

## DETROIT

teacher

June 2016

Summer Break: A time to enjoy *and* stay engaged!

## DFT member activism builds to meet big challenges

The 2015-16 school year brought a number of challenges for Detroit Federation of Teachers members, our students and our school district.

Years of financial neglect and mismanagement by a series of state-appointed emergency managers created a crisis in the Detroit Public Schools that reached critical mass.

DFT members rose to the challenge by engaging in unprecedented collective action in the fight to save our neighborhood public schools and to oppose attacks on the rights of professional educators.

Over the past few months, DFT members have:

- Sent thousands of emails;
- Made thousands of calls to residents around the state and legislators through phone banking;
- Knocked on hundreds of doors through neighborhood canvassing;
- Sent hundreds of letters; and
- Held dozens of meetings with AFT Michigan members and legislators to support public education in Detroit.

## What union activism looks like!

Top row: Members participate in phone banking at AFT Michigan. Middle row, left: Neighborhood canvassing. Middle row, right: In-district meeting with state Sen. Tory Rocca (R-Sterling Heights). Bottom row, left: DFT members and education allies deliver community platform to DPS at the Fisher Bldg. Bottom row, right: Members rally on May 2-3 during the lockout to demand that educators be paid for work.



## Bring the heat! Stay connected through DFT's summer member engagement actions

The school year has come to an end, but the fight for our students, our schools and our profession is not over!

We encourage DFT members to stay engaged in the fight and connected to the union throughout the summer months.

"Now is the time to build on the momentum we have created through increased member activism over the past few months," says Ivy Bailey, interim DFT president.

Several main areas of union work will continue through the summer, including:

- Contract negotiations;
- Local school board elections;
- Political action to prepare for the Michigan House races;
- "Still committed" alternative dues campaign; and
- Strategic planning for next year.

For details on how to stay connected and engaged with the DFT on these issues, see page 3.

# DFT Member Spotlight

## Teachers make headlines for making a difference

### Cass Tech's Marilyn McCormick honored during nationally televised Tony Awards program

Detroit Federation of Teachers member Marilyn McCormick is the 2016 recipient of the Excellence in Theatre Education Award, presented by the Tony Awards and Carnegie Mellon University.

A drama instructor at Cass Technical High School, McCormick accepted the award on June 12 in New York during the annual Tony Awards, which recognize achievement in Broadway productions.

The prestigious award is presented to education professionals who "discover talented students, nurture

them, inspire them and set them off on a lifelong journey as theatre supporters and professionals," according to the Tony Awards Web page.

McCormick, a 40-year education veteran, was chosen from a pool of more than 1,100 entries submitted from schools around the country. She was nominated by former students via written testimonials and a video presentation.

In addition to a trip to New York and accommodations, the award also provides a \$10,000 grant for Cass Tech's theater program.

"The DFT wishes to congratulate Ms. McCormick on this incredible honor," said Ivy Bailey, interim DFT president. "We want to express our gratitude to her for her years of outstanding service to our school district and our community."

To see McCormick's acceptance speech, follow the link on the DFT's website at: [www.dft231.com](http://www.dft231.com).



### Generosity of Thirkel Elementary's Mitzi Davis attracts support from local business leaders



Like hundreds of other dedicated Detroit Public Schools educators, Mitzi Davis cares so deeply about her students that she frequently makes

personal financial sacrifices to buy school supplies for her classroom.

Davis revealed in a video produced by the Detroit Federation of Teachers and the AFT that she also purchases personal supplies—like clothing and even food—for students who need them.

Students can leave a note in a special box with a label that says, "Mrs. Davis, I need . . ." to request the items they need in a way that preserves

their dignity.

After a June 8 article on Davis in the *Detroit Free Press*, the second-grade teacher was contacted by local business leaders who want to support her classroom and, she hopes, her school.

"It feels great to have people wanting to help the work of supporting our kids," she said.

### Three Detroit teachers awarded Fulbright Scholarships to Brazil

This year's Fulbright Scholarship Award recipients include three Detroit Public Schools teachers.

They are:

- **Karen Russell**, a first-grade teacher at Edison Elementary School;
- **Rachel Walker**, a visual arts teacher at Renaissance High School; and
- **William Bowles**, a media instructor/librarian at Western International High School.

Scholarship recipients will participate in a collaborative project in Brazil, where they will consult with schools, nonprofit organizations, teacher training institutions and other educational organizations.

# DFT Summer Member Engagement

## Contract negotiations

On June 30, the collective bargaining agreement between the Detroit Federation of Teachers and the Detroit Public Schools expires.

We must continue to stand united as a union to achieve a contract that reflects members' priorities and ensures students and educators get the schools and respect they deserve.

As a result of the recently passed DPS education bills, the DFT expects that contract negotiations will be challenging. Union negotiators met with DPS leaders today to begin talks on a new contract agreement. We are committed to working for the best possible contract for our members.

Members can help us win a fair contract by working with the DFT Contract Action Team. For information on the Contract Action Team, contact DFT Executive Vice President Terrence Martin at 313-875-3500 or via email at [tmartin@dft231.com](mailto:tmartin@dft231.com).

## School board elections

The Detroit education plan approved last week in the Michigan Legislature calls for the return of Detroit Public Schools to a locally elected board.

Voters will elect members to serve on the DPS school board during the general elections this November.

The future of our school district is at stake. It is critical for educators to have a strong, united voice when it comes to electing members to serve on the school board.

The DFT is counting on members to be engaged and active in helping to ensure that pro-public education candidates are elected. We need school board members who will

stand with and fight for Detroit's students and educators.

## Still committed

When our contract expires on June 30, Detroit school employees lose the right to have union dues deducted automatically from pay checks. This attack on payroll deduction rights is an attempt to silence the voice of educators by weakening our union.

The same lawmakers who tried to kill public education in Detroit and strip educators of our jobs and our rights also have made it inconvenient for union members to pay dues.

We won't let them take away our voice! Sign up for alternative dues collection.

When the new school year begins, only members will have a say in the direction of our union; only members will be able to participate in union activities, such as internal elections, negotiations for a new contract and other important decisions.

Sign up today to keep our union strong at [join.aft.org](http://join.aft.org) or at [dft231.com](http://dft231.com).

## Michigan House races

The last legislative session is proof that elections matter! In November, we must use our ballot power to change nine seats in the Michigan House to elect a pro-public education majority. There are more than a dozen seats at play in the upcoming elections.

Your vote counts! It's time to elect lawmakers who stand with us.

Check out this video of House Democrats blasting the DPS bills: <http://go.aft.org/RepsOnDPSBills>

## Save Our Schools Rally

On July 8, a delegation of Detroit Federation of Teachers members will join with a coalition of education allies at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., in a rally and march to save public education in the United States.

The next day marks the start of a Save Our Schools Activist Conference at Howard University. The conference includes workshops designed to provide attendees with enhanced leadership and activist skills.

Because DFT member activism has drawn national attention to the plight of our city's students and educators, the organizers of the Save Our Schools conference have raised funds to allow a limited number of Detroit teachers to attend the conference at no cost.

The DFT delegation will travel by bus to Washington to attend this historic event.

For details on the march, rally and conference, visit <http://saveourschoolsmarch.org/>.





We're still committed.  
**Are you?**



Protect your rights, your voice.  
**Keep our union strong!**

Sign up today for alternative dues collection.

[join.aft.org](https://join.aft.org)

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