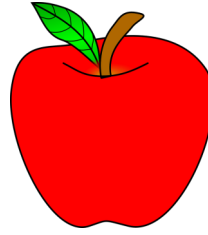


# Vocational Instructor



IT PAYS TO BE TAUGHT BY A  
VO-TECH TEACHER!

Local 4200A~AFT, AFTCT, & AFL-CIO

Volume MMXXIII Issue 1

September 2023

## Congratulations to our 2023 Teachers of the Year!



Back Row: Jamie Lamitie (SVFT Secretary), Makenzi Hurtado (SVFT Vice President), Michael Sodins (Platt), Latrice James (Platt), Brian Moore (Bullard Havens), Wendell Soucy (Prince), Rachel Dubreuil (Norwich), Chris Wethered (Abbott), Bob Riccitelli (SVFT EUR). Front Row: Lisa Anniello (Ellis), Derek Nadeau (O'Brien), Joe Sirico (Wright), Melissa Ellis (Wilcox), Denis Hamann (Cheney), Michelle Lomma (Kaynor), Paul Angelucci (SVFT President)  
Not Pictured: Patricia Queen (Bristol), Ronald Murray (Goodwin), Jose Rios (Grasso), Tim Larson (Vinal), Ann Sumowski (Eli Whitney), Susan Zbell (Oliver Wolcott), Gary Moquin (Windham)

### Executive Council Meeting Dates & Locations

- 9/13 @ Prince
- 10/11 @ Wilcox
- 12/13 @ TBD
- 1/10 @ Vinal
- 2/7 @ Wilcox
- 3/13 @ Vinal
- 4/3 @ Wilcox
- 6/12 @ TBD

### General Membership Meeting Dates & Locations

- 11/8 @ Prince
- 5/6 @ Prince

### Full Time Officer Building Meetings

Please look for reminders in your mailbox for time and location.

- 9/18 @ Windham
- 9/19 @ Vinal
- 9/20 @ Cheney
- 9/26 @ Abbott
- 9/27 @ Wright
- 9/28 @ Norwich

- 10/2 @ Goodwin
- 10/3 @ Bullard Havens
- 10/4 @ Kaynor
- 10/5 @ Prince
- 10/11 @ Wilcox
- 10/12 @ Emmett O'Brien
- 10/17 @ Platt
- 10/18 @ Eli Whitney
- 10/19 @ Oliver Wolcott
- 10/24 @ Bristol
- 10/25 @ Ellis
- 10/26 @ Grasso

## Welcome Back!!

by Paul Angelucci

*Paul Angelucci is SVFT's President. He is a Plumbing Department Head from Bullard Havens. He is also an alum of our district.*

I hope the summer was everything you wanted it to be and more! If not, I know you'll try harder next year. As this year gets underway, I'm pleased to say that our interim Superintendent Dr. Lowe is off to a great start. I've worked with him in the past and he is a teacher at heart. We'll be visiting all the schools for a meeting at day's end, the dates are published here, please come join us. This year my goal is to spend more time in schools. I'll be in schools during that day, in the break room, when my schedule permits. I'll send an e-mail letting you know when. Please stop by and let me know how you are doing and how I can help you. I hope you have a great year!

## Brothers and Sisters

By Tashua Troiano

Tashua Troiano is a School Psychologist from Emmett O'Brien. She has been a member of the Scholarship Committee and is now also a member of the Teacher of the Year Committee and a Delegate.



Paul, Makenzi, and eight SVFT Delegates attended the AFT TEACH Convention in Washington DC this summer. They spent three days attending professional development sessions and networking with local unions from around the country. Pictured: John Hemenway (Wright), Rich Benedict (Platt), Bob Herdlein (Cheney), Kris Paradis (Grasso), Eric Klotz (Goodwin), Tashua Troiano (Emmett O'Brien), and Mel Perry (Oliver Wolcott). Not Pictured: Jamie Lamitie (Norwich)

If I'm being honest, I never fully understood why the term "brothers and sisters" was always used in our union notices. It always felt just a little odd to me.

This year I became a delegate for our union. This summer, I joined nine other members, including our President and Vice President, on a trip to the AFT TEACH Conference in Washington DC. Admittedly, when I first arrived at the airport, I felt the same nervousness as when I started at a high school outside of my hometown. I had never met most of the "brothers and sisters" I was about to spend a great deal of time with in a city I've never visited.

Our group attended a wide variety of sessions ranging from combating systemic racism that is inherently intertwined in our lives, to the use of AI in the classroom, to preventing school violence. The school psychologist in me is always on the lookout for trends and patterns. Without fault, any time that

our group would debrief about the different sessions we attended, it seemed we were always discussing how we could bring the information back to our respective schools, identifying the different needs of each school, and where and how the information would fit best.

This was my first sudden insight into the words "brothers and sisters". We are one of the largest school districts spanning across the varied landscapes of CT and have more than 1,200 members in our union. That is a lot of very diverse needs. But those needs were heard, noted, and the first thought when learning new information. This is what a team feels like.

Outside of the sessions, it took no time at all to feel comfortable with these people who were complete strangers just a day earlier. It was fast comradery founded in a curiosity to learn more, an eagerness to do better, and a shared goal for the well-being of our staff and students. This is what a family feels like.

I no longer wonder why we use the words "sisters and brothers" when referring to our membership.

**It just makes sense.**

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### Important Reminders

**Advanced Degree Stipend** Sign Up is open until October 15th. Please read the email from Carla Keilbasinski that was sent to your work email. You can also use the flow chart on our website and on our Facebook page as a resource. If you are already receiving Advanced Degree Stipend for your highest degree, you do not need to apply again.

**Sick Bank Enrollment** is open from September 1st to November 1st every year. The enrollment form is available on our website. You must be a full time employee for three years or a part time employee for three years and 66 days to enroll. Your building reps will have a list of who is eligible to enroll. If you have enrolled in the past, you do not need to enroll again.

**Tuition Reimbursement** is being paid again. The fund was replenished on July 1, 2023. Lillian's email address is [lillian.riverahicks@cttech.org](mailto:lillian.riverahicks@cttech.org) or [tuition.reimbursements@cttech.org](mailto:tuition.reimbursements@cttech.org)

If Lillian does not respond that your email is received, please check the address.

**A Fresh Start**  
by Makenzi Hurtado

Makenzi Hurtado is SVFT's Vice President. She is a Math Teacher and Related Department Head from Prince.

I am always optimistic at the start of a new school year. I can't help but create a teacher's version on New Year's resolutions as I shop for a new planner. As Vice President, my resolutions look a little different than when I was a teacher, but I still have them prominently displayed at my desk to keep myself focused.

This year I am hoping to create more opportunities for members to develop relationships across the district. We are also working hard on advocating for our substitute teachers. Throughout the State there is a movement to build solidarity between labor unions and other organizations that work towards equity. I will be sharing information how these efforts affect us as public school teachers and State employees and sharing ways our members can get involved.

Lastly, I have been hearing more and more requests for professional development that supports our members. This year, I will be reaching out to see what our members need and how to best serve you.

Expect to see some more surveys this year. We will be targeting specific groups of members. It is very important to us to hear what you need and how we can support you.

**Your Union Rights During an Investigation**  
by Bob Riccitelli

Bob Riccitelli is SVFT's Executive Union Representative. He is a Sustainable Architecture Department Head from Platt. He is also an alum of our district.

If an administrator calls you into their office and starts asking you questions about an incident about you or a colleague, you have the right to stop that meeting and ask for union representation. You can do this at any point during any meeting. It is in your best interest to have a union representative present in case the issue goes to Labor Relations.

Usually your building representative will be your rep, but if it is a matter between two SVFT members, a FT officer will represent you. The representative is not there to defend anyone's actions or to talk on your behalf but rather to document the conversation, list documents or evidence provided in that meeting, and give you someone to talk to if you're not sure how to answer. Occasionally an administrator will ask questions that are not appropriate to an investigation or may become unprofessional in their questioning. In that case, a rep may intervene and/or end the interview. At that point, I would get involved. Without proper documentation, it becomes very hard to defend you in a pre-disciplinary hearing.

So please don't ever think that a casual conversation with your school administrator cannot be stopped if it seems to be leading towards an investigation. ASK FOR YOUR REP. It is your right.

In June we had elections for building representatives and our Executive Council voted on our committee members and delegates. We would like to thank everyone who served last term and those who will be serving this term. We received over 40 requests to join committees and worked to ensure that everyone who wanted to serve the union would be offered a committee seat. Our goal as officers was to offer a slate of committee members that was diverse in many different ways and also gave an opportunity for new volunteers. If you are interested in joining a committee, the next opportunity will be in Spring 2025.

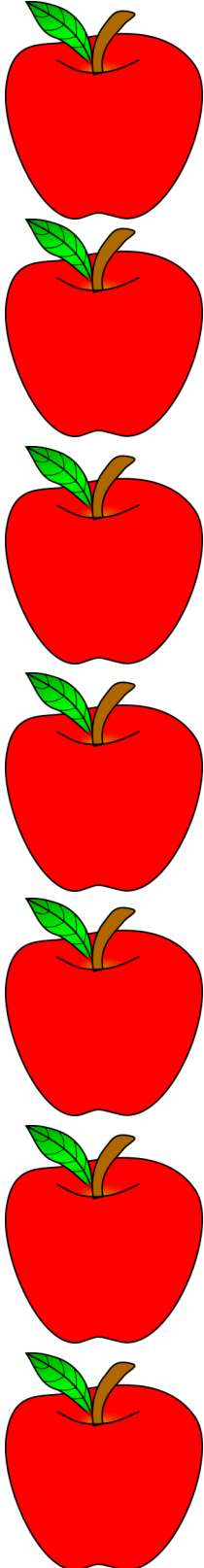
**Our Executive Council is made up of our five officers and our 37 building representatives.**

**Your building representative is your liaison to the officers and also your building administration.**

<b>Abbott</b> Brian Malota Bob Roche	<b>Aero - Hartford</b> Dawn Graham	<b>Bristol</b> Steve Donaghy	<b>Bullard Havens</b> Bob Jacabacci Taylor Urbano
<b>Cheney</b> Kelly Consolini Bob Herdlein	<b>Eli Whitney</b> Dan DelPiano Bob Martinchek	<b>Ellis</b> Tim Milton John Pascone	<b>Emmett O'Brien</b> Mary Benjamin Lillie Johnson
<b>Goodwin</b> Eric Klotz Keith Lebouthillier	<b>Grasso</b> Monique Mailhot Kris Paradis	<b>Kaynor</b> Darlene Marks Pete Sanca	<b>Norwich</b> Kelley Benzing Pete Fiasconaro
<b>Oliver Wolcott</b> Royal Allard Mel Perry	<b>Platt</b> Christian Haight Dawn Murphy	<b>Prince</b> Jerome Grant Brian West	<b>Stratford Aero</b> Tim Graham
<b>Vinal</b> Sabrina Papadopoli Joe Szydowski	<b>Wilcox</b> Michelle DellaVecchia Lenny Morrell	<b>Windham</b> Brian Charron Leah Simmons	<b>Wright</b> Phil Bodey John Hemenway

## Committee Members and Delegates June 2023—May 2025

Some of these committees meet more frequently than others and we will share dates that we are meeting at Executive Council Meetings and on our calendar. As we meet, please reach out to these members, if you have any questions about the work we are doing or if you would like any topics brought up in committee meetings.



<b>Contract Negotiations</b>	Bob Herdlein Sarah Fennessy Eric Klotz Michelle Dellavecchia Jen Garzone Royal Allard Wanakee Young Vanessa Medina-Valdez Jon Nadeau Mel Perry Dennis Mercado Johana Rios-Roldon Nick Ogorzalek	<b>Teacher of the Year</b>	Tashua Troiano
		<b>Constitution &amp; ByLaws</b>	Mel Perry Brian Sheppard Christian Haight Chris Mongeau John Hatfield Kelley Benzing Latrice James
<b>Budget</b>	John Hemenway Israel Velez John Pascone Ed Martinez	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	Chris Theriault Kris Paradis Chris White Tim Milton Steve Orloski Kenneth Keeney
<b>Labor Management</b>	John Hemenway Johana Rios-Roldon Rich Benedict	<b>Nominations</b>	Andy Taddei Felecia Williams Kara Papa
<b>Grievance &amp; Arbitration</b>	Tommy Viola Eric Klotz Dan DelPiano Darlene Marks Kelley Benzing Bob Herdlein Wanakee Young	<b>Scholarship</b>	Tashua Troiano Angela Ocasio Siobhan Jurczyk Tina Piscioti Kris Paradis Cynthia Keeney Krista Miller
<b>Minority Teacher</b>	Lillie Johnson Latrice James Jerome Grant Victor Cooper Inara Ramos Nadine Mills Israel Velez Lisa Higgins Jessica Galan Wanakee Young	<b>Political Action</b>	Dawn Murphy Matt Noonan Brian Malota Jerome Grant Israel Velez Gordon Fain Brian Sheppard Kelly Consolini Angela Ocasio
<b>UTAC</b>	Rich Benedict Roxanne Amiot Caro Marrero Brian Charron Kenneth Keeney Kristen Braccia Hufnagel Craig Lundell Chris Theriault Julie Watt Lisa Carloto Tammy Shaw Joe Santangelo Tommy Viola Chris Marks Pete Vontell Steve Orloski Sara Bruno	<b>Delegates</b>	Rich Benedict Kelley Benzing Brian Charron Dan DelPiano John Hemenway Bob Herdlein Eric Klotz Angela Ocasio Kris Paradis Mel Perry Brian Shepard Leah Simmons Tashua Troiano Wanakee Young

## Labor Unions Are Not The Only Unions To Look Out For

by Jessica Stamp

Jessica Stamp is a Science Teacher at Platt Technical High School. She is also a leader of the Blake Street Tenants Union (BSTU).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

There is a housing crisis in CT. Over 40% of renters are cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income in rent each month. They often must choose between groceries or medicine or heat for their family.

At the same time, corporate megalandlords are moving into the state and buying up property for the sole purpose of maximizing profits. They "renovate" with a coat of paint and crooked tiles, calling it luxury. In my complex, an apartment with a rent set at \$1100 was increased to \$1900 when it was "renovated." My neighbors can't afford that, and we can't afford to move either. Rent is too high everywhere.

These megalandlords also buy up low income homes and choose not to invest in them. The buildings decay leading to health problems from rodents and mold. Many apartments are at risk for fires. The most vulnerable amongst us live in these homes because it's all they can afford, including many of my students. No one deserves to live without dignity.

When my megalandlord, Ocean Management, bought our complex, maintenance issues and phone calls were ignored. My neighbors were left without heat, with raw sewage backing up into their bathtubs, and with rusted nails and razors from renovations causing flat tires in the parking lots. So, we formed the Blake Street Tenants Union (BSTU). We are the first municipally recognized tenants union in the state.

In June, Ocean gave us a 30% rent increase that would have hurt many of my neighbors. So we refused it, standing together in solidarity and demanding to collectively bargain.

On August 19th, we received 16 retaliatory notices-to-quit, promising evictions if we didn't move out by September 1st. My landlord admitted they did it to scare us, so we would call and sign onto the new lease with the higher rent. But we weren't scared.

On August 30th, we marched. Labor unions, elected officials, and faith leaders - around 400 people - marched with us in solidarity because the same people that don't want to pay us for the true value of our work are also trying to take as much of our paychecks as possible to profit off our rent.

After the publicity, the support from elected officials, the size of our march, and the threat of a lawsuit, on September 5th, my landlord rescinded the notices-to-quit, formally recognized our union by naming us on a legal document, and agreed to enter negotiations for a collective bargain. This is a first in CT's history and it's very, very exciting!

We haven't won everything we want yet, but we are standing together in solidarity. I would like to invite you to join our movement. With a union at home and a union at work, together, we can start to hold negligent landlords accountable and we can keep rent reasonable.

You can email us at [cttenantsunion@gmail.com](mailto:cttenantsunion@gmail.com) or find us on Twitter: @cttenantsunion

In solidarity,  
Jessica Stamp



Jessica Stamp, speaking at a rally on August 30, 2023 in front of hundreds of people in downtown New Haven.

**\*\*\*We welcome member articles in our newsletter. We reserve the right to edit articles. We reserve the right not to publish articles for any reason.\*\*\***



## Calendar

We will be updating the calendar on our website soon!

**9/26 UTAC Meeting**—Reach out to a UTAC Committee Member if you are having any issues that you would like addressed at Labor Management

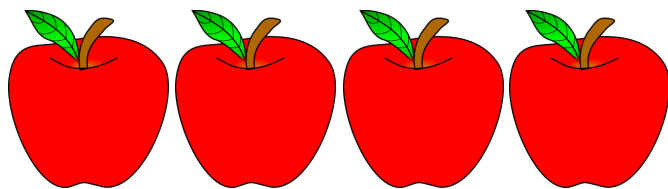
**10/3 Labor Management**—Reach out to your building representative or Makenzi, if you are having any issues that you would like addressed at Labor Management

**10/9 No School**

### **svft.ct.aft.org**

Any information you need is on our website! Do you have suggestions for additions to our website?

Email our Secretary, Jamie Lamitie:  
jlamitie@svft.org



### **Future Articles**

We would like to have a “School Shout Out” article and a “Member Spotlight” article in each newsletter.

Invite us to attend an event or share something from your school that makes you proud.

What else do you want to see in the Vocational Instructor? Please let us know!

Email Jamie at jlamitie@svft.org

## Vocational Instructor

*is the monthly newsletter of the  
State Vocational Federation of Teachers*

**President ..... Paul Angelucci**  
**Vice President ..... Makenzi Hurtado**  
**Executive Union Rep ..... Bob Riccitelli**  
**Treasurer ..... Emily DelPiano**  
**Secretary ..... Jamie Lamitie**  
**Office Manager ..... Lindsay Hochadel**

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### **SVFT Mission Statement**

The SVFT is an organization of professional educators that promotes excellence through the mutual adherence to policies, documents, and procedures negotiated with the CTEC. We work to guarantee that the contract is followed and positive working conditions are maintained. This organization shall be to provide a safe and positive teaching environment for all by:

1. Maintaining the integrity of the contract, the Vocational Technical High School System, and the solidarity of the union.
2. Ensuring all members are protected by the contract and equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to make them successful.
3. Protecting the jobs of our members and strengthening our system.
4. Providing members opportunities to further their education and receive quality professional development.
5. Responding quickly to the emerging changes to the workplace and technological challenges.
6. Handling all interactions with fairness and integrity.
7. Striving for productive, open communication between the SVFT leadership and our membership.
8. Building and improving relationships with our union affiliates and local labor councils.