

Members Brave Snowstorm, Wind Chill for Books!

Give it up for Detroit teachers

They braved a snowstorm, terrible driving conditions, and chilly temps — all to get new books for their students.

Teachers, media specialists, school secretaries, and social workers drove to the Parade Company on Mt. Elliott Jan. 25 to pick up their allotment of free books, made possible by Detroit school unions working together.

The DFT, the Detroit Federation of Paraprofessionals, and the Detroit Association of Educational Office Employee (known as AFT Detroit) worked with the AFT, and First Book, a non-profit organization that collects surplus books from publishers and re-distributes them to children in need.

Several teachers drove an hour to get there by 8 a.m. to ensure they'd get books for their students. They were happily surprised at the selection.

"I said I'll believe it when I see it," said Bill Bowles, a Western International High School media specialist. "This is the real deal. They're perfect books."

Valerie Reed, a Ronald Brown Academy teacher, said, "I feel like a kid in here."

The union workers were amazed by the selection that was sent. First Book sent a truck with 46,800 books that the unions unloaded and sorted over three days. Titles ranged from large picture books for toddlers, to popular teen novels by Rick Riordan.

"It's wonderful," said Chris Bryant, a teacher at Frederick Douglass Academy.



DFT members Nicola Turner and Ann Turner pick up their free books at the Parade Company Jan. 25.

"Any time anybody can give teachers free books to help encourage kids to read, I'm all for it."

The unions did not know what kind of books would be sent. The truck drops have occurred in five other cities, including the Bronx and Philadelphia. An AFT representative said Detroit had the best selection of titles to date.

"And you had one of the most unusual settings," said Tom Moran, director of the AFT's Paraprofessional and School Related Personnel. The backdrop of paper mache heads and Thanksgiving parade floats drew members' attention mo-

mentarily away from gorgeous new paperbacks.

Harlan Minor, an art teacher at Westside Academy, got a selection of Disney design and art books for his high school students.

"It's awesome especially when you can get art books like these," he said.

AFT Detroit is trying to get another truck of books to come to Detroit in the spring. To do that it needs 2,000 district employees to register at First Book by going to www.firstbook.aft/org.

Reinstitution of PAR Will Strengthen Teachers and DPS

Five years ago I made it a personal mission to make sure that incoming teachers as well as veteran teachers had access to a program that would provide sustained, comprehensive assistance for those in need. The concept of Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) was negotiated in 1989, but never implemented or pursued by the DFT or DPS.

Many members strongly objected to the idea of teachers evaluating teachers, a total misconception of what PAR is designed to do. The truth is, PAR helps teachers identify areas of needed improvement, develops strategies, and provides the support needed to improve performance.

President's Report



Keith Johnson

Even when we pushed for implementation of PAR in 2009, I was roundly criticized for resurrecting an idea that lay dormant in our contract since it was negotiated. Perceptions changed when I brought the "father" of PAR, former Toledo Federation of Teachers president Dal Lawrence, to conduct a PAR workshop for DFT members.

By the time the presentation was over we had a room full of believers who not only supported the idea, but couldn't wait to submit applications to get training and placement as PAR consultants for DFT/DPS. With the support of DPS administration at the time, PAR became a reality in 2010.

Current DFT Executive Board members Ivy Bailey and Vanessa Parnell co-chaired PAR, interviewed applicants, developed the writing tests, and made recommendations for the selection of 18 PAR consultants. We made several trips to Toledo to get training and watch how the Internal Board of Review (IBOR) evalu-

ated the reports of the PAR consultants. We traveled with the PAR consultants to witness how they worked with teachers.

The next step was to invite leaders from DPS to witness the same activities so they, too, could see the benefits and necessity of implementing the program. All agreed this was a MUST HAVE for DPS and DFT. We all realized it was not enough to identify struggling teachers, we were also obligated to help them.

This would strengthen instructional quality in the classroom and strengthen our school district. Once the PAR consultants began visiting schools and working with teachers, the support for PAR spread like wildfire. Vanessa and Ivy were inundated with requests for assistance for teachers across the district.

When DPS leadership changed and Roy Roberts became emergency manager, one of his first actions (of many that hurt the district) was to end PAR. Neither he nor the people he placed in leadership over academics took the time to learn what PAR was designed to do or how it worked. In addition, Roberts was so caught up in power and control he wouldn't accept that the union and the district were collaborative partners in PAR. This is what made PAR effective — the necessity for the union and district to work together to ensure teacher quality.

Now we are in the second year of the (poorly) revamped evaluation system as mandated by the state. No mechanism is in place to provide teachers identified as ineffective or marginally effective with the sustained guidance and support required by the state during the three-year evaluation window.

Principals are continually asking me:



DFT Parliamentarian Retires

DFT President Keith Johnson honored DFT parliamentary Marguerite Gutt at the Dec. 12 membership meeting with a bouquet of flowers for her decade-long service, ensuring DFT meetings are run according to Robert's Rules of Order.

when are we going to get PAR back? I am determined to make that happen for the good of our students, our teachers, and our profession.

We sued the district after the bogus evaluations from 2012. More than 400 teachers lost their jobs due to a fraudulent and flawed evaluation process. If the district fails to provide the required assistance to teachers in need, we will sue them again.

School districts nationwide are clamoring for PAR. Those that have implemented the program wonder why it took so long. Even the Obama White House has praised PAR and recognized Dal Lawrence and AFT Executive Vice-President Fran Lawrence, (Dal's wife and successor as president of TFT). He noted their success as the architects of PAR and how it improved educational quality across the nation.

It is time for DPS to do the right thing for our teachers, our students, and the image of our district. We cannot afford to remain in the dark ages on teacher reform, thinking that the only thing we need to do is get rid of "bad teachers." If we help teachers with a proven program such as PAR, we just might not have any bad teachers. PAR has proven to work across the nation, let's get it back working for Detroit Public Schools.

Updates . . .

New DFT Office

The DFT office will move to a new location, following the Feb. 6 sale of the DFT building at 2875 W. Grand Blvd. The new DFT office will be at 7700 Second Ave. Suite 427. The phone number will remain 313-875-3500 and the fax number is 313-875-3511.

New DFT Meeting Location

The DFT General Membership meetings will be held at the IBEW Electrical Workers Hall Local 58, 1358 Abbott St., Detroit, 48226, east of Trumbull. The entrance is on Porter Street. The meetings start at 4:30 p.m. and are open to all members. Meetings usually fall on the second Thursday of the month. Check your DFT calendar to verify meeting dates. The next DFT membership meeting is Feb. 13.

Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: Linda Spears-Powers, Elaine Taylor and Sandra A. Morrison. If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

Contest for High School Students

The World Affairs Council of America is sponsoring Academic WorldQuest for high school students in March. Teams of four students will compete answering questions on cyber-security, global health, geography, current events and more. The winning team will be sent to Washington, D.C. in April to compete nationally. For more information and to register, please contact Dellashon Di Cresce at 313-577-8270 or at dellashon@globaldetroit.org.

New DFT Treasurer Appointed

Michelle Broughton, an active DFT member for many years, has been appointed treasurer of the DFT. Broughton fills the seat vacated by Kurtis Brown who left the DFT recently to take an administrative position in the Detroit Public Schools. We wish them both good luck!



A Certification Alert for Teachers

Every year, a number of DFT members are terminated because their certificates expired. The district sends a courtesy letter warning teachers their certificates will expire in June. Even then, some fail to take action.

If your certification is up for renewal, it is not too late to secure your employment for the fall. Now is the time to make sure you have your ducks in a row.



Edna Reaves

Last fall, I received a phone call from a member who insisted that the district had done her an injustice because it had no record of all the workshops she attended. She maintains that all of the District Provided Professional Development (DPPD) workshops she attended over the last five years qualify for credit under Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) Sections 380.1526 and 380.1527.

I explained that the law she referenced took effect in October 2012 and that only 30 hours per year can count toward renewing your certificate. She admitted she had not entered her DPPD hours of training into her Michigan Online Educator Certification System (MOECS) account as required.

The question that followed was, "Can you help me get my job back?" The answer is, "No." All we can do once your certification expires is suggest you reapply for your job. The district is under no obligation to rehire you.

DPPD can only be used to "renew or advance" to Professional or Occupational Education Certificates.

According to the DPPD guidelines, the professional development must be designed to:

- Serve the purpose of increasing student learning
- Align with your school improvement plan
- Be planned, ongoing, and intensive
- Be supported by the school or district, financially or through released time

Many members resist reporting their professional development (PD) to their principals or record their PD in their evaluation portfolios. This is the best way to keep up with your PD and make sure your principal signs off on them. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) requires that a principal or district designee sign off on each of the DPPD hours recorded.

DPPD is just one way of renewing your certificate. You can go to the traditional college or university or you can take online courses to earn credits. One popular provider is Teachers Education Institute (TEI) (<http://www.teachereducation.com/>).

A consistent complaint we receive is: "I thought I had more time because the state says our certificate renewal isn't due until September." The district, however, is your employer and sets its own deadlines. If you want to remain employed you must adhere to your district's deadlines.

I encourage everyone whose certificate expires within two years to visit the MDE website for information regarding renewal of certificates using DPPD hours. You may also direct questions to Donna L. Hamilton at (517) 241-4546.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS



Michigan Carpenters, Millwrights Bring Christmas Cheer to Spain Kids

When Michigan's carpenters and millwrights put on a party, they figure why not overdo it?

For 17 years, the union has adopted Spain School, its neighbor on Beaubien Street, to throw a massive Christmas party. This year they hired a band, a magician, and of course, Santa made an appearance.

Each of Spain's 670 students got to tell Santa what he or she wanted and get a photo taken. They got food and drinks.

Not to stop there, each child got a duffel bag full of gifts.

"We adopted this school 17 years ago and that's back when our union had a lot more money," said Lisa Canada, political director of the Michigan Regional Council of Carpenters and Millwrights. "But as times got tough this is one thing the union wants to do because the kids love it."

Erica Rolack, Spain assistant principal and a former DFT member, said the carpenters and millwrights are wonderful and generous to the school, giving embossed blankets, scarves and gloves to the students.

"They adopted our school years ago to make sure every child in the school has a Christmas toy and warm outerwear," she said.

"At a time when schools across Michigan are facing tough times, students, teachers and staff at the Spain school and schools in many other communities are doing more with less," said Mike Jackson, MRCC Executive Secretary-Treasurer. "We want them to know that carpenters and millwrights stand with them. They're our future and this holiday party is our way of saying thanks to them."

Priest Teacher Builds Energy Efficient Classroom

Here's a good question: What to do with all the garbage, plastic bottles and discarded tires in Detroit?

Priest sixth-grade science and math teacher Linda Keteyian had an idea. A few years ago she visited a friend of her son's in Taos, N.M. and stayed in a house built entirely of plastic bottles, tires and straw. The house was remarkably insulated and warm.

"We have garbage everywhere right?" Keteyian said. So she decided to build an energy-efficient classroom on the grounds of her school in southwest Detroit.

The 30-year Detroit teacher drew up a curriculum, and sought funding from the Skillman Foundation and Toshiba. She walked down the street and collected dozens of tires.

The "Earthship" is almost complete with cement covering the tires, plastic bottles and straw. She sees these homes as an answer to environmental issues, homelessness, and utility use.

"We have a lot of housing problems here," she said. "Whether it's the homeless or people who can't afford housing. Do you know if you put plastic bottles filled with sand around a house, it's bullet proof?"

Keteyian has always been interested in science and the environment and credits her grandfather with teaching her to compost and not to waste.

"I believe in living it and teaching my kids too," she said. "Turn the water off. Don't buy plastic if you don't need to."



DFT Retirees Celebrate Holidays



The DFT Retiree Chapter has enjoyed a robust social and informational network, including always putting on an elegant luncheon for the Christmas holiday. This year more than 80 retirees gathered Dec. 10 for the luncheon put on by students at the Golightly Career and Technical Center. The Retiree Chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month at 11:30 a.m. at Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit MI 48211.

THE DETROIT Teacher NEWSMAKERS



Charlene Smith, Arthur Divers, chair Jewel Gines and Frank Squeo of the DFT Retiree Chapter.

Spain School Goes to Lansing

On Nov. 1, Spain School sixth-grade teachers Maria Brown and LaJuana Jones, along with fifth-grade teachers Waseana Ballard and Brenda Jones, took a trip to the Lansing Capitol. About 105 fifth- and sixth-graders spent the day learning how our state government operates.

They toured the Michigan Historical Museum and saw artifacts from the Ice Age through Slavery. They were able to see how the automobile industry evolved. They also lay on the floor to look at the capitol dome.

The luxury coach buses the students and staff took to Lansing were financed by Dion Williams, a representative from DAW Consulting; Rick Blocker, from the Metro AFL CIO and president and chairman of the 14th Congressional District; and State Reps. Coleman Young and Rashida Tlaib. Spain is grateful to them for making this important learning experience happen.



Right-Sizing the DFT

By Mark O'Keefe
DFT Controller

When we close on the sale of our building on Feb. 6, it will mark the final step in right-sizing the DFT.



Mark O'Keefe

Detroit's declining population, the opening of additional charter schools, and the state's decision to give 15 schools to the EAA, have further reduced our membership to about 4,000 members.

When we purchased the building in November 2004, we had nearly 12,000 members. When Keith Johnson and I took office in January 2009, our membership had already dropped to just over 7,000. De-

In 2012 when our controller left, I decided to resign as executive vice president and use my background as a CPA in the controller position. Our cost cutting efforts have continued under the Johnson-Reaves administration.

Now that we are selling the building, we are able to move to an office that fits our staff, membership and budget.

Getting here has been difficult. We have made major reductions in every area. Since 2009, we have reduced our staff from 16 full-time employees to five full-time and three part-time employees. DFT's expenses for 2013 were 55 percent lower than five years ago. Selling the building will allow us to cut our expenses by another 25 percent.

While we have dramatically reduced expenses to allow us to live within our ever-diminishing means, we have balanced our budget every year without

raising DFT dues. Twice, we passed along increases from the state and national federations. On two other occasions, instead of passing along increases from the state and national federations, we kept dues deductions the same, resulting in a decrease in DFT revenue.

We also made great progress on paying off debt. In January 2009, our combined obligations to the state and national federations, the school district, and the bank totaled \$6.1 million. By the close of our fiscal year on June 30, we will have repaid all obligations except \$1.5 million we owe the national federation for per capita dues from 2006 through 2008.

During the last five years, I have earned the nickname bestowed on me by DFT President Keith Johnson: The Miser. I look forward to a time when we can be less miserly in order to pay for the past, and have more opportunity to help the union allocate its resources in a way that allows us to move forward.

DPS State Takeover is an Abject Failure

By John Telford

As DPS superintendent, I protested the ongoing presence of an emergency manager and the existence of the "Educational Achievement" Authority. When the unconstitutional PA 436 took effect, I had been on the brink of strengthening DFT bargaining rights and returning DPS principals to OSAS membership.

We now await the outcome of our federal lawsuit to terminate "emergency management" and regain the 15 pirated EAA schools. In order for DPS to be fully enabled to educate all of our students, it must become a single unified district once again, governed by our

elected school board and its appointed superintendent.

The takeover's decade-plus of inept leadership has brought the district to the brink of academic and financial ruin. The schools enjoyed a \$93 million surplus in 1999, and the scores were at the state midpoint and rising.

Ten years later, Emergency Manager Robert Bobb left behind a \$327 million deficit and the scores were the worst in America. If that was the reformers' concept of what constitutes reform, I'd hate to see their concept of what constitutes deformity.

Longtime Detroit activist educator John Telford's books are available at www.AlifeontheRUN.com. He can be contacted at DrJohnTelford@gmail.com or (313) 460-8272. His blog is <http://DrJohnTelford.blogspot.com/>.



John Telford

Grants . . .

Fruit Trees

Fruit Tree 101 is an initiative of the Fruit Tree Planting Foundation to provide schools with edible outdoor orchard classrooms. Through the program students can improve the quality of the air and water while creating a source of tasty and healthy snacks years into the future. The donation of 20-25 trees includes figs, cherries, apples, pears, citrus and more. For info, visit info@ftpf.org.

Video Contest

A video contest in honor of the 50th anniversary of the National Academy of Engineering is open to middle school and high school students imagining what engineering will accomplish in the next half century to enhance life on Earth. Grants up to \$25,000 are available. Deadline: March 31, 2014. For info, visit E4Uvideocontest@nae.edu.

Psychology

The American Psychological Foundation seeks to strengthen the study of psychology by high school students through grants that support relevant projects. Grants up to \$20,000 are available. Deadline: May 1, 2014. For info, visit www.apa.org/apf/funding/pre-college.aspx.

Elementary Teachers

The Literacy Empowerment Foundation provides books for nominated teachers on a weekly basis. Nominees are teachers who have demonstrated their support for fellow teachers, whether by providing a web site with innovative and exciting new teaching methods, presenting at a conference, or mentoring other teachers. Grants of \$100 worth of books are available. For info, visit www.leftbooks.org/teachers-helping-teachers.

Libraries

The Ezra Keats Foundation offers grants up to \$500 to public schools and public school libraries for projects that foster creative expression in public schools and libraries. Deadline: March 15, 2014. For info, visit www.ezra-jack-keats.org/minigrant-program.

Service Learning

Do Something provides weekly seed grants for young people interested in starting a community action project. Grants up to \$500 are available. For info, visit www.do-something.org.

Listen to a Life

The Legacy Project invites students age 8 to 18 to enter a Listen to a Life Contest. The contest involves young people interviewing elder people and writing a 300-word essay about what they learn from the interview. Deadline: March 22, 2014. For info, visit www.legacyproject.org.

High School Science

The Lemelson MIT InvenTeams provide grants and a platform for high school science teachers who want their students to think critically and scientifically. Students and their science, math or technology teachers work in teams devising an idea for a needed invention. Grants up to \$10,000 are available. Deadline: Feb. 28, 2014. For info, visit inventteams@mit.edu.

COPE Aims to Raise \$20,000

COPE, the political action arm of the DFT and AFT Michigan, set a goal to raise \$20,000 by the end of the school year. The money is being raised to help elect candidates in November in state offices who support the work of public school teachers and staff.

COPE chair Ivy Bailey says she's asking a small amount from each DFT member to make that happen.

"We need \$10 from each DFT member," Bailey said. Of course larger contributions are always welcome. The funds are desperately needed to stop the barrage of attacks on teachers, unions and public schools from the right wing governor and legislature.

Checks should be made to AFT Michigan COPE, and sent to AFT Michigan at 2661 E. Jefferson, Detroit MI 48207, or dropped off at the DFT office, 7700 Second Ave. Suite 427, Detroit, MI 48202.



COPE chair Ivy Bailey accepts a check to the COPE fund from Vida Bonacci.

Detroit Celebrates “Day of Action”



We won't take it sitting down. That's what union, education and community groups in Detroit said during a national “Day of Action” on Dec. 9.

Locally, the Day of Action launched a coalition of education advocates, students and families to stand up for their right to a quality education.

More than 100 people from varied organizations crammed into St. Luke AME Church in Highland Park to talk about the need to band together to face the unprecedented threats to public education.

“A high quality public education for all children is an economic necessity, an anchor of democracy, a moral imperative and a fundamental civil right,” said David Hecker, AFT Michigan president.

“Education is the most powerful weapon to use to change the world,” said Donnell White, executive director of the Detroit NAACP. “We speak from different pulpits and platforms, but today we came together.”

Hecker said the best way to stop the destruction of public education is through unity.

“We know to achieve educational quality, we must do it in a coalition,” he said.

The Day of Action helped launch a campaign to reclaim the promise of public education. The campaign aims to bring greater investment to public schools and colleges and renew the focus on teaching and learning, not testing.

Chanel Kitchen, of Youth Voice, urged an examination of zero tolerance policies toward students.

“Zero tolerance is a policy that punishes youth for any infraction of a rule regardless of mistakes,” she said. These infractions are as minor as ID cards or being out of dress code.

“We don't have a voice at the table to tell our side,” she said.

The Day of Action was the first day in many ahead to reclaim the promise of public education.

Big Bird Visits Carver STEM Academy



On Nov. 12, the One World, One Sky Big Bird's Adventure Plantarium visited the PNC Grow Up Great Head Start classes at Carver STEM Academy. Other classrooms were invited to share in the wonderful Earth science experience.

*DFT
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Marcus Garvey Gets New Playground

With the same commemorative shovel used on March 23, 1963 to break ground for Butzel Junior High School and now the Marcus Garvey African Centered Academy, the school broke ground Dec. 10 for a new playground and fitness park.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of the UAW-GM Center For Human Resources, DFT members Bill Hoover Jr. and Sue Dropiewski, school engineer Davida Green, and principal James Hearn launched this immense project. The team worked closely with UAW-GM since Marsha Creelman of the UAW, and Janice Adams of GM, first showed interest in helping Garvey achieve its dream.

The current playground received a \$40,000 gift from the Kellogg Foundation in 1999. It was mainly constructed of wood, however, and was designed for lower elementary POHI children. The nearly 14 years of heavy use by kids and the neighborhood led to it being condemned.

A complete excavation of the condemned playground will begin this winter.

“Every elementary school in America deserves a playground,” said Hoover, Garvey’s physical education teacher. “This school has been a pre-K through 8 building for decades and thanks to the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources, we finally have one.”

“Our students have excellent behavior and focus at Garvey,” Hoover said, “and that will only improve with an area to have recess and lunch time recreation to exercise, get fresh air and sun light, and release energy.”

The area will include a playscape for 85 children at once, three swing sets, four fitness stations, a walking track, basketball courts, garden boxes and new fencing to secure the area.

Also instrumental in getting funds and support for the project were Lee Jones, Kris “Buffalo” Owens, Jeff “Paycheck” Pietrzyk, of UAW-GM; Scott Sandefur, of GM; Jim Glynn, vice president of labor relations at GM; and Joe Ashton, UAW-GM.



The UAW-GM Center for Human Resources held a penny drive and collected \$8,500 from only 200 people in the building and have purchased 100 shoes and school uniforms for the students. They also donated \$6,000 in equipment and school supplies and are throwing an all-school pizza party.

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

February

- 6 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(7700 Second Ave., Suite 427, Detroit, 48211)
- 13 Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 17-21 Winter Break, School Closed**
- 18 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.
(at (1-75), Detroit, 48211

March

- 6 Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(7700 Second Ave., Suite 427, Detroit, 48211)
- 13 Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
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