

## We All Could Use a Little Spring!

By Gregory Floyd

President, Teamsters Local 237 and Vice President-at-Large on the General Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

### Ah Springtime!

Buds turn into flowers; the first baseball of the season has been thrown out to the cheers of hopeful fans forgetting a disappointing last year; Mr. Softee's trucks are back on the road driving us crazy with their intoxicatingly obnoxious tune that caused little kids to shriek with delight and adults to grudgingly reach for their wallets. It starts getting darker later and thoughts drift to summer vacation plans and how many fast days am I away from a bathing suit body.

Springtime, the universal remedy to winter doldrums couldn't get here any sooner.

Much has been written and said about Spring and its attributes. Baseball great Ernie Banks said: *"Spring training means flowers, people coming outdoors, sunshine, optimism and baseball. Spring training is a time to think about being young again."* Former First Lady, Ladybird Johnson said: *"Where flowers bloom, so does hope."*

It's a time when the chaos of winter storms shift to our rear-view mirror and the promise of a warm, sunny day can greet us like that first cup of morning coffee. New beginnings, a fresh start, a clean slate. Inspiration is in the air and hope is everywhere.

The Ghanaian founder of Smart Youth Volunteer Foundation, Lailah Gifty Akita calls Spring: *"A season for the soul to regain its strength."* And even comedian Robin Williams had an opinion on Spring, calling it, *"Nature's way of saying 'Let's Party'."*

It's no coincidence that Ramadan, Easter and Passover are Springtime holidays. The renewal of nature that comes with Spring amplifies the promise of redemption embedded in the historical events being commemorated by all three religions.

Ramadan, a month-long celebration, marks the holiest month of the Islamic calendar. According to tradition, the holy book of the Quran was revealed to the prophet Muhammad during Ramadan. Muslims believe that during this month, the gates to Heaven are open and the doors to Hell are closed.

Muslims focus on their connection to God, reflect on their lives and spend quality time with friends and family.

Easter celebrates the resurrection of Jesus and His victory over death. Around the same time – and often overlapping – Jewish people celebrate Passover, the holiday commemorating the Hebrews' exodus from slavery in Egypt. In the religious festivities that ensues, nature and history converge with a resounding message of hope.

These holidays are about delivery from a state of despair. Easter

assures the individual that life is eternal. It offers a way out of a world beyond repair. It celebrates a religion that provides comfort to those who had lost faith in the gods of Rome. It spreads the message that the death of one has the capacity to save many and the resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate affirmation of life.

Passover summons Jews collectively into the world to repair it. The message of Passover is that a tyrant-like Pharaoh could be overthrown and a nation as powerful as Egypt could be defeated. Slaves could become free men and the oppressed could break the shackles of their captivity. Anything is possible, if only we dare to dream the impossible dream.

It was the biblical record of the Exodus from Egypt that enabled the spirit of optimism to prevail for the followers of Martin Luther King Jr. and the quest for equal rights. They were stirred by the vision of Moses leading his people to the Promised Land. In fact, the historic speech that King delivered at the Mason Temple in Memphis, where he went on April 3 in 1968 to support sanitation workers protesting their meager wages of \$1.65 an hour and deplorable working conditions, included the prophetic line: *"I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land."* He was assassinated the next day. It was ironic that many of King's supporters, aides and confidants had urged him against expanding their focus and leaving their comfort zone to take on new causes, such as the Poor People's Campaign, which he was pushing. King would have none of it. Instead, he urged the sanitation workers to go on strike telling them: *"You have to escalate the struggle a bit."* And he countered the containment argument with: *"We have moved into an era where we are called upon to raise certain basic questions about the whole society."*

When we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is impossible not to recognize that his lessons are similar to the main lesson of Spring: *"Without hope, all will be lost"*. So much about the history of our nation underscores that sentiment. Even the drawing on America's official seal – suggested by Benjamin Franklin in August 1776 – attested to this belief, with the dramatic scene described in Exodus where Moses divided waters of the Red Sea that is depicted on the seal. Dr. King added: *"The impossible can happen, it just takes longer."*

No doubt he may have been discouraged along the way, but he never totally lost hope. Indeed, America's history attests that when hope prevails, even what you thought was a dead-end sign can become an open highway.

Springtime inspires us to take that drive to wherever the road leads us. ■



## Local 237 Member Services

### UNION HEADQUARTERS

212-924-2000  
216 West 14th Street  
New York, NY 10011-7296

### LOCAL 237 DIVISIONS

**CITYWIDE**, 2nd Fl.  
212-924-2000  
Donald Arnold, Director

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**, 2nd Fl.  
212-924-2000  
Derek Jackson, Director  
Kangela Moore, Assistant Director

**HOUSING**, 2nd Fl.  
212-924-2000

Carl Giles, Housing Director

**SPECIAL PROJECTS**, 2nd Fl.

212-924-2000  
Debbie Coleman, Esq., Special Projects Director

**LONG ISLAND**

631-851-9800  
100 West Main Street, Babylon,  
New York 11702  
Benedict Carena, Director  
Long Island Welfare Fund:  
For information on the various  
funds call 800-962-1145

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212-807-0555  
Provides a variety of pre- and post-  
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Julie Kobi, Director

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(Citywide and Housing)

**SKILLED TRADES**, 2nd Fl.

212-924-2000  
Donald Arnold, Director

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**, 2nd Fl.

212-924-2000  
Donald Arnold, Director  
Susan McQuade, Coordinator

**MEMBERS HEALTH**, 2nd Fl.

212-924-2000  
Susan McQuade, Director  
smcquade@local237.org

**WELFARE FUND**, 3rd Fl.

212-924-7220  
The Fund administers the eligibility,  
enrollment, disability, optical and  
death benefits directly by the Fund's  
in-house staff, as well as prescription  
and dental programs indirectly.  
Diana Nappi, Director  
Len Proctor, Deputy Director

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646-638-8608  
The Local 237 Social Services Depart-  
ment features free social work  
services that are available to all  
members. Social workers connect  
people to much needed assistance  
and resources. The union knows that  
its members have tough jobs and  
that when encountering tough per-  
sonal challenges, learning about pos-  
sible solutions to those challenges  
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Karla Steinberg, MSW  
Membership Social Worker

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Jennifer Hudson, Esq., Chief Attorney

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**RUBEN TORRES**

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Secretary-Treasurer

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Recording Secretary

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LEGISLATION**, 5th Fl.

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Local 237 protects members' rights by helping to sponsor legislation that is important to members, and by communicating with and supporting elected officials serving our best interests.  
Phyllis S. Shafran, Coordinator

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212-924-2000

For grievances and job related problems, first contact your shop steward and/or grievance representative. If they can't resolve the issue, contact your business agent.  
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Grievance Coordinator

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Saul Fishman, President  
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CSBA Welfare Fund  
Alicare 866-647-4617

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Phyllis S. Shafran, Director &  
Editor Local 237 Newsline and  
Editor, Retiree News & Views

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Provides a variety of training and educational advancement opportunities for members.  
Shanell Grayson, Director

### USEFUL NUMBERS FOR PRE-RETIREEES

**NYCERS**

(New York City Employees Retirement System)

By Mail:

30-30 47th Avenue, 10th Floor  
Long Island City, NY 11101

In Person:

340 Jay Street, Mezzanine,  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

General Information:

347-643-3000

Outside NYC toll-free:

877-6NYCERS

**NYCERS website**

<https://www.nycers.org>

**BERS**

(NYC Board of Education Retirement System)

65 Court St., Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(929) 305-3800

**BERS website**

<https://www.bers.nyc.gov>

**Social Security Administration**

800-772-1213

**NY State and Local Retirement Systems**

518-474-7736



## Message from the President

# Climbing That Hill

By Gregory Floyd

President, Teamsters Local 237 and Vice President-at-Large on the General Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

At the inauguration ceremony of President Joe Biden, Amanda Gorman, the 22 year-old poet laureate, read her poem “*The Hill We Climb*” which begins with the words: “*We ask ourselves when can we find light in this never-ending shade?*” She goes on to say that: “*Somehow we’ve weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished.... But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.*” And, “*We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be a country that is bruised, but whole, benevolent, but bold, fierce and free.*” She concludes “*...there is always light. If only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.*”

Inspiring, uplifting words for sure — and a theme appropriate not just for an inauguration - but for all periods of new beginnings, such as the Spring season.

There are countless articles offering advice on how to get that light. For example, former speechwriter for President Ronald Reagan and columnist for the Wall Street Journal writes Peggy Noonan writes: “*You have to go into this year with dreams, there’s no other way to do it.*”

New York Times columnist, David Brooks had some advice of his own in his recent farewell column entitled “*Time to Say Goodbye.*” He expressed his view that America has become “*a sadder, meaner, and more pessimistic country.*” He quoted a new study that finds 69% of Americans say they do not believe in the American dream. Brooks argued that we have abandoned our humanistic values. He said that “*the elements of our civilization that lift the spirit, nurture empathy, and orient the soul now play a diminished role in national life... and humanism is anything that upholds*

*the dignity of each person is missing in America lately.*” Although a daunting insight, Brooks did offer some hope in the otherwise bleak picture he painted, proclaiming, “*One of the most exciting things in American life today is that a humanistic renaissance is already happening....*” America, according to Brooks, can turn the page.

So, in keeping with the spirit of new beginnings associated with Spring, now seems like a good time to start. It’s a time for healing, a time to strive forward to create the nation we deserve to live in. It’s a time for us, as a nation, to be who we are meant to be and who we need to be for present and future generations. Spring has sprung and so must we. We need to get into action — to begin to exemplify the spirit that’s always been within us but has been dormant for far too long. Let’s use the start of this new season to embark on and embrace fully a fresh start that will guide us toward better days instead of longing for days gone by.

Spring is a good time to start, I am confident that Amanda Gorman would agree. The theme of her 2021 poem is as relevant today as then. It’s about healing America and striving to create a healthier nation, saying: “*We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts. So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left with. Clearly, the hill we must now climb is very steep, but the rewards are even greater. To help get us there, try to remember the things you enjoyed before our world was up-ended, and let’s work to get them back—but even better. Not only for us, but for our children and grandchildren. Yes, Spring has sprung and some may wonder, what to do about it? Embrace it, let its spirit guide us and start to climb that hill.*”

## Our Members in the News

### Gunfire near Manhattan high school underscores the role of School Safety Agents in keeping students and staff out of harm’s way

A school bus was stopped inside a crime scene recently in Chelsea after gunfire rang out near a public high school during dismissal. No one was injured, but investigators recovered about a dozen shell casings outside the school, according to officials, who say the shooter, wearing a blue hoodie, ran from the scene. “*I just saw children running, trying to get away from it,*” said Ever Rivera, a parent who witnessed the chaos.

The incident comes during a concerning week for school safety citywide. **Local 237 President Greg Floyd**, who represents roughly 2,000 school safety agents, said officers have recovered three loaded guns in schools in Harlem, the Bronx, and Astoria in recent days. Nine have reportedly been recovered since the start of school in September, Floyd said. He commended them on a job well done.

Agents have also seized a growing number of small weapons, including scalpels. The NYPD reports 205 scalpels have been confiscated from students so far this school year, including one on Tuesday at Roosevelt High School after a fight. Floyd claims students are now selling the blades which are difficult to detect. “*They shouldn’t have them, and they’re readily available to be used at any time on anyone in the schools,*” he said.

An NYPD spokesperson said, “*Our agents utilize a multi-layered process to identify, search, and stop weapons from entering schools through magnetometers, X-ray baggage machines, and scanners,*” adding, “*Our process is working.*” Officials say up to 90 schools use new scanning technology on any given day. However, no scanning devices were present at the four schools where weapons were recently recovered. Sources said several of the loaded guns were found during fights or unrelated arrests. “*The weapons are outnumbering our coverage, and it’s just a matter of time before somebody gets seriously hurt,*” Floyd said.

A NYC Public Schools spokesperson praised school staff for keeping students safe and said additional security measures will be implemented at Harlem’s School of Earth Exploration and Discovery. ■

# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS Above and Beyond

So many of our members go above and beyond the call of duty, performing acts of heroism, ingenuity, kindness and generosity that demonstrate their professionalism and heart. They were willing to go that extra mile, and by so doing, made a difference in someone's life.

## SSA Charles Smith Honored



School Safety Agent Charles Smith from PS 78 was honored at the 120th Precinct Community Council meeting in Staten Island and received a Certificate of Excellence. SSA Smith is known for his deep commitment to the job, he works well with the school staff, families, the surrounding community. He is highly respected by the students. SSA Smith's consistent presence, positivity and professionalism has played a pivotal role in transforming the school's culture and climate. He helps maintain a safe and secure environment for all and fosters a sense of belonging.



### Local 237 NEWSLINE

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#### Executive Board

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<b>Curtis Scott</b> Trustee	<b>Benedict Carenza, Jr.</b> Trustee	<b>Catherine Rice</b> Trustee	

**Phyllis S. Shafran**  
Editor

Special thanks in the preparation of Newsline to:  
**Gisela (GiGi) Reyes**, Executive Administrative Assistant

IF YOU MOVE – Please send your change of address in writing to **Membership** to ensure that you continue receiving your newspaper.



## Shop Steward Shoutout

### HOUSING DIVISION



**Jackson Jolifils**  
Sheepshead Nostrand Houses  
Maintenance Worker

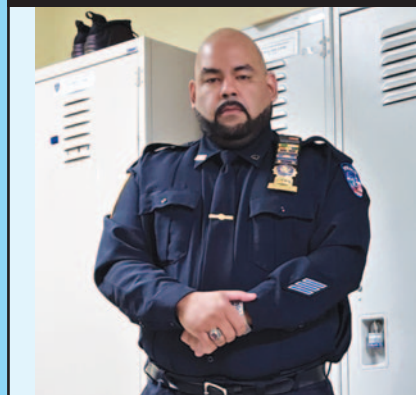
Mr. Jackson has been a Shop Steward for many years. He is always inquiring about union business to inform his staff. As well as meeting with Supervisors to address concerns.



**Edwin Cabrera**  
Gowanus Houses  
Maintenance Worker

Mr. Cabrera is a dedicated Shop Steward. He's always attentive to the staff and ready to assist and give out information.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION



**Carlos Rivera**  
Special Officer, Department  
of Homeless Services

Mr. Rivera has been an outstanding role model and point of contact for 11 years to **Charlie Cotto**, Local 237 Director of Operations, Law Enforcement and Citywide. He makes sure important information is being communicated with the union as well with getting union business out to our members out in the field.



**Robert Crispin**  
Special Officer, Lincoln Hospital

Mr. Crispin has shown great leadership with our Hospital Police Officers assigned in the Bronx. He has been a great asset representing the Bronx with **Charlie Cotto**, Local 237 Director of Operations, Law Enforcement and Citywide. Robert says, "Standing together — because no member stands alone. I'm always willing and able to serve our local and members."

### LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CITYWIDE DIVISION



**Reji George**  
Special Officer, Seaview Hospital

Mr. George has been our Shop Steward assigned in Staten Island for 3 years making sure our members in Staten Island are updated with any information we may share with him, Mr. George always has a great smile when visiting Seaview Hospital.

### CITYWIDE DIVISION



**Neil Bell**  
Custodian, DCAS

Mr. Bell has been a Shop Steward since 2014 and has always attended every meeting that the union and the Citywide Division has hosted, we want to shout out Mr. Bell for 100% attendance in Union events.

# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS Law Enforcement Division

*So many of our members distinguish themselves by their professionalism on the job. Here are some of their pictures and stories.*



**Hospital Police Officer Ahmed** at Coler Hospital. He is providing a safe space for patients, visitors, and staff.



Keeping a college environment safe is no easy task, but thanks to **CUNY Peace Officers Pittman** and **Andagana** the campus is safe for visitors, students, and faculty.



Officers at CUNY Technical College during morning roll call (l-r) **PO Moses**, **Sgt. Hardy**, **PO Quinones**, **PO S. Lewis**, **PO Burgos**, **CSA Cisneros**, **CSA Dryden**, and **Cpl. K. Bush**.

## In the Holiday Spirit



Staten Island SSAs share a few festive photos.



**Officers Williams and Spear** welcome visitors to the Javits Center during the holidays.



York College Campus Peace Officers New Years Celebration. **Sgt. Orridge** and **CSA Ross** with **Kangela Moore** (c), Assistant Director and Business Agent of Law Enforcement.

## DHS Holiday Event on Wards Island



**DHS Captain Cruz** (c), **Lt. Beckett** and **Lt. Woodard** hosted *Hot Chocolate and S'mores Day* for the officers with **Deputy Commissioner Velvauche Priester** and **Assistant Commissioner John Norris**.



A beautiful window display created by **SSA Pineda**.



3rd Annual Holiday Giveaway in an honor of our fallen member **School Safety Agent Tamara Hamilton**, formerly of PS 18.



**Officer Hall** and **CSA Castillo** are elated to greet the LaGuardia College community.

## Valentine's Day



Staten Island shared the LOVE of Valentine's Day — all **KINGS** and **QUEENS!**



**Level 1 Zheng** celebrates Chinese New Year with Pre-K students at the Renaissance School in Queens North.



Holiday Mixer at the Borough Command.



**SSA Ziewleski**

# Law Enforcement Division *Continued*

## TLC Graduation



Law Enforcement



Safety and Emmisions

**Enforcement Class of 2025A**  
 Kathleen Carrasquillo  
 Arnaldy Fermin  
 Bryan Hanif  
 Hashmi Javed  
 Jennifer Lopez  
 Jeffrey Manalo  
 Henry Meza Flores  
 Edwin Pastuizaca

\*Samuel Rodriguez  
 Jianguang Shi  
 Nicole Smith  
 Syeda Zarin Tasneem  
 Jessica Walker  
 Franklin Wilson  
 Jevonte Wilson  
 Milad Youssef  
 \*valedictorian

**Enforcement Class of 2025B**  
 Alberto De Los Santos  
 Festus Fabajo  
 Joyran Gonzalez Francisco  
 Nikayla Grant  
 MD Karim  
 First Last  
 Hongbin Liu  
 Kartik Madaan  
 Rochard Moss

Youssoupha Ndao  
 Md Azizur Rahman  
 Keith Ramos  
 Eduardo Reyes  
 Daniel Sanders  
 Richkensley Virgile  
 Stacie Williams  
 Todd Wilson  
 \*Jiahua Wu  
 \*valedictorian

**Safety & Emissions Class**  
 Taufique Amin  
 Geordy Aracena  
 Touhami Benaissa  
 Eric Carrillo  
 Anthony Celiberti  
 Oumar Dibaga  
 Darrien Feanny  
 Stanley Garcia  
 Joel Gomez  
 Luigi Guagenti

Dathaniel Henry  
 Edgar Lopez-Vega  
 Dayrovis Objio  
 Robert Penalo  
 Brando Rojas  
 Santiago Romero  
 Alexander Sanchez-Garcia  
 Sulajman Taipovic  
 Alex Tang  
 Raul Tavaréz-Genao  
 Meng Zhang



Lt. Lewis (c) and Captain Diaz (third from right) with Kangela Moore, Assistant Director of Law Enforcement Division (third from right), participating in a walk through at Metropolitan Hospital with the Labor Caucus.



Staten Island School Safety Agents from Susan Wagner HS, Staten Island School Safety Mobile Taskforce, 122 Pct., YRT, Community Outreach units from 120/121/122/123 Pct. and staff from Susan Wagner maintained a safe environment for all those at an ICE protest at Susan Wagner HS.

## Assistant SSA Graduation



**OCI: SSA3 Ayeshia Artis**  
 Latoni Albert  
 Tanaya Anderson  
 Jaiden Andujar  
 Kavon Battle  
 Jeremiah Bennett  
 Jaylin Bleary-West  
 Kayla Bradford  
 Syncere Brown  
 Brianna Camacho  
 Najae Colon  
 Tyler Damas  
 Shaborn Davis  
 Shiarah Davis  
 Renny Delacruz  
 Nene Diallo  
 Andri Familia  
 Yazmine Francois  
 Terrell Freeman  
 Brianna Gonzalez  
 Kysaire Gordon  
 Joshua Graham-Salinas  
 Emija Green  
 Alexis Groce-Adams  
 Yokaira Guzman-Diaz

Anaya Jenkins  
 Serenity Johnson  
 Tatiana Johnson  
 Konstantinos Karagkounis  
 Kenroy Llewellyn  
 Dontez Lumpkin  
 Branden Martinez  
 Britney Melendez-Arana  
 Justin Mercado  
 Shimara Miles  
 Janiya Powell  
 Calvin Reid  
 Jesus Rivera-Hernandez  
 Eduardo Rodriguez-Hernandez  
 Sadmani Samin  
 Marcus Santos  
 Tyrek Saunders  
 Randi Stith  
 Kevin Tineo  
 Essence Tyler-Bellinger  
 Quanmira Tyson  
 Aaron Vigo  
 Jada Webb  
 Giovanni Wilson



Congratulations to Agent Nelson and Agent Bravo as newly appointed Level III's in Manhattan North Command.



DHS Officer Tonya Hunt (mother), and SSA Caquan Samuels (son) at the SSA Graduation pictured with Charlie Cotto, Local 237 Director of Operations, Law Enforcement and Citywide.

## SSA Graduation



**COMPANY 25-06**  
**OCI: SSA-3**  
*Anderson-Robinson*  
 John Adami  
 Versace Brown  
 Melissa Buckner  
 Yamali Frias  
 Aniya Goffe  
 Kulsum Humaira  
 Brandon Johnson  
 Arvin Karim  
 Jacob Lantsman  
 Shameka Lugg  
 Jalen Mcbride  
 Dymond Moe-Bernal  
 Sultana Razia  
 Ebony Ricketts  
 Shante Robinson  
 Caquan Samuels  
 Kenyetta Thompson  
 Destiny Valentin  
 Tiana White  
 Ja'lyn Wilson

**COMPANY 25-07**  
**OCI: SSA-3 Santiago**  
 Alexis Atriano  
 Dina Browne  
 Metria Bryant  
 Katrina Canady  
 Shanique Edwards  
 Anwar Hamid  
 Dawayne Jeffrey  
 Taniya Jones  
 Solange Lasso  
 Jordan Martinez

**COMPANY 25-07 Continued**  
 Natonia-Grace McCain  
 Hector Minaya  
 Esmeralda Morales  
 Stephanie Orr  
 Victor Reaves  
 Jennifer Rudecindo  
 Shishir Sarker  
 Kristofer Susie  
 Johnee Tommie  
 Quanisha Washington  
 Ashanti Williams  
 Na-Jae Wynn

**COMPANY 25-08**  
**OCI: SSA-3 Vereen**  
 Doreen Anderson  
 Unique Barton  
 Xavier Carter  
 Alecia Francis  
 Shamari Harper  
 Spencer Ingram  
 Kelvia Joseph  
 Jonathan Lewis  
 Tamia Miller  
 Elijah Mitchell  
 Diana Morocho  
 Aniyah Nimmons  
 Karies Pena  
 Armani Reid  
 Bithi Saha  
 Jada Stewart  
 Yudilsa Tavarez  
 Chantel Treasure  
 Latasha Watson  
 Tricia Williams

## HHC Graduation



(l-r) Derek Jackson, Director of Law Enforcement; Officer Bryant Dixon, valedictorian; and Charlie Cotto.

## Training at Bedford Atlantic Armory



Training new recruits of Special Officers for DHS, HRA, ACS and OCME at the Bedford Atlantic Armory - Men's Shelter in Brooklyn. Pictured, addressing the recruits are: (l-r) Charlie Cotto; Frank Rella, Law Enforcement Business Agent; Len Proctor, Deputy Director, Welfare Fund; Martha Bodhnarain, Esq., Local 237's Sr. Counsel; Karla Steinberg, Local 237 Social Worker; and Jennifer Hudson, Esq., Director of Local 237 Legal Services Plan.

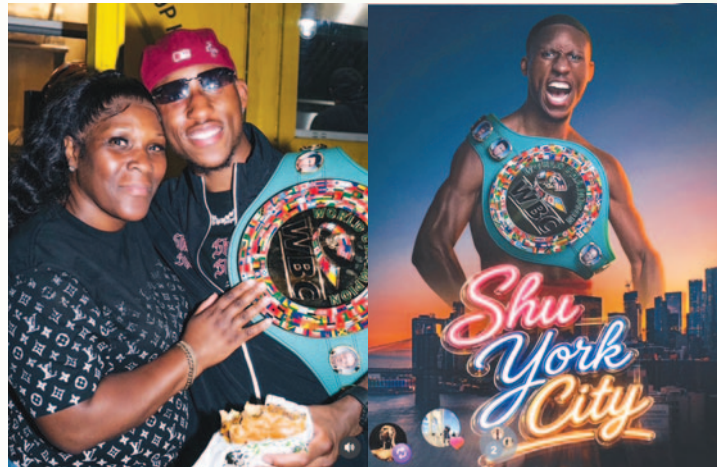
# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS Public Housing Division

*So many of our members distinguish themselves by their professionalism on the job. Here are some of their pictures and stories.*



**Ken Roper**, Housing Business Agent and Assistant to the President attended the Bangladeshi American Family Night & Holiday Celebration.

## A Winning Match



**Kelly Simpkins**, Caretaker at Langston Hughes Houses with her son, Professional Boxer Fighter Bruce Shushing Carrington. Ms. Simpkins is very proud to be a NYCHA employee and even prouder of her son who won his last match.

## Marlboro Houses



**Shaquone Sanders**, Supervisor of Grounds with **Alan Taylor**, Supervisor of Caretakers are looking forward to Spring and Summer.



Gowanus Houses Maintenance Staff with Assistant Superintendent. Ms. Calendar, Superintendent Mr. Brian, Maintenance Workers: Drayton, Gibbs, Barnes, Kevin and Edwin.



**Joseph Swint**, Supervisor of Grounds is a senior SOG and a long time union member. He is looking forward to this year and the good things that come along.



Jefferson Houses Staff Moral Booster Celebration.



**Ms. Shaquanda Bell**, Caretaker is enthusiastic of new things to come in is year, and warmer weather.

## Added to the Roster of Retirees

*Local 237 wants to thank the following members for their years of dedicated service, and wishes them well in their retirement:*



**Jose Ramos**, H+H Elmhurst Hospital, EVS Housekeeping Supervisor.



**SSA Maria Mallia** (r) begins her well-deserved retirement. with **SSS Holt-Pate** (l).



**Robert Davis** retired, pictured with **Frank Rella**, Law Enforcement Business Agent.



**Antwoine Smith**, Caretaker I from Marcus Garvey Houses is finally retiring after 37 years. Pictured with **Ken Roper**.



**Officer Gordon** from Henry J. Carter Specialty Hospital completed over 24 years of service. Pictured with **Kangela Moore**.



**SSA Ellis Atkins** (third from the left) retired with 13 years on the job. Pictured with (l-r) **Donald Arnold**, Local 237 Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer and the Director of the City-wide Division; **Jeanette Taveras**, Local 237 Executive Board Recording Secretary and Law Enforcement Business Agent; **Gregory Floyd**, President, Teamsters Local 237; **Kangela Moore**, Assistant Director and Business Agent of Law Enforcement; and **Derek Jackson**, Director of Law Enforcement.



(l-r) **Norberto Luna**, Business Agent with **Joel Ramirez** who retired after 29 years of service as a Maintenance Worker at Sedgwick Houses, and **Jose Lopez** who retired after 29 years of service as a Supervisor of Caretakers at Mitchell Houses; and **Jaleesa Moye**, Business Agent.



**SSA Robyn Knesel** (r) retired with over 20 years of service. Pictured with **SSS Holt-Pate** (l).

# MEMBERS IN THE NEWS Citywide Division

*So many of our members distinguish themselves by their professionalism on the job. Here are some of their pictures and stories.*



The Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS) Managers Meeting.



The Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS) District 25 Managers Meeting.



The Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)- Evidence and Property Control Specialists with **Curtis Scott**, Citywide Business Agent and Local 237 Executive Board Trustee; and **Bianca Jones**, Citywide Business Agent.

## Signs of Change: DOT Maspeth Members Organize for a Safer and Healthier Workplace



**Robert Aguilar Jr.**, Shop Steward



Recent renovations.

The NYC Department of Transportation's Sign Shop in Maspeth plays an important role in our city: and produces every street and highway sign in the Big Apple. The location also houses the unit that installs, monitors and repairs parking meters throughout the five boroughs. It's a busy shop with dedicated employees who help keep our city on track to their destination. The agency has conducted these operations out of this location for many years. Over time, the working conditions in the building deteriorated, and became a serious concern for these city workers.

**Robert Aguilar Jr.**, Shop Steward says, *"Built by union grit, driven by the memory of those we lost. The Maspeth Coalition turned doubt into action—replacing old walls with new hope. We stand as proof that when Teamsters lead, the environment is forced to rise with us and the environment changes to meet us."*

Some attempts have been made in past years to address concerning issues. In 2019, the agency had put forth a capital projects plan and had approval for major renovation work, but COVID upended that initiative, and staff became discouraged. Aguilar, fairly new to the facility, remained motivated, contacted the union, and began to meet with staff throughout the facility who are represented by several unions. In April 2024, Local 237 staff and union staff from several city unions conducted a walkthrough and met with upper management to get a serious commitment to address the staff's concerns. When efforts stalled, the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations was contacted to provide the push needed to secure the funding to make much-needed renovations, repairs, remodeling and clean-up.

**Bianca Jones**, Citywide Business Agent says, *"This has been a big and long project however DOT Management heard our concerns.... working in tandem with other Unions in solidarity was a big plus for members"*

Fast forward to 2025, and upon entering the facility, the changes are immediately noticeable.

**Phil Castellani**, Supervisor of Traffic Device Maintainer says, *"It's changed for the better!"*

But one big issue remains: how to deal with the many trucks that park in the facility. New cleaning machines have been purchased and regularly utilized to minimize the dust, but staff still hope some other location could be found to park those vehicles. However, space is hard to find, and the trucks need to be at the facility to move signs and meters and other equipment to locations throughout the city.

**Curtis Scott**, Citywide Business Agent and Trustee says, *"Safety is important to our members and to Local 237."*

## Added to the Roster of Retirees

*Continued...*



**Karen Talovera** retired with 31 years on the job at PS 20, Manhattan South. Pictured with **Derek Jackson**, Director of Law Enforcement.



**Specialist Brooks** retired after 35 years of service at Queens College. Pictured with **Kangel Moore**.

*While we're readying for Spring to officially begin on March 20th, let's take a look at the months leading to summer.*

### Black History Month February

A time to acknowledge the accomplishments, delight in a rich heritage and retell the history of a people too often forgotten, mistreated, and misunderstood. The originators of the idea for a Black history celebration were historians Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, and his associate, Jesse E. Moorland. They created the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, to promote black history and recognize achievements of African Americans.



### Valentine's Day February 14, 2026

Valentine's Day is a time to celebrate love in all its forms—from romantic, to family to friends. It is rooted in an historical, Christian figure, St. Valentine, who was known to embody selfless dedication, sacrifice, and appreciation for those who enrich our lives. Valentine's Day recognizes love as a powerful emotion and the importance of extending kindness, service, and deeply caring for others.

### Presidents' Day February 16, 2026

Presidents' Day is an American holiday that honors the legacies of George Washington, the first President, who led our colonial troops to victory during the American Revolution-defeating the army of Great Britain's King George III, and Abraham Lincoln, our 16th President, who brought the Civil War and slavery to an end. Because their birthdays are close to one another, they are celebrated together. In 1968, Congress passed the Uniform Monday Holiday Law, which moved the holiday to the third Monday in February. Today, Presidents' Day has become an acknowledgment of **all** US Presidents with memories and the messages they left behind.



### Women's History Month March



(l-r) The late **Corinthians Andrews, Bernice Christopher and Patricia Williams** volunteered to sign-on as the lead plaintiffs in a gender-based class action lawsuit President Floyd brought against the City, in March of 2010, on behalf of our 5,000 School Safety Agents. These peace officers, 70% of whom were women, who were paid \$7,000 less than their counterparts, with similar titles, working in other City agencies, most of whom were male. We won and made history!



**Marie Colvin** (r) was a Teamster. She started her career as the editor of Local 237's, newsletter, Newsline. She went on to become a war correspondent who wrote about innocent women and children caught in the crossfire of civil war in the Middle East. She wanted the world to care as much as she did. First she lost eye by governing forces trying to silence her, then she lost her life as well.



### Passover

April 1, 2026  
First day, begins at sundown



### Easter

April 5, 2026



### Mother's Day

May 10, 2026

Mother's Day usually includes tributes and remembrances dedications to the first person who welcomed us into the world after a 9-month wait. Over the years, some acknowledgments have been happy, some, unfortunately sad, but all make an important statement of fact: "Mom made a difference in my life". Maya Angelou said: "There is no influence as powerful as that of a mother." Former President Barack Obama credits his mother with "What is best in me I owe to her." Michael Jordan called his mother "his root, my foundation", while Stevie Wonder said, "Mama was my greatest teacher, a teacher of compassion, love and fearlessness."



Clearly, we know that mothers have a huge impact not only on their own children, but also on other peoples' kids as well. Throughout history, mothers-worldwide-have played roles from warrior to waitress for their offsprings and others. Mother's Day may be celebrated just one day a year, but it symbolizes the everyday caring of a mom for her children.



### Memorial Day

May 25, 2026



Memorial Day is for honoring and mourning the men and women in our military who sacrificed their lives while serving in the United States Armed Forces. It is a holiday for us to give thanks for their bravery and selflessness which helped ensure the continuance of our nation's democracy.



### Martin Luther King Jr. Day January 19, 2026



Aug. 28, 1963., The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. waves to the crowd at the Lincoln Memorial for his "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in Washington.

When we celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., it is impossible not to recognize that his lessons are similar to the main lesson of Spring: Without hope, all will be lost. So much about our nation underscores that sentiment. Even the drawing on America's official seal – suggested by Benjamin Franklin in August 1776 – attested to this belief, with the dramatic scene described in Exodus where Moses divided waters of the Red Sea that is depicted on the seal. The history of our nation, the hope and sense of rebirth that springtime inspires, has a message that is clear: The impossible can happen, it just takes longer. Dr. King believed that and lived it. We should too.

# LONG ISLAND REPORT

## Benny in His Own Words



**Benny Carenza**, Director of the Long Island Division and Trustee on the Executive Board, has achieved a Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do. In his own words: *“I started my Tae Kwon Do journey at the age of 7 and would always go for a bit then stop. Then I started about 3-1/2 years ago again. My goal was to have my Black Belt by the time I hit THE BIG 60! Well, I turned 60 and passed my test! A lot of HARD WORK, DEDICATION and PRACTICE! It’s never too late to set crazy goals in life so go for it.”*

## North Babylon Bus Drivers

North Babylon Bus Drivers at their annual Holiday Luncheon. Great job and thanks to the bus drivers for all they do for the community.



**Liaison Dee** is well respected for all of her input and just simply cares so much for the members. Pictured with **Benny Carenza**.



**John Gallagher**, Long Island Business Agent, representing Local 237 at the Martin Luther King Day of service at Half Hollow Hills library. We are proud to donate needed things to the MLK Day of Service event. **Assemblyman Kwani B. O’Pharrow** spearheaded this great event.



(l-r) Benny Carenza with Steve Zwerin.

## North Babylon



North Babylon members catching up as the schools are closed for staff and students. Great work!



## Half Hollow Hills



Half Hollow Hills High School East Chief Custodian Shout-Out to **Allan Jones**! We would like to recognize Allan Jones for always showing up, being available whenever we need him, and maintaining a consistently positive, can-do attitude. Allan takes great pride in his work and keeps his area in tip-top shape every day. Thank you, Allan, for your dedication and hard work—it truly makes a difference!



Teamster member **Joanne Coppinger** officially retired after a long career in Food Service at Brentwood Schools. She was a dedicated cook who made sure all of her staff were treated fairly and the kids got great meals. **Scott Dimperio**, Long Island Business Agent (r) presented Joanne with her plaque.



**Annmarie Schneider**, West Islip Teamster Secretary retired with over 30 years on the job. She is well liked by all of her co-workers and will be missed! Enjoy your retirement. Pictured with **Benny Carenza**.

# POLITICAL AND LABOR NEWS

## MEEKS HOSTS LABOR BREAKFAST



US Congressman Gregory Meeks (sixth on the left) and CLC President, Brendan Griffith, (seventh on the left) meet with representatives from the City's leading labor unions.

US Congressman Gregory Meeks, who is also the Chairman of the Queens Democratic Organization, recently hosted a roundtable discussion with labor leaders, held at the New York Central, Labor Council. Representatives from the City's leading labor unions — including Teamsters Local 237— were in attendance to hear a Washington update from Rep. Meeks, as well as to partake in a lively exchange of their thoughts and concerns on behalf of the working men and women they represent. ■

## Local 237 Member a Candidate for the Assembly

Marie Mirville-Shahzada is a member of Local 237, serving as a NYC School Food Service Manager, for 26 years. She is a candidate for the office of New York State Assembly, representing the 46 Assembly District. ■



(l-r) Donald Arnold, Local 237 Executive Board Secretary-Treasurer and the Director of the Citywide Division; Jeanette Taveras, Local 237 Executive Board Recording Secretary and Law Enforcement Business Agent; Gregory Floyd, President; Marie Mirville-Shahzada, Assembly candidate.



## Recognize our Crucial Role, Work with Us for the Betterment of NYC

By Saul Fishman

President, Civil Service Bar Association (CSBA)

The brutally cold winter should mercifully be ending around the time you read this article. As the submission deadline for this "Spring 2026" Newsline edition is in early February, I am trying to focus on Spring while suffering through near-historic low temperatures and wind chills here in our beloved city.

Not every agency has a new Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel yet, and the budget hasn't been finalized, so it's far too early to assess the impact of the Mamdani administration on our careers as dedicated NYC Agency Attorneys and Agency Attorney Internes. Likewise, our fellow New Yorkers are still holding their collective breath to see if promised reforms translate into tangible results.

I'm confident that I speak for the vast majority of CSBA members in promising to work with Mayor Mamdani and his leadership team in delivering high quality, fair, legal and equitable service to those we have the opportunity to serve. We are a key component of nearly every Mayoral agency. Without us, children would be less safe when these most vulnerable New Yorkers are in the hands of abusive parents, stepparents and/or guardians. Where would they be without ACS Family Court Legal Services ("FCLS") Agency Attorneys? Ditto indigent and/or aging, vulnerable adults assisted by our members in the NYC Department of Social Services/ HRA/ DHS? We work in over thirty (30) city agencies, making sure that taxes, fines and services are collected or provided fairly and lawfully, in the correct amount on time. When present or consulted, we advise when a potential arrest is lawful or not and how to not trample on New Yorker's first amendment rights. We know that a bad arrest subjects our city to costly litigation, settlements and/or verdicts. In short, we generally work behind the scenes, making our commissioners look good and your constituents better served.

Note to City Hall: We are a difficult-to-retain and recruit title. DCAS has recognized this well-documented fact. It is imperative that we be provided with a career path to advance with experience and hard work. Agency Attorney has four different levels; promotional opportunities are essential to retain good, experienced attorneys as well as to maintain morale and maximize productivity. Also key to retention (but not a substitute for advancement) is to be treated with dignity and respect and that we have an adequate number of colleagues and resources to perform our crucial work professionally and competently!

On a good day, we represent 900 members, stretched thin by often-stressful jobs and high workloads. Most of us are only eligible for inferior Tier 6 pensions. Please see the Sunday March 8th Rally information to Fix Tier 6 on our website [www.csbanyc.org](http://www.csbanyc.org) or on our FB page CSBA Attorneys. Also on the near horizon is our next Membership meeting (conducted online) tentatively scheduled for Monday March 30th. [Reminder: You must reach out to us at least one business day in advance to receive log-in information].

Always feel free to contact us at [csbainfo@local237.org](mailto:csbainfo@local237.org) or at (212) 675-0519 to keep us apprised about issues in your shop. Please be assured that we care about all significant issues impacting our members, starting with our safety and health and our ability to thrive.

Thanks as always for remaining a valued member. ■

## New Administration, Familiar Challenges

By Vito R. Pitta, Esq.

With a new administration in City Hall, Local 237 members should keep an eye on key issues that could shape their work, benefits, and communities— from public safety and schools to health coverage and redevelopment projects.

Notably, Julie Menin was elected Speaker of the City Council and newly elected Council Member Shirley Aldebol was named Chair of the City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor. Council Member Erik Dinowitz was named Chair of the Education Committee; Council Member Chris Banks, Chair of the Committee on Public Housing; and Council Member Oswald Feliz, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety.

### Fulton & Elliott-Chelsea Redevelopment Moves Forward, for Now

A major redevelopment of the Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses in Manhattan is moving forward after a judge ruled on January 22nd to deny a lawsuit attempting to block the project. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) plans to replace existing apartments with affordable and market-rate units. In 2023, about 30 percent of residents responded to NYCHA's and Related/Essence's survey, and about 60 percent of those opted for demolition.

While some tenants and advocates worry about displacement and loss of protections, supporters say the project is the only realistic way to deliver safe, modern housing at scale. NYCHA says the project is necessary because the buildings are aging and are part of a systemwide \$80 billion repair backlog.

For Local 237, this redevelopment underscores ongoing challenges in balancing upgrading aging public housing while protecting resident rights, and the future of public housing in the city. The plaintiffs may appeal the judge's decision.

### Safest Year on Record for Gun Violence, But Not for Youths

Governor Kathy Hochul, Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and New York Police Department (NYPD) Commissioner Jessica Tisch announced that 2025 was New York City's safest year ever for gun violence.

While overall crime in New York City decreased, youth violence increased, with adolescents making up 14% of shooting victims and 18% of perpetrators— the highest percentages recorded since the NYPD began tracking this data in 2018. Many incidents involved gang activity or schoolyard conflicts.

In the fall, the NYPD implemented School Safety Zones at high-risk locations, including bus stops and common student routes. The NYPD also changed its strategy with school safety agents, increasing deployments in and around schools. Since September, these measures have led to a 53% drop in overall crime within the zones and a 75% reduction in shooting incidents and victims. Mayor Mamdani and Commissioner Tisch emphasized a "whole-of-government" approach to continue addressing youth crime citywide.

### Proposed Mayoral Control Extended Over New York City's Public Schools

Governor Hochul has proposed a four-year extension of Mayor Mamdani's control over New York City's public schools, keeping the mayor in charge of chancellor appointments, school board composition, and overall policy direction. While Mayor Mamdani campaigned on ending mayoral control, he has since reserved his stance and plans modest changes to increase parent involvement, such as expanding parent coordinators and improving access to school meetings.

Mayor Mamdani cannot immediately appoint a majority of the Panel for Educational Policy, though he has two vacancies he can fill and will eventually gain full control. In the meantime, the board's current members, appointed under the previous administration, may influence key decisions, shaping how policies and school operations affect Local 237 in the near term.

### Addressing Health Fund Insolvency

An audit issued by former Comptroller Brad Lander claims that the Health Insurance Stabilization Fund, which helps pay insurance premiums and benefits for city workers, retirees, and their dependents, is insolvent, with over \$3.1 billion in unpaid obligations. The timing of this report has drawn scrutiny, as it was released as Lander steps down from office and ramps up his bid for Congress.

The audit asserts that, over multiple administrations, both City Hall and municipal unions used the fund beyond its original purpose. The Adams administration's Office of Labor Relations and the Municipal Labor Committee emphasized the fund can be used for any mutually agreed upon purpose through collective bargaining and it has long supported essential benefits.

Mayor Mamdani said the audit will be taken seriously and reassured city workers that their health coverage is secure, noting that recent shortfalls have been covered by the city's general fund. Current Comptroller Mark Levine plans to work with the mayor and municipal unions to develop a sustainable approach. ■

Vito R. Pitta is a partner at Pitta LLP, a firm whose practice consists primarily of traditional union-side labor law, employment law, employee benefits law, and campaign finance compliance law. The firm counts more than forty local and international labor unions as its clients. Mr. Pitta's practice consists of counseling the firm's clients on traditional labor and employment matters, as well as advising the firm's political campaign and political action committee clients with respect to federal, state, and local campaign finance laws. Mr. Pitta is also a Partner in Pitta LLP's affiliated personal injury firm, Pitta & Baione LLP, which represents victims of the September 11th terrorist attacks; and a member of Pitta LLP's affiliated lobbying firm, Pitta Bishop & Del Giorno LLC.





## Keeping you in the know



## Keep Your Life Insurance Beneficiary Up to Date

By Diana Nappi

Director of the Welfare Funds

Talking about life insurance isn't always easy, but it's an important part of planning for the future. The Welfare Fund provides all members with a Group Term Life Insurance Policy through MetLife. Ensuring your beneficiary information is current can make a meaningful difference for your loved ones.

### WHY YOUR BENEFICIARY MATTERS

Your life insurance benefit is paid directly to the person you designate. If no beneficiary is listed, or if your beneficiary has passed away, the benefit must be paid to your estate. This can delay payment and require your executor to go through Surrogate's Court—something that can be time-consuming during an already difficult time.

### HOW TO UPDATE YOUR BENEFICIARY

Updating your beneficiary is simple:

- Call the Fund Office at (212) 924-7220 to request a new enrollment form.
- Complete the beneficiary designation portion.
- Make sure your updated form is on file with the Fund Office.

If you're unsure whom you previously listed, we encourage you to complete a new form.

### CURRENT BENEFIT AMOUNTS

- Member Benefit: \$15,000
- Spouse Benefit: \$5,000
- Dependent Benefit: \$5,000

### SUPPLEMENTAL LIFE INSURANCE OPTIONS

MetLife also offers voluntary Supplemental Life Insurance through payroll deduction. You can apply anytime at:

[www.metlife.com/info/teamsters-local-237](http://www.metlife.com/info/teamsters-local-237)

Questions? Contact MetLife Customer Support at 1-866-492-6983.

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP

For more information about your benefits, contact the Welfare Fund at (212) 924-7220 or email [welfarefund@local237.org](mailto:welfarefund@local237.org). You can also visit our website at [www.local237.org](http://www.local237.org), click on "Your 237 Benefits" for more information regarding your Plan Benefits. ■



## Meet Your Local 237 Legal Team

By Jennifer E. Hudson, Esq.

Director of Local 237 Legal Services Plan



Top row (l-r) Christian Ureña; Jessica A. Caruso, Esq.; Ingrid Ventura-Thogode; Amanda Colon; Israel Yevgeny Levin, Esq.; Kirk M. Rotger, Esq.; Ishtar Summerfield; Lucia M. Lopez, Esq.; Rebecca J. Engel, Esq.; and Caroline Tenesaca, Esq. Bottom row (l-r) Jennifer E. Hudson, Esq.; Maria Debraux; Sharmin A. Piancca, Esq.; Hannah E. Collins, Esq.; Anelle Morales-Rojas, Esq.; Maeve M. Callagy, Esq.; April M. Calabrese, Esq.; and Patricia Groner.

One of the joys of my job is getting to meet so many Local 237 members and retirees. Another is getting to work with a marvelous team of co-workers. I want to start off the new year by introducing this team to the members and retirees by sharing some fun facts about the folks who make up your Local 237 Legal Services Plan. We are a small but mighty collection of people dedicated to assisting you with your legal matters. However, that's not all we do!

**April M. Calabrese, Esq., Senior Attorney**, loves K-Pop and has seen many live K-Pop shows, including BTS, Blackpink and Stray Kids. Ms. Calabrese hopes to catch BTS on tour this year now that they have completed their mandatory military enlistment.

**Maeve M. Callagy, Esq., Staff Attorney**, enjoys collecting rocks.

**Jessica A. Caruso, Esq., Supervising Attorney**, enjoys songwriting and musical composition.

**Hannah E. Collins, Esq., Staff Attorney**, was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee, and has a family connection to Taylor Swift.

**Amanda Colon, Assistant Office Manager**, learned to knit a few years ago, and now it has become her hobby to make hand-knit Christmas gifts for friends and family.

**Maria Debraux, Assistant Secretary**, enjoys horror movies, music, dancing and most especially, her sweet dog.

**Rebecca J. Engel, Esq., Deputy Director**, loves reading so much that she usually reads about three books a week.

**Patricia Groner, Legal Secretary**, loves gardening.

**Jennifer E. Hudson, Esq., Director**, enjoys taking violin classes.

**Israel Yevgeny Levin, Esq., Senior Attorney**, has been a passionate soccer fan since he started watching soccer at the age of nine. His Grandfather would take him to games in his hometown stadium. Since then, he has seen games in four different Portuguese stadiums, two English stadiums, two Dutch stadiums, and twenty years ago, he saw a French 3rd Division game. Mr. Levin hopes to see a World Cup Game this summer.

**Lucia M. Lopez, Esq., Staff Attorney**, is re-learning how to knit and crochet, so she likes to practice making things in her free time.

**Anelle Morales-Rojas, Esq., Staff Attorney**, collects tropical plants and at one point had over 30 plants, her next hoped-for find is a Monstera Albo.

**Sharmin A. Piancca, Esq., Staff Attorney**, enjoys indulging in her obsession with make-up and particularly loves trying different lipsticks.

**Kirk M. Rotger, Esq., Staff Attorney**, is writing a murder mystery.

**Ishtar Summerfield, Receptionist**, loves cats.

**Caroline Tenesaca, Esq., Staff Attorney**, has been dancing Colombian Folklore for twenty-three years.

**Ingrid Ventura-Thogode, Office Manager**, was born and raised in Chile, is a proud mom of two, a marathon runner, and enjoys fulfilling her passion for travel every chance she gets.

**Christian Ureña, Legal Secretary**, has run eight marathons, and plans to do a ½ marathon in every state. He is also fluent in English, Spanish and can speak some French.

**Sara N. Wagner, Esq., Associate Director**, attended LaGuardia High School (the "Fame" school), and sings in the LaGuardia Alumni Choir.

In addition to assisting New York City Veterans process VA disability claims, the New York City Department of Veterans' Services (DVS) connects service members, veterans, survivors, caregivers, and military families to services from our partner organizations, including veteran service organizations, non-profit community organizations, and government agencies through the VetConnectNYC platform.

DVS helps individuals lead purpose-driven lives by directing them to services that support economic empowerment, housing security, access to food, health, wellness, and more.



## HAVE YOU FILED YOUR VA CLAIM YET?

Get access to Veterans' benefits and support services through DVS!

Accredited DVS staff members are now processing Veterans Affairs (VA) claims for NYC Veterans and their families within the five boroughs.

VISIT [NYC.GOV/VETCONNECT](http://NYC.GOV/VETCONNECT)

Sign-up and get connected to support services through our Military Resource Portal



## Preparing for the Unimaginable

By Karla Steinberg, MSW

Membership Social Worker

*"The only thing that makes life possible is permanent, intolerable uncertainty; not knowing what comes next."* — Ursula K. Le Guin

This Ursula K. Le Guin quote illustrates what we already know; we cannot know the future. What do we do with this uncertainty? For some of us, we are mobilized to action. We plan, we scheme, we plot. Some of us feel paralyzed by not-knowing and we find it difficult to move at all. Still, the best time to plan for a "rainy" day is when it isn't raining at all.

Part of my role as membership social worker is to go into the field and provide support to members at their job site. This can be for several reasons including (but not limited to) a traumatic event on site such as a violent crime, an accident, and all too often, after the death of a member. Sadly, I average about 20 of these kinds of visits each year, and an unfortunate commonality with a lot of these visits is a lack of preparation on the part of the member.

Did you know that one phone call to the main offices at Local 237 can connect you with three departments, where you can assign a beneficiary? A beneficiary is a person (or organization) that is legally entitled to assets such as money after the owner's death. As a Local 237 member, you can assign as many people as you like as an annuity beneficiary. The annuity department will mail or can give a card to you in person. You can call and request that card at 212.924.2000 ext 6018. If you want to know your balance, you can always come to the union Monday through Friday between the hours of 9-5, no appointment necessary, but bring a form of ID.

Our legal services department can do a simple will, health care proxy and power of attorney for active members. Contact their department at 212.924.1220 and request a legal questionnaire be mailed to you. Then, fill it out and you will be assigned to an attorney after submitting it back to them.

Lastly, there is the death benefit for active members. If an active member loses a spouse, or a child, they are entitled to receive a death benefit for them within a 5-year window. Should an active member die, his or her beneficiary is entitled to receive a death benefit as well. The best number to call to assign a beneficiary/beneficiaries is 212.924.7220, and ask for the enrollment department, or an enrollment form.

While I hope we all live long and healthy lives, I also hope that we can put our affairs in order long before we need to. It's best to be prepared and not need it, than to need it and not be prepared. As always, I look forward to hearing from you. ▮

## 2 MINUTES ON.....

### Seniors and Identity Theft

An aging demographic with increased life expectancy that own nearly 50% of US financial assets make Seniors very attractive to identity thieves.



Let's find out why...



The 60+ Age Demographic represented nearly 30% of Identity Theft victims that reported to the FTC in 2024



Seniors own almost half of all financial assets in America making them a prime target for Identity Theft Fraud. According to the AARP, an estimated \$28 billion is lost to Fraud by seniors each year with over \$20 billion stolen by family, friends and caregivers!



Seniors are generally more trusting with strangers and scams from email "phishing" and telemarketing put them at increased risk



Use of Social Media amongst those 65 and older has doubled in the last 5 years increasing the risk to their identities for fraud. More than 65% of seniors use Facebook daily with YouTube running at 65% and Instagram and Pinterest at about 15%. They are not always aware of the risks to their personal information when engaging with Social Media.



Medical Identity Theft is naturally a major concern as seniors tend to use medical services more and medical records are very detailed and highly prized to identity thieves.



Seniors are proud and can put themselves at risk, particularly with technology issues and scams, by simply being too embarrassed at not being "up to date" to seek proper advice

### So How Can We Reduce The Chance of Being a Victim ?



Medicare and Medicaid information needs to be protected. Don't share your SSN and medical insurance info unless absolutely necessary. Check your records regularly



Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or on the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or you are sure you know who you are dealing with.



PASSWORDS PASSWORDS PASSWORDS..... Seniors can be very trusting and share passwords and PIN codes... we need to be vigilant and DON'T use the same password for everything!



Seniors need to understand that social media is a fertile ground for identity thieves. Be careful of what and with whom we share info. Friend requests are not always from "friends"

To Learn More, Go To : <https://idresolution.net/seniors-identity-theft>

Or Scan the QR Code



More Information? Call Us... 877 308 9169



## Spring in His Step – And Mine!

By David Bonington, CFP®

Financial Planner, Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

In keeping with the spirit of the season ahead (and, wow, have we ever wanted a Spring to arrive more quickly?) the Editor requested that articles for this issue include examples of beginnings, freshness, enlightenment, and revival – while also emphasizing not only work contributors have performed but work yet to be done with new energy and inspiration.

How can I not oblige?

Today's article involves a January client meeting – my second appointment of the new year - with one of your colleagues, a 2025 newcomer to Local 237 who noticed a piece I wrote here last year on 2025 changes to personal Income Tax regulations. Naturally, I can't mention his name, but after reading the article he – let's call him Marvin to humanize him - thought I might be able to identify ways he could avoid some tax over the next few years, and he started the meeting with this request.

How could I not oblige?

It helped that Marvin had his concerns organized. He had been preparing his own taxes for years, but was not convinced he was taking advantage of all features in his favor. He was also confused about the nature, timing, and amount of 2025's many changes. He described his family composition (a spouse and two sons), his last 3-4 years of tax experience (payments every April), and wondered about ways saving might also be fruitful from a tax standpoint.

We reviewed activities which would benefit Marvin and his family in future years, including making additional pre-tax retirement plan contributions and opening Section 529 Plan saving-for-college accounts, both of which would reduce tax liability. We then addressed some specific changes and opportunities created by 2025 legislation: the increase in the Standard Deduction; the ability to shield a portion of his Overtime Pay (and, for Marvin's wife, her Tip Income); the increase in the Child Tax Credit; and the ability of even Standard Deduction taxpayers to deduct a certain amount of their charitable gifts. There was even a "bonus" item when I called Marvin's attention to a new \$12,000, age-based deduction his Over-65 parents qualify for!

As each item was addressed, Marvin asked for a moment to make notes, and kept remarking how his confusion was lifting and being replaced by a clear tax roadmap that was going to make preparation easier and conserve a meaningful amount of money. His end-of-meeting thank you was a sincere, heartfelt one.

After the meeting, I think I was as happy as Marvin was. I thought to myself, "Now, how great is it to have a job where I was able to do this – where, metaphorically, in an hour I helped turn what was a blizzard of confusion, a near-whiteout, into a clear Spring morning?" Some meetings revitalize the Planner as much as the client - and when they occur, I remember why I run to work. ▮

Free, confidential telephone or Zoom sessions with a Stacey Braun planner can be arranged by calling 1-888-949-1925. No financial products are sold and there is no sales pressure.

# ¡A todos nos vendría bien un poco de primavera!

Por Gregory Floyd

Presidente, Teamsters Local 237 y Vicepresidente General de la Junta General de la Hermandad Internacional de Teamsters

## ¡Ah, la Primavera!

Los brotes se convierten en flores; la primera pelota de béisbol de la temporada ha sido lanzada a los vitores de los fanáticos esperanzados, olvidando un decepcionante año anterior. Los camiones del Sr. Softee están de vuelta en la carretera volviéndonos locos con su melodía embriagadoramente desagradable, que hace que los niños pequeños gritaran de deleite y que los adultos buscaran sus billeteras a regañadientes. Comienza a oscurecer más tarde y los pensamientos se desvían hacia los planes de vacaciones de verano y a cuántos días de ayuno de distancia estoy de un cuerpo para traje de baño.

La primavera, el remedio universal para la depresión invernal, no ha podido llegar antes.

Mucho se ha escrito y dicho sobre la primavera y sus atributos. El gran jugador de béisbol Ernie Banks dijo: *"Los entrenamientos de primavera significan flores, gente que viene al aire libre, sol, optimismo y béisbol. El entrenamiento de primavera es un momento para pensar en volver a ser joven"*. La ex primera dama Ladybird Johnson dijo: *"Donde florecen las flores, también lo hace la esperanza"*.

Es un momento en que el caos de las tormentas de invierno queda atrás de nuestro espejo retrovisor y la promesa de un día cálido y soleado puede saludarnos como esa primera taza de café de la mañana. Nuevos inicios, un nuevo comienzo, una pizarra limpia. La inspiración se halla en el aire y la esperanza está en todas partes.

La fundadora ghanesa de Smart Youth Volunteer Foundation, Lailah Gifty Akita, llama a la primavera: *"una temporada para que el alma recupere su fuerza"*. E incluso el comediante Robin Williams tuvo una opinión sobre la primavera, al señalar que es, *"la forma en que la naturaleza dice 'vamos de fiesta'"*.

No es casualidad que el Ramadán, la Pascua cristiana y la judía sean vacaciones de primavera. La renovación de la naturaleza que viene con la primavera amplifica la promesa de redención incrustada en los eventos históricos que conmemoran las tres religiones.

El Ramadán, una celebración de un mes de duración, marca el mes más sagrado del calendario islámico. Según la tradición, el libro sagrado del Corán fue revelado al profeta Mahoma durante el Ramadán. Los musulmanes creen que durante este mes, las puertas del Cielo están abiertas y las del Infierno cerradas. Los musulmanes se centran en su conexión con Dios, reflexionan sobre sus vidas y dedican tiempo de calidad con amigos y familiares.

La Pascua celebra la resurrección de Jesús y su victoria sobre la muerte. Casi al mismo tiempo, y a menudo de manera superpuesta, los judíos celebran su Pascua, fiesta que conmemora el éxodo de los hebreos de la esclavitud en Egipto. En las fiestas religiosas que se suceden, naturaleza e historia convergen con un resonante mensaje de esperanza.

Son fiestas que remiten a la liberación desde un estado de desesperanza. La Pascua le asegura al indi-

viduo que la vida es eterna.

Ofrece una salida del mundo más allá de la reparación. Celebra una religión que brinda consuelo a aquellos que habían perdido la fe en los dioses de Roma. Difunde el mensaje de que la muerte de uno tiene la capacidad de salvar a muchos, y que la resurrección de Jesús es la máxima afirmación de la vida.

La Pascua convoca a los judíos de manera colectiva al mundo para repararlo. El mensaje de la Pascua es que un faraón tirano podría ser derrocado y una nación tan poderosa como Egipto derrotada. Los esclavos podían convertirse en hombres libres y los oprimidos podían romper los grilletes de su cautiverio. Todo es posible, si solo nos atrevemos a soñar el sueño imposible.

Fue el registro bíblico del Éxodo de Egipto lo que permitió a los seguidores de Martin Luther King Jr. que el espíritu de optimismo prevaleciera y lanzarse a la búsqueda de la igualdad de derechos. Fueron conmovidos por la visión de Moisés guiando a su pueblo a la Tierra Prometida. De hecho, el histórico discurso que King pronunció en el Mason Temple, en Memphis, adonde concurrió el 3 de abril de 1968 para apoyar a los trabajadores de saneamiento que protestaban por sus escasos salarios de \$1.65 por hora y sus deplorables condiciones de trabajo, incluyó la línea profética: *"Es posible que no llegue allí con ustedes. Pero quiero que sepan esta noche que nosotros, como pueblo, llegaremos a la Tierra Prometida"*. Fue asesinado al día siguiente. Resultaba irónico que muchos de los partidarios, colaboradores y confidentes de King le hubieran instado a no ampliar su enfoque ni salir de su zona de confort para emprender nuevas causas, tales como la Campaña de los Pobres (Poor People's Campaign), la cual él estaba impulsando. King no tendría nada de eso. Por el contrario, instó a los trabajadores de saneamiento a ir a la huelga diciéndoles: *"Hay que intensificar un poco la lucha"*. Y respondió al argumento de que se contuviera, diciendo: *"Hemos entrado en una era en la que estamos llamados a plantear ciertas preguntas básicas acerca de toda la sociedad"*.

Cuando celebramos el legado del Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., es imposible no reconocer que sus enseñanzas son similares a la lección principal de la primavera: *"Sin esperanza, todo estará perdido"*. Gran parte de la historia de nuestra nación subraya ese sentimiento. Incluso el diseño del sello oficial de Estados Unidos, sugerido por Benjamin Franklin en agosto de 1776, daba fe de esta creencia, con la dramática escena descrita en Éxodo donde Moisés dividió las aguas del Mar Rojo, algo que se halla representado en el sello. El Dr. King agregó: *"Lo imposible puede suceder, solo lleva más tiempo"*.

Sin duda, él podría haberse desanimado en el camino, pero nunca perdió totalmente la esperanza. De hecho, la historia de Estados Unidos da fe de que cuando prevalece la esperanza, incluso lo que pensabas que era la señal de callejón sin salida puede convertirse en un camino abierto.

La primavera nos inspira a emprender ese viaje hacia donde sea que nos lleve el camino. ■





# Keeping you in the know

## WITH DEEPEST

# Sympathy

To the families of Local 237 members who are no longer with us, and to our members who have suffered a loss, please know that we share your sorrow and hope that fond memories will offer you peace and comfort.

– President Gregory Floyd,  
the Executive Board and Staff



## Digital Literacy: Why it Matters

By Shanell Grayson

Director of Training and Education

Last year was coined ‘The Year of AI’. As we launch into 2026, it’s clear the reach of artificial intelligence has no signs of slowing. It has “infiltrated” social media, it’s a hot button topic in debates, and is even seeping into our workflows. Despite its conception taking place over 70 years ago, AI’s recent explosion feels, well, uncomfortable.

The resistance to emerging technology is not unique to AI. In fact, technology has been expanding rapidly for decades, eliciting both excitement and trepidation at every breakthrough. It has revolutionized nearly every aspect of our lives – from banking, to shopping, and even healthcare. There was a time when you had to physically go to the doctor to get your prescription refilled. Now, we can request medication with the press of a button. Similarly, funds can be sent and received from the comfort of your couch in lieu of racing to the bank on lunch hour. Still, there are those who reject the benefits of technology in favor of “the old way” because of fear: fear of change and fear of the unknown.

Our society is experiencing a profound technological revolution. Just as online banking has become the norm, so will AI and whatever lies beyond that. It’s good to be critical, but living an analog lifestyle in an increasingly digital world, can lead to isolation and limitation. This is why basic digital literacy, or acquiring the skills to navigate a technological society, is essential. Not only will it help you develop confidence and purpose, you can make informed decisions about the unique impact you want technology to play in your life.

We’ve highlighted our most recent Advanced Computer Skills graduates below. Some have overcome their own technophobia to reach this milestone. As we celebrate their achievement, do take the time to read, in their own words, how expanding their digital literacy has made a positive impact on their lives. If you feel inspired by their stories, we hope you, too, will take advantage of our next computer course. As always, we are eager to serve you! ■

### STUDENTS OF THE MONTH... IN THEIR OWN WORDS



(l-r) Shanell Grayson, Director of Training and Education; Lasme Essoh, staff; Ronnie Acosta and Alicia Atkinson, students; Anthony Fonseca, Instructor; Gregory Barnes, student; Frank Pettaway, Assistant Director.

#### Ronnie Acosta Assistant Supervisor of Nutrition, DOE

With my new promotion I’m dealing with over 700 employees, so this class helped me out a lot because I have to deal with Microsoft Outlook everyday. I also have to do a lot of charts. In the class, I learned how to use Microsoft Excel to set up graphs and formulas to get totals. It was a breath of fresh air because now I’m working more efficiently and I feel more confident in myself when a task is given to me to do on a computer.

#### Alicia Atkinson Special Officer, Lincoln Hospital

I did Excel in college, but I forgot most of it. So when I saw this class, I jumped on it. I did it for me personally, but it could also help on my job, just in case there’s an advanced position available. I could always apply this information.

#### Gregory Barnes Caretaker X, NYCHA

I wanted to get this computer skillset to prepare myself to move into a position as a Supervisor of Grounds. I want to be comfortable doing schedules for vacations and stuff like that. This is my second time coming back. So, this group prepared me to use outlook, send emails, blind emails, all the fonts, the files, and the peripherals. I’m one of those individuals, that once I get it, then I can teach somebody. So, I’m getting both at the same time as a student and as a trainer.

## Education Department’s FREE Courses

#### CIVIL SERVICE EXAM PREP CLASSES

- Maintenance Worker (March)
  - Plasterer (March)
  - School Safety Agent (March)
  - Special Officer (March)
  - Supervisor of Housing Caretaker (March)
  - Taxi and Limousine Inspector (April)
  - Maintenance Worker (June)
- Visit [nyc.gov/examsforjobs](http://nyc.gov/examsforjobs) for details.

#### SCHOLARSHIPS

- Teamsters International Scholarship
  - > High School Seniors
  - > JRHMSF.org
- Union Plus Scholarship
  - > Members and their families
  - > Unionplus.org

#### COURSES AT PARTICIPATING UNIONS

- GED Prep
  - > 1199: (212) 894-4362
  - > UAW: (212) 228-0041
- English and Spanish Courses
  - > 1199: (212) 494-0525

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

- Shop Steward Training #1 (April)
- For current and active Shop Stewards
- Beginning Computer Skills (May)



Scan the QR Code to register now.

Email: [training@local237.org](mailto:training@local237.org)

#### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

- Defensive Driving NY (December)
  - > 10% off insurance
  - > 4 points off license



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SPRING 2026

DATED MATERIAL

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City \_\_\_\_\_