

THE DETROIT teacher

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DFT Files Class Action Grievance on Seniority Violations

The DFT filed a Step 2 Class Action Grievance Sept. 28 on behalf of teachers whose seniority may have been violated with recent layoffs and recalls. The DFT received detailed information on layoffs and recalls late last week. The union worked over the weekend to compile the information and then filed the grievance Sept. 28.

Most of the apparent violations relate to either the Teach For America program or Priority Schools. Teach for America candidates can remain on the job only if all certified members in that subject area have been recalled. The district has the option to keep lower-seniority members at Priority Schools. However, the higher seniority member who would then face lay-off must instead be made a Contract Teacher At Large, maintaining pay and benefits.

Almost half of the people who are laid off or just received notices could be affected. Please don't call to ask if you are on the list because a final determination of who is affected cannot be made until the case is settled. We will keep you posted.



Famed Neurosurgeon Ben Carson Visits Detroit

As a domestic worker for a middle class family, Ben Carson's mother saw something different there. She saw the family go about life differently.

"They spent a lot of time reading," the mother noticed. "They didn't spend a lot of time watching TV and messing around."

His mother came home, turned off the TV and made her two sons read books.

"It was really having a mother with the foresight to understand the real importance of education," Carson said in Detroit Sept. 29 to dedicate the new Dr. Benjamin Carson High School of Science and Medicine at Crockett Career and Technical Center.

Carson started to love reading, gobbling up books, then art, then classical music. "I was learning stuff I couldn't even imagine."

Carson decided as a young man at Detroit's Southwestern High School to pursue medicine. A renowned pediatric neurosurgeon, Carson has successfully separated conjoined twins. Now he is the director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Carson addressed the 124-member fresh-

man class of the school, telling them that to stand out, they have to risk acting differently than their peers, and must go beyond the classroom in educating themselves.

"I'll tell you, I'm not a genius," he said. "I'm just like you guys. No difference at all. Same dreams. Same hopes." He was a "horrible student," in fact, and a troublemaker. He lost a year to acting foolishly. But he eventually learned the most important lesson for success: delayed gratification.

Some of his classmates told him he was crazy to want to be a doctor and go to school so many years.

"A funny thing happened," Carson said. "When I finished school, they were the same age I was."

"The difference is I took personal responsibility for my education," he said. "And that's what you have to do. The teacher can only teach so much. They can spark the interest."

He told the students that success isn't measured by a spacious home, luxury car, or fancy vacations.

"Success is using your god-given talents to elevate someone else."

See BEN CARSON, on Page 5

AFT DETROIT: Three Locals With One Mission, Fight For Our Rights

By Keith Johnson, DFT President

The DFT, the Detroit Federation of Paraprofessionals, and the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employees have joined forces to form AFT Detroit. We have taken this action not just because we are all affiliates of the AFT, but because we are all under attack locally, statewide, and nationally from those who are anti-public education and certainly anti-union.



Keith Johnson

Ruby Newbold (DAEOE), Donna Jackson (DFP) and I have always had great respect for each other and have always worked together.

Too often, however, we were consumed with the challenges facing our individual members. With the actions of the legislature and the Emergency Managers (Bobb and Roberts), the challenges facing us have unprecedented overlap that requires us to stand up for each other.

We are in a state where an injury to one is

an injury to all and we cannot afford the luxury of fighting our attackers individually. A united front of the three locals can be more formidable than the individual unions fighting on their own.

We all are involved in the education of the whole child. While teachers are directly involved in teaching our students, the contributions of paraprofessionals and clericals working with students and parents cannot be underestimated.

For the past two summers the three locals sponsored the AFT Detroit Literacy Camp. We recruited volunteers from the three locals to spend a week working with our students to build that learning bridge between the end of school and the start of the new school year.

Last May AFT president Randi Weingarten had an unprecedented meeting with the executive boards and the building reps from the three locals to strategize a defense against the attacks on our collective bargaining rights and the abrogation of our contracts - contracts that were heavy on concessions from all three unions.

We recently conducted a joint building

representatives workshop that focused on member mobilization, building one-to-one relationships with our own members as well as members of our sister unions. The workshop allowed members to see that while we may serve in different capacities, our challenges are the same.

We filed a joint lawsuit in federal court challenging the abrogation of our rights from Public Act 4, the Emergency Manager Law, which gives unlimited authority to the EM without regard to the will of the voting public or contracts negotiated in good faith.

AFT Detroit will work hard to represent our constituents and fight the battles we face together. Combining our resources allows us to maximize the assistance from our national organization and our president Randi Weingarten.

I encourage all DFT members to close ranks with each other and the paraprofessionals and secretaries in your buildings and conduct joint meetings to keep informed as AFT Detroit engages in the fight of our lives.

We are three locals, but one union: AFT DETROIT!

Robert Reich: Get People Back to Work

Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, who served in the Clinton, Carter and Ford administrations, told a Wayne State University audience Sept. 16 that the employer of last resort — the government — should put Americans back to work.

Reich said businesses don't need tax breaks, they're sitting on \$2 trillion in cash and still not hiring. "Businesses aren't going to hire unless there are customers," Reich said at a WSU conference on the future of retirement.



Robert Reich

Reich, a progressive economist and political commentator, said the American economy is in a vicious cycle. Customers aren't

spending and businesses are cutting back for lack of customers.

In the last three decades, he said, the median wage has not grown. Yet the economy is twice as big. American labor became more productive. Because more jobs are automated (in banks, gas stations etc.) and more jobs went overseas, wages flattened. The way the American family has coped with flattened wages is

tri-fold: women went to work to add to the family income, Americans worked longer hours, and we went into deeper debt.

The jobs that remain are service oriented and not unionized. With the consolidation of jobs but the expansion of the economy, where did the wealth go? Reich says it went to the top one percent of the wealthy. In the 1970s the top one percent owned nine percent of the wealth. In 2007, they owned 23 percent.

The only other time this large consolidation of wealth happened was in 1928, just before Wall Street crashed and the Depression started.

Reich called for higher tax rates at the top, which met applause. The first three decades after WWII, the highest tax rate on the top earner never fell below 70 percent.

"No one would have called Dwight Eisenhower a socialist," Reich said. "Under Eisenhower, the top tax rate was 91 percent."

Reich called for government spending on infrastructure, research and education, especially early childhood education, and teacher pay.

"We've got to make sure teachers are paid enough," he said. "If we want talented men and women to go into teaching, we have to pay them enough."

THE DETROIT teacher

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**NO
ROLL-
BACKS**

Detroit Federation of Teachers



Carol Thomas: Fighter for Teachers

Carol Christensen Thomas, 83, passed away Aug. 21 in Bluffton, South Carolina. She was born in Royal Oak, Michigan on Aug. 5, 1928, the daughter of Frederick and Lucille Christensen. She was married to Duane Thomas for 53 years. She graduated with degrees in education from Wayne State University and the University of Michigan.

Thomas taught elementary grades in the Detroit Public Schools until she was appointed executive vice president in 1980, where she served until 1996.

She was very active in improving education in public schools in Detroit and Michigan. Her educational efforts brought appointment to the Michigan State Board of Education — Technology, Certification and School Improvement Councils. She was a commissioner, board member and past president of the Detroit Public Library.

She was a vice president of the Michigan Federation of Teachers and was appointed to the board of the Skillman Foundation Education Program and Detroit Compact — Teacher Evaluation Program. She was the first recipient of the Horace Sheffield Award for contributions to educational equality.

“She was revered by elementary teachers because she never forgot that she came from the classroom,” said her long-time friend and union activist Paula Trilety. “She concentrated her efforts on improving conditions for elementary teachers.”

“Carol was great,” DFT President Keith Johnson said. “She was a very under-rated negotiator.” Thomas was instrumental in bringing to the table critical issues such as lesson plans, class size and assault pay. She championed a daily prep period for teachers.

A scholarship award in her name has been established within the Detroit Federation of Teachers Scholarship Fund for students pursuing a teaching degree.

In remembrance of Carol, contributions can be made to the Detroit Federation of Teachers Scholarship Fund c/o of the DFT, 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit MI, 48202.

Competition Versus Cooperation

By Mark O’Keefe, Executive Vice President

Two of my favorite hobbies are fishing and bird-watching. I have noticed a big difference between fishermen and birdwatchers. Fishermen are reluctant to tell you where the fish are biting or what they are biting on, because the more fish you catch, the less fish are left for them.

On the other hand, birdwatchers are happy to tell you where they saw an interesting bird. They will give precise directions, including time of day, and GPS coordinates. That’s because your success does not diminish their success. In fact, the more help they give to others, the more they get in return.

The difference is competition versus cooperation. Until now, teachers have operated in a cooperative environment. New laws will change that to a competitive environment.



Mark O’Keefe

Tenure protections that required school districts to fire only for just cause are gone. Instead, the district only has to show that its decision was not arbitrary and capricious. In other words, as long as it has a reason, the district can fire you.

When our contract expires on June 30, 2012, it will be illegal to use seniority as a factor in recalling teachers from layoff. As a result, **no teacher has job security**. Every teacher is competing against every other teacher for the ever diminishing number of teaching positions in Detroit.

Most new teachers need help from experienced teachers. Later in their careers, most teachers are happy to return the favor by mentoring new teachers. Even experienced teachers learn from each other as they share ideas. Now that our jobs may depend on getting higher test scores than the teacher next door, will teachers continue to help each other?

I know a lawyer who was in law school when researching cases required reference books, not computers. She was unable to find the cases she was researching for a school assignment, because another student had torn the pages from the book in the law library to boost his success and hinder someone else’s. The state’s actions will reward this type of behavior in teachers.

Teachers who thought they were entering a cooperative, nurturing profession will feel like a fish out of water in the competitive, cutthroat schools Lansing is creating.

THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

Detroit Meteorologist Visits Spain

By Charlene Uresy

Andrew Humphrey, the Emmy award winning meteorologist on WDIV Channel 4, visited Spain School in September. He talked about his love and curiosity for the weather and sports as a child growing up in the Washington D.C. area. As he got older, he knew he did not have the talent to become a professional athlete.

But he did have the aptitude to become a meteorologist. Humphrey shared this with the students, telling them he took lots of science and math courses. Whatever it is you want to be in life, he said, you must prepare yourself now while you are in school. After his presentation he spent another hour talking individually to several students. They were thrilled to have his attention.



(From left) Daniel Burton, Delsharr Jackson, Darius Britton, Andrew Humphrey, Taveon Brown, Desity Davis, Reagan Woodfork, and Principal Ron Alexander.

The School Bus Is the Safest Way

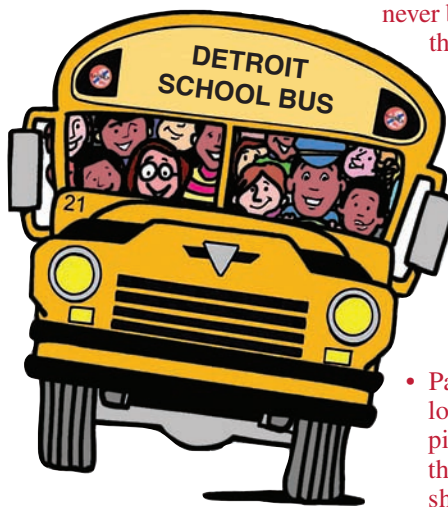
As schools across the country begin to welcome children back to school this week, Student Transportation of America (STA), the third-largest school bus contractor in North America, reminds parents that riding a school bus remains one of the safest forms of transportation on the road. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, riding a bus to school is 13 times safer than riding in a passenger vehicle and 10 times safer than walking to school. A single school bus also can eliminate as many as 36 cars, reducing congestion around schools and the carbon imprint on communities.

School buses are designed specifically to protect students on and off the bus with special safety features not available on any other vehicle, said Don Weir, STA's director of passenger safety and compliance. "The reality of school bus safety is that there are more risks outside the bus than riding inside as a passenger," Weir said. "Safety is all about finding ways to eliminate risk."

This year, as school district budget cuts resulted in some elimination of bus routes for many students, Weir fears that more and more parents will be driving their children to school or carpooling, creating an even greater need for safety awareness. The following is a series of safety tips.

Safety Tips for Students:

- Be on time for your school bus and never run after or next to a bus.
- If the windows are down on a hot day, keep your head and arms inside the bus.
- Stay away from the Danger Zones. Areas within 10 feet to the front, back and sides of a bus are considered the most dangerous spots.
- If you drop something near the bus, never bend down or crawl under the bus to get it — ask your bus driver for help.



- If you must cross the street, always do so in front of the bus. Make sure the red lights are flashing and walk in front of the crossing gate arm that extends in front of the school bus.
- Pay attention. Listen and look both ways before stepping off the bus or crossing the street. Don't let sweat-shirt hoods or headphones block your vision or hearing.

"Just as motorists have a responsibility not to drive distracted, students have a responsibility not to walk distracted," said Weir.

"In the beginning of the school year we see a greater risk of students rushing to make their bus, especially kids who stepped-up and are going to middle school or high school for the first time and have to get up earlier than they're used to," Weir said.

Dancing With Their Stars

When Remus Robinson Principal Sharon Lee wanted to do something special at her school, the staff came together. When they started the Mother-Son Dance two years ago, everyone got busy.

"Our staff is unique," said Donna Taylor-Hughes, a special education aide. "We all come and make it happen." This year the Remus Robinson staff combined with the Carstens Elementary School students and staff. The building is renamed Carstens.

The school hopes to carry on some of those wonderful traditions under the new name. Alleccia Bowman, a special education assistant, was the go-to person on staff and hustled to pull together events and programs. She called community members and retirees who came back willingly to join the fun.

Last spring, the second annual mother-son dance was well organized and attended, thanks to the whole school community. It was especially memorable for Taylor-Hughes, left, who worked the dance and enjoyed it with her handsome and well-suited sons De' Shon, 4, De'Jon, 7, and DeVon, 15.

"This age people think is very difficult," she said. "But it's fun to me because I look back and see what we used to be."



Ben Carson High School Opens at Crockett

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

The Dr. Benjamin Carson High School of Science and Medicine opened this year in the Crockett Career and Technical Center to a freshman class of 124 students. They will pursue courses in medicine and science.



Spanish teacher Mo Torres with students at the Dr. Benjamin Carson High School of Science and Medicine.

The Sept. 29 dedication ceremony featured Dr. Ben Carson. Sponsors also were at the dedication from Detroit Receiving Hospital, Michigan State University, MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine, MSU Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, MSU University Outreach and Engagement and Wayne State University's School of Medicine Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The partnerships will help to ready the students for these demanding careers.

WSU, for example, is fifth in the country to graduate the most African American doctors. Outside of historical black colleges, it is the first.

"We've been working with Ms. Brenda Belcher for the last few years collaborating on high school readiness," said Deandrea Wiggins, of the WSU School of Medicine Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Edna Jackson-Gray, also of the WSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion, said WSU created a pipeline to work with middle and high school students and then with students in college. They bring the students to WSU to work and study with faculty four times a year.

"We don't want to bend the system for the students," Jackson-Gray said. "We want to make the students more competitive so they can compete in that system."



WSU School of Medicine Office of Diversity and Inclusion partners with the school. Pictured above, from left, are Dr. Silas Norman, associate dean of WSU School of Medicine, Edna Jackson-Gray, Deandrea Wiggins, and Joseph Weertz.

Destination: Carnegie Hall



How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice. And a little cash.

The John R. King Academic & Performing Arts Academy's "Angelic Chorale" has been chosen by the National Middle School Choir Festival to perform in New York, on the prestigious stage of Carnegie Hall in March.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the students. The students and their teacher, Annette Anderson, above, are fundraising to garner the \$50,000 for the trip. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation, make checks payable to John R. King Academy-DPS (please reference Angelic Chorale) and mail to John R. King Academy, 15850 Strathmoor, Detroit, MI 48227, Attn: Principal Vivian Hughes-Norde or vocal music director Annette Anderson.





**By
Patrick
Falcusan
DFT
Retirement
Counselor**

Re-Thinking Your Retirement Timeline

Although hundreds of our members have retired in the last two years, some 1,600 folks are still eligible to retire including approximately 500 DFT members over age 55 but under 60 with more than 15 years of service credit but less than 30. They could be eligible for an early reduced pension. There also are hundreds more with 25 years of service but less than 30 who could buy up to five years so as to have 30 years and then be eligible for an unreduced pension.

All of these folks should have been pro-

ceeding toward retirement with not a care in the world. However, the plans of the state and EM Roy Roberts possibly could force hundreds of folks to retire by July 1 – years ahead of schedule.

The problem we have now is that some schools will be spun off into a new district next year and some may turn into charter schools. We do not know who will remain in DPS, who will go to the new state-run district, and who will go to a charter school.

- Those who remain with DPS will still be part of the retirement system.
- Those who go to the new state-run district (the EAA) may or may not be part of the retirement system.
- Those who end up at a charter school will almost certainly not be part of the retirement system.

Not being part of the retirement system (like folks in a charter school or perhaps the EAA district) after July 1, 2012 could result in a deferred pension and have major negative consequences regarding members' pensions and the cost of their health insurance.

Folks will need to make retirement plans based on where they end up working next year, but at this point nothing is certain — which schools will be a part of DPS and which staff will be part of DPS. (Once seniority is disallowed for purposes of layoffs and recalls — see related story — the principals will probably be major players in deciding who is to remain and who is not to remain.)

The folks who can retire by July 1, 2012 need to be ready to retire by July 1, 2012 if need be.

Timeline to Retirement

Once folks make the decision that they wish to retire, they usually ask: What do I do next? Following the countdown below should ensure a smooth transition from work to retirement.

- 4 months ahead – Call the State (1-800-381-5111) to get your retirement packet and retirement forms.
- 3 months ahead — Fill out the paper retirement forms (or go online — michigan.gov/orsmiaccount to apply). In addition, you will need to send to the retirement office copies of birth certificates or passports; an HMO application (if taking an HMO); a marriage license (if married). For children over 19, provide proof of being a full-time student and page one of federal tax form. If over 62, apply for Social Security at a Social Security office.
- 2 months ahead – If sheltering pay-out money (TIP monies, any pay still owing, etc.), discuss with TSA agent. If buying time (TDP account), call the Union (313-875-3500 ext. 783) for forms.
- 1 month ahead — File your Separation from Service form. To file your Separation from Service form:
 - * Go to the fourth floor of the Kahn Building (7430 Second Ave.).
 - * Get two Separation from Service forms.
 - * Fill out both copies.
 - * Check the retirement box.
 - * Have both copies date-stamped.
 - * Take one copy with you for your records.

When notifying the District of your interest to retire using the Separation from Service (SFS) form, always put the same date as your retirement date. Example: if your retirement date is July 1, 2012, also put July 1, 2012 as your retirement date on your SFS form that you file with HR (fourth floor Kahn Building). Do not put a retirement date in June. Make sure to file two SFS forms, get both forms date-stamped, and take one SFS form with you for your records.

* Note: Once submitted, a Separation from Service form is irrevocable.

Health Care Insurance in Retirement

- A regular unreduced pension includes health, dental and vision insurance.
- An early reduced pension includes health, dental and vision insurance.
- A deferred pension (a deferred pension is when there is a gap between working for a district that participates in the retirement system and the actual retirement date) may not include health, dental and vision insurance.

When one receives a deferred pension based on 20 years or less, there is no premium subsidy (the premium subsidy is the amount the retirement system pays). Your subsidy will be 10 percent for each year of credited service you have over 20 years.

With 25 years the subsidy increases to 50 percent. With 30 years of service, you will be entitled to the full subsidy.

Who is Eligible to Retire?

If you have Basic and are under age 60, you must be at least 55 and have 30 years of service in order to get an unreduced pension.

If you have MIP and are under age 60, you must be at least 46 and have at least 30 years of service in order to get an unreduced pension.

If you are at least 55 but less than 60, you are eligible for an early reduced pension if you have 15 years but less than 30 years of service.

If you are over 60, you are eligible for a pension if you have 10 years or more of service (Basic) or 5 years or more of service (MIP).

If you are over 55 but under 60 with more than 15 years but less than 30 years of service credit, you may decide to retire by July 1 to preserve your right to health care along with your early reduced pension.

If you are over 55 with 10 actual years worked, you might be able to buy five years to get you to the 15-year threshold.

If you are under age 55 and have more than 10 years of service, you are vested with the state retirement system and would be eligible for a pension at age 60 even if you never returned to teaching in a public school that was part of the pension system. The pension would be based on your years worked.

If you leave DPS and you have less than 10 years of service and are not vested, you could get a refund of your MIP contributions or leave your MIP contributions with the state in case you took employment with another public school in Michigan that was part of the retirement system. Your years in Detroit would then count toward the 10 years you needed in order to get vested.

Applying for Medicare

If you or your spouse are over 65 when you retire and want health care through the retirement system, you will need Medicare parts A and B. Almost all members over 65 already have Medicare part A, but not part B. Here is what you need to do to have part B in place by the time you retire.

- On your retirement insurance form, put the date from your Medicare card when Medicare part A started. Put your retirement date for the date Medicare part B started. (If you don't yet have part A, also put your retirement date for when part A started).

- Three months before you retire, go to Social Security and notify them of your retirement date and tell them you want your Medicare part B to be effective the same day as your retirement date (and part A if you don't already have part A).

- If Social Security gives you a Medicare form to be filled out by your employer (they almost always do), take that form to the fourth floor of the Kahn Building (Human Resources). (Make an extra copy of the form in case the first copy gets lost and you have to repeat this process).

- Submit the form from Social Security to the District along with a copy of your Separation from Service form. If this is the first time you have submitted your Separation from Service form, submit two copies, get them date-stamped and take one copy with you for your records.

- The District will fill out your form from Social Security and return it to you. (Usually you will have to leave the form and come back later to pick it up).

- Take the completed form back to Social Security. (Make a copy for your records).

After You Retire

Several questions always pop up when folks retire: What happens to my health care? When does the payment for TIP come? When does my pension start, etc.? Below are many of the answers.

Q: What happens to my health care?

A: Your district insurance will stop the last day of the month you retire (June 30 for those retiring July 1). Your new retirement insurance will start the first day of the month you retire (July 1 for those retiring July 1).

Q: What happens to my pay?

A: For those retiring July 1, one more regular check will come in July (both for 22 pays and 26 pays).

Q: I have 26 pays and retired July 1. What happens to the four checks that normally come in the summer?

A: Those four checks will come along with other monies owed you in one big final check.

Q: When will I get my final check for TIP monies, last four checks, etc.?

A: In most cases, the final payment will come in mid to late August for folks retiring July 1. If you are sheltering or buying time with any of this money, you must have notified the district ahead of time.

Q: When will my pension begin?

A: For most folks retiring July 1 the first pension payment will come July 25.

Q: Can I work after I retire?

A: You can not work for a school district that is part of the retirement system for one month after you retire.

Q: If I get a job after I retire, will I have a limit on how much I can earn?

A: New rules about working after retirement became effective July 1, 2010.

1. If you work for a school district that is part of the state retirement system and you become an employee of that school district and are paid directly by that school district, you will have an earnings cap of one-third of your final salary average — \$20,000-\$24,000 for most folks.

2. If you work for a school district that accepts state aid — all charter and public schools — but that district uses a third party to pay your wages, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from the third party.

3. If you become a consultant for a school district and are paid as a consultant and not an employee, your pension and health care will stop as long as you are receiving wages from that district.

4. If you work somewhere that is not accepting state aid — a private school, in private industry or a public school in another state beside Michigan — you can earn as much as you want.

Q: Will collecting Social Security impact how much I can earn?

A: Yes, between 62 and 66 (or your full Social Security age) there is a Social Security annual limit of approximately \$14,000 on how much can be earned without impacting your Social Security. After 66 (or your full Social Security age), Social Security does not have an earnings cap. The pension system's earnings cap will remain in place the rest of your life.

Garden Flourishes at Palmer Park Prep

From the garden at the Palmer Park Preparatory Academy, one could eat something different for a month.

There's ground cherries, spinach, cantaloupe, scallions, a bean tee pee, watermelon, beets, parsley, carrots, arugula, lettuce, basil, eggplant.

And to make it all look nice, there are roses and zinnias.

Each of its first three years, the garden produced several beautiful watermelons.

"The neighbors had a couple but we only ate one," Priscilla Dziubek said, laughing off the neighbors who helped themselves to the fruits of the garden. That's what it's there for.

And for the kids in the school.

"We're trying to connect children with nature and we're trying to get them outside," said Dziubek, of the East Michigan Environmental Council. Dziubek worked with Sanaa Green and Kim Sherrobi, a retired Detroit teacher, to win a grant for the garden projects based on Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods," which says many children today suffer from nature deficit disorder.

"We have the garden to teach about healthy foods you can grow yourself."

Dziubek says the first reaction with kids working outside in the garden is resistance to bugs. Then they learn that the worms and bugs do

Kim Sherrobi, Priscilla Dziubek and Sanaa Green, of the East Michigan Environmental Council in the garden they started at Barbara Jordan school, now the Palmer Park Preparatory Academy.



their part to nourish the soil and grow the food.

"We'll be seeing bugs," Dziubek tells the students. "We won't be killing bugs though."

"The thing I love the most is to see the growth," Green said. "A large family comes in and they have ownership. They're committed to the garden. There's energy not only when the food comes in."

The trio of gardeners have a slew of plans for the coming year, including a Family Dinner Hour where they will show a video and cook. They will do things our parents and grandparents did without pause: cook, eat and talk.

P3A Holds Open House



Welcome to the Teacher-Led School — The Palmer Park Preparatory Academy held an Open House Sept. 21 to acquaint parents and students to the innovative teacher-led school. P3A opened last year after the DFT worked on language for the concept in the 2009 collective bargaining agreement. At left teacher leader Kim Kyff, also 2006 Michigan Teacher of the Year, is pictured here with a parent and student. Student Jedediah Brown, left, introduced the parents to the Open House.



Grants...

Educator Awards

The Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge is taking applications for the Leavey Awards for Excellence in Private Enterprise Education. The award honors educators who bring passion and creativity to their classrooms in teaching students about the private enterprise system and entrepreneurship. Up to 20 awards of \$7,500 each are given to excellent educators. One meritorious award of \$15,000 may go to an outstanding entry. Deadline: Nov. 1, 2011. For info, visit awards@ffvf.org.

Math and Science

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) is accepting applications for a grant for improving students' understanding of geometry. It is focused on pre-K through eighth-grade teachers. Grants up to \$4,000 are available for teachers who are NCTM members. Deadline: Nov. 11, 2011. For info, visit nctm@nctm.org.

Immigrant Advancement

The Ray Solem Foundation's purpose is to help others and be of service, with an emphasis on helping immigrants overcome challenges as members of American society and to become productive citizens and further their communications skills. Grants up to \$10,000 are available to non-profits that have creative ways to help immigrants achieve their goals. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit www.raysolemfund.org.

Environment

The SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Environmental Excellence Awards for 2011 provide incentives and financial support for youth involved in environmental projects. These awards recognize outstanding efforts of K-12 teachers and students by selecting eight groups to win \$10,000 each and a trip to a SeaWorld and Busch Gardens park. One educator will receive \$5,000. Deadline: Dec. 1, 2011. For info, visit www.seaworld.org.

Math and Science

The National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) in partnership with Zula International recognizes two early science teachers. One award will recognize a member of NSTA or the Council of Elementary Science International. The second award will recognize a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Head Start Association. Eligible winners must belong to one of the groups mentioned and be full-time teachers of prekindergarten through grade 2 and use innovative science inquiry programs for early education. Deadline: Nov. 30, 2011. For info, visit www.nsta.org.

Service Learning

Youth Services America and United Healthcare are offering HEROES Service-Learning grants to support service learning projects that address the problems of obesity in children and youth. The health literacy program aims to help children between ages 5 and 25 create and implement local, hands-on programs to fight childhood obesity. Grants of \$500 to \$1,000 will be awarded. Deadline: Oct. 17, 2011. For info, visit www.ysa.org/heroes.

Technology

Digital Wish is a nonprofit organization with a mission to assist teachers with their technology needs. To apply for grants they can win for their classrooms, such as technology software from Tool Factory, teachers must register at the web site and submit a technology-based lesson in any content area. Grants are awarded on the 15th of every month. Grants of up to \$1,400 are available. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit www.digitalwish.com.

Literacy

Author Bruce Larkin, who published numerous children's books, is offering travel grants to help finance early childhood literacy professionals wishing to attend literacy conferences with support from Wilbooks. Grants up to \$200 will offset travel expenses to the International Reading Association or Reading Recovery conferences. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit www.wilbooks.com.

Visual Arts

The American Geological Institute is sponsoring a visual arts contest for children in grades K-5 to coincide with Earth Science Week 2011. The contest "Picturing Our Ever-Changing Earth" invites entries from elementary children who create two-dimensional artwork that addresses this topic. The winner receives \$300 and a copy of the AGI's Faces of Earth DVD. Deadline: Oct. 14, 2011. For info, visit www.earthsciweek.org.

DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

NOTICE REGARDING UNION SECURITY AGREEMENTS AND AGENCY FEE OBJECTIONS

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal union dues. While the wording of these claims is not perfectly uniform, none require more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

Under the Detroit Federation of Teacher's By-Laws and policy on agency fee objections, employees who are not members of the union, but who pay agency fees, pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year from Sept. 30 to Oct. 30 followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with the start of the school year.

Briefly stated, the Detroit Federation of Teachers' objection procedure works as follows:

- The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures for those activities or projects normally or reasonably undertaken by the Union to represent the employees in the bargaining unit with respect to their terms and conditions of employment.

Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with the employer and employing departments, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with representatives of the employer or employing departments, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies or informal meetings and Union administration. In the past, approximately 85 percent of the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures have gone for such activities. Reflected in this percentage is the chargeable portion of the affiliation fees (per capita) paid to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Among the expenditures treated as "non-chargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service, legislative activity unrelated to wages, hours or working conditions of represented employees, certain public relations activities, support of political candidates, cost of affiliation with organizations (and unions) other than the AFT and members-only benefits. In the past, approximately 15 percent of DFT's expenditures have gone for such "non-chargeable" activities. The percentage of the AFT's expenditures on "non-chargeable" activities has been generally between 20-25 percent.

- Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. The explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "non-chargeable," and the independent certified public accountant's report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. Audited financial information relating to the chargeable, non-chargeable expenses of the AFT will be provided at the same time. Objectors will have the option of challenging the union's calculation of the reduced fee before an arbitrator, pursuant to the AAA Rules on Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so are found in the DFT's By-laws and policy on agency fee objections, a copy of which will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

- Objections must be received by DFT between Sept. 30 and Oct. 30 of each school year. In addition, agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit may object within thirty days of receiving this notice, either in the new employee packet or in the Detroit Teacher (where necessary, retroactive to the commencement of their union security obligation and for the duration of the current agency fee year) and employees who resign union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing late objections for either of these two reasons should so indicate in their letter of objection.

- The letter of objection should include the employee's name, address, and school at which employed. Objections must be sent to: Agency Fee Objection, c/o Detroit Federation of Teachers, 2875 West Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202.

Educators Can Help Reduce Teen Violence

By Ron Seigel

In the midst of recent shootings, particularly where teenagers have killed other teens, it may be good to remember the words of Rabbi Michael Lerner: "Violence violates an understanding that every human



being is precious and of infinite value."

In some of the most shocking and brutal cases of violence, where criminals are not motivated by a desire for material gain, when they are reacting to insults or even dirty looks, hurt feelings or perceived threats to their dignity, violence is an attempt to prove they have value.

This is complicated by boys who have been brainwashed into associating masculinity with aggression and the willingness to inflict emotional and physical pain. In such circumstances, law enforcement measures will not represent a complete solution, because many young people will not be deterred by punishment.

Educators can help reduce violence and prevent future tragedies.

One way is simply showing students they do count by respecting their dignity and showing appreciation and caring.

This can be done by the school itself. In 2009 the Detroit Police Department ruled that a drive by shooting was caused by the fact that administrators closed one school and teenagers from rival gang areas were put together in the same school. Since then there have been more school closings.

Is it not possible to help kids deal with the transition from one school to another? Can administrators organize special events for students who are new to the school? Might they have periodic meetings between teachers, administrators and the students to discuss pressures students face, including those that lead to violence?

Two retired teachers, who are my most in-

sightful friends, proposed other suggestions.

(1) Create empathy for others by showing students the reality of how violence affects people. Bring in speakers who were victims of violence, had loved ones who suffered violence, or who committed violence themselves and were sorry they did. Psychologist William Pollack suggests bringing in speakers to talk about issues students face, including substance abuse, sexism, pressures of sexual stereotypes, including homophobia.

(2) Encouraging students to write inspirational essays on the subject of peace and harmony (like those that appear in the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series).

(3) Encourage students to write down things that bother them and share them with those they trust. Psychiatrist Alice Miller indicated it might be therapeutic to address people who made you feel disrespected and tell them how

you ought to have been treated (though if this is done in letter form, these letters do not have to be sent).

(4) Encourage students to settle conflicts

by themselves or submit them to a panel of teachers, parents, and students. Pollack has suggested classes informing students about conflict resolution techniques and mediation, as well as sexual decisions, family problems, coping skills and the stress of economic hardship.

One organization, United Communities of America, persuaded Detroit and other cities to proclaim the 22nd of every month a time for people to think of ways to create peace and healing. It has influenced some school administrators to get students involved in creating a "consciousness of peace."

Another organization, Boys and Girls Empowered, is teaching young people to deal with bullying "but not be mean themselves." Teachers might learn tips by calling the organization at (313) 757-0912.

At a time when some young people are humiliating others on Facebook, a magnificent 13-year-old, Natalie Hess, has used her initiative to start a Facebook page designed to stop bullying. Teachers and students who want to see it can just type in the words "savealifestopbullying."

My own organization, the Respect Month Committee (RMC) suggests ways teachers can emphasize respect. To get the material free of charge, call (313)728-2350 or (313) 866-1970 or write RMC, 10 Ferris Street, Room 106, Highland Park, Michigan 48203.

Calendar

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. Dates and times are subject to change.

NOVEMBER

- 3** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 10** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 11** Half Day, Veterans Day
- 14** Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 15** Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 15** School Social Workers Chapter, 4:00 p.m.

DECEMBER

- 1** Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 8** General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 12** Special Education Chapter Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- 13** Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.
- 13** School Social Workers Chapter, 4:00 p.m.
- 26** Schools Closed, Winter Break