulations to paraprofessionals of the year:

- Bronx: Erika J. Brown, Iliana Guzman and Zelideth Diaz Hatch
- Brooklyn: Jacqueline Marshall and Esperanza Tong
- Manhattan: Margaret Dalton-Diakite and Kadeeja Williams
- Queens: Dolores Balboa and Irene A. Olivia-Sutherlann
- Staten Island: Helane Collins and Geraldine Cucuzza
- District 75 (special education): Elaine Holland and Erastus Topel K. Laster
- High School: Sheila D. Archer and Shrella A. Henegan

Chapter elections are coming up

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May, UFT members will elect chapter leaders, delegates and para reps for the next three years, from July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2021. Each school has a chapter leader elected by the members of that school. Functional chapters, which represent non-teacher members including speech teachers SLPS, secretaries, school nurses or school counselors, elect citywide chapter leaders and their own delegates to the UFT Delegate Assembly.

UFT members have a right to run for office, nominate other members and vote for candidates. Electing a solid team is important to your interests, the strength of your school or professional community and the strength of our union. You must be a member of the UFT to hold office or vote in the union's elections. We encourage all members to vote.

[Read about the responsibilities of a chapter leader »](#)

Reminders for our chapter

- Have you checked your DOE email inbox?

Remember to check your DOE (@schools.nyc.gov) email inbox regularly. All career advancement opportunities from the DOE, from Career Ladder to Lead Teacher Assistance applications, are sent there. Don't miss out!

- Tell us if you earned a degree.

We always want to highlight paraprofessionals who further their education. If you graduate from a college or graduate school program, email Janelle Joseph at jjoseph@uft.org so we can feature you in the next ParaScope Honor Roll.

- Stay in touch with your union.

Are you signed up for UFT texting and email? These are the best ways to get important updates from our chapter and union representatives. To sign up for email, [register for an account on the UFT website](#). Then, you can [sign up for UFT text messages](#).

If your contact information changes, you can update it and your subscription preferences by logging in, clicking "My Account" in the upper, right-hand corner, and using the fields below the heading that says "Update your information."

- Are you missing out on important TRS benefits?

The Teachers' Retirement System offers protection for your family and yourself in the event of death or permanent disability. Make sure you're enrolled and your contact information and beneficiaries are up-to-date. You can learn more [on the UFT website](#).

- Want to transfer schools?

If you want to transfer schools for the 2018-19 school year, apply through the DOE's [Open Market Hiring System](#) until Aug. 7.

- Apply for a summer job.

The DOE is hiring for Summer in the City and summer school positions. Check out the job postings and learn how to apply [on the DOE website](#).

Scholarship opportunity for Puerto Rican women

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annually to undergraduate Puerto Rican women who demonstrate academic excellence and service to the community. Applicants must be currently matriculated as an undergraduate student in an accredited institution of higher education, having earned a minimum of 12 accumulated credits with a minimum GPA of 3.0 and no failing grades. For full eligibility requirements and to download an application, see the [New York League of Puerto Rican Women website](#). The application deadline is Monday, May 28.

Watch this powerful video that shows what we stand to lose

Seven years ago, Kim Kohlhaas was working her dream job in Wisconsin as a well-paid, respected teacher. When Scott Walker, the newly elected Republican governor, decided to go after public employee unions in 2011, Kohlhaas and her colleagues had no idea how quickly everything they took for granted as public school educators would be taken away from them.



As we await a decision in the Janus v. AFSCME case before the Supreme Court, it's important to reflect on Kohlhaas' story.

[Read a New York Teacher story about Kohlhaas visiting the UFT this school year.](#)

Lead Teacher Assistant receives scholarship award



Lead Teacher Assistant, UFT Paraprofessional Representative and Peter Greeman Scholarship recipient Jamel Holmes holds some favorite books in his classroom at PS 29, The Melrose School, in the Bronx.

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UFT paraprofessional representative, and NYC Men Teach program member, to name a few. But it was likely his passion and drive, rather than any one of his commitments, that caught the eye of the selection committee for the Peter Greeman Community Teachers Initiative Scholarship.

The award, along with Holmes' many other accomplishments, earned him a write-up from [News 12 the Bronx](#) this year.

Holmes strives to offer exceptional support and serve as a role model for his students, many of whom struggle with some of the same challenges Holmes himself overcame, such as growing up in a single-parent household. But he also prioritizes bolstering his fellow paras through his work as an LTA and UFT paraprofessional representative.

[The LTA program](#) offers paras more responsibility in their schools along with bigger take-home pay. A para who earns this Career Ladder position serves as "a true assistant teacher, supporting all aspects of classroom instruction," and other paras in the school.

Giving back to his colleagues as a UFT paraprofessional representative is important to Jamel, who has benefited from his union through "professional learning sessions that focused on building knowledge and skills in the areas of instruction, safety and leadership." He added, "These workshops allowed me to turnkey the information to paraprofessionals at my school. Being in the union makes me proud to have a voice! I am proud to be a part of a diverse community of educators who serve students in NYC public schools."

We're proud to be a part of your community, too, Jamel! Congratulations from the UFT Paraprofessionals Chapter on your wonderful scholarship.

Honor roll

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(Please note: on the honor roll, each teacher's name is followed by a number that identifies the teacher 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.)

Cynthia Amato	Q316	MS	Touro College
Latrice Bell	K364	BS	Touro College
Mashantuck Bell	K364	MA	Nyack College
Maria De Lourdes Leodis	M811	BA	Touro College
Candance Goesre	K677	AA	Boricua College
Lashawn Holmes	K36	MBA	Long Island University
Tijuana James	Q80	AA	Boricua College
Patrick Kenny	X24	BA	Lehman College
Bathseba Lamarre	K4	BA	City College
Cheryl Masullo	R5	BS	Empire State College
Olga Pilar Portalatin	Q480	BA	CUNY School of Professional Programs
Vanessa Vega	X511	BS	John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Carmen Ventura	X324	BA	Lehman College

OUR CHAPTER | OUR UNION



United Federation of Teachers
A Union of Professionals
52 Broadway, New York, NY 10004
(212) 777-7500 • UFT.org

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