



74th Annual Business Convention
May 1, 2021

VIRTUAL MEETING

AWARDS



AFT Connecticut Staff Recognition

Neal Thomassen, Technology Support.....	20 years
Mary Richardson, Field Rep	15 years
Nicole Conti, Receptionist.....	5 years
Eric Borlaug, Director of Organizing	5 years
Elizabeth Guerra, Field Rep.....	5 years
Stuart Savelkoul, Chief of Staff	5 years
Jasmine Vendredi, Organizer.....	5 years
Jim Vigue, Legislative Advocate	5 years



Local Anniversary Citations

New Britain Federation of Teachers.....	75 years
New Haven Federation of Teachers	75 years
Ansonia Federation of Paraprofessionals	50 years
Ansonia Federation of Education Personnel	45 years
Bloomfield Federation of Education Personnel.....	40 years
Fairfield Public Health Nurses #3	40 years
Johnson Memorial Hospital RNs #66	40 years
Danbury Nurses Union Unit #47	40 years
Bridgeport Professional Nurses Unit #13	40 years
East Hartford School RNs Association	40 years
Lawrence & Memorial Hospital RNs.....	40 years
Lawrence & Memorial Technologists.....	40 years
A&R Employees Union	40 years
Natchaug Hospital Unions United.....	40 years
Manchester Memorial Hospital RNs.....	40 years
American School for the Deaf Federation of Teachers	40 years
Federation of Technical Colleges Teachers-Retirees	30 years
New Milford Hospital RNs.....	25 years
North Branford Federation of Paraprofessionals	20 years
Manchester Memorial Service & Skilled Maintenance	20 years
Canton Federation of Education Personnel	10 years
Rockville Hospital Federation of RNs	10 years
Manchester Federation of LPNs & Techs.....	10 years
Norwalk Federation of Educational Personnel.....	5 years
Western CT United Professionals	5 years



2021 Legislative Session Testimony

Administrative & Residual Union, Local 4200

Ally Sexton
John Disette
Laila Mandour (Retired)

Ansonia Federation of Teachers, Local 1012

Mathew Hough

Backus Federation of Nurses, Local 5149

John Brady

Bristol Teachers, Local 1464

David Hayes

Danbury Nurses Union, Unit 47, Local 5047

Margaret Cleary, RN BSN
Mary Consoli, RN (retired)
Amanda J Hutchins Warren, RN
Brittany Manley, RN
Megan O'Toole RN
Janice Stauffer, RN

Federation of Tech Colleges, Local 1942

Lauren Doninger, PhD
Diba Khan-Bureau, PhD
Lillian Maisfehl, MLIS
Ron Picard. PhD

Hartford Federation of Paraeducators, Local 2221

Shellye Davis
Marta Shepard

Judicial Professional Employees, Local 4200B

Melissa chin-Hing
Robert Moreau
Marvin Parson
Gregory Sperling

L & M Federation of RNs, Local 5049

Dale Cunningham, RN
Kathleen Rinkes, RN
Barbara Sadowski, RN

Comm Health Services (CHS) United, Local 5151

Irving Buchbinder

Managerial & Exempt Employees, Local 6577

Eileen Ego
Barbara Fernandez
Michael Mendick
Monika Nugent
Susan Shellard
Richard Symonds

New Haven Federation of Teachers, Local 933

Marianne Maloney

Norwalk Federation of Teachers, Local 1723

Mary Yordon

State Vocation Federation of Teachers, Local 4200A

Paul Angelucci
Jan Hochadel
Ed Leavy
Suzanne Niemiec

University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association, Local 3695

Michael White

University Health Professionals, Local 3837

Robin Washington Addison
Theresa Aisevbonaye, RN
Jill K. Alsgaard, RN
Isolde A. Bates
Shawn Brown
Jean B. Castagno
Tina Chupas
Dino Circosta
Chris DeFrancesco
Bill Garrity, RN
Ivonne Hamm, RN
Diane Morgan RN
Jean Morningstar
Donna Napomoceno
Michelle Proper
Stephanie Rauch
Cheryl Ressler
Rosemary Swanke, RN
Matthew Winters, RN
Peter Zarabozo, RN



West Haven School Nurses, Local 1547N

Donna Kosiorowski MS RN NCSN (retired)

Unionist of the Year Award

Ed Leavy—State Federation of Vocational Teachers #4200A

Congrats!

The Unionist of the Year is given to someone who has served their local and AFT-CT. Perhaps the most surprising part about Ed Leavy winning this award in 2021 is that he has never won it before. Ed shows up; no task intimidates him and no task is beneath him. Before he was a union activist and leader, he was a teacher. And from the day he began his teaching career at Bullard-Havens in Bridgeport in 1985 to this very day, Ed has never stopped teaching. And, like the hundreds of students to whom he taught English, many of us in this room have learned a great deal from Mr. Leavy.

Ed's resume of union experience is long. As most of you are aware, he has been President of the SVFT since 2015. Before that, he spent seven years as their Executive Union Representative and prior to that, he spent over 20 years as a building representative for his local. In 2010, he added to his considerable responsibilities with the SVFT by becoming the AFT-CT Secretary/Treasurer. Around the same time, Ed joined AFT-CT's LPAC, and as AFL-CIO can attest, he has knocked more doors in the past 10 years than any other union member in our state. His wisdom and insight on the Executive Committee has been inspirational and instructive for everyone.

In 2014, Ed participated in his first AFT Public Employee Mobilization in Wichita, Kansas. He found the experience to be transformative and he went from being a leader who believed in the organizing model to a full-time organizer who happened to be a union president. Since then, he has participated in 10 member mobilizations and organizing exercises in at least 6 different states. It's probably more, but he's retired now and his memory isn't what it used to be. These experiences made him an incredibly effective leader. With the help of his local leadership team, Ed guided his membership through Fredricks and Janus, and the local has maintained an amazing 97% membership rate.

In 2019, Ed agreed to become AFT-CT's Divisional VP for State Employees. Even before assuming this role, Ed has been a force in negotiations and interactions with the State, fiercely advocating for state workers' rights. At the same time, he joined AFT's Public Employee Program and Policy Committee and public employee leaders from around the country look to him as an authority on the issues faced by public sector workers in the 21st Century.

Ed has brought his passion, intelligence, integrity, selflessness, and his commitment to AFT-CT and the SVFT for over 35 years. Even though Ed has retired from the State and SVFT, on Monday he is beginning a new chapter as an organizer for AFT-CT. Ed, you've been a friend and mentor to so many of us in the room today. Our union is stronger because of you and our state is a better place for workers because of you. You deserve this, no one has ever deserved it more.

Joseph H. Soifer Award

Chris DeFrancesco—University Health Professionals #3837

Chris has been an AFT member since 2007. Once he was recruited by leadership, he steadily got more and more involved. Through the years, he became a Union Rep, a Steward, a member of the negotiating teams and a delegate to all the conventions that were available. This was all done while he was on the Board of the Children's Theater Group in Newington, where he is also a performer with his daughter. He also plays competitive deck hockey in an adult league. To say he is busy is an understatement, but he always volunteers to do what is needed in the UHP office.

This past year he has done all of that and more. He added becoming more politically active on behalf of his local. He cultivated a personal relationship with his State Rep Gary Turco, who is now on speed dial and calls this member for input on issues regarding the Health Center. He has testified personally on bills and helped recruit and manage 17 other members to testify on the Omnibus Bill. If you are a state employee, he was the architect of ridding the words essential and non-essential from our vocabulary of description of workers.

You define a leader as someone who has followers, and Chris believes in leading by example.

Congrats!

Phyllis H. Kornfeld Golden Achievement Award

Laila Mandour—Administrative & Residual Employees Union Retirees #4200R

Laila has remained an active and enthusiastic leader, organizer, and unionist within AFT at the local, state, and national level throughout her retirement. Not only did Laila represent Connecticut retirees on a national level on the AFT Retiree Committee, but she contributed her voice, experience, and wisdom to the creation of the AFT Retirees PPC and helped to shape AFT's National Retiree Program as it has developed and grown these past few years. Laila is a trained member of the Afterburners, our retiree political outreach team, was a presenter at the 2020 Retiree Conference during our last convention, and has traveled to organizing trainings in Texas to work with and learn from her retired sisters and brothers there.

Over the past year, she has been, and continues to be, a strong ally and activist for social justice as a member of the Retiree Legacy Initiative by participating in and contributing to workshops, events, and hard discussions on racism, allyship, and unionism. Moderating panel discussions on voter suppression and fearlessly facilitating workshops, Laila has been inspirational in her ongoing pursuit of knowledge and understanding as we build this arm of the national retiree program.

Laila has the kind of energy, excitement, and passion for building collective power that organizers dream of in an activist. She has a truly beautiful way of bringing people together while keeping it real! Her eagerness and openness to listen, learn, teach, and fight side by side with and for others is a gift she shares with retired AFT members all over the country. The contributions she has made have been a part of building a sustainable National Retiree Program that AFT Connecticut should be immensely proud of. AFT's National Retiree Program is certainly grateful you share Laila and her integrity, wisdom, and knowledge with us!

President's Award

Sherri Dayton—Backus Federation of Nurses #5149

Sherri has been a member of not one, but two AFT Connecticut Locals, the VNA of Southeastern Connecticut, Local 5119, where she works as a visiting nurse and the Backus Federation of Nurses, Local 5149, where she works as an Emergency Room RN and serves as the Local's President.

Like many nurses, Sherri began her healthcare career as a patient care tech and continued to work in this role as she worked toward her degree in Nursing. After graduating, she moved to Texas and began her nursing career, but returned to Connecticut and Backus and was elected as the President of Local 5149.

Sherri has worked tirelessly to promote worker power by engaging members, working to build a 10:1 structure, and developing a robust executive board. It was this work that led to the Backus Nurses involvement in a 2 year internal organizing campaign that led to a more than one year contract campaign. That contract campaign culminated in a successful 2 day strike with over 95% of nurses walking the picket line. Sherri's leadership to her local at a time when members had understandable fears and her commitment to the principles of organizing and member engagement was a key ingredient to the success of this contract campaign. Not only did the Backus Nurses secure wages and benefits in line with their union sisters and brothers in New London and Windham, but they secured needed contract language, such as the language around staffing committee, which is now used as model language nationally.

Sherri has become a voice for how a union of 400 can make a difference and is asked to speak on national issues such as Workplace Violence and how to build worker power.

Sherri would be the first to say that she did not do this alone, and she is correct, but a leader is defined as a person who has followers. Sherri has that. More importantly, a great leader is defined as a person who has followers and leads those followers along a path that improves conditions for the greater good. For that reason, Sherri Dayton is receiving this year's President's Award.

***Congratulations and best wishes
to our awards recipients!***

