

AFTerthoughts



A Union of
Professionals



A publication of the Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 943 AFL-CIO

QuEST Conference

Quality Educational Standards in Teaching Local offers members the opportunity to attend

This summer the American Federation of Teachers is offering a teaching and learning conference for union educators. The QuEST Conference — Quality Educational Standards in Teaching — will be held July 12-15, 2007, at the Hilton in Washington D.C.

The workshop tracks include Developing Effective Curricula; Education Issues in Urban Schools; Effective Early Childhood Education; English Language Learners; Literary Instruction; No Child Left Behind;

Organizing and Negotiating for School Improvement; Safe and Orderly Classrooms; Special Education; Teacher Quality; and Teaching Mathematics for the 21st Century.

Local 943 will be sending union members who have an interest in these topics as they apply to their respective school districts. Members are asked to fill out the Local 943 conference form and indicate the area(s) of interest. The form is available online at www.aft943.org or from your council president. [Deadline for returning forms](#)

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Legislative Update

Members become Activist for Congressional Education (ACE)

Local 943 has begun training 15 members who have volunteered to serve on Legislative Committees. The group's first meeting was on January 30th. Toby Trimmer from the IFT presented information to help pave the way for our committees to begin establishing meetings with legislators.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 15th at 4:30 p.m. in the Local office, 4544 W.

1 0 3 r d s t r e e t . Senator Ed Maloney will be available to answer questions about what is currently happening in Springfield regarding issues that are important to our members. This opportunity will provide our committee members with some experience of meeting with a legislator.

To become a member of Local 943's Legislative Committees, please contact Deneen Pajeau at (815) 474-

Visit
www.aft943.org
for all your
union news
and
benefits.

Local 943 election results will be posted in schools.

"Thank you" to all Council union officers and building representatives for your time and effort in conducting the Local 943 election in your district. It is greatly appreciated.



Is this the year for school funding?

Will it happen? Will a serious discussion take place in Springfield about school funding? Will a plan be put forth? Will it be passed? This is the year it could really happen. School funding could be addressed at the state level. A solution could be voted on. Why this year? This is a good time. It is the first year of the governor's new term.

The school funding crisis is getting worse—particularly in the south suburbs. But the school funding problem is only part of a bigger problem in Illinois. Business acknowledges the state's finances are in trouble. The Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago has published a 56 page report on the financial status of Illinois that has received a lot of publicity. Among its topics is education funding along with pensions and state-provided retiree health insurance. They offer solutions that possibly will not make you happy. Why? They want to change our pension system **but not for current teachers or retirees. But for those who are just entering the profession.** They want to change our retiree health insurance program claiming it is too generous and too costly. The Chicago Tribune is currently running a series of editorials on school funding and ways to improve education. Have you read it?

Attention is focusing on education. **What will be proposed?** Right now we don't know. I know that sounds crazy. The legislature hasn't really gotten that far. There is a proposed bill in the hopper. But it is called a "shell" bill. There isn't anything in it yet. Soon it will have substance added. What will it be? Again we don't know.

What can you do if this is the case? Be ready to act when contacted by your council president or by Local 943. E-mail will be used for those members that can be contacted that way. You will probably be asked to call or e-mail your state representative or state senator on an issue. Background information will be provided. Your calls and e-mails will backup our lobbyists as they work in Springfield.

Consider traveling to **Springfield on Lobby Day, May 9, 2007** to lobby your state senator and representative. You will receive background

information, help with lobbying and lunch at the Governor's Mansion.

If you have easy access to a computer, become a member of the **AFT e-activist** group. Sign-up by going to the Local 943 website—www.aft943.org—and click on the blue box under the word Conventions. It's as simple as that. Think about becoming a member of **Local 943's ACE program**. See article on page 1.

Donate to Local 943's Voluntary Cope (Committee on Political Education) program. Think about the fact that practically everything in education is affected by politics: curriculum, funding, pensions, standards, certification and, of course, testing of students.

>>> IFT Convention

This year's IFT convention (March 2-4) will see many changes. Proposed constitutional amendments, if passed, will have the convention held every three years instead of two. This also means officers will be elected for three year terms. The convention will also be held in the fall instead of the early spring. Besides electing the president, the convention will also elect a secretary-treasurer, a newly created position. Dues will be set for the next four years because of this change.

I am opposed to the three years between conventions and to holding the convention in the fall. Three years between conventions is a very long time. Many issues can arise. Holding the convention in the fall adds one more duty to already over-worked council officers and active members who want to attend. The fall finds us finishing our contract negotiating, enrolling new members, starting school—open houses and parent-teacher conferences—besides all the holidays that occur in the last quarter of the year.

Kathy Setlak

Grievance Workshop

Separating gripes from grievances;
learn how to identify, write and win your grievance.



Sponsored by Local 943 and the Illinois Federation of Teachers

Tuesday, March 13, 2007
4:30 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

IFT/Local 943 office, 4544 W. 103rd Street, Oak Lawn

Presented by: Tonia Havard-Dew and Emilie Junge, IFT Field Service Directors

To sign up, send an email to: thavard-dew@ift-aft.org or call 708-423-0766 x 10.
Leave your name, phone number, and school district.

Free, democratic and independent labor unions are the hallmarks of free societies. We are committed to achieving the rights of all workers—irrespective of nationality, citizenship, or employment sector or status—to organize and represent their individual and collective workplace, economic, occupational and professional interests whenever such rights are effectively denied in the United States and throughout the world.

We are committed to the principle of self-determination, fair play, responsiveness and accountability in union governance. Working people and the public are entitled to know that the unions representing their interests are honest, participatory and unflinchingly and exclusively devoted to the common good.

Useful Websites

Drive Union! Go to www.uaw.org to see a list of union made automobiles. The guide is prepared by the United Auto Workers to provide information for consumers who want to purchase vehicles produced by workers who enjoy the benefits and protections of a union contract.

Tired of unsolicited telephone calls?

The National Do Not Call Registry at www.donotcall.gov allows you to limit telemarketing calls you receive. Once you register your phone number, telemarketers covered by the National Do Not Call Registry have up to 31 days from the date you register to stop calling you. If you don't have an e-mail address, you can register by phone at 888-382-1222. It's free.

Family member or friend in a nursing home?

The simple-to-understand and easy-to-use guide, "20 Common Nursing Home Problems—and How To Resolve Them," allows you to help residents get better care from nursing homes. Author and attorney Eric Carlson of the National Senior Citizens Law Center draws on first-hand experience with hundreds of cases involving residents' rights to help you solve some of the most common problems in nursing-home care. Go to <http://www.aft.org/retirement/index.htm>.



**FANNIE MAY
EASTER CANDY GIFT CARD SALE
25% DISCOUNT
OFFERED TO YOU BY AFT LOCAL 943**



Need some candy to fill Easter baskets? Need a hostess gift? Have a sweet tooth?
We have just the answer.

Local 943 is once again sponsoring a Fannie May Candies Gift Card sale for our members at a savings of 25%. Gift cards are available in the amounts of \$5, \$10, or \$20. This will allow you or your gift recipient to select the candy in the store.

In order to ensure the gift cards arrive in ample time before the upcoming holiday, the order forms **must be received in the union office** by the following deadline:

No later than 4 p.m. on Monday, March 19th.

Return your order form... **with payment**...to the union office to the attention of Judy Spirakes,
4544 W. 103rd Street, Oak Lawn, IL 60453. **Make checks payable to Local 943.**
708-423-0766

As soon as the cards have been received, anyone who placed an order will be notified by phone. To prevent cards getting lost in the mail, all orders must be picked up at the union office. We cannot mail certificates!

We hope you all continue to enjoy this feature being offered to you by your union and **HOPPY EASTER.**

Fannie May Order Form

Name (Please print)	School/Office	() Home Telephone Number
Card Retail Value	Quantity	Your Cost
\$ 5.00 (Five Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 3.75 =
\$10.00 (Ten Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 7.50 =
\$20.00 (Twenty Dollars)	_____ x	\$15.00 =
Total # of cards ordered	_____	GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO LOCAL 943

Local 943, Att: Judy Spirakes
4544 W. 103rd Street, Oak Lawn, IL 60453
708-423-0766

Son of Local 943 member wins \$6,000 IFT Scholarship

Local 943 member Kathleen Spedale found yet another benefit of being a union member.

Her son, Daniel, a senior at Richards High School, won a \$6,000 scholarship from the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Daniel's accomplishments include #1 rank in his graduating class, having received straight A's in all four years of high school, and is a member of the National Honor Society and Mathletes. He has also received a varsity letter for basketball and golf. Daniel has applied to the University of Illinois and Illinois State University.

Congratulations and best wishes to Daniel. His mom, Kathleen, is a library media specialist and union member at Oak Lawn Hometown middle school in District 123.

Scholarship Application deadlines

Wanted: Retiree's Pension Stories

The IFT has joined the Illinois Retirement Security Initiative, a broad coalition of unions, associations, and individuals committed to protecting our pensions and health insurance. They need stories from our retiree members in order to let our legislators know how important retirement security is to us. Retirees will be receiving a letter asking for your story. Your quick response is needed because pensions will be an issue in the upcoming spring legislative session.

Educator Expense Deduction

Teachers and other educators (including classroom aides, counselors, and principals) can deduct as much as \$250 that they spent to purchase classroom supplies last year. The deduction for educator expenses can be claimed on Form 1040, line 23, "Archer MSA Deduction." Enter "E" on the dotted line to the left of that line entry if claiming educator expenses, or "B" if claiming both an Archer MSA deduction and the deduction for educator expenses on Form 1040. If entering "B," taxpayers must attach a breakdown showing the amounts claimed for each deduction. Source: www.irs.gov

◆ **March 1, 2007:** CFL \$1,500 academic and random drawing scholarships. Request an application by writing to the William A. Lee Scholarship Committee, 130 E. Randolph St., #2600, Chicago IL 60601. For more information, go to www.chicagolabor.org

◆ **March 31, 2007:** AFT \$8,000 scholarships. \$1000 grants also available to AFT members. Go to www.aft.org for an application.

◆ **May 1, 2007:** Local 943 \$500 Scholarship. An application is available at www.aft943.org or from your council president.

For further assistance, please contact Local 943 at 708-423-0766.



Membership Benefits ...

It's income tax time!!! With the Union Plus online tax preparation service, AFT members and their families can prepare and file their federal and state returns for only \$14.95 each. If your adjusted gross income is below \$29,000, your **federal** tax return is **FREE**. For more information, or to access the service, visit: <http://www.unionplus.org/taxes>.

After you get your income tax taken care of, you can start planning a trip with your refund and AFT PLUS will help you save on your hotel. Save 10 % off the "Best Available Rate" at thousands of participating locations throughout the world! You can check rates and make reservations online. Visit <http://www.aft.org/aftplus/travel/hotel.htm>. Information and reservations are also available by calling **877/670-7088**. Identify yourself as an AFT member and mention your AFT PLUS discount number to the operator: **20952**.

Also, don't forget to order your Fannie May Candy gift cards at a 25% savings. The order form for this benefit can be found on page 4 of this publication.

To find out all of the benefits available to you, visit www.aft943.org. All benefits are listed with a direct link for each one. The **About Local 943** button will access the **Benefits** button.

THANK YOU

**>>> to those who represented their council at
the
December Senate Meeting:**

108 — Cindy Layer, Margaret Schomburg
 110 — Karen Smith
 111 — Audrey Bukovsky, Peggy Kedzior, Sandy Krsak,
 Stacy Passarella
 122 — Janet Turek, Donna Flanigan, Nancy Havlin,
 Gail James-Chirco, Noreen Sharp, Mary Stockwell
 123 — Nancy Tauchman
 124 — Chris Dewey, Mary Dixon, Cindy Haase
 133 — Debra Terry
 135 — Karen Kendall, Deneen Pajeau, Donna Rehm
 143½ — Eddie Caffey
 152½ — Christina McClory
 155 — Jerry Rucker
 156 — Sue Benigni
 SWCCCASE—Theresa Long, Chris Adamo
 Local officers and staff in attendance:
 Kathy Setlak Dawn Stanovich Sue Mirabella
 Bob Goldsbury Judy Spirakes Laura Kies

**>>> to those who represented their council at
the
Special January Senate Meeting:**

110 — Karen Smith
 111 — Audrey Bukovsky, Andrea Biondi, Peggy Kedzior,
 Sandy Krsak, Stacy Passarella
 122 — Gail James-Chirco, Noreen Sharp, Mary Stockwell
 123 — Nancy Tauchman, Wendy Miller, Pat Adams
 124 — Chris Dewey, Mary Dixon
 126 — Maureen Fournier
 133 — Debra Terry
 135 — Nan Slewoski, Karen Kendall, Deneen Pajeau,
 Donna Rehm
 143½ — Eddie Caffey
 152½ — Dave Bohmann, Christina McClory
 155 — Jerry Rucker
 229 — Margaret Darnell
 SWCCCASE—Theresa Long, Chris Adamo, Shirley Lamping
 Local officers and staff in attendance:
 Kathy Setlak Dawn Stanovich Sue Mirabella
 Bob Goldsbury Laura Kies

NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

Alsip Teachers: The Union's negotiating team is in the process of developing proposals.

Hazel Crest: The Union's negotiating team is in the process of developing proposals.

Reminder

Register to vote!

Upcoming elections

April 17, 2007

Support your
local school district's
referendum.

***** VOTE *****

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Secretary
Sue Mirabella
Treasurer

Vice Presidents:
Bob Goldsbury
Deneen Pajeau
Mary Stockwell

Emilie Junge
Tonia Havard-Dew
IFT Field Service Directors

Hotel Savings for AFT Members

Call the toll-free numbers listed
and mention your **AFT +**
member ID number 20952.

Advance reservations required



The Community Advantage