

THE DETROIT teacher

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July 2010

Mumford Valedictorian Awarded \$500,000 In Scholarships

Shanara Burke learned to be strong to navigate a family of 10, the death of her mother at two years old, and a move from Jamaica in 2006.

But the will and doggedness that usually led to success needed taming.

“She was the mother of the class,” says Mumford High School English teacher Kathryn Seabron. “Shanara was very outspoken, very blunt.”

“I like to succeed,” the 18-year-old says. “I don’t like to be mediocre. I don’t like my efforts to be ignored.”

In Shanara, the Mumford staff quickly spotted a rare scholar.

“She wasn’t like a traditional ninth-grader,” says Seabron, a 29-year teacher. “She was always the star of her class. She had a tenacity about her. I never had a student like her.”

As a top academic performer since

elementary school, Shanara made her way as the top grade-earner at Mumford and the 2010 valedictorian.

In her sophomore year, she won admittance to a prestigious nursing program at the University of Michigan. Shortly after, she burst into Seabron’s class and announced she wouldn’t be attending.

Seabron knew something broke down but Shanara wouldn’t say what. Just, “I’m not going.”

“Indeed you are going,” Seabron told her.

“We knew something was wrong but we didn’t know what it was,” Seabron said. Figuring it could be a transportation issue, Seabron and a Mumford Chemistry teacher decided to take turns getting Shanara to Ann Arbor and back.

“As we all became aware of this star, this jewel we had, we started supporting her,” Seabron says.



Mumford Valedictorian Shanara Burke and English teacher Kathryn Seabron.

It paid off handsomely.

Shanara is the recipient of a \$350,000 Bill Gates scholarship to fund studies through post graduate work. She also won an \$84,000 UM Scholarship to study actuarial science. Other colleges committed funds as well.

As a mother figure, Seabron was instrumental in this success.

“Her opinion plays a very important part in the decisions I make,” Shanara says of Seabron. “She’ll tell me something’s not the right approach. Through experience she knows what she’s talking about.”

Teacher of the Year Named at Pasteur Elementary

Maia Stephens didn’t work in isolation to become an outstanding educator. At a June 1 surprise announcement at Pasteur Elementary School, Stephens was awarded Wayne RESA Elementary Teacher of the Year. She thanked everyone in her building, including the custodian.

“To be successful, you can’t do it yourself,” says Stephens, 35, a National Board Certified teacher. “The support you get by your administrator and your colleagues is important. We have fantastic colleagues here.”

“I’m excited to represent Detroit



but I feel like I’m standing in good company because we have so many people at Pasteur who have a heart and work hard.”

The 12-year teacher has been at Pasteur almost her entire teaching career.

Stephens says it’s not one thing she does in her second-grade classroom that makes her successful, but everything.

She credits tips she picked up in inservices and workshops and from “people in the trenches” as well as her colleagues who have really innovative ideas.

After getting 100 percent on a spelling test, her students get to give

the next test to the class.

Stephens says she’s humbled by her students who need so much of her.

“I try to instill in my kids that you are not the circumstances you’re in,” she said.

“My kids just want to know when is Ms. Stephens going to get here and do something exciting,” she said. The self-effacing teacher says the award is nice but she’s

got lots to pull off in the fall.

“Good teachers always feel like, thank you, but there’s so much more I have to do.”



A Special Thank You to Special People

By Keith Johnson, President

This school year has been nothing short of tumultuous for me as president, for the DFT, and for you, the membership.

We were welcomed back in the fall with contentious and difficult contract negotiations, a dysfunctional start to the school year due to school closings, reconstitution, chaos in Human Resources, displaced teachers etc. And it was downhill from there.



Keith Johnson

The growing conflict between the Emergency Financial Manager and the elected school board, and conflicting directives from the General Superintendent and the Emergency Financial Manager, left members wondering who's in charge of the district and where are we heading?

We were inundated with tests from Burst, Zangle, Q2, Q4, etc. We were vilified when Detroit students were reported to have tested lower than any other district in the country on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

We were forced to embrace the reality of the district's financial crisis and engage in cost-saving measures to preserve jobs, wages and benefits.

When internal strife threatened to rip the fabric of this great Union, the majority of the rank and file came together to ensure the attacks from the outside did not destroy the solidarity necessary from the inside. Discourse can be healthy but it must never destroy our Union.

The year ended with school closures, layoff notices, and the district still in academic and financial turmoil. However, through it all we persevered.

No matter what the challenge, no matter how frustrated we were with central administration, you, the ones in the trenches delivering instruction and instructional support, never wavered in the performance of your duties to the children of Detroit.

So for the last edition of the Detroit Teacher this school year, I would like to offer special thanks to some very special people.

• **The DFT Bargaining Team:** Mershira Oliver, Paula Trilety, Felecia Clark and AFT Michigan President David Hecker were invaluable assets during negotiations. I often bounced ideas off of them to get a feeling for the reaction of the rank and file as we attempted to protect our jobs and

benefits while helping DPS reduce the deficit.

• **Executive Vice President Mark O'Keefe and Financial Analyst Patrick Falcusan:** Without their financial knowledge and ingenuity we never would have been able to avoid layoffs, pay and benefit reductions, and other concessions that would have created tremendous financial hardship for our members. Even though we were criticized for the TIP plan, most of our members have come to realize that we exercised the best options available.

• **The DFT Executive Board:** It was not easy for them to support a contract that was negotiated during the most desperate time in DPS and DFT history. They provided unyielding support to me and to Mark as we acted in the best interest of the DFT.

• **The Labor Relations Administrators: Mershira Oliver, Judy Smith, Terrence Martin and Karin Whittler** carried the mantle during trying times as they went out to schools, met with staff, and represented the rights and interests of our members. They remained steadfast in their commitment to always put the best interests of the membership first.

• **To the office staff: I can't thank Barbara Downey, Estella Burnette, Linda Wilson and Samarrah Thomas** enough for all they had endure and for their patience and support throughout this year. Whatever was needed was done right and with a smile. This includes our custodian, Lisa Downey, who set up, broke down, cleaned and maintained the Union hall and the grounds, and to our security officer Mike Guyton who was always there for whatever was needed, even during weekends and holidays when the hall was in use.

• **To my assistant Holley Sabotchick and our controller Vito Peraino:** Holley always reminded me of the values of leadership that preceded me in this office, standards established by presidents Mary Ellen Riordan, John Elliott, Janna Garrison and Virginia Cantrell. She reminded

me that sometimes the membership may not understand why you do what you know you have to do. Yet your first obligation is to always act in their best interest. Vito has done a phenomenal job of restoring this Union to fiscal solvency. Though not out of the

but, more important, to working together on those issues that unite us while resolving the issues for which we share a different point of view.

I wish all of you the safest and most enjoyable summer for you and your families. To those who have retired, I



DFT President Keith Johnson gives thanks at the 2010 Building Rep Dinner.

woods, the DFT is financially stronger because of Vito's leadership and smart business decisions.

• **To our editor and webmaster, Margaret Weertz:** Thank you for upgrading the Detroit Teacher into an award-winning newspaper. You have also made our DFT website relevant and up-to-date, saturated with the success stories of our members and their students. Your work has been nothing short of outstanding.

• **The DFT rank and file:** I know this has not been an easy year for you given all you had to endure and all you sacrifice. Yet as I visited 89 meetings with staff throughout the year, you have always shown me respect, courtesy, and support, even when you didn't agree with me. To those who have been the most critical of me, I also owe thanks. Even though we may have been diametrically opposed on some issues, you always gave me cause to think in order to be sure that I could validate a position I took on behalf of the DFT. In some instances you showed me how in the future I can do some things differently, if not better. I appreciate your candor and passion for the rights of our members, the welfare of the children and the school district, and the respect for our profession. I look forward to more spirited debates

thank you for your service to the children of Detroit and to the DFT. You make me proud to be a DFT member, let alone its president.

As I often say, as president I may be the face of this Union but you are definitely its strength.

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Building Reps Honored at Dinner

(See more Building Rep photos elsewhere in this issue.)



For their tireless efforts this year, DFT Building Representatives were treated to dinner at the Doubletree Hotel June 4.

“This last year you have been absolutely remarkable,” said DFT President Keith Johnson. “Nobody could have been more disappointed with the conditions under which we had to negotiate this contract. The objective is not to keep members happy, but to keep them working,” he said. Johnson said unionism was a great era in this country and it should have a rebirth.

“We must pass it on to other generations,” he said. Some of the very people vilifying unions are people who benefitted from them.

“They should not try to vilify the union,” he said. “They should praise it. They were able to go to college because their parents and grandparents were members of unions.”

Labor leaders at the dinner highlighted the constant pressure union workers are under in this Great Recession. But they reminded the building reps that public school teachers are right.

“It’s very sad for the right wing to attack teachers,” said Mark Gaffney, AFL-CIO president. “It’s a very sad thing for a country.”

“We always scapegoat somebody when times are bad but hang in there. You are right. You are always right.”



BLUE PIGS PLAY AT CARSTENS — Was it the teachers or the kids who enjoyed it more? The Detroit Police’s Blue Pigs performed June 1 at Carstens Elementary School singing tunes from Motown to current hip-hop. The Blue Pigs’ message is the same as it has been for decades: stay in school and stay safe in the neighborhood.

Powerful Graduation Ceremony at Ferguson

More than 60 Catherine Ferguson Academy seniors clad in white caps and gowns got their sheepskins June 7 at a tearful ceremony at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.



Just days later it was announced that the school for student mothers would stay open.

“Many doubted my ability to attain my graduation,” said Brittany Stephenson, the valedictorian. “I decided not to be another stereotype of a teen mother dropping out of school.”

Kimbreiya Matthews, the salutatorian, said she now has a bigger mission than herself.

“I have hit the books here at CFA as I’ve always done,” Matthews said. “But I now have to do it for myself and my son, the most important person in my life.”

Indeed, said Principal Asenath Andrews.

“You don’t get to pick your ancestors,” Andrews said. “But you can definitely pick the ancestor you want to become.”

Retirements Announced:

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Debra Elaine Williams, Marilyn Maxwell-Peoples, Mearon Lewers, Delores Corley, Vilanda Prograis, Nito Ossman, Jonathan Kline, Jacob Ishakis, Oni Akilah, Houston Hudson, Lillie Gladney, Lanell Lasenby, Theresa Carroll, Sharon Williams, Darlene Barbara, Toyia Sterrett, Shirlene Ayers and Rita Herrera. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

The DFT and AFT-Michigan

Endorse:

Democrat

Virg Bernero

For

Michigan Governor

Vote August 3!

The student gave the right answer to the question. But it was wrong. “Do we all know why we’re here?” Robert Carabelli asked a Chrysler Elementary School fifth-grade class.

“To learn,” a student said, to a burst of laughs from photographers and reporters. Carabelli, president of the Old Newsboys’ Goodfellow Fund of Detroit, visited Chrysler June 16 to honor fifth-grade teacher Antonia Gibson.

Though the Detroit Goodfellows has been around for 96 years, this is the first year the charitable organization sponsored a contest to honor a Detroit teacher. And Gibson goes down in history as its first-ever Goodfellow Teacher of the Year.

Gibson won a \$200 gift card, pizza party and a tribute breakfast. Her 11-year-old student, Gill Foster, wrote the

Goodfellows Honor Chrysler Teacher

winning essay of more than 200.

“My teacher Mrs. Gibson is the best teacher in the whole world to me,” Foster wrote. He said Gibson enters lots of contests herself, like the free field trip to the Detroit Institute of Arts. The class goes on lots of field trips. And Gibson started the school’s first student council.

“Our class has come together from a lot of rubber bands to a big rubber band ball. So please pick us,” he wrote.

The students agree that Gibson is an outstanding educator after 34 years of teaching, 21 of them in Detroit. “She’s

the bomb,” said Kierah Alford, 11.

“I thought she’d be nice but not this nice,” said Kailyn Jefferson, 11.

Chrysler Principal Linda Whitaker said Gibson came to Chrysler this year a bit shy.

“She’s like a butterfly to me that’s kind of held closed,” Whitaker said before encouraging Gibson to do all the things she excels at.

“All she needed was support.”

Gibson says 21 years of teaching in Detroit “refined me.” Though the challenges are immense, she found a way to

face each day.

“Teachers have to focus on closing the door and teaching the kids,” she said. “Try to put the power struggles aside for now.”



Gill Foster and Antonia Gibson

Northwestern Teacher Rejuvenates Library with \$6,000 Grant

When Maureen Meuser was transferred to Northwestern High School this year, she found the media center woefully antiquated. Only 300 books had been circulated the year before.

“A lot of the books hadn’t been checked out since 1984,” says Meuser, a 16-year Detroit teacher. She began an assessment of the library and found its collection was

dated and poorly used. She read in *The Detroit Teacher* about grants teachers kept winning. So she went about applying for her own.

In June, Meuser received a \$6,000 check from the Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries. The Laura Bush Foundation was established in 2002 and this year awarded more than \$1 mil-



lion in grants to 188 schools. Northwestern and a school in Wilson, Mich. were the only schools in Michigan to receive grants.

Meuser reinvigorated the library with an infusion of popular books and African American fiction. This year 2,500 books have circulated. Some titles in the popular Bluford series circulated 80 times.

“If you have the right books, they’ll be circulated,” she says. Meuser developed a point system where students are listed on the wall by how many texts they read. Lining the outside of the library are photos of high-point students holding their favorite books, which advertized which books were available.

“We really try to promote reading in this school,” she said. Joseph Adams (above), a junior, is listed in the 500 point club, the highest, having read 39 books this year.

“I loved reading since I was little,” he said. “I remember stuff really well. If I read five books a week I’ll remember all of them.”

Another avid reader passed by Meuser’s desk to sign a library release form to graduate. “I don’t think I want to sign this,” Meuser said. Why, he asked.

“Because I don’t want you to go.”



AFT Michigan Rally for Adequate Funding of Public Education

“If you want an educated community, doggone it, you’ve got to invest in it,” said DFT President Keith Johnson at a May 24 rally at the DFT.

Teachers, support staff and elected officials joined the rally organized by AFT Michigan. State Senator Irma Clark-Coleman, State Rep. Coleman Young Jr., State Rep. Jimmy Womack, a Michigan Education Association representative, and others attended to show their support for education.

While districts across Michigan grapple with under-funding of public education, we are coming together to preserve quality public education, a right for every child.

WSU AFT Local 6075 President Charlie Parrish said we have to start funding the right things in Michigan and stop funding the wrong things.

“We don’t need to spend all that money on corrections,” Parrish said. “We need to reform corrections.”

Clark-Coleman said Michigan has cut its budget to the “bone marrow.” Simply put, it needs more revenue. The solution, she said, is a graduated income tax.

Hutchinson Stages Spectacular Plays

It's not the Fox Theater, but pretty close.

A play at Hutchinson School has all the color, costumes and set design of a professional production, thanks to director La'Wanda Rogan, a special education teacher.



Though it's not in her purview, and the student actors are general ed, Rogan took on the massive production of "The Lion King" in June.

"I like drama," says Rogan, who has worked for Detroit Public Schools for 21 years.

It all started two years ago when a colleague enlisted Rogan's help on set design

to stage "The Wiz." Rogan ended up co-directing and the production was stunning. They teamed up last year to do "The Lion King" but the production got cancelled and the colleague went to another school.

"I figured we needed to do this," Rogan said. "I feel it's something the kids need."

Students from first- to seventh-grade filled spots for 15 main characters and 19 animal characters to pull off the 90-minute unabridged production. And students are rewarded richly by the experience, even at times getting stubborn about how they wanted the production to go.

"It gives kids who might not have academic excellencies," Rogan said, "a chance to shine in other areas."



CMA Junior Torri Livingston

C.M.A. Wins Extreme Makeover

Even with broken windows, a leaky ceiling and a dysfunctional heating system, Kavon Lewis and Torri Livingston love their school.

And why not?

Communication & Media Arts school has a 17-year legacy as a quality Detroit application high school. It graduates more than 95 percent of its students and has a 98 percent attendance rate. But the program has been in three buildings and was slated to close in the fall.

"I love this school," says Lewis, 17. "It's a great school. It's just a terrible building.

"We see the bigger picture. We come here for an education, not to be in a pretty building. But CMA was due for something like this."

Livingston says the school's karma goes beyond the busted window shades.

"The feeling of the school is great," Livingston said. "We have good students here and great teachers."

The two juniors took a crew from NBC's "School Pride" — an "Extreme Makeover"-type show for schools — on a tour of the building.

"The paint was coming down from the ceiling," Lewis said. "It was raining really bad that day and rain was coming into the building."

CMA won the makeover, thanks to the students' two-hour tour and interview with the producer. Renovations will be done in August and revealed on Aug. 6. The CMA community is seeking thousands of volunteers to help by going to www.schoolpridevolunteers.com.



Kavon Lewis

Brother to Brother Session at Taft Elementary

By Judy Summers

The eighth-grade team at Taft Middle School hosted a "Brother to Brother" session this spring for eighth grade boys. The boys listened intently to a dynamic panel of speakers including



Mayor Archer

the Honorable Dennis Archer, State Re. Jimmy Womack, Rev. Arric Wilkerson of Up From the World Ministries, and Toyota's Bruce Covington.

The speakers gave advice to the boys on how to reach their goals and potential in life.

The men expressed the importance of finding joy in their career choices and not just wealth. They impressed upon the boys that one can achieve more legally than illegally. The passionate advice to reach back and help others was compelling.

The boys applauded the awesome men of the Detroit chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity, whose generous grant made the event possible. The Kappa men — Michael Taylor, Rod Arnold, Bruce Covington, Mike Fox and Charles Shepherd — interacted with

the boys in a professional yet warm and positive way.

The Rev. Scottie Jones of Faith Redemption Center and Rev. Jim Lee of Renaissance Unity shared special stories. Joseph Norman, our former resident photographer and physical education teacher, who left last year due to low enrollment, came back to spend time with the boys.

A special "thank you" goes out to our principal Naomi Lewis and the eighth-grade team!



Taft teachers (from left) Linda Beltzman, Gracie Brown, Judy Summers, Cheryl Vincent, Brenda Gardner and Lori Taylor (retired).

Marquette Students Learn the Magic of Puppetry



Computer science teacher Cathy Wilkins put together a collection of large, soft, brown puppets she acquired through her church. They were pretty puppets, except for Dara. "Nobody wanted to be Dara," says Wilkins, a 28-year Detroit teacher.

The eighth-grade students at Marquette Middle School used the puppets to communicate, solve problems and write skits about their feelings.

"Students share their problems and opinions every day but often they have difficulty trying to work through them," Wilkins said. "When I first introduced my students to puppetry they all laughed at me."

As time went by, however, students started showing up at her door during lunchtime asking about the puppets. Then a strange thing happened. Kids started to give Dara a second chance. "Now everyone wants to be Dara," Wilkins said.

Today Wilkins reports that the students love working with puppets because they are allowed to be creative through their writing. And puppetry lends room for expression. "When you allow students other ways to communicate, it helps them see the problem in a different light and understand other ways to resolve issues on their own," Wilkins says.

The puppets created an atmosphere of calmness in room 101 and helped the pre-teens become a team. They performed "Empire State of Mind" by Alicia Keys and Jay-Z. They performed a short skit entitled "Wonderfully Made," written by a Cass Tech English teacher, part of a project on conflict resolution.

"After being in the classroom for 28 years, you learn to try new and innovative things with the students," Wilkins says. "I found that they love sharing what matters to them in the world."



TIGERS BASEBALL AT SCHULZE — Students at Schulze Elementary School worked on their baseball skills, thanks to the efforts of teacher William Weir, who runs a baseball camp during the summer. Weir called the Detroit Tigers and Samuel Abrams (above), Tigers manager of youth and sports programs. Abrams gave the students free Tigers T-shirts and batting, catching and running lessons. Weir runs a "Boys to Men" mentoring program. "We were trying to think of a way to keep our boys together through summer," Weir said. So he formed a summer baseball team. Running the team is immensely satisfying, says Weir. "This is what I look forward to all year."

THE DETROIT NEWSM

The Lost Art of Letter Writing

By Charlene Uresy

With Martha Reeves and the Vandellas hit song "Please Mr. Post Man" playing through the public address system, the students are summoned to exchange their pen pal letters.

Each week students at Spain School are participants in SWEET, an anagram for



Spain

Spain Writing Engaging — a campaign to improve

SWEET was set in motion by Beth Dzodin-Fuchs and her colleagues only to improve writing. She wanted to see the value in journalism and wanted students to experience the joy of receiving letters and

Recently with a gathering of students from third through eighth grade, a group assembly was called. SWEET was the name of the Lost Form of Letter Writing. The students wore T-shirts with words and idioms printed on them. They were given new words to their vocabulary and the meaning of their shirts.

A program explained to the students at an assembly, followed by a writing activity. The program was written and read by eighth-grade student teacher Norbert Kidd and a drama teacher, asked the students what they enjoyed most about writing

ROIT teacher MAKERS



Students participate in SWEET — a writing program.

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At the end of the program students exchanged letters and read each others' T-shirts. They recited definitions of the new words they added to their vocabulary with zeal and enthusiasm!

In this fast-paced and ever changing world of technology, rediscovering the Lost Form of Letter Writing is creating a personal and wonderful feeling from the students. They know that someone took the time to write to them.

SWEET is teaching them that a simple and lovely letter will make both the writer and receiver happy. It will improve their writing, reading and vocabulary. It will make them more inquisitive about their world. It will make them more thoughtful and caring. It might even save the United States Post Office!

Because one good deed, can lead to another — the simple act of engaging writing will make Spain students smarter and better citizens of the world.



SCIENCE ROCKS AT CLIPPERT ACADEMY — In March, students at Clippert Academy won four gold medals at the Metro Detroit Science Fair and two second-place medals at the Wayne County Science Olympiad Regional Competition under the direction of George Goff (Science Fair) and Kathy Meloche (Science Olympiad). Clippert was once again the only Detroit Public School to compete at the Olympiad Tournament. We are very proud of our students' achievements! The Science Fair gold winners were: Brandis Jones, first-place gold; Andres Marquez, first-place gold; Mariana Moreno, second-place gold; and Manuel Villareal, second-place gold. The Science Olympiad winners were: Russell Palmer and Adrian Silva who won second-place in the event "Get Your Bearing."

Golightly Teacher Takes Kids to Science Camp

David Boye knows interesting things happen when you take kids outdoors.



The sixth-grade teacher at Golightly Educational Center wanted his students to go to science camp. Boye saw a grant publicized on television and he went for it.

Thanks to the \$5,000 Pepsico Foundation grant, Boye took 60 fifth- and sixth-graders this spring to Camp Tamarack in Ortonville, Mich. For three days, students experienced nature and science concepts at once.

They studied owls, raptors, birds of prey, the weather (constructing a weather station using materials won through donorschoose.org), food chains and food webs, and native American cultures.

"We did a lot of science stuff we couldn't do here," says Boye, an 11-year teacher. "And it was great to take some of the kids who never cooked a s'more."

Boye says the outdoor experience brings out different perspectives in kids.



"Some excel so greatly in that environment," he said. "Some students have a naturalist intelligence."

"You see a whole different side of them that you don't see in the classroom."

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(seated) Joann Olivache, Sidney Lee, Richele Oliver, (standing) Marilynn Jackson, Priscilla Penelton, Karen Hamilton.



(seated) Denise Thomas, Becky Szymaszek, Nancy Muerhoff, Amanda Brooks, (standing) Corey Stokes, Mike Shenk, and Greg Johnson.



(seated) Diane Smith, Jan Curry, Valda Adams, (standing) Vanessa Rasheed, Marcus Walton and Lawrence Neely.



(seated) Dietta Atkins, Felicia Langford, Donyelle Johnson, (standing) Daryl Newman, Lakeisha Simpson, Carla Henry and Raymond Brown.



(seated) Pat McPherson, Melaine Tillman, Miranda Washington, (standing) Frances Borg, Erica Rolack and Leslee Przygodski.



(seated) Sandra Ambrose, Dorian Evans, Samele Ambrose, (standing) Terrence Martin, Michael Nodler, Mershira Oliver and Johnny Mickles.



(seated) Marion Frehsee, Anita Daly, Wendy Newberry, Sandra Battle, (standing) Yvonne Brady, Marjorie Jones, LaShawn Sims, Yolanda Stewart.



(seated) Lisa Scott, Louvera Lawrence, Deborah Scott, Michelle Broughton-Gibson, (standing) Carol Steward, Virginia Graham, Beverly Wilkerson, Wanda Hogg and Kim Travis-Ewing.



(seated) Mark O'Keefe, AFL-CIO Michigan President Mark Gaffney, Melvin Evans of Co-op Optical, Mary Ellen Gurewitz of Sachs Waldman, AFT Michigan President David Hecker, Dave Scott of Delta Dental, (standing), George Barnes of Heritage Optical, Metro Detroit AFL-CIO President Sandra Williams, Keith Johnson, Nadonya Muslim, Felecia Clark, Luther Bradley of Blue Cross, Mike Dexter of HAP.



(seated) Keith Littsey, Judith Harper, Lillie Gladney, (standing) Evelyn Foreman, Debra Washington and Doneta Webb.



(seated) Lorraine Jeter, Valeria Hatten-Mathis, Mearon Lewers, (standing) Desiree Clinksdale, Sandra Hughes and Clyde Lewers.

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(seated) Vida Bonacci, Deanna Vanderbilt, Geraldine Johnson, Mary Helen D'Angelo, (standing) Martha Bills, Cathy Schrock, Frank Squeo, Tracy Arneau, Chris Abood and Robin McDaniel.



(seated) Margaret Weertz, Michelle Puryear, Jennetta Clark, (standing) Judy Smith, Patrick Falcusan, Mark Moroni, Vito Peraino and Lisa Downey.



Luther Bradley of Blue Cross and DFT Executive Vice President Mark O'Keefe.



Benjamin Edwards Jr., Ethelle King, Kemmie Holmes and Lenny Barnes



Felecia Clark and Jennetta Clark



Karen Hamilton and Ethelle King from Co-Op Optical.

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(seated) DFT President Emeritus John Elliott, (standing) George Adams and William Gardner.



(seated) Peggy McConnell, Luciana Simpkins, Paul Perich, Latrice Dawkins, Jymmie Turner, (standing) Christal Bonner, LaVeta Browne, Robin Partmon, Sherry Samuel and Kathy Osinski.



Sandra Hughes, George Barnes and Mearon Lewers.



Dave Scott of Delta Dental



Deborah Scott



Keith Johnson honors retired Sachs Waldman attorney Eileen Nowikowski for her many years of service to the DFT.

BUILDING REPS GIVING REPS DINNER

BUILDING REPS



JUMPING



THROUGH



HOOPS



Sisters Kept Union Dinner Afloat

Samele and Sandra Ambrose are a DFT fixture and not because they are identical twins. The twins have been a mainstay on the DFT Executive Board, the AFT Michigan Administration Board, the COPE committee and the Work Action Committee and countless DFT functions. They're punctual and dependable and hard-working.

Some 26 years ago, they were asked to cut the DFT birthday cake. They got people laughing and turned the event into such fun that DFT Administrative Assistants Frances Hill and E. Rhusha Scales took note. Soon, Hill and Scales floated an idea to the Ambroses about hosting a dinner at which all building representatives would be honored for their year of service. "They watched us at the birthday party and how the response to us was overwhelming," Samele said. "Everyone had a good time so he asked us if we'd be the hostesses."

Through the years, the sisters have hosted the dinner at such elegant venues as the Renaissance Center, Ford Field, and the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. They hosted through the presidencies of John Elliott, Janna Garrison, Virginia Cantrell and Keith Johnson. "You meet people," said Sandra. "People know who you are. They say, 'I look forward to seeing the twins.'" The twins remember years when the building reps from 300 schools attended, when the union was flush and prime rib and complimentary drink tickets were de rigueur. Today they enjoy themselves just the same.

Who will take their place? "We'll be back," Samele says. "If we're asked, there's always room for the DFT," says Sandra.



Mike Dexter of HAP congratulates Wendy Newberry, who won a golf club bag.