

Local 2398

Staff & Clerical Federation, AFT, AFT-Wisconsin, AFL-CIO
Chippewa Valley Technical College, Eau Claire

March/April
2009

<http://wi.aft.org/CVTC2398/>

From the President

Spring is almost here! It's time to start thinking of all the fun things you want to do with the warm weather approaching. As you may know, the union has formed a Social Committee to help plan some fun events for members and their families. Please take a look at attachment in the email with some of the ideas the committee has come up with. We are very interested in getting feedback on the things you would love to do, and the things you would never attend. Please share comments or suggestions with Kim Vollmer, Sheri Brandstetter, or myself.

The members that attended the PSRP Conference have included articles on the workshops they attended. I would ask that you read those, as there is excellent information included in them. Great job, Deb, Kathy, My Nou, and Shana! Thank you for sharing with us what you learned at the conference. Also, thank you for taking time away from your lives to attend!

Please don't forget to vote on April 7th!!! Local and State elections are so very important to all of us, and the ones we have the most control over the outcome.

As always, if you have any questions what so ever, about anything, please feel free to contact me.

In Solidarity,
Lisa

Labor Relations

We have no grievances at this time.

As Jim reported out at the February meeting, we won the grievance regarding a reduction in hours. The member was compensated for the hours they were not allowed to work.

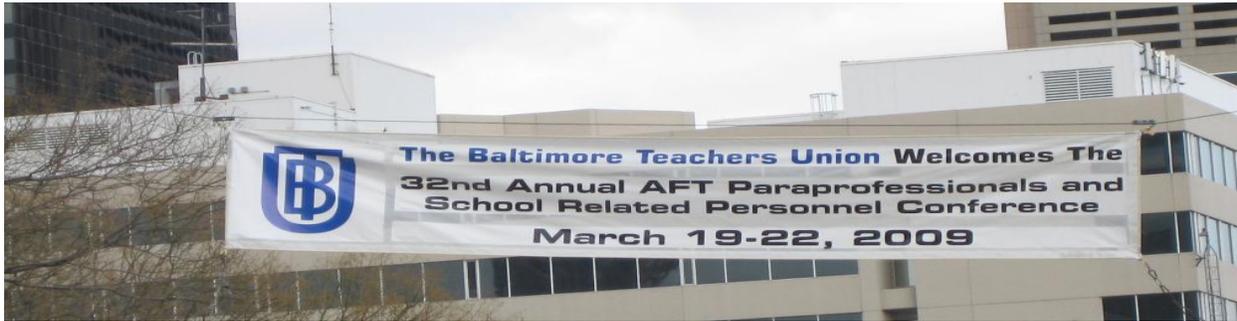
Lisa and I continue to meet with management on a bi-weekly basis. Mary Casey, the new HR Director is now involved in these meetings. We find that Mary is very easy to talk with, and very knowledgeable. We are looking forward to a mutually respectful relationship. Please continue to forward your concerns to us to discuss at these meetings.

It is really important for all members to know our contact. You will not know if your contract is being violated if you do not know the language. Remember too, that we have trained union stewards at all campus locations should you have a question or need to report an issue. Those stewards are: BEC—Barb Stuber, HEC—Sue Sie, Emergency Services & Transportation—Jean Alcantar, Gateway/Nano—Brenda Meinen, Chippewa Falls—Viv De Ford, Neillsville—Linda Danzinger, Menomonie—Jeannie Krig and River Falls—Paul Wittrock. Don Morrow was a union steward at the Transportation Center, but has recently transferred into the custodial/maintenance union.

Please let the stewards, Lisa or me know of any workplace issues that you encounter or questions you have.

In Solidarity,
Kathy Goodman
Labor Relations Chair

2009 AFT PSRP Conference – *Kathy Goodman*



The 32nd Annual AFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel Conference was held March 19-22 in Baltimore, Maryland. It was a privilege to attend this national conference and to meet and network with hundreds union members, activists, and leaders from all across the United States.



The Wisconsin Delegation included 4 members from Local 2398-CVTC: Deb Ausman, Kathy Goodman, Shana Schmidt and My Nou Xiong; 2 members from Local 212-MATC Milwaukee: Marietta Love and Marwill Santiago; 2 members from Local 3605-Western: Dawn Kooze and Pam Miller; and 1 member from Local 4018 Eau Claire Schools Classified Staff: Denise Gulden.



Wisconsin Delegation: sitting- Dawn Konze, Pam Miller, Marietta Love, Marwill Santiago; standing-Kathy Goodman, Denise Gulden, Deb Ausman, My Nou Xiong, Shana Schmidt



A Union of Professionals

Below is a summary of the workshops that I attended:

Work and Health for Office Workers: I served as the moderator for this session. A moderator's role is to ensure that the workshop runs smoothly. They meet with and introduce the presenter, assist with handouts and equipment, facilitate the question and answer period, and hand out evaluation forms and return them to the registration desk after the session.

The session included group activities centering around hazards and problems in the workplace. Some challenges included: Ergonomic issues (poor lighting, frequent lifting, repetitive movements, improperly adjusted chairs and workstations). Safety and mechanical concerns (spills on floors, tripping hazards, electrical hazards, ventilation, indoor air quality, moving equipment parts). Work organization (workload demands, respect-or lack of, flexibility, control or say about things, sexual harassment). Chemical and mineral exposure (cleaning products, paints, vapors, fumes, gases). Physical hazards (exposure to

temperature extremes, constant loud noise, and radiation). Biological hazards (blood and body fluids, bacteria & viruses, mold). Most workers accept these challenges as part of the job, however AFT believes we should not have to accept bad working conditions. Signs of stress were discussed as well as tips and ways to prevent these problems.

Knowing the Opposition: How to use Strategic Research: The presenter provided handouts with numerous websites that can be used to gather basic information about companies, organizations, and individuals, both public and private. Due to the inability to connect to the Internet, we were not able to get a look at these sites, or learn how to maneuver through the pages during the session, but the session was worthwhile and informative.

Protecting Workers Rights When Employers are in Crisis: This was an excellent session that addressed workers rights. With the tough economic times, members need to be educated about their rights so they are not overworked or threatened by managers. With the budget crisis and cutbacks, employers are making cuts in ways which may create unsafe working environments, such as equipment needs, etc. The presenter discussed The Fair Labor Standards Act and OSHA in detail, as well as encouraged all members to familiarize themselves with their contract. Our contract is our number one defense to protecting our rights. Members cannot be disciplined for reporting incidents regarding safety and health issues in the workplace; in fact we are obligated to report these issues.

Seven Tips for Turning Building Reps into Organizers: The presenter was passionate about this topic, so it really made for a great session. It is important that new employees, and really all employees, see the Union as a source of strength and support. We need to view the Union as a means to accomplish good things, rather than a way to protect members from bad things. We should not be asking “what did the Union do for us,” but “what can we do for the Union.” It is important to view the Union as positive. The Union is power. We are the Union! Making a personal connection with new members is important and is the key to educating new members about the Union.

The seven suggestions for effective leadership are:

1. Visibility- seek members out and take an interest in them. Members respond to leaders who have true motives.
2. The Union is you and your co-workers- seek involvement; celebrate successes, don't speak of the Union in third person.
3. Make the Union first friend, best friend to new members. Reaching out to new members is time well spent. Let new members know that their success is a priority of the Union.
4. Listening is the primary form of effective communication.
5. “Issues-speak” is the best language. Communicate what the union stands for, what it is trying to achieve, and what it cares about.
6. Don't ask people to join, rather challenge them to “take a stand.” Getting involved means standing up for what we need to do our jobs the best that we can.
7. Tell your story. Telling your own story is the best way to encourage members to get involved. “Why are you committed to and involved in the union? What have you experienced that makes you a true believer? What inspires you to do this work? Why is your activism compatible with your personal values, and commitments?” Why are you passionate about being a union leader?

Quotes taken from Rick Kuplinski, Deputy Director
AFT Organization & Field Services, presentation.

Submitted by Kathy Goodman

2009 AFT PSRP Conference – *My Nou Xiong*

Session One: It Takes a Team: Paraprofessionals and Teachers in the Classroom

Stages of Team Development

#1 Rule: Listen! Listen! Listen!

Stage 1: Getting to know each other!

This stage is to create a comfort level between the paraprofessional and instructor. In order to avoid conflict and controversy, it is important to establish the ground rules, lay out the foundation, and discuss both individuals' roles and expectations. It is essential to list what the goals are for each individual and for their students.

Stage 2: Storming: We can work it out!

This stage is to learn to work together by becoming a team. Within the team, it is essential to be able to create solutions for conflicts, struggles, differences, and issues. This creates the team to be able to work together.

Stage 3: Norming: How “we” do what “we” do

The one thing about this stage that I have a strong agreement with is that not only person is right; just because of degree and status but the team should acknowledge differences, accept their roles and others' roles, support, trust and respect all team members.

Stage 4: Performing: I know you have my back!

This is a part where I think sometimes we lack around this area. Some people focus so much other's abilities that they neglect and ignore other people's abilities and this isn't a team. We need to learn to appreciate the differences we have in a team and distribute the uniqueness of each person's abilities towards our goal, which is, implementing ways and strategies to our students to become successful individuals. This allows students see that we are embracing differences in every aspect of our environment in the college.

Stage 5: Adjourment: The party's over!

Celebrate our accomplishments as a team! Give each other a great compliment to make sure they know they are part of the team.

Overall, this session was the greatest because it focused on the teamwork between paraprofessionals and teachers in the classroom. A lot of the paraprofessionals at the conference believe this should be implemented into the schools and college systems so that everyone would respect each other and their positions better. I think this would be a great training session for anyone who is going to be working with either a paraprofessional or teacher.

Session Two: Workload and Member Response

Understanding the “Psychology” of why members allow their personal workload to increase is important to finding solutions to a problem that will only increase as employers struggle with staffing concerns. The union's response has to take into account your member's commitment to meeting the needs of students

The following are some major points I picked up from this session regarding workloads for paraprofessionals.

Causes of heavy workloads

- Do good work; get more work
- Employment absences
- Budget
- More requirements-no additional staff
- Don't replace people who leave

- **FAVORITISM!!** (Big one in our college!)
- Poor coordination
- Poor planning
- Poor employee work
- Increasing enrollment
- Unfair demands

It's essential to build allies with other unions, community groups, educational groups, chamber of commerce, etc. In addition, your family and your own well-being should come first before anything. We know we have to accomplish our tasks and be efficient; however, we should also consider what we were hired for.

The presenter suggested that we should take a second look at the requirements listed on the employment form, from when we were hired. If we are required to learn something new or are doing something that isn't on the employment form, then the employer should provide us the training. Also, this would make it clear that specific workloads were not listed under our job requirements and outlook.

Submitted by My Nou Xiong

2009 AFT PSRP Conference – Shana Schmidt

My experience at the PSRP Conference in Baltimore was both educational and enjoyable. I met a diverse group of people, many of whom had very different jobs from my own, but all of whom shared a few common interests: education, community and protecting the rights of those who serve these interests. All of us serve the institution of education, and the PSRP Conference was a great way to unite as a group and learn how to better fight for this institution and one another in our shared purpose.

I attended four workshops at the conference and one focus group. Here is a summary of what I learned in each session:

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Focus Group

NIOSH, which is a government agency under the umbrella of Health and Human Services, organized this focus group to help them address occupational safety and health in schools. I spent an hour talking with other employees of K-12 and higher educational institutions, primarily about a draft safety fact sheet that was passed around and our reaction to it. I shared that one of our college's strategic initiatives is Safety/Security, which some of the other group members were interested in. Many of the group members had concerns about the conditions of their school buildings and felt the environmental hazards they faced at work each day (mold, poor ventilation, etc.) needed to be addressed.

Grievance 101

In this workshop, an AFT National Representative walked us through the grievance process. We watched a video, which chronicled a grievance from start to finish, and were able to ask questions and comment throughout. The workshop was very informative and helped me to understand how grievances help enforce the collective bargaining agreement. It was also interesting to hear members and leaders from different AFT locals talk and brainstorm about various facets of their agreements.

Saving Jobs When the Economy Tanks

This workshop was particularly relevant in today's tough economic climate. The presenters were both from the AFT Legal Department, and did a terrific job outlining the very difficult state that public institutions like ours are in. Budget cuts and job losses can leave public employees feeling hopeless about their situation. The presenters emphasized the importance of bargaining for a strong contract which includes protective language. They gave us

bargaining suggestions to use when contracts are reopened which reduce layoffs and still trim the budget. Mobilization and communication are key issues which are cheap and vital to remaining strong, as well!

Health Care Reform: America's Hot Topic Returns

A Field Coordinator from the AFL-CIO Health Care Campaign led this workshop. She gave us the most up-to-date information from Washington on the ongoing debate on health care reform. There is a growing concern about the state of health care in America today, especially as premiums rise and salaries remain static. The presenter in this workshop laid out Obama's eight principles for health care reform: 1) Guarantee choice; 2) Make health coverage affordable; 3) Protect families' financial health; 4) Invest in prevention and wellness; 5) Provide portability of coverage; 6) Aim for universality; 7) Improve patient safety and quality care; 8) Maintain long-term fiscal sustainability. These eight principles are the guiding force behind health care reform today. The presenter gave us an idea of what will happen in the near future to change health care, who will be involved in Washington, and how we can join the cause to make our voices heard.

Civil Rights and the Law

The final workshop I attended gave me insight into the complexities of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The presenters were attorneys, one from AFT and the other from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. They did an excellent job spelling out the language of these laws in a way that laypeople could understand them, and applying them to real life scenarios in the workplace. I felt the information was extremely useful, especially in my situation as a union member and public education employee.

Submitted by Shana Schmidt

Demos Workshop: *How to Talk about Taxes and Government*

Two workshops were held at Chippewa Valley Technical College, one March 4 and the other on March 5. Deb Ausman, Bob Bauer, Debbie Duncanson, Kathy Goodman, Shana Schmidt and Lisa Storms attended from Local 2398, along with many other community leaders.

Attached to the email is a summary of the workshop and below is a list of "10 Best Ways to Talk About Taxes and Government." If you have questions, please feel free to contact one of the participants above. *Permission to publish these documents has been received from Karen Royster on 3-16-09.*

10 Best Ways to Talk About Taxes and Government

- 1. Begin with big ideas** that connect people to shared values and frame the context for your discussion.
- 2. Order matters** – Don't sabotage your message by beginning with an anti-tax frame.
- 3. Use strong images** to focus on the value and importance of government and public systems.
- 4. Define and use the term "public structures"** to help people move past stereotypes of politicians and huge bureaucracies to a more practical view of government systems such as transportation, public safety or schools.

5. **Use social math to clarify statistics**. Instead of 'a CEO makes 12.500 times more than a workers on minimum wage', you could say 'A CEO is paid more in 10 minutes than workers make in a whole year...and the CEO gets the tax break!.'
6. **Use metaphors to strengthen concepts** and help people see the issue clearly and simply (e.g. the heart is a pump or the wetlands act as a filter.)
7. **Emphasize problem solving, not attacks** which trigger listeners' knee jerk political reactions.
8. **Present viable solutions** and the role citizens can play in making change.
9. **Stay positive and build confidence**. Focus on the 'Little engine that could' not 'The sky is falling.'
10. **Connect with people as fellow citizens** and partners in the effort to meet broad community goals, not as consumers or caretakers of other people's needs.

Submitted by Kathy Goodman

Congratulations!!

Kathy Goodman, Shana Schmidt and My Nou Xiong each submitted scholarship applications to attend the AFT-Wisconsin 2009 PSRP National Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. Great job Kathy, Shana and My Nou, as each was awarded \$500.00 to help offset costs. In addition, unused scholarship dollars were divided among the Wisconsin Delegates, so each member received an additional award. They, along with Deb Ausman (representative at the National level), attended the conference March 19-22; "Unite: for our Students, our Communities, our Work." The information received will definitely benefit our local.

Member Contributions

AFT-Wisconsin Economic Summit

The first economic summit, "How to Prosper in Tough Times," was held on Saturday, January 24, 2009, in Madison. Deb Ausman and I attended this full day conference along with about 100 other union advocates from around the state. The morning session presenters; Jewell Gould, Nathaniel Johnson, Matthew DeCarlo and Scott Spector outlined details of the economic challenges that are facing Wisconsin and the nation. We received numerous handouts outlining Wisconsin's economic outlook.

The afternoon concurrent sessions: Bargaining in Tough Times, What is our Message?, Mobilizing our Membership, and Identifying and Recruiting Allies, centered around specifics on how to effectively bargain in these difficult economic times. I attended the Mobilizing our Membership session, where we learned how and why to mobilize our members, organizing a plan, and what we as leaders must do to encourage member involvement. The final session involved a group project where members put all 4 workshop topics together and came up with a strategic plan for a bargaining session.

If you would like to view the handouts and conference materials, please see Deb or me. You can also access the information online at <http://www.aft-wisconsin.org>, 2009 Economic Summit. You will need to login as a member to have access to the information.

Submitted by Kathy Goodman

Helpful Links:

<http://wi.aft.org/CVTC2398> CVTC Staff and Clerical Federation, Local 2398 

<http://www.aflcio.org/> American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations 

<http://www.aft.org> American Federation of Teachers 

<http://www.wacteonline.org> Wisconsin Association for Career & Technical Education 

<http://www.aft-wisconsin.org> AFT-Wisconsin 

<http://www.aft.org/psrp/index.htm> Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) 

<http://www.wisafclcio.org> Wisconsin State AFL-CIO 

<http://www.witechcolleges.com> Wisconsin Technical College System 

<http://etf.wi.gov> Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds 

<http://www.wisconsin.gov> Wisconsin Government 

<http://www.datcp.state.wi.us/core/consumerprotection/consumerprotection.jsp> Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection 

<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/serviceagencies.htm> Wisconsin State Legislature 

Submitted by Kathy Goodman