



# PEA Broadside January 2017



## President's Column

When I received a call from NYSUT a few weeks ago asking me for a brief statement from PEA regarding the passing of Sonia Basko, I was still reeling from the news of her death and trying to come to terms with the loss of our colleague and friend. How would it be possible to make a “brief statement” about a person who left behind such a legacy of courage, determination, and resolve?

I did not know what NYSUT would choose to print from our conversation, but I was pleased to see that they chose the quote “Sonia fought for what was important.” A simple thought perhaps, but it summed up the essence of Sonia’s spirit.

Almost immediately upon Sonia’s arrival as an English teacher at the high school, she became a union advocate. Elected to a building representative position in 2007, Sonia championed the cause of her high school colleagues with fierce determination. From day one, Sonia did her homework – she listened, she asked questions, and she researched information. Sonia was committed to representing the membership with an energy that seemed boundless.

During Sonia’s incumbency as PEA President, she worked tirelessly to increase union involvement. She spearheaded “meet and greet” opportunities, initiated new teacher mixers, and coordinated a variety of fun events designed to offer PEA members the opportunity to enjoy some relaxing time with friends and families. Sonia was instrumental in developing the district’s first APPR plan as well as securing acceptance in NYSUT’s Local Action Project (LAP).

Early in her second term as PEA President, Sonia received a call from NYSUT, which would change her life. After much soul searching and deliberation, Sonia resigned from Penfield Central School District and joined the NYSUT staff in Albany working as a Special Projects Coordinator. Her dedication to the labor movement was reflected in her many and varied endeavors.

NYSUT’s memorial article honoring Sonia’s union work was a fitting tribute to her dedication to union causes, but it did not adequately define her most cherished role- being a teacher. Although Sonia wore many “hats” throughout her well-respected career, the one she would be most proud of would be educator. Her wit and wisdom influenced the lives of countless students and challenged them to become their best selves. There is no greater legacy than to have made a difference in someone’s life, and Sonia definitely made a difference in the lives of all those who knew her.

Sonia will be dearly missed, but she will not be forgotten by those fortunate enough to have known her.



Our contract negotiations process is continuing, and so far, we have not experienced any serious impediments. We are taking the necessary time on the front end of the process to ensure that we have a viable contract at the end of our negotiations.

I can assure you that both the district and the PEA are taking this process very seriously. Our current contract situation did not happen overnight. It has taken many years and many contracts to reach this point. Our goal is to negotiate a fair and just contract, and patience and determination are key. Our work will not be done



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until we can assure our members that we have negotiated a contract that guarantees benefits and salary comparable to those of our neighboring districts.

Please feel free to share your ideas or concerns regarding the contract with your PARC rep or me. Negotiations are ongoing. Nothing is settled yet, and your ideas are welcome. I would be happy to speak with you about contract issues or other concerns individually or as a group at your PEA meeting in February. Do not hesitate to contact me.

Finally, I welcome Kevin Leisten as our new *Broadside* editor beginning with this month's issue. Should you have any question regarding a submission to our union newsletter, please contact Kevin at Bay Trail.

Thank you for the exemplary work you do each day. It is an honor to represent you.

Together we are Union Strong.

Bob Young  
PEA President



*In Memorium of Sonia Basko*  
*Former PEA President*

## Sonia Basko Memorial Book Drive

With ideas from the PHS English department, and artistry from the PHS Art department, we will soon begin a book drive in memory of our colleague and former PEA President Sonia Basko. As a PHS English teacher, it comes as no surprise that Sonia was a huge advocate of literacy.

The PEA will be collecting like-new or new books for all age levels and reading levels, pre-school age through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Books will be collected through your PEA building reps starting Monday, January 30, 2017 through Friday February 10, 2017. A sticker honoring Sonia's memory will be placed on the inside cover of each book (similar to the design included).

We are hoping to be able to donate books to a number of organizations in the Rochester area: Golisano's Children's hospital, Camp Good Days and Special Times, and Rochester City Schools and outreach centers. If you have the name and

This book is  
donated  
in memory of

*Sonia Basko*

Beloved PHS  
English teacher  
2005 to 2014



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contact information for Camp Good Days or Rochester city schools/ outreach centers that would benefit from book donations, please contact Colleen Parkhurst at PHS with that information. Books will be donated throughout the month of February.

We hope to make a big impact with this book drive, just as Sonia made a big impact for students and faculty here in Penfield.

Contact [cparkhurst@penfield.edu](mailto:cparkhurst@penfield.edu) with any questions.

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*“You won’t change things unless you are prepared to fight, even if you don’t win.” ~ Wendy Davis.*

This quote reminds me so much of Sonia. Her passion and sense of just and righteousness was something that was truly impressive. She never wavered or succumbed to the politics of education. Sonia had the ability to see what was best for students, and the teachers who taught them. She was smart, and funny, and charismatic. The whole package. I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to know her. She brought me through some of the toughest days I have faced in my teaching career and for that I will be forever grateful. I found myself in an environment that was fueled by political motivation and turbulence, Sonia reminded me that there was a light at the end of the tunnel; that we would get there; and she would be right behind me the whole way; and she was. Sonia Basko taught me to find strength in myself through truth and righteousness. To stand firm in my beliefs and philosophies. To remain persistent in the knowledge that standing up for what is right and just will prevail. Sonia was a woman who did not need validation from others; she was a true leader, teacher, and friend. I will miss her.

-Renee Yandow

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It was a privilege and an honor to have the opportunity to be a colleague of Sonia’s. Although I didn’t know her that well, I was certainly aware of her passion for teaching.

I would like to share a couple of memories that I have of Sonia. The first is on behalf of my son—Brian. Sonia was his “Leadership” teacher at PHS. When I spoke to Brian about Sonia’s passing, he readily recalled his experience in that class. Every two weeks he was allowed to pick a book from Sonia’s bookshelf. He would read it and they would have a discussion about it. Believe me, not too many high school boys love to read; however, Sonia certainly instilled that love in my son. To this day, Brian has many favorite titles that Sonia shared with him. He continues his love of books and I credit her with this important asset.

Another memory I have of Sonia is as a colleague. I attended a workshop that Sonia gave many years ago. I’m sure it was on English Language Arts. But what truly impressed me was her talent and passion for her craft. She was truly an outstanding educator and I remember wishing that I wanted to be just a little bit like her!

-Julie Colombo

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Sonia Basko was one of the first teachers who welcomed me to Penfield. She went out of her way to stop by my classroom to make sure everything was going well, and encouraged me as a first-year teacher. I always felt uplifted by Sonia. Her energy and love of life is truly rare to find, and to this day, I have not met anyone quite like Sonia. I will always remember her generous and outgoing spirit.

-Laura Hernandez