

# THE DETROIT teacher

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## WE DID IT! *DFT DEFEATS TEN PERCENT CUT*





# ALL IS STILL NOT WELL IN THE WORLD OF DPS

**W**elcome back to reality everyone. I hope your summer was restful and enjoyable. While we bask in the glow of a successful rebuke of the proposed 10 percent pay cut, there is still much work to do.

As Emergency Manager Jack Martin said in his press conference announcing the rescission of the cuts, enrollment of students is Priority 1! The cure for layoffs and budget cuts is student population.

## President's Report



**Keith  
Johnson**

For the first time in history, last year DPS did not educate the majority of school-aged children in Detroit. Only 48 percent of Detroit's children were enrolled in DPS. We know many students start off in charters or EAA but come back to DPS. Yet they are not part of our count or funding.

We must serve as ambassadors for our own cause by encouraging parents to send their children to DPS. We must encourage parents to entrust their children's education to us, even as we engage in the battle for salaries, benefits, better working conditions, and administrative support.

Here is what we must do:

### GET OUT THE VOTE

Gov. Snyder must go. The Republican led legislature must go. The attorney general must go. Our apathy cost us in the 2010 mid-term elections. If every educator, middle class worker, member of

organized labor, and senior citizen looks at how their lives were affected under Snyder's reign, HE WILL LOSE. But only IF WE VOTE!

People say they don't know Mark Schauer. BUT THEY DO KNOW RICK SNYDER! If you think Snyder was bad when he had re-election to think about, imagine him with nothing to lose.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MEMBER MOBILIZATION

We just witnessed what we can accomplish when we deliver a clearly defined message and a simple "ask" of our members and community.

We must use the same energy we exerted to ward off the cuts to get the district to realize they must incentivize quality teachers to come here and stay here by offering competitive salaries, affordable benefits, adequate materials and supplies, competitive class sizes, administrative support and professional respect.

We cannot do this alone, but simply asking the community to support us is not enough. We must engage our community; lead them to see what we see, feel what we feel, and see how it impacts their children.

### SET ASIDE THE FEAR; YOU DON'T GET WHAT YOU DESERVE, YOU GET WHAT YOU DEMAND!

Too many members are afraid to speak up, show up, and stand up for what they need. They believe they pay the union to do that, which in part is true. You actually pay for the union to LEAD and for you to follow that lead with your actions and support. We cannot make something right unless people identify what's wrong. Membership is not a spectator sport, it is an activist endeavor.

Realities within DPS, however, im-

pede our ability to deliver the outcomes we desire. Mr. Martin alluded to one himself when speaking of class size. Martin said the number of students actually in the classroom on a daily basis average 16 per class. What he didn't acknowledge was (a) it may not always be the same 16, (b) the teacher is still responsible for the record keeping and academic progress of all students on her roster, and (c) with class sizes ranging from 25-38, on any given day ONE-THIRD OF THE STUDENTS ARE ABSENT!

That means teachers have difficulty maintaining continuity because they are always playing catch up.

There is reason for hope. Despite all the adversity, I was proud so many of you showed up for your open houses on Aug. 23. I was very pleased with the response to the Telephone-Town Hall on Aug. 21. Nearly 2,000 AFT Detroit members were in on the call.

There is still much work to do. The question is are we all ready to do the work?

Have a safe, productive, and active school year. You are greatly appreciated.

## THE DETROIT teacher

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# Stop Taking the Easy Way Out

By Edna Reaves,  
Executive Vice President

When the coalition of unions was called to a meeting to hear the Detroit Public Schools' revised Deficit Elimination Plan (DEP), we knew something wasn't right when we walked into the room. After listening to an hour long presentation, the hammer dropped. The only way the district could balance its budget was to cut an additional 10 percent from wages. I was outraged!

This is the same story we heard from Robert Bobb when we agreed to the TIP, the same message from Roy Roberts' imposed 10 percent salary reduction, and the same rhetoric from Jack Martin when he restructured our health care plan. When will it end?

After using a few choice words, I asked the chief financial officer to stop taking the easy way out, go back and come up with a plan that didn't include another cut to employees. He refused and led me to believe that the state would not approve a plan unless it contained deeper wage cuts. That's why we had to take this fight to the governor's office.

As deplorable as this DEP was, it actually awakened a sleeping giant. Our members and our community woke up. We let our voices be heard by saying enough is enough!

I did what I've been committed to doing for the last three years, listening to you, our members. I listened to your suggestions as I sat in some of your living rooms, listened to voice messages, and read your emails. I met with the other locals and our community partners, and devised a plan to fight back. Although some members were skeptical and wanted to take more drastic and potentially illegal measures, I thank you for trusting the process and engaging in the actions that led to this victory.

- Almost 2,000 AFT Detroit members participated in the telephone-town hall

## Retirements Announced

The following DFT members have announced their retirements: **Timothy Cook** and **Elizabeth Tadsen**.

If you have retired in the last six months and would like it announced, please call the editor at 313-875-6776.

- AFT Michigan locals called the governor as did Metro Detroit AFL-CIO affiliates and MEA members. We called thousands of Detroiters, informed them of the issues, and urged them to contact the governor.

- Mayor Mike Duggan, House Democratic Leader Tim Griemel, Senate Democratic Leader Gretchen Whitmer, and many community leaders responded to our calls by urging the governor to put a halt to these cuts.

- State Superintendent Mike Flanagan tweeted his opposition to the 10 percent pay cut, saying budget crises can't be solved by continuing to cut wages.
- At the Michigan Democratic Party Convention, the agenda was put on hold so delegates could take out their cell phones and call, tweet, or email the governor, after David Hecker and I spoke from the floor.
- Our coalition of union members made countless calls and emails to the governor's office.

While I may have led this organizing campaign, no single individual made this possible. We mobilized as a local, as a coalition of unions, and as a community, proving there is strength in numbers. We showed that when we unite for a common cause and work together, we can make things happen.

Even after the 10 percent wage cut was rescinded, we continued our charge:

- A large contingent of union members and community partners walked door-to-door encouraging parents to bring their children to our classrooms
- Community organizations and other unions joined more than 300 DFT members in our unity rally
- The DFT had one of its largest turnouts in recent years for the Labor Day Parade

We must keep this momentum going all the way to the polls on November 4. We need to stay committed to working with our community to stop this assault on public education in Detroit. I urge each of you to dedicate some time to our Get Out To Vote campaign. Watch the DFT website for more details.



Edna Reaves



# THE DETROIT NEWSMAKERS

## Carver Starts Young Eagles Aviation Club



Deanna Wilson, a student of Carver STEM Academy, and Dr. Brian Smith prepare to take off at Detroit's City Airport. Smith, director of the Tuskegee Airmen and sponsor of Carver's Young Eagles Aviation Club, is in his second year working with Carver students to inform them about aviation and aerospace careers. Smith also is assisting Carver in partnering with instructor Cliff Miller at Davis Aerospace Technical High School at Golightly so the students can further their aspirations of graduating with a pilot's license. The sky is the limit for the Eagles!

## DFT Walks for Labor Day



**A near record number of DFT members walked in the Labor Day Parade this year to support a living wage for working men and women and protest the income gap in the United States. Good news is on the horizon. We are uniting to put pressure on corporations and government leaders to remedy this inequality. More states are raising the minimum wage and more Americans are aware of the stagnation in wages.**

# Blackwell Students Learn the Art of Debate

**N**ews of girls getting kidnapped in Africa by an extremist group that didn't want them to go to school and learn Western values propelled eighth-graders at Blackwell Institute to have opinions.

Teacher Lionel Scott thought he would use current events to get students to write down some pro and con arguments. The next step would be getting these pre-teens on a podium in front of their peers.



Scott, a math and social studies teacher, held a well rehearsed debate June 9 for the qualifying teams in front of a seventh-grade audience.

Plenty of the girls and boys had speaking jitters but they went to the podium to say the Nigerian girls should be in school.

Scott also had the students debate whether juveniles should be tried as adults after committing serious crimes.

"Most young people are not living an adult life," argued Thomas Draughn, 13. "They're still living a child's life."

Kayla Dobbins, 14, formed her argument about the Nigerian girls, asking the seventh-grade audience to imagine their parents.

"How would you feel if you sent your girls to school and they got kidnapped?" she said.

Fellow Blackwell teacher Willie Dechavez praised Scott for taking on the exercise. "He challenges the students to think," Dechavez said. "He fully engages them and really cares about the students."



**Blackwell teacher Lionel Scott instructs eighth-graders in the art of debate.**



**Charlene Smith, a DFT retiree, helps at the First Book giveaway this winter at the Parade Company.**

## DFT Retiree Attends AFT Convention

Charlene Smith, DFT retiree delegate to the AFT Convention, joined the AFT volunteers, Los Angeles Federation of Labor, and community allies, at the All Peoples Community Center to give back to our convention host city. The volunteers helped give away free children's books, free bags of groceries, games, popcorn and snacks. Food and music was enjoyed by all.

THE DETROIT teacher NEWSMAKERS



## DETROIT FEDERATION OF TEACHERS NOTICE REGARDING UNION SECURITY AGREEMENTS AND AGENCY FEE OBJECTIONS

As a general matter, employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement containing a union security clause are required, as a condition of employment, to pay an agency fee equal to normal union dues. While the wording of these claims is not perfectly uniform, none require more than the payment of this agency fee to retain employment.

Under the Detroit Federation of Teachers' By-Laws and policy on agency fee objections, employees who are not members of the union, but who pay agency fees, pursuant to a Union security clause, may request a reduction in that fee based on their objection to certain kinds of Union expenditures.

The policy provides an objection period each year followed by a reduction in the objector's fee for the twelve months beginning with the start of the school year. Briefly stated, the Detroit Federation of Teachers' objection procedure works as follows:

- The agency fee payable by objectors will be based on the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures for those activities or projects normally or reasonably undertaken by the Union to represent the employees in the bargaining unit with respect to their terms and conditions of employment. Among these "chargeable" expenditures are those going for negotiations with the employer and employing departments, enforcing collective bargaining agreements, informal meetings with representatives of the employer or employing departments, discussion of work-related issues with employees, handling employees' work-related problems through the grievance procedure, administrative agencies or informal meetings and Union administration. In the past, approximately 85 percent of the Detroit Federation of Teachers' expenditures have gone for such activities. Reflected in this percentage is the chargeable portion of the affiliation fees (per capita) paid to the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

Among the expenditures treated as "non-chargeable," which objectors will not be required to support, are those going for community service, legislative activity unrelated to wages, hours or working conditions of represented employees, certain public relations activities, support of political candidates, cost of affiliation with organizations (and unions) other than the AFT and members-only benefits. In the past, approximately 15 percent of DFT's expenditures have gone for such "non-chargeable" activities. The percentage of the AFT's expenditures on "non-chargeable" activities has been generally between 20-25 percent.

- Objectors will be given a full explanation of the basis for the reduced fee charged to them. The explanation will include a more detailed list of the categories of expenditures deemed to be "chargeable" and those deemed to be "non-chargeable," and the independent certified public accountant's report showing the Union's expenditures on which the fee is based. Audited financial information relating to the chargeable, non-chargeable expenses of the AFT will be provided at the same time. Objectors will have the option of challenging the union's calculation of the reduced fee before an arbitrator, pursuant to the AAA Rules on Impartial Determination of Union Fees. Details on the method of making such a challenge and the rights accorded to those who do so are found in the DFT's By-laws and policy on agency fee objections, a copy of which will be provided to objectors along with the explanation of the fee calculation.

- Objections must be received by DFT each school year. In addition, agency fee payers who are new to the bargaining unit may object within thirty days of receiving this notice, either in the new employee packet or in the Detroit Teacher (where necessary, retroactive to the commencement of their union security obligation and for the duration of the current agency fee year) and employees who resign union membership may object within thirty days of becoming an agency fee payer. Employees filing late objections for either of these two reasons should so indicate in their letter of objection.

- The letter of objection should include the employee's name, address, and school at which employed. Objections must be sent to: Agency Fee Objection, c/o Detroit Federation of Teachers, 7700 Second Ave., Suite 427, Detroit, MI 48202.

# DFT Absorbs Increase in Per Caps

By Mark O'Keefe, Controller

When you pay DFT dues of \$40.78 per pay period, you are actually paying dues to DFT, and per capita dues to AFT national, AFT Michigan, AFL-CIO Michigan, and metro Detroit AFL-CIO.



Mark O'Keefe

Per capita dues for AFT national and AFT Michigan were increased by a total of \$1 per month for the new school year. The DFT is lowering its dues to offset this increase, so our members will continue to pay the same \$40.78 they have paid since 2012.

We absorbed a smaller per caps increase last year, making this the second consecutive year we have lowered the portion of your dues that is retained by DFT.

The sale of our building has made it easier for us to absorb these increases. We still have liabilities that need to be paid before we can go one step further and reduce the total dues you are paying.

In January of 2009, the DFT had over \$6 million in liabilities. Since that time, we have consistently limited spending to less than our income, while working to sell the building. Now that the building is sold and we are housed in a suite that is affordable and the right size, we have been able to pay off over \$4 million of our debts.

The bank has been paid in full. We are current on our salary reimbursements to DPS. However, we still owe about \$2 million to AFT national and AFT Michigan for per cap payments we collected from you, but did not remit. Of that total, \$1.4 million is from 2006 through 2008. The remaining \$600,000 is from last school year when we held back on per cap payments in order to pay off the bank when we sold our building. That amount will be paid in full by the end of February.



# DFT Wins Five National Awards

At the AFT Convention in Los Angeles in July, the DFT was honored with five awards from the Communications Awards Contest for The Detroit Teacher and the DFT calendar.

The DFT won second place for Best Original Illustration or Photo (pictured below) for its photo story “Right to Work is Wrong for Michigan,” capturing DFT members and other workers’ protest against the legislature for pushing through a Right to Work law. The DFT won second place in the Best News Story category for “DFT Votes to Keep Collective Bargaining Rights.”

We won third place for Best Feature Story for “A Class on Class,” about social worker Kathy Hemingway and teachers at Turning Point Academy’s

work with young women to learn manners and dining etiquette.

The DFT won a third place award for Best Profile for “Learning How to Be a Man,” about DFT President Keith Johnson’s talk with middle school boys about growing into manhood by accepting challenges and rejecting violence. The DFT also won third place Best Non-Periodical for the 2013-14 DFT Calendar.

“Congratulations on your awards,” said Leslie Getzinger, AFT Communications Specialist. “The work you do every day is invaluable to our members and our community. We’re fighting forward with real solutions to the challenges we face. And we’re driving home the fact that everyone deserves a great public education—from early childhood through col-

lege—as well as affordable healthcare and high-quality public services. It’s an uphill battle, but with your diligence and continued dedication, we can change the conversation and collectively reclaim the promise of America.”

## 3 Percent Case Still Pending

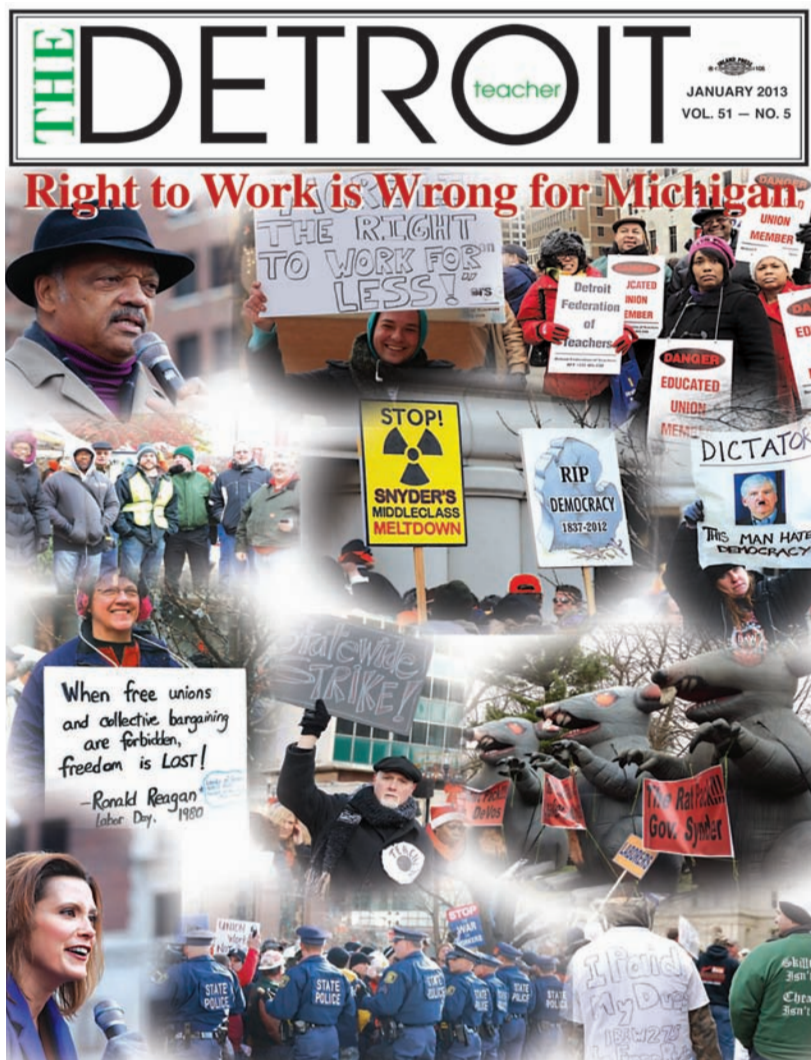
The union has two lawsuits in the court system challenging laws that raised your contribution to the pension system. The first law was Public Act 75 of 2010 that deducted 3 percent of every paycheck for retirement health benefits, without guaranteeing that you would ever receive those benefits. We won that case and also won the appeal. The contributions required under this law began in July 2010 and were discontinued in December 2011. The money withheld is held in escrow pending a final ruling from the Michigan State Supreme Court.

The second suit seeks to overturn Public Act 75 of 2012, which replaced the mandatory 3 percent contribution with an optional 3 percent payment. Members who opted out also opted out of receiving health care during retirement. The law also required higher payroll deductions for employee’s pensions. We lost this case at the appeals level.

The Michigan Supreme Court recently announced that it will hear our appeal on the second case, which relates to Public Act 300 of 2012. The Michigan Supreme Court will hear arguments this fall.

Meanwhile, the case concerning Public Act 75 of 2010 is being held in abeyance. This means the Michigan Supreme Court will not address the case until the case concerning the 2012 law is resolved.

We will keep you updated on any other developments.

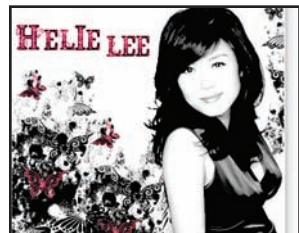




# Korean Immersion Experiences Await You and Your Students

By Bill Bowles, Western International Academy

The Korea Academy for Educators (KAFE) is a funded one-week immersion into all things Korean. It is open to K-12 teachers and administrators and takes place in Korean Town in Los Angeles each July. History lectures, visits to museums and a Buddhist temple, demonstrations of traditional Korean music and Taekwondo and, of course, delicious Korean food are all just part of a rich immersion into Korea. Teachers get lots of ready-to-use resources to share with students and colleagues.



KAFE was founded by Helie Lee, author of two best-selling books on the Korean American immigration stories of her family members. Her books are compelling page-turners filled with personal drama that bring to life Korea's tumultuous modern history.

Teachers can apply online next spring at [www.koreaacademy.org](http://www.koreaacademy.org).

Teachers also can treat students to an exploration of Korea by participating in the Single Shard Program, offered by the NAM Center for Korean studies at the University of Michigan. Suitable to English or social studies classes, students read the award-win-

ning novel "A Single Shard," by Linda Sue Park.

NAM awards a class set of the novels. Set in 12th century Korea, the story revolves around a young man's quest to apprentice to a master potter. The book is filled with dramatic tension while weaving a vivid tapestry of Korean life in a bygone era.

NAM also sends teachers a Korean culture kit, which includes books, videos, textiles and ceramics, all of which help engage students in Korea then and now. As a culminating activity, students visit the Korean ceramics galleries at the University of Michigan Museum of Art for a hands-on interactive experience. Students then create clay tiles based on a Korean design.

This program is funded. Apply at [www.ii.umich.edu/ncks](http://www.ii.umich.edu/ncks).

Western International Academy English teacher Tara Baker and I collaborated on this project last year with her ninth-grade pre-AP English class.

"Learning about a new culture was an eye-opening experience for us all," Baker said, "and added camaraderie to the classroom."

**Participants in KAFE re-enacting a traditional Korean wedding. Western teacher Bill Bowles is far right as father of the bride.**



## Nominations Open for DFT Election 2014 Calendar for Biennial Election of DFT Officers, Executive Board Members and Trustees

- **Sept. 11:** MEMBERSHIP MEETING. Nominating procedures and schedule of appropriate dates announced. Placed on DFT website, The Detroit Teacher, and sent to schools.
- **Sept. 11:** OPEN NOMINATIONS. May be mailed to Election Committee P.O. Box. Must be in P.O. Box by 4 p.m. Oct. 9, 2014 or hand delivered to the Election Committee at the Oct. 9, 2014 Membership Meeting.
- **Oct. 9:** MEMBERSHIP MEETING. List of nominees posted and additional nominations will be accepted from the floor. NOMINATIONS CLOSED as last order of business.
- **Oct. 13:** Notice sent to those nominated with request for acceptance and statement for Special Election Edition of the DETROIT TEACHER.
- **Oct. 20:** Second notice to nominees who have not responded.
- **Oct. 27:** DEADLINE FOR ACCEPTANCES AND STATEMENTS. Must be in PO Box by 4 p.m. or hand delivered to the DFT office by 5 p.m.
- **Oct. 28:** List of eligible candidates sent to each candidate and to schools for posting. Notice sent to candidates who did not send a statement for the DETROIT TEACHER that no information will be printed.
- **Nov. 6:** DEADLINE FOR FILING GRIEVANCES on nominations and acceptances. Grievance(s) heard by Election Committee and Executive Board.
- **Nov. 13:** Grievance appeal(s) to membership.
- **Nov. 17:** VOTING BEGINS. Ballots mailed to members' homes.
- **Dec. 5:** VOTING ENDS. Ballots in P.O. Box by end of business day.
- **Dec. 6:** Ballots counted.



# Teacher of the Year: She Thinks We're Smart

**B**ennett Elementary School Principal Josette Buendia had to keep it a secret that teacher Elizabeth Kolesar was selected as Teacher of the Year by the Detroit Goodfellows.

After it was announced Buendia did a little dance of excitement. Kolesar, a 15-year DPS teacher, won the honor, as well as a \$200 gift card to buy classroom supplies.

"I love working here at Bennett and at DPS," said the fifth-grade math and science teacher. "I couldn't ask for a better principal and staff. They're absolutely amazing."

Isabella Mouat is the 11-year-old who wrote the winning essay. The consensus is exactly what Isabella wrote – Kolesar is kind.

"My teacher is special because she cares about how we do things," Isabella wrote. "Even though other teachers do too, it seems like she cares more. She helps us with everything. She makes us count. She thinks of us as smart kids."

Isabella also said Kolesar is a fair teacher.

"She does not care about how we look or what our skin color is," she said in her essay. "She makes us matter."

Therese Yglesias, president of the Detroit Goodfellows, said Kolesar's personality came through in the essay.

"One of the things that struck me was the child's genuine love of the teacher being so accepting," Yglesias said. "She had high expectations of their behavior."

"A lot of teachers think yelling is keeping kids in control. That's not how you do it."

The Detroit Goodfellows sponsors the Goodfellow Teacher of the Year contest to show its appreciation to DPS administrators, teachers, and support staff who, each year, work diligently to identify students in need of its holiday gift packages.



**Bennett Elementary School Principal Josette Buendia, student Isabella Mouat, Goodfellow Teacher of the Year Elizabeth Kolesar, and Therese Yglesias, president of the Detroit Goodfellows.**

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

## September

- 11 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 16 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**  
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.)

## October

- 2 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
(7700 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202)
- 9 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 21 Retirees Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**  
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.)

## November

- 6 DFT Executive Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
(7700 Second Ave., Detroit, MI 48202)
- 11 Veterans Day, Half Day School**
- 13 General Membership Meeting, 4:30 p.m.**  
(IBEW Hall, 1358 Abbott, East of Trumbull)
- 18 Retiree Chapter Meeting, 11:30 a.m.**  
(Triumph Church, 2760 E. Grand Blvd.)
- 27-28 Thanksgiving, Schools Closed**

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**Facebook!**

Check us out at

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