

Happy Holidays

# THE DETROIT teacher

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## Keith Johnson Wins DFT Election

Keith Johnson was re-elected Dec. 1 as president of the DFT, his third two-year term. Johnson's entire slate - United for Teacher Rights - also was elected to serve as DFT vice presidents, trustees and executive board.

Johnson received 55 percent of the vote with 670 votes. Steve Conn received 457 votes or 37 percent of the vote. Victor Gibson received 95 votes; 7 percent of the total.

"Now that the DFT election is completed, we can turn our attention to the pressing matters that confront us," Johnson said.

"We will resume our determined effort to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement that makes sense; a document that focuses on educating students and respecting educators, not managing and controlling people."

"We are prepared to carry out the legal action pending [over improper layoffs], including forcing DPS to negotiate a contract, eliminating the bogus evaluations that resulted in teachers unjustly losing their jobs, implementing an evaluation tool and process that must be negotiated, and getting those teachers back to work."

In negotiations, Johnson said, his priorities include getting rid of the "ridiculous"

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DFT President Keith Johnson and almost 50 laid off teachers attended the Nov. 14 press conference announcing a DFT lawsuit against DPS.

## DFT Files Lawsuit Over Improper Layoffs

Hundreds of Detroit teachers' lives were turned upside down when they were laid off this summer and not recalled. Some had more than three decades of experience. Many had never received a negative evaluation or report in their files. Still others scored 70 or higher on their evaluations.

To answer these injustices, the DFT filed a lawsuit on behalf of 422 De-

troit teachers who were improperly laid off.

"They've had their lives and their world turned upside down," said DFT President Keith Johnson at a Nov. 14 press conference. Almost 50 of these teachers attended the conference to talk about their experiences.

Johnson said the district falsified

See LAWSUIT, on Page 8

# THE LEGISLATURE MUST NOT NEGATE THE VOTE OF THE PEOPLE

On Nov. 6 the citizens of Michigan made it clear they do not support the appointment of emergency managers to supplant the rights of the electorate in municipalities to elect their local leaders.

The repeal of Public Act 4 should spell the end of emergency managers (created by PA4) and emergency financial managers (created by PA72). However the Michigan Court of Appeals does not see it that way, and neither does the state Attorney General.

Activist Robert Davis (who does not live in Detroit and should stick to his own issues in Highland Park) filed a hastily-written motion to have

## President's Report



**Keith Johnson**

Roy Roberts removed as emergency financial manager. In a sketchy one-page decision, the Court of Appeals determined that Roberts was appointed under PA72, not PA4. But no provision in PA4, including the part that repealed PA72, was maintained.

This suggests that with the repeal of PA4, PA72 was resurrected. This ruling is in stark contrast to the opinion submitted by Chief Justice Robert Young of the Michigan Supreme Court. Justice Young determined that when a law is passed (PA4) that repeals its predecessor (PA72), and the new law is subsequently repealed by

a vote of the people, the old law is not resurrected.

While Davis' actions were well intended, he hurt the cause by not adequately establishing a legal foundation for the removal of Roberts. That said, there is no scenario under which the will of the people should be circumvented by the Republican legislature, the Republican governor, or the courts, which we expect to act on the merits of law, not partisan politics.

If it was not understood that both PA4 and PA72 were repealed by a vote of the people, the Republicans would not have immediately begun working on legislation to re-invent a hybrid form of both laws. By taking such action they are saying, "Damn the people and their vote."

The case is now scheduled to go before the Michigan Supreme Court. If Chief Justice Young sticks to his prior opinion, the will of the people shall be honored. PA4 and PA72 will be history



**DFT President Keith Johnson, DFT Executive Board Member Jan Curry, DFT Executive Vice President Edna Reaves and DFT Vice President Nadonya Muslim celebrate Curry's winning raffle ticket for a flat screen TV from the National Teachers Association Life Insurance at a membership meeting.**

and so will the emergency financial managers across the state.

I encourage all of you to contact the governor's office, the offices of the legislature and the Supreme Court justices. Remind them that the people have spoken and we expect them to respect our voice and our vote.

We have a democratic form of government for a reason; because it is a government of the people, for the people and BY THE PEOPLE!

## THE DETROIT teacher

The Detroit Teacher is the official publication of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, American Federation of Teachers Local 231, AFL-CIO. Member of the Union Teacher Press Association, International Labor Press Association & Michigan Labor Press.

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# Updates . . .

## Keith Johnson Wins DFT Election

DFT ELECTION, from Page 1

two hour staff meetings, restoring the elementary prep periods, and eliminating reporting 15 minutes early "to do nothing!"

"I want to thank the membership for entrusting the future of the DFT to our team," Johnson said. "We are committed to delivering the quality of leadership they have a right to expect."

## Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Cora Duncan-Foster and Charlene Uresy. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

## DFT Backpack Giveaway



The DFT gave away more than 100 backpacks to disadvantaged children Oct. 30. The backpacks ranged from superhero designs to princesses and subtler patterns for high school students. All backpacks came stuffed with school supplies. Detroit teachers, including Angela Alexander from Ronald Brown Academy and Susan Troxell from Cooke Elementary School (above), streamed into the DFT hall to pick up the backpacks for their students.

## K-12 Funding Proposal Included in School Aid Rewrite

*From the AFT Michigan Capitol Report*

On Monday, Nov. 19, Richard McLellan (Oxford Foundation) unveiled his 300-page suggested rewrite of the state's School Aid Act, as ordered by Gov. Snyder. It includes recommendations for more on-line learning, a \$2,500 scholarship for students who finish school early, year-around schools, and more parental choice, the so-called "anytime, anyplace, any space, anywhere" model.

It uses the existing School Aid Act as a template and still contains much of that law's language. The changes are designed to work in concert with HB 5923, which would allow for different forms of public schools and establish a strong online component for all public schools. The draft bill would create the Michigan Public Education Finance Act and provides for the following:

- Each district would receive a per-pupil allowance, but schools could earn more above that level by showing student progress during the school year and not just on test scores per se. Students would no longer be bound to a district for their entire education. A student could take as many courses as he or she wanted from any public school district in the state. But districts would decide whether to have open enrollment.

- Students choosing to receive their education from multiple districts would have to designate an "enrollment district" that would handle their records and from which they would graduate. The proposal would provide an extra \$20 per pupil to districts designated as enrollment districts.

- Enrollment districts also would have to handle any special education services, receive any at-risk funding for the student and handle special English language needs. They also would provide counseling services, have to accept all credits obtained by a student from other districts, including from online courses, and administer the Michigan Merit Exam.

- Instead of the October student count day, which currently determines 90 percent of funding, that funding will follow the student. An average daily membership system would be used where student counts are based on the number of days of the school year each pupil is enrolled in the district's or intermediate district's schools divided by the number of days the schools are in session. That would count for 85 percent of the pupil count.

- There would be a new "performance count day" where at the end of the school year, districts would have to show student growth based on standardized assessment scores with districts seeing a reduction in state aid proportionate to the percentage of students who failed to reach the standard.

- The new system also would contain an incentive for students to graduate early from high school -- \$2,500 for each semester earlier than the usual eight. Online learning options would be expanded.

- McLellan's proposal would give students two-week breaks throughout the year rather than extend the school year and pay for more days.

The Oxford Foundation will accept public comment on the proposal through Dec. 14 and then make a formal recommendation to Gov. Snyder by the end of the year. **Email your comment to [oxfordfoundationmi@gmail.com](mailto:oxfordfoundationmi@gmail.com).** Snyder will then decide what recommendations, if anything, to incorporate into his proposed K-12 budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year in February 2013.

# THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS

## Showing Kids How to Vote

Detroit teachers Herbert Graham and De-Shawn Jackson didn't think they should leave it to chance that their students would learn how to vote. So they used the 19 voting stations at Thirkell Elementary School to do a practice run the day before the Nov. 6 election.

Each student, even the kindergartners, went to the polls to punch their ballot. In addition, the school trained students to be ballot box inspectors, poll book inspectors, and reg-

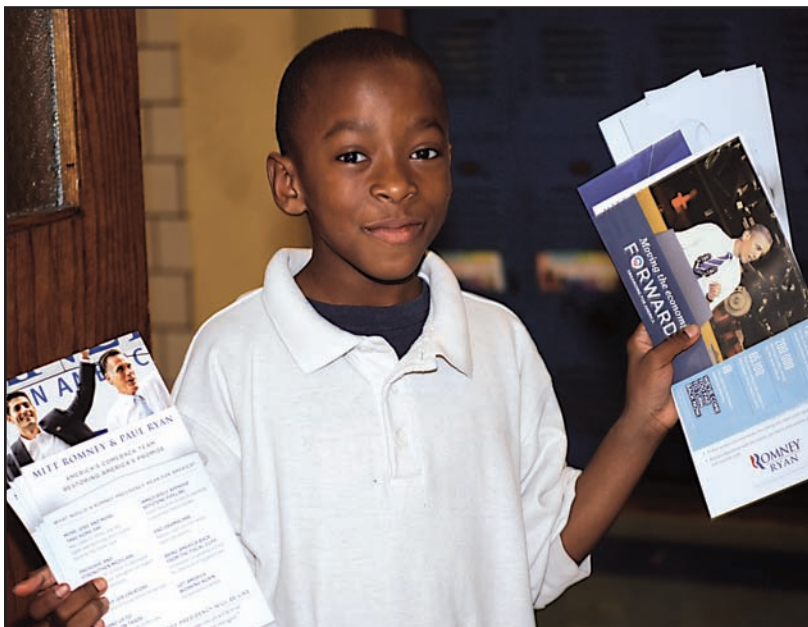


istration inspectors. Students even leafleted for candidates outside the polls.

"We're trying to encourage our students to vote and their families to vote," said teacher Tymecka Wray, a first-grade Thirkell teacher. "And give them first-hand practice to see what adults go through to vote." It's a Thirkell mission to expand the

four walls of the classroom, she said.

"We try to give them real life situations all the time."



From left are Thirkell ballot inspectors Takyra Jones, 9, Azavia Bledsoe, 10, Dylan Brown, 10.



## Rocking the Mock Vote

By Arlene Rosemond

Charles Wright Academy on Detroit's northwest side held a mock election Nov. 5. Students shared an amazing day casting ballots and getting "I voted today" stickers.



The students got exposure to the ballot issues, researched the candidates, and got the real-life experience of voting in a school polling place. Charles Wright was decked out in a dazzling array of campaign hats, flags, and star spangled balloons.

The students ultimately learned the importance of voting when they reach voting age. They also encouraged their parents to go out the next day and make their voices heard through the ballot.



**Above:** Students filling out their ballots.

**On the right:** More students lined up waiting to vote.



# THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

## Carver Teacher Wins Teacher of the Year

By Crystal Williams

Rita Lockridge teaches middle school Social Studies at newly reconstituted Carver S.T.E.M. Academy and has been named Middle School Social Studies Teacher of the Year by the Michigan Council of Social Studies! She has taught with Detroit Public Schools for 28 years and participated in several Social Studies programs. Lockridge has a degree in Education for the Visually Impaired grades K-12 and a master's degree in Educational Sociology.



**Rita Lockridge**

Lockridge has been a coordinator for Project Citizen as well as a presenter for the Detroit Public Schools Social Studies Department. She has written lessons for the Library of Congress under Wayne RESA and the Charles H. Wright Museum as well as test questions for the MEAP. In addition to her dedication educating children, she is married with three adult children.

# MORE TO DO AFTER RETIREMENT

By Charlene Uresy  
Retired Spain teacher

Working for a living is real and part of that reality is retirement. My retirement from DPS was not a complete surprise, although I was hoping to work a few more years. There was much more knowledge and experience I wanted to share with my students, and I loved my school. I decided to retire because I was not called back to my school. My happiness is too important to take a chance at a new school late in my career, where anything could happen. It was not worth the risk.

With retirement comes a fear, even if you retire on your own accord. What will I do every day? Did I save enough money to live comfortably? Will I be content?



The first and most important notion I dealt with was fear. When you are afraid you pull back from life. What I know about myself is that I can't pull back from life. I have a passion for traveling, learning about African people and the Diaspora of African people, and sharing what I love through my photography and painted furniture. I've always known that after teaching I

wanted to share my passion with the City of Detroit, and perhaps beyond.

At school I shared this passion with my students. It helped them on the path of becoming their authentic selves, having pride in what their people, city, and school have contributed to the world.

All along and at times unconscious to myself, I was preparing for life after teaching. I was preparing to be a part of an important factor that is transforming Detroit back to its greatness – art! My painted furniture and photography have received much attention, and has landed me in the middle of this creativity. I'm excited!



An article about my art is featured in the November issue of B.L.A.C. Magazine. I don't think this would have happened if I were still teaching. The acknowledgment and pleasing comments from people who see my work tells me what I'm doing is right on. I'm motivated and encouraged by these forces. I have direction and I'm contributing to the success of the city I love. This enthusiasm for my art is telling me, I will be fine in my new life after education.

I'm grateful to what DPS has given me. I'm even more grateful to the young lives I helped to become good citizens of the world. I know I made a positive impact in their lives because they tell me so when I run into them. They are so happy to see me and for me to see how well they are doing.

Yes, at the end of the last school year, I was hoping to be called back. But at this time in my life, it is so good to stay in bed longer, and not face another school year of uncertainty.

We're on

**Facebook!**

Check us out at

[www.facebook.com/DFT231](http://www.facebook.com/DFT231)

# Grants . . .

## Environmental Educator

The SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment Outstanding Environmental Educator of the Year award aims to recognize the excellence of a teacher. Since 1993 SeaWorld has recognized the efforts of students and teachers working to preserve the environment. Grants up to \$10,000 and an expenses paid trip to the NSTA National Conference are available. Deadline: Dec. 31, 2012. For info, visit [buschgardenseducation@gmail.com](mailto:buschgardenseducation@gmail.com).

## Libraries

Sarah Jaffarian is a retired school librarian from Massachusetts and a member of the American Library Association for over 60 years. The Sarah Jaffarian School Library Program Award for Exemplary Humanities Programming rewards excellence in humanities programs that serve students in grades K-8. A grant of \$4,000 is available. Deadline: Dec. 15, 2012. For info, visit <http://apply.ala.org/jaffarian>.

## Salad Bars

The Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools grant provides districts with salad bars to encourage students to eat more fruits and vegetables, thus becoming healthier. It aims to increase the number of schools with salad bars. Deadline: ongoing. For more info, visit [info@saladbars2schools.org](mailto:info@saladbars2schools.org).

## Technology

The Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award recognizes the outstanding contributions of classroom teachers in the field of technology education, and rewards

excellence in the delivery of technology programs. Programs that focus on aerospace or aeronautics will receive priority consideration. Grants of \$1,000 are available. Deadline: Jan. 14, 2013. For info, visit [amfreg@amfcse.org](mailto:amfreg@amfcse.org).

## Self Sufficiency

The Harry Chapin Foundation supports organizations that have shown to ability to dramatically change people's lives for the better by helping them become self-sufficient. It is interested in community education programs, art in education, agricultural and environmental programs. Grants range from several hundred dollars to a maximum of \$10,000. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [harrychapin-found@aol.com](mailto:harrychapin-found@aol.com).

## Hands-On Learning

Fiskars, which provides products for the lawn and garden industry, offers Project Orange Thumb Grants to support non-profit community gardens. Project Orange Thumb supports the creation of new gardens to further creative expression, beautify outdoor spaces, provide healthy hand-grown food, and sustainable living. Teachers interested in involving their students in a community garden project may be interested in applying. Grants of \$3,500 and \$1,500 in Fiskars products are available. Deadline: Dec. 15, 2012. For info, visit [orangethumb@fiskars.com](mailto:orangethumb@fiskars.com).

## Poverty Needs

The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation has a particular interest in funding projects that directly serve or impact children living in urban poverty. The

foundation's interest is education, childhood health, and family economic stability. Grants of \$500 and up are available. Deadline: ongoing. For info, visit [info@msdf.org](mailto:info@msdf.org).

## DonorsChoose

The National Education Association Foundation has partnered with DonorsChoose.org, an online charity that connects public school teachers in need of extra resources to the corporations, foundations and other supporters who help provide financial support. The partnership aims to support educator-driven solutions to improve student performance. Register as a teacher on DonorsChoose.org to start the process.

## Library Programs

The American Association of School Librarians is taking applications for its National School Library Program of the Year Award from school librarians. The award honors programs that ensure students and staff are enthusiastic readers and effective users of information and ideas. Grants of \$10,000 to three schools are available. Deadline: Jan. 1, 2013. For info, visit [www.ala.org/aasl/aaslawards/nslpy/nslpy](http://www.ala.org/aasl/aaslawards/nslpy/nslpy)



# Legislating Inequality

By Mark O'Keefe  
DFT Controller

The state legislature is currently considering a bill that would help ensure higher funding for wealthy school districts and lower funding for those that serve at-risk students. Currently, funding is based on student population. The new bill would still be primarily based on the number of students, but 15 percent of funding would be based on students' test scores.

Ignoring the fact that we do not have a test that accurately and reliably measures student growth, how do we account for difficulties faced by at-risk students? Urban areas have disproportionate numbers of students with truancy problems, parents lacking college degrees, fewer books in the home, and a host of other factors that result in a competitive disadvantage.



Mark O'Keefe

**We will not narrow the achievement gap by punishing those who are born with two strikes against them while rewarding those who were born on third base and think they hit a triple.**

The Republicans want to run schools like businesses. If the new funding proposal becomes law, schools will act like businesses. They will fight to attract students who will generate profits, and will work to drop unprofitable students. Who will want to teach a child with a 90 IQ? Who will accept a student who is chronically truant, or has a learning disability?

In 1954, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" school districts were illegal. If enacted, this flawed funding scheme would circumvent the intent of that ruling, and further ensure that students in high-poverty districts have teachers who have lower pay, lower benefits, and smaller pensions.

If the legislature actually cared about helping at-risk students, they would find a way to bring more resources to those who need it most.

# DFT Files Lawsuit Over Improper Layoffs

LAWSUIT, from Page 1

records and entered scores for teachers who were never observed or evaluated. He said some teachers were on medical or maternity leaves at the time their evaluations were allegedly conducted.

"At least one teacher received a 90 who didn't even work here last year," Johnson said.

Some teachers who received an 85 on their evaluations (the district's threshold is 70) are not working while teachers with lower scores, new hires and Teach for America instructors are working.

While the evaluation, layoff and recall processes were so inconsistent and sloppy, Johnson said no district administrators have been penalized.

"The real travesty is the perpetrators of this fraud are still working," he said, "and these teachers are not."

One of those laid off teachers told her story.

"These teachers coming out of college don't have the experience we have," said Renee Chown, a 26-year laid off teacher. She said she was in her school's office when she watched three Teach for America teachers resign "because they couldn't handle it."

"Roy Roberts came in and told everyone he wanted well qualified, effective teachers," Chown said. "I was rated an effective teacher. This is the first time I woke up and didn't have a classroom."

James Britton, the Sachs Waldman attorney who filed the suit on behalf of DFT, said Michigan law requires evaluations to be rigorous, transparent and fair.

"Teachers who were evaluated in 2011 or 2012 still have not received their scores," Britton said. "The teachers still do not know how their scores were translated."

The union tried to warn the district that the first year of conducting the state-mandated evaluations should not be used to recall teachers.

"Had they listened to the union in the beginning, we would not be here," Johnson said. "These teachers should not suffer because of the incompetence of the district."





## Clippert Hosts Veterans Dance

By Kathryn Meloche

Monday, Nov. 12 was an exciting day at Clippert Academy. The Clippert staff and students constructed a memorial Wall of Honor to celebrate all of the family and friends of Clippert who are veterans.

We then held a dance in their honor and recited the names of the veterans every 30 minutes so students and staff could cheer for each one. This year we honored 62 veterans!

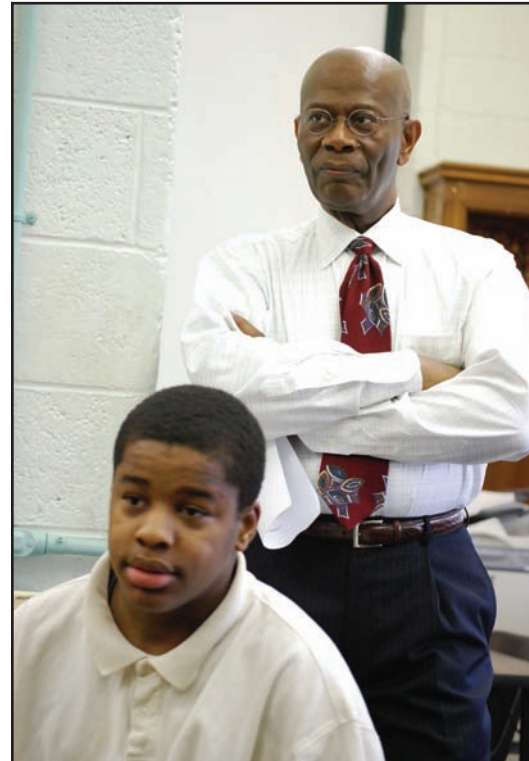
We paid special honor to Dominic Bailey, our special education teacher, who retired with honors from the US Air Force, and Charline Jenkins, (above) our academic games instructor, who retired from the US Army. Everyone had a great time and our veterans got the recognition that they deserve!

# Psychiatrist Visits Turning Point Academy

Dexter Fields M.D. has encountered many cases of mental illness in his career as a psychiatrist but none involving a cursed or possessed patient. Still, those were some of the questions he fielded from students at Turning Point Academy, an east side Detroit school for severely emotionally impaired students.

"Is it true that people can be possessed?" a student asked.

"I don't know," said the distinguished doctor who graduated from medical school in 1972. "From my experience I haven't seen it."



**Psychiatrist Dexter Fields, M.D. with Turning Point student Chevaz Straughter, 16.**

The 25 teenage boys peppered Fields with questions about careers, mental illnesses, and how long some patients need to take the psychotropic medicines that pull them back from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

Fields said many patients need to stay on their medications for a long time.

"I'd rather people don't experiment," he said.

Fields encouraged the students

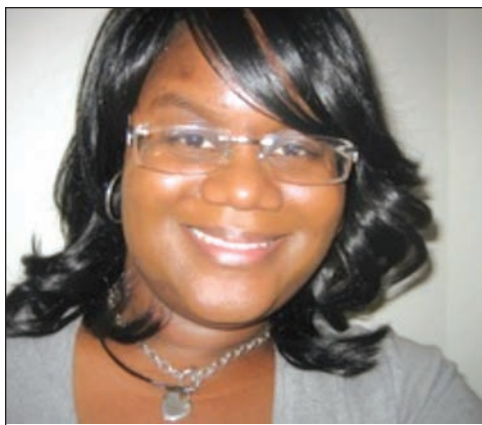
to go to college to pursue their real interests and not, ironically, pre med. He said pre-med students face a deluge of science classes and a dearth of humanities.

Although family structures have changed dramatically in the last two decades, Fields said some social trends don't change "Young people probably never realize how important education is," he said.

"As you get older, you have the right to not do what society tells you," he said. "But what happens when you don't go by society's rules?" In other words, perhaps it's best to rebel when you have established yourself in your career and your community.

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ERICA M. DEAN

# Teacher Money

By Erica M. Dean

It's another payday. For the most part, I am satisfied that I was able to take care of my rent and car note. I even took my cat to the vet for a nail trim.

Relaxing on the couch and reflecting on the day, I thought about the wages I had brought home and how quickly they disappeared. Then my mind drifted to those in other professions: I wondered if they worried about their wages and certain "disappearing acts."

For a moment, I wished I was in a "big money" profession. Before my thoughts spiraled into depression, my church-up-bringing stopped me and reminded me:

I don't make "lawyer money."

I don't make "doctor money."

I make "teacher money."

Some may laugh and say, "There's no comparison." It's my faith in God, however, that causes me to reconsider this as the thought dropped into my spirit, deep and heavy. A different perspective causes me to proclaim that my teacher money beats lawyer and doctor money hands-down.

How?

In spite of a pay cut here and there, my teacher money stretches far and wide. My teacher money works miracles. My teacher money brightens up a classroom with a fresh roll of bulletin board paper, a leafy green plant, or a classroom pet.

The bulletin board paper is tacked to the wall and covered with the hopes and dreams of students. It's a place where their best work can be displayed for all to see, like a mom, dad, or another relative who will come to the next parent-teacher conference. "I hope they come too," I gently say.

That leafy green plant and classroom pet opens the door to exploration. So many questions: Why is that plant green? Is that fish swimming backwards? Is this plant poisonous? Where do hamsters come from?

"I don't have the answers, but perhaps reading a book or doing research on the Internet may help you out," I tell my students. Books are read. Internet research conducted. Minds grow. My teacher money did that.

My teacher money buys the construction paper, glue, and glitter that craft the perfect thank-you card for a helpful volunteer. That volunteer will take the card home and place it on the living room table. Visitors will ask, "Do you think I could be a school volunteer as well?" Yes! There's always a need for good volunteers at the school. Instant recruitment. My teacher money did that.

My teacher money makes a student feel loved through the purchase of a pair

of socks, shoes, or new coat when his family is unable to buy one. My teacher money buys uniforms for a family of four, allowing them to fit in with the rest of the class and not be teased or bullied.

My teacher money gives a colleague a birthday, condolence, wedding or new baby card with enough left over to buy the principal, assistant principal, and all the secretaries something special on their holidays.

My teacher money thanks foster grandparents, school service attendants, paraprofessionals, school counselors, speech therapists, resources teachers, attendance agents, building engineers, security guards, custodians and food service staff as well.

My teacher money provides for the best pizza parties in the city: the back-to-school, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas pizza parties, and the pizza party to celebrate the time when the whole class was quiet for 10 minutes.

Although it gets a little rough and uncertain in the world of education, I still believe in my education degrees. I still believe what I do makes a difference, no matter what is posted on Facebook or Twitter about the "lowly educator."

My career and job still matter and my teacher money does, too.

## Calendar

All meetings will be held at 2875 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, unless otherwise noted. All Meetings start at 4:30 p.m. Dates and times are subject to change.

### December

- 6 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 11 Retiree Chapter Holiday Lunch, 11:30 a.m.**
- 13 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 21 Pay Day**
- 24-28 Schools Closed, Christmas Break**

### January

- 1-5 Schools closed. Christmas Break**
- 7 Schools Reopen**
- 10 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 15 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
- 17 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
- 21 Schools closed, Martin Luther King Jr. Day**