

Steve Conn Wins DFT Presidency

New DFT President Steve Conn, executive vice president Ivy Bailey, and the executive board were sworn in Jan. 20 by AFT Michigan President David Hecker.



DFT President Steve Conn

"I want to salute the marvelous due militancy of Detroit teachers," Conn said. "It's time to take a stand for justice.

"I want to say to the governor, the

politicians, and the corporate interests who they work for, we are fed up with the state-sponsored destruction of the Detroit schools."

Conn said he wants to re-incorporate the EAA schools into DPS, end the "obscene standardized testing regimen," and get a union rep in every building, among other goals.

He recalled the speech given by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1963 as a situation similar to what Detroit teachers face today and "the fierce urgency of now."

Conn won in a runoff against former DFT executive vice president Edna Reaves by a vote of 612 to 599. Also winning in the runoff were vice presidents Ivy Bailey, Vida Bonacci and Mike Schenk, recording secretary Nicole M. Davis and treasurer Michelle Broughton. The new DFT executive board approved Bailey as executive vice president.

The Executive board members who were elected in the December election are: Glenda Booker, Robin Jennings, Mark Moroni, Quan Neloms, Jason Posey, Leslee Przygodski, LaShawn Sims, Terry Strauss, Marcus Walton, Darnese Wilkinson and Lokia Wilson.

Three trustees were elected: Lisa Card, Rahjinah Johnson, and Elena Brantley-Phillips. They serve 2-year terms.



New DFT executive board members and trustees took the oath at the December membership meeting. They are (from left) Robin Jennings, Leslee Przygodski, Lisa Card, Glenda Booker, Marcus Walton, LaShawn Sims, Mark Moroni and Jason Posey. Not pictured are: Quan Neloms, Terry Strauss, Darnese Wilkinson, Lokia Wilson, Rahjinah Johnson and Elena Brantley-Phillips.

REFLECTIONS PART II: BE EVER WONDERFUL

As my tenure as an educator and DFT president comes to a close, I conclude by referencing a song from Earth Wind and Fire. People who know me well know that I believe EWF to be the greatest band of all time. One of my favorite songs by this super group is "Be Ever Wonderful."

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

One of the lines reads; "What I want to do, and what I might tell you, may not be as you see. But as you live today, what I want to say, is be ever wonderful in your own sweet way." This capsulizes how I view my tenure as DFT president during the most challenging times in our long and distinguished history.

Leadership is like faith. It is easy to lead and have faith when things are going well. If our school district was fiscally solvent, if teachers were getting raises and step increases, if class sizes were where we need them, if teachers had the resources, support and respect they deserve, in clean and safe environments, and if we had public accountability for an elected school board and superintendent, leadership would have been much easier.

But that was not the reality under which I had to lead this union. In fact it was the absolute antithesis. The district was in a \$300 million hole. An Emergency Manager had unmitigated authority, and the legislature passed laws specifically designed to thwart the ef-

forts of teacher unions, not just DFT, to fight back on behalf of their members.

I never complained. I never ran away from the conditions under which I was expected to lead. I made no excuses or apologies for the decisions I had to make to protect this union and her members.

Through these trying years, many members criticized me because they felt I could have done more or done things differently. That's why the EWF song was so inspirational to me. No, what I did wasn't the way many of you thought it should get done. However, that is what I was elected to do, make decisions that I believed were right for the now, and for the future.

I was able to make those decisions because of the outstanding training I had, and the outstanding people I had working with me. These people, and so many more, held me up, helped me out, and made my presidency work.

Presidents John Elliott and MaryEllen Riordan: These two great pioneers of the labor movement taught me so much. The most important lesson they taught me was to never make decisions to ensure I'd get re-elected. They taught me to make decisions that are in the best interest of the members, because my job was to do my job, not try to keep it. They also taught me to know the strength and levity of the employer, the law, and the impact my decisions would have on the livelihood of the members. They taught me to have the courage to do what you know is right, not what is convenient. I did that. As I told many of you when I visited your school; if the decisions I make costs me my job, that's ok, as long as it doesn't cost you yours.

Eileen Nowikowski, Marshall Widick, and the entire legal counsel from Sachs Waldman Law Firm: Our

attorneys are the greatest. During my tenure we had lawsuits and arbitrations and won each of them. They kept me apprised of the law, the options available, and the ramifications of each option. They gave me the sound legal advice to responsibly lead this union — knowing the law, respecting the law, and following the law.

Executive Vice-Presidents Mark O'Keefe and Edna Reaves: Without question these are the two best right hands I could ever imagine for the times they served. Mark's knowledge of business, finance, accounting, auditing and controlling was invaluable as we addressed the financial crisis in DPS as well as DFT. I chose him because I needed someone smarter than me by my side. Because of his hard and tireless work, the DFT became fiscally solvent again, and we are in a position to address our own legacy debt with AFT.

Edna's passion for member mobilization, community outreach, and member service made her the perfect EVP as we expanded the DFT's scope. Edna established herself locally and nationally as an advocate for members, a strong organizer and mobilizer, and union leader.

THE DETROIT
teacher

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President continued from Page 2

The LRA's (Mershira, Terrence, Karin, and Judy): These people were relentless in their pursuit of justice and fairness for our members. They knew their jobs, did them well, and just needed to know they had my support, direction and guidance to effectively represent our members.

Margaret Weertz has done an incredible job telling your story in the Detroit Teacher. When I became president I urged her to go out to highlight the good in DPS and the teachers and support staff who make it work. Margaret did that and so much more. Due to her great work, the DFT won many awards for the paper. Margaret is a jewel.

Patrick Falcusan is perhaps the most invaluable asset we have. His unprecedented knowledge of DPS finances, employment law, revenue streams, and spending practices are phenomenal. He aided me tremendously as I sought ways to minimize the impact upon our members during the DPS fiscal disaster.

The clerical staff: Barbara, Estella, Samarrah, Andrea (Susan), and the late Linda Wilson. They always did what I asked them to do, even when it wasn't required of them. I never wanted them to look at me as "the boss." I was their co-worker and they were just as important as anyone else in that office. Special among them, of course was Holley, the assistant to Presidents Riordan, Elliott, Garrison, and Cantrell before me.

Holley was with me from my arrival in 1993 through her retirement. Holley always made me aware of precedents, old contract language, files of reference, and DFT history. Holley knew more about the DFT than just about anyone because in her more than 40 years in the office, she lived through it all.

Retired AFT Michigan Secretary-Treasurer Lois Lofton-Doniver: Way back in 1997 she advised me that one day I would have to lead this union and there were some things I needed to modify, e.g. my powder blue suits. Lois conveyed that I must not only be professional, I must look professional.

AFT Michigan President David Hecker was always there whenever DFT needed him. Whether keeping us abreast of legislative actions pending in Lansing, connections with the governor's office, health vendors, or just bending an ear, David was always available and dependable and was an asset to the DFT.

My wife, Sherese, and my children Quill, Kiki, and REJEAN (Keith) for giving me the time, space, and support to do this job the right way. I know it kept me away from home on many nights, yet they never complained because they understood the importance of the work.

Finally to you, the union that I've led and loved. You were always my strength and inspiration to do my best no matter how difficult the circumstances. I remained determined to represent you because you are the best.

It has been my honor to serve you for 21 years and to lead you the past six. Thank you for the time and the opportunity. BE EVER WONDERFUL DFT.

Updates . . .

DFT Retiree Chapter Meetings Moved

The DFT Retiree Chapter meetings have moved as of Jan. 13. The retirees will no longer meet at Triumph Church on East Grand Boulevard.

The Retiree Chapter will now meet at the Michigan First Credit Union, 27000 Evergreen Rd., Lathrup Village, 48076. Also, instead of meeting on the third Tuesday of each month, they will meet on the **SECOND** Tuesday of the month.

Meeting dates this year are: Feb. 10, March 10, April 14, May 12 and June 9. Meetings start at 11:30 a.m.

Take Your Students on a Quest

Teachers can lead a team of four students in Academic WorldQuest, a quiz bowl on world events and issues. Local winners will travel to Washington, D.C. in April to compete nationally. For more information, contact Dellashon Di Cresce at ourglobalkids@gmail.com.

DFT Retirees Celebrate the Holidays

The DFT Retiree Chapter had an amazing turnout for its holiday luncheon Dec. 9 at the Golightly Career and Technical Center. The luncheon provides a chance each year to catch up with former colleagues and have a leisurely meal prepared by students. Past President Keith Johnson (from below left) attended with chapter officers Charlene Smith, Arthur Divers, Jewel Gines and Ricardo Thomas.



CORRECTION

The article in the December 2014 issue about a Sampson-Webber Breast Cancer Awareness event was missing some key information. The idea for the day was brought by Amy Krzyzanowski, who invited the speaker from the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute to explain the disease, along with getting a class worth of Race for the Cure T-shirts. Amy is also a survivor and has won the Race for the Cure the last six years in a row.

Sampson-Webber Going Green on Major Scale

In Lashon Clay's class at Sampson-Webber Leadership Academy, the third-graders can differentiate renewable resources from non-renewable resources and understand science-based environmental issues in depth. That's because Clay and other Sampson-Webber teachers have been going green and teaching science revolving around the students' environment.



Sampson-Webber teachers Anna Thomas, Ellen Hoyer and Lashon Clay.

With the grant, the students made recycling bins to collect materials and are building a garden.

Clay takes on a lot at Sampson-Webber. She's a 16-year math and science teacher who is the Academic Games coach and the Go Green leader, as well as the math lead teacher.

She has boundless energy and gives her kids positive feedback at every turn. She worked with teachers Anna Thomas and Ellen Hoyer to get the school to conserve in a major way.

This year they teamed up with Lawrence Technological University and won a \$280,000 Ford Fund grant to create a solar and water collection infrastructure. This includes solar panels, an energy farm, and an outdoor classroom with an instructional garden for the neighborhood.

The small and large efforts to conserve resources teach the students to do the same. In the composite bins, students take food and recycle it to use as fertilizer for the garden.

"We can start a compost bin now with leftover food," Clay says, "and compost it in the community vegetable garden."

Clay recently won a \$500 Visa card from the Bosch Engineering, Science and Teaching Grant program. The grant goes to schools that participated in the Go Green instruction and its four themes: recycling, conserving energy, conserving water, and building

THE D NEWS

Meijer Hire

Sean Hopkins had all the intelligence and a young American needs to succeed. But his pants and tough attitude got in the way of being promoted in jobs. Hopkins had several Detroit interviews in which superiors saw his work ethic and so his attitude continued to be an issue.

"No one could tell me anything," Hopkins said. "I had to adjust my attitude."

At the new Meijer store at the State Fair, Hopkins' work skills got him noticed by the store director within weeks. After three months at the store, Hopkins is on a leadership career track. Hopkins and three other leaders at the store shared their successes and setbacks -- with five students from Sampson-Webber Leadership Academy in November.

The store leaders, display managers, and clerks told the students what they looked for in a job. It comes down to attitude -- positive,



like I was exposed and see that people will be successful. Store director Adrian Lewis said Meijer is not just here to sell groceries,"

DETROIT SMAKERS

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Meijer's employee Sean Hopkins talks to Turning Point students.



position — friendly. They also shared their own personal hurdles for succeeding at the new store. Two managers said they learned a lot about honesty at the store, that the doughnuts in the back room are not theirs for the taking unless they paid for them.

"If you see a penny on the floor," said Nakia Pennix, "I want you to turn it in."

Kathy Hemingway, a behavioral specialist at Turning Point, said she wanted the students to see the realities of getting hired in the real world.

"I wanted the kids to be exposed will take a chance on them," Hemingway said.

er isn't only the newest store in Detroit.

es," he said, "but to give back."

DFT Goes to Lansing

DFT members went to Lansing in December to voice their strong opposition to the expansion of the EAA state-run district. The EAA took over some of the district's newest state-of-the-art buildings for \$1 rent, has not increased student achievement, and was found to pay exorbitantly for travel and a failed chancellor.



Photo by Sean Shields

Teachers Terrence Butler, Tara Baker and William Bowles met with Renee Edmondson (second from left), assistant to State Rep. Harvey Santana. Rep. Santana (District 10, Detroit).

Carver Hosts Food Pantry for its Community

Just before the winter holidays, Carver STEM Academy hosted a in the gym food pantry for 200 families in its



community. Staff members, color coordinated in blue shirts, lined up bulk bags of potatoes, apples, spaghetti and chicken so families could easily pick up the goods.

Carver has a partnership with Target, which did a handsome makeover of its library earlier this year. This time Target gave Carver a voucher for Gleaners Food Bank for 200 families to pick up the food on Dec. 10.

"We invited the Gardner School community too," Carver principal Sabrina Evans said proudly.

Lessons in Leadership

By Mark O'Keefe, DFT Controller

A first mate asked his captain, "Last week when I told you we were being attacked by pirates, and we are outnumbered two to one, why did you tell me to get your red shirt?" The captain replied that if he was injured in battle and bleeding, he did not want his crew to notice and lose confidence.



Mark O'Keefe

The captain was a true leader, but he could have learned a few lessons from retiring DFT president Keith Johnson.

For six years, I have had the pleasure and honor of working side by side with Keith, first as his executive vice president, and more recently, as controller. We have been outnumbered and under attack the entire time, but Keith Johnson never lost confidence, and never lost faith. He is a strong, optimistic, fearless man of integrity, and he will be missed.

One of the many lessons I learned from Keith is that you have to build relationships. You can argue facts and principles, but it should never be personal. After disagreeing, often loudly and passionately, you should still be able to shake hands when you walk away.

Keith also believes that it is not enough to say "No." You always have to give the other side something to say "Yes" to.

Keith is a professional. He knows his job, does it well, and expects and allows others to do the same.

One thing I could teach Keith is how to hold a grudge. Somehow, he just doesn't seem able to do that. He has taken unjust criticism from members who later call him for help. Rather than resenting a past injustice, he seems to welcome the opportunity to be of service and change a person's opinion.

Keith never lets politics affect his decisions. He can always be counted on to do the right thing for the right reason. During a difficult round of negotiations, he told the DFT membership, "If doing my job costs me my job, that's OK, as long as it doesn't cost you your job." He lived by those words throughout his tenure at DFT.

Keith's encyclopedic knowledge of our district, our collective bargaining agreement, and the many grievances and arbitration decisions we have won cannot be replaced. His knowledge and forceful presence made many administrators a little nervous when he came to their buildings.

As I bid farewell, I thank Keith for his mentoring, friendship, and leadership during red shirt days. Keith, I hope the next chapter of your life is everything you want it to be.

FAREWELL TO THE DFT

I would like to thank the members for their support during the last six years. It has been my pleasure to serve you; however, I have resigned effective Jan. 19.

I am proud of the work I did, including paying off over \$5 million of the \$6.5 million in debt that the DFT had amassed prior to my arrival. We were able to do this while cutting DFT union dues twice. These cuts happened at the same time that the state and national federation were increasing their dues.

The union is still living paycheck to paycheck, and it will still need to monitor expenses and cash flow carefully. I wish the best of luck to the new administration. I know if they continue to run the union's finances carefully, the union will be able to carry on the important work of representing its members.



Eighth-grade teacher Meredith Summer with a student whose family home was destroyed by fire.

A Fire and a Call to Help

One day recently an eighth-grader was pulled from Meredith Summer's social studies class at Greenfield Union Middle School. The boy learned that his family home caught fire and destroyed all of their belongings.

The can-do teacher sprang into action. She went on Facebook to talk about it with her 1,000 "friends." She started a "Go Fund Me" online account. A total of \$600 rolled in.

Summer's neighbors in Oak Park, Huntington Woods, and Berkley started dropping off clothes and appliances at her house.

"One lady dropped off \$20 in my mailbox trusting me to deliver it," Summer said, astonished. Her home in Oak Park is filled with new pillows and blankets, sheets, toaster ovens, microwaves, TVs, clothing and shoes. Soon she will get a refrigerator and a gas stove.

"I've always done things like this," she said, "but not to this magnitude."

Summer has worked one year in Detroit and 16 years previously in Southfield.

"I went on a site called Next Door and people just came forward," she said. "I was basically able to get them everything they need, clothes, a refrigerator, furniture." Summer said she was floored by the number of people who wanted to help.

"The teachers, my principal, Beverly Campbell, have been very supportive of this project," she said, confirming that Greenfield Union has the community spirit to help kids in need.

"I love it here."

2015: Police Brutality is Once Again Headline News

The Basic Law class at East English Village Preparatory Academy completed an investigation project at the end of the first semester. The students studied two incidents in Detroit’s history: the Cynthia Scott Murder (1963) and the Algiers Motel Incident (1967). These two incidents involved questions of police misconduct.

Retired DPS media specialist Charlene Smith introduced the students to research techniques and information sources. Research took students to the Burton Historical Collection at the Main Branch of the Detroit Public Library and to the Walter P. Reuther Library on Wayne State University’s campus where they were able to read newspaper accounts from the past, look at photo collections and listen to oral accounts.

Students developed an investigative file folder for each case and wrote whether justice had been served or denied.

The culminating activity was a visit from Ron Scott, long-time Detroit activist and member of the Detroit Coalition against Police Brutality. The Basic Law students at East English were also exposed to living history and a rigorous and relevant unit of instruction.

Basic Law teacher Ninochk Griffin gave her stu-



East English Village basic law students with teacher Ninochk Griffin and activist Ron Scott.

dents an opportunity to become actively engaged in investigations, analysis and argumentation as well as in the civic activities of their community. In turn, the students were active learners, highly motivated as they achieved the course’s learning objectives.

Griffin has prepared her students for successful post high school civic engagement.

Membership Meeting Attendance

School representatives who were in attendance for the months of November and December 2014 are listed below.

NOVEMBER 2014

Academy of the Americas
Bagley
Blackwell
Brewer Academy
Brown Academy
Carlton
Carver Academy
Cass Tech
Clemente
Clippert
Cody (APL)
Cody (MCH)
Cody (DIT)
Cooke
DFT
Davis Aerospace
Davison

DSA
Dixon
Douglas
Durfee
Drew
Edison
Ellington
Emerson
Moses Field
Fisher
FLICS
Golightly
Gompers
A.L. Holmes
Hutchinson
Keidan
J.R. King
M.L. King

Mackenzie
Mann
Marquette
T. Marshall
Mason
Nichols
Noble
Osborn College Prep.
Priest
Pulaski
Renaissance
Paul Robeson
Sampson
Schulze
Spain
Thirkell
Vernor
Wayne

Western
J. L. White
Office of Specialized Services

DECEMBER 2014

Academy of the Americas
Bagley Elementary School
Bates Academy
Brewer Academy
Brown, Ronald Academy
Carver STEM Academy
Cass Tech High School
Charles R. Drew Transition Center
Clippert Academy
Cooke Elementary School

Davis Aerospace
Davison Elementary School
Dixon Elementary School
Durfee Elementary School
Edison Elementary School
Ellington @ Beckham
Emerson Elementary School
Moses Field School
Fisher Magnet Lower Academy
Foreign Language Immersion
Garvey Academy
Gompers Elementary School
Holmes, A.L. Elementary School
Hutchinson Elementary/
Middle School
King, J.R. Academy

King, M.L. High School
Mackenzie Elementary/
Middle School
Mann Elementary School
Marquette Elementary School
Marshall, T. Elementary School
Mason Elementary School
Noble Elementary/Middle School
Osborn Evergreen
Priest Elementary School
Pulaski Elementary School
Spain Elementary/Middle School
Thirkell Elementary School
Vernor Elementary School
Western International
High School



John R. King Students Get Hats and Gloves

Sorority sisters from Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority (Alpha Rho Omega chapter) didn't need to look far to dig in for a community service project.

Days before Christmas, John R. King teacher Glenda Booker and retiree Cynthia Matthews headed to the dollar stores to pick up warm winter wears for their students. This was going to be a big "scarf, hat and gloves" giveaway to 170 students in 34 classrooms. Stocking up on colorful accessories, they returned home at 11:30 p.m. on Dec. 17.

But the sorority sisters were able to serve 588 students by the end of the day.

John R King is a large preschool-8 school on the west side that serves 1,029 students.

"I'm a product of the Detroit Public Schools," said Booker. "I like giving back to the community. It's not like they have a lot."

Booker was pleased with the work of the sorority. "We served more than half of the kids."

Not bad at all.



B.E.S.T. Writing Contest Deadline March 27

Judy Robinson, retired teacher at Davison School, is chairing a writing contest for Detroit Public School fourth-graders. This is the third year of the B.E.S.T. contest, sponsored by Bookstock. Contest materials are available at Bookstock.com.

"The prizes are great and the participation last year was phenomenal," Robinson said.

The contest will be launched the second week in February. Entries need to be postmarked by March 27. The awards ceremony (televised live on WDIV) is April 28.

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

February

- ~5 **DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 10 **Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.,**
Michigan First Credit Union, 27000
Evergreen, Lathrup Village
- 12 **General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
(IBEW Hall)
- 16-20 **Schools closed, Mid-winter Break**

March

- ~5 **DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**
DFT Office (7700 Second Ave.)
- 10 **Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.,**
Michigan First Credit Union, 27000
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