

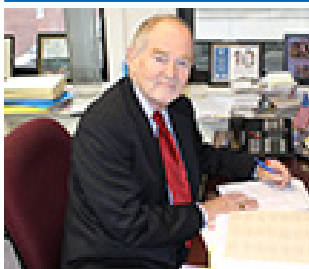


The Advocate

June/July 2017

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THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Thomas J. Gosnell
President, AFT Massachusetts

Significant Issues Ahead: Summer is a time to stay engaged

As we prepare for summer, many important issues linger. Among them are the following:

TRUMP'S BUDGET CUTS

The budget proposal by President Trump and Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos is staggering and will seriously hurt public education and the state of Massachusetts. In addition, they wish to increase funding for charter schools and to spread across the nation school vouchers for private schools.

For example, funding for after school programs, for health services for students, and for class size reduction would be substantially curtailed.

Our national organization, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), is working strenuously to persuade the Congress that such cuts will be disastrous for our students, public education, and the states.

Fortunately, the U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators from Massachusetts completely understand how disastrous these proposals are for Massachusetts.

MEMBERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

In the 1970's, the U.S. Supreme

Court ruled unanimously that charging non-members an agency fee for services they received from their union was constitutionally sound.

However, several years ago a federal court case challenging this decision came forward. It appeared that the U.S. Supreme Court was poised to overturn the decision by a 5-4 vote. However, when Justice Scalia died, the court on a 4-4 vote did not overturn the decision.

union membership. We must involve our members on a more extensive scale than we now do. During the upcoming school year, the American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA) will put great emphasis on these two items:

AFT MA will have a leadership conference on Saturday, October 28 at which we shall have training to reach these goals.

**For the LATEST news
from AFT MA and AFT
and other EXCLUSIVE content,
visit our NEW website
www.aftma.net**

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REGARDING THE "FAIR SHARE" TAX

AFT MA is supporting a constitutional amendment to the Massachusetts constitution that will increase the income tax of those whose income, not net worth, is over \$1,000,000.

The amendment would increase by 4% the taxes on any income, not net worth, over \$1,000,000. Thus, if an individual's income is \$1,500,000., he would pay an additional \$20,000. In taxes. This tax would raise between 1.5 billion and 2 billion dollars. The increased revenue would be targeted for public education, pre-k through higher education, and public transportation, roads and bridges.

As of the date of this article, June 7, 2017, one more vote is needed in the legislature to put the constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2018.

All of us showed our might to defeat Question 2 in 2016. We can do the same to pass this public education constitutional amendment in 2018.

I wish you all a fun filled summer.

If you have any comments or questions, email me at tgosnell@aftma.net.



A PEERLESS PARA
AFT MA President Tom Gosnell fetes retiring Paraprofessional Council President Josefina Lascano at the 2017 AFT MA-BTU Paraprofessional Conference (Please see story on page 3)

though unions will strenuously argue that the current decision of the Supreme Court has worked well, most unions expect that the Court will abolish agency fee. We must educate our members about the benefits of

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WE CAN DO IT!
AFT MA Director of Organization Brian LaPierre gives a "thumbs up" at the Rally for Public Education (Please see story on page 12)

The Fruits of His Labors

AFT MA President Gosnell honored by MA AFL-CIO

In recognition of the impact of the Question 2 victory and their other inspiring efforts, MA AFL-CIO presented AFT MA President Tom Gosnell with its Merit Awards at the 2017 MA AFL-CIO Gompers-Murray-Meany Educational Conference.

With Memorial Day weekend looming, some 300 dedicated union members gathered in Falmouth, MA, not for an early vacation, but to engage important issues and to build community through solidarity. Amidst inspiring presentations by former Communications Workers of America (CWA) President and current Board Chair of Our Revolution Larry Cohen and representatives from Harvard Dining Services and Faulkner Hospital about issues ranging from immigration to effective right to work actions, participants gathered in focused discussions about the issues that affect all laborers and certain sectors in particular.

At a meeting of municipal workers that was attended mostly by members of AFT MA and MTA, MTA Training and Professional Learning Specialist Courtney Derwinski posed the question of how union members can best prepare for the possible and potential challenges to come, including the loss of agency

fee and further pressures to break up unions in MA and nationwide. When Derwinski asked participants how they think members see the union, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell observed that most of the largest meetings locals hold deal with contracts and suggested

each other.

"[The union] has to be in your heart," Georges maintained, suggesting that the labor movement has to be the most important element of union life.

As noted by members of MTA, engaging members in all aspects of union

"We got more people engaged than ever before," noted AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty, posing Question 2 as a "transformative" element of building the labor movement, "and a lot of people saw what can be accomplished." "The tradition of this

dinner has always been special because it's about recognizing people who give their heart and soul night and day," said MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman. "So many of us give and continue giving in order to make our labor movement second to none and to stand up against injustice."

While introducing Gosnell, Tolman reminded everyone that, "thanks to all of our teachers...MA is number one in education," and recalled how, "without any egos...AFT MA and MTA got together,

worked together, and inspired other leaders to work for their campaign." In praising the way other unions supported the teachers, Tolman likened the Question 2 victory to how the teachers got behind and stood with the building trades to garner the prevailing wage victory in 1988 when the shoe was firmly on the other foot and the unions again marched to victory together.

"This was about breaking our unions," Tolman maintained. "And we all stood tall and vowed to work together. And I knew we would win!"

In his introductory remarks for Gosnell, Doherty said, "I can think of no other person who is so dedicated to his members and to the labor movement."

Gosnell's award cited him for mobilizing tens of thousands of stakeholders to defeat Question 2 and for bravely leading AFT MA to an overwhelming victory and for dedicating his career to champion public schools and public educators and for his decades of unwavering solidarity

"I think I have a promising future in this organization," Gosnell smiled, individually thanking the many AFT MA locals in attendance and all of his colleagues for their hard work and support. "This is a tribute to them...and I am so glad to be working with these men and women!" ■



UNITED IN PRAISE

AFT MA President Tom Gosnell (center) with colleagues from both AFT MA and MTA (including MTA President Barbara Madeloni, who was also recognized) at the MA AFL-CIO Gompers-Murray-Meany Educational Conference.

that many members may see the union primarily as a protector of rights. MTA President Barbara Madeloni (who was also honored with a Merit Award, as were International Union of Operating Engineers General VP Louis Rasetta and Foundation for Fair Contracting of MA Executive Director Karen Courtney) noted that it may be "difficult to know how members feel" and other union administrators admitted that their perspectives may differ from those of the members they serve. One AFT MA member went so far as to observe that many new members are unsure of the role of the union and what membership may mean. As an antidote to such lack of understanding, United Teachers of Lowell President Paul Georges noted how he personally engages new members before they begin work and that he and his colleagues try to explain each element of union involvement so that all members can understand what the union aims to do and what they can do to support it and

life (including such challenges elements as grievances) not only helps to actively engage and explain to them what the union does and can do, it also makes for more impressive displays of union strength and solidarity that can benefit all members.

Citing the so-called "blue jean rebellion" that Springfield paraprofessionals carried out in response to an unpopular imposed dress code that was technically not covered in their contract yet which, with help from AFT MA, they were able to overturn, AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk suggested that, "AFT MA does the representative role particularly well...and has for decades." Even so, it became clear from the discussion that more will be necessary and that, despite the great success we recently enjoyed regarding Question 2, there would be more challenges ahead.

Speaking of Question 2, however, the participants were able to find some silver linings and important lessons.

The Advocate

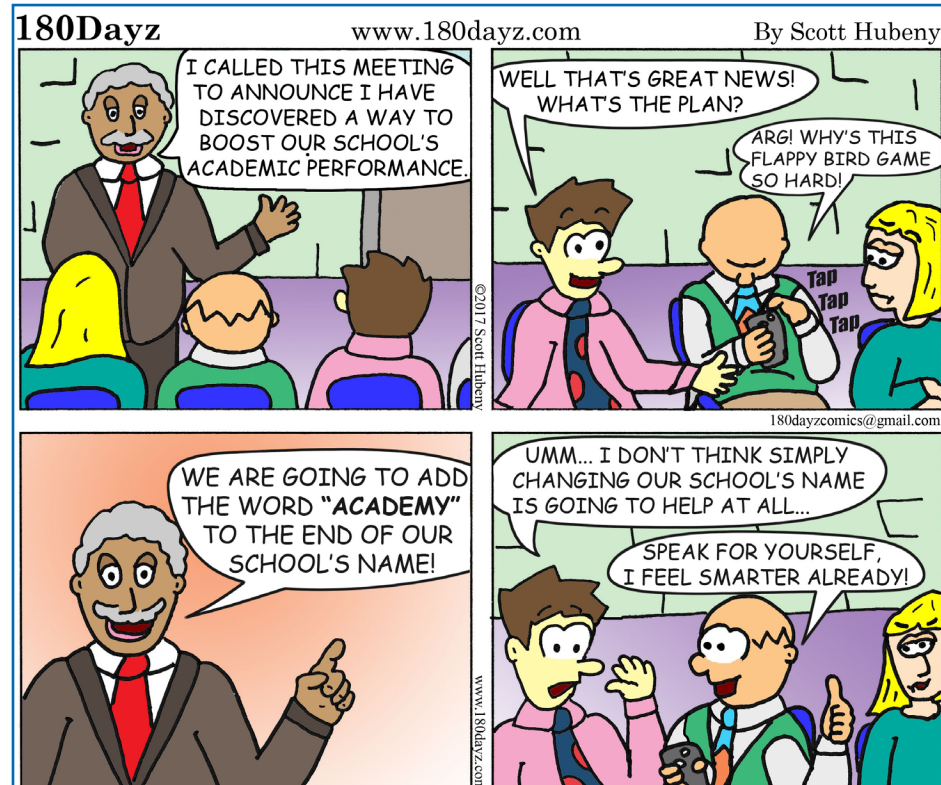
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**The Special Senate
Subcommittee on Education
will host a
"Turnaround School"
discussion
6/13 @ 3:30 PM
at the State House
Contact Vicki Halal
at 617.722.1578 /
victoria.halal@masenate.gov**

United for the Students

2017 Paraprofessional Conference the largest ever

On April 8, the largest group of AFT MA paraprofessionals gathered at the BTU Hall in Boston for the 31st annual AFT MA/BTU Paraprofessional Statewide Conference.

In addition to hundreds of paraprofessionals from Chelsea, Pittsfield, Springfield, Lynn, Billerica, the North Shore Consortium, Danvers, and of course Boston, who again proved their dedication by spending a Saturday discussing important issues, the conference was also attended by AFT MA, BTU, and other leaders, including many who were campaigning for various administrative positions.

In her opening remarks, retiring Paraprofessional Council President (and event organizer) Josefina Lascano welcomed her colleagues and thanked them for their participation.

"The good news is that we are here," she observed, noting that the event was being attended and contributed to by "the largest group that we have ever had" and thanking AFT MA for bringing everyone together.

After offering special recognition for her fellow Council members (especially Patty O'Donnell, who has served as Lascano's right hand for many years), Lascano recalled Superintendent Tommy Chang's recent praise of her colleagues and his promise to work with the paras in Boston and beyond.

"This year I called him and asked him to do workshops," Lascano explained, noting that his "right hand" Deputy Superintendent Karla Estrada would be offering one of the three main workshops during the conference, alongside Assistant Superintendent for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Wellness Amalio Nieves (see February/March 2016 issue) and BPS Senior Equity Manager Steven Chen.

In thanking Josefina and her colleagues, BTU Vice President Patrick Connolly maintained that "the job you do is important to the entire Commonwealth of MA" and assured the assembled support staff that their issues "are important to us," noting how many paraprofessional-related issues are "at the forefront of negotiations."

Though he refused to share his famed "Red Sox joke," AFT MA President Tom Gosnell was eager to praise the paraprofessionals who serve our students every day (and even on weekends).

"You paras have an awful lot to do with the achievements of our students," Gosnell said, "and I appreciate that!"

Recalling past struggles to unionize paraprofessionals, both locally and nationally, Gosnell concluded that "it has succeeded and it was worked out wonderfully."

After mentioning such pressing challenges as changes in health care costs (see April/May 2017 issue) and the proposed removal of Title II funds that are used to support reducing class size, Gosnell ended on an encouraging note, citing the fact that our unions have made us stronger.

"We are the most unionized state in the nation," Gosnell observed, noting that MA students top the nation and

the world in many standardized tests. "So much for the view that unionization interferes with quality education!"

As Estrada is a former paraprofessional herself, she understands the challenges inherent in the role and also how much paras need to rely on each other, as well as on the students they teach. With this in mind, she offered a supportive seminar on using culture and language to enhance relationships and achievement.

"Identity creates strength and power in our young people," she observed. "It makes a difference in how our young people are willing to push themselves



ATTITUDE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Chelsea paraprofessionals at the 2017 Paraprofessional Conference

to learn." Estrada also observed how indemnity cannot be given or awarded, but must be developed internally.

"Identity builds skills we want students to have in order to be learners," Estrada suggested. "It is a critical element to academic success."

With this in mind, Estrada encouraged the paraprofessionals in the room to introduce themselves according to the identifiers they had each developed and to consider how these might differ from those imposed upon them by others. She also challenged them to devise ways to make the classroom of today look less like that of Boston's historic past and more like the world of tomorrow.

"Boston had first public school in the nation," Estrada pointed out. "Students still sit in rows and look at the board. We are now challenging ourselves to create the environment and conditions for innovation to happen."

Estrada then defined what she sees as "the four C's" of 21st century skills: Collaboration, Communication, Creativity, and Critical thinking.

"In our classrooms are the people who are going to solve the biggest problems in the world," she concluded, "but if we do not push the conditions for that to happen, it won't."

In his session, Nieves (who is the son and brother of paraprofessionals) and SEL Director Carla Burley also expressed their respect and empathy for their colleagues.

"I have tremendous respect for the work that you do to support our students and our teachers," Nieves said, "and I feel honored to be among you because I know the challenges and the joys of being a para."

Admitting that SEL can seem "broad" and even intimidating, Nieves assured the assembled that it is "something we have been doing... on a daily basis." He also suggested that SEL work "is not just about our kids.

It is also about ourselves."

After asking the group to reflect on the skills that make them successful in any work-related situation, Nieves picked up on Estrada's "four C's" and suggested that they are "replacing the three R's" which for so long have been the standard upon which education was based.

In order to support their support for SEL, Burley cited recent studies that suggested SEL skills encourage behavioral and academic gains and decrease conduct problems and distress and Nieves noted the \$11 return on investment for each \$1 spent on encouraging

SEL-related skills and practices.

"SEL [is the] process through which individuals acquire and apply skills to manage emotions, make responsible decisions, maintain relationships, and achieve goals," Burley defined.

"These are power skills," Nieves added, "not soft skills."

In addition to the "three C's," Nieves offered the idea of the SEL stool, the three legs of which are explicit Instruction, integration, and culture and climate. Burley echoed Estrada in observing that SEL is "conveyed through language" and suggested explicitly asking students about their strengths and assets and "encouraging them to seek support when needed."

The paraprofessionals were then asked to assess themselves in terms of their SEL skills and then to participate in a gallery walk during which they read and discussed the contributions of others, stopping to physically stand by the ideas that most resonated with each of them. With their own SEL skills recognized, the paras felt better prepared to encourage others to develop them as well.

With an solidified sense of self and both personal and professional identity, the paras met with Chen to discuss how to avoid making others feel inferior through bias. After mentioning local and Federal standards regarding bias, Chen worked with the paras to flesh out the definition and to ease understanding of this often complicated issue.

"We all have biases," he admitted, noting how some may be subconscious, "even if we cannot always reveal or act on them."

And while some biases may not be as relevant (Chen offered his own preference for his hometown team, the Portland Trailblazers), "others affect people in a negative way."

In an effort to simplify the bias code, Chen listed the 15 "protected

classes" regarding which pejorative speech or action can be considered as bias, especially in school settings. These include gender identity, age (for people over 40), religion (which is considered as a "sincerely-held belief"), ancestry, race, color, ancestry, sexual orientation, active military, homelessness, disability, genetics (e.g., medical predispositions), criminal record, and retaliation.

"If you judge me because of what I wear, that stinks," Chen offered, "but it does not affect my civil rights."

Chen then went on to discuss the equity-related publications that BPS (and many other districts) offer and noted how both students and staff have the right to report incidents of discrimination and harassment.

"Nobody is exempt if they are participating in [discriminatory] behavior," he maintained.

After noting how difficult it can be of individuals to admit biases, Chen observed how difficult it can also be for people to identify with a group or class that may be subjected to it.

"It is not easy for a student to come out to us," he noted, specifically discussing issues related to gender identity and sexual preference. "Students are not doing this just for kicks."

As many school (and other) buildings predate such anti-bias legislation as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Chen noted that, if accommodations are requested, they must be seriously considered and every possible change must be made.

"You can ask for anything and legally we have to look into it to determine if it is reasonable," he assured. "For example, I may not be able to build you an elevator, but all of your assignments will be arranged to be on the first floor."

Another contemporary issue that has unfortunately become more prevalent in recent years is online bias.

"You and your students both need to be really careful online," Chen advised. And while he assured the paraprofessionals that they did not have to actively monitor their students, he noted that, "if a situation that started outside of school... comes into school, it is our business."

As such, Chen concluded, "it is important to know your rights and it is also important for students to know their rights."

Armed with their new knowledge on identity, social and emotional development, and the protections afforded them as educators and citizens, the paraprofessionals ended the day with a session of Laugh Yoga, during which they actively laughed at their troubles and found more reasons to bring joy into their lives and into the lives of their students. After feting Lascano with flowers and cake, the paraprofessionals went back to their districts, better prepared than ever to help prepare our students for success. ■

Check out
www.aftma.net

Supporting Those Who Support Us All

AFT MA Convention urges participation and engagement

As hundreds of delegates from all over MA worked their way through traffic on a warm April day, colleagues caught up at Chopps American Bar and Grill in the lobby of the Marriott Boston Burlington and prepared for the 49th AFT MA Convention.

In addition to Boston Bruin legend Renee Rancourt, many delegates were spotted taking selfies with Betsy DeVos and a large furry colleague she had apparently invited to join her at the Convention.

As members of the Berklee College of Music faculty played jazz, delegates gathered in the ballroom for a delicious dinner. Upon hearing President Tom Gosnell rap the lectern with his Red Sox hammer, the delegates were called to order and welcomed by President Gosnell, who then proceeded to bestow the 2017 Distinguished Service Awards to educators from Chelmsford, Lynn, Medway, Springfield, and The Longy School. In their respective acceptance speeches, the recipients thanked their colleagues and also their field representatives and other colleagues from AFT MA, observing how many dedicated people are necessary to make public education work.

"A true leader is not just one," maintained Chelmsford Federation of teachers President Jen Salmon (see April/May 2017 issue). "The true leaders...are the hard-working people on our executive board and building reps."

"Our local continues forward and very much values the support of all of you behind us," added Jane Hershey, the past president of the Longy Faculty Union who is widely credited with serving the Longy local through 42 bargaining sessions and eventually growing it.

Recalling how she started her career without representation (as she was not a classroom teacher) AFT MA Executive Board member Mary Cawlina-Kasle credited Lynn Teachers Union President (and AFT Secretary-Treasurer) Brant Duncan with helping her develop a unit for therapists and social workers.

"I encourage my colleagues to protect collective bargaining that we have and to support public education," she said.

Similarly, Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals (SFP) Secretary Connie Long recalled a "dark time" before SFP President Cathy Mastronardi came along.

"We have so much more to our community that makes me proud to be a member," Long said before telling a clever "chicken cross the road" joke that filled the gap left by Gosnell's absent Red Sox joke.

"I never imagined that as a teacher I would have to fight as often as I do," observed Medway's Nicole Ball. "We have very little support from anyone besides ourselves. That is why it is important that we continue to build our strength and our unity."

The next morning, as delegates continued to register and reconnect, AFT's Asher Huey offered advice on the effective use of social media while President Gosnell himself welcomed

a group of first-time delegates to the Convention.

"It is important to think about the interactions," Huey advised, noting how social media involves more than just one-way broadcasts of ideas.

When a new delegate expressed appreciation for the sense of camaraderie she had developed during the previous evening's events, Gosnell echoed Huey in citing the social interactions among members as one of the most important parts of union life.

"That is a key element of the convention," Gosnell maintained, explain-



ABOVE AND BEYOND

AFT MA President Tom Gosnell (left) and Secretary-Treasurer Brant Duncan (right) stand with Distinguished Service Award recipients Jane Hershey, Marie Cawlina-Kasle, Nicole Ball, Linda Lindsay, Connie Long, and Jennifer Salmon

ing how, though it may best be known for serving educators, AFT MA also represented higher education staff, paraprofessionals, lunch monitors, bus drivers, 31 public libraries, and even nurses.

In addition to coordinating efforts among AFT MA's "diverse group of members," Gosnell also touted the organization's ability to work well with other unions, including MTA.

"AFT was a real champion of collective bargaining long before the other organization," he noted. "Now we are much closer on that issue."

Before ushering the new delegates to the official opening of the Convention session, Gosnell admitted that, "the challenges before us are unbelievable," but offered his encouragement to (and sense of encouragement from) his colleagues and fellow members, emphasizing the need to be involved and to urge others to participate as well.

In fact, this theme of participation and engagement ran throughout the day's proceedings. After a demonstration by the Lynn English High School ROTC Color Guard, an invocation by Labor Guild Member Fr. Mac Fallon (who observed how the "precious gift" of public education can be "overlooked" and how we must all be grateful for the gifts of learning we have to share), and some rallying songs led by members of Boston Voices of Community and Labor (B VOCAL), Gosnell opened the morning session with a request to adopt the Standing Rules and a drawing by the staff of B&M Insurance for tickets to see his beloved Red Sox.

After a good-natured dig at Gosnell's team, MTA President (and unabashed Yankees fan) Barbara

Madeloni generously addressed the Convention, recalling the early predictions for the Question 2 campaign and how our unions and others were able to emerge not only victorious but with an unprecedented margin of victory that was emblazoned on the tote bags distributed to all delegates.

"People thought we were crazy to think we could win," Madeloni noted, crediting the unified work of AFT MA and MTA and the support of the AFL-CIO with creating a voting block large and broad enough to succeed.

"We built and have extended a larg-

then offered a bit of a history lesson about the days when the building trades were being similarly threatened and how they were able to organize and "turn it around," encouraged in great part by Gosnell and Madeloni's claims that how "attacks on teachers are attacks on middle class" and how all unions need to be involved to protect themselves.

"They could not have done it if they didn't have buy-in from their members," Tolman observed, "and that is every one of you!"

Encouraging all union members to become involved in organizations like the Constituent Activist Network (Labor CAN) and also to run for public office so that they (like he and Doherty) can have a direct role in shaping policy, Tolman closed with one last encouraging recollection.

"We've been through difficult times before," he observed, "and the ingredient to staying strong is staying united."

After they had settled down from Tolman's impassioned speech, the delegates voted to pass a pair of resolutions that called on all AFT MA members to oppose the recent legislation regarding innovation partnership zones that had been introduced by Sen. Eric Lesser and Rep. Alice Peisch and also to reject the promotion of school vouchers, which take public funds to support private schools.

"The terminology is a farce," Gosnell maintained, arguing that the so-called "partnerships" are really just more ways to give DESE Commissioner Mitchell Chester more authority in more districts, including many that are overseen by AFT MA. And while many have expressed surprise and concern that Sen. Lesser was involved in the filing of the proposal, Gosnell noted appreciatively that many other legislators have taken their names off the bill after being advised as to its possible consequences.

In his presentation on member involvement, Field Representative Jeremy Sherk encouraged members to participate more actively in union affairs and to call on those who were not present at the Convention to do the same.

"We have to get our members involved," echoed Gosnell after Sherk and Fairbanks' presentation. "It is

er coalition that is not only about students," she observed, "it about unions and community organizations.... We discovered that people deeply value public education...and in understanding that, we have built a coalition for the road ahead...[that is] a model for the rest of the country."

In victory, however, often come the roots of future defeat.

"We scared them," Madeloni suggested, "and they are going to push back harder than ever...[but] we are not going away. We are here in solidarity!"

In thanking Madeloni, Gosnell also cited the "wonderful alliance" the leadership and members of the two organizations have forged since she was elected.

During introductions of AFT MA Executive Board and staff, Gosnell also offered special thanks to Ed Doherty, the first educator to serve on the Board of Education in 20 years.

"Given the problems we have with the department," Gosnell said, "it is wonderful to have him there!"

During his speech, MA AFL-CIO President Steve Tolman recalled his own public school education, citing it as a source for his understanding of and respect for public education. He also recalled how Gosnell and Madeloni "didn't back down" when threatened with overwhelming odds and predicted defeat "because they knew what they had."

Observed the "younger crowd" in the room, Tolman



TAKE THAT, BETSY

Lawrence teacher Santana Turowski gives Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos a "hug"

absolutely critical!”

AFT Northeast Regional Representative Rob Fairbanks then offered AFT’s view on what he called a “national, coordinated attack” that includes so-called “right-to-work” proposals.

“Active union engagement is the key that determines whether members keep or drop their rights when approached with these proposals,” Fairbanks maintained, maintaining the pro-participation push. “We need to show our members that they are our union.... We want to heighten excitement and create urgency...and mobilize members around our issues. Anything that builds engagement and participation...is what we want to do.”

Observing our recent success regarding Question 2, Shenk then suggested that teachers are “super popular” and are they key to any engagement moving forward.

“We do not bargain contracts in a vacuum,” he observed. “We bargain them in a apolitical context that we can influence.”

Shenk then offered a trio of organizing strategies that included increasing member participation, member engagement in legislative and political priorities, and engaging larger communities.

“You need to do that work,” he encouraged his fellow members, “[because] it is you they respond to!”

Though he urged all AFT MA members to get involved, Shenk also noted how we are clearly not alone and how, through coalitions such as the MA Education Justice Alliance (MEJA), we can garner support from other unions and even non-members.

“We want what others want,” he said. “We just need to educate them about what we want and what we can do to help get it.”

After a brief “sustenance break,” Gosnell banged his mighty Red Sox hammer and introduced AFT MA Director of Organization Brian LaPierre’s presentation regarding opportunities and challenges.

“These are issues that you are well versed in,” Gosnell observed, “and we need you and your members more than ever to rise to the occasion.”

After again congratulating and thanking AFT MA members for the Question 2 victory, LaPierre explained how much that victory cost financially and what that means for the organization going forward.

“The cost to the AFT family (including state and national),” LaPierre explained, “was over \$3.1 million as part of over \$15 million in total expenditure.”

And while we were able to beat an opponent that had spent over \$20 million, the millions we spent will affect other campaigns, including those against such current opponents as MA Education Secretary Jim Peyser and DESE Commissioner Mitchell Chester. LaPierre also offered a view into the future that included so-called “innovation partnership zones,” Chapter 70 funding cuts, and even another Supreme Court case like the Friedrichs case that would make agency fee the

law of the land and potentially decimate union budgets. He also showed Simpsons cartoon of a classroom that actually had students stacked on top of each other and actual photos of Lynn schools that were in desperate need of repair.

“These are the sites our teachers are working in and our children are learning in,” he noted, “and it is not healthy!”

Despite all of these potential problems, however, LaPierre ended on an encouraging note, suggesting that we have been able to emerge victorious because of our “people on the ground.”

“Our hallmark is to continue to be proactive and to be on the offensive to provide first-rate service and to maintain our members’ standard of living,” LaPierre concluded. “I’m excited by the opportunity to continue to work together!”



HANGING OUT WITH THE PARAS
AFT MA Field Representative Walter Armstrong (third from left) sits with a happy group of Pittsfield paraprofessionals

In his financial report, Secretary-Treasurer Brant Duncan thanked everyone who had contributed to the Question 2 campaign, especially the locals in Billerica, Boston, Chelsea, Lowell, Lynn, Peabody, Salem, UMass Dartmouth, and the MLSA, all of whom donated additional funds. Echoing LaPierre’s presentation, Duncan noted how much more had been spent by the other side, and cited such sources as Bill Gates and the Walton family (of Wal-Mart fame) as its major funders. Duncan also noted how names of fundraising organizations can be misleading (e.g., the pro-charter group Great Schools MA). With all this in mind, Duncan concluded by advocating for maintaining the current dues rate (which included the increase that was voted upon at last year’s Convention) and thanked everyone for their involvement and support.

After voting to expand the Executive Board from 28 to 29 seats, delegates voted to officially elect Southeastern Regional member Debbie LaFond to the seat that had been vacated by Joe Poli and also added Salem’s Beth Kontos to the Board.

In his President’s Report, Gosnell again eschewed mentioning his beloved Red Sox but could not miss the opportunity to cite his hero Abraham Lincoln.

“Lincoln captured America forever in 272 words,” Gosnell said, referring to the speech that has come to be known as “The Gettysburg Address.” “I will not be able to replicate that, but will focus on the key issues.”

After specifically welcoming and expressing pride in “everyone in the bargaining unit,” including therapists, librarians, psychologists, public and private higher education teachers, paraprofessionals, librarians, and custodians, Gosnell reminded all members of AFT MA’s main goals.

“We want what is fair to all AFT MA members,” he began. “We want

what is good for students and what is collectively done. That is the mantra of AFT MA.”

After lauding his colleagues for leading their communities to world-leading academic status and setting the “gold standard” for many national tests that, he noted emphatically, are not “high-stakes” tests, Gosnell again congratulated his colleagues for helping to compose “the most unionized state in the Union.” He then went on to congratulate them for staying on message regarding Question 2.

“Our message about taking money away from public schools resonated,” Gosnell observed, thanking Steve Crawford for encouraging the consistency (see April/May 2017 issue). “It was successful because it was true!”

After acknowledging past successes, however, Gosnell also looked forward to potential threats, including cuts to

Title II which would result in larger class sizes and further cuts to funding for the arts.

“As if the arts were some secondary sort of thing for education,” he mused pointedly, quoting AFT President Randi Weingarten’s promotion of music and visual arts as “core elements” of education that are vital for children’s well being and development.

When Gosnell mentioned Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, the room filled with hisses and boos.

“Let me make clear to you what a threat she is,” Gosnell offered, noting how her proposed plans for vouchers “have the power to undercut public education throughout the nation.”

Gosnell also cited the planned raise in fees for GIC-based health care (see April/May 2017 issue), noting that the AFL-CIO has proposed legislation to reverse these increases and to cap costs.

“This will be a battle,” Gosnell assured, “and believe me we will be in there!”

As far as the so-called “innovation” zones, Gosnell mused regarding how ridiculous it will be to have the Commissioner have the power to take over an entire district simply because one school has been cited as “underperforming.”

“He also wants to revoke licensure for the flimsiest of reasons,” Gosnell observed, suggesting the presence of “serious constitutional issues there.”

Looking nationally, Gosnell also notes how many states have begun to cut pensions or have ended them altogether upon the death of the recipient, with no benefits extended to spouses or family members.

“We have to be vigilant and on our guard,” Gosnell urged. “We need to fight for our students and for everything which we believe.”

During the debate regarding dues, many members lauded AFT MA staff and encouraged the fellow members to maintain the raised dues in order to maintain and assure the high level of service to which they have become accustomed. And while it was admitted that the higher dues may place more of a burden on certain members and locals, it was concluded that, especially at this time when so many actual and potential threats and challenges

are in play, we need to maintain the current structure so as to avoid threatening services any further.

“This fight will take resources,” suggested Board Member Margaret “Midge” Farrell.

Admitting that dues increases are “rarely popular,” fellow Board Member Jessica Tang suggested that they are still important because they are not only in support of our union but of public education.

“We need to be able to respond and react and to further our proactive vision of what we are fighting for,” Tang suggested. “This is the time when we have to put the investment in... [because] we know when we put the investment in, we can win!”

“We are fighting for more than ‘pin money,’” observed Board Member Dan Haacker. “We have earned a greater respect for the work we do and our union has helped us earn that.”

“We need to pass this motion for each other,” echoed Board Member Frank McLaughlin. “This is the right thing to do!”

Turning to the other side of the argument, Board Member Bruce Nelson suggested that the delegates consider what will happen if they do not approve the increase.

“Whenever threats arrive,” Nelson noted, “I know I can call Boston and get the help we need.”

Nelson went so far as to compare the dues increase to the money that most members spend on their daily cup of coffee.

“People say they enjoy their coffee,” he mused. “Do they not enjoy being employed?”

Though the decision may not have pleased everyone, most delegates understood the reasoning behind it and were not surprised when the motion to maintain the current dues passed overwhelmingly.

With all political matters taken care of, it was time to reflect on our victories, pledge our support for future battles, and celebrate with a luncheon at which children of members were awarded scholarships and feted for their dedication to education.

“Thank you for another wonderful Convention,” Gosnell concluded. “Solidarity forever!” ■



HONORING THOSE WHO SERVE
Lynn English High School's Jr. ROTC presents the flag

Funding Education

An EXCLUSIVE guest column from Sen. Pat Jehlen

Does your school have enough money? That question, stretched across the Commonwealth, was the focus of an important Supreme Judicial Court decision and legislation in 1993, and it's likely to be the main issue in education that the legislature and the voters will deal with over the next 18 months.



BY THE NUMBERS
Sen. Pat Jehlen

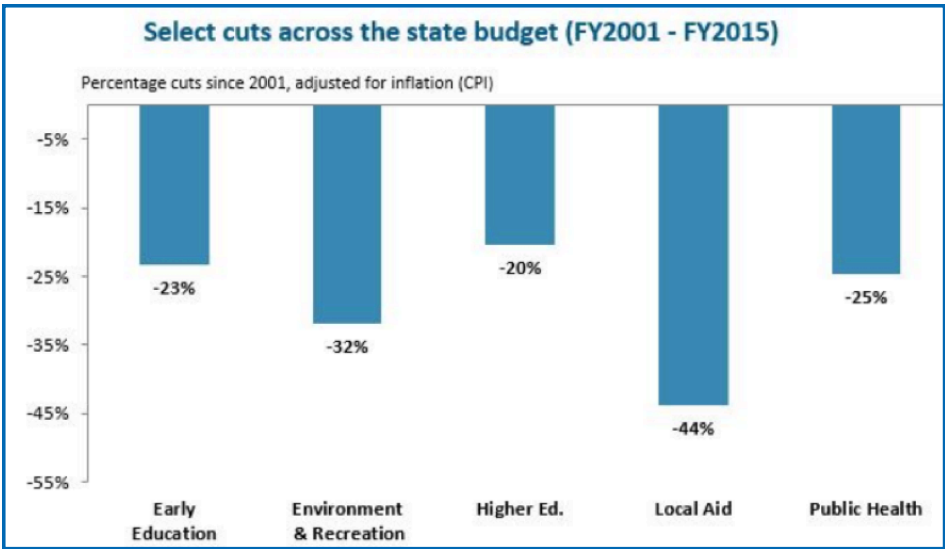
Here's the bottom line: Before 1993, some children went to schools that were well funded while others learned in overcrowded classrooms in poorly-maintained buildings facing shortages of even basics like paper.

education and that the Commonwealth was failing to provide that. In response, the legislature adopted a "foundation budget," a standard for adequacy that included -- for example -- maximum student-teacher ratios, with added weights for low-income students and English language learners.

In 2015, I was on the Foundation Budget Review Commission, which included representatives of many education organizations as well as legislators. We found that state funding for education was shortchanging children

by over a billion dollars, compared to what the foundation assumptions require. More than 20 years after the Supreme Judicial Court said our children have a constitutional right to a good public education, we are again failing to meet our obligations. We started out well. From 1993 to 2000, the state doubled local education aid, increasing it by a billion dollars in a mostly equalizing way. Since then, however, education funding has been cut, and new aid has been given out in ways that don't respond to the need for equal opportunity.

This has different effects in wealthy and poor communities. Communities with high property values can raise enough

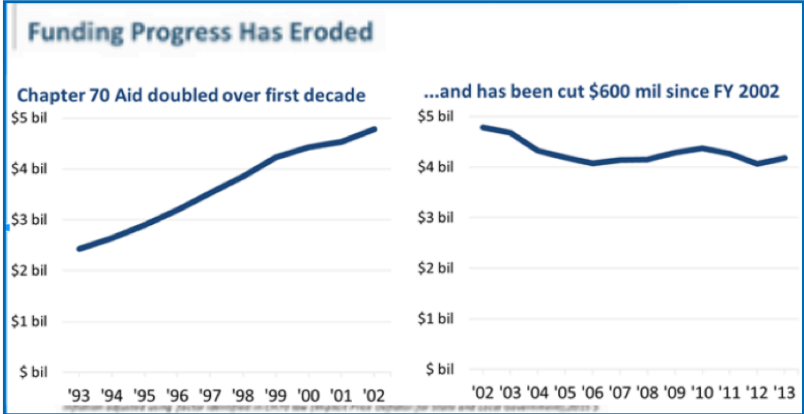


property taxes to offer a good education. Schools educating children with the greatest needs have the least adequate funding. Districts with the highest number of low-income students spend at just the level required by the old, outdated foundation budget. The districts with the fewest low-income students spend far more than required. The average district in the state spends 20% above the old, outdated foundation budget requires, and many have enough property tax capacity to add to the foundation. The fact remains, however, that schools in low-wealth communities can't spend nearly as much

Most people don't realize that we are moving toward being a low-spending state. We were a high tax state in the 70s, but now we're in the middle of the pack, having cut taxes and spending more than 48 other states. Education isn't the only thing that's been cut; almost everything but health care has lost funding.

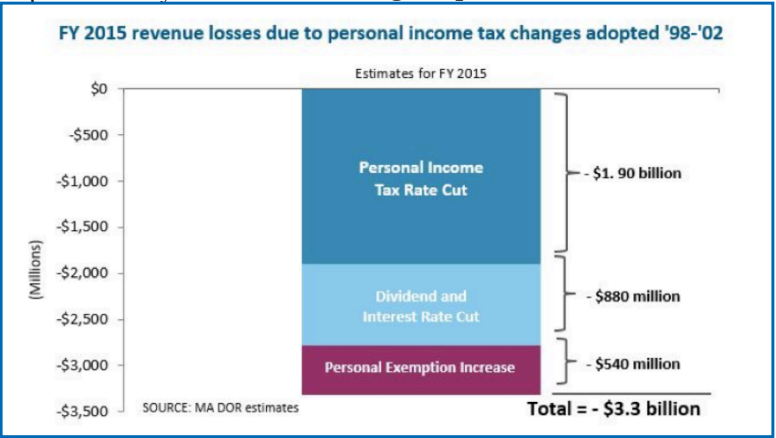
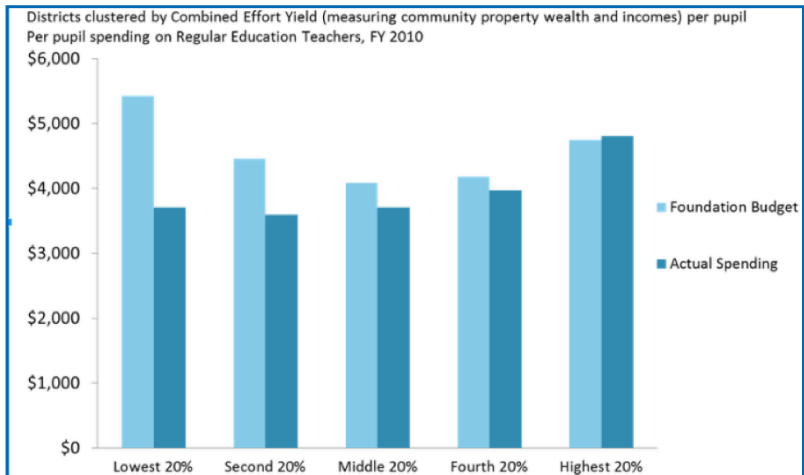
Is this the direction we want our state to continue to go?

We can take a giant step toward restoring fair funding for the education of children in our cities: the "Fair Share Amendment" to the state constitution will be on the ballot in 2018. It would increase revenues nearly \$2 billion by adding a 4 percent tax on income over



It all depended on where they lived. And it's happening again today. In the 1980s, some districts were able to spend only half as much per pupil as wealthier ones, despite having much higher tax rates. I joined with teachers' unions, the League of Women Voters, school committees, and others to organize a court suit for fair school finance. In 1993, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that all children in MA are constitutionally entitled to an adequate

Supreme Judicial Court said our children have a constitutional right to a good public education, we are again failing to meet our obligations. We started out well. From 1993 to 2000, the state doubled local education aid, increasing it by a billion dollars in a mostly equalizing way. Since then, however, education funding has been cut, and new aid has been given out in ways that don't respond to the need for equal opportunity.



Why have we retreated from our promise to fund schools adequately and equitably? Because we prioritized cutting taxes. The income tax has been cut by over \$3 billion a year. Besides the income tax cuts, we've also adopted tax breaks for particular businesses.

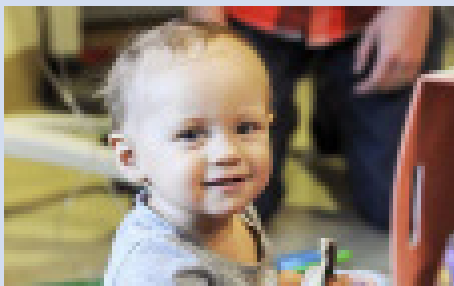
The other problem, of course, is that health care costs are crowding out other priorities. Next year, for example, revenues are projected to increase by about a billion dollars; so will health care costs, leaving no room for inflation, pay raises, program improvements or innovations.

\$1 million per year. It would affect about 14,000 taxpayers – those with the highest incomes in the state. They can afford it, and the money would be used for education and transportation infrastructure. If you ride the T, you know we need that, too!

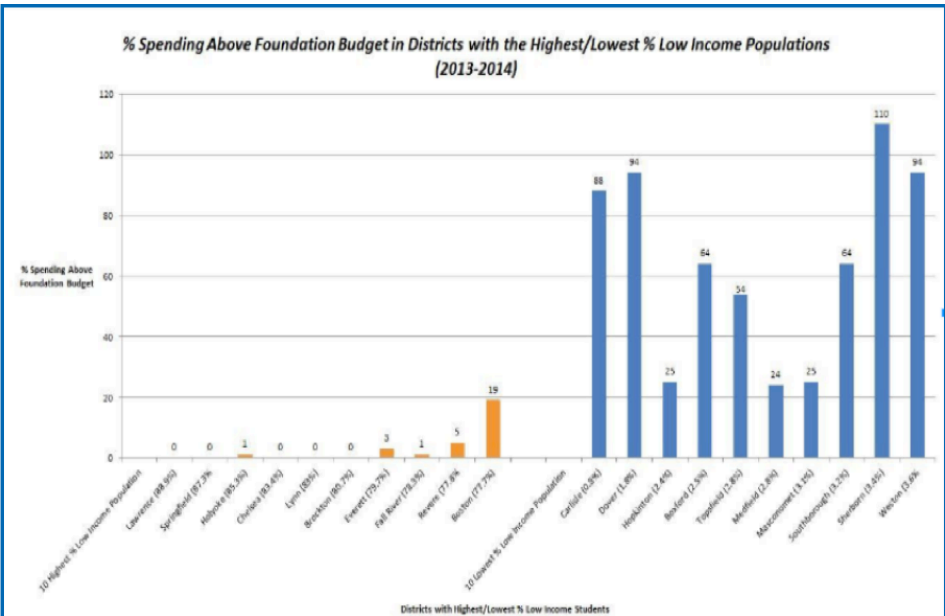
Sen. Jehlen wishes to thank the Mass. Budget and Policy Center (www.massbudget.org) for most of the charts in this article and to recommend the Center as "the indispensable source" for understanding the state budget.

Care for "Callie"

Calliope "Callie" Carney is the one-year-old daughter of Lawrence teacher Kathryn Carney. She was recently diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and needs YOUR help to pay for her medical expenses.



To donate, go to www.gofundme.com and search for "Care4Callie"





2017 Convention Report

The State of the Union

The mission of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is a union that champions fairness, democracy, and high – quality public education, healthcare, and public services for students, their families, and their communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political action, and especially through the work our members do.

The American Federation of Teachers Massachusetts (AFT MA), as one of the AFT's state federations, wholeheartedly supports this mission.

We want what is good for children, fair to our members and collaboratively done.

Since the last convention, our greatest challenge was Question 2 that proposed a huge expansion in the numbers of charter schools. We defeated this initiative petition by a massive margin.

What were the critical factors that contributed to its defeat?

1. The Campaign to Save Our Public Schools, the umbrella organization managing the campaign, had a credible, relevant, and consistent message stating that the passage of Question 2 would siphon much needed money from the district public schools.

2. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and all those working in the district public schools were able to testify to the truth of this message.

3. Those participating in phone banks, home canvassing, and one on one conversations numbered in the tens of thousands.

4. The presence and voices of students, parents, and teachers in the television ads were very persuasive.

5. AFT MA and its locals were willing to spend large amounts of money to spread our message. The

Massachusetts Teachers Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the National Education Association also spent large amounts of money.

The challenge was great. The victory was great. I thank all of our members.

The following list, though not exhaustive, highlights some of the issues in which AFT MA will be involved between now and next year's convention:



Thomas J. Gosnell
President

1. Restoration of collective bargaining rights for level 4 and 5 school and districts

2. Preservation of health insurance benefits and medicare

3. Support of the fair share constitutional amendment to raise 1.5 to 2 billion dollars in revenue for public schools, pre- k through higher education, and public transportation, roads, and bridges

4. Opposition to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos's attempts to divert money from public schools to fund charter schools and vouchers for non – public schools

5. Increased funding for public libraries

6. Support for a moratorium on high stakes testing and an eventual end to it

7. Negotiations of collective bargaining agreements that provide the best possible salaries, benefits, and working conditions for all members

AFT MA, in alliance with like-minded organizations, will fight for the above issues and the continuation of quality public education for our students from pre-kindergarten to higher education and the maintenance of quality public libraries for all residents. All members need to be activists, willing to articulate the values and ideals we believe are necessary for an American society committed to the well being of everyone. ■

The State of the Organization

As many of us look forward to our Annual Convention, we have much to be celebratory, reflective, and cautious about as we move into the Spring and Summer months of 2017. There have been

many changes during my 20 years of being in public education and serving in various capacities as a teacher, local union official, field representative, political organizer, and now Director of Organization for AFT MA. These changes always bring about exciting challenges and opportunities that we are able to

meet together. As you will recall, we began last summer and fall facing an uphill battle against the expansion of charter schools statewide. Our opponents were well funded with dark

money and held an almost 20% lead in most polls. We met and exceeded that challenge by running a grassroots campaign that included thousands and thousands of our members having meaningful conversations with their



Brian LaPierre
Director of Operations

families, neighbors, friends, and communities. We knocked on 150,000 doors, made 120,000 phone calls, hosted countless house parties, held signs and attended rallies to prevail on the No on 2 campaign and by a wide margin.

I want to thank each of our locals who gave their hearts, minds and souls to that effort. It was quite remarkable.

We continued as an organization to meet the needs of our locals by Continued on page 3A

Congratulations!

2017 Distinguished Service Award Recipients

Congratulations to the winners of the 2017 Distinguished Service Awards!

The awards are presented annually to AFT MA members who have demonstrated an outstanding level of service and dedication to their union locals.

Educators in the K-12 System

Linda Lindsey – Medway Federation of Teachers

Jennifer Salmon – Chelmsford Federation of Teachers

Public and Private Higher Education

Jane Hershey - Longy Faculty Union

School-Related Personnel

Marie Cawlina-Kasle – Lynn Teachers Union

Connie Long – Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals

Members 35 or Younger

Nicole Ball – Medway Federation of Teachers

The AFT MA Professional Staff Union Jay E. Porter Memorial Scholarship

The AFT MA Professional Staff Union has established a scholarship to honor the memory of our dear friend and colleague Jay Porter. We're pleased to announce that to date more than \$10,000 has been donated to support the scholarship.

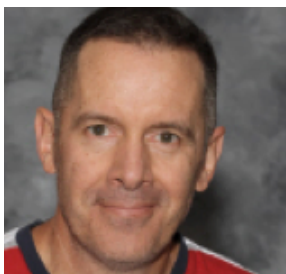
If you or your local would like to make a donation in Jay's memory, please send it to:

AFT MA Professional Staff Union
Scholarship Committee
c/o AFT Massachusetts
38 Chauncy Street,
Boston, MA 02111

THANK YOU!

**Please be sure to visit
our NEW website
www.aftma.net
and encourage colleagues
to send story ideas
to advocate@aftma.net.
Thank you!**

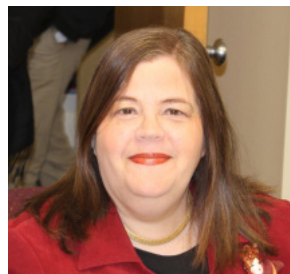
2017 AFT Massachusetts Executive Board Members



Tim Angerhofer, Building Representative, AFT Amesbury, Local 1033 Tim teaches math at Amesbury High School,.



Kimberly Barry Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Klm is a literacy teacher and serves as the recording secretary for the LTU.



Deb Blinder, Holliston Federation of Teachers, Local 3275 Deb is the former Holliston President.



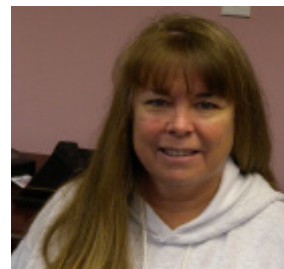
Marie Cawlina-Kasale, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Marie serves as occupational therapist in Lynn and on the executive board of local 1037.



Brenda Chaney, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Brenda is the Community Outreach Liaison for the BTU.



Donald Dabenigno, Chelsea Teachers Union, Local 1340 Don is Chelsea's President.



Kathy Delaney, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Kathy is Treasurer of the LTU.



Marianne Dumont, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Mickey is Education Issues Chair and Corresponding Secretary for UTL.



J. Michael Earle, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495. Michael is Staff Representative and former Vice President of the UTL



Margaret Farrell, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Retired after 47 years of teaching, Midge is now Chairperson of the Retired Teachers Group in Lowell.



Paul Georges, United Teachers of Lowell, Local 495 Paul is President of the UTL and a vice president of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO.



Daniel Haacker, Massachusetts Library Staff Association, Local 4928 Dan is Assistant Director of Milton Public Library and VP of the MLSA.



Debbie Lafond, Southeastern Regional Teachers' Federation, Local 1849 Debbie teaches English at SE Regional Vocational-Technical HS.



Susan Leahy, Billerica Federation of Teachers, Local 1677 Sue is a retired Billerica teacher who serves on the AFT MA COPE Committee.



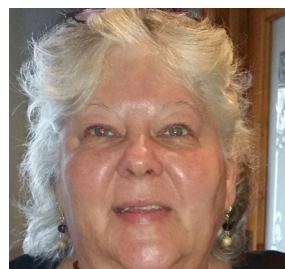
Johnny McInnis, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Johnny teaches music at the BTU K-8 Pilot School



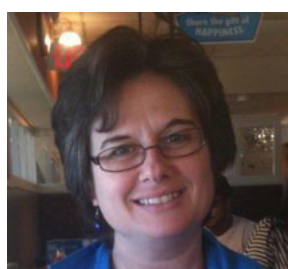
Frank McLaughlin, Lawrence Teachers Union, Local 1019 Frank is President of the LTU.



Michael J. Maguire Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Michael is a Latin teacher and Co-editor of the BTU newspaper.



Catherine Mastronardi Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals, Local 4098 Cathy is President of Local 4098.



Christine Ann Moyer Medway Federation of Teachers, Local 3645 Christine is a local union rep and teaches elementary art.



Bruce Nelson, Peabody Federation of Teachers, Local 1289 Bruce is a retired teacher who has served as president of the Federation since 2005.



Sheila O'Neil, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Sheila is Recording Secretary for LTU and has taught elementary school in Lynn for over 20 years.



Bruce Sparfven, UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895 Bruce is retired from UMass Dartmouth and continues as a union member of the Local 1895.



Jonathan Staveley, Chelmsford Federation of Teachers, Local 3569 Jonathan is a teacher and building rep who served as executive VP for Local 3569.



Richard Stutman, Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Richard is President of the BTU.



Jessica Tang Boston Teachers Union, Local 66 Jessica is Organizing Director of the BTU and taught middle school social studies.



Gale Thomas, Lynn Teachers Union, Local 1037 Gale is a retired teacher and long-time activist in Lynn.



2017 AFT Massachusetts Staff



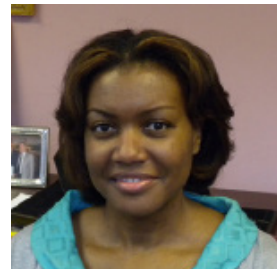
Walter Armstrong, Field Representative
Walter attended the UMass Labor Center and was the president of the Bellingham Municipal Employees, part of AFSCME Council 93.



Eric Blanchet, Field Representative
Eric graduated from the UMass Labor Center and worked for SEIU before joining the AFT MA team.



Michael F. Canavan, Field Representative for Legislation
Mike has been with AFT MA for more than 25 years and has serviced locals across the state.



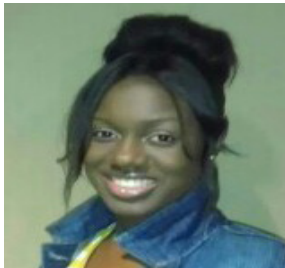
Jennifer L. Daniel, Office Manager
Jennifer graduated from Bristol Community College and has been with AFT Massachusetts since 1994.



Edward Doherty, Special Assistant to the President
Ed served as president of the Boston Teachers Union before joining the staff of AFT Massachusetts.



Shawn Flood, Field Representative
Shawn is a former field representative with AFT Northern New England Council. He also organized for New Mexico Federation of Teachers.



Monique Jackson, Secretary
Monique attended Oakwood University in Huntsville, AL, and has been with AFT MA since December, 2014.



Harold Jones, Associate Council
Harold also works with organizations such as Massachusetts Interfaith Worker Justice.



Caryn Laflamme, Field Representative
Before coming to AFT, Caryn was with AFSCME Council 93 for over nine years both as a field representative and an organizer.



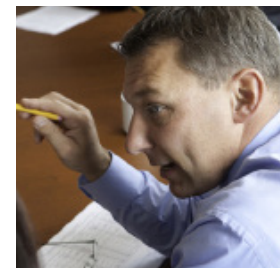
Joseph R. Lettiere, Associate Counsel
Joe formerly served as associate counsel for Council 93 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.



Haidee Morris, General Counsel
Haidee was formerly General Counsel to the State Secretary of Labor and Commissioner at the Labor Relations Department.



Daniel Murphy, Director of Education Policy
A former researcher, writer, and analyst, Dan comes to AFT MA from AFT's national headquarters.



Andrew Powell, Field Representative
Andy formerly worked as a health insurance consultant with Boston Benefits Partners, advising public sector unions.



Michael Regan, Field Representative
A former history teacher, football coach and local co-president, Mike joined AFT MA in September of 2011.



Matt Robinson, Editor
Matt is an English, journalism, and boxing teacher who has edited and contributed to publications around the world.

The State of the Organization

Continued from page 1A
providing second to none services in bargaining, trainings, legal casework and assistance to our local leaders. I want to thank all of the field staff, along with the legal department and clerical staff at AFT MA for going the extra mile each and every day to serve you.

There are plenty of new and exciting things we want to share with you as we continue to build upon the success of the No on 2 campaign. We will be launching a membership engagement plan in many of our locals that will aim toward increasing the amount of activists and capacity to win on campaigns for both our profession and our community. AFT MA will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as we stay involved in electoral politics at the local and state level. We will also be a key ally in the Raise Up Massachusetts coalition, looking to bring more than \$1.8 billion dollars to our public schools and transportation system. We need to collectively invest in our schools and the students we serve.

Another major focus in 2017 will be

the expansion of our Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance (MEJA) efforts to build regional chapters throughout the state. Currently, we have tables up and running in Boston, the Northshore, Springfield, Lowell Education Justice Alliance, Greater Lawrence Education Justice Alliance and more are in the works in communities in the Southeast region and the Berkshires as well. These regional coalitions work to put public education at the forefront of any decision making in a given community. We are working to increase state and local funding for our schools, deemphasize the need for high stakes testing, requiring new charter schools to have local approval before they can operate and many other important issues. Please let me know if your local is interested in joining or starting your own MEJA coalition.

In my work, I am probably the most excited and encouraged by the work I see out in our locals, whether it be taking on the status quo at the work site, advocating at the bargaining table for better working and learning conditions, a contract campaign to secure better wages, or fighting to maintain

adequate and decent health insurance plans to preserve our member's healthcare and pocketbooks. At AFT MA, our team works hard to serve you, whether it is up at the Statehouse in Boston or at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in Malden, we strive to make sure our locals have the very best tools, resources and information to enable your local to succeed. We look forward to working with you over the next year to build upon past successes and prepare for future challenges. I hope you enjoy this year's convention from the Distinguished Service Awards dinner

to our new Social Media workshop and presentations. Finally, if we have not met, please locate me and introduce yourself to me. It would be great to meet and talk to you about what we at the State Federation level are doing and how we might improve upon the work that we collectively do together. Happy Convention! ■

Brian LaPierre can be reached at the office at 617 423-3342, by text/cell phone 617 974-1243, or by email at blapierre@aftma.net.



Jeremy Shenk, Field Representative
Prior to joining AFT MA, Jeremy served the United Steel Workers (PA), SEIU 615, and Community Labor United in Boston.



J. Coley Walsh, Field Representative for Legislation
Coley is a former guidance counselor at the Lawrence Regional School where he served as President of Local 1707.

Secretary Treasurer's REPORT



Brant Duncan
Secretary
Treasurer, AFT
Massachusetts

The AFT Massachusetts family has a proud history of utilizing collective bargaining as a tool to advance the interests and communities of our members and the power of our union to fight for economic and educational justice. It was the appreciation for and the promise of our collective work that prompted me to seek out the position of Secretary-Treasurer and it has been a pleasure to serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of AFT Massachusetts for the last 12 months.

Mark Allred, Secretary-Treasurer emeritus, was an exemplary leader and financial planner. Mr. Allred met the fiduciary responsibility of his position and ensured that the interests of AFT Massachusetts members and staff were at the forefront of all decisions. Thank you Mark for your friendship, service, and unwavering commitment to the financial stability of our federation.

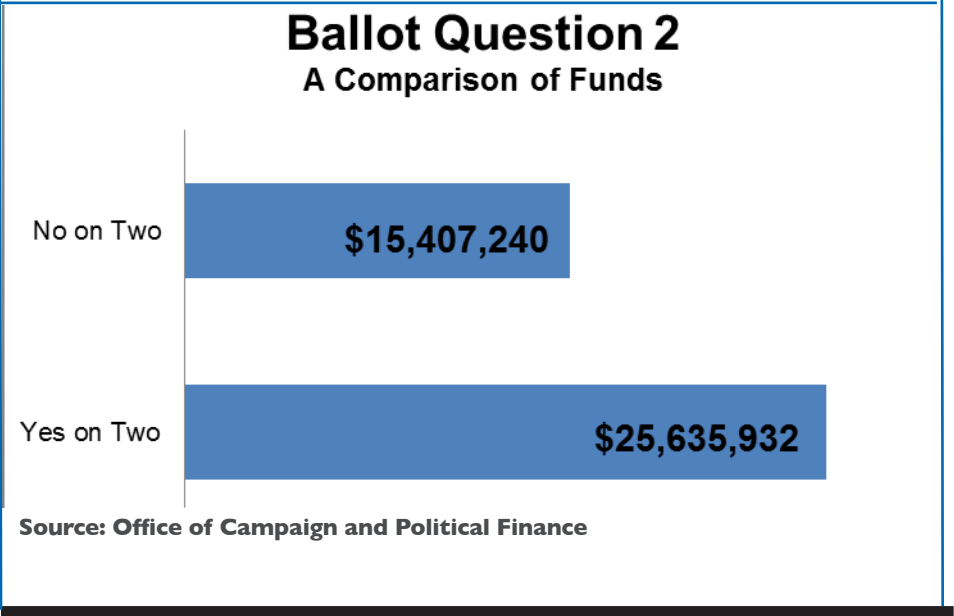
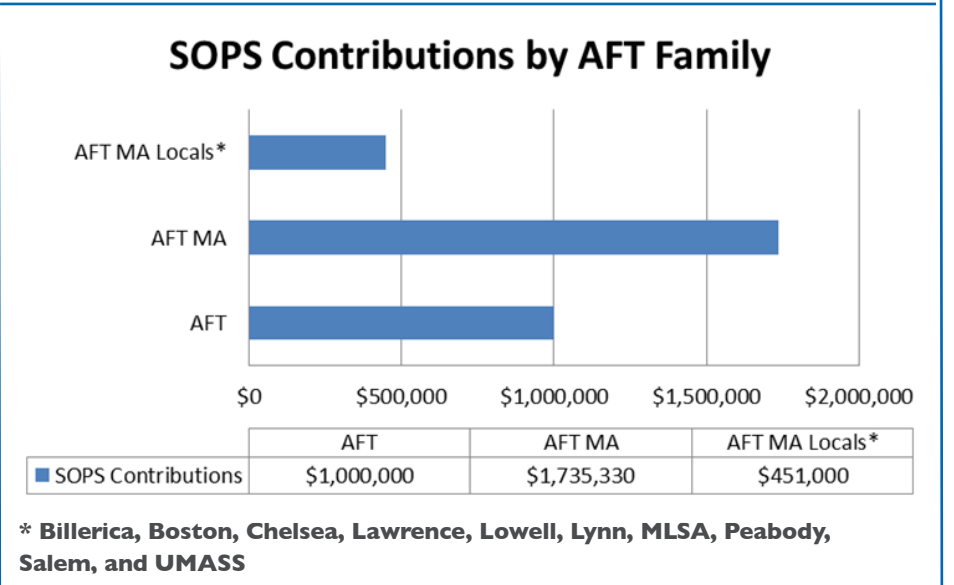
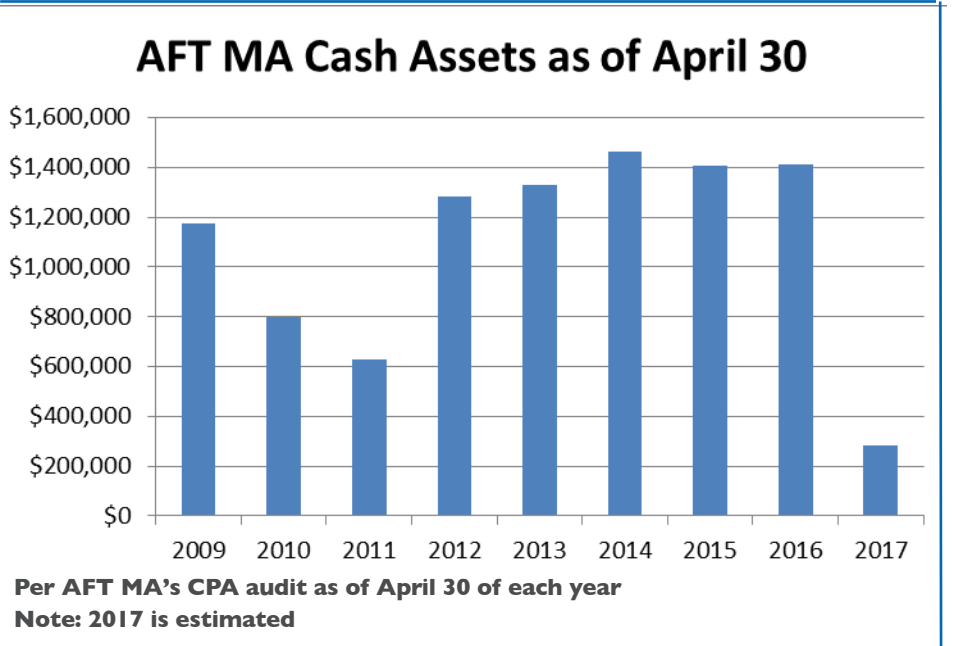
The enclosed financial report, as summarized by an independent auditor, is the result of the sound planning of the AFT Massachusetts Executive Board and the commitment to our employees and members. Simply, our financial

resources support our amazing staff and union endorsed campaigns.

Members from across our union engaged in contract and organizing campaigns, electoral campaigns, community campaigns with both the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools and the Massachusetts Education Justice Alliance and the Save Our Public Schools (SOPS) campaign to name a few. Every union campaign is important, but the SOPS campaign, in particular, required significant financial resources and a team effort.

Funds in excess of three million dollars were secured from across our AFT family to support the SOPS campaign. Building on our experiences with the SOPS campaign and in anticipation of the challenges and opportunities ahead, the AFT Massachusetts Executive Board has recommended that we maintain our current level of dues. The extension of our current level of dues will enable our federation to maintain the quality services provided to members and to fund the campaigns ahead.

All children have the right to a great schools and libraries. As parents, educators, citizens and voters we know the future of our community depends on fulfilling this promise. When we come together as a union of professionals, we realize our potential and power to overcome barriers to providing the best schools and libraries. ■



2017 Legal Report

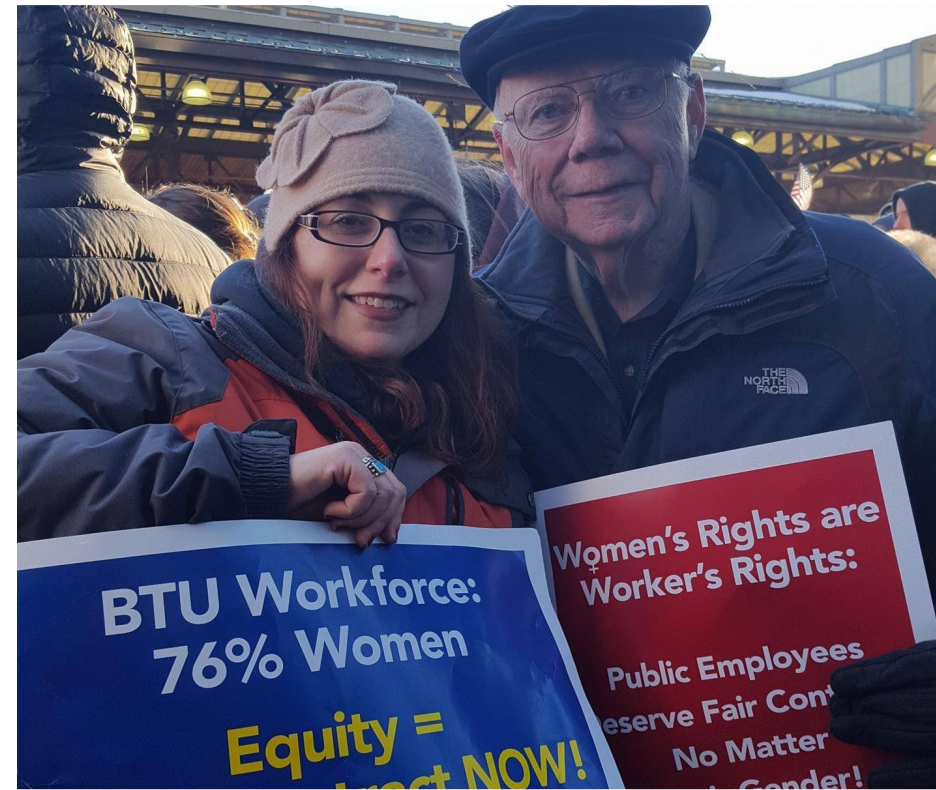
By Haidee Morris, General Counsel, Joseph Lettiere, Associate Counsel, Harold Jones, Associate Counsel, AFT Massachusetts

While Massachusetts voters rejected Question 2 and resoundingly affirmed support for our public schools, the specter of *Friedrichs* returns with Trump's nominee filling the Supreme Court vacancy. As you will recall, the *Friedrichs v. Cal. Teachers Association* case challenged the constitutionality of agency fees and sought to have the Court overturn its precedent set in *Abood v. Detroit Bd. Of Ed.*, 431 U.S. 209 (1977). After Justice Scalia's death the Supreme Court was divided 4-4, hence the *Friedrichs* appeals court decision was sustained and *Abood* was not overturned.

It now appears that another case challenging the right of public sector unions to negotiate for agency fees is ripe for appeal to the Supreme Court, likely to be heard in the 2017-18 term. The 7th Circuit Appeals Court issued a decision in *Janus v. AFSCME* on March 21, 2017, affirming an Illinois District Court's dismissal based on *Abood*. A Supreme Court decision could issue in this case by June of next year.

We have continued to fight for our members in a variety of cases and forums. We have defended salary rights, leave rights, successfully defended against discipline which was not for just cause and prevailed in several cases involving dismissals based on performance evaluation assessments which were unfairly conducted. In addition to addressing many Family Medical Leave issues, we also successfully contested a school district's actions that that would have added new conditions to funeral leave.

In several library cases we have challenged the misuse of substitutes, failure to pay holidays correctly and forcing members to take unpaid days off when they are required to work on a Saturday. These cases help protect our members from having their jobs taken over by underpaid employees. ■



A LEGACY OF SUPPORT
AFT MA Special Assistant to the President Ed Doherty rallies with his daughter, BTU teacher Allison Doherty, to support BTU teachers in their fight for a fair contract (Photo by Michael Maguire)

Thank you to our members for their contributions and support.
We ALL must work together to gain and protect the rights and benefits that benefit ALL of us.
Enjoy the Convention!

Meet Your Colleague: Marianne “Mickie” Dumont

A proud product of Lowell Public Schools, Marianne “Mickie” Dumont has been involved with the district almost her entire life. Her teaching career in Lowell lasted 35 years and, even after 11 years in “retirement,” Dumont remains a devoted supporter of her school system. In fact, she says, “I am more immersed in public education issues than ever before.”

When asked how she decided to enter education as a profession, Dumont recalls a conversation she had over 50 years ago with her father.

“My Dad strongly encouraged me to become a teacher,” she explains. “He said I’d make decent money, have vacations scattered throughout the year, have my summers off allowing me to travel and see the world, and my work day would be shorter than most.”

As Dumont and her father (who thought his fourth of six children was “quiet as a mouse” - hence the nickname “Mickie”) both soon realized, however, teaching involves far more than short days and long vacations.

“When my Dad and I meet again,” Dumont predicts, “we will have some very earnest discussions about the *real* meaning of teaching.”

Though she admits that the teaching schedule did allow her to be home when her children more, Dumont also recalls many nights when she had more “homework” than they did.

“I remember telling my husband to pick the weekend day...to plan a fun

family activity,” she says, “because the other day was reserved for me to work on school plans.”

As far as her union involvement, Dumont also admits that, for the first 15 years or so of her career, there was not much to speak of.

“I was too busy with school and raising a family,” she says, potentially echoing many members today who pay their dues financially but do not get involved at a deeper level.

When her local president visited her school to explain how the union had just won Lowell teachers a 25-minute lunch period, however, Dumont and many of her colleagues began to see the larger value in labor life and became more engaged.

“Throughout my 35 year teaching span, my union leaders brought us from a 25-minute per week prep time...to 200 minutes per week of prep time with a 25 minute duty-free lunch,” she recalls thankfully.

Dumont’s own introduction to union life began as a building representative. Later, she helped open and

manage a trio of “satellite” offices as the LTU’s Strike Coordinator.

“We never reached the point of engaging in an actual strike,” she says, “but were always ready!”

In her last decade of active teaching, Dumont also served as Education Issues Chair and Executive Vice

President. Since retiring, she has added Corresponding Secretary, and AFT-MA Executive Board VP to her list of obligations, and also serves as Recording Secretary for the MA Alliance for Retired Americans and as a founding member of the Lowell Education Justice Alliance

(LEJA). During last year’s dramatic fight over Question 2, Dumont also volunteered to be UTL’s coordinator.

“That was of the most exciting and...rewarding events of my union participation,” she says.

Despite her many diverse titles and obligations, Dumont says that her goals have always been consistent.

“I want to be aware of what’s happening in public education,” she explains, “and to share what I learn

with active colleagues.”

During her long tenure, Dumont has seen educational policy change dramatically. However, as is true of her goals, she sees an overwhelming (and often overwhelming) theme to the policy.

“Each new act...is requiring more,” she observes, “including rigorous and measurable standards, statewide standardized tests, and increased accountability of schools and teachers.”

Dumont also is keen to note that most policies were created with no input from the people who would be overseen by them (e.g., the teachers).

As much as she has done for her union and her colleagues, Dumont still wishes to do more.

“My one single regret throughout my active teaching career was that I did not push back hard enough,” she says. That is why she continues to urge current educators to get engaged and involved as early and as often as possible.

“If I could...advise current teachers of one important valuable trait to foster,” she muses, “it would be to stand up and be counted. If one or two people in a school raise a concern...it is often dismissed by administration. If 15 or 20 teachers stand together and raise the same concern, something will be done!” ■

This is the seventh in a series of pieces intended to introduce AFT MA members to Executive Board members.



FIGHTING FOR RIGHTS
UTL members (from left) Susan Uvanni and Mickie Dumont prepare to testify at the Statehouse regarding House Bill 1364 to restore collective bargaining rights to Level 4 and 5 schools

Celebrating a DEAR Woman Lowell Rotary Recognizes Marcy Winer

On May 16, Lowell Paraprofessional (and AFT MA editorial contributor) Marcy Winer was recognized by her peers at the Lowell Rotary Club’s 17th annual Celebration of Teaching. Having been named Para of the Year at the Moody School, Winer was nominated for the Rotary award by her colleague and friend Lisa Hogan, who wished to recognize Winer for her community service work with Project DEAR (an acronym for “Donate Educate Amaze Read.”), a literacy support program that Winer founded.

“I am happy and proud to be nominated for this award,” Winer said, “and I feel proud that my organization, Project DEAR, has helped bring books to children who are homeless and in need of books for three years now.”

According to Rotary President-elect John Finegan, Winer was chosen because she best exemplifies the theme of this year’s event – “serving humanity,” which was a key tenet for Rotary’s founder Paul Harris and which remains a vital element of Rotarian life. According to the nomination form, the goal of this year’s event was to recognize and celebrate educators who best serve the people (particularly the students) of Lowell both in the classroom and in the larger community as well.

“We highlight one teacher and one paraprofessional from each school that participates,” Finegan explained, noting the event would also spotlight Anne Marie Bisson, founder of Caties’s Closet (www.catiescloset.org), another organization that supports students in Lowell and beyond.

In her introductory remarks, Hogan said it was “easy to nominate Marcy



DYNAMIC DUO
Paraprofessional Marcy Winer (right) and her classroom colleague Shelagh Gallagher

Winer as a paraprofessional who fits the theme of serving humanity” because, as anyone who has worked with her during the past 12 years knows, she is dedicated to helping others and “her kind heart and support for co-workers, students, and the community run deep.” Hogan also noted that Winer has been a regular contributor to this publication and a strong voice for paraprofessional rights.

In accepting the award, Winer expressed her appreciation for the entire community at the Moody, making a point to mention Principal Robbie Keefe, her classroom colleague, Shelagh Gallagher, and her longtime friend Hogan

“I appreciate the support I have received with my ongoing project,” Winer said. “I am blessed to be surrounded by a caring and supportive staff each day.” ■

The Next Chapter(s) Educational cartoonist publishing book

After the successful launch of his 180 Dayz Calendar (which is available on his website, www.180dayz.com), award-winning Boston science teacher Scott Hubeny is preparing to launch his next supportive and educational endeavor - a collection of stories from his colleagues.

“These days there is more pressure on teachers than ever,” Hubeny observes, “and more and more educators are leaving the profession before they even had a chance to develop their craft and have a truly dynamic impact on their students.”

In an effort to help stem the tide and keep potentially and certifiably great teachers in the classrooms, Hubeny is compiling a volume of stories that have been contributed by teachers in the first years of their careers.

“Each narrative is accompanied by a full-color comic inspired by the teacher’s story,” Hubeny explains, noting that the book is intended to not only inspire and educate the reader but also tickle their funny bone as well.

In addition to his calendar and this publication, Hubeny also uses his drawing talents for other projects as

well, including a research poster he recently presented as part of the Wipro Science Education Fellowship.

“I want to improve the field of education by providing an entertaining

yet insightful read full of applicable lessons for our new teachers,” Hubeny explains, “which in turn will ensure better schools and learning experiences for our children.”

Using the popular crowd-funding site Kickstarter (<http://tinyurl.com/NewTeacherBook>), Hubeny hopes to raise funds for the new publishing project from many of the same people who inspired and contributed to it.

“If we make our funding goal,” he muses, “we can look forward to some stretch goals, such as hardcover book, more stories, maybe even a full-length feature film!”

In the meantime, Hubeny hopes to get this project off the ground so he can help his colleagues stay grounded and in their classrooms.

“Teaching is no funny business,” Hubeny maintains, “but anyone with experience in education knows that it can be hilarious!” ■



DRAWN TO THE PROFESSION
Boston teacher Scott Hubeny

Faith in the Future

New Teacher Diary

By Amrita Dani

About four years ago, I decided that I wanted to be a teacher. I was graduating from college, full of dreams that I would be joining a community of practical idealists, men and women who realized that the world was full of injustice but also had hope that we could nurture - student by student - a more equitable future for us all. Today, after completing a year of training through the Boston Teacher Residency program (BTR) and starting as a new teacher almost two years ago, I still have those dreams, though they are tempered by the difficult realities we find ourselves in and by the daily challenges of teaching.

Luckily, I teach at Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA), where I

am fortunate to work with teachers whose depths of experience, compassion, and commitment inspire and compel me to be better. My fellow teachers have shown me how to listen and support students as they go through all kinds of challenges in their personal and academic lives;



LEADING BY EXAMPLE
Amrita Dani

they are the ones who have provided me models of responsive, culturally relevant teaching with an eye towards social justice; and they are the ones who believe that I am capable of doing the same for my students. Together, we have taught students to act with confidence, to understand issues as diverse as U.S. immigration and the Parsley Massacre in the Dominican Republic, and to read Shakespeare, Langston

Hughes, and Edwidge Danticat.

When I started teaching, I was full of enthusiasm, but I struggled to transfer that into my teaching. Being able to co-teach and plan with my co-workers has helped me figure out

what I want my classroom to look like.

As I have worked to be better by my students, I have been driven by the belief that they will use their educations to be successful personally and to change the world for the better. My students often both inspire and worry me with their insightful understanding of the inequalities of our society. One of my students last year asked me, "Why are we studying the history of police brutality if nothing we say is going to make it stop?" I was floored: I did not have a good answer. What do you say when students express the belief that their ideas and their words do not matter to the wider world, even on issues that directly affect them?

Today, more than ever, we need to find a way to inspire students to see themselves as actors in the world, and I think, for me, the starting point for that is finding a way to act myself. One of the most challenging parts of our jobs, as teachers, is that we see the effects of inequality and injustice on our students every day, and there is not much we can do about it, at least not within the confines of a system with limited resources. Some days, I feel a lot like my students and ask am I trying to teach when I cannot do anything to address the hardships

my students face. Through organizing and working within our communities, though, we can and should do more, and the men and women I work with in my school, in BTR, and at the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) live up to this imperative.

This year, I am co-teaching with a 20-year veteran who pursues racial, social, gender, and economic justice both in and out of the classroom. By working with her, I have learned that it is important, even as a new (often overwhelmed) teacher, to be committed to social change both inside and beyond the classroom. I am trying to figure out what that looks like, how I can connect with organizations in my students' lives and organizations committed to educational justice in Boston, including the BTU, and I hope that, as I grow older, I can develop this part of my commitment to teaching, as much as my work in class. My hope is that, in the future, I will be able to model for my students how they can make their voices heard to create positive change in our society. ■

Amrita Dani teaches ESL and Humanities at Boston Adult Technical Academy.

"Hi-Diddle-Dee-Dee!"

BTU teacher Maurice Parent embraces the actor's life

What do you do when your mother is a government accountant and your father designs computer chips?

Why, become an actor, of course!

Strange as it may seem, such is the story of Maurice Parent. And a good thing too! For in addition to winning awards for his performances in Boston and beyond, Parent has been a dedicated educator in Boston and recently helped form a new company intended to encourage actors of color to engage new stories and new audiences of all colors.

Though he went to Carnegie Mellon University en route to what his parents hoped would be a degree in Business Administration, Parent recalls finding his own path and dancing to the tune of a different drummer. In fact, his first theater experience was with a school production of "The Music Man."

"I saw it as a fourth grader and was bitten," Parent reminisces. "The next year, I was old enough to audition, and from then, it was just a done deal!"

As he still held an interest in engineering, Parent was fortunately able to pursue both interests.

"I did both equally growing up," he explains. "It was easy to do because my middle school had a strong theater program."

And while he realizes that such schools are in a declining minority these days, Parent continues to do all he can to help structure solid footing for future performers.

"Acting stretches who you are," says the strong supporter of performing arts, "but it is always the person who you are."

As he was the first in his family to attend college immediately after graduating high school, Parent realized that "there were a lot of expectations," and admits that "theater did not really

fit into anyone's." As he also admits that he was not completely sold on the stage, Parent enrolled as a humanities student but eventually changed to a business track. Even so, the "bug" would not let go, and Parent soon found himself acting in college as well.

"I used to skip finance class to go to ballet," he admits.

When asked where the appeal came from, Parent suggests that he was intrigued by the fun his acting friends appeared to be having.

"It was being part of a world," he observes. "You could be another version of yourself by being someone else in a play."

Though he enjoys escaping into other people's lives through theater, Parent is secure enough in his own identity that he has been able to support others with a similar identity through his latest venture- The Front Porch Arts Collective (www.FrontPorchArts.org), which was also inspired by an artistic experience.

"At the end of last year, I went to see 'Saturday Night/Sunday Morning' at the Lyric Stage in Boston," Parent recalls of the acclaimed performance by an all-Black cast. "I was at the after party and I said wouldn't it be nice if there were a theater company that did that type of work all year. The director of the show was there and she, plus one of the show's actors suggested we pursue that!"

Working with Debra Wise at the Central Square Theater in Cambridge, Parent and other talented colleagues have devised a new way to tell what he calls "Black and Brown stories" in ways that are both innovative and inclusive.

"We explore the work of Black and

Brown communities," he explains, "but certainly everyone is invited to the experience because, at the end of the day, we hope to inspire dialogue so we need everyone at the table."



CURTAIN UP!
Maurice Parent

When not working with Front Porch (which will present a series of readings of pieces by Marcus Gardley through March of 2018), Parent inspires dialogue and people as a teacher at the Martin Luther King, Jr. School in Dorchester. When asked how he became interested in teaching, Parent reveals a bit of his business acumen.

"I approach theater like a business," he explains. "I was trying to diversify my product."

After trying musical theater and other venues, Parent began teaching dance and then became a member of Actors Shakespeare Project (see April/May 2016 issue).

"They have such an amazing educational component," Parent observes. "It is such a part of the company and such a draw- especially for young actors."

After teaching with ASP for a few years, Parent (who also served as the company's co-artistic director with the legendary Paula Plum) was placed into the Tobin School in Boston through a program sponsored by the Citi Performing Arts Center (now the Boch Center).

"My second assignment was at the King," Parent explains, "and I am still there now!"

These days, Parent also teaches at Tufts University and Boston University and has also worked with Boston Arts Academy. In the interim, Parent has passed his MTELs and is now a full-fledged teacher.

"Teaching has been a wonderful opportunity that I did not realize until

recently was a real passion," he says.

Parent also credits teaching with helping him organize his own life more efficiently.

"Teaching has taught me to realize I can do it, period," he smiles. "I see time completely differently. When I was just acting, if I had 30 minutes, I would put things off and relax. As a teacher, 30 minutes is plenty of time to do a project, have a meeting, etc. So that new mentality has really helped and has revolutionized how I do anything...to the point that, when people tell me they are too busy, I tell them, 'You are not!'"

As he often has to switch from supporting three-year-olds to dealing with college students in a matter of minutes, Parent adds that teaching has also encouraged his flexibility, which is important for actors as well.

"Being able to switch up quickly helps keep me light on my feet and responsive to the students," he reasons, "just as I am responsive to people on stage."

While teaching has helped Parent in many ways, the greatest benefit his new role affords comes from seeing how his work benefits his students.

"To see how they light up when they get to do this art form is great," he beams. "There really are no words to describe what theater does for them!"

Among the specific benefits Parent encounters (and encourages) in his acting classes are overcoming shyness, developing interpersonal skills, and engaging great literature in a new way.

"Acting teaches collaboration and also personal responsibility," Parent observes. "It teaches literacy and gives you something to be proud of. It can also be a reason to stay in school and stay out of some difficult situations and to be around people who support you." ■

The Helicopter Factor

Paraprofessional Perspective
By Marcy Winer

When my children went to preschool, I stood and watched until the bus was a dot on the horizon. I was the first at their school plays and the first to volunteer in their classes. Though I was concerned about my children (as any parent should be), I trusted the teachers and the school to ensure my children could function without me and to make sure they were safe.

Today, many well-meaning parents blur the line between concerned and intrusive. Soem goes as far as to insist that they know what is best for their children and also for other children in the classroom. I have seen parents do their children's homework, even pretending to write like they think a student should. They want to help but they are doing the opposite.

Parents need to take a step back and let their children grow, make choices, fail, and ultimately emerge to be who they are supposed to be. A parent can be the best cheerleader for their child and as educators we certainly appreciate and relate to this. The hard part

for us is when the parents come to school and demand that things should be done a certain way to please their child. With over 20 children in the class, this is not going to happen. That is sometimes when the "helicopter parent" begins to emerge.

So what exactly is "helicopter parenting?" I would define it as a parenting style that is too controlling and managerial and that does not encourage children to learn and grow on their own.

A helicopter parent controls all schedules, activities and runs interference for their child, thus taking away the choices that children need to make on their own. With their choices limited, the child will constantly rely on the parents to make decisions for them and this will stunt their independence.

How can we effectively deal with "helicopter parents?" A gentle, yet firm approach works best. Classroom boundaries must be adhered to for

the safety of all. An intrusive parent can be just as disruptive as an unruly child. Teachers can set the tone for welcoming parents at assemblies, and other school functions at the beginning of the year so all the expectations are clearly understood. If a parent steps over these boundaries they can simply be respectfully reminded of the rules and regulations.

Children need to develop coping skills as they mature. Parents who make decisions for their children will crush their confidence and self esteem. If children can not make independent decisions, they will always look to their parents. As young children develop, they are faced with many decisions and challenges. They need to choose out-

comes for themselves in order to learn and gain independence.

My younger daughter was faced with a very difficult decision in high school about whether or not to stay in a separate academic program or to leave it. Both her father and I told her it was her choice and she needed to

he explains, "along with tzedakah," the Hebrew term that literally means "justice" but that is often taken to refer to acts of charity. "I learned that being compassionate was just and righteous...[and] it is, of course, the Golden Rule [of] loving your neighbor as yourself."

Specializing in supporting indigent citizens of Pittsburgh with housing issues, Smizik realized that the world was as bigger place and that there was more he could do to improve it. In 1978, he was offered a job in Boston with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) as a housing lawyer.

"I have now lived in Brookline longer than I lived in Pittsburgh," he smiles, "and have discovered that Brookline truly is the center of the universe!"

As a long-time resident of Brookline, Smizik has done much to give back to his adopted hometown. After winning a Town Meeting seat soon after he moved to town, Smizik was asked to run for a seat on the Housing Authority Board, for which he served as Chair for many years. When his daughters entered the public school system, Smizik also ran and won a seat on the School Committee.

Professionally, Smizik eventually went into private practice, but never gave up working for the public good.

"I represented a number of special education students fighting to receive appropriate services in their public schools," he recalls, noting that he had originally left MLRI in order to be able to more actively affect and change the laws that were holding so many of his clients back.

"I wanted to help write the laws," he says, "in order to help the poor."

When a long-time representative was narrowly defeated in 1998, Smizik decided to take a shot at State Legislature and became Representative for the 15th Norfolk District in 2001.

These days, Smizik chairs the House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change. In 2008, he championed the Global Warming Solutions Act, which established Massachu-

figure this out and make the best decision she could. We provided the input that she asked for and she carefully weighed the pros and cons. Her decision was informed and effective and it allowed her to succeed academically. Most importantly, it was her decision.

Even though they will want what is best for their children, parents need to take a step back and let their children grow on their own. In order to do this, children must be allowed and encouraged to make choices and even to fail sometimes so that they can find their own path to becoming who they want to be. Parents can guide their children the best way they can to ensure they are loved and supported, but no parent can win (or lose) that trophy, join (or not make) that sports team, or be accepted (or not) to a college of their choice (even and especially if it is not the child's choice).

Quit hovering, Folks- Your children can pilot themselves! ■

Marcy Winer has been a paraprofessional in Lowell for over 10 years. She also is the founder of the literacy program Project DEAR (www.facebook.com/Project-DEAR-738334756244926).

sets as a national leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. "Using my faith as a guide, I fight to ensure that future generations have the opportunity to grow and prosper in a healthy environment. While the legislature has made progress in the fight against climate change, we must continue our efforts by supporting clean energy development and building resilient communities."

Smizik has also remained dedicated to improving access to public education services for all students. He has successfully delivered additional state funding for public education, from early education through graduate school, including the METCO program and special education services. He also continues fighting high-stakes student testing, school privatization, and attacks on teachers and other public employees. In 2016, Smizik worked tirelessly to ensure that Question 2 on the Massachusetts Ballot, which would have allowed 12 new charter school designations a year, was defeated. Smizik recently also joined the Rally for Public Education for the protection of equality public education for all. ■

Legislator Profile: Rep. Frank Smizik

Growing up in the steel city of Pittsburgh as the son of a mother who had escaped the Ukranian pogroms, Frank Smizik

knew early on the importance of hard work, solidarity, and freedom. He also learned a thing or two about air pollution. Perhaps that is why Rep. Smizik now serves as Chair of the MA House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change.

Another vital value with which Smizik was raised was education.

"Education was very important to my parents," recalls Smizik, who has served as an Advisory Board Member of Citizens for Public Schools since 2008 and who was named the MA Association of School Committees' Legislator of the Year in 2014, "and they made sure that I was able to go to college."

As the first in his family to enjoy this privilege, Smizik worked very hard to

help finance his time at the University of Pittsburgh, taking on multiple jobs, including some stints in the steel mills.

During the summer of 1962, Smizik became aware of the triple homicide perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan.

"It was not lost on me that, of the three young men killed by the KKK that summer, two were Jewish," says Smizik, who was also involved with the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (see October/November 2016 issue). "Coming of age in the 1960's and 1970's was

a time of experimentation and agitation, but also a time of reflection and empowerment. We believed we were making a new world, and it had to be a better place, where we truly could all live together in harmony, despite our differences. And that meant that every person--regardless of race, religion, gender, or economic class--was equal, entitled to the same rights and opportunities."

With these values firmly in mind, Smizik decided to continue his academic pursuits at Duquesne University Law School and then went on to work for the publicly-funded Neighborhood Legal Services team in Pittsburgh. When asked what continued to fuel his fellowship fire and his desire to help those who were less fortunate, Smizik cites the Jewish value of tikkun olam (usually translated as "repair of the world").

"[That] was engrained in my mind and in my heart as an important life goal,"



MAN OF STEEL
Rep. Frank Smizik



MISTER EDUCATION

A new statue of Horace Mann - the "father" of public education - was recently unveiled in his hometown of Franklin, MA



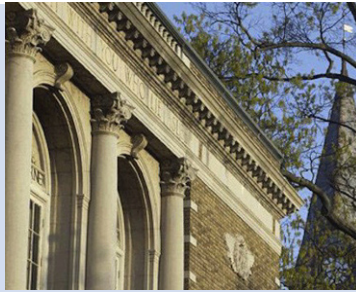
MISS NEW ENGLAND

Elliana Davis, a senior in the AFT MA district of Assabet, was recently named Miss New England in the Teen division.



On Campus

Susan Krumholz, President
UMass Faculty Federation, Local 1895



Innovation Links Campus and Community

In January of 1987, the Kerr Mill, a sprawling mill complex located in the city of Fall River on the shores of the South Wattupa Pond and at the intersections of Routes 195 and 24, burned to the ground in a spectacular fire that is still recalled vividly by the residents of the city and surrounding towns. While it had originally been a mill that manufactured thread, supplying the dozens of textile manufacturers located within the city, at the time of its demise it had a number of businesses operating within the site, and more than 900 people were left unemployed. Unlike most of the Commonwealth, the region's economy was still heavily reliant on traditional industry throughout the late 1980's and into the 1990's.

Even though MA was, and still is today, known as a startup hub, with significant venture capital, Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant funding, and patent activity within the state, the Southcoast had never really seen much activity in any of these sectors. Realizing that there was a need to both build and diversify the region's economy, the Southcoast's legislative delegation, the Fall River mayor's office, and UMass Dartmouth (led at the time by Chancellor Peter Cressy) began to develop a plan for creating a business incubator within the region. Because of the prominent location of the Kerr Mill, it was chosen as the site for what would become the Advanced Technology Manufacturing Center (ATMC).

The construction and financing of the building was accomplished through the economic development

organization known as the MA Development and Finance Agency. The building, a state-of-the-art 60,000 square foot facility opened in November of 2001. The facility houses the Tech Venture Center (TVC), laboratories for such ventures as prototyping, life science, and environmental chemistry, and a fully-functioning conference center, with enough room to accommodate over 220 participants.

Because of a changing state budget environment, and because of a changing startup environment, the University felt that the ATMC needed to adapt itself in order to remain relevant to the region's business community. In late 2014, a task force, led by UMass Dartmouth, and with the help of the UMass Presidents Office, was formed to develop a plan for moving the ATMC forward. Many recommendations were made. As UMass Dartmouth was to take ownership of the building through an \$11.5 million dollar grant from the Mass Life Sciences Center (MLSC), there was a need to develop a plan for financial self-sufficiency. As a result, in 2015, the ATMC was rebranded as the UMass Dartmouth Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CIE), a new director was put in place, and an aggressive plan for reaching financial self-sufficiency was implemented.

From 2001 to 2015 the CIE hosted over 45 companies, supported dozens of industry and governmental sponsored research projects, and connected hundreds of UMass Dartmouth students to TVC companies, laboratories, and outside projects. Dozens of UMass Dartmouth faculty from across

the campus have become involved and the ATMC has received millions of dollars in grant funding from organizations such as the US Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation, which supported faculty research projects, connected faculty and student researchers with the region's industry, and employed up to 300 student interns a year.

Today, the CIE is home to 23 companies in such diverse and vital industries as clean technology and energy, biotechnology, marine technology, and software. The CIE has become a globally-recognized leader in incubating marine technology firms and it hosts the largest marine technology conference in New England. Collectively, the 23 current tenants have brought in more than \$15 million in funding, from private investors, SBIR, and other funding sources. They have been regionally, nationally, and internationally recognized in competitions such as MassChallenge, MassChallenge Israel, MassChallenge Road to Rhode Island, EforAll Southcoast, the RI Business Plan Competition, Tech Stars, Carbon X-Prize, Piranha Pond, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute Blue Startup Weekend, and more. The CIE has graduated 45 companies which have gone on to employ more than 225 and have, collectively, more than \$200 million in sales revenue. More than 75% of CIE graduates have located their company within the Commonwealth, and four of them have established in Fall River.

In our ever-more competitive world, we need to take every opportunity to engage and develop new ideas

and to use our resources as effectively as possible. At UMass Dartmouth, the CIE is leading the way! ■

I wish to thank CIE Director Tobias Stapleton for his help with this story. Enjoy the summer!

**Do YOU know
someone who
should be
featured in
Summa Cum
Laude?**

**Send their
information to
advocate@aftma.net**

Thank you!



Putting Spring(field) Back Into Their Steps

Springfield para helps less fortunate get back on their feet

Many of our students come to school with used textbooks, hand-me-down clothes, and other items that may not be the latest or the best. Even so, they come to school and do their best to learn and grow as students and as people, realizing how fortunate they are to have a place to go and teachers and staff who care for and about them.

Unfortunately, not all children are as fortunate as even these children in our schools. Around the world, many children do not have the opportunity to go to school and still others do not have proper food, clothes, or even shoes.



OLD SHOES. NEW LIVES.

That is why it is so encouraging to know that, even when facing difficult situations, our members and their students can still be grateful for what they have and do what they can to support others who do not have as much.

One significant example of this is Springfield para-professional Dave Stein, who has been working with ReRun Shoes (www.rerunshoes.com), a not-for-profit based in Holyoke that employs many people with disabilities who help clean,

package, and deliver used footwear to students and families in areas that are even more challenged than ours.

"Every year, more than two billion pairs of shoes are imported into the United States," explains ReRun Founder Michael Aronson, noting how many of these perfectly good shoes are discarded or "forgotten" in the

backs of closets across the country.

"From our very start, we saw those shoes as important, reusable assets that can find a valuable life elsewhere in the world."

Working with entrepreneurial partners in nations like Liberia, Morocco, Guinea, and Mali, ReRun distributes gently used shoes to people who need them.

When asked why he became involved in charitable endeavors, Stein replies, "I was trying to involve The Springfield Federation of Paraprofessionals in becoming more active in the community and to increase our union's charitable endeavors, as outlined in our goals set by our president Cathy Mastronardi."

"Dave is very involved in union activities and always thinking of new ways to link the Federation to community service programs," Mastronardi explains, noting that Stein launched



"SOLE" MAN
Dave Stein

the ReRun program as a pilot at the High School of Science and Technology.

As he had worked in the recycling business before becoming a paraprofessional, Stein was drawn to ReRun and its founder Michael Aronson.

"I called Michael for a tour of his warehouse," Stein recalls. "I was impressed by the facility because it had efficient sorting equipment and they even sew their own shipping bags!"

At the end of that first visit in October, Aronson gave Stein some free ReRun boxes. By the end of February, Stein and his colleagues had collected over 150 pairs of sneakers and shoes.

"The experience was rewarding because it showed how teamwork at The High School of Science and Technology can create a successful charitable drive," Stein says, noting that the union is already planning to engage in more activities of this kind in the future. ■



Retiree Corner

Marie Ardito

Co-founder, Massachusetts Retirees United
www.retireesunited.org

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True Endings and New Beginnings

Beginnings and endings pretty much determine the cycle of life, and our lives are no different. In teaching, we experienced this with the end of every school year which was followed a few months later by the beginning of a new one. Months later, the end of the calendar year and the entrance of the new year catches our attention and reminds us of the cycles once again.

Recently, I received a phone call from a grandson who was excited that he had just finished his last college class. Instead of looking at what had just ended in his life, I commented that he would now take his place in the world of work. While that may not have been what I had been expected to say, I was always taught that commencement meant a beginning or start. It was the beginning, the launch, the kickoff; not the end of something. I guess it is all how you look at life or want to look at it that matters.

This episode got me thinking about society as a whole and how we wear so many different pairs of glasses. Some people have their own perception of circumstances and events and the way they see things is the only correct way it should be seen (at least according

to them). In my college philosophy class, we were taught that the only absolute is the fact that there is no absolute. Nothing can be viewed without relation to other things. So, maybe the reason things are perceived so differently depends on whom or what we relate them to - just ourselves, our neighbors, or society as a whole.

One scripture reading that always gets to me is when Pilate asks Jesus, "What is the truth?" and then, without waiting for an answer, turns and walks away. Society today has me asking the same question, "What is the truth?"

At the beginning of each school year, I used to tell the children in my class that it was imperative that they never let me catch them in a lie or cheating, as it put me in a difficult position for the remainder of the school year, because I will never know if they were telling the truth or if the work I am correcting were really theirs.

The other day, I saw this message on a marquee at a nearby church "The only damage you can do to the truth is stretch it." Who knows what the truth is today? Who knows who is telling it and who is not? How do we teach our children the morality

of being honest when we don't know what honesty is anymore? When did it become popular to not only stretch the truth but to blatantly lie and to insult the intelligence of people further by making the lie something they can see for themselves and therefore know that the truth has been fabricated? Furthermore, are people truly lying or just seeing things through the glasses they are wearing?

I see all the hand-held gadgets people own and how in a matter of seconds they can (allegedly) verify a fact or check a bit of information. Yet, are they any closer to the truth than those of us who lived prior to the invention of such things? I know one thing for sure that today, truth is not valued as much!

Through the ages, different names have marked an era - the Renaissance, the Age of Discovery, the Industrial Revolution, the Victorian Period, the Cold War etc. What will today's years be labeled? We have definitely crossed over the bridge and are at a new beginning in our country. They say that, "the truth will set you free!" Now our challenge is finding the truth and respecting it! Are we on the threshold of a new beginning? ■

Teaching at a "Turnaround"

Educator Opinion

By Kristen Leathers

Earlier this year, the large, comprehensive urban high school where I teach was designated as a "turnaround" school. Now, another headmaster is leaving. The incoming headmaster will be the sixth at the school in 11 years. What does that reflect about our expectations for these schools? What are we doing to the people who are willing to take on this tremendous responsibility when most cannot seem to find a balance between their work and personal lives? Especially in a field that is dominated by women, what does it say or mean when the positions at the top are so unsustainable that nobody will remain for more than a few years?

These unreasonable standards extend into the classroom as well. Teachers in high-needs secondary schools are expected to fill many roles in the face of tremendous expectations and responsibilities. In addition to teaching, many take on the complex and complicated roles of social worker, therapist, guidance counselor, friend, cheerleader, data analyst, and

parental advisor. In addition to helping students with academics, teachers are also called upon to support students as they process incredible trauma, search for places to live, navigate their immigration status, acclimate to a new culture and language, work part or full time, or adjust to living in a new family situation. And of course teachers must attempt to do all of this while also navigating the tumultuous teenage years. Teachers must also differentiate instruction to address the needs of students that are on IEPs and those who are college-bound in the same classroom. Depending on the content area, teachers may even have 9th graders and 12th graders in the same classroom.

Some students have advanced literacy in their first language but not English, while others have experienced interrupted schooling or little schooling at all. Some students have even been promoted from grade to grade without the skills necessary for them to do the work. Teachers must try to address all of these competing needs while navigating a high-stakes testing schedule and preparing each student to be ready for their grade-level content classes and, hopefully, social adept as well.

Looking at this exhaustive list of demands and tasks, it is no wonder

many teachers and administrators experience burnout. According to the National Center of Education Statistics, upwards of 50% of teachers leave the profession within five years. The US Department of Education reports that turnover is highest in public schools where more than half

the students receive free or reduced lunch. Teachers and administrators work tirelessly to facilitate their students' education in every way possible, but are still told they are failures.

During the "turnaround" process, all of the educators at my school were let go and many were "encouraged" to reapply for their positions. Why should teachers reapply for a position at a school where it has already been determined that they and their students are

failures? In every way, teachers who are dedicated to reaching students with the greatest needs are given the demoralizing message that they and their students are the problem, not the tests or the system. However, the results have not borne this out. Forcing people to do an incredibly complex and demanding job with dwindling resources is a recipe for failure. Yet people persist. I just don't know for how much longer. ■

Kristen Leathers is a National Board Certified ESL teacher in the Boston Public Schools.



TURN LEADS TO BURN
Kristen Leathers

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FEATURE FOCUS: Days of Action

“May Day”: Teachers sound the alarm

In an effort to expand upon the impact of the observances of International Workers Day (a.k.a., “May Day”), AFT MA members across the Commonwealth participated in marches, rallies, and other activities intended to bring attention to the needs of teachers, students, and all community members.

Expanding their provocative programming throughout the entire week of May 1-5, members of the BTU at over 40 Boston Public Schools participated in a Sanctuary Schools Week to raise awareness of and show support for the many students who may not feel safe due to impending national policies.

“Our undocumented students and families are bombarded daily with messages of hate and fear,” said elementary school teacher Maya Taft-Morales. “This has tangible effects on our students every day.”

Citing the 1982 case of Plyler v. Doe, Taft-Morales maintained that states do not have the right to deny students a free public education on account of their immigration status. Therefore, she concluded, “we, as educators, are both legally obliged and morally compelled to welcome, respect, cherish and protect our undocumented students and families.”

After gathering in Maverick Square, teachers, and students marched to

Boston Common to join other groups in support of undocumented and other workers who are fighting for fair contracts, better pay, and other benefits.

“On International Workers Day, we were proud to be there to celebrate the contributions of labor unions and also stand up for our immigrant families,” said BTU Organizing Director Jessica Tang. “We believe in building schools and communities not walls, and we believe in education, not deportation!”

As part of the City of Lynn’s May Day rally, nearly 100 educators, paraprofessionals, therapists, and other staff and supporters of Lynn Public Schools gathered at the Cobbett School before marching to City Hall to show their support for and solidarity with a large assortment of pro-Civil Rights groups who gathered to share their views and their strength.

“We march today for our students and our contract,” said LTU President Brant Duncan. “We know that strong schools depend on strong communities. We are committed to ensuring that

every child has access to a great neighborhood public school... that is safe and welcoming and focused on the well-being of kids. That’s what we owe our children.”

“We were thrilled to be joined by...Lynn and Salem educators,” said North Shore Labor Council (NSLC) President Jeff Crosby. “They came in strength and their union t-shirts got a huge response from the crowd. It was a big day for strengthening the ties between teachers and the community, and they got a lot of support for their commitment to the young people of Lynn and their contract fight.”

As the teachers marched, AFT MA Field Representative Jeremy Shenk led

them in chants that demanded a fair contract and applauded the hard-working educators, support staff, and parents, all of whom are vital to raising and engaging successful students.

“May Day capped off an exciting week in Lynn,” explained NSLC Organizer Katie Cohen, mentioning that educators from Lynn, Salem, and Peabody participated in workshop ways to support immigrant students and families and that Lynn also won a Sanctuary School Resolution that week.

“The Lynn School Committee took a stand for our students,” Duncan said. “Now it is time for the committee to stand up for our teachers.”

The May Day demonstrations proved to be an effective means of engagement for AFT and others. According to AFT’s Eric Zachary, over 140 organizations participated by singing an open letter to Congress and more than 500,000 people viewed a video produced by the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (www.reclaimourschools.org).

“The May Day action was the culmination of our ‘Build Schools; Not Walls’ campaign,” explains AROS leader Keron Blair, who notes that the campaign has also involved parents and community leaders as well as educators and students.

“We think May 1st was an important step in linking our work for educational justice with the movement for immigrant justice,” Zachary said. ■



SAFE AND SECURE

BTU Organizing Director Jessica Tang (left) and other BTU members rally on Boston Common

Finding Common Cause: Unions rally for change

On the afternoon of May 20, thousands of public school educators, administrators, parents, students, and other supporters of public education gathered on the Boston Common for a wide-ranging rally for the public good. In addition to representatives from AFT MA and MTA were members of such groups as Citizens for Public Schools, Jobs with Justice, MA State College Association, and a higher education cohort from PHENOM, many of which have been collaborating under the banner of the MA Education Justice Alliance (www.massjustice.org). Also in attendance were City Councilor (and mayoral candidate) Tito Jackson, MA Sen. Pat Jehlen (please see story on page **), Rep. Natalie Higgins, and Rep. Frank Smizik (please see story on page 9).

In addition to speeches and presentations by many community leaders, the rally also featured performances by students, teachers, and others, including Urban Science Academy student Rasheem Muhammad (who wowed the crowd with a freestyle rap about BPS legend Ben Franklin) and Lisa Gallatin and members of Boston Voices of Community and Labor (B VOCAL) who led the throng in rousing labor songs that had been adapted to include mention of charter schools and other current issues.

“We need to focus on learning and not just testing,” suggested Local 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers Executive VP Tyrék D. Lee, who served as emcee for the day’s events.

With this common focus in mind, participants from all walks of life and many communities and professional sectors raised signs (including such clever comments as “Stop the DeVos-tation” and “Education should not be a debt sentence,” which was held by one of the many students who literally

wore their student debt amounts around their necks) and chanted along in unity.

Among the speakers was BTU President-elect Jessica Tang, who recalled the recent anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education and looked forward to the proposed billions in educational budget cuts.

“These cuts will affect everyone,” Tang maintained, making special mention of higher education and “our most vulnerable” students.

“Now is the time to fix this,” she urged. “Our governor and legislator can fix this!”

Tang also noted how she and her colleagues in BTU have been with-



FRIEND AND FOE

AFT MA President Tom Gosnell holding a cutout of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos

out a contract for over nine months yet refuse to stop fighting for a fair contract and fair treatment for themselves and their students.

“We will continue to fight,” she said, “because we know that when we fight, we win.”

Lynn educator (and Advocate contributor) Miriam Fusco echoed this theme when she observed that, “it is clear that to get what we want, we have to ask for it.” The third-generation Lynn student also recalled her son (who is also in Lynn public schools) wishing for smaller classes, arts programming and air conditioning in his dilapidated school building.

“Let’s raise our voices for our children,” the speech pathologist concluded. “When we speak, we can achieve.”

“Cutting public education is not an option,” said Jackson (who also serves as Chairman of the Boston City Council’s Committee on Education). “Our public schools are a gem and we need to invest, not divest.”

Comparing the \$20,000 it costs to educate a student with the \$60,000 it costs to incarcerate an individual, Jackson added that, “if we don’t invest in the young people of Boston...we will be investing more later.”

For his time at the microphone, AFT MA President Tom Gosnell brought a outsized image of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, the sight of which elicited loud booing from the crowd. Gosnell also pledged AFT MA’s support of the proposed amendment to the state constitution that would raise billions for public education by taxing those who make over a million dollars in income in a year and also for the establishment of local control over the development of new charter schools. Quoting AFT President Randi Weingarten, Gosnell observed that those who had assembled on the Common “are lovers public education” and maintained “our cause is clear.” ■



RESPONDING TO “MAY DAY”

Lynn Teachers Union President Brant Duncan (in green hat) and other LTU members gathered in front of the Cobbett School before marching to City Hall to participate in a May Day demonstration.