Local battles heat up

County workers fight back

See story, Page 3.

Photo by Mark Kotzin
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Photo of the Month

Thousands of CSEA members take part in the ‘Hot Day in February’ demonstration in 1991, marching toward the state Capitol in Albany. CSEA was demonstrating against then-Gov. Mario Cuomo’s lack of movement in state contract negotiations, budget cuts and a payroll lag. The image is from a collection of photos in CSEA’s official archives, which can be accessed via the union’s website at: www.csealocal1000.org. CSEA will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2010. See Pages 10 and 11 for more information.

CSEA urges alternatives to drastic cuts

ALBANY — CSEA is raising concerns about Gov. David Paterson’s latest proposal to cut $500 million from state operations funding.

The union recognizes the economic pressures facing New Yorkers and the need for responsible action at all levels of government. CSEA remains concerned about actions that erode necessary services and increase pressures on middle class people.

“CSEA-represented state employees have repeatedly been squeezed by multiple rounds of cutbacks that are making it harder to do the job. But most CSEA members work for localities and school districts across the state and these latest proposed cuts will create challenges in every community in the state,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue.

“CSEA urges local government and school district officials to work with their employees to find better ways to get the job done and achieve savings rather than unilaterally impose drastic cuts to positions and services that are counterproductive,” Donohue said.

The union has offered a number of ideas for savings to help ease the budget pressures. Consider just one: New York state alone could save hundreds of millions of dollars by implementing a Canadian mail order prescription drug option for state employees.

“Numerous municipalities across the state have already implemented this program and are already saving millions of dollars. Many other localities and schools could also save from this approach, too,” Donohue said.

CSEA, AFSCME strong in opposition to taxing health care benefits

CSEA and AFSCME are expressing alarm at provisions of the U.S. Senate version of health care reform legislation. The so-called Baucus bill sponsored by U.S. Sen. Max Baucus (D-Montana) is unacceptable because it would tax health care benefits.

“It’s not right to penalize people for having good health care benefits and then try to call it reform,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “There’s a lot wrong with the Baucus bill but in simple terms, CSEA and AFSCME will not accept any plan that harms our members.”

AFSCME President Gerald McEntee has also been very strong in opposing taxes on health care benefits, and his stance has been widely reported in the media.

CSEA and AFSCME are strong supporters of health care reform having a public option to provide a counterbalance and healthy competition to the insurance industry. The public option is strongly supported in the House of Representatives but is not yet apparent in Senate legislation.

Stay up-to-date on the health care reform debate at: www.csealocal1000.org.
SYRACUSE — As the Onondaga County workers clad in black CSEA shirts began arriving outside a county budget hearing, the crowd quickly overflowed the sidewalk.

Police were forced to shut down the entire street as more than 1,000 angrily demonstrated, demanding a better budget.

A sea of black
CSEA leaders praised the solidarity in the fight against Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney’s budget. “I have never been more proud to be an Onondaga County employee,” yelled CSEA Onondaga County Local President Phil Graham, his voice rough from leading the workers in chanting.

“I know that with such a strong showing, we are definitely going to send a loud and strong message tonight,” CSEA Central Region President Colleen Wheaton shouted to the crowd. Worker after worker spoke at the budget hearing, which lasted until about 1:30 a.m., joining Wheaton and Graham in decrying a proposed “work schedule reduction” and layoffs in Mahoney’s budget.

Message received
CSEA eventually was successful in stopping Mahoney’s most harmful proposal, the threat to reduce the work schedules of 2,149 full-time county workers by five hours a week by laying them off and rehiring them as part-time workers.

It was a bittersweet victory, as the majority of Republican county legislators voted along party lines to lay off more than 135 workers, despite savings suggestions offered by CSEA and having money in county reserves to avoid any job cuts. In turn, the union pulled several planned endorsements, stating that most of the Republican majority and the administration had “played politics with peoples’ lives.”

A test of wills
Mahoney took her first shot in August, demanding union leaders reopen their contracts, giving back their negotiated raises for 2010 and increasing health insurance contributions and co-payments, along with a proposed 51 layoffs. Otherwise, she said she would implement a 44-day furlough, which later morphed into her “work schedule reduction.”

The Onondaga County Local leadership stood its ground, telling the county administration CSEA would not reopen its contract. Instead, the union offered to implement an alternative prescription drug benefit, a program already saving several other counties an average of about $1 million a year. The county called off talks, saying the savings weren’t enough. CSEA offered other money-saving options, but those suggestions were largely ignored.

Aggressive campaign
Working with CSEA staff, local leaders waged an aggressive campaign to keep members informed and involved in the budget fight, setting up a special web page for updates, holding departmental membership meetings, and sending out frequent “info blasts.”

A week before the budget vote, a radio ad featuring CSEA President Danny Donohue criticized Mahoney’s budget. Union members and the public were urged to contact their legislators to demand a better budget.

Mahoney played the blame game, publicly stating that if only CSEA would reopen the contract, her more harmful proposals wouldn’t have to be implemented. She sent a letter to union workers trying to turn them against their CSEA leadership, claiming CSEA’s leadership in Albany were “holding hostage” the local CSEA members.

Mahoney didn’t count on the workers’ resolve. “No one was tying their hands or holding them hostage. They came out to support their union and to send a clear message to the county that they would not be bullied into unnecessary givebacks,” Wheaton said.

“If anything, she actually made more people aware of what she was all about and what her agenda really was,” said Onondaga County Local 2nd Vice President Carmen Church, an income maintenance worker in the county Department of Social Services. “What she did was instill fear, but ultimately the members realized that they did belong to one of the strongest unions and that in order to be heard, you have to stand up and get involved.”

Changing minds
It was clear that involvement had an impact. Several legislators admitted they changed their minds about the “work schedule reduction” after the strong solidarity showing at the demonstration.

CSEA has now demanded impact negotiations over the layoffs, and still hopes the county will work with the union to reduce the amount of people who will be affected.

“We don’t believe that anyone needs to be laid off,” said Graham. “We continue to hope we can get the administration to find savings and stop trying to punish the workers for standing up to their demands for givebacks.”

— Mark M. Kotzin
Politicians beware: CSEA's at its best in adversity

It's really interesting that CSEA is now approaching its 100th anniversary year, but many elected officials in New York state don't seem to understand much about our history. What's more, a lot of them don't seem to grasp much at all about CSEA even though we keep delivering the same message over and over again in word and action.

We're proud and we care about making New York a better place to live and work. CSEA is No. 1 when it comes to reasonable, responsible labor relations. We always have some ideas about how to achieve savings and do the job better. CSEA members usually know more about our communities and the importance of the services we deliver than anyone else.

That's why we will not be made scapegoats. We will not be browbeaten and we will not reopen contracts that have been fairly negotiated. CSEA will not apologize for who we are and what we do.

The past year has been difficult, but based on what we're already seeing across New York, there are enormous challenges ahead in our centennial year. We've seen more than enough cheap shots from politicians who should know better. We've seen unprecedented management attempts to break contracts and undermine our union.

The good news is that we have stood up to this kind of thing before and we're doing it again. CSEA has been on the march in community after community in every part of the state in recent months, standing strong against layoffs, cutbacks and other wrong-headed policies. In the end, it's a lot more productive to work with us than against us.

There are some lessons from our history that should give CSEA members some confidence and elected officials some pause: We are at our best in adversity and we've seen many elected officials come and go over the decades.

CSEA intends to still be here – and stronger than ever – well into our second 100 years.
CSEA members express concern about H1N1 mandate

NEW YORK — CSEA members are speaking out to state lawmakers about their concerns about how the state is handling the threat of the H1N1, or “swine flu,” virus.

CSEA member Brigitte Higgins-Havlicek, a 17-year registered home health care nurse from Fulton County, told lawmakers at a state Assembly hearing in Manhattan that the state’s approach will exacerbate an already strained health care system if health care workers who don’t get vaccinated for religious or ethical reasons are not allowed to serve due to these considerations.

Mandates not recommended
New York is the only state to mandate vaccination against the virus, in stark contrast to the recommendations of experts at the federal Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control. CSEA believes mandating that workers be vaccinated is not only controversial but also counterproductive.

CSEA President Danny Donohue has previously said the H1N1 crisis offers New York an opportunity to set a national example for how to respond to the outbreak of serious disease. He said the union would continue to fight for comprehensive, science-based solutions.

“New York state needs a comprehensive approach to infectious disease control as opposed to a band-aid approach every time a crisis arises,” Donohue said.

Alternative precautions
Higgins-Havlicek also said the state has not even considered traditional alternative precautions to prevent the spread of contagious disease, which the union believes would achieve better results.

She cited testimony from another CSEA-represented nurse at a long-term care facility in Orange County, where an H1N1 outbreak was controlled using such measures. Under the state’s emergency regulation, her facility is exempt from the mandatory vaccination requirements.

“As health care providers, we deal with life-threatening contagious diseases on a daily basis. These diseases include: Tuberculosis, MRSA, Hepatitis B and C, and HIV among others,” she said.

Learn more about H1N1

The Occupational Safety and Health page on CSEA’s website contains many resources for you to learn more about H1N1 and seasonal flu, whether you are a health care worker concerned about mandatory vaccinations or simply concerned about keeping yourself — and your workplace — healthy, including:

- Downloadable fact sheet about H1N1 and seasonal flu;
- Links to expert sources on H1N1 and;
- Latest news on the viruses.

Log on today and learn what you need to know to protect yourself:
www.csealocal1000.org/osh.php
Carpenter uses his skills for good

WEST HAVERSTRAW — For many people, summer vacation means trips to the beach, camping, or even just barbecuing in the backyard.

For CSEA member Santos Guzman, summer vacation involves hard work. For the past three summers, Guzman, a carpenter at Helen Hayes Hospital, has taken the skills he’s acquired over his almost 24 years with the state and headed to Guatemala to build facilities that aid underprivileged children.

“I started doing this several years ago after my brother-in-law approached me about it,” said Guzman, who previously volunteered locally at a community food bank. “He extended an invitation to go to Guatemala and I didn’t think twice.”

Hearts in Motion, the Indiana-based not-for-profit group that sponsors the building projects, has in recent years constructed a nutrition center for malnourished children, daycare centers and medical facilities.

It’s a logical fit for Guzman, who as the main carpenter at Helen Hayes, a rehabilitation hospital, has performed a many duties from small repairs to bigger building additions.

“Not a lot of people would do this, but Santos really cares about people,” said Helen Hayes Hospital Local President Bill Curtin, a longtime co-worker of Guzman’s. “We knew that about him long before he went to Guatemala.”

Guzman said his visits to Guatemala are humbling. Seeing the poverty in Guatemala versus the relative abundance in the United States, Guzman said, means “you don’t appreciate what you have until you see what they have.”

His favorite memory comes from helping one of the young children Hearts in Motion’s efforts aid.

“This little kid would come around every day to see what we were doing on the construction site,” Guzman said. “It turned out that he had a huge hernia that required surgery. We were able to get him the help he needed and Hearts in Motion set up a surgery.”

Guzman doesn’t know what became of the little boy after the surgery, but there is something else he does know. Next summer, if circumstances allow, he’ll be headed back to Guatemala.

Santos Guzman, a CSEA member employed at Helen Hayes Hospital, at work in Guatemala. (Photo provided)

Humbling reminder

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— Jessica Ladlee

Cuts proposed in Ulster County, city of Kingston

KINGSTON — Workers in the Ulster County and city of Kingston units are fighting proposed layoffs in their respective bargaining units.

In Ulster County, where county taxpayers are stuck paying back a $6 million debt next year because of massive cost overruns at the new county jail, County Executive Mike Hein proposed cutting 30 jobs and closing the county’s Community Corrections Program.

CSEA members staff the program, which is an alternative to prison for nonviolent offenders. Community Corrections offers residential and day programs for offenders, allowing for substance abuse and criminal rehabilitation. The program saves on incarceration costs.

Workers are already lobbying members of the Ulster County Legislature to restore the job cuts in the budget and keep the program running.

Kingston cuts

In the city of Kingston, also the Ulster County seat, word of 19 CSEA layoffs came mid-month.

While claiming the city has no choice in the layoffs, Kingston Mayor James Sottile still transferred CSEA Kingston Unit President Bart Robins into a job that will require costly retraining, despite the fact that the city already has experienced workers able to perform those tasks.

Sottile has had a particularly acrimonious relationship with Robins and CSEA.

“Our municipalities need to focus on creative cost savings and revenue generating solutions, rather than always going after the workers first,” said CSEA Southern Region President Billy Riccaldo. “The truth is, the Ulster County and Kingston work forces are already lean.”

— Jessica Ladlee

Ulster County budget proposal:

• 30 layoffs
• Closure of the county’s Community Corrections Program.

Kingston budget proposal:

• 19 CSEA unit layoffs
Sullivan Sheriff’s Office Unit members step up contract fight

MONTICELLO — It’s a vicious cycle, says Sullivan County Sheriff’s Office Unit President Timothy Search.

Just as soon as a crop of new correction officers graduates from training and gains a bit of experience at the Sullivan County Jail, the nearby federal and state correctional facilities come calling.

“The turnover rate is so high,” said Search, who has worked at the jail for the last 17 years. “It’s tough to keep quality people for a little bit of money.”

Workers at the Sullivan County Jail are paid dramatically less than their counterparts in neighboring counties, a fact the unit leadership is emphasizing as they press for a new contract.

Negotiations have been at a standstill almost since they began, due largely to stall tactics on the county’s end, so CSEA activists at the jail are taking the next step.

Seeing the importance of political action, members are lobbying Sullivan County legislators by sending letters and e-mails and attending legislature meetings as a group.

“On average, we’ve lost 11 COs per year over the last 20 years,” said Search. “The only way to stop that is to increase the salary.”

Correction officers at the Sullivan County Jail make approximately $14,000 less per year on average than their counterparts in Ulster County. In making their case to members of the Sullivan County Legislature, unit leaders are asking for parity to make Sullivan competitive with the surrounding counties.

“We just want to be able to feed our families, heat our homes and lead a decent life,” said Joe Manning, unit vice president. “Nothing extravagant.”

— Jessica Ladlee

Newburgh budget woes lead to proposed cuts

NEWBURGH — A true sign of the City of Newburgh’s grim financial situation, city council members recently voted to authorize borrowing to cover payroll costs for the rest of 2009.

Now, Acting City Manager Richard Herbek has released a proposed 2010 budget that includes 32 layoffs and a whopping 82.5 percent property tax increase for homeowners.

CSEA members employed by the city perform essential work that Newburgh residents depend on, including taking emergency calls and staffing civilian jobs in the police department, answering calls in City Hall, picking up garbage, maintaining streets, treating the city water supply and running city recreational facilities.

Newburgh is one of the state’s poorer cities and strongly needs these services.

The economy isn’t the only culprit when it comes to the city’s financial situation. In the local media, Herbek cited a decade of improper budgeting by former city administrators for the current woes.

“CSEA members in the City of Newburgh have been going about their business doing their jobs, assuming that the people in charge of the city were doing the right thing budget-wise,” said Riccaldo. “Now city officials are looking for givebacks and want to balance the budget on the workers’ backs. Our members are the ones who have been doing the right thing. They shouldn’t be paying the price.”

— Jessica Ladlee
EAST MEADOW — More than 100 CSEA officers and activists from locals across the Long Island Region have been helping their union brothers and sisters at Nassau University Medical Center fight contract violations and union-busting tactics.

Called the “Blitz,” the outpouring of support is aimed at bolstering a months-long campaign by Nassau County Local members working at the hospital.

“The strength of CSEA solidarity is on full display today,” said Nassau County Local President Jerry Laricchiuta said to members before the Blitz. “Your support in this effort will certainly make a difference in how management perceives our resolve to secure a fair contract.”

Responding to irresponsibility

Union members having been distributing informational literature all over the medical center, detailing the irresponsible actions of management and urging union members to attend a pending meeting of the Nassau County legislature to make their thoughts and concerns public.

The Blitz came shortly after a recent demonstration at the medical center, where the union’s 12-foot inflatable rat stands as a symbol of management’s inflexibility.

Increasing danger

CSEA contends that many of the policies and procedures mandated by administrators at the hospital will inevitably endanger the safety of patients and employees there. The facility is understaffed in critical areas such as the nursing, intensive care and psychiatric units.

The hospital is also violating its collective bargaining agreement with CSEA by forcing nurses to work with less than the required 12 hours between shifts. The current contract expires at the end of 2009 and so far, CSEA negotiators say they have had little response to their demands from management.

— Rich Impagliazzo
ALBANY — Leaders from CSEA's VOICE and CCPT-NY child care groups met in Albany recently to advance CSEA's advocacy role with childhood educators.

The VOICE and CCPT-NY Leadership Summit brought together leaders from both child care campaigns, as well as state leaders and CSEA's statewide officers.

The meeting coincided with the formal signing of an four-year memorandum of agreement between CSEA and New York state after 18 months of negotiations.

“This is an historic point for CSEA. Now with this agreement we are showing how labor unions not only represent workers in traditional labor/management relationships but build real union strength for independent child care providers,” CSEA President Danny Donohue said.

OCFS understands and appreciates the critical role child providers play in the protection and development of our most valuable resources; our children. You make a difference every day!”

“In partnership with CSEA-VOICE, we remain committed to make substantial improvements in the quality and professionalism of child care across the state,” Gettman said.

Also speaking to the group was Ken Allen, executive director of AFSCME Oregon Council 75, which was the first AFSCME affiliate to achieve a collective bargaining agreement like those in VOICE and CCPT. The Oregon group is now in its second contract.

Before the summit, CSEA had announced that the child care groups and the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and state Assembly member Susan John.

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Among those addressing the summit were William Gettman Jr., executive deputy commissioner of the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), and state Assembly member Susan John.

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Before the summit, CSEA had announced that the child care groups and the state Office of Children and Family Services had reached agreement on a four-year contract for the providers. It requires reimbursements to stay at the 75th percentile of the market rate survey — the highest standard in the nation. It also provides access to affordable health insurance benefits, support for professional development and program improvement grants, among many other items that providers need to maintain quality of care.
These are exciting times to be a part of CSEA. In 2010 CSEA will mark 100 years as a labor organization. A benchmark event like a centennial anniversary provides an opportunity to look back and appreciate all that has gone before us that brings us to this point. But even more importantly, it is an opportunity for all of us to build on our success and look forward to the meeting the challenges ahead.

For the past 10 years, CSEA has been working to collect, catalogue and preserve the union’s history. Several years ago we designated the Grenander Special Collection at the University at Albany as our official archives. We have worked with graduate students from the Center for Public History at the university to review and organize our materials and make them easily accessible.

Today a significant part of the CSEA materials are available on the web with more of the material being added regularly. You can access them through the home page of the CSEA website.

CSEA has also conducted nearly 100 video interviews about CSEA’s history with a wide range of individuals, from activists and union leaders to public officials. This work has helped shape a book about CSEA that is already in production and will eventually find its way into a video documentary that will put CSEA into perspective in a way that we have never done before.

A new series of ads highlighting CSEA’s Centenary of Service will begin airing on television stations statewide shortly. A number of public works are also being planned across the state to recognize the importance of the CSEA Centennial in 2010.

A traveling display presenting CSEA’s Century of Service is now making public appearances in all six of our regions. The displays are on an 18-month odyssey that we expect will take them to every corner of the state to tell CSEA’s story in highly visible public locations. The displays have already been seen by tens of thousands of people and the centennial year is just beginning! Visit your region page on the CSEA website to see when the display will be in a location near you.

State Employee archives
The latest addition to the CSEA archives is the full collection of the association’s earliest publication. The State Employee magazine, later renamed Merit was published from 1931 to 1951. You can now view full editions of the magazine, which provides a fascinating window into the early days of the association. The collection, which is housed in the New York State Library in Albany, was recently loaned to the University at Albany for scanning and inclusion in the online CSEA archives. You can access it via the home page of the CSEA website.

Albany, 2012
A break in union membership status can have long-term future implications. Your membership status affects your eligibility with respect to:

- seeking or holding union office;
- signing nominating petitions for potential candidates;
- voting in union elections, and;
- voting on collective bargaining contracts.

Only members “in good standing” can participate in these activities. To be in “good standing,” your dues cannot be delinquent.

If you go on unpaid leave or for any other reason have a break in your employment status, your dues will not continue to be paid through payroll deductions. You must make arrangements to pay your dues directly to CSEA to continue your membership status.

If you are either laid off or placed on leave without pay status due to becoming disabled by accident, illness, maternity or paternity, you may be eligible for dues-free membership status for a period not to exceed one year. If you are called up for active military duty you may also apply for dues-free status.

Delegates approved the following changes to the By-Laws, which go into effect immediately:

- **Article II, Purpose and Policy**, to include gender identity or expression to accurately reflect the diversity of our membership; and
- **Article IV, Organization of the Association**, to provide that the Private Sector should have representation on the Board of Directors based on the size of its membership and that the Private Sector board seats should be representative of the entire division by assuring that board representatives comes from different employers;

Delegates approved the following resolutions:

- The Employee Free Choice Act;
- Modern Comprehensive Cost of Living Adjustment;
- Dignity for All Students, as amended;
- Marriage Equality, as amended; and
- Member Participation in Organizing.
‘Arch D’Boot’ honors Buffalo State College workers

BUFFALO — CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi joined several CSEA Buffalo State College Local members at a recent dedication ceremony for “Arch D’Boot,” a towering sculpture built from workers’ boots.

“This is the first time in my time as a region president that I have seen something like this,” said Western Region President Flo Tripi. “Each of these workers is part of the base of this campus. Without them, Buffalo State College would not be nearly as great. Their boots imbedded in this sculpture is a wonderful tribute — a wonderful recognition — of the importance of what they do every day to help this college run.”

Casts of actual work boots form the lower potion of the arch. The boots represent the work of members of the Campus Services Department and other classified titles: their work holds up and supports the rest of the campus. For two years, when maintenance workers purchased new work boots, they donated their old boots to the cause. It is these worn, well-worked boots that form the base.

Speakers at the event included the interim college president, the director of college services and CSEA Buffalo State College Local President Jerry Richmond. In addition to thanking campus service workers for their dedication, speakers encouraged those in attendance to take time to get to know these employees. They are much more than maintenance workers; they are poets, musicians, chefs, artists, athletes and community volunteers.

“These are people who have done many other things with their lives,” Tripi said.

— Lynn Miller

Saratoga public works employees honored for saving woman’s life

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Two CSEA-represented Saratoga Springs Department of Public Works employees are being credited with saving the life of a stabbing victim.

Mark Roberts and Mark Milks heard screams near the department’s garage and soon found and ran to the aid of a seriously injured woman.

Roberts called 911 while Milks helped the woman, who was on the ground outside of her house. Roberts and Milks continued to help the woman while waiting for emergency help to arrive. They later spoke to Saratoga Springs police, who are investigating the incident.

The woman’s son, Nicholas A. Ture, 20, was later charged with assault and criminal possession of a weapon and remains in jail.

Saratoga Springs Department of Public Works Unit President Gary Benincasa recently presented Roberts and Milks with certificates of recognition on behalf of unit members.

— Therese Assalian
Association members take active role in public finances

70 years ago ...

Arguments about state and local government finances specifically taxes, is a topic that doesn’t seem to change much over the years.

Consider the following two paragraphs from the November 1939 edition of The State Employee magazine, then the official publication of the Association of State Civil Service Employees, as CSEA was then known.

“The Association is an organization of taxpayers. Each of its members, like every other taxpayer in the state of New York, is anxious to see to it that there is no waste or extravagance in state government.”

“It is desirable that Association members take an active community interest in taxation and that they make it a point to speak informatively at local gatherings in order that everyone may be honestly informed. Last year, there was a great deal of misinformation presented to the public, the reaction to which was a legislative cutting of state expenditures.”

Today, CSEA members across the state, particularly those in local government, are fighting to get local elected officials to understand a very similar point: there are cost-saving measures beyond layoffs, contract-busting furloughs and tax increases that municipalities can enact to save money.

CSEA has also presented the governor with employee-friendly alternatives for saving money as he considers another $500 million in operational cuts.

Now, just as in 1939, it’s important for CSEA members to get their point across.

Also in 1939 ...

- World War II begins after Germany invades Poland, leading Great Britain and France to declare war on Germany.
- New York World’s Fair opens.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture starts the first food stamp program in Rochester.
- *Gone with the Wind* premieres, grossing $192 million, making it one of the most profitable films of all time.
- *The Wizard of Oz* is released, later one of the most celebrated fantasy films of all time.
- Robert Kane introduces *Batman*.
- Albert Einstein writes a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt regarding the possibility of using uranium to initiate a nuclear chain reaction, the fundamental process behind the atomic bomb.
- The New York Yankees defeat the Cincinnati Reds in the World Series in a 4-0 sweep. Earlier that year, Yankees great Lou Gehrig played his last game.
Fighting for farmworkers’ rights

CSEA is a longtime supporter of the Justice for Farmworkers campaign, led by the Rural and Migrant Ministry, committed to overcoming prejudices and poverty.

ALBANY — CSEA Executive Vice President Mary E. Sullivan, who also serves as president of the AFL-CIO’s Capital District Area Labor Federation, recently took part in a demonstration in front of New York state Farm Bureau Headquarters recently, calling on state senators to pass legislation granting equal rights for farmworkers.

CSEA is a longtime supporter of the Justice for Farmworkers campaign, led by the Rural and Migrant Ministry, committed to overcoming prejudices and poverty.

The Farm Bureau, which lobbies on behalf of large agri-business concerns, has led the opposition to farmworkers gaining basic rights.

The Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act (FFLPA, S.2247/A.1867) would remove the legal exclusions that deny farmworkers basic rights such as the right to overtime pay, to a day of rest per week, and to form a union.

It was passed by the Assembly for the fifth time in June. The legislation has been stalled in the state Senate.

In an effort to better serve CSEA members, the NYS & CSEA Partnership for Education and Training has extended its office hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Reach the Partnership by phone at: 518-486-7814 for areas outside the Capital Region, call: 800-253-4332.

Reach the Partnership by e-mail at: learning@nyscseapartnership.org

For more information about the many Partnership programs and services available to CSEA members, please visit the website at www.nyscseapartnership.org

State, local government and private sector CSEA members:

Skills for Success courses offered

This fall and spring, CSEA members employed by New York state, local government agencies and the private sector have opportunities to take Skills for Success training courses offered by the NYS & CSEA Partnership for Education and Training (Partnership).

Course participation by local government and private sector employees is sponsored by the CSEA WORK Institute.

Skills for Success courses are designed to help employees prepare for the challenges and demands of current and future jobs.

More than 200 courses are scheduled statewide through June 16, 2010. The training is available at no cost to employees or agencies. All courses are held during the day at conveniently located training sites. November’s scheduled courses are listed on page 19.

Employees can directly apply for these courses. However, supervisory approval and signature are necessary to attend without charge to leave credits.

Applications should be sent to the Partnership as soon as possible and not later than three weeks prior to the start of a class.

For more information on Skills for Success courses, visit the Partnership’s website at www.nyscseapartnership.org for a web catalog with course descriptions, schedules, course locations and a downloadable application.

You can also call the Partnership at 518-486-7814 or, for areas outside the Capital Region, call 800-253-4332, or e-mail at learning@nyscseapartnership.org.
Dependent Eligibility Verification Extension:
Empire Plan and NYSHIP HMO enrollees with family coverage

The Oct. 5, 2009, deadline for New York State and Participating Employer enrollees to submit dependent verification has passed, but the state has granted an extension.

Dependent eligibility verification documentation MUST be received by Budco no later than Nov. 25, 2009, to ensure continuation of coverage of your dependents. If documentation is not received, your dependents will be terminated retroactively to Feb. 1, 2009.

Budco is in the process of completing its review of documents received prior to the original Oct. 5, 2009, deadline. If you have not yet received a confirmation letter from Budco and documentation was received by Oct. 5, 2009, you will receive a letter from Budco between Oct. 23, and Oct. 29, 2009, confirming the eligibility of your dependent(s) or requesting additional documentation.

Budco will continue to review documents received after the original Oct. 5, 2009, deadline until Nov. 25, 2009. Documentation received by Budco after Oct. 5, 2009, will be reviewed by Budco starting Oct. 27, 2009, and a separate letter will be sent by Budco after the documentation has been reviewed.

If you have submitted documentation, you should wait until you receive a letter from Budco. When you receive your letter, if eligibility is not confirmed, follow the instructions for submitting any necessary additional documentation during the appeals period, which will run from Oct. 27, 2009, through Nov. 25, 2009.

REMINDER: If you have eligible dependents on your health insurance file and you have not sent in information verifying your dependent’s status, you must return the Dependent Eligibility Confirmation Form or the Dependent Eligibility Status Confirmation Form along with the required proofs of eligibility to Budco as soon as possible. Information MUST be received by Budco no later than Nov. 25, 2009.

If the required documentation is not received by Nov. 25, 2009, the Department of Civil Service is scheduled to cancel the coverage of your dependent(s) around Dec. 24, 2009, retroactive to Feb. 1, 2009.

If you have questions about the Dependent Eligibility Verification Period contact Budco at 1-888-358-2198 or visit http://www.cs.state.ny.us/nyshipeligibilityproject/index.cfm for more information.

Health insurance: Important dates to remember

The following information is applicable to eligible New York state Executive Branch and Unified Court System employees:

Flex Spending Account
Open enrollment: Sept. 21 – Nov. 16, 2009
The “Health Care Spending Account” allows you to set aside up to $4,000 in pre-tax salary to pay for health-related expenses not reimbursed by your health insurance.

The “Dependent Care Advantage Account” allows you to set aside up to $5,000 in pre-tax salary for eligible child care, elder care or disabled dependent care expenses.

If you are currently enrolled, you must re-enroll to continue your participation in 2010. For more information, visit www.flexspend.state.ny.us or call 1-800-358-7202

Dependent Eligibility Verification Period
The Oct. 5, 2009, deadline is extended to Nov. 25, 2009.
Dependent eligibility verification documentation MUST be provided to Budco.
For more information, contact Budco at 1-888-358-2198.

Productivity Enhancement Program (PEP) *
Oct. 26 – Nov. 27, 2009
Exchange vacation credits and/or personal leave in return for a credit to be applied toward the employee share of your NYSHIP premium.

If you are currently enrolled in PEP, you must re-enroll to continue your benefits in 2010. *Ask your agency’s health benefits administrator (typically in your personnel office) if you are eligible for this program.

Pre-Tax Contribution Program (PTCP)
Nov. 1 – Nov. 30, 2009
Your share of health insurance premium is deducted from wages before taxes are withheld, which may lower your taxes. You were automatically enrolled in PTCP when you became eligible for health insurance, unless you declined. Your paycheck shows whether or not you are enrolled in PTCP.

*Contact your agency’s health benefits administrator (typically in your personnel office) if you want to change your pre-tax status.

NYSHIP Option Transfer Period
Dates to be determined
New York state Executive Branch and Unified Court System employees who are eligible for benefits will have the ability to change their health insurance plan for the 2010 plan year. Option transfer period will begin once the 2010 health insurance premiums are approved (please watch The Work Force and your mail for additional rate information).
Have you ever had a question about your benefits and you didn’t have the time to call, or have you ever needed a copy of your listing of panel providers, then and there? Did your child leave for school this fall and now you need a student proof form?

At the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund, we’ve designed our website to meet the demands of your fast-paced lifestyle!

Visit www.cseaebf.com and you can e-mail one of our highly trained and specialized customer service staff to answer your questions directly, download a copy of your summary plan description, search panel providers in your area, download enrollment forms and much more.

With all of our benefits, a workplace health benefits administrator (HBA) is responsible for adding an employee on to our records after your employer’s eligibility requirements are met. The employee then must fill out and send in an enrollment form to activate the benefits. After the administrator makes the addition to our file, we send out an enrollment form to the address that the employee has given to the administrator. So, if you’ve moved, make sure to update your address by calling (800) 323-2732 and our member services department will be able to assist you.

• “I already filled out an enrollment form. Why do I need to do it again?” Has your family grown? If you need to add dependents to your plan the enrollment form is the way to go. Keep in mind that your policy has to have the family coverage option that enables you to add dependents.

• “I only have a single-only policy and I want family coverage!” Please call (800) 323-2732, listen for the automated system to pick up and Press 5 and you’ll be transferred to the Marketing Department or e-mail your marketing representative and they’ll be able to assist you.

• “Where can I find their e-mail address?” Our website at www.cseaebf.com contains a “contact” function located on the upper right side of your web browser window when you are on our site.

The next time you’re surfing the Internet, stop by and check out what’s new! To view the downloadable forms located on www.cseaebf.com, you will need the latest version of Adobe Reader which is a free program. The link is provided on the EBF website.

Once again, it’s that time of year to start thinking about your health insurance options.

The NYSHIP Option Transfer period will be held after the 2010 health insurance premiums are approved. During the option transfer period, CSEA-represented state enrollees will have the ability to change their health insurance plan for the 2010 plan year. Members will be able to choose from the Empire Plan or one of the NYSHIP-approved health maintenance organizations (HMOs) in their area.

In the past, enrollees may have received from the Department of Civil Service a copy of “Choosing Your Health Plan.” If you found that information helpful you may want to request a copy of the 2010 Choices guide from your health benefits administrator. Members should review each of the options carefully to determine which health insurance plan will best meet their needs and the needs of their family.

Please watch for additional information in The Work Force as the option transfer period draws nearer. The Joint Committee on Health Benefits will publish more information on health insurance premiums for the 2010 plan year in an effort to assist you in making the most informed choices for you and your families’ health care needs in 2010.

This members only benefit program provides attorney representation for Workers’ Compensation, Social Security Disability, Personal Injury and Personal Legal matters including Taking Care of Business for members and their dependents. Quality legal representation at little or no out-of-pocket cost for injury/illness related matters; quality legal representation at pre-negotiated/discounted fees for other personal matters.

Finding a CSEA Legal Services Program attorney is as simple as calling the CSEA toll-free number: 1-800-342-4146 and following the prompts for the Legal Services Program. Listen to the directions for accessing the Injury-Related Plans, or the Non-Injury Related Plans, which includes the Taking Care of Business Plan. Information is also available on the CSEA website at www.csea10100.org.
Marty Langer: quietly effective in diverse roles for 40 years

**Editor's Note:** CSEA will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2010. Throughout this year, The Work Force is devoting the Leading Edge to a look back at some of the key individuals who have helped shape our extraordinary history. This month, we feature a profile of Marty Langer, who served CSEA well in both highly visible and quiet, behind-the-scenes roles for 40 years.

It would be hard to find many individuals who served CSEA longer and in more diverse ways than Marty Langer.

Langer, who began his career as an attendant at Rockland State Hospital, as Rockland Psychiatric Center was known in 1960, capped his CSEA career as executive assistant to President Danny Donohue in 1996.

Langer, who served as a local president and board member early in his CSEA career, was instrumental in helping to elect William L. McGowan as CSEA president in 1977. He chaired and helped establish CSEA’s statewide Political Action Committee in the late 1970s and later chaired the CSEA-New York State Labor Management Committees.

But Langer is best known in CSEA for his decades of involvement on mental health and developmental disabilities issues, where his expertise is unparalleled. For more than a generation, Langer helped hone CSEA’s position on contract and public policy issues involving these areas. He played a leading role in coordinating CSEA’s support of deinstitutionalization in the developmental disabilities area and overseeing the move into community-based residences.

He also helped CSEA stand strong for more humane care in the mental health field, a position that has finally begun to yield some progress in recent years.

In a 2006 interview for the CSEA 100 History Project, which collects the oral history of the union, Langer detailed how he initially got involved in the early 1960s: “I guess my introduction to CSEA came because the state set up some Catch-22 scenarios about what it took for me to ... advance.”

“I called up this organization that I knew nothing about other than the fact that it existed, and I spoke to somebody in the Research Department who said, ‘you know, you’re right.’ In the course of a fairly short time, CSEA helped me. Hardly a gigantic matter in those days, but it was to me. And it made me realize that I was a little guy and that the state of New York was a big operation and that, on my own, I couldn’t do really very much to deal with it. It was at that moment that it was sort of an epiphany, I guess. And my own wake-up call was that I said, ‘well, maybe I need to get involved a little bit. Maybe it’s time for me to just take a look around and see what this union is all about.’”

“Well, probably the most positive thing is that I watched the CSEA organization go from being kind of a social club to being a major force in New York state,” Langer said.
FORMING A UNION — Private sector food service workers employed by SUNY Canton’s College Association recently voted to form a union with CSEA. The union will soon begin the process to initiate contract talks on behalf of the 41 workers … AMHERST WORKERS FIGHT LAYOFFS — Close to 200 Amherst town employees represented by CSEA and two other unions, as well as their supporters, recently demonstrated against layoffs included in the town’s 2010 budget. The Town Board voted to restore some positions … REACHING OUT — Port Washington School District Custodial, Transportation and Maintenance Unit members, Nassau Educational Local members and Long Island Region leaders recently marched in the “Pride in Port” parade for the fifth consecutive year. Port Washington School Unit members were also recognized for their work in numerous local charity events to raise money for the Children’s Health Fund mobile medical clinic. The mobile clinic has now been purchased and is being used to give health care to the nation’s most medically underserved children … YARD SALE — The Southern Region Women’s Committee recently held a successful yard sale outside the region office in Beacon to benefit the Southern Region Emergency Disaster Fund, which aids CSEA members in need, as well as local women’s and family shelters.

West, Clifton Park
Nov. 9 -10: Local Government/Private Sector Grievance Workshop. Sign-in: 5:30 - 6 p.m., Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., CSEA Headquarters, Albany
Nov. 10: Skills for Success: Control of Hazardous Energy (Lockout/Tagout), SUNY Albany *
Nov. 12: Skills for Success: Hazard Communication & The NYS “Right-To-Know” Law, SUNY Albany *
Nov. 10, 17, 24 & Dec. 1: Skills for Success: Workplace Writing, Department of Correctional Services Training Academy *
Nov. 12: Skills for Success: Fall Prevention and Protection, SUNY Albany *
Nov. 16: Skills for Success: Masonry Basics, Office of General Services *
Nov. 17: Skills for Success: Conflict Resolution Skills: How to Be Your Own Mediator, Office of General Services *
Nov. 24: Skills for Success: Change: How to Make it Work for You, Department of Labor. *

Central Region:
Nov. 4-5: Local Government/Private Sector Grievance Workshop. Sign-in: 5:30 - 6 p.m., Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., CSEA Central Region Office, Manchester
Nov. 5: Local Government/Private Sector Grievance Workshop. Sign-in: 9 - 9:30 a.m., Workshop: 9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., Westchester County Local Office, White Plains. PLEASE NOTE: Appropriate leave must be used to attend this workshop, if applicable.
Nov. 10: Skills for Success: Managing Finances, Fishkill Correctional Facility *
Nov. 12: Skills for Success: The Organized Secretary, Fishkill Correctional Facility *
Nov. 14: Local Government Discipline: Representing Members in Interrogations Workshop, Sign In: 8:30 - 9 a.m., Workshop: 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Orange County Local Office, Middletown
Nov. 14: Local Government Discipline & Interrogation: Representing Members Under Article 33 Workshop, Sign In: 8:30 - 9 a.m., Workshop: 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Southern Region Office, Beacon
Nov. 17-18: Skills for Success: Math Skills Builder: Level 1, Ulster County Local Office. *

Capital Region:
Nov. 9 -10: State Government Discipline and Interrogation Workshop. Sign-in: 5:30 - 6 p.m., Workshop: 6 - 9 p.m., Shenendehowa High School
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