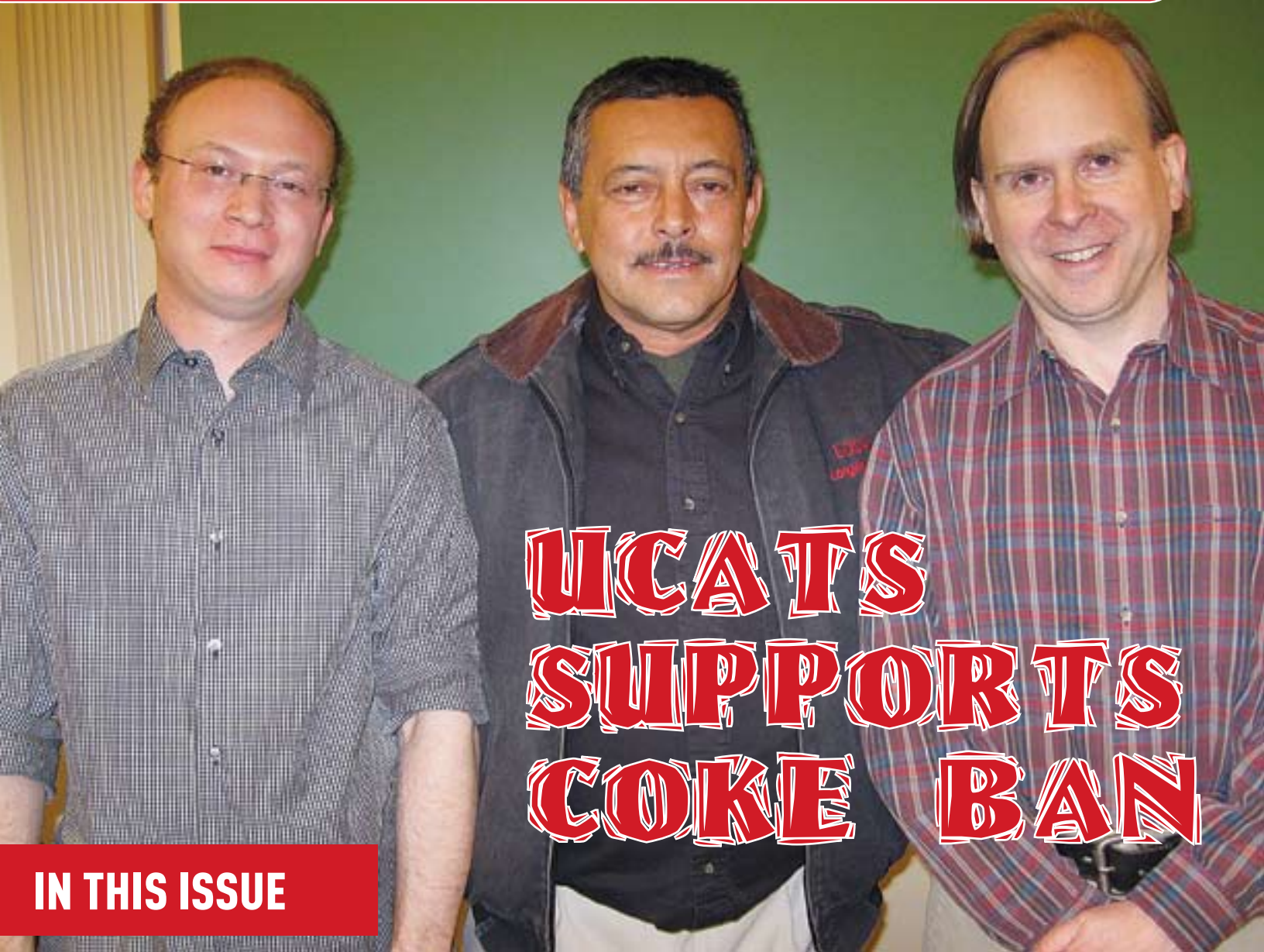


# UCATS Momentum

Union of Clerical, Administrative & Technical Staff at NYU, Local 3882, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Volume 30 Number 2 | Spring 2009

## Social Justice, UCATS, & You



**UCATS  
SUPPORTS  
COKE BAN**

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# Social justice and UCATS

■ Stephen Rechner, Law School

*"You can't be a union without a social justice agenda."*

Dick Ianuzzi, President, New York State United Teachers, (NYSUT)

Since Dick Ianuzzi became NYSUT president six years ago, I've been forced to ponder the issue of the union and a social justice agenda. I read about it in every issue of New York Teacher, I hear about it at every NYSUT board meeting, and my wallet is culled at every conference and convention.

Like many, I became a labor leader twenty years ago not to save the world, but because I wanted better wages and benefits, and more respect on the job for myself and my colleagues. I wasn't thinking about living standards in other countries, the working conditions of those who labored to produce the products I buy to live comfortably, or if those products were produced by children who should be in school.

## Why should I care?

As a 23-year union member and employee of NYU I have job security, five weeks vacation each year, a healthy pension to look forward to, and 120 days in my sick bank; I could easily say "I've got mine and to heck with everyone else."

But union leaders understand that in the work place we move forward together, through collective action and by pooling our resources for the common good. It works the same way beyond the parameters of our workplace; as a society, as a



Helping out at the Fair Trade booth at the NYSUT School Related Professionals Conference last October. Sue Brewer of North Syracuse bought chocolate.

nation, and as a civilization, we are only going to move forward together. Unions are uniquely positioned to lead the way because we hold to those ideals.

## Do we have a social justice agenda?

We don't wear it on our sleeves, but the UCATS leadership team is doing our fair share to make the world a better place with a social justice agenda of our own.

For example, the last three years we have donated the proceeds from our holiday party raffle to the NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund. By pooling the donations of similar efforts throughout the state NYSUT is able to provide financial assistance to union members all over the country who find themselves the victims of natural disasters, like hurricanes, floods and fire.

Another example is our boycott of Coca-Cola products. In 2005 our Vice President, Rob Lesko, brought to our attention human rights abuses at Coca-Cola bottling plants in Columbia, and your executive council passed a resolution pledging not to serve Coke products at our events. Just this past February, we

reaffirmed that resolution, while the NYU University Senate put profits over people and voted by a narrow majority to lift the ban at NYU.

Still another example was our promotion of Fair Trade products at this year's holiday party by giving each member who attended a bar of Fair Trade chocolate; your council members also dug into their own pockets and donated a basket of Fair  
*(Continued on page 3)*

## UCATS Momentum

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**Newsletter**

# UCATS supports Fair Trade

## Social justice

*(Continued from page 2)*

Trade products for one of the raffle prizes. (See Fair Trade story on this page).

### Making an impact

As a NYSUT local these efforts are our contribution to making the world a better place; now consider the impact of similar actions taken by the hundreds of locals affiliated with NYSUT, and the thousands of locals that make up our national affiliates, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, and the tens of thousands of locals that make up the AFL-CIO, and you can imagine the impact of the labor movement's social justice agenda on the world.

As a member of UCATS you are a part of our union's social justice agenda. You can do even more by making a commitment to not purchase products by known human rights abusers, like Coca-Cola, by looking for products "Made in America", and if you can find them, "Union Made in America," and by looking for the Fair Trade label when purchasing products made abroad. If that's too tall an order, try making a commitment to purchase at least one Fair Trade product a month.

Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate are all readily available in local health food stores and increasingly on the shelves of major supermarkets. If you don't see them in your local markets, ask or shop on-line (just google "fair trade"). My personal recommendation for coffee is Dean's Beans Moka Sumatra blend ([www.deansbeans.com](http://www.deansbeans.com)). Try it—you'll never want to drink any other coffee! ☘



Rehima Hussein, twelve years old in this photo, is now a university student thanks to Fair Trade. Rehima's family belongs to a Fair Trade coffee cooperative in Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee.

**M**aybe your morning doesn't start until you've had that first cup of coffee, or you may look forward to savoring a bite of chocolate at the end of a busy day. Fair Trade choices make these daily indulgences more meaningful and are another way union members advocate for living wages and educating children.

By purchasing Fair Trade products, union members enter into a relationship with the farming families around the world who produce their food. Cacao farmers in the Dominican Republic and coffee growers in Ethiopia, Nicaragua or Papua new Guinea experience the benefits of receiving a living wage for their work.

Because of Fair Trade, hundreds of thousands of children are attending school rather than working in the fields. "Before Fair Trade, people might walk 9-18 miles to

a nearby school," says Tadesse Meskela, manager of a coffee cooperative in Ethiopia. "Because of Fair Trade, there is now a health center in the village, a school and a clean water station."

This is achieved by paying growers a fair price for their crops, rather than buying on the commodities markets for the lowest available price. Sadly, most commercial brands of coffee and chocolate source their products from large exploitative growers who use child slave labor.

The good news is that local supermarkets are stocking more and more Fair trade products. They can also be found from many vendors on-line, one of the best being Dean's Beans. Through our state affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), we are members of the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition which also promotes and sells Fair Trade products. ☘

# OSHA and UCATS at Dental

■ Greg Succop, Organizer

**OSHA** has issued citations and fines to the University as a result of a complaint filed by the Local on behalf of dental assistants working in the Kriser Dental Center's Pediatric Clinic. This is the second major action taken by OSHA regarding violations at the Dental Center in the last several years. The previous case resulted in citations, fines, much press, and the permanent disability of the individual involved due to exposure to extremely high levels of formaldehyde. In this instance, not just employees, but dentists, and the children receiving treatment in the clinic's "quiet room" were exposed to levels of Nitrous Oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O, laughing gas) that in many of the samples taken exceeded recommended levels, some significantly. This situation was known to the Dental Center for a number of years, and despite recommendations from the parties responsible for monitoring, no action was taken until this past summer, and arguably, only after UCATS began to make inquiries into the transfer of a union member to the clinic earlier in the spring of 2008.

What started as a routine request from an employee for assistance regarding a re-assignment to the Pediatric clinic led UCATS to make inquiries about her working in the "quiet room" and ultimately the filing of a complaint with OSHA.

Nitrous Oxide is a colorless gas for which guidelines have been established to protect workers from decreased mental performance, audiovisual ability, and dexterity and embryofetal toxicity. Some studies have shown Nitrous Oxide to produce adverse reproductive effects—reduced fertility and miscarriages. It was this specific concern that was communicated to the employee by her physician and shared with UCATS.

## NYU's unsatisfactory response

The response to our initial request for dialogue came from the Dental Center's Director of Human Resources who said that to entertain any possibility of a different assignment would be to admit liability. She further

stated that the "quiet room" was safe; and there was nothing to be concerned about. However, within a few days, her position would be reversed as testing had indicated that the situation in the "quiet room" was something other than "safe". It is not clear which year's data the reversal is based on, however, as far back as 2006 the University's own tests had concluded that, "This data suggest that ... exposure is of some concern. We should perform more testing to verify these results as well as explore possible engineering or administrative options

that will reduce employee exposure." (Review the test results and recommendations for yourself at our web site <http://ucats3882.org>.) What is known is that none of the re-testing or other recommendations were followed until the spring of 2008, and were so close to when UCATS became involved, that one wonders if 2008 would

have been just another year of increasing concern from the testers and the routine ignoring of those same warnings by the Dental Center.

## An unprecedented OSHA mandate

Anytime OSHA issues citations and fines against an employer it's a big deal. But in this case OSHA went further. First, OSHA urged the Dental Center to repeat the training module on the dangers of Nitrous Oxide and its potential effects on a woman's ability to conceive and carry to term. Second, in an unprecedented mandate made over strenuous university objections, OSHA has required the creation of a joint Union/Management committee to monitor conditions at the Dental Center. Furthermore, to ensure compliance, OSHA has required that the minutes of at least the first year's meetings of this committee be sent to them for review.

The situation continues to develop. I would like to acknowledge the courageous staff of the Pediatric Clinic—you know who you are—without them we could not have achieved this unprecedented outcome.

If, in previous years you have worked in the Pediatric Clinic, or you have questions and/or are interested in the situation at the Dental Center, or you have concerns about your workplace, do not hesitate to contact UCATS at 646-602-1485. All calls are confidential. ☒



# Call for sacrifice rings hollow

■ Kerissa Ward, 726 Broadway

When it comes to the suddenly wobbly footing of the New York University budget it is hard to know where to begin. With the stock market's autumn swan dive the market value of the University's endowment is now below what was initially contributed; under New York State law NYU is prohibited from spending income from the endowment until that situation is rectified. It was also reported in December that NYU lost over \$24 million in the Bernie Madoff ponzi scheme. These unfortunate circumstances, coupled with the overall downturn in the economy impacting every aspect of organizational financing, have created monumental challenges for NYU.

## Who will sacrifice?

According to President John Sexton we must begin to address these challenges with sacrifice. This has been his keyword in speaking to faculty, administrators and staff about the fiscal crisis facing the university. Tuition is going to be rising again, administrators are not getting raises this year (they also didn't get raises in 2003), the hiring freeze (in place for the last twenty years) is being adhered to, and departments must develop contingency plans wherein their budgets can be cut up to 10 percent. This is what he labels sacrifice.

Sacrifice is nothing, though, without a little common sense. When our personal finances are tight, we decide to forgo luxury items that we cannot afford. The university administration, however, has no desire to do this.

The university is still going ahead with faculty searches where professors from other universities are poached by dangling six-figure incomes and housing



Kerissa Ward

that has been blocked from other administrators and staff for decades. The university is still going ahead with NYU Framework 2031—a capital expansion project that will cost billions.

## Not our million dollar president!

From where I sit, though, sacrifice is best endured when it is practiced by those who request it. After all, setting an example is the best way to expect that it be met by others. A wonderful way to set the trend would be to take a page from Citibank CEO Vikram Pandit's book and take a pay reduction to \$1 a year and no bonus? I'm sure that President Sexton has some money set aside from the \$1,324,874 he made in 2006-2007 (the most recent year statistics are available). ❧

## Dell discount update

**UCATS MEMBERS** and agency fee payers can now receive a 7% discount on most products purchased through the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) Dell Discount Program. You can receive the discount only when you order by phone or online. To order by phone, call a Dell sales representative toll-free at 866-535-3580 to assist you with your purchase. Be sure to mention the **NYSUT Member Benefits Trust ID# US72614970** to ensure you receive the discount. To

order online, go to [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) and click on Member Benefits/Discounts.

Please note: this discount is only available through out state affiliate, New York State United Teachers. **DO NOT GO TO THE NYU COMPUTER STORE FOR THIS DISCOUNT.**

For online shopping, once an item is added to your cart you should see the 7% discount deducted from the

*(Continued on page 10)*

# UCATS REAFFIRMS COKE BAN— NYU LIFTS IT

■ Rob Lesko, 29 Washington Square West

In February, the NYU University Senate repealed a three-year old ban on the sale of Coca-Cola products on campus. The ban was the result of a 2003-2005 campaign conducted by student activists, which began after Luis Adolfo Cardona, a former union activist at a Coke bottling plant in Colombia, visited NYU to speak of a string of murders of union leaders at such plants, committed with the apparent collusion of plant managers and paramilitary death squads. Over the course of two years, NYU students participated in an international effort to boycott Coke from college campuses. By tabling with petitions, hosting debates, holding candle-light vigils, and presenting resolutions to student councils of the University government, the activists convinced the Senate to ban the sale of Coke products on the NYU campus until the Coca-Cola Corporation agreed to an independent investigation of violence against bottling plant workers in Colombia.

## The case for Coke

Last fall, students began a campaign to rescind that ban. Prompted by NYU's announcement of an investigation of conditions in Coke's Colombian plants conducted by the International Labor Organization, an agency of the United Nations, students ran a campus petition drive urging a re-opening of the debate on the ban.

Hampton Williams, a Steinhardt junior, spoke to *Momentum* on his motivations for working to overturn the ban. "The 2005 resolution called for an independent investigation of the charges against Coke," Mr. Williams said. "An investigation was conducted by the U.N. What body has more authority to address issues of human rights? One result of the ban was Coca-Cola suspending endorsement and scholarship aid to NYU. That has led to a drop in the quality of student life at NYU, most notably for student athletes. Nearly all current students were not here when the ban was imposed, and many are not even aware of it. I felt it was fair and appropriate to bring the full issue to their attention, especially in a time of declining revenues for NYU."

Derick Schaudies, a law student, also spoke to *Momentum*. "These were serious accusations made



against Coke. The investigation found no evidence for them. As long as bans such as this continue, Coke workers in this country suffer from decreased demand for their products. Also, I believe that consumer boycotts are best left to individuals rather than organizations such as NYU."

## The case for the ban

As the debate returned to the campus, other students argued for maintaining the ban.

Erin Keskeny, a 2007 CAS graduate and participant in the 2003-2005 campaign, herself returned to the campus, as a concerned alumna, and spoke to *Momentum*. "NYU selected the ILO to investigate them. The resulting investigation looked at current working conditions at the plant, and avoided looking at the charges that led to the ban. Edward Potter, Coca-Cola's Director of Global Labor Relation, is a chief spokesperson for the ILO. We can understand Coke's touting the



Above: UCATS members joined student supporters of Coke ban outside University Senate meeting on February 5.



Left: Luis Adolfo Cardona (r) was the keynote speaker at the "Dying for a Coke" event organized by NYU students and alum on February 4. Cardona witnessed the assassination of his union president at a Coke bottling plant in Columbia.

Cover: (l to r) Jeff Olshansky, law student Coke Ban organizer, Luis Adolfo Cardona, *Dying for a Coke* Keynote Speaker, and UCATS VP Rob Lesko.

results of the ILO report, but we do not consider that report to be an independent investigation of the murders for which we seek justice."

On February 3, Luis Adolfo Cardona returned to NYU. At a forum held by supporters of the Coke ban, he re-told his account of witnessing the death of the president of his union, who was shot to death on-the-job by a masked gunman. He also spoke in harrowing detail of his seizure by paramilitaries, and his escape from their custody and from Colombia. He reported that death threats continue against unionists at Coke bottling plants and that lifting the NYU ban could embolden death squads to carry out those threats.

The following afternoon, the University Senate lifted the ban.

Student supporters of the ban were disappointed by the Senate's reversal, but found consolation in the closeness of the vote (28-22). Also, they view the recent declarations by two student councils and seven student organizations at NYU to maintain the ban as indicative of substantial student support for their position. In a statement released on March 4th, ban supporters wrote "Students are now planning next steps to get back the

ban on Coca-Cola products until the company agrees to true accountability for its practices."

As clerical and technical workers are not represented on the NYU University Senate, we are not part of their decision-making process. Through UCATS, though, we can advocate for our rights in the workplace, and for those of other workers on-campus and abroad. After reviewing the ILO report, the UCATS executive council has come to the same conclusion as the advocates of the Coke ban—it does not address the murders of union activists at Coke's bottling plants in Colombia. On March 11th, the UCATS Executive Council voted to re-affirm our 2005 resolution to boycott Coca-Cola products for our member events and we call upon our members to avoiding purchasing Coke products until further notice. UCATS was privileged to support the 2003-2005 student campaign. We look forward to the opportunity of providing further support to those NYU students who, in the spirit of mutual aid and solidarity, continue to advocate for the rights of our fellow trade unionists in Coca-Cola plants in Colombia. (For a list of Coca-Cola products, or to view the relevant resolutions and ILO report, contact Rob Lesko at [ucats@erols.com](mailto:ucats@erols.com).) ✉

# More on Eyeglasses

■ *Stephen Rechner, Law School*

In our last issue of *Momentum* we reported that UCATS members would be receiving a “Perks for Eyes” discount card after the new year. Regretfully, we learned in mid-January that the only *For Eyes* store in Manhattan was closing in February because their lease was up and the landlord was raising the rent on their store from \$21,000 per month to \$40,000 per month (only in New York!). The company has no plans to reopen in Manhattan at another location at this time.

Instead, we offer these additional suggestions for saving on eye wear:

- ✓ You can always get a prescription from your NYU Health Insurance plan for the cost of the \$20 specialist co-pay. You will need a referral from your PCP; to avoid the \$10 PCP co-pay you can request a referral the next time you see her/him for something else if you're not in a hurry, or perhaps by phone.
- ✓ As an NYU employee you can get an eye exam and discounts on glasses from the Optometry Department of NYU Student Health Services (ext. 31260). When you make the appointment just be sure to mention you are an NYU employee. Why this is such a well kept secret, I don't know, but I've been assured it's no different than getting dental care at the School of Dentistry.
- ✓ Once you have a prescription in hand you can use the on-line retailers I mentioned in the last issue of *Momentum* (I'm completely satisfied with the glasses I purchased on-line for \$63).
- ✓ If you are a member of either the AAA or the AARP you can receive a 30% discount on glasses from LensCrafters, Sears, and Pearle Vision. On contacts, AAA members get a 15% discount and AARP members get a 20% discount. For complete details visit their web sites. You can join the AARP as young as age 50 and receive this member benefit at no additional cost.
- ✓ LensCrafters is currently offering eyeglasses starting at \$99.95, and 40% off clearance items. For children under 12 there is a 50% discount.



- ✓ If you live near a Costco they get excellent reviews from Consumer Reports for their low-cost eye wear (and you can get an eye exam there too).
- ✓ Prior to shopping at any major retailer of eye wear be sure to visit their web sites for coupons.

Lastly, if you signed up for the VSP Vision Plan, try to get the one complete pair of glasses you are entitled to this year and then discontinue your coverage during the next open enrollment period. Remember, you can only get one complete pair of glasses every two years with VSP, so there is no point in paying their monthly premiums for a second year. ✖

## SECRET SERVICE

*Diana Corzen, Health Services*

The Student Health Center has areas that are accessible to staff, such as Pharmacy, Physical Therapy and Optometry Services. I would like to highlight Optometry Services, because this is a hidden treasure that few UCATS members take advantage of.

It has a wide variety of frames and contact lens from designer to budget. Your visit includes routine eye exam with prescription for glasses if necessary. For some it would include glaucoma screenings and visual fields. You can also use the service if you have Pink Eye or rash around the eye area.

It is open Monday through Friday from 10 to 6 PM. The phone number to schedule an appointment is 212-443-1260. Yes, there is a discounted rate for NYU employees. So come check out the place, see if it is the hidden treasure you need.

# Members' questions

*Q: My boss is delegating more of her work to me; can I be compensated for that?*

It depends. The tasks that a manager may assign to you aren't necessarily the tasks that make a job a management level position. If the work being delegated to you is task oriented and involves no decision-making or responsibility for outcomes, chances are these are tasks that can appropriately be delegated to you without additional compensation. As a union member you should never be asked to supervise, interview, hire, fire, or discipline another member of our bargaining unit. It is not uncommon, however, to be asked to oversee the work of temps, student workers or casual employees. Keep in mind that the volume of work assigned to you does not determine your compensation. If you are assigned more work than you can complete in a seven hour day, then you can receive additional compensation when you are asked to work overtime. If you believe the additional work being assigned to you is of a higher grade, or

even management level, it's best to call the UCATS office and set up an appointment with one of our staff members to discuss the situation and whether or not a reclassification request is appropriate.

*Q: I took a sick day last Friday and was told by my manager on Monday that I was abusing my sick time. I thought sick time belonged to me to use as needed; what gives?*

Article 24 of the union contract articulates how you can use your sick time and what the university can do when they believe there is evidence that you are abusing your sick time. Paragraph C also makes an affirmative statement that "An employee may be disciplined or released for abuse of the sick leave benefit". In reality, it is rare that NYU managers fire or even discipline our members for abuse of sick time, but you should be aware that they can under circumstances described in Article 24 (see pages 23-24 of the contract). If you are using your sick time as fast as you earn it there are two things you should consider: 1) if you

have a chronic health condition, or you are caring for a family member with a chronic health condition, that is causing regular use of sick time, you need to consider filing for Family and Medical Leave Act protection. It is a complicated process that you shouldn't initiate by yourself, but it is an important step to take to protect your job. The UCATS staff are experienced with FMLA filing procedures and will be happy to help you. 2) if you are using your sick time as extra vacation days or "mental health" days, you are squandering a valuable benefit that can protect you in the event of a health crisis.

Our contract allows us to accrue up to 120 sick days in our bank which, in the event of an illness or injury requiring an extended absence, will pay your full salary from the first day of your absence up to the amount of time you have accrued. If you were to purchase disability insurance you will find that it is not only expensive, there is usually a 90 to 180 day waiting period before benefits kick in. ❧

## UNUM UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

**NYU** has recently changed the ways and means by which an employee's leave is managed. UNUM is currently administering both short term sick leave, and Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) absences for many areas of the University. The UCATS leadership team is deeply concerned about this company's behavior and we have filed grievances regarding UNUM policies and procedures. There is much more information about UNUM on our web site, [ucats3882.org](http://ucats3882.org), along

with details of what you can do and what UCATS is doing to address these issues.

If you have had interactions with UNUM please speak with one of our organizers, Greg Succop or Linda Wambaugh, about your experience. All conversations are confidential and you will not be asked for any medical information.

Greg and Linda can be reached at 646-602-1485 or via e-mail at [ucats@erols.com](mailto:ucats@erols.com).

# Out and About



(l to r) Diana Corzen, Kerissa Ward, and Stephen Rechner attended the NYSUT convention in Buffalo, NY April 2-4. The Obama Buffalo lost his head here due to space limitations!

## AFT CONFERENCES

Our national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), held conferences for members in higher education March 6-8 in Miami Beach, and for Paraprofessionals and School Related Personnel March 19-22 in Baltimore. The workshops and plenary sessions at both conferences focused heavily on the global

economic crisis, economic stimulus plans and the impact on bargaining, staffing and working conditions. UCATS president Stephen Rechner attended both conferences.

## SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The UCATS spring membership meeting took place on Wednesday, March 11. The focus of the meeting was taking nominations for the 2009-11 term of the Executive Council. The current term expires on April 30, and the new term will begin May 1. As we went to press the Election Committee, chaired by Luz Contreras, had contacted all nominees to ask if they would accept or decline their nominations, and a mailing was being prepared to inform the membership as to how the election would be conducted.

## NYSUT CONVENTION

Our state affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), held their convention April 2-4 in Buffalo. Affiliate locals brought dozens of resolutions to the floor of the convention that, when passed, will determine the activities of NYSUT for the coming year. UCATS members attending the convention were Diana Corzen, Edwin Guzman, Kerissa Ward and Stephen Rechner. The convention was preceded by the NYSUT Local Presidents Conference April 1-2, attended by Stephen Rechner. ☒

## Dell discount update

(Continued from page 5)  
price. If an item does not show a 7% discount upon checking out, then that item does not qualify for the discount.

All orders are subject to approval and acceptance by Dell. Pricing, specifications, availability or other terms of offer may be withdrawn or changed without notice. Taxes, fees and shipping charges are extra, and vary. Discount applies to new purchases only.

If trying to decide which system to buy has you confused, then you can choose a recommended system created by Dell at a discounted price just for NYSUT members. These are pre-configured systems by Dell that come with a warranty. Look for the link that says "Recommended for NYSUT Members" to see the system specifications. Please note that the standard 7% discount does not apply to these already discounted recommended systems.

*We are having ongoing discussions with NYU Employee Relations to extend to UCATS members the opportunity to purchase computers from the NYU Computer Store using the payroll deduction option currently available to faculty and administrators. We have an agreement in principle and we expect an announcement shortly. However, you will not get the NYSUT member discounts from the NYU Computer Store.*

# Active union women

■ Veronica Johnson, 726 Broadway

When I was first asked to write an essay about women and union membership I had no idea what I would write about. It was suggested that I research the statistics\* and write about all the benefits women receive due to belonging to a union. Like the fact that salaries for women in unions are higher than the salaries of non-unionized women working in comparable fields. In many cases unionized women can earn over ten percent more. In straight dollars that is a differential of \$75.00 per week for a woman in UCATS. Nice.

Not only are the salaries higher but a woman in a union is much more likely to have a defined benefit pension (25 percentage points) and health insurance (19 percentage points) than her non-union counterpart. There is even evidence that unions can boost a woman's likelihood of having a pension or health insurance higher than a college degree can.

When you consider these statistics in the current economic climate it appears that from a financial standpoint women in unions have it pretty good. The statistics make it fairly easy to argue that opinion, but in the twenty-first century, even in these tough economic times, we've come to expect more from the employment experience.

Considering that, perhaps this article should go in another direction. Perhaps it should be more anecdotal. How do the women at NYU specifically feel about our union? As one staff member put it, she appreciates the fact that while she is employed at New York University



Veronica Johnson

she is protected by the union from abuses that many of our non-unionized sisters face everyday. While unions exist to secure better wages and benefits we also demand respect on the job.

## My unscientific survey

Another of my co-workers comes from a union family and was advised by her mother to join the union as soon as she could. So women benefit financially from the union and generally have good feelings about their union membership (at least based on an unscientific survey of three women).

So that got me to thinking maybe this article should really be about how to transform happy but passive union members into active union leaders. One of my other co-workers has decided to run for steward this year. I asked her why and her response was a simple, "I wanted to do something meaningful and rewarding". She is graduating this year and expects to have lots of free time. She has discussed with me her plans to be proactive and get

out and meet other union members and promote the union. She is truly inspiring to me and her excitement is contagious.

## Women take charge

The labor movement, in general, and UCATS specifically, will certainly benefit from the participation of motivated members. And what is good for the labor movement is good for women. When you consider that women already make up 45 percent of union membership and are on course to surpass the 50 percent mark by 2020 it's in every unionized woman's interest to be an active participant in how her union operates.

Lastly, while the national percentage of women in unions is 45 percent, women are a robust 64 percent of the UCATS membership. That is why I am active in my union.

*\*Statistics obtained from the Unions and Upward Mobility for Women Workers report written by John Schmitt for the Center for Economic and Policy Research.*



# TURN AROUND America's Economy

## REBUILD THE MIDDLE CLASS



No one needs to tell you our economy is in a mess.

Joining together in unions to bargain for better wages and benefits is the best chance working people have to get a fair deal and get ahead. Union members earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers and are far more likely to have employer-provided health care and pensions.

No wonder more than half of U.S. workers—nearly 60 million—say they would join a union right now if they could. But not enough get the chance because every day companies intimidate, harass and fire workers to stop them from forming unions and bargaining.



What union members gain at the bargaining table lifts wages and living standards for all of America's workers. And a strong union movement is the best ally in the fight for social and economic justice.

That's why we need the Employee Free Choice Act.



### The Employee Free Choice Act Will:

- Allow workers to form a union if a majority wants one.
- Increase penalties for companies that abuse workers who are exercising their freedom to form unions and bargain.
- Guarantee that workers who form unions can get contracts.



No matter what we do to turn around our economy, the benefits can never be broadly shared unless working people regain the free choice to bargain with their companies for a better life.

Big Business front groups are gearing up to spend \$200 million to defeat the Employee Free Choice Act so corporations can keep all the power in the workplace. We've got to fight back to turn around our economy and rebuild the middle class.

## JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Sign up at [www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org](http://www.EmployeeFreeChoiceAct.org)