

THE WORK FORCE

United for Medicaid reform



Photo by Ron Wofford

CSEA Elections Info, Page 16

Special Supplement: *Officers Reports to the 93rd Annual Delegates Meeting*

Photo of the Month



CSEA members get in the marching mood at the Capital Region Labor Parade in Albany recently. CSEA's contingent marched in support of CSEA locals and units fighting for fair contracts. View more labor parade pictures at www.csealocal1000.net.

CSEA President Danny Donohue to visit Metropolitan Region

CSEA President Danny Donohue will visit the CSEA Metropolitan Region on Wednesday, Nov. 19 to meet with members.

The meetings will be held at the region office at 40 Fulton St., 22nd floor, Manhattan.

Donohue will meet with union members from 1 to 7 p.m. Please call the Metropolitan Region office at (212) 406-2156 for an appointment and directions.

Note: Each month, *The Work Force* will feature an excerpt of the union's agenda for the future. To read the entire agenda, visit www.csealocal1000.net.

November 2003 Making a Difference in Our Communities

CSEA has the responsibility to speak on behalf of workers everywhere because an injustice to one is an injustice to all.

- **Identification of need**
We will use our numbers and strength to help organizations in need.
- **Participation and involvement**
Our members and staff are encouraged to participate in community projects and services.
- **Statewide Activities**
We will identify and adopt a single project on a statewide basis in order to maximize our impact and effort.
- **Local Activities**
We encourage every local and unit to adopt at least one community project.

State talks proceed

TROY — CSEA and state negotiators continue to meet, most recently hammering out education and training benefits and the disciplinary/grievance process.

The CSEA team presented a six-page proposal in the education/training subcommittee talks, updating contract language to reflect the creation of "The Partnership," consolidating several articles, removing the "sun setting" of funding when contracts expire and strengthening joint decision making procedures. The state asked many clarifying questions and indicated that a response would be forthcoming shortly.

During discipline/grievance subcommittee discussions, CSEA refuted some state information with CSEA data, and pushed for CSEA's continuing need to move cases more quickly through the grievance process.

In coalition bargaining, several issues (emergency duties, child rearing leave, longevity, overtime meal allowance and seniority) made their way to the front burner with productive discussion.

There was a short break in talks with the state because of the CSEA Annual Delegates' Meeting in Lake Placid. Negotiations will be held once again the week of Nov. 3.

Many state employees have received a phone call from the negotiating team, providing comments and assistance. The team will continue to call members and will call local presidents, specifically, during the week of Nov. 3.

Visit www.cseacontractsnow.org for up to date information on state and local government negotiations. You can also sign up to join the contractsnow.org mailing list.

CSEA a sports booster

ALBANY — CSEA is a sponsor for the 2003-2004 New York State Public High School Athletic Association's 29 high school state tournaments.

The sponsorship not only helps support school athletics, it boosts the visibility of 40,000 CSEA members who work in the education system statewide.

"CSEA members across New York contribute to the success of student athletics every day —

they maintain the fields and athletic facilities, transport students to games, and provide scheduling and organizational support in the athletic departments. They also feed and take care of students as food service workers and school nurses. And of course they're coaches, parents and community supporters," CSEA President Danny Donohue said.



CSEA President Danny Donohue, second from right, and Nina Van Erk, New York State High School Athletic Association Director, pose with CSEA members, from left, Chris Ingham, George Johnson, and Bill Bryant, on the athletic fields at Ichabod Crane Central School District in Valatie. CSEA is a proud sponsor of this year's 29 public high school athletic championships. CSEA members perform a wide variety of jobs in support of school athletics across the state. For more information about NYSPHSAA and to view the championship schedule, visit www.nysphsaa.org.

CSEA united to fight for Medicaid reform

ALBANY — Hundreds of millions of dollars in state and local government aid is at stake as CSEA gears up across New York to build support for a reform of the federal Medicaid formula.

“The Medicaid program serves an important public good but its cost is overwhelming state and local government in New York,” said CSEA President Danny Donohue. “New York State and its localities need more help from the federal government to provide relief in the immediate Medicaid squeeze as long-term strategies are developed.”

At present, New York splits the cost of the Medicaid program 50-50 with the federal government. The state then further splits its share with counties, so the state and the locality each pay 25 percent of the cost of the program.

CSEA believes several points must be made about this arrangement:

- 4 **New York continues to have a significant deficit of payments with the federal government, meaning the state and its taxpayers pay much more to the federal government than we receive back in funding and services;**
- 4 **While Washington pays 50 percent of the cost of New York’s Medicaid bill, the national average for the federal government’s share of state Medicaid programs is 60.5 percent;**
- 4 **County budgets in particular are being overwhelmed by increasing, mandated Medicaid costs;**



4 **Counties’ Medicaid costs are largely borne by onerous and regressive property taxes;**

4 **Each \$1 increase in the federal government’s share of Medicaid costs means \$1 less that the state and counties have to spend.**

“Some have suggested that New York state should take the lead in Medicaid Reform with an eye toward having the state provide local government relief,” Donohue said. “That’s merely a cost shift and CSEA does not believe it is the right solution.”

CSEA strongly believes there is a moral and practical obligation on the federal government to increase its share of New York’s Medicaid funding. CSEA activists are pursuing commitments from county executives across the state to join with the union in seeking an improvement in the federal government’s share of the Medicaid formula for New York.

On the cover ...

CSEA Niagara County Local President Elaine Timm, left, and Unit President Nancy Bye were part of a recent protest against closing Mount View Nursing Home.

Lack of help from Washington in covering increasing Medicaid costs is affecting communities across the state in funding public health centers.

Mount View workers continue their dedicated tasks, caring for those in need of health care with the cloud of closure or sale of their facility hanging over their heads.

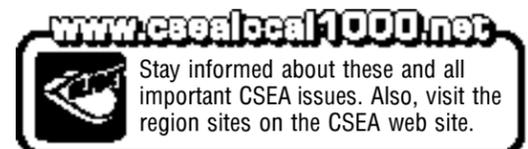
A poll conducted by CSEA showed a wealth of community support for the facility and a desire that it remain a community asset. Those findings are being discussed with Niagara County Legislature leaders to bolster the need for the county to maintain the facility.

The county has received state permission — but has declined to carry out — plans for a proposed \$15 million expansion of the facility.

The center’s administrator has resigned, following the county’s refusal to act on, or approve several plans — including an \$8 million proposal that would renew and expand Mount View.

Concessions have been sought by the county from its unions, including CSEA. But they have been refused. The county has not issued a firm commitment to keeping the facility open.

— Ron Wofford



THE WORK FORCE

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IN TOUCH WITH THE WORK FORCE CSEA President Danny Donohue

Stop bashing public employees over pension fund woes

State and local governments across the state that are facing huge budget deficits are blaming much of the problem on higher than expected pension costs with the implication that overly generous pensions are at fault. It's a convenient argument but the real facts tell a different story.

Since the fiscal crisis of the late 1980s, public employers have essentially made no payments into the state retirement system. During most of this period, all public employees who participated in the pension system continued to contribute 3 percent of their salary annually into the fund.

The economic downturn of more recent times has taken a significant toll on the value of the state retirement fund. Payments on the part of employers are once again being required to ensure the fund's ability to meet future obligations. Both current state Comptroller Alan Hevesi and his predecessor Carl McCall, had previously warned about this for some time. As with the state budget crisis, anyone who didn't see it coming was simply choosing to ignore it.

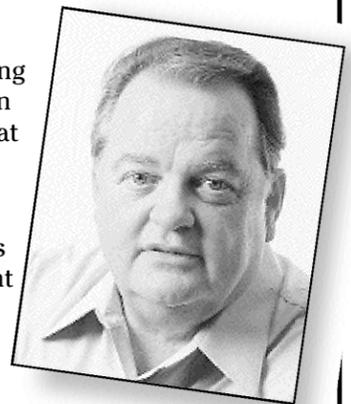
It should further be noted that the impact of these required employer pension payments was significantly softened by legislation enacted as part of the bipartisan budget agreement this past spring with the support of all employee unions. The measure limits the immediate costs for participating employers but establishes the fiscally responsible policy of an annual minimum payment in good times and bad.

There has been a lot of whining about increased costs to the fund as a result of "sweeteners" enacted for public employees in 2000 – the elimination of the 3 percent of salary contribution for fund participants with more than 10 years vested and the establishment of a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) tied to the Consumer Price Index.

The fact is that these costs to the fund are *negligible* compared to losses to the fund resulting from the Wall Street downturn. **According to an August 2003 report from Comptroller Hevesi, \$9 billion of the Common Retirement Fund's \$15 billion equity portfolio's loss in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, is directly attributable to the corporate accounting scandals!**

Where is the outrage over these facts? Greedy and irresponsible actions cost taxpayers billions of dollars but we don't hear a peep out of most politicians in this state to demand accountability. Instead we get public employee bashing.

CSEA members are united to fight back and will not be scapegoats for corporate greed and government mismanagement.



Food workers fed up at MPC

Food service workers at the Manhattan Psychiatric Center (MPC) say they are fed up with chronic understaffing and what they view as the shameful exploitation of patients by management.

"The workers are angry, very upset," said Sam Koroma, president at MPC. "The consumers are supposed to work just two hour days as a form of therapy, they are not supposed to replace the work force."

Koroma recently sent a letter to the Office of Mental Health demanding the state fill positions in the food service department. Just two years ago some 40 workers staffed the department. That number has now shrunk to about 20.

As a way to pick up the slack, the union alleges that patients are being used more and more to do the work normally assigned to qualified, state-certified food service workers.

While the union is in favor of helping patients adapt to a community setting by employing them at various jobs through the facility, it opposes the use of patients beyond the required number of hours they are supposed to work and at other times when they should be enjoying recreational or



Food service workers at Manhattan Psychiatric Center say consumers are being used to perform their work. Pictured here are Lorraine Burrell, Wilhemena Felder and Marsha Taylor.

educational activities.

"It's gotten to the point where patients are being overworked themselves," said Joey Horsford, the local's vice president.

But even with the additional help of patients, food service workers say they often have to service entire buildings by themselves, pushing several heavy food trucks and cleaning up tables while servicing residents.

"Management is being told that the work is being done (so they assume that more workers aren't needed)," said Lorraine Burrell, who has worked in food service for two years. "However, I'm not thinking about the supervisor, I'm thinking about the patients which is why I do everything I need to do to make sure they are fed."

Marsha Taylor, who has worked in food service for 20 years, said workers aren't even allowed a short break in between feeding schedules.

"By the time you finish breakfast in the morning you are burned out, but you must begin preparing for lunch," said Taylor.

With the possibility of OMH opening a new area for MPC, workers are now fearful that their workload will soon become even greater.

"There is no appreciation for these workers," said Koroma. "There is no compassion for these workers in the kitchen."

— David Galarza

CSEA
NEW YORK'S
LEADING UNION
Represents 60,000 Workers in
HEALTH CARE
SERVICES

“It’s gotten to the point where patients are being overworked themselves.”

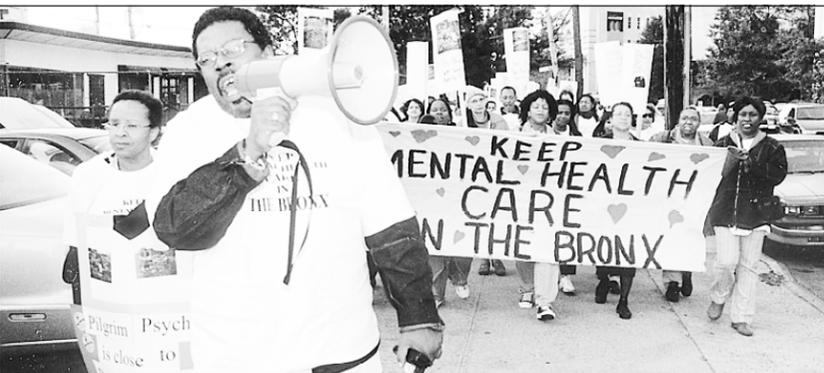
CSEA *Voices*



“CSEA really protects its members. For the people who have needed it, the union has really gone to the depths for them.”

— Jayne Clancy, EKG Services, Rockland County, Robert L. Yeager Health Center

March in the Bronx



Bronx Psychiatric Center Local President Abraham Benjamin leads members to a public speakout. CSEA is fighting George Pataki's attempts to close the Bronx Adult and Bronx Children's Psychiatric Centers. See related item in CSEA Today, Page 19.

54 years and still one of the fastest

MINEOLA — Arnold Cohen strides with quiet confidence into the musty courtroom, taking up the position he's assumed for 54 years.

As chief court reporter at Nassau County Supreme Court, he has recorded with swift precision every word uttered before him — at a rate of up to 280 words per minute.

That makes him one of the most skilled and longest serving court reporters in the country.

“Arnold Cohen has always been, and remains to this day, at the top of his field,” said Mary Ellen DeLouise, CSEA Courts Local president. “There is no one who can speak faster than he can write,” she said.

Though not formally trained, Cohen won first place in the National Shorthand Speed Contest three years in a row. It was Arnold's brother Jerome who attended classes for court reporting, then proceeded to teach Arnold and his twin, Bill, everything he knew.

“My secret weapon in shorthand was my brother

Bill,” said Cohen. During college and every day while in the service, they would hone their skills by giving each other dictation. “It was a lot of practice. That's how you develop high speed,” said Cohen.

While in the Army Air Forces during World War II, Arnold Cohen served as a court reporter, taking courts martial in the JAG (Judge Advocate General) office in Atlantic City, N.J., and then later in the Phillipines. At war's end, Cohen stayed in the Phillipines, serving as a civilian court reporter for the War Crimes Trials in Manila.

Between 1946 and 1948, Cohen worked as an English verbatim reporter for the newly formed United Nations. Among the history he witnessed was the creation of Israel's statehood, as well as addresses by presidents, prime ministers and government officials from around the world.

Eventually, Cohen passed the civil service exam and was appointed to the 10th Judicial



CSEA court reporter Arnold Cohen at work in Nassau County Supreme Court, where he's worked the past 54 years.

District, which at the time included Queens, Nassau and Suffolk counties. He spent about a year rotating between courthouses in the three locations.

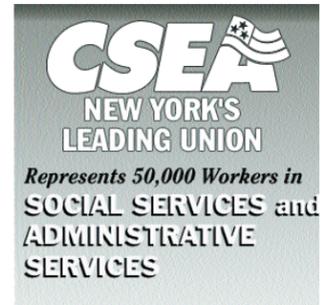
Before the Long Island Expressway was built, Cohen commuted the nearly 70-mile trip, one way, from his home in Jackson Heights to the courthouse in Riverhead via Route 25 — a long and winding road with many stop lights. The lengthy commute required overnight stays.

In 1949, Cohen received a permanent appointment in Mineola, and he's been there since. In a day and age when most people can't conceive of working in one place for 25 or 35 years, Cohen is still on the job after more than half a century, and he still loves it.

“Every day is like the opening of a Broadway show around here,” said Cohen. “You just get a different cast of characters.”

When he's not on the job, Cohen delights in reading non-fiction books and newspapers,

Continued on page 13



“Every day is like the opening of a Broadway show around here. You just get a different cast of characters.”

CSEA *Voices*



“We know that CSEA will fight tooth and nail for our contract.”

— Kim Branagan, Clerk I and Katie Burns, Assessor I, Nassau County Clerks Office, Local 830



Cohen, seated in middle, records proceedings during the Manila War Trials following World War II.



Union rights a major wrong

“I know if I wasn't in a union I couldn't have fought back.”

SCHOHARIE CROSSING — Imagine doing your job and then losing your job and your home for it.

That's exactly what happened to Don Drew in a story of flagrant injustice that proves two things: bad things really do happen to good people and being in a union is central for righting a wrong in the workplace.

Before coming to his job at Schoharie Crossing, a state historic site in rural Montgomery County, Drew held other jobs in the state Parks and Recreation Department going back to 1982. He left those jobs because of bias and discrimination he said he faced.

Sought better life

He moved to the Albany area in search of a better life for him and his family. After working at Saratoga Spa State Park, he landed what seemed like the ideal situation — a caretaker position responsible for the grounds and crew of a historic site.

Drew loved his job as caretaker. He also loved the cottage, a home for his family, provided as part of his position. Things seemed to be going well and Drew was fulfilled by his work.

“The darkest of days” as Drew refers to them began on Feb. 9, 2002. A tree was bowing over a

trail along the old Erie Canal, Drew decided to take it down before it fell on someone, a seemingly routine act that Drew had performed many times as part of his caretaker duties.

Night was falling and rather than risk injury cutting up the rest of the tree, Drew decided to stop and resume the next morning. The clearly posted park hours are “dawn to dusk” and Drew had no reason to assume the trails would be used that night. This innocent decision resulted in a chain of events that would find Drew fighting for his livelihood for the next 18 months.

Later that evening, an ATV rider, on the trail illegally, who had been drinking and traveling at high speed came around the corner and struck the tree. The tree was not blocking the entire path but because the driver had been drinking and driving too fast, he was not able to react in time to avoid collision. While the ATV driver had minor injuries, the nightmare for Drew and his family was just beginning.

The State of New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation took a heavy-handed approach to resolve the matter. Fellow CSEA members say that this “ton of



CSEA member Donny Drew at the Parks and Recreation Department area he oversees. Drew was wrongly fired for doing his job, and CSEA helped win his job back.

bricks” approach has become routine for management.

Park Police arrested Drew on Feb. 14, brought him to the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department and charged him with reckless endangerment.

Charges

On March 14, 2002, Drew was served with a Notice of Discipline (NOD) and suspension without pay. The misconduct charges were numerous — reckless judgment, abuse of authority, violation of agency mission and failure to perform duties and responsibilities.

Drew had to tap into retirement and personal savings to cover attorney fees to fight the criminal charges that took until November 2002 to resolve. CSEA's legal representation covered the fight on the disciplinary changes on fighting the NOD.

As if things weren't bad enough, Drew was notified that he and his family were being evicted and had 30 days to leave the state-owned house they called home for the past four years.

Faced with a loss of home and job, Drew took a job at Wal-Mart and moved. “We had to live in a slum,” he said. At the same time his wife was facing the loss of her job and Drew and his wife feared for the emotional well-being of their distraught son.

“This kind of stress doesn't just impact the person, it impacts the whole family,” said Drew, remembering the hardest times and how his wife, two sons and daughter struggled together as a family and separately in their own private ways.

While Drew's career hung in the balance, CSEA attorneys worked

Continued on Page 13

CSEA Voices



“Our greatest union strength comes from getting our endorsed candidates elected.”

— Renee Chichester, Livingston County Local

Influential union Brothers and Sister

MOUNT VERNON — CSEA members in Westchester County are using the power of music to lift spirits of children affected by a rapidly changing and uncertain world.



CSEA Mount Vernon School District custodian Mike Murphy

The Influential Brothers and Sister, a musical group of CSEA members from the Mount Vernon and Yonkers school districts as well as non-CSEA members, combines genres such as R&B, gospel and rock in what band members call “Gospel Motown.”

Between entertaining young audiences, these union members and musicians are hoping to inspire children to rise above negative influences and circumstances not only within their own communities, but across the nation and the world.

“It’s been a thought within my mind for a long time,” Barry Addison, a lead singer and guitarist in the band and CSEA member at the Mount Vernon School District, said. “It’s all

Despite their acclaim, all of the band members are committed to using their talent to positively influence young people in their community.

based around what’s going on in our society,” Addison said. “We’re trying to lift up the children in many areas because we all hear about such negative stuff today. I thought that it would be nice to use our local talent to do something positive.”

Addison reached out to other CSEA members and the community to form the Influential Brothers and Sister. He eventually gathered together for the group Ben Oates, a singer and CSEA groundskeeper at the Mount Vernon School District; Richard Norman, a singer, drummer and CSEA maintenance worker at the Mount Vernon School District; Mike Murphy, a guitarist and CSEA custodian at the Mount Vernon School District; Yolanda Jergens, a singer and CSEA secretary at the Mount Vernon School District; Todd Brennan, a singer and CSEA employee at the Yonkers Public Schools; and non-CSEA members Fred Hunter on bass and Julio Vitola on saxophone.

“These people are so committed and faithful,” Addison said.

Soon, the group was performing on a volunteer basis throughout Mount Vernon, but the band wanted to spread its positive message to all of the city’s school children. The Influential Brothers and Sister soon received approval from Mount Vernon school administrators to perform concerts at each of the district’s schools.

From pre-kindergarten to 12th grade, Mount Vernon district students were equally entertained and inspired, with students loudly cheering the



CSEA Mount Vernon School District member Barry Addison

music and its message during at least one performance.

“These kids are off the hook,” Addison said. “They’re so excited.”

Addison, Brennan, Murphy and Norman also perform as part of the New York City-based gospel group Christ Sent, which has been featured in publications such as *The New York Times Magazine*, performed as an opening act for singer Gladys Knight and performed at a national Urban League Convention during the mid-1990s.

But, despite their acclaim, all of the band members are committed to using their talent to positively influence young people in their community.

“We’re all family,” Norman said.

— Janice Marra



“... we all hear about such negative stuff today. I thought that it would be nice to use our local talent to do something positive.”

CSEA *Voices*



“Nothing provides job security and a safe working environment more than having a CSEA membership card.”

— Bunnie Smith, bus driver, Deer Park School District

Bay constables nurture nature, protect people

HEMPSTEAD — CSEA employees in the town Department of Conservation and Waterways serve ALL of the residents — footed, winged and finned alike.

In the nine linear miles from Jones Beach Inlet to East Rockaway Inlet, CSEA represented workers act as stewards of the environment. Through the Shellfish Management Program, our members have helped to save the region's struggling shellfish industry.

Robert Bialick, who manages the town's Clam Hatchery, said two CSEA members there help nature

along by raising 400,000 clams a year on in-water racks, and another 700,000 indoors.

"We provide a clean, nutrient rich, predator free environment. All the clams have to do is grow and eat," said Bialick.

A clam less than 1-inch across the back or hinge is considered a seed clam, and must not be harvested.

"Years ago you could dig 30 bushels of clams. Now you can only take six bushels of clams a day in the town waters. And they have to be a certain size, so you don't fish the supply out," said Town of Hempstead Bay Constable Lt. Robert

Powell. By continually monitoring and sampling these areas they have made conditional areas open and available to the public for shellfish harvesting and safe consumption for years to come.

The job of enforcing state and local maritime and environmental law falls to the town's bay constables.

Bay constables prevent poaching and illegal hunting, and enforce safe boating regulations. They also act as the community's first line of defense in the event of an environmental threat, like an oil spill, or a more sinister



Above, from left to right, Kristen Reicharter, Jim Hess, Pete Kaiser and Charlie Avondet at the outdoor in-water clam rack. Right, Robert Bialick. Far right, a clam less than 1-inch across the back or hinge is considered a seed clam, and must not be harvested.



Lt. Robert Powell patrols the beach front nesting areas to protect endangered waterfowl, like the piping plover, from other animals or careless beach-goers.



Bay Constables Mike Brennan and Jennifer Olivera.



Constables raise the bow as they speed away.

threat, like a maritime attack.

Another important bay constable function is search and rescue.

"This summer alone we had about 35 rescues in the bay involving boaters or swimmers in distress. People don't realize how dangerous the waters can be, especially if they're not prepared," said Bay Constable Jennifer Olivera. "They're not only risking their own lives,

but ours too, because we're the ones who get them out of dangerous situations," she said.

No matter how bitter cold or stormy the conditions, Hempstead residents are more secure with the town bay constables on the job.

— Rachel Langert

Labor-management relations uplifting

MACHIAS — A sparkling new Cattaraugus County nursing home, the Machias Campus of the Pines Healthcare and Rehabilitation Centers, recently opened, heralding a new level of care for its patient-residents and staff as well.

“This building, and its updated work aids, including the overhead, integrated lift system, represents a bright future for the residents,” said Donna Vickman, a 24-year licensed practical nurse at the former county nursing home, and Cattaraugus County Employee Unit president. “It also means a great deal to our members, who have endured quite a lot, while trying to help the residents.

“And I attribute a lot of it to a positive labor-management atmosphere, since the county ended its relations with a private management company and hired an in-house director, Tom Schobert. Since then, our ideas have been listened to,



Cattaraugus County Unit President Donna Vickman models as a patient-resident to demonstrate the multirail lift device that allows placement into bathtub, using a remote control. Looking on, John Bieger and Mary Klink.



Left to right, Mary Klink, director of nursing, Tim Anderson, Cattaraugus County local president, John Bieger, CSEA Occupational Safety and Health Specialist and Donna Vickman, Cattaraugus unit president showing lift device that can place a resident into tub without strain.

including many work aids that were included in the design of the new facility.”

“The no-lift systems and policies instituted at the Machias Campus are exactly what CSEA has been lobbying for across the state,” said CSEA Director of Occupational Safety and Health Janet Foley.

“These devices and practices greatly reduce worker back strain and injuries, at little overall cost to the employer,” Foley said. Studies show that health care facilities using lift-assist devices save millions of dollars over time that would be paid out in Workers Compensation claims and lost work-hours due to injuries.

Local President Tim Anderson was also praiseworthy of the new facility and labor-management relations.

“I thank the county

legislators for this beautiful new nursing home, and I am

convinced that it was through the joint efforts of Tom Schobert and Unit President Donna Vickman, that the project turned out so well,” said Anderson.

“County employees are hard-working and loyal, and nowhere is that more evident than in the nursing home. These employees put the care of the elderly above their own families sometimes. Even through years of threatened layoffs, threats of closing, threats of selling the homes, (another county home is in Olean), they are here day after day, caring for elderly. So I feel this facility is partly a thank-you to the employees for their dedication. When I visit the homes



Safe Practices

- * **The home has a “no-lift” policy, supported by mechanical lift systems, meaning no worker will be required to attempt lifting a patient, reducing back strain possibilities.**
- * **Each room has a ceiling rail that will accommodate the lift control, aiding in lifting residents into or out of bed or wheelchair, if needed.**
- * **The central bathroom can accommodate the lift device, and bathtub sides will lift, making patient entry into or out of tub much easier.**
- * **The nursing home has a dedicated rehab wing, with updated equipment.**
- * **All rooms are single or double occupancy.**

now, never have I been greeted by so many smiles. This is a great morale boost.”

Unit President Vickman said the unit will continue with monthly labor-management meetings on behalf of the 125 members working at the nursing home, and the families of the approximately 115 patients there can rest assured their loved ones will receive the best care possible.

— Ron Wofford



Union fight brings vindication

Continued from Page 8

to collect and present evidence before the arbitrator to show the injustice of the charges.

During the arbitration, the Parks representative argued that Drew was reckless in cutting down the tree and suggested that he knew ATV riders would use the path. The state charged he violated the park's mission by not protecting "patrons," and that he also violated agency regulations that require permission before cutting down trees.

CSEA attorneys Bill Herbert and Rick Stewart argued there was no possible way Drew could have known riders would be on the trails after hours, that he was acting responsibly to protect patrons as he had always done, and there was never any communication with him regarding an obscure inter-office memo directing that permission should be sought prior to trees being removed.

Eighteen months after it began, it was over. Herbert called Drew on Aug. 11 and gave him the good news that they had won. The award stated Drew was "not guilty of the charges set forth in the NOD," that the agency did "not have probable cause to suspend the grievant without pay" and that Drew was entitled to reinstatement with back pay.

In language akin to a scolding, the arbitrator wrote that "unsubstantiated allegations are

not evidence, nor can they be 'bootstrapped' to support a determination of probable cause."

The arbitrator dismissed all charges against Drew and reinstated him to his job with full back-pay.

"Being vindicated, that's the biggest thing, even more than the job," said Drew.

Obtaining job security to protect workers against arbitrary dismissal is one of many important reasons why CSEA is working to organize non-organized workers and bring them the protections of belonging to a union.

The family was back in their house within one week of the arbitration and the "darkest days" are behind them. Drew remains cautiously optimistic about the future.

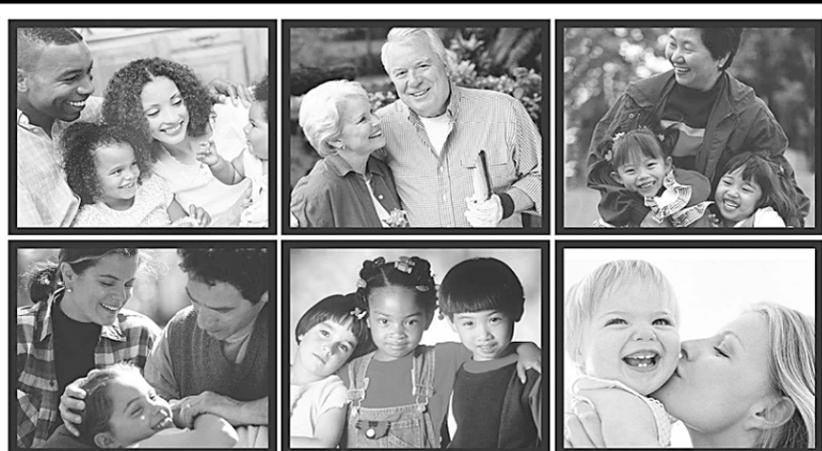
There are still moments when he wonders how his employer, whom he has worked for almost half his life, could have treated him this way. But Drew tries not to let bitterness creep in.

"I have strong faith and we did a lot of praying while this was going on," he said. He also thinks of his family and the job that he loves — a job he came very close to losing.

"I know if I wasn't in a union I would have lost, definitely," Drew said.

"I'm really grateful to CSEA, especially Bill and Rick."

— **Therese Assalian**



Make Your Mark
— and Make a Lasting Impression
in Your Community.



For more photos and info, visit the SEFA website at www.sefa.state.ny.us

Recorder of and witness to history

Continued from page 7

such as the *New York Times*. But he says it's not just for pleasure.

"It's important to stay abreast of current events," said Cohen. As a court reporter, "You have to have the raw speed. Then you need polish, to understand grammar, syntax. You also need a good vocabulary, and reading helps to develop that," he said.

What are his days like? "Hectic!" he said. His favorite cases revolve around real estate, medical malpractice and tax issues.

"We're very busy here. (Court reporters) have to concentrate constantly. You must listen intently and utilize all of your powers of concentration to hear what is being said. It's important to not miss anything. It's very challenging," said Cohen.

"He's always been held in high regard," said CSEA Courts President DeLouise, who has known Cohen for more than 30 years.

"It's such a stressful job, but he is so warm and gracious, and he has helped many younger reporters along the way," said DeLouise.

Cohen oversees a staff of court reporters now, and DeLouise said he remains an inspiration to his colleagues.

"He always keeps up with all the technological changes in our profession. He even took on the task of converting to a computerized transcription system, something many seasoned reporters have not yet attempted," she said.

Over the years he's seen tremendous changes on the job. The formerly rural Nassau County population has exploded. Men are the minority in what was once a male dominated field. Many more women are lawyers and judges. Computers are everywhere.

"You always have those cynics sounding

the death knell for court reporting. I've been hearing that talk for years, but it's never happened." Cohen does not believe recording equipment or computers will ever be able to adequately handle the demands of the job.

"A lot of people don't speak clearly, and that's one of the drawbacks of using tape recordings. If you have two or three people talking at the same time, the human auditory system is capable of picking out the voices. No tape recorder can do that," he said. "I think the professional court reporter is here to stay," said Cohen.

Cohen's quiet, refined demeanor belies a sharp, quick wit. Has the father of two, grandfather of three, given any thought to retiring? "Not really," he quipped with a smile. "But now that I'm an octogenarian, maybe I should consider it."

— **Rachel Langert**



11 years ago ...

In 1992, CSEA and AFSCME helped elect Bill Clinton president of the United States. Union members across the country worked tirelessly in the Clinton campaign.

CSEA was the first major union in the country to back Clinton in December, 1991, before any of the primaries. AFSCME also joined in as an early supporter of the then-Arkansas governor. Clinton has noted his appreciation for the early and unwavering support on numerous occasions.

The Clinton presidency saw numerous advances for working people, including enactment of the Family and Medical Leave Act, a health and safety standard for ergonomics, and an unprecedented era of economic strength that provided full employment and creation of a federal budget surplus.



AFSCME President Jerry McEntee, left, President Bill Clinton and AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Bill Lucy at a union celebration.

Also in 1992:

- i The beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police is captured on videotape setting off race riots in portions of L.A. and sparking a national furor.
- i Hurricane Andrew hits Florida, killing 14 and leaving 250,000 people homeless.
- i Dr. Mae C. Jemison becomes the first African-American woman astronaut, spending more than a week orbiting Earth in the space shuttle Endeavor.
- i The largest shopping mall in the U.S., Minnesota's Mall of America is constructed, complete with indoor amusement park.
- i Nicoderm, the first patch for smokers to quit smoking, is introduced.
- i Johnny Carson leaves the "Tonight Show."
- i For the first time, Major League Baseball's World Championship Banner flies outside the United States as the Toronto Blue Jays defeat the Atlanta Braves in the World Series.

Freedom Riders rally for workers' rights

In 1966, Noemi Zuniga, then 15, left her native Honduras to join her parents and start a new life in the United States.

"They came for the same reasons that many other immigrants come for," the CSEA member said. "For a better life and to escape poverty."

Zuniga, a keyboard specialist who started working at the Creedmoor Psychiatric Center in 1975, said she didn't experience too many difficulties obtaining U.S. citizenship when she arrived but is now troubled by the renewed crackdown on immigrants since 9/11.

"We did nothing wrong," said Zuniga. "We just come here to work and raise our families."

On a recent Saturday morning in October, Zuniga was joined by her husband, two grandchildren and tens of thousands of immigrants, union workers, and their supporters at a historic rally in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens.

The rally was the culmination of the 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, a two-week campaign that included 18 buses carrying 900 immigrants and their allies from cities as far away as Los Angeles, Seattle, Miami and

Houston. "The struggle of immigrant workers is our struggle," said AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, the child of an Irish immigrant.

"We believe, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed, that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Starting in Chicago

Three buses filled with more than 130 Freedom Riders from Chicago made several stops throughout New York state before heading to New York City.

In Albany, CSEA members mingled and shared stories with riders during a rally at Washington Park emceed by Guillermo Perez, of CSEA's Education and Training Department. A dinner for the riders was later held at the United Methodist Church.

CSEA members also greeted the riders in Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse.

Inspired by the Freedom Rides of the 1960s civil rights movement, supporters of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride hope to persuade congressional leaders and the president to grant legal statutes to millions of immigrant workers that live and



CSEA supporters of the Freedom Ride rally in Queens. The Freedom Riders crossed the country to bring attention to the plight of migrant workers.

pay taxes in the United States.

Beyond legalization, Freedom Riders and their supporters are also demanding that any new immigration policy passed by Congress include: a clear and well-defined road to citizenship for all immigrant workers; the right of immigrant workers to be united with their families and; protecting the rights of immigrants in the workplace.

"CSEA has many Spanish-speaking members and immigrants from many different countries in facilities throughout the state," said Joe Aravena, the local president at the New York Psychiatric Institute who is of Puerto Rican descent and also

attended the rally. "We need to be

able to better represent them and also educate and organize them to stand up and fight for their rights."

many religious, labor, community and immigrant leaders speak and watched the throngs of immigrants

from all over the world dance to the beat of a famous Caribbean band, Zuniga smiled while holding her CSEA banner high above the crowd.

"We are really blessed with what we have (in this country)," said Zuniga.

"We should share it."

— David Galarza



Above, CSEA members, staff and activists greet Freedom Riders in Albany as they made their way across New York. At right, CSEA Western Region President Flo Tripi, bottom left, and CSEA activists host Freedom Riders at the Buffalo stop.



Health Benefits Department



Protecting Your Benefits

The following information is intended for CSEA represented Executive Branch enrollees — enrollees employed by the State of New York covered by one of the following CSEA collective bargaining agreements; Administrative Services Unit, Institutional Services Unit, Operational Services Unit or the Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Annual Option Transfer Period

November is typically the Annual Option Transfer Month, when state employees may change their health insurance option and pre-tax contribution status.

Employees who wish to change their plan option must do so during the Option Transfer Period by contacting the health benefit administrator, usually located in their agency personnel office.

Your agency Health Benefits Administrator will receive a supply of Choices for 2004, your guide to NYSHIP health insurance options. If you are thinking about changing your option, read the plan

descriptions, which have important information, including office visit and prescription drug co-pays for each of the health plans available in the area you live and/or work. The Choices for 2004 publication can be a very important resource if you are contemplating changing your health insurance option.

If you would like to review your options and the benefits available, you may obtain a copy of this guide from your health benefits administrator directly.

Another important resource during the option transfer period is the Rates & Deadlines Guide. As soon as the 2004 rates are approved, a Rates & Deadlines Guide will be sent to enrollees' homes so an informed decision can be made about your health insurance choices for the 2004 plan year.

As always, enrollees will have 30 days from the date the rate information is approved to make any changes. If you decide NOT to change your health insurance option, you do not have to take any action. If you wish to change health insurance options, you must submit a signed Health Insurance Transaction Form PS-404 to your agency's Health

Benefits Administrator by the deadline specified in the Rates & Deadlines Guide.

Pre-tax Contribution Program (PTCP)

The Pre-tax Contribution Program (PTCP) allows enrollees to have their health insurance premiums deducted from their pay before taxes are taken out. This may lower the taxable income and give the enrollee more spendable income. Enrollees were automatically enrolled in this program when they became eligible for health insurance, unless they declined to participate.

The enrollee paycheck stub shows whether the enrollee is enrolled in PTCP. "Regular Before Tax Health" will appear in the Before Tax Deductions column if your health insurance premium is deducted from your wages before taxes are withheld. "Regular After Tax Health" will appear in the After Tax Deductions column if your health insurance premium is deducted from your wages after taxes are withheld.

Under IRS rules, by participating in the PTCP enrollees may change their health insurance deduction during the tax year only after a PTCP qualifying event (i.e. change in family status). Additional information on the

PTCP is included in the NYSHIP Health Insurance Choices for 2004 publication.

If you wish to change your pre-tax selection for the 2004 plan year health insurance premiums, you must see your health benefits administrator and complete a health insurance transaction form no later than Nov. 30, 2003. No action is needed if you wish to keep your current pre-tax option.

MVP Expanding Service Area for 2004 NYSHIP Offering

Based on the annual review of the HMO's participating in the NYS Health Insurance Plan; **Mohawk Valley Physicians (MVP)** was approved for expansion into Cayuga, Cortland and Oswego counties.

HMO out of pocket costs are not negotiated by CSEA. Enrollees will be sent a side-by-side comparison detailing any changes in benefits for 2004. Contact your HMO for clarification of office visit or prescription drug co-pay changes.

If you have any questions regarding your health benefits, please contact the CSEA Health Benefits Department at 518-785-4774 or 1-800-286-5242 (JCHB) or you may send e-mail to healthben@cseainc.org

Promoting Good Health

September 2003 CSEA Board of Directors meeting summary



Reeves

Editor's note: The Work Force publishes a summary of actions taken by CSEA's Board of Directors. The summary is prepared by CSEA Statewide Secretary Barbara Reeves for union members.

ALBANY — CSEA's Board of Directors met on Sept. 19. In official business, the

board:

- Directed that the union lobby the federal government to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for New York State;
- Authorized the union to lobby the state government on behalf of local governments to reduce reimbursement rates on Medicaid;
- Restructured Florida State Retirees into three locals to be known as Local 950 (Florida State Retirees West), Local 951 (Florida State Retirees East) and Local 952 (Florida State Retirees North);
- Created Local 746 (Ellenville Regional Hospital) and Local 747 (Ulster County Head Start Employees) and dissolved Local 713

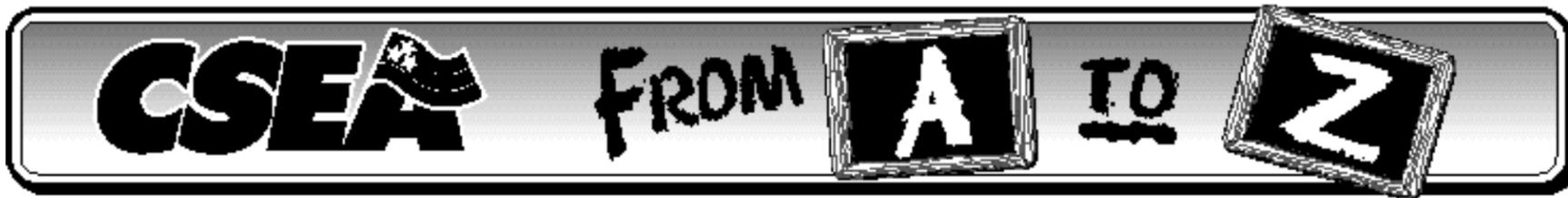
(Geneva B. Scruggs Health Care Facility); and

- Placed into administratorship Galway Central School District Unit 8454-00/Local 864 and Albany County Office of Mental Health Unit 6000-04/Local 801.

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The Board of Directors held a budget session on the previous day, Sept. 18. In official business, the board

- Approved the 2003-2004 budget, as amended; and
- Approved the 2003-2004 Capital Additions Budget, as submitted.



W hat does CSEA do?

CSEA has nearly 100 years of history advocating for working people across New York. Through elected leadership, member involvement and dedicated staff, CSEA is a leader in terms of accomplishment in labor relations, public policy and member benefits. Our methods are often as diverse as our membership, as our union activities vary from statewide campaigns to grassroots initiatives on local issues and challenges.

CSEA's priority activities break down into three areas: Representation, Political Action, and Organizing non-represented workers.

Representation

Negotiating and enforcing good contracts is at the heart of CSEA activity. CSEA is responsible for more than 1,100 separate contracts statewide. Professional staff work directly with local leaders and rank and file activists on negotiating teams to set priorities and strategies for contract campaigns. As a CSEA member you have the opportunity for input before negotiations begin and the right to vote on tentative agreements. Along the way it is essential that you support your team, get involved in contract campaign actions as necessary, and stay in touch with your



CSEA members show their union pride at Albany's Labor Parade this year. Belonging to a union means better pay, job protection and sound benefits.

leaders about the progress of negotiations. Enforcing contracts and protecting you and your interests in other ways are also a part of CSEA's commitment to representation. The union's Occupational Safety and Health, Legal, Research, Communications, Education and Training Departments and the new Health Benefits Department all have responsibilities in working with you and your co-workers to make sure your voice is heard and your interests are well represented in a range of forums.

Another important part of representation is CSEA's Member Benefits program which provides an incredible number of valuable services, programs, and discount opportunities, exclusively for you as a

member of New York's Leading Union.

Political Action

CSEA legislative and political action efforts work in close coordination with the union's representation activities. Through member involvement, CSEA's political action committees at every level of the organization interview, endorse, and work to elect candidates for public office who will support the issues and values we care about, especially fairness and respect for working people. CSEA endorses candidates, not political parties.

CSEA members are integral to the union's success in contacting and lobbying officials to hold them accountable for their actions and positions.

CSEA aggressively uses its political action network and expertise for leverage on a broad range of issues and public policy questions, including budget and contract fights across New York. CSEA's affiliation with AFSCME ensures that we have an effective way to be heard on federal issues in Washington, D.C.

Organizing

CSEA pursues an aggressive program to help non-represented workers become a part of our union. As long as employers can get cheaper labor to perform similar work to what we do, our wages, benefits and on-the-job rights are at risk. It is important for our union to grow and continue to build our strength. It is also important for us to maintain union density in the categories of jobs that we perform.

Organizing workers is very difficult and often frustrating work, as employers have wide opportunity to threaten, intimidate and coerce employees to keep them from forming their union. CSEA has made great progress in encouraging workers with the hand-on involvement of our own activists in numerous campaigns across New York.

More reasons why it's good to be union

Union members earn 26 percent more than their non-union counterparts.

More than 75 percent of union workers have health benefits. Less than half of non-union workers have health coverage.

Nearly 70 percent of union workers have a pension. Only 14 percent of non-union workers have one.

www.csealocal1000.net



Read previous A to Z stories online.

What's In It For You?

Do you know your vision plan?



Anyone who has a CSEA Employee Benefit Fund vision plan negotiated into their collective bargaining agreement knows how great (and cost effective) it can be. The fund receives a lot of questions about the vision plan: "Does the fund have ophthalmologists on the plan?"; "Why don't I see this frame at my providers office?"; "Why did a co-worker get more boxes of disposable contact lenses?"

Let's debunk some of the mysteries of the EBF vision plans.

Providers

All providers on the EBF vision care panel are optometrists. An optometrist examines the eyes and treats certain defects by means of corrective lenses.

An ophthalmologist is a specialist dealing in the anatomy, pathology, and treatment of the eye. Health insurance normally covers an ophthalmologist IF there is a medical necessity.

If using a participating provider, all services must be completed at the same visit (exam and frame selection). If using an ophthalmologist (non-plan provider), the exam should be submitted under your health insurance. If you wish to have your prescription from the ophthalmologist filled under the EBF vision plan, take the prescription to one of the EBF providers, stay within the lens and EBF frame bar and the only out-of-pocket cost to you is the co-pay under your health insurance. Please note that not all EBF providers will accept a prescription from another doctor. Contact the provider you wish to fill the prescription and ask if they accept a prescription from another doctor.

Non-participating eye doctors

Members have the option of choosing doctors that are not providers with the CSEA Employee Benefit Fund.

Should you choose to use a non-participating doctor, take a moment to review the reimbursement schedule in your EBF vision booklet. Please contact the EBF for a Vision Care Reimbursement Form. The

form must be filled out and signed by the non-participating eye doctor for you to receive reimbursement.

Frame collection

The frame collection is updated annually. State CSEA members and Local Government members who have Platinum 12 should have approximately 300 frames to choose from. Members who have the Silver and Gold vision plans should have approximately 270 frames to choose from. Providers display the frames in different ways based upon the space in their offices. Most display the frames on a tower. Each frame in the collection should have a tag on it. The outside of the tag lists all sizes and colors of the frame available. On the inside of the tag is the size and color of the frame displayed in the collection.

Contact lenses

There is contact lens coverage available under all EBF vision plans. "Plan lenses" are not disposable. The most popular type of contact lenses are disposable, which are not covered in full. The allowance provided in the vision plan is applied toward the cost of all non-plan contact lenses.

Many members ask why they received four boxes of disposables while their co-worker got six boxes. The amount dispensed depends on the type of lenses you wear and how often they're thrown out. Someone wearing a two-week lens will receive a different supply than the person who wears a 30-day lens. Providers normally dispense a "start-up supply" (six months).

Warranty information on your frames

Members have 30 days from the date they pick up their eyeglasses to return them OR notify the provider of any problems they are experiencing with the prescription.

A one-year manufacturer's warranty is in place for factory defects on the frame. If the nose piece breaks, temple bar falls off or the frame cracks, repairs will be made to the frame. If the frame cannot be repaired, it will be replaced.

We hope the information in this article is helpful. For more information, please visit us at www.cseaebf.com

SWEEPING VICTORY IN BROOME COUNTY – CSEA fought back an effort to contract out the Broome County Mental Health Department. County Executive Jeffrey Kraham

announced the investigation into contracting-out the department was over, and there would be no change in the department's operations. He specifically mentioned CSEA's efforts to fight for the services ... **NO "DEALS," MR. COHEN** – CSEA is taking Ithaca Mayor Alan Cohen to task over his ridiculous allegations that CSEA cut a "deal" with mayoral candidate John Beau Saul to gain a better contract, in exchange for CSEA's endorsement. CSEA and the city are locked in a contract stalemate ... **SPEAKING OUT IN THE BRONX** — Hundreds of CSEA members from Bronx Adult Psychiatric and Bronx Children's Centers' recently joined other union representatives, local elected officials, mental health and family advocates during a march and Speak Out aimed at defeating Gov. George Pataki's proposal to close these two centers. "The Bronx Centers are the only New York State Office of Mental Health in-patient facilities that provide culturally competent mental health care for Spanish-speaking



individuals and families," said New York City Councilwoman Margarita Lopez, chair of the Council's Mental Health Committee, who co-sponsored the Speak Out with New York State Assemblyman Peter Rivera, chair of the Assembly's Mental Health

Committee. (see photo, Page 5) ... **NICE JOB IF YOU CAN GET IT** — Gov. George Pataki's former campaign manager Robert Ryan has a new \$110,000 job with the state, despite the state's hiring freeze. The hiring follows earlier charges of Ryan's malfeasance in his previous state job. "It's a really pretty sad commentary on the way the administration plays fast and loose sometimes with their own rules. Ultimately it sends a very bad message to our members who are out there working and feel very much underappreciated," CSEA said in a statement ... **CSEA WINS FOR WORKERS INJURED BY ASSAULT** — Gov. George Pataki signed into law a CSEA-sponsored bill that increases from one to two years the amount of time a public employee may be on leave from service due to a disability caused by an assault in the course of their employment. The provision will not apply if the disability permanently prevents a worker from doing their job.



CSEA President Danny Donohue, center, meets with members of the newly organized Saratoga County Head Start Unit. More than 90 workers organized and joined CSEA. The union has been recognized by management and preparations are under way to secure their first contract.

An Ever Better Future



Make sure to vote on Tuesday, Nov. 4, Election Day, especially for candidates running for local office in your community.

CSEA has endorsed hundreds of candidates across the state for offices such as county executive, town board and county legislature. We endorse the candidates we know will be committed for working families. But they need your votes to get into office so they can make a difference. **And if you don't vote, you can't complain about decisions made at the local level that affect you.**

A complete list of CSEA's endorsed candidates in your CSEA region can be found on the region pages of www.csealocal1000.net. Visit today and

Make a difference on Nov. 4!