

# The Member Ship



The Newsletter of The West Genesee Teachers' Association

## Let's Keep Perspective While Forging On

By Ellen Miller  
Newsletter Editor

Syracuse Post-Standard headline: "West Genesee Teachers, Superintendent, others, agree to pay freeze." CNN: "Teachers in upstate N.Y. talk, take pay freeze."

It's all about perspective. Sure, we could get carried away on a self-congratulatory wave. We saved jobs and scholastic programs/activities! We made national news! All true. And all reasons for us to feel proud to be part of the West Genesee School District. And if you juxtapose us with what's happening in Wisconsin or what happened in Liverpool, it makes us look even better - West Genesee, a shining example of collaboration in a crazy world of protests and mistrust.

And we **should** be proud. We have helped to forge a

relationship based on trust between our members and our district, thanks to our WGTA President John Christian and our Super-

intendent Chris Brown's efforts. We have created an atmosphere of common trust and camaraderie. We made an unselfish, albeit "gut-

wrenching" decision to forego our raises that were due us. We made that decision personally, after much talk and debate, and as a result, we have saved some jobs and some school programs. And that is a fine example to our students, and after all, they are the ones we are teaching, aren't they?

But let's not forget that some among us have already lost their jobs. And let's remember that 99 of us voted no to a wage freeze. It wasn't an easy decision; it was made after a lot of soul-searching and hard work by our union leadership as well as our district leadership. We will have some healing to do. But above all, we have teaching to do.

And let's also not forget to keep our perspective.

*Our decision was made after a lot of soul-searching and hard work. We will have some healing to do. But above all, we have teaching to do.*

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You have to admit, after two grim weeks, it was nice to get some positive feedback. The news made CNN, the link fanning like fire across Facebook pages in Camillus. Our governor himself commended us, didn't he? Sure, he did, and at first it made me proud and happy. Yet I heard a disquieting voice in the wind from the west, whispering caution.

We here at West Genesee need to be careful lest we become a political rock thrown by those more powerful than us looking to try to put a chink in the collective bargaining process. It's comparing apples and oranges: in Wisconsin, the governor is pushing through legislation that would take away collective bargaining altogether. And Liverpool's decision not to vote on a freeze stemmed from a relationship of mistrust with their district.

Let's step back and take a world perspective: across the globe, in places like Libya and Iran, Yemen

and Egypt, a groundswell of people have risen up to demand their inherent human rights. They have put their lives on the line and in

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many cases, have died in the streets.

Keeping that perspective, let us be thankful for what we have. But let's not close our classroom doors and forget all about this until next year's budget begins to rear its ugly head. Let's stay active in the process the whole way through. Let's make a

goal to be innovative in our problem solving.

We need to realize that we are not merely teachers, but we are public relations ambassadors for the West Genesee School District, and our every action reflects who we are and what we believe.

We need to be sure that our voices are heard loud and clear before the bitter wind in Wisconsin begins to blow our way.

Most of all, we need to remember who is watching and who is learning from our behavior and our decisions.

So let's keep our perspective, and be mindful that behind all the headlines and all the websites and the TV news and the protests and the emails there are little people sitting at desks, waiting for and watching our next move. Let's continue to shine as examples to our students of how to work together and solve problems creatively.



**Contact Your WGTA Officers**

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**Looking for Kudos!**

*The Member Ship* is looking for good news to publish about West Genesee teachers. If you - or someone you know - has good news to share, please contact Ellen Miller at CMS or at: **emmiller@twcny.rr.com**

## FYI...

Donations are being sought for the Donald Stebbins Memorial Scholarship Fund. Checks should be made payable to Donald Stebbins Memorial Scholarship Fund and can be sent to Barb Schmidt at the district office

## **New Advertisement...**

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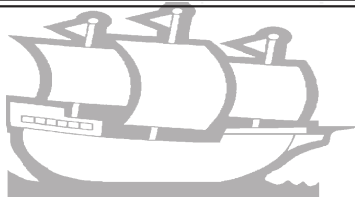
## **E-MAIL DIRECTORY**

**Join the FREE WGTA E-mail Directory.** There are currently more than 100 WGTA members, retirees, West Genesee staff and WG parents in the Directory. We share our E-mail addresses and send each other educational articles, WGTA and union information, and personal notes.

If you would like to be a part of this FREE Directory please send your name, E-mail address, and WG status (school name / retired / WG staff / WG parent) to Lynn Davis at: [davis@twcny.rr.com](mailto:davis@twcny.rr.com)

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<http://www.wgta.net>

## Are you up to the challenge?

If you're like most people, you make New Year's resolutions only to break them soon after. NYSUT Member Benefits challenges all NYSUT members to make and keep this one resolution: I resolve to draw up (or update) my will.

The importance of having a will to protect your loved ones and your wishes cannot be stressed enough. This is especially true if you have children under the age of 18. A will allows you to name a legal guardian(s) for your children. It also ensures that your estate will be distributed according to your desires. Without a valid will, these very important, personal decisions are made by the state.

The Legal Service Plan endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is a convenient vehicle to help you meet this challenge. It provides one simple will or update, free. A simple will provides for the proceeds of one's estate to be distributed to specifically named beneficiary(ies), with an alternate distribution plan in the event the primary beneficiary predeceases the writer of the will. With a simple will, proceeds are to be distributed outright with no conditions attached. Placing a condition on a bequest requires a trust, which can be obtained from the Legal Plan for a fee.

In addition to the simple will, you'll receive a durable power of attorney, living will and health care proxy, all important documents to have in place *before* the need for them arises.

The plan also gives you access to unlimited, toll-free legal advice from plan attorneys. These attorneys will make phone calls and write



third-party correspondence, at no charge, to resolve personal legal situations on your behalf before they become major problems. In addition, when you enroll in this plan, you receive two coupons for free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney.

Is there a real estate transaction coming up in your near future? Do you have any traffic violations? You can receive legal assistance on a variety of personal legal matters when you enroll in the Legal Service Plan. If the matter can't be resolved over the phone or with a letter, you will be referred to a plan attorney in your area, who will charge you \$200 an hour or 40 percent off the usual hourly rate, whichever is lower. Optional riders for Elder Law services and for business protection can be added to your legal plan coverage.

Don't put it off any longer! Draw up your will. Enroll in the Legal Service Plan and use its service to help you, or do it

another way, but just do it! The peace of mind you'll have once you know you have taken care of your loved ones far outweighs any unpleasantness associated with making up your will.

If you happen to belong to a local association that provides a group legal service plan to you through the local or its benefit fund, remember to take advantage of the plan's benefits.

If not, you can enroll in the voluntary plan online at [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org), or view and print a descriptive brochure and enrollment form online. You can also call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101.



*The Legal Service Plan provided through Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, P.C. is a NYSUT Member Benefits Trust (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 33.33% of annual participation fees received for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.*