

The Long Island Teachers Benevolent Fund

The Benevolent fund was created more than thirty years ago when NYSUT locals across Long Island saw a need for organized assistance to members of locals who found themselves in financial need as a result of situations such as those faced by Levittown (a 34 day strike in 1978) and several others in the turbulent late '70's. In February of 1980, after more than 16 months of discussion and debate, 35 charter member locals became fully participating members of the new fund. These locals pledged \$5 per member per year to a general fund to provide support for colleagues in need, and pledged continuing support up to \$5 per member per week to support fund participants who might find themselves in a situation without salary. That commitment continues today.

The Fund, that is open to all Long Island NYSUT Locals, has grown to include 94 member locals. While the membership of the fund is almost exclusively teacher locals, the fund does include the St. Catherine's Federation of Nursing and Health Professionals and Brookhaven Memorial Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals and one higher ed. local.

The assets of the Fund today exceed 3.5 million dollars. Approximately one-third of the assets are held in a general fund that is administered by the trustees, while the rest of the moneys are held in trust by the member locals in a local LITBF account.

Until 2002-2003 each member local had been required to deposit \$5 per member into the locally administered LITBF account. While that requirement has been waived on a year to year basis, member locals are still required to forward the annual interest along with a bank statement from their local LITBF account to the general fund. In addition, member locals may be called on to help replenish moneys used by the fund to assist a participating local who is temporarily suffering financial need.

Benefits

The fund has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships, emergency, military, burial and other grants since its inception. Applications for grants are made by local Presidents to the trustees who have developed criteria for granting assistance in each of the grant categories. The number of scholarships, emergency, military and burial grants the Fund provides each year is limited to 85% of the interest income during the calendar year.

Administration

The fund is administered by Ron Smith, fund coordinator, and seven trustees who are elected by the fund council (the presidents of the member locals and Long Island NYSUT Directors). The trustees, one from each of the Nassau and Suffolk NYSUT Election Districts currently include: Stuart Napear (ED18), Randee Colter (ED17), Kathy Brand (ED21), Antoinette Blanck (ED23), Paul Pecorale (ED22), Bruce Sander (ED20), Eleanor Russell (ED19).

The governing body of the Fund is the "fund council" that meets at least twice a year. It is this group that makes basic policy determinations for the fund by having the power to amend the Fund Constitution. Over the years the fund council has amended the constitution to increase the number of trustees, change benefit limits and qualification periods for benefit eligibility.

The Fund also has a Scholarship Committee that meets at least annually which assists in determining the distribution of scholarships. The number, amount and final determination of scholarships must be approved by the fund council.

The LITBF office is located in the offices of the Sayville and Bayport-Blue Point Teachers Associations at 100 South Main Street, Suite 205, Sayville, New York 11782. The LITBF phone/fax is (631) 563-8853. Laura Grossé is the secretary for the fund.