

THE DETROIT teacher

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Goodfellows Names Teacher of the Year

I llya Tolbert was a bit annoyed at being called to the gym in the middle of his morning class on June 12. He likes teaching. Likes his students. And likes his classroom.

Good thing he disrupted his schedule. Tolbert, a 15-year teacher at Harms Elementary School in southwest Detroit, was named the Fourth Annual Goodfellow Teacher of the Year. The Goodfellows received the most entries this year — more than 800. Tolbert got 18 nominations.

“Mr. Tolbert is so special because he smells like fresh almonds,” third-grader Yazmine Cirne wrote in her nominating essay. “He spends all his money to buy art supplies to make some clay masks and other projects.”

The students underscored what they like about Tolbert: he’s kind and gentle, and happy go lucky.

“He works very hard to make everyone smile,” said Melody Rose Andino. “He is very creative. His paintings are

better than the Mona Lisa.” Tolbert doesn’t speak Spanish to his mostly Latino students, but he is demonstrative.

“I’m really not a big talker,” he said. “I like to demonstrate every project so I have tons of examples when I’m done. Whatever we’re doing, I’m doing it too.”

Tolbert, a big user of DonorsChoose.org, will use his \$200 prize money for school supplies. Steven Colbert, the Colbert Report comedian funded one of his projects.

The Detroit Goodfellows sponsors the



Goodfellow Teacher of the Year to show its appreciation to Detroit Public School administrators, teachers and support staff who work diligently to identify students in need of its “No Kidde Without a Christmas” gift packages.

More Evaluations Done, But Not Well

While many Detroit teachers get stressed about being evaluated, they want it done and done right. State law now requires Michigan teachers to be evaluated annually. Yet in Detroit, the process is still far from uniform and unbiased.

A DFT survey found that teachers want to be evaluated and held accountable. But they want the process to be fair and objective. Several teachers said evaluations were uniform in their buildings.

“My evaluation, although stressful, was fair,” said Tracey Diebel.

In other buildings, however, teachers felt the evaluations were rushed at the end of the year and evaluation criteria was not shared with them.

“The process is arbitrary and capricious,” another said, “(as was last year’s) as we did not even know the criteria until April or May (funny how the PowerPoint slides my principal shared with us were from August).”

“I felt the principal just was clicking effective without looking or listening to anything,” one teacher said.

“The evaluation was simply a formality, get it done in a hurry!” a teacher said. “I became a teacher to be accountable, what about administrators and parents.”

Many teachers felt they were held accountable for things out of their control. They said they should not be held accountable for students’ achievement when the district has no attendance enforcement and the average student misses 46 days a year.

“I can’t teach a child who is absent,” a teacher said.

One teacher said DPS needs to take another look at attendance.

“Let me start by saying I got a 93 on my evaluation,” the teacher said. “One reason was I chose to come to school daily for three weeks with pleurisy. I was in no way highly effective during this time, but didn’t want to risk losing points on my evaluation.”

DFT COMPLETES ANOTHER YEAR OF TRIUMPH DESPITE TURMOIL

As we close the 2012-2013 school year I want to recognize all of you for your outstanding dedication and performance under unprecedented circumstances. No matter the challenges, you always manage to rise above the fray to provide quality instruction and support to the students in DPS.

President's Report



**Keith
Johnson**

The school year began with the DFT filing a precedent-setting lawsuit against our employer, challenging a flawed and fraudulent evaluation process that left 422 of our members unjustly laid off due to those bogus evaluations.

We also faced the "dictatorial edict" issued by the Emergency Manager that stripped us of rights and benefits attained through 45 years of collective bargaining success. Many school administrators now felt empowered by the culture of fear that permeated this district from the EM's office on down. Yet the DFT remained resolute in our determination to stand up to the EM, the "edict," and the bogus evaluations with the belief we would prevail.

Meanwhile, we fought to make collective bargaining a constitutional right, and to eliminate the Emergency Manager Law through a repeal of PA4. Although voters rejected the constitutional amendment, we were successful in repealing PA4, only to see the legislature, in another of their patented underhanded tactics, reinstitute the law in the "lame duck" session in December.

Adding insult to injury, the legisla-

ture passed the hated Right to Work (for less) law in an effort to silence public sector unions and nullify our political voices. Without question this was a major blow to the labor movement in Michigan. Who would have EVER believed our beloved state, the cradle of the labor movement, would succumb to RTW?

The legislature continued to impose itself on public education and unions by making teacher evaluations and placement prohibited subjects of bargaining. The hits just kept coming.

Through it all the DFT continued our battle for righteousness, particularly for those members who were unjustly laid off. We endured criticism because of the deliberate but time-consuming preparation for court action against the district.

We were acutely aware of the hardship our laid off brothers and sisters were facing. But our case would face irreparable damage if we did not do it right. We would only get one chance and we wanted to make sure we left DPS no escape from their ineptitude and arrogance.

When we finally filed suit, seeing that we had them "dead to rights," DPS wanted to reach a settlement. We used that as leverage to amend the EM's "edict" and negotiate an agreement that would give us something to build on for the future rather than losing those rights and benefits forever.

The DFT membership recognized the importance of preserving the right to collectively bargain and ratified an agreement that NO ONE liked by a 78 percent margin. That spoke volumes about our members' understanding the need to continue the battle.

We were able to get the bogus evaluations expunged from the records of our members. We were able to get those members who were laid off returned to work, either this school year or in the fall. We were able to get the sick bank "payout" restored, so those members who worked diligently and came to work every day could receive a financial benefit for the days they earned.

We restored due process rights as well as binding arbitration, which is vitally important to the grievance procedure.

On Sept. 18, as a result of ANOTHER lawsuit and settlement with DPS, our members received a 2.5 percent bonus check, and on Dec. 21, our members received a 2 percent surplus-sharing bonus, just in time for the holidays.

This has been a difficult year for all of us. Yet we had many successes in the face of the turmoil. If not for YOUR commitment to YOUR union, this could not have been achieved.

On behalf of all of us in the DFT office, the Executive Board, Officers, and Trustees, I humbly thank you for all you do; in the classroom, in the community, for the DFT, and for the teaching profession, the one profession that creates the path for all to pursue their goals and dreams.

**Have a safe and RESTFUL summer.
YOU ARE VALUED AND
APPRECIATED!**

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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 . . .

Burton Is Art Teacher of the Year



Patrick Burton

Patrick Burton, a 28-year Detroit art teacher, was named Art Teacher of the Year of the 100 schools in the Detroit Public School District. He was honored in June at the 76th Annual Detroit Student Art Exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Burton, who created an African American history mural at Finney High School before it was demolished, helped students paint similar murals at other schools. His students learn many techniques and genres and consistently produce high quality pieces. In 2005 Burton had more student pieces at the exhibit than any other teacher.

"I was totally shocked and very honored by the award," Burton said. "It was a long time coming and I received a lot of enthusiasm from other teachers."

Memorial Scholarship Fund Awards Scholarship to Cass Tech Student

At a May 8 reception at Wayne State University, the DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund Committee awarded Paige Watkins a \$2,000 scholarship to attend WSU College of Education.

"I grew up not always enjoying school or my classes, but always loving to learn," Watkins wrote in her essay. Watkins excelled and graduated at the top of her class at Cass Tech. "My success in the classroom was the result of the influences I had in my family and community—people who constantly encouraged me."

The DFT Memorial Scholarship Fund honors Detroit teachers who are active union members and encourages young students to pursue the teaching profession. DFT Memorial Scholarship Chair Jeanetta Cotman and DFT President Keith Johnson presented the award to Watkins (above).



Scholarships Awarded to King Students

The Martin Luther King Neighborhood Network (MLKNN), a 501c3 organization, awarded \$1000 scholarships to Martin Luther King High School students Kevin Reid, Jasmine Lampkin, Courtney Ohenzuma and Conrad Ohenzuma at a May 22 recognition dinner.

The students were required to describe in writing their future careers as they touched on science and technology. Cynthia Cockrel, executive director of DPS Student Services & Data Management Complex and treasurer of MLKNN, presented the certificates of achievement to the students. Debra Jenkins, principal at King High School, attended the dinner, proudly supporting her awardees.

"It was a lovely affair," said Dr. Jenkins, expressing her gratitude as the financial support assisted a population that may have been overlooked.

Measuring Student Growth

By Mark O'Keefe, DFT Controller

Students should be evaluated based on their academic growth, and teacher evaluations should include student growth as a significant component. Who would argue with either of those propositions?

The problem is determining how to obtain a reliable measurement of student growth. Unfortunately, the Michigan legislature did not come up with a solution to this problem before changing the laws to peg teacher pay and certification to student growth.

A valid measure of student growth would require a pretest at the beginning of the school year, and a post test at the end of the year. The test would be aligned with the curriculum, and would provide a reliable indication of the extent to which the student mastered that curriculum. Teachers would only be accountable for students they taught, during the time they taught them.



Mark O'Keefe

In DPS, pretests were given as late as November. If teachers are evaluated, paid, and employed based on growth in test scores, they would have been better off if they did not start teaching until November. Of course with all the time spent on preparation for MEAP tests in October, there is little time for teaching before November anyway.

I had a chance to glance at some of the high school tests. I read fewer than ten questions and found two significant errors. One question had a quote about Napoleon saying that he "moved down the youth of Europe." I Googled the quote and found, as I suspected, that the original quote said "mowed" down the youth of Europe. With the typo, the answers made no sense and the question was invalid. Without the typo, the student only needed good test-taking skills to answer correctly. At best the question measured test-taking skills, but not mastery of the Social Studies content that it was purported to test.

Teachers are wondering:

What allowance is made for students who enter a class late in the year?

If a teacher brings an entire class from three years below grade level to 1.5 years below, will the tests show she is effective because the students advanced by more than a grade level, or ineffective, because the students are still behind grade level?

If the test score is not part of the student's report card grade, how do you know they put forth the proper effort to ensure a meaningful result?

What happens when students purposely put forth minimum effort because they do not like a teacher who demands excellence and has high standards?

Some subjects do not lend themselves to standardized tests. If a world language teacher is judged based on written tests, how much time will be spent on oral skills?

And finally, where is the teacher input into this system?

A flawed system will produce flawed results.

THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

From Farm to Classroom

By Vanessa Parnell

Marty Schramm has been a teacher for 17 years, the last 14 of them in Detroit. Simultaneously, he has been a hobby farmer on five wonderful acres in southeast Michigan. He is excited to take his science background and his passion for teaching and combine them with his love of the farm.

Next year, he will be moving out of the classroom setting and taking his animals into the schools for assembly presentations full time. His educational presentations will include food sources, life cycles, a literacy list, stories of bullies in the barnyard, and an opportunity for students to see and interact with live, friendly farm animals.

If you'd like him to bring his animals and present at your school, you may contact him at 734-417-9073 or by email at JoyfulHouseFarms@gmail.com. If you'd like to receive updates on what is happening at Joyful House Farms, send an email with "Newsletter" as the subject to JoyfulHouseFarms@gmail.com. A website will be coming soon.



Poetry and Tea at Marcus Garvey

Students at Marcus Garvey Academy participated in a Common Core Poetry Workshop Tea Party May 17. The two-day workshop focused on standards for grades 1-4 with an emphasis on understanding metaphors, stanzas, literal and non-literal phrases, famous poems, famous poets, poetry styles and writing poetry.



The fun day concluded with a tea party and discussion complete with fancy hats and outfits. Students also studied the origin of tea, tea etiquette, various flavors of tea, and teas that promote good health. Students received free poetry CD's created by TSLI

Amella Washington, tea pots, cups and tea bags to take home. Garvey staff members Evelyn P. Holmes and Carol Bennett, parent volunteer Shatella Harvey, and former Marcus Garvey librarian Charlene Smith hosted the tea party.

"We continue to promote literacy," Holmes said, "using strategies that encourage learning and promote cultural experiences."

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS



DSA Performs at Carnegie Hall

The Detroit School of Arts Wind Symphony performed at Carnegie Hall this spring. The symphony was awarded "Best Performance" by the National Band and Orchestra Association on March 31 at Carnegie Hall in New York. Also this year, the senior band students received over \$2 million in band scholarships to various universities around the United States. "I am so proud of them," said Ronald Malabed, DSA band director.

Vernor Students Take Great Lakes Field Trip

The Great Lakes Education Program focuses on fourth grade students discovering the wonders of the Great Lakes. This is a field-based educational opportunity backed by university research and offered through Wayne County MSU Extension and Michigan Sea Grant.

On May 20, students from Irma Kabakciyan's fourth grade class at Vernor Elementary School set sail on a science school-ship from Elizabeth Park Marina in Trenton. They had been eagerly anticipating this trip. Students spent the morning aboard the school-ship participating in hands-on activities and experiments at each station.

Their looks of astonishment said it all when they saw plank-

ton being pulled up in a net and observed them on a magnified screen; or saw how the water temperature changed as the underwater camera immersed deep into the river's bottom.

What students learned in text came to life in front of their eyes. Students and parent chaperones enjoyed a picnic lunch at the marina and then were off to the afternoon



session at the nature park. There, students saw different animals native to Michigan.



"The GLEP is a wonderful hands-on, multi-disciplinary science program enjoyed by students and parents alike," Kabakciyan said. "Parents said this was by far the best educational trip they had ever experienced."

Traveling to Washington to Celebrate My Asian Heritage

By: Willie Dechavez

President Obama proclaimed May as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month in the United States. This is the time when our nation comes together to remember the contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders to this country.

This year's theme, "I Want the Wide American Earth," was based on the poem by Carlos Bulosan. He was an English language Filipino novelist and poet, the author of the book "America is in the Heart."

Bulosan wrote: "Before the brave, before the proud builders and workers, I say I want the wide American earth, For all the free. I want my beautiful land. I want it with my rippling strength and tenderness, Of love and light and truth, For all the free."

I traveled to Washington D.C. for this year's celebration as a representative of the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission (MAPAAC). I attended the White House Forum on Asian American and Pacific Heritage.

I had the chance to be with a Filipino veteran Celestino

Almeda in the Hart Building listening to the Senate Judiciary Committee members, lead by "Immigration Gang of Eight" discussing border security, economic opportunity and the Immigration Modernization Act. With more than 300 amendments filed, immigration reform is clearly front and center for Congress.



Filipino veteran Celestino Almeda and Detroit Teacher Willie Dechavez

Filipino veterans in the area protested the Obama administration's inaction on denied one-time equity pensions. Obama signed the stimulus law in 2009, which included the equity pension provision for Filipino war veterans. Thousands of claims were turned down, however, because their names were not on a prescribed list. This is even if the soldiers showed proof of U.S. military service authenticated by the Philippine government.

Filipino veterans have a new supporter in Congress in the name of

Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii. Hopefully with her assistance the plight of the Filipino veterans claiming their rights to benefits will be realized soon under the Reformed Immigration Act. This is urgent, as veteran Almeda told me, " We used to be 20 active Filipino veterans fighting for our rights and we only have five now."

Teen Court Stars at Northwestern

Basic Law is not a dry textbook class in David Britten's social studies room at Northwestern High School. More than 16 times this year, a juvenile first-time offender got his or her hearing in front of Britten's class.

The students got so good at questioning and legal logic they took their show on the road. Britten's class won the 2103 Dean Michelle R. Miller Moot Court Champion Trophy in the Michigan Youth in Government conference. They scored so well they will compete in August in the National Youth in Government Mock Trial Tournament in Chicago.

"It's really neat to see my students asking questions with proper logic in a firm, positive behavior, over and over again," said Britten, a nine-year Detroit teacher.



"They try to see how remorseful they are, how the kid's doing in school and what's happening at home," he said.

Britten said the students learn so much from the experience they employ that same reasoning with incidents in the school.

When they ask the offender, "Couldn't you have done this?" or "Wouldn't it have been better to do that?" or "Maybe you should get involved in after-school programs," they ask themselves the same questions in a scuffle at school.

Britten says the program run by Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Danton Wilson proves successful for all the young people involved.

"The point is to right the student, to get him on the right path."

The biggest surprise is for the parents of the offenders, who must attend Teen Court with their child.

"Some parents struggling with their own kids don't think kids are this smart," Britten said. "They say, 'Wow, I didn't know kids thought like that today.'"

DFT Honors “Undying Spirit” of Building Reps



DFT President Keith Johnson

This year might be recorded as the worst in DFT history. Teachers underwent terribly flawed evaluations. The legislature passed the Right to Work law in Michigan. Although voters defeated the Emergency Manager law, the governor imposed a new one that is similar.

“There was a tyrannical attitude and a culture of fear” in DPS, said Keith Johnson, DFT president.

“This has been a difficult year on so many levels,” Johnson said. Hundreds of Detroit teachers were not recalled based on the faulty evaluations.

“For many of them, irreparable harm was done to their lives,” he said.

Thankfully, the DFT filed a successful lawsuit to throw out the evaluations and recall those laid off.

For sticking with the union through thick and thin, the DFT honored its building representatives at a dinner June 12 at the Doubletree Hotel in Detroit.

“I remember a time we had 300 people at this dinner,” Johnson said. “The important thing is we’re still here and we’re here because we have an undying spirit, an undying belief in ourselves.” Johnson predicted that one day Roy Roberts will be gone, but the DFT will survive.

“We’ll still stand because the labor movement will still stand,” he said, “because the labor movement is woven into this land.”



DFT Executive Vice President Edna Reaves and AFT Michigan President David Hecker



Merishira Oliver and Glenda Booker



Hostesses Miranda Washington and Cynthia Matthews

DTJ Honors 2013 Building Reps



(Seated) Mershira Oliver, Terrence Martin, Cynthia Matthews, Miranda Washington, (standing) Beverly Wilkerson, Dionne Shell, Glenda Booker, Kim Travis Ewing, and Robin McDaniel.



(Seated) Joyce Burrell, Melaine Tillman, and Wanda Hogg and (standing) James Mallett, Patrick Falcusan and John Andrews.



(Seated) Rochelle Massingill, Leslie Hubbard, Crystal Lee, Marcus Walton (standing) Jason Posey, Lawrence Neely and Christal Bonner.



(From left) Kerrie Yax, Marva Fletcher, Dorian Evans, Tracy Arneau, Maria Davis, Keshia Allen, LaShawn Sims and Rita Barksdale.



(From left) Nicole Davis, Virginia Graham, Tywana Johnson, Julie Jablonski and Donyelle Johnson.

DTJ Honors 2013 Building Reps



LaShawn Sims, Nadonya Muslim and Kurtis Brown



Julie Jablonski, Vanessa Parnell, Virginia Graham, Wanda Lundy Colquitt and Rochelle Massingill



(Seated) Karin Whittler, Estella Burnette, (standing) Gail Spencer, Lennie Barnes and Patricia Hicks.



(From left) Vida Bonacci, Cathy Schrock, Ivy Bailey, Mitzi Davis, Deborah Pruitt and LaWanda Gray.



(From left) Danielle Doniver, Lisa Scott, Jeanette King, William Gardner, Ethelle King, Michelle Broughton, Wendy Newberry, Victor Gibson, Wanda Lundy Colquitt and Joseph Hines.

DFT Honors 2013 Building Reps



(From left) James Britton, Steven Portnoy and Mark O'Keefe.



Heritage Optical Centers President George Barnes plays the package giveaway game.



DFT Attorneys James Britton and Marshall Widick from Sachs Waldman.



Which box contains the \$100 bill?



Cynthia Matthews wins a Franklin.