Dear Colleagues,

I hope that this issue of The Scoop finds you well and beginning to catch up from our recent run of storm-related closings.

This is the time of year when our advocacy for the state budget ramps up. I have had the opportunity to talk with many of our area legislators about issues important to public education. First and foremost is state funding, which continues to be crucial in light of a tax cap that is once again less than two percent. We also continue to advocate for changes to the tax cap and APPR laws. If you are not yet signed up for the NYSUT Member Action Center, it is a quick and easy way to help support this advocacy with a few clicks. Please visit mac.nysut.org or download the MAC App for more information.

The 2017 United Way campaign is well under way. WITA works collaboratively with the District around this important charity, and your building representative is responsible for collecting all envelopes whether or not you chose to give. West Irondequoit is unique in our generosity in that over 50% of our employees donate to United Way, nearly double the next highest suburban Rochester district. Payroll deduction is painless and even $1 per pay makes a difference!

WITA Elections will take place May 3rd and 4th in all school buildings. If you or a colleague is interested in running for a two-year term in any WITA position or as a delegate to the 2018 and 2019 NYSUT Representative Assemblies, please submit a nomination form to Colleen Vay at Rogers by April 24th. A nomination form is included in this issue of The Scoop. The duties for each position can be found on the back of the nomination form, re-printed from the WITA Constitution. Please contact the WITA Office or Colleen with any questions or to request additional forms. Thank you to Colleen for once again coordinating our election process!

The Annual WITA Excellence in Education Banquet will take place on Tuesday, May 16th at Glendoveres. The Neighborhood (K-3) schools will host this year’s banquet. That evening we will honor recipients of the Sandra Baxter Award for Outstanding Service to WITA and the Beverly F. Engel Excellence in Education Award, new members, newly tenured members, members who achieved 25 years with the district, and retiring members. It is not too late to submit a nomination for a colleague to be considered for a Beverly F. Engel Excellence in Education Award. Each nomination is evaluated independently based on the provided criteria and there is no set number of awards given. Members can also win this award multiple times. Nominations must be sent by email and received by Friday, March 31st.

During the banquet we hold our annual raffle to benefit the WITA Scholarship Fund. This is the primary fundraiser for our scholarships that go to IHS Seniors. If you are able to donate a prize for the raffle, please contact Lindsay Shaugnessy or Erika Guetti at Listwood.

Annual School Budget Votes also occur on Tuesday, May 16th. Eligible voters can weigh in in every area district except for the City of Rochester. Several area districts will need to pass with 60% or more support because they will be seeking to override the tax cap. Please make sure to vote in support of your school budget. We will pass along any School Board endorsements from local Teachers’ Associations as they become available.

Finally, our annual VOTE/COPE drive will be coming soon. VOTE/COPE is your political action fund, and is used to support pro-education candidates and advance pro-education issues across the state. 40% of what is donated by WITA members and retirees is returned to us to use on local political action initiatives, such as support of the school budget. Our contributions last year were down, and for the first time in my memory we did not win the award for collecting at least $10 per member. With our need to fend off a constitutional convention in November (see page 3 for more information), this year’s campaign is more important than ever. Please consider donating or increasing your existing donation. Member dues money is not spent on political activities, so this fund is your voice in Albany!

In Solidarity,
Important Events 2016-17
(All meetings are on Tuesdays at 3:30 at IHS except as noted)

April:
  4th: Executive Committee
  7-9th: NYSUT Rep Assembly in New York
  7th: WITA Logo Shirt Day
  11th: Governing Council

May:
  2nd: Executive Committee
  5th: WITA Logo Shirt Day
  9th: Governing Council
  16th: WITA Excellence in Education Dinner

June:
  2nd: WITA Logo Shirt Day
  6th: Executive Committee
  13th: Governing Council

Support the WITA scholarship fund….wear your WITA Logo Shirt
the First Friday of every month!
Please contact the WITA office if you are in need of a shirt, sweat-
shirt or would like to place an order.

Baby News...

Lincoln Francis and Evelyn Rose
born February 8 to Christine (Seneca) and
John Ginter

SAVE THE DATE...

Tuesday, May 16, 2017
WITA Excellence in Education Dinner @
Glendoveers

Please send your wedding and birth
announcements to
Kimberly_Sklenar@westiron.monroe.edu

HAVE YOU JOINED THE MAC YET?
mac.nysut.org

PTSA Honorary Life Award

Congratulations to WITA Member Gerard Porter
Welcome New Members

Briarwood:
Meghan Kleehammer, Lisa Lopeser

Brookview:
Melinda Mannino

Colebrook:
Kelley Prietz, Jennifer Latshaw, Val Lessard

Dake:
Alexis Hernandez, Aleni Lemen, Lisa Cushman

IHS:
Karen Braun, Andre Rogers

Listwood:
Kaitlin Bollinger, Jennifer Henry, Cheryl Lipani

Rogers:
Ahren Henby, Jennifer Sullivan

Seneca: Kristin Hummel, Emily Topping

Southlawn: Laura Lamphere, Alison Mulhollen, Theresa Wing

Pandora’s Box:
The CON in the Constitutional Convention

According to the state constitution, every 20 years New York voters are asked: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?”

The question will appear at the top of the ballot on November 7, 2017.

Here are three key reasons why a state constitutional convention should be rejected:

1. The constitution establishes the basic organizational structure for state government as we know it. A convention would place everything on the table and delegates would have the power to swipe away any of the policies, programs and protections we might take for granted. With enough votes, they could give much more power to the executive branch and significantly weaken the role of the Legislature.

2. The constitution establishes the fundamental rights every NYSUT member enjoys as a citizen of the state, as a public employee or as a retired public employee. This includes:
   - the right of all state residents to a free public education
   - your rights to be a member of a union and to bargain collectively
   - prohibits reductions in public pension benefits
   - provides workers compensation
   - requires that the state provides for social welfare needs
   - provides the “Forever Wild” statute that protects the Adirondack and Catskill parks.

3. The constitution sets the most important policy goals for the people of New York State. Any changes would affect every other law in the place, as well as future statutes.

Hosts for Dinners

The host schools for the Excellence in Education Banquet rotate on a regular cycle.

The host schools through 2022 are as follows:

2017..............Neighborhood Schools
2018....................Rogers School
2019....................Iroquois School
2020 ....................Dake School
2021 ..............Irondequoit High School
2022............Neighborhood Schools

Congratulations WITA Members on 25 years of service
Charlotte Craig (Listwood), Nancy Bonavilla (IHS) and Suzanne Frank