

Giving Everything to Her Students—Even an Organ

Last May, 17-year-old Aja Booth was talking to a teacher at her Detroit school — West Side Academy — about a book



Nadirah Muhammad

she had written. Overhearing the conversation, teacher Nadirah Muhammad

asked if she could read it.

Revealed in her book, Muhammad learned about Aja's health issues and her need to find a kidney donor. On the spot, Muhammad, a 16-year health and physical education teacher, offered to help her in the best way she could — to be the donor.

In a single day, in one conversation, Muhammad offered her kidney and signed the papers. (Aja was carrying paperwork for a friend to sign).

"I was told by my parents to always serve God and humanity," the 16-year DPS teacher said. "This is that service."

Upbeat and positive, Muhammad said she didn't want attention for the five-hour operation she underwent on Dec. 15.

"If it was up to me, I would have done it quietly and carry on my business," she

said. Nevertheless, the local TV crews showed up.

"She doesn't like attention," said Nadonya Muslim, a former colleague who is now assistant principal at East English Village. "She's very friendly and loving and has really high expectations of the kids and they know it."

Muhammad got the blessing of her parents, husband and 13-year-old son, who at first didn't want her to do it.

But Muhammad told him: "If that were you, would you want someone to help you?"

Muhammad had no misgivings until her full-day consultation when the doctor said the donor has a 2-3 percent chance of death.

"Did he just say *die*?" Still she went forward with the operation and recuperated for six weeks. Now she says she has three small scars that are healing "beautifully." Aja is still recuperating.

Muhammad wants Aja to pursue her dreams of college next fall at Oakland University and of becoming a nurse.

"I want her to live a much longer, sustained life," she said. "I'm happy."

Conn Holds Three Rallies Against Principals

DFT President Steve Conn organized three rallies at schools where he says principals have bullied the staff. The first rally at Mann Elementary School was held in snow but some 50 members from the DFT, the community, and the school district boiler operators (licensed stationery engineers), showed to protest how teachers are being treated.

"Hey hey, ho ho, abusive principals have got to go," they chanted.

Another rally was held at Marquette School where teachers have complained about serious building problems and principal-staff relations. Conn said the Marquette rally of 24 protestors produced the most success, with roofing crews working on the building the day the rally was held.

"DPS roofers arrived and fixed the roof just as DFT members were picketing the school," he said. "And the very next day, DPS notified the union that it was adding staff to Marquette in order to lower class size."

A third rally was held March 24 at Clark Elementary School, where 15 picketers circled the front sidewalk.



Conn says these rallies are mounting public pressure on the district. He said earlier in March as a result of a class-action step two grievance, DPS agreed that the building reps may be part of a weekly building walkthrough with the principal to identify maintenance problems.

"It's time to unite our whole union behind the spirit of bold, new DFT activism," he said.

OUR UNION IS MAKING A COMEBACK

I am very pleased to report that our union is making a long overdue comeback. Nearly all of my activity during the first weeks of my presidency has centered on implementing the plans and strategies voted on at the Jan. 25 special DFT membership meeting. We are at a critical moment for the very future of the DFT and DPS. But as long as we keep up the fight, we will win. The

President's Report



**Steve
Conn**

watchword for the next period of time must be that of 19th century abolitionist Frederick Douglass, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

Winning Public Support for the DFT and Detroit Teachers

Critical to our success is continuing the tough public stance the union has taken since my election, rallying public support for our program of just demands, such as class size reduction, job security, pay raises, health care improvements, more support staff in every school, and restoring the dignity and pride of our members. To help pay for these things, we demand that the state cancel the \$170 million debt that DPS has incurred through the 14 years of state "emergency fiscal management."

The community enthusiasm for the DFT's newfound public voice has been huge. People's only question is why our union hasn't been doing this all long.

Essential to our strategy is the continuing series of rallies to expose abusive principals and demand their removal.

With DPS under state control, administrative harassment and even sexual harassment of teachers has spiraled upward to deplorable levels. No employee should have to work like this, every day in fear – least of all those charged with the responsibility for educating our children. Of course, this mistreatment is not limited to teachers: our students are also being victimized by the use of pepper spray by security guards, frequent suspensions for minor offenses, and in at least one elementary/middle school, handcuffing as punishment.

If we are ever going to change this situation, then it is essential that these problems be brought to public attention. The problems in an individual school are never only those of that building's particular staff; they are the concern of everyone in Detroit. These are the community's PUBLIC SCHOOLS, not a principal's private business!

Fighting to Improve Conditions in our Schools—and Winning!

Our rallies have already won real concrete gains in the fight for improved school facilities and class size reduction. The Marquette rally centered on DFT grievances for roof repair and class size reduction. After years of neglecting Marquette, DPS roofers arrived and fixed the roof just as DFT members were picketing the school! And the very next day, DPS notified the union that it was adding staff to Marquette in order to lower class size.

Earlier this month, as a result of a class-action step two grievance, DPS agreed that the DFT Building Reps may be part of a weekly building walkthrough with the principal in order to identify all maintenance and repair problems. That victory too was the result of public pressure, specifically a press conference and numerous pictures and press releases exposing the district's inadequacies in heating and snow-plowing schools.

Finally, in order to systematically collect and organize all the data on school problems – from maintenance issues to class size and books – the union has established a centralized database. This database will be used for the purpose of additional grievance campaigns and public exposures. Members are encouraged to report school issues to the database by emailing me at sconn@dft231.com or calling me at 313.303.1996.

Training the DFT Building Reps — the Backbone of Our Union

The first important item of business at the Jan. 25 meeting was a resolution to properly train the building reps, defend them against administrative harassment, and organize effective grievance campaigns. This is a 180-degree change from the recent past, when the union left building reps to fend for themselves. Having strong reps is central to our success in rebuilding the DFT.

We must ensure that each school has a building rep and that those reps are fully supported in fighting for our members. To achieve that goal we have held two successful training sessions for DFT building reps where they received information on understanding federal and state labor laws, filing grievances, sub-

THE DETROIT
teacher

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President's Report

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mitting Unfair Labor Practice charges, and standing up to the school administration. Many of our schools have no building rep and we must correct that. The rep elections are held in May in the schools. Anyone considering running for DFT building rep should attend the trainings.

With our union on its feet and beginning to fight again, huge new opportunities are starting to open up for Detroit teachers and students. The balance of power is shifting in our favor. We MUST keep the fight going and inspire more members to participate in order to wield the full measure of our strength.

Any attempt to throw cold water on the new DFT activism, or drown us in an ocean of fear-mongering, must be met head-on by all of us. It's time to unite our whole union behind the spirit of bold, new DFT activism. Calls for "uniting" our new activism with the do-nothing, losing strategies of the past several years must be opposed by DFT members. It is time to seize the day, and capitalize on all of the new opportunities developing for the teachers and young people of Detroit.

Updates . . .

Legislative Education Action Day on April 30!

AFT Michigan is hosting two Legislative Education Action Days (LEAD) this spring: one focused on higher education issues and the other will focus on PreK-12 issues (April 30). The agenda will include issue discussions and meetings with legislators. If you have suggestions for ways to make the events interesting and productive, please email Legislative Mobilization Coordinator Julie Rowe at jrowe@aftmichigan.org.

AFT Michigan Endorses Safe Roads Yes! Campaign

AFT Michigan's Administrative Board encourages our members to vote "Yes" on May 5 for Proposal 1, which will generate the desperately-needed revenue to repair Michigan's deteriorating transportation infrastructure. Proposal 1 also will include restoring the Earned Income Tax Credit for many working families, as well as generating significant additional revenue for the School Aid Fund.

Please visit the Safe Roads Yes! Campaign website for more information here: <http://www.saferoadsyes.com>

Teacher Appreciation Day

Bookstock, the book supplier, celebrates Teacher Appreciation Day April 28 from 3-9 p.m. All books are 50 percent off, regardless of what the book is, as long as the teachers have teacher identification. Bookstock is held at the Laurel Park Place Mall, Six Mile and Newburgh Roads in Livonia. Their website is: www.bookstock.info.

Our Voices Need to Be Heard

By Ivy Bailey, Executive Vice President

After sitting on the academic sub-committee of the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Children, I have lots of thoughts and convictions. I'm convinced we need to reach out, as a positive collective voice, to the governor to ask him to consider the committee's findings and recommendations.

I am asking every member to write a letter to Gov. Snyder to ask that he consider the recommendations of the committee and that Detroit Public Schools continue to be just that, our city's public school system. A member suggested that we also enlist our students in our letter writing campaign. Parents, community and family members are also welcome to join the campaign.



Ivy Bailey

What I saw in these coalition meetings was Detroit, EAA, and charter school teachers, DPS principals, leaders from various organizations and other institutions working together to create a plan that will improve the educational structure of the schools in our city.

Those professionals who worked for DPS were cautiously optimistic about the future of DPS. They want DPS to be on the cutting edge of school reform. They want us to be leaders when it comes to technology and new education trends. They want to make DPS into a global model for urban education.

They want to see every child in Detroit graduate and go on to succeed, whether they continue in an educational or vocational pathway. They want to look at DPS a few years from now and see that their voices made a difference.

Our focus should be on coming together – the whole district. We need to come together because this affects all of us, the principals, teachers, secretaries, support staff, paraprofessionals, and engineers – but most of all, our students. They are our most precious resource. But the powers that be are not allowing us to do our job, which is to cultivate, protect and preserve the lives entrusted to us on a daily basis.

Someone asked me why I accepted the invitation to be on the coalition. My response was that I would rather be at the table and know someone was there speaking on behalf of the students, parents, and staff members of DPS, than not. When I got to the table I wasn't surprised to find that the other DPS voices were extremely passionate, forceful, and focused on the future of our school system. We have some of the best educators, support staff and administrators in the nation, right here in Detroit.

Let's stick together and let the governor know we have the most committed and caring staff. Many of us were born and raised in Detroit. We went to DPS schools. We are DPS!

Please write those letters so we can continue to be at the table to determine our future. Call Gov. Snyder at: 517-335-7858 or email him at: www.Michigan.gov/snyder.



Pride in Working Hard

Carver STEM Academy celebrated its first semester honor roll students on March 5. The students looked awesome in their new honor roll shirts and were treated to a delicious luncheon to celebrate their honor roll achievement. "We are beaming with Carver pride," said teacher Crystal Williams.

Superheroes Read Too

To celebrate March is Reading Month, Candace Graham, a Reading Recovery teacher at Carver STEM Academy, invited Michelangelo and Spiderman from Playhouse Cartoon Party, to be guest readers for the first and second grades.

Candace knows that reading is important and wanted the students at Carver to see that reading is cool — even superheroes do it. If you would like to have a guest reader at your school, from Playhouse Cartoon Party please contact Carl at (586) 439-8867.



THE DETROIT NEWSM

Clippert Ser Luncheon to

A loved and honored tradition for many years, Clippert Academy in southwest Detroit served its annual Ethnic Luncheon on March 25 to more than 200 community members.

But the lunch is more than a thank you to a supportive community of parents and business leaders, it's a way to teach students how to entertain and throw a party.

"I coordinate with the kids and teach them etiquette, how to set a table, how to decorate," said Jacqui Washington, the Clippert paraprofessional in charge of the event.

Nathalia Camacho, 14, was the team leader of the lunch and kept a check on everyone performing their roles.

"It's very hard work," she said, "but it's worth it because it looks good."

Although teachers use the month to teach students about world cultures and customs, Washington is in charge of putting on the culminating party. She engages the school's 540 kids to help her.

"It's a big day ever since my girls went to school here," she said about her daughters now in their 30s.

"Everyone looks forward to it," she said. "We just eat, eat, eat until all the food is gone."



Jacqui



DETROIT teacher MAKERS

Serves Ethnic Community



Tricia Barnes and Nathalia Camacho



Happy Birthday Dr. Seuss

Carver STEM Academy had "All Eyes on Deck" as they celebrated Dr. Seuss' birthday March 2. Everyone was asked to Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) from 8:30-9:00 a.m. Tricia Barnes, Instructional Specialist at Carver, coordinated the event. She was so happy to see all the children from ages 4-13 use their active listening skills to hear all the Dr. Seuss collections.

"This was better than any Christmas gift!" she said as she went from room-to-room taking photos. "Our staff and students are the best," Barnes said when she saw the looks on the faces of the children, administrators and staff. Carver is hoping to make this an annual event and involve the parents and community partners as well.

Smiling to be Able to Swim



Students from Turning Point Academy and Detroit College Prep @ Northwestern were all smiles as they — along with the Boll Family YMCA directors — received a check from the Ilitch Charities for \$25,000 in February.

Nikole Conostas, YMCA Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Evelyn P. Holmes, retired DPS autism teacher and current YMCA Special Needs Coordinator, formed a partnership six years ago that would allow students with autism and other special needs to receive aquatic therapy at the Y.

The program continues to grow and provide students with basic water safety and swimming lessons. The Boll Family YMCA is located downtown at 1401 Broadway and Gratiot. For additional information, please contact the Boll Family YMCA at 313-309-9622.

For The Teachers, By The Teachers

First Annual Teachers Appreciation Gala

“For the Teachers, By the Teachers” is a newly formed entity, composed of DPS teachers, which will celebrate the contributions of All Detroit Public School educators via our First Annual Teachers Gala. The purpose of this Gala is to celebrate those of us who have made the commitment to educate the children of Detroit.

Committees are formed and pledges of support are being made. It is imperative that a moment in time is taken to say “Thank You” to the teachers of Detroit Public Schools for our dedication and commitment to the children of our great city. If you wish to join this pivotal effort, please make immediate contact to join a committee, recommend a sponsor or simply state your interest in attending this event.

TENTATIVE EVENT DETAILS

When: Saturday, June 13, 2015

Time: 8 p.m.- 12 a.m.

Where: Doubletree by Hilton Hotel ~ Detroit – Dearborn

IF INTERESTED, PLEASE SEE THE CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW:

For The Teachers, By The Teachers

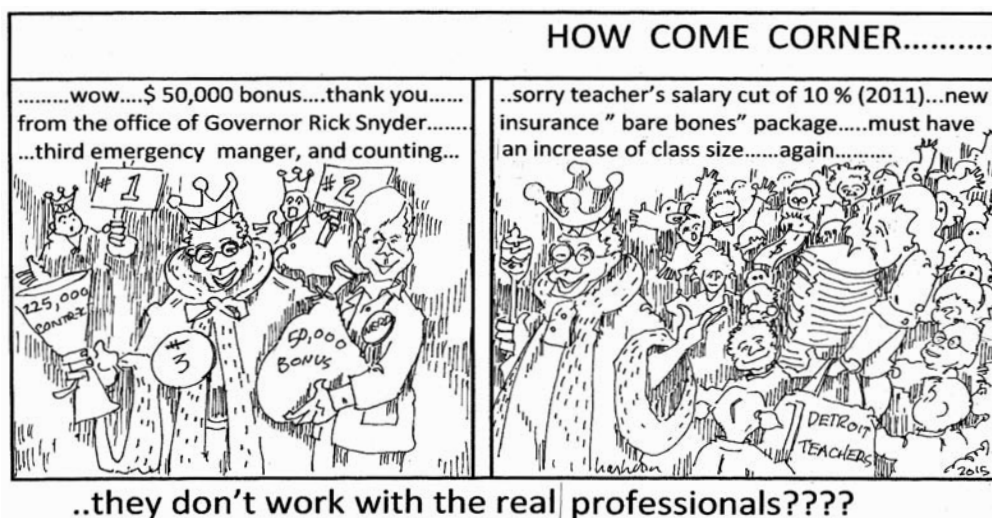
P. O. Box 5144 Detroit, MI 48205

Phone: (313)884-4364/ (248)635-6802

Email: fortheteachers@outlook.com

“JOIN” US ON FACEBOOK.... 4TEACHERSBYTEACHERS

**We will be selling
snacks at the DFT
Membership Meetings
to raise money for the
“For the Teachers
By the Teachers”
Gala Event.**



Membership Meeting Attendance

School representatives who were in attendance for the month of March 2015 are listed below.

MARCH 2015

Academy of the Americas
Adult Education Center
Blackwell Institute
Ann Arbor Trail
Brewer Academy
Brown Academy

Clippert Academy
Douglass Academy for
Young Men
Edison Elementary
Fisher Building
Emerson School
Garvey

Golightly Education Center
Gompers
Greenfield Union
Hutchinson K-8
Keidan
J.R.King
Mann

Mason
Marquette
Mackenzie Elementary
Medicine & Community
Health at Cody
King High School
Moses Field School

Neinas
Noble
Palmer Park Prep Academy
Robeson Malcolm X
Priest
Pulaski
Renaissance

School Social Work
Spain
Speech & Hearing
Vernor
Wayne Elementary
Western High
White, Jerry L.

FAQs About Public School Strikes

by Sachs Waldman Professional Corporation

Q: Are public school employee “strikes” still against the law in Michigan?

A: Yes. For at least 50 years the law has prohibited strikes by all public employees.

Q: What is a public employee “strike” under Public Employment Relations Act (PERA)?

A: Essentially, a public employee is on “strike” if he or she intentionally is absent from his or her position or stops working in full or partially, for the purpose of trying to bring about a change in wages, hours or working conditions.

Q: What happens if public school employees go on “strike” as defined above?

A:

1). The school district can go to circuit court for an injunction, which is a court order directing the school employees back to work.

2). Each public school employee may be fined one day’s pay for each day of a “strike,” but only after notice by a school district to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) that each employee is on strike, individual earnings and a determination by MERC that the employee was on “strike” and not absent for other reasons. (This provision was added in 1994).

3). The employee may be discharged from employment with the school district.

Q: What is the MERC proceeding on fines for each day of striking?

A: The employer starts the procedure by filing with MERC a detailed notice and affidavit concerning each employee alleged to be on strike and mailing a copy of the notice to the employee.

Each employee is entitled to a hearing on the charge, at which he or she must be present. Each employee is entitled to be represented by counsel. The district must provide its own attorneys to present the case against each employee. At

the hearing, the district must present evidence to establish that the employee was on strike in violation of PERA. A MERC hearing officer will preside at the hearing and, after hearing the evidence from both sides, will make a written recommendation to the full Employment Relations Commission whether the employer has proven that the employee was on strike.

Q: What penalties can MERC impose if it determines, after a hearing and recommendation from the hearing officer, that the employee was on strike?

A: The statutory fine is one day’s pay for each day the employee was on strike. The fines are deducted from the employee’s salary. If the employee no longer works for the district, the former employee is to pay the fine directly to MERC. The fines do not go to the school district, but to the state school aid fund. The fines cannot be waived in bargaining.

Q: Are there any other financial penalties that can be imposed as a result of a public school employee strike?

A: Yes. If the school district is successful in obtaining an injunction against the strike in circuit court, the school district may be entitled to payment of reasonable attorney fees and costs from the union. Also, there are contempt sanctions, which could be imposed on employees after a hearing, see discussion below.

Q: What happens if a return to work injunction is issued and a person does not go back to work?

A: If a member of the DFT gets actual notice of the terms of the injunction, for example at the meeting at Cobo or otherwise, he or she could be found to be in contempt of court for violating it.

Q: What has to happen to be “held in contempt?”

A: A person cannot be held in con-

tempt of court for violating the injunction unless a number of due process procedures and protections are followed. A person cannot be held in contempt for being part of a group. A court must find a violation of the injunction in a separate proceeding for each person individually. Contempt proceedings must be begun by the filing of a sworn petition giving specific information showing that the person had notice of the injunction and specifically how he or she violated it. The court must hold a hearing for each person accused, after giving written notice. The person accused is entitled to be represented by a lawyer. It must be proven at the hearing that the person accused had actual notice of the injunction and afterward did not report for work on one or more days. The person can testify or present other evidence that he or she did report to work or had an excuse, such as an illness verified in some way, which caused him or her not to report.

Q: What happens if a person is held to be in contempt of court.

A: Contempt is not a crime, and does not result in a criminal record, however, the court generally imposes a civil fine of up to \$7,500 per day for each person who violates the injunction. In some cases courts have incarcerated people until they promise to obey an injunction.

Q: Where can I get a copy of PERA as amended in 1994?

A: A pamphlet containing the act and the MERC rules for proceedings regarding public school employee fines is available from MERC for a nominal fee. The commission’s offices are located at Cadillac Place Building, 3026 W. Grand Blvd., Suite 2-750, Detroit, MI 48202.

Q: Can I lose my teacher certification if I go on strike?

A: No. This bill passed the state house but it did not pass the senate.

Loved Detroit Principal Wins Honor

Clippert Academy principal Kim Gonzalez was honored March 25 as Principal of the Year by the United Business Partners of Southwest Detroit. Veronica Jenson, left, presented the award on behalf of Yolanda Morales, president of the organization.



Veronica Jenson, of the United Business Partners of Southwest Detroit, Clippert social worker Rudolpho Menchaca, and principal Kim Ganzalez.

"She's the absolute best," said Jacqui Washington, a Clippert paraprofessional. "She gives you your job. She expects you to do it and she doesn't ride you. Don't send me anywhere else."



Taking Boys on a Reading Adventure

Eric Pate, a former Detroit teacher, sportswriter and now chief of staff for State Sen. Bert Johnson, visited and read to a group of boys at Turning Point Academy on March 30.

Pate read the book "The Raft" by Jim LaMarche and chatted about the great outdoors, whether the boy's ever saw a deer or whether they could swim. The story recounts a boy's adventures on a raft in a lake where he communes with animals and nature.

Teacher Katrice Collins and paraprofessional DeeLora Hawkins gave the students a quickie course on Sen. Johnson and his major issues: education reform and regional mass transit.

The students impressed Pate so much he got the senator on the phone and said, "They researched you man. They know everything about you."

The senator pledged to visit the boys one day soon.

CALENDAR

All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

April

- 3-10 Schools closed, Spring Break
- 13 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m. DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 14 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village
- 16 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m. (IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott)

May

- 7 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m. DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 12 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village
- 14 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m. (IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott)
- 25 Memorial Day, Schools Closed
- 28 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m. DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)

June

- 4 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m. (IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott)
- 9 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen, Lathrup Village
- 11 Last day for students
- 12 Last day for teachers
- 13 DFT "For the Teachers, By the Teachers Gala"

We're on
Facebook!
check us out at

www.facebook.com/DFT231