

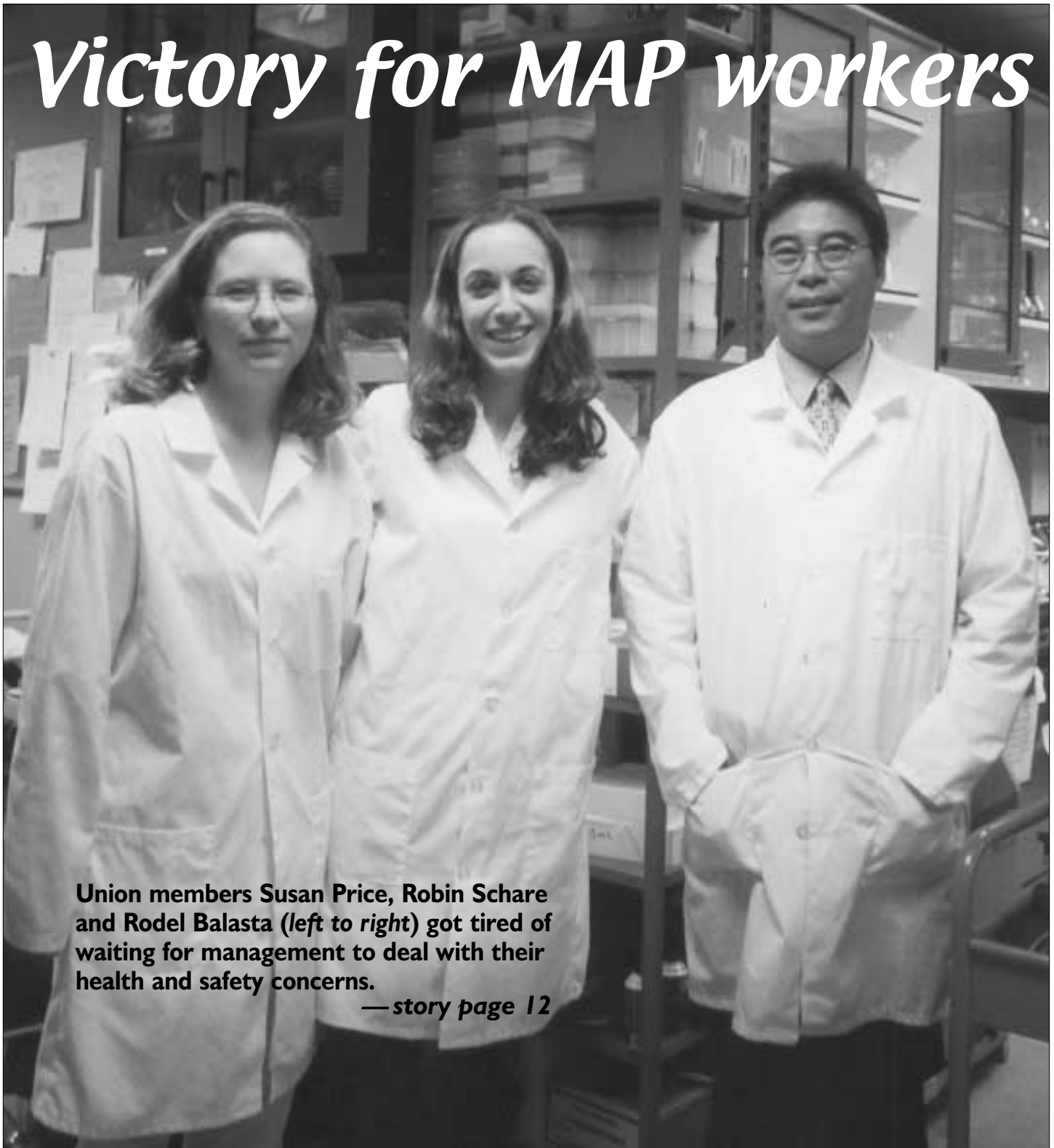
# *the* 3882 Local News

United Staff Association of NYU • Local 3882, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Volume 24 Number 3

Summer 2003

## *Victory for MAP workers*



**Union members Susan Price, Robin Schare and Rodel Balasta (left to right) got tired of waiting for management to deal with their health and safety concerns.**

**— story page 12**

# Reflections on my presidency



Union President Kathy Cruz (*far right*) featured here with former vice president Barbara Harley and former shop steward Scott Loane, both of whom are leaving office to pursue other interests.

*by Kathy Cruz, Goddard Hall*

## Looking back

**L**ike many of you, I arrived at NYU much younger than I am today and truthfully, I didn't expect to do anything other than my job, do it well, and be rewarded for it. I also started taking classes, assuming that along with my hard work, my initiative would propel my success. Several years later all I had to show was a paycheck that barely made ends meet and a job that offered no real challenge and afforded me little respect. I found that whatever progress I enjoyed, like raises and seniority pay, were won for me by the union, so I decided the

union merited a closer look.

My union activism started slowly, as one of many union members who attended union meetings, mailings and rallies during the 1993 contract negotiations. NYU tried to take back our health benefits. Instead we beat NYU back and kept our benefits free, won

raises, a Childcare Fund and won Domestic Partner Benefits for workers throughout the entire university. I saw the connection between members' activism and our victory. I was hooked! Looking back a decade later, I can honestly say I have never learned more or grew more as a person than from working with other union members to better our lives — not from my classes and certainly not from my job at NYU. All of our elected leadership are volunteers, even our organizers are former union activists that spent many years building the union. I am constantly amazed by how irrepressible a bunch of volunteers can be when we take responsibility and share the load. Just ask NYU.

## Struggles ahead

It's a good thing we know how to work hard and win because our upcoming battles are very clear. Nationally, healthcare costs are rising twenty percent each year. Eighty percent of large companies will be making their workers pay more for their healthcare even though many employees are already paying on average, \$174 a month for family coverage. As you read this, two bills are moving through Congress. After 65 years of Federal protection for paid overtime, the so called

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**“Local 3882 has only moved forward, without any give backs, because all of our members have stood strong, together. We're now nearly 1,500 strong.”**

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# The trouble with Caremark – let us know your concerns!

**O**n January 1, 2003 NYU's prescription drug plan changed requiring all maintenance drugs be ordered only through the mail. This was effective for all health plans. NYU made this unilateral change without negotiating with the union. The union immediately responded by seeking arbitration which is scheduled for the end of July. As part of our legal effort we have been soliciting comment from members as to how the change in plan has impacted them. For many the difficulty of receiving prescriptions via mail (i.e. small mailboxes, inaccessible post office hours and the concern over deliv-

ery of time or temperature sensitive medications) has been more than an inconvenience.

## Contact your shop steward

As the arbitration date approaches, Local 3882 continues the important task of documenting specific examples of how members have been adversely affected by this change in plan. If you have been affected, call (646-602-1485) or email the union office at [lcl3882@erols.com](mailto:lcl3882@erols.com). All information is confidential and will be presented in a manner so that no one's name or personal information will be compromised. ❖

## Reflections

*(Continued from page 2)*

Family Time Flexibility Act would let employers get away with "paying" overtime solely with comp time. Another bill would let unionized companies reduce their pension obligations by billions of dollars. And as always the boss is pushing for merit pay raises rather than across the board increases. For all that Congress is doing for big business, even as the economy picks up, there isn't a lot Washington can do to encourage employers to hand out more raises.

And on the NYU front, we've seen disappearing holiday parties, increased healthcare costs, wage freezes and layoffs for administrators, and a hiring freeze for all of us — except the 12th floor of Bobst. CEO pay rose 15% last year. NYU's CEO, John Sexton, gave back 5% of his salary — but before you break out the violins — remember his measly 5% is more than what 95% of the bargaining unit makes in a year, before taxes. The pittance he tossed away for pub-

licity purposes is what he intends to make sure you are going to bust your butt all year for. Remember, his last manifesto (March 30th Message to the NYU Community), states that in 2004 more "sacrifice" is coming. Let's see if he sacrifices his luxury housing, NYU's 100% matching of his pension "contribution", again, probably more than any of us will have made, and other perks I can't even imagine. The only good thing here is that he has let us know who he is, what we're up against, loud and clear. Our next contract negotiation is in 2005. We have two years to get ready.

### We're on the move

So far we're well on our way. Our executive council has now doubled in response to NYU's 'belt-tightening' stance, and our new president, Steve Rechner, has years of union experience. He's a hard worker, and he's smart. But, as our history shows us, it's not solely up to the officers and stewards to continue winning our

groundbreaking contracts. Local 3882 has only moved forward, without any give backs, because all of our members have stood strong, together. We're now nearly 1,500 strong. Many of our new members are also new to the labor movement. More experienced union members must step up and lead the way, as has been our way, our strength, for 23 years. I know that many of you are busy. That's fair to say. Who isn't? What I ask is that you take a good look at all that's coming up, not only your personal obligations, but at NYU and even nationwide. Make time for your union. Once you do that, the rest is easy. Ask yourself how many hours a month your health benefits; health and safety; reclassification, transfer and promotion rights; raises; your union security; your job security; your dignity; ask yourself what they are worth. Though my presidential term has ended, I'm not going to say goodbye — because I expect to see you at our next union meeting. ❖

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# Welcome to the new president of Local 3882 – Steve Rechner

*Local 3882 is very lucky to have as our new union president, Steve Rechner, a long time union activist and leader. Steve sat down with organizer, Trudy Rudnick, and answered some questions about his history and his goals for Local 3882.*

**Trudy Rudnick:** Why did you join the union 17 years ago?

**Steve Rechner:** A few years prior to working at NYU, I had worked at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It wasn't a good experience; low pay, few benefits, and there was no recourse if your supervisor was abusive. When I came to NYU, I knew it shared many similarities with the Met in that both are large, bureaucratic, not-for-profit organizations that perceive themselves as having noble missions. It was clear to me from the beginning that the only reason I had terrific benefits working for NYU, that I didn't have when I worked at the Met, was because of the union.

**TR:** How did you make the leap from union member to union activist?

**SR:** The union was in negotiations with NYU for the contract that culminated in our 1988 strike and I asked our organizer if I could attend a bargaining session because I was taking a class in Human Resources Management. I never got to attend a bargaining session, but I was instead asked by the president of the union if I would distribute leaflets throughout the Law School. We had gotten to know each other when I was an SCE recording clerk and as (sort of) a personal favor, I agreed to do it. Then, a few days before the strike started, law school members were sharing their angst with me and one of the things I told people to allay their fears was that the strike would only last two or three days. When it was over, three weeks later, one of these members told me she was angry with me and when I asked why she said, "You told me the strike would only last two or three days, and now I'm out three weeks pay because I listened to you." That certainly stung, at first, because it was true, but as I reflected on her statement I thought, "Wow, she *listened* to me." I was only 27 at the time and no one had ever listened to anything I had to say before, so, I decided to run for shop steward because I felt I owed something to the members who had gone on strike. I subsequently served five terms as shop steward because our members and their supervisors listened to me when I offered solutions to the problems that arose in their workplaces. More importantly, I enjoyed working with everyone who served on the executive council with me and I was always impressed by the commitment of our leadership to our members and to making NYU a better place to work. As president, I intend to continue that tradition of commitment.

**TR:** You have a degree from Stern. Was it difficult going to school, being an activist and working at NYU?



Local 3882 President Steve Rechner, with co-workers from the Law School, Daniele Yglesias, Heidi Lubov and Laurencia Gonzalez. (left to right)

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# Steve Rechner, the new president

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**SR:** It wasn't difficult at all. During the 10 years I served as shop steward, we didn't have release time for union work, as we do now, but I was able to accomplish most of my steward work on my lunch hours, and our monthly council meetings were on Saturdays. Union work also tied in directly with several of the classes I had to take for my degree, such as Human Resources Management and Organizational Behavior. We did case studies in both classes, which, in a nutshell, read something like "bad employee, good manager, what should the manager do?" and the entire class (except me) would say "we should fire that bad employee" and then I would raise my hand and say something like, "I think we should investigate the manager" or "How about sending the employee for counseling?" I did well in both classes even though I was considered the class rabble-rouser.

**TR:** What stands out most about your experience being on the NYU bargaining team?

**SR:** I have been on the bargaining team for the last three contracts and each time I am astounded by how out-of-touch NYU's negotiators are with the variety of jobs that our union represents. These people, however, are only the representatives of NYU's decision-makers, who are even more disconnected from our members, yet they are deciding how we will be compensated. In spite of these challenges, I have been impressed each time by the ability of just a few of our members to win concessions at the bargaining table. For example, when our members with children wanted a child care fund, and when our lesbian/gay members wanted same-sex domestic partner benefits, these people did extensive research and made professional-quality presentations that convinced NYU's negotiators to give us these benefits.

**TR:** What made you decide to run for president?

**SR:** While I was on the contract 2000 bargaining team, and thereafter, I started clip-

ping pieces from NYU's press releases about all the money they make, and jotting down notes about all the things we could have done, or should be doing. Soon the notes became a few pages and finally a notebook and I decided that as president I could act on those ideas for the benefit of our members.

**TR:** You've been promoting TASP. What does it stand for and what is the concept behind it?

**SR:** TASP stands for Technical & Administrative Support Personnel. It is an outgrowth of my experience at last year's national American Federation of Teachers

**Most importantly, I want to lay a strong foundation for contract negotiations in 2005. This also requires member involvement. Like it or not, this union is a self-help organization.**

(AFT, our national affiliate) convention. On the first day of the convention everyone attended their "Divisional Meetings." Our division in the AFT is "Paraprofessionals & School Related Personnel" (PSRP), and the discussion we had focused on changing the name of our division to something that better described our jobs, and how essential our jobs are to the success of our employers. During that discussion I started to think that the current name of our union, United Staff Association, in no way described the work we do, and I have come to believe that it is one reason why NYU has undervalued us all these years.

**TR:** What do you think about NYU's new austerity plan—hiring freeze, etc.? Do you think it's warranted?

**SR:** No doubt, NYU's investment income

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# Luz Contreras

## A gem is elected vice president

**L**ocal 3882's organizer Greg Succop sat down with Luz Contreras the other day to speak with her about her run for vice president, as well as her thoughts about NYU and the future of the union.

**Greg Succop:** You've been a steward for a number of years before choosing to run for vice president. How did you become a steward in the first place?

**Luz Contreras:** My office was working on job upgrades, which we got thanks to the union. During that time, Trudy Rudnick approached us about putting together information about Code 104s for the upcoming Contract 2000 negotiations. So I started to work on that. One thing led to another, and I found myself on the bargaining team. During those talks I represented Code 104 technicians in the computer and entertainment technology fields.

After that experience, the executive council voted to make me a steward. That was December 2000. Currently I am the only executive council member who works nights.

**GS:** What can you tell us about your decision to run for vice president, and what would you like to accomplish?

**LC:** To be honest, I didn't really think of going for that position until President Kathy Cruz approached me. I was thinking about going for the secretary position. I thought I needed to work my way up through the positions first. After asking questions about the duties and responsibilities of the VP position, and just taking some time to think about it, I decided to go for it. I guess one aspect is the

fact that I will be more involved with the operations of the union. To have the chance to work more closely with our extraordinary organizers (Trudy and Greg) I think is a special treat.

**GS:** Wow! Thanks!

**LC:** and to be involved with the penultimate executive council of this contract period. We will be working towards preparing for the 2005 bargaining sessions. These next two years are crucial. With the way our nation's economy is going right now, with the recession, the belt-tightening and financial scandals, we have to work hard to make sure that NYU does not try take anything away from us. My main concerns are job upgrades, job reclassifications, and Code 104 techs. There are workers whose job descriptions probably still list outdated equipment and duties, like typewriters and making mimeographs. Many workers should be in a higher grade with higher pay. The techs are very underpaid and underrated.

We recently won upgrades for some of the Code 104s. We are still working on the others, like Campus Media and TSOA techs. Those two divisions hire part-time workers. There have been many part-time positions created at NYU in the past few years. The circumstances for PTs need to be improved although they are actually better here than in other companies. Most places do not offer pensions to PTs for example. I want to see if we can make some improvements there, also.

**GS:** In the last contract, the local won agency fee. How do you see that having changed the local?

**LC:** When I started my employment in 1996, there was no agency fee. Only those who joined the union paid dues. I found that to be strange, wrong, and unfair to those who fought for our benefits. The agency fee actually helps all of the workers. And, I be-

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**Let's work together  
as one to protect our  
rights and benefits.  
We are enjoying a  
great contract now.  
We should strive to  
get an even better  
one in 2005.**

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# Luz Contreras, the new vice president



New Local 3882 Vice President Luz Contreras in a rare moment of sitting down.

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lieve, that it creates more involvement in the union. We now have all four steward positions filled in my District, with three of the stewards in the Main Building. And the Dental Center has three stewards now. Having people who are willing to be stewards or involved in the union in other ways benefits everyone. We all volunteer to become stewards and officers of this union. And we do this while we work full-time and have families and lives outside of work. The more people involved in the union, the better our position at the table with NYU.

**GS:** With so many more people involved in the executive council, what are some of your hopes/wishes as we approach the expiration of our contract in September 2005?

**LC:** I hope to see more folks getting involved in our activities, like reaching out to new employees. We try to have a luncheon every couple of months for the new hires. This is where they can meet with the officers, stewards and organizers, get information about the union, and meet other workers. Also more involvement in the membership meetings, especially elections. I would like to have folks offering help to the stewards, to keep the union abreast with information on the happenings in their respective offices. This is very important.

**GS:** Your department is now working at the Kimmel Center. You were the catalyst for bringing health and safety issues to the fore before staff moved in (see our last issue, Spring 03). Kimmel is being billed as a “state of the art” facility—what kinds of changes do you see being implemented there that could tell us where the university is headed?

**LC:** This building is very high profile. A lot of money was raised, donated and spent on this building. So, everything has to look good. That can bring down a lot pressure to the staff, especially when the supervisors are catching heat from central administration, who just happens to be next door in Bobst. Kimmel will be operated like a convention center, with convention center prices. This building has to make money. That’s the bottom line. That might cause a decline in student programming this year. I’m hoping it does not. There are security cameras throughout Kimmel. I think there should be more. There should also be more officers assigned to the building. Hopefully the Public Safety Division has that in the works. After 9/11, people are definitely more concerned about safety in the workplace. NYU has been negotiating with Clear Channel Entertainment to book events at Kimmel. CCE handles bookings in almost every major arena and theatre in the U.S. And with the former director of the Joe Papp Public Theatre in charge of the theatre, we will definitely be seeing major productions at NYU.

**GS:** In light of these new challenges, what would you like to say to new and old members?

**LC:** Let’s work together as one to protect our rights and benefits. We are enjoying a great contract now. We should strive to get an even better one in 2005. And we can do that by signing up new members and showing more involvement. We have a lot of work to do.

**GS:** Well Luz, thanks for your time and thoughts. I look forward to continuing to work with you. ❖

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# Your new shop stewards and their new ideas

*Local 3882 welcomes 12 new stewards. These statements reflect some of their thoughts as they approach their terms.*



Newcomer Heidi Lubov (*right*) joins Juanita Davis in organizing and representing Law School union members.

## Heidi Lubov

The desire to help my co-workers and help myself by becoming active in the union is what led me to run for steward. Membership morale is one of my key objectives and I hope it will be one for the new leadership as well. Our local is more than the body that provides us our job security and medical benefits — it is where change and improvements on all levels can be made.



Caroline Rubens (*above*) joining Local 3882 members in this year's commemoration of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire.



Shop Steward Ryan Nuckel will join veteran steward, Evelyn Lora, as they represent members in Bobst Library.

## Ryan Nuckel

I ran for steward because I'm looking forward to working with the union and working to make sure members get treated fairly by the university. As a student at NYU, I was involved in activism around labor and social justice issues, so I'm used to taking on NYU administration when it's necessary. I'm really grateful to Local 3882 for this opportunity.

## Caroline Rubens

I ran for shop steward of District 15 because I think it's a great way to become more actively involved in the union. I get to meet other members, be an advocate for those in my district, and help build a united front as we move towards new contract negotiations. As an ITS lab technician, I hope to bring to the executive council the concerns of technical staff, such as better recognition by NYU of our skill levels. On a wider scale, I believe a strong labor movement can be a force for political change, and have marched with other unions behind the Local 3882 banner at various political events over the past year.



New shop steward Geraldine Muhammad has been elected to represent the Midtown Center on the Local 3882 Executive Council.

### Geraldine Muhammad

I decided to become a union shop steward to work with and to assist my co-workers, because I come from a family of union supporters that spans three generations, from my parents who worked in factories prior to WW2, to my children who collectively have been active in factory unions, the 1199 Health and Hospitals Union, and have participated in the 1999 Union Summer held in Chicago.

I enjoy union benefits that include job security and an opportunity to seek fairness in the workplace through union participation as well as guaranteed raises in spite of scheduled cut-backs. Union members need not fear the changes that have been sweeping through SCPS resulting in the loss of administrators, changes that have been very scary. A union member does not have to be in constant fear of a sudden loss of employment.

### Edwin Guzman

I became a steward because I wanted to make sure union members had the information they needed to get the benefits and treatment they deserve at NYU, especially those covered by the union contract. When people in my area (Campus Media) go to managers for assistance, they tell them they'll take care of their problem, but then nothing happens.



New shop stewards (left to right) Edwin Guzman, Joy Young and Susan Price join Frank Santos to form a dynamic group to fill the District 3 steward area.

### Susan Price

I decided to become a shop steward to give back to my union. Given everything that has happened in my workplace in the last year, I am extremely grateful to have a union. It seems to me that so many people are indifferent when it comes to politics in this country, and not just at the federal level — apathy is rampant even at the local level. I've seen the powerful unfairly taking advantage of those with fewer resources at their disposal to defend themselves, all too often. In our case, we do have resources — we have a union! That is where our power is. I'm looking forward to being more involved in the union, as well as empowering my fellow NYU employees.

### Joy Young

NYU is so large but yet communication can be lacking. Union members need someone who is willing to voice their concerns and to provide them with accurate knowledge of what will affect them. I plan to do this for Local 3882 union members.

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# New shop stewards

(Continued from page 9)



School of Ed Shop Steward Shirley Montgomery (standing) with co-worker, Merlyn Jerry.

## Shirley Montgomery

It's an opportunity to give something back and be great while doing so...and everybody can be great, because all you have to do is SERVE!



New shop stewards Deb Parise (left) and Betty Greenidge will be representing union members at the Fairchild Building.



Ralph Simeron (left) gets some help from new shop stewards Michele Cox and Don Joyner.

## Michele Cox

I decided to become a steward because I wanted to be on the team that provides, workable solutions to the problems staff are having here at the Dental Center.

## Don Joyner

Since 1999 I have been a Senior PC Technician at the Dental Center. I know the Dental Center from top to bottom. If you have a computer I have probably had a one on one with you. The Dental Center consists of many different jobs from supply clerks, receptionist, administrative support to technicians of PCs and dental chairs and equipment, as well as many other important jobs that are vitally important to the function of the Dental Center. This puts me in a position to see first hand the concerns and interest of the Dental Staff union members. Ours jobs are important and we should be proud of our hard work and contributions to the Center. It is time that I step up to the plate and do my part and take some responsibility in a union that represents us and is for us.

## Betty Greenidge

I believe strongly employees should be treated fairly by employers and I'm interested in representing fellow workers in the workplace by becoming involved and learning about the function of the union.

## Deb Parise

I wanted to get involved in the union before the contract expires in 2005. Our health care and other contractual benefits are too important to wait until the last minute — I want to get the union's message out that by working together we can accomplish great things.

# Local 3882

## Your stewards and officers serving from 2003-2005

### OFFICERS

President: Stephen Rechner  
 Vice President: Luz Contreras  
 Vice President: Robert Lesko  
 Secretary: Kathy Cruz  
 Treasurer: Anita Prokesch

### SHOP STEWARDS

NAME	DISTRICT	BUILDINGS COVERED
Shirley Montgomery	#1	School of Ed – Pless, East, Ed, Kimball, 280 2nd Avenue
Juanita Davis Heidi Lubov	#2	Law School Buildings
Edwin Guzman Susan Price Frank Santos Joy Young	#3	Coles, Kimmel, Silver Center, Brown, Waverly, Kevorkian, Silver Towers, Washington Sq. Village, Thompson Center, Mail Services, 14 and 16 Waverly Place, 561 LaGuardia Pl.
Evelyn Lora Ryan Nuckel	#4	Bobst Library
Nathan Palmer	#5	Shimkin, Tisch, MEC
Barbara Francis	#9	145 4th Avenue, 233 Broadway, 594 Broadway
Caroline Rubens	#15	All Residence Halls, 8 and 14A Washington Place,
Betty Greenidge Deb Parise	#16	Fairchild Building
Diana Corzen	#17	726 Broadway, 838 Broadway
Michele Cox Don Joyner Ralph Simeron	#18	Dental Center Buildings, Dental Faculty Practice
Geraldine Muhammad	#19	Midtown Center

### CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL DELEGATES

Robert Lesko, 145 4th Avenue  
 Ryan Nuckel, Bobst Library

*\*Only those districts with stewards are listed. If your district is not listed  
 ....it's never too late to get involved!*

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# “Mapping” out a winning health and safety victory

by *Trudy Rudnick, Organizer and Susan Price, Silver Center, MAP Lab*

**W**hen the workers at the Morse Academic Plan science lab called the union they were frustrated. Attempts to have health and safety concerns dealt with were ignored, despite the fact that 3,000 students came through their lab every year. The workers in the MAP lab were responsible for preparing experiments for these students, using chemicals, insects, and other scientific substances. They felt that the environment was not safe. The Morse Academic Plan labs have been in operation for seven years, and the lab has been written up by NYU’s own Environmental Services for the past three years for various safety violations. Prior to that, the laboratory was never even visited because it was not officially listed as a ‘laboratory’. To exacerbate the problem, management had never acquainted the staff with even the simplest safety precautions, such as informing them not to eat or drink in the lab, or making fun of them when they wore their lab coats.

## **Equipment not adequate for work**

Simple equipment such as chemical spill kits and eye washes were inadequate. It was not until a visit by Environmental Services in the fall of 2002 that the staff became fully aware of the safety issues. After that, they tried on numerous occasions to make management more attentive, all to no avail. The only recourse was to bring the problem to the attention of the union.

The union knew we had to act...and

we did. After consulting with the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and our New York State United Teachers Health and Safety representative, we demanded NYU permit a ‘walk-through’ of the lab with NYCOSH. They refused. We showed them the legal cases proving we had the right to have a walk-through with our representative, NYCOSH.

The next thing we knew, they were calling us to schedule a time. Dave Newman, Health and Safety Specialist from NYCOSH, conducted the inspection. Everything was going smoothly until we hit another roadblock. NYU refused Dave the right to test the air, ventilation and other equipment in the lab. Again, we used the resources available to us and provided NYU with the case law proving that we also had the right to this testing in the lab. While NYU wouldn’t acknowledge we had this right, they **did** relent, and NYCOSH came back and tested the lab. When Dave tested the Hood, which is an enclosed container where toxic chemicals are released into the air, the result was so below standards that NYU immediately, on the spot, called to have it repaired. A report will soon be issued with the rest of the results.

## **NYCOSH sets standards**

The NYCOSH visit was significant for three reasons. First and foremost, it is important that the MAP laboratory be a safe working and learning environment for both staff and students. The second reason the

“Since its inception, the number of students taking MAP courses has increased four fold. To rise to the challenge, management has widened the breadth and scope of our experiments. Management bought more instruments and glasswares, introduced and stocked more chemicals and biologicals, bought and built more equipment and materials, and hired more personnel. Our operations became more complex over time. More people, more waste and more activities in less space, coupled with management’s denial to rectify the issues we raised, became a sure recipe for disaster,” stated Lab Technician Rodel Balasta.

NYCOSH visit was important was to show the university that the staff cannot be taken advantage of, censored, or have valid concerns swept under the carpet. They are hopeful that the visit will have a positive impact on the working conditions and hence, the learning experience of the 3,000 students they serve per year. And thirdly, the union’s right to inspect and test sights is paramount to our ability to represent members and

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# Law School – oh no, don't let the rain come in...my roof's got a hole in it...

**W**ho would think that at the Law School, yes, the Law School—the school that Sexton built—there would be repeated complaints from staff about cleaning schedules, dirt, bad air, uncomfortable temperatures, water damage and general neglect? And what could you do if repeated complaints to supervision were generally met with the response, “Hey, we work here too!” (Where have we heard that before? Bobst, Kimmel).

## Juanita takes action

But for Juanita Davis, the Law School steward, the answer was clear. Having had success at Bobst (newsletter Winter 2002/03), Kimmel Center (newsletter Spring 2003), and the MAP laboratory at the Silver Center (this newsletter), Juanita circulated a questionnaire asking people to tell her what was happening (or not) in their immediate working environment that needed attention. She then scheduled a ‘walk-through’ when everyone that responded would be available to meet with union organizers and her to discuss and document their situations. Armed with clipboards and cameras the union visited each and every person who responded to Juanita’s query. In many situations, a picture was worth a thousand words.

At a meeting with university officials, organizers presented the results of the walk through. Not only did the univer-



Exposed pipes and electrical wires above union member Albert Robinson’s desk, indicates some problems found during our Law School walk-through.

sity take careful notes, but even reported back to the union on repairs made at Bobst and Kimmel. Outstanding issues were discussed within the context of a to-do list. While the union does not claim to have won the war, many of the battles have been won, so it came as no surprise that the university would respond to the list of problems at the Law School.

But no one was prepared for what happened next.

## A safer work environment

Juanita called the day following the meeting with the university to report that maintenance staff were going from place to place changing filters, cleaning, and speaking with staff to determine how to correct problems! In

the transformation of a situation that might be described as “stone walling” to one of “how’s that for service,” the staff experienced, first hand, the power of their union.

By taking action, Juanita put into play the power of workers to effect change and make their working situation better, not only for those involved but for all visitors and students at the Law School.

Congratulations to all!

If you have questions about health and safety in your work space or office please call the union office at 646-602-1485 to find out what you can do. ❖

## A health and safety victory

*(Continued from page 12)*

force NYU to provide a healthy and safe environment.

As Lab Technician Robyn Schare stated, “I’m just thankful that we have the union to go to in times like these when we feel that management won’t listen to us. It is important to

have a support system, to have people, who will fight for us and with us to ensure that we have the best/healthiest working conditions possible. We just want to come to work and know that our health is not at risk for the eight hours we are here. We want to feel comfortable in our surroundings.” ❖

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# Steve Rechner, the new Local 3882 president

(Continued from page 5)

fluctuates with the rise and fall of interest rates and the stock markets, but that's just one component of their overall financial condition. I assume (and hope) that their investments are professionally managed and diversified such that they have not suffered the devastating losses that individuals have endured in their 401Ks and mutual funds. Indeed, NYU continues to raise tuition at twice the rate of inflation and they reported in the November 2002 issue of *NYU Today* that their income from donations was about equal to the previous year, and more than double what they raised in 1996. For these reasons, I believe that NYU's hiring freeze/austerity plan is more opportunistic than necessary. They know that the economy is in a slump and that jobs are difficult to find so they are trying to make people do more work for the same amount of money. Unlike NYU's non-union employees, however, we have language in our contract that protects our members from abusive employment practices, such as overtime pay if people are asked to work more than 35 hours in a week and our members can request an upgrade when they are assigned new responsibilities and/or required to learn new skills. NYU is also required to give us a raise each September for the next two years, even though this year they are not giving their administrators raises.

**TR:** Do you have specific goals you want to accomplish during your presidency?

**SR:** First, I want to change the name of our union to Technical & Administrative Support Personnel (TASP), and I want to improve the appearance of our newsletter with different layout, paper quality and photographic reproduction.

I also intend to work with the executive council to explore ways to get our members more involved. In speaking with members throughout the university during my campaign, I've been shocked by the number of people who have complained that they were



Local 3882 President Steve Rechner was out on the streets in 1993 protesting NYU's plans to cut our health benefits.

told by supervisors that they could not be paid for working overtime or that they couldn't get promoted for assuming additional responsibilities or for doing the same work as higher-graded co-workers. If these members had read the contract, the newsletter, and other information we send in the mail, they wouldn't have been taken advantage of by their supervisors in this way. Unfortunately, this lack of involvement is costing our members thousands of dollars in lost wages and benefits every day. I believe that our state affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), can be helpful with strategies to bridge the communication barrier we are experiencing with too many of our own members. After all, rights only have value when they are exercised.

Most importantly, I want to lay a strong foundation for contract negotiations in 2005. This also requires member involvement. Like it or not, this union is a self-help organization. We know how much we've accomplished in the past 25 years with just a handful of people participating; imagine what we can achieve if every member gets involved. ❖

## KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

# Vacation, vacation, vacation

**A**fter all the rain in June, summer is finally here and for most of us, vacations. In the past, vacations were subject to the whim of supervisors and deans who used the approval of time off as a means of rewarding those they liked and a punishment to those they did not. With the contract however, rules have been established that determine the number of days workers are entitled to, and how and when they maybe taken.

Since this article is limited to newsletter length please refer to the contract for the full contract language on vacations (Article 23). If you don't have a "hard" copy please visit our web site ([aft3882.org](http://aft3882.org)) to read, download, or print out. What follows are a few commonly asked questions.

### How do I get vacation days?

Full-time permanent employees accumulate vacation days for each month of service for a maximum annual total of one month (22 days). Part-time employees have a prorated vacation accumulation based on the number of hours they are scheduled to work each week. The longer you work at NYU the more vacation days you accumulate (see chart on page 24 of contract).

However on June 1 of each year, you are given advance credit for June, July, and August, so the total annual vacation is available during the summer months.

### How does that work if I'm a new employee?

New employees are not credited with any vacation time until they have completed 6 months of service. At that

time they are credited with 6 months accumulation. Accrual during your first year depends on when you were hired, so please consult the contract for the table (page 25) which calculates this for you.

### When can I take my vacation?

Each School or Division must notify the staff and the union of its vacation period by January 31st of that year. The vacation period consists of no less than 12 consecutive weeks during the months of May through September.

However, with your supervisor's approval you may schedule vacation time before May 1, but not use days that have not been earned up to that point. Also you may schedule all or part of your vacation after September 30 with you supervisor's approval.

### Can I save up unused vacation time from year to year?

Yes, but with qualifiers. At NYU vacation is calculated and used on an annual basis. However, a maximum of one half of the annual vacation may be carried beyond the first of April, but must be used before August 31st of the following academic year.

### What happens to my unused vacation if I leave NYU?

If you have worked for 6 months and have given 2 weeks notice, earned vacation is payable upon separation.

If you have any questions about vacation time, call the union at 646-602-1485 or e-mail to [lcl3882@erols.com](mailto:lcl3882@erols.com). ❖



## LOCAL 3882'S WEBSITE

Have you checked out the newly revised, fantastic, informative, beautiful web page?

Just log on to: [www.aft3882.org](http://www.aft3882.org) to get the latest and greatest news and events, along with the union contract, important links, and lists of union officers and stewards.

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# *Inside* the 3882 Local News

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## REFLECTIONS ON MY PRESIDENCY

Like many of you I arrived at NYU much younger than I am today and truthfully, I didn't expect to do anything other than my job, do it well, and be rewarded for it...

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## WELCOME TO OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Local 3882 is very lucky to have as our new union president, Steve Rechner, a long time union activist and leader. Steve sat down with organizer, Trudy Rudnick, and answered some questions about his history and his goals for Local 3882...

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## A GEM BECOMES VICE PRESIDENT

Organizer Greg Succop sat down with Luz Contreras the other day to speak with her about her run for vice president, as well as...

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## Union members at work



Union members came in after work to help send out the election mailing.



Union members at NYU's Midtown Center attend one of several meetings held recently to discuss members' concerns.

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## *the* 3882 Local News

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Local 3882 Office: (646) 602-1485  
E-mail address: [lcl3882@erols.com](mailto:lcl3882@erols.com)  
Website: [www.aft3882.org](http://www.aft3882.org)

President	Stephen Rechner
Vice Presidents	Luz Contreras Rob Lesko
Secretary	Kathy Cruz
Treasurer	Anita Prokesch
Organizers	Trudy Rudnick Greg Succop
Newsletter	Trudy Rudnick Margarita Aguilar Denise Shavers

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