

Happenings

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Affiliated with NYSUT, AFT #2937, AFL-CIO

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## PJTA Election Edition

### Officers

**President:**

**Regis Foster**

**1st Vice President:**

**Jenny McElroy**

**2nd Vice President:**

**Carol Brown**

**Recording Secretary:**

**Debra Cassara**

**Corresponding/  
Social Secretary:**

**Claire Dillon**

**Treasurer:**

**Joseph Becker**

**Grievance Chair-  
man:**

**Robert Avdoyan**

An election will be held for the positions of officers for the PJTA. The election will be held on May 10, 11, and 12, 2017. Ballots will be distributed in each building by the building representatives.

The contested offices are as follows:

1st Vice-President: Jenny McElroy & Valerie Ricciardi  
Grievance Chairman: Robert Avdoyan & Dawn Higgins

Each candidate submitted a campaign letter.

### 1st Vice President

**Jenny McElroy**

My name is Jenny McElroy. This is my sixth year as First Vice President and my 16<sup>th</sup> year here at Port. Many incumbents will tell you what they have done and why you should re-elect them, which is all very well and good, but I feel what I have not done is equally as important.

I have never turned a member away when he or she has come to me for help. I have never shifted the responsibility to another executive to solve the problem. I make sure our members are heard and try to find a solution that in the end keeps the member's integrity intact.

I have never compromised a member. I maintain the confidentiality placed in my hands. Members never have to worry about what they have said being repeated back to administration or even worse, the board.

I have never compromised myself. I stand behind all that I have said and done. Again, never shifting the blame to others and taking responsibility for what has happened.

I have never been disloyal to PJTA. When we wrote letters to the paper requesting that PJTA's concerns be taken seriously by the board of education, I did not waiver. I stood in a room full of my colleagues explaining our stance and asking them to support our position. This was not an easy task, but I knew that "Anything worth having is worth fighting for".

I have never shied away from a challenge. During that same year as the letter writing, my family was asked to help PJTA. My husband stepped up; he ran and won a seat on the school board. During this time, PJTA was at a standstill and headed to impasse with the board of education over contract negotiations. My husband's voice as a support for the PJTA was integral to this process.

I have never asked more of our members than what I was willing to do myself. Recently, I spoke at the board of education meeting fighting to maintain our current staffing numbers. The board feels that two additional administrators is more important than two teachers who have the ability to affect the lives of our students on a daily basis.

I have never regretted running for First Vice President. Throughout the past six years, I have learned a lot. I have had to learn to juggle my schedule. There has not been a day that goes by that a member has not stopped in my room looking for advice, an answer or just an ear to listen. I have had to learn the ins and outs of our contract almost as well as our grievance officer does. I have had the difficult task of telling members unsettling information/decisions, all while trying to maintain the integrity of that member. I have learned how to stand my ground during sometimes contentious discussion at our monthly Thompson Street meetings, ensuring that our members are represented to the best of my ability.

Through it all never once have I said I should not have taken this office. I have enjoyed working with our members to help create a better PJTA. Moving forward, I would like to continue what I started 6 years ago. I would like to continue to move PJTA into its next phase by encouraging our new members to get more involved, so that they can understand and respect how far we have come. I respectfully ask for your vote in the upcoming election for First Vice President. Thank you.

## **Valerie Ricciardi**

Dear Colleagues,

My name is Valerie Ricciardi and I am running for the P.J.T.A. executive position of First Vice President. I am an elementary teacher at the Anna. S. Kuhl School. I have had the opportunity to work with many talented co-workers in both of our elementary schools over the past years. I spent my early learning career in the Port Jervis Schools and graduated from the Port Jervis High School. My daughters were educated in this district by fine dedicated members of the P.J.T.A.

I feel as your First Vice President that I can provide leadership and integrity to ensure that everyone is treated and represented fairly. As an "empty nester," I will have the time to eagerly take on more responsibility in the association. I have a great deal of knowledge and experience from being part of our union through the past 37 years. I do not believe that everything has to be adversarial in relations with administration. You can stand your ground, but at the same time be cooperative and respectful of each other in moving our union in a positive direction.

I have been a Building Representative for over 30 years and served as a Head Building Representative for many of those years. I attend the meetings regularly. I have served on the following P.J.T.A. District and Building Committees: B.E.P.T., D.L.T., P.D.P., Mentor, Scholarship, Report Cards, Fit Kids, Fun Fridays and Faculty Cabinet. I am currently a P.J.T.A. negotiator and worked collaborately on our current contract.

Being a member of many district committees, I have the ability to encourage shared decision making among stakeholders. I represent the P.J.T.A. on the District Leadership Team. This team reviews each B.E.P.T. action plan and approves their budget expenditures. Being a member of this team, I act as a clearinghouse for information and member of the review board if any B.E.P.T. has a conflict. I review any policy changes recommended by any B.E.P.T. and bring these changes to the board of education for approval. I am also responsible for the annual review of the code of conduct, which requires shared decision-making.

I want to remain positively involved in our union as your First Vice President. I believe the association is extremely important for all members and I will represent you in a fair and equitable manner. We need leaders with integrity, the ability to listen to all concerns, the desire to advocate for each P.J.T.A. member and the willingness to work with the district for the benefit of all.

I ask for your vote as First Vice President of the Port Jervis Teachers' Association!

In solidarity,

Valerie Ricciardi

**Grievance Chairman**

**Robert Avdoyan**

Dear Colleagues,

I (Bob Avdoyan) am your present Grievance Chairman and I am running for reelection. I have been a Special Education Teacher in the Port Jervis School District for 36 years.

Six years ago I was elected to my first term (2 years) to serve as your Grievance Chairman. I have since been elected for two additional terms to serve PJTA. During my tenure as you Grievance Chairman, I have filed 46 grievances. I am pleased to share with you that I have won all 46 grievances. Each grievance was unique in that it either harmed individual members, groups of members or our whole unit. Many grievances helped our members secure finances due to them or protected them from the possibility of being disciplined unfairly. No matter the nature of the grievance I prepare for each in the same manner. After I research the grievance, I then present the grievance to the principal, superintendent, or the Board of Education in executive session.

It has been my privilege to protect the contract and ensure that no harm comes to our members. It would truly be an honor to continue as your Grievance Chairman. I respectfully seek your vote.

## **Dawn Higgins**

Dear P.J.T.A. Members,

I am running for the P.J.T.A. Grievance Chairman. I attended, since kindergarten, and graduated from the Port Jervis City School District. After attending college, I came back to Port Jervis to raise my family and start my teaching career in our district as an elementary teacher. I am a tax payer in the district and I have four boys. Three of them attend our district. My other son graduated last year from our district.

Throughout my eighteen years of teaching in the district, I have taught first through fifth grades, and in summer school grades kindergarten to sixth grade special education. I have had the opportunity to teach in both the Anna S. Kuhl and Hamilton Bicentennial Elementary schools watching and learning from our many talented union co-workers run our union since I started teaching. This inspired me to get involved and become a building representative. I have been a building representative now for the past four years. Since then, I have always kept current on all the issues regarding our union and contract. I have walked into the administration's office several times and advocated for our members when their rights in the contract were being violated and was successful.

Not only have I been a building representative, I have been a teacher mentor, member of faculty cabinet for the past six years, honor roll committee person in the elementary school, co-founder of the perfect attendance program at A.S.K., served on the audit committee, and on the district report card committee advocating for tri-semesters.

My goal in running is to represent every P.J.T.A. member fairly, not having a bias against anyone, and by providing leadership and integrity to seek a resolution before having to file a grievance. I have a genuine concern for the issues that face the P.J.T.A. members and will work together with everyone. As a candidate for the grievance chairman, I believe there are workable solutions to provide means for orderly settlements of differences, promptly and fairly. I feel that I am qualified for this position because I am very well organized, very thorough, research all avenues, and I follow through. If any of our members' rights are being violated, I would be by the member's side advocating and fighting for them to the end every step of the way.

I believe that I would be a great grievance chairman that will stand by and defend what is right so that it becomes a win-win situation for the member. If any member has a question, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or e-mail. I will be available to answer any questions and concerns you may have about any issue. I look forward in working with all of my fellow P.J.T.A. members for many years to come in moving this union forward in a positive direction.

I would appreciate your vote as your next Grievance Chairman.

In Solidarity,

Dawn Higgins

### Uncontested Offices:

President:	Regis Foster
2nd Vice-President:	Carol Brown
Corresponding/Social Secretary	Claire Dillon
Secretary	Debra Cassara
Treasurer	Joseph Becker
NYSUT Delegates	Craig Fisher & Eric Hartmann
NYSUT Retiree Delegate	Raymond Holyk

The Head Building Representatives will bring the unopened ballots to the Representative Assembly Meeting on **May 15, 2017 by 3:45 p.m.** Ballots will be counted under the supervision of the Election Committee Chairperson and results announced at the May 15 P.J.T.A. Representative Assembly Meeting. Voting will be held for all contested offices. The secretary was directed to cast one ballot for all uncontested offices.

You will also be voting on a \$10 increase in dues commencing for the 2017—2018 school year.

