



A Union of Professionals

AFTerthoughts

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

Local 943 moves into new office

The big move is over. After more than 30 years of being located in Oak Lawn, the “Oak Lawn” office has moved to Orland Park. Over the years, Local 943 has grown in membership and has moved to larger office space. “Our federated local first began meeting in office space above a garage, recalls Local president Kathryn Setlak. “Our meetings had become standing room only—It was time to move again.”

The new offices are shared with the Illinois Federation of Teachers. The building consists of four offices, two conference rooms, a reception area and work room, and meeting space that can seat 100. The new office will easily accommodate the Local senate meetings, professional development classes and various workshops conducted throughout the year by Local 943 and the IFT. Additional amenities for the staff include a kitchen and private restrooms—a luxury not seen at the previous space.

While the office is still in need of some unpacking, notes president Setlak, “I stand in awe of the work of our union movers. Amazingly, we were able to get to work almost the next day.”

Local 943

NEW ADDRESS

**15521 S. 70th Court
(155th, East of Harlem)
Orland Park, Illinois
60462-5105**

**708.633.0943
Fax 708.633.0944**



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Local 943 is planning on decorating the walls of its new office with union and education themed quotes.

Send your suggestions of quotes with author to
Laura Kies at lkies@ift-aft.org



From the president's desk...

Look at the issues that affect all of us

The current presidential primary season is almost over. This summer, the Democratic and Republican conventions will be held. The candidates will be chosen. Up until now, we have heard a lot of rhetoric along with the issues. In order to make good decisions for the November elections, members need to be evaluating the candidates' stand on issues that affect all of us.

Whether at the state or federal level, two issues stand out: health care and education. There is a lot of talk about some sort of national health care. At the state level, there is issue of healthcare for children and some discussion of a healthcare for all. Recent events such as St. Francis hospital's possible closing emphasize the need for a revamping of our current system of healthcare.

" In order to make good decisions for the November elections, members need to be evaluating the candidates' stand on issues that affect all of us. "

What's happening in Congress and the Illinois legislature? The biggest issues for us as educators are, of course, educational issues such as NCLB and school funding. The No Child Left Behind debate in Congress seems to be on hold until after the November elections. School funding at the state level, for all intents and purposes, also seems to be on hold until the November veto session.

After last year's disastrous attempt to pass the gross receipts tax, our union is backing Senator Meeks' SB 2288 which calls for an income tax increase for personal and corporate state income coupled with at least a 20% property tax reduction on the education portion of your tax bill. It would mandate \$300 million to higher education funding which has been neglected for many years,

raise the foundation level from \$5,734 to \$6,974 by 2012-2013, substantially increase funding for Early Childhood education and, among other changes, would create an "Invest in Illinois" for capitol projects such as roads and mass transit. For more information, visit our website at www.aft943.org.

Officers and staff from Local 943 traveled to Springfield on IFT Lobby day—April 30. The basic story, from the legislators we spoke to, was that no substantial debate or votes would be taken on Senator Meeks' bill until the November veto session. Local 943 plans to lobby our area legislators by meeting with them while they are here at home this summer. If you are interested in participating, please call 708-633-0943 and you will be put in contact with the group who will meet with your legislators.

Kathy Setlak

PS.... Have a safe and healthy summer. In the fall plan on coming to the Orland Park IFT/Local 943 open house.



Have you received your AFT national membership card?

All AFT Local 943 members (full, half, quarter, retired, and on-leave) should have received an AFT national membership card in the mail. If you did not receive your card, please go to www.aft.org/members and on the right side, select "replacement card"; enter your information and submit. For further assistance, please contact Laura Kies at Local 943 at lkies@ift-aft.org or at 708.633.0943 x 221.

>>> Negotiations Update and Council News <<<

◆Willow Springs #108 — participated in a bargaining marathon on the weekend of March 25. A tentative agreement was reached by the conclusion of the weekend.

◆Oak Lawn-Hometown #123—currently negotiating.

◆Riverdale #133—currently negotiating.

◆Orland Park #135 support staff have begun bargaining for a successor contract.

◆Posen-Robbins #143 1/2—reached a tentative agreement on April 30.

◆Hazel Crest 152 1/2 — currently negotiating.

◆Sahs #110—officially begins bargaining on May 12.

◆Alsip Support Staff #126—have negotiated a side agreement that provides them with increased sick day benefits, an opportunity to waive health insurance for compensation, and the addition of two paid holiday.

◆Wentworth-Wilson #155 paraprofessionals—reached a tentative agreement with the district and are in the process of voting on their new, first contract. According to IFT Rep Emilie Junge, the new contract will include substantial increases, particularly from the

previous minimum wage start rate. Pat Philips, president of the PSRP council, is confident that the union will ratify the contract, “[IFT Rep] Emilie put together a very good contract.” The next step is merging with the teacher’s council.

◆Lincoln #156 teachers and support staff—ratified their new contract, which was reached with a combination of interest-based and traditional-based bargaining. The district and the teachers have begun a new mentoring program with the help of IFT’s professional development director Sue Walter.

◆Hoover Schrum #157’s merged council of teachers and support staff has begun putting proposals together for a new contract.

◆Thornton Fractional #215 support staff have elected new officers, including first time union president Cynthia Winbush-Acoff.

◆Reavis Support Staff #220—have compiled their proposals and are scheduling dates for bargaining.

◆Oak Lawn Community High School District #229—reached a tentative agreement for a five year contract in April; and have since ratified their contract.

Educational Research and Dissemination

AFT LOCAL 943’s Fall ER&D Schedule

Thinking Math

This course focuses on research about how children learn mathematics and how these findings can be applied in the classroom. Ten principles capture practices that lead to a better understanding of math for all students and are applicable at all levels. In this course, they are exemplified through the research on counting, addition and subtraction. The course takes a broader look at the importance of patterns.

The class will meet on Mondays at 4:00 p.m. beginning October 6, 2008. Classes will be held at the Local 943 office, 15521 S. 70th Court, Orland Park.

REGISTRATION

The cost of each course is \$50.00 payable to Local 943 at the time of registration. Registration begins August 15, 2008. To register you can log on to the Local 943 website (www.aft943.org) or call (708.633.0943 ext 221) for a registration form.

COURSE CREDIT

Each course offers both teachers and paraprofessionals 30 hours credit. TEACHERS will receive 30 CPDU’s and can apply for two hours of graduate credit from Governors State University. PARAPROFESSIONALS can obtain two hours of undergraduate credit from Prairie State Community College towards their certificate. Participants register for college credit, for an additional cost, at the first class meeting.

Managing Anti-Social Behavior

The anti-social actions of a small but powerful number of students in school not only put their own academic success at risk, but threaten the learning environment for everyone. This course presents research on emotional and behavioral problems of students who consistently act out. Participants will learn strategies to reduce and/or prevent the occurrence of disruptive or dangerous outbreaks.

The class will meet on Wednesdays at 4:00 p.m. beginning October 15, 2008. Classes will be held at the Local 943 office, 15521 S. 70th Court, Orland Park.

Local awards \$500 scholarships to outstanding students

Local 943 is pleased to be able to offer monetary assistance to the children of our members, explains Local president Kathy Setlak. "We received applications from ten outstanding students." This year's scholarship winners are Gregory Seymour and Scott Clay. Each of them receives a \$500 award to use towards college expenses.

Gregory Seymour is the son of Orland Park council member Claudia Petnuch. Gregory graduates from Stagg H.S. with a 4.527 GPA and class rank of 17 out of 631. He is a member of the National Honor Society, a three sport varsity athlete, performed over 100 hours of community service and worked as a golf caddy during summer breaks. Gregory plans to pursue a career in engineering at the University of Illinois, Champaign Urbana so he can "make things happen."

Scott Clay is the son of Burbank council member Raymond Clay. Scott graduates from Lyons H.S. with a 4.365 GPA and class rank of 160 out of 908. He is a member of the Spanish Honor Society, Mathematics Honor Society, and the Honor Roll. He also spent countless hours volunteering and playing sports. Scott plans to pursue a career in either economics or engineering at the University of Illinois at Chicago and is looking forward to "studying in a big city."

Gregory Seymour and Scott Clay have set high academic standards for themselves, noted Mary Stockwell, chair of the scholarship committee "We wish them the best of luck in all of their educational endeavors."

Are you efficient with your e-mail?

Everyone who works using a computer uses e-mail to communicate. Are you using e-mail in an efficient manner? Here are some ideas for improving e-mail efficiency, from productivity expert Jan Jasper:

1. Much incoming e-mail can be read once and deleted, this means less e-mail clutter to wade through.
2. Create e-mail folders for specific clients, projects or subject areas rather than leave them in your inbox forever.
3. Use detailed subject headers—sometimes the whole message can be in the header.
4. Customize your e-mail software to display all the information you need at a glance.
5. Delete unneeded e-mails regularly.
6. Keep your e-mail lean so that it becomes an extension of your to-do list.

If you follow the above tips, you won't need to print most of your e-mails. Printing e-mails should be the exception, not the rule. You can save time by filing and accessing them digitally.

Source: AFT PSRP Dept.

THANK YOU

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

108 — Cindy Layer, Margaret Schomburg
110 — Karen Smith
111 — Peggy Kedzior, Lucy Kennedy, Stacy Passarella
122 — Gail James-Cherco, Dan McDermott, Mary Stockwell
123 — Nancy Tauchman
124 — Meg Wear, Eileen Gorman
126 — Bob Goldsbury
133 — Debra Terry
135 — Karen Kendall, Deneen Pajeau, Donna Rehm, Donna McDonough, Dan Leib
152 1/2 — Janet Hadnett
156 — Sue Benigni
157 — Sue Henke
SWCCCASE—Terri Stangel, Theresa Long, Chris Adamo, Rita Svane

Local officers and staff in attendance:

Kathy Setlak	Dawn Stanovich	Sue Mirabella
Bob Goldsbury	Mary Stockwell	Deneen Pajeau
Judy Spirakes	Laura Kies	

NEXT SENATE MEETING: September
None held in June, July or August
Enjoy your summer break!

Many Voices...One Union: professional development for all

31st Annual AFT PSRP Professional Issues Conference

Washington DC's Capital Hill was the site for a myriad of professional development opportunities for PSRPs from every part of the nation (including Alaska and the Virgin Islands). The message was clear...professional development for all – from paras to building and central office staff to bus drivers, the AFT provided a rich menu of choices for all.

Prior to the conference, my colleague Karen Kendall and I attended a focus group and were introduced to a new design for professional development. The Union Learning Representative (ULR) is being piloted in three areas of the country as a new union position designed to empower members through education. The ULR will help members deal with their educational needs, professional issues and career growth, as well as help the institution for which they work to benefit from a culture of ongoing learning. ULRs are recruited from within the workplace and trained in advising members on learning needs and opportunities.

PSRP Notes

◆Local 943 members attending the AFT PSRP (paraprofessionals and school-related personnel) conference April 24-27 in Washington, DC were Donna Flanigan (#122), Karen Kendall (#135), Mari Jayne Tittle (#135), Lori Dunnett (#122) and Chris Adamo (SWCCCASE).

PSRP and Response To Intervention (RTI)

One workshop at the AFT PSRP conference, *Changes to Special Education Services: Understanding "Response to Intervention"* was presented by Dr. Lisa Thomas. She stated that there are only 8 states that are participating in RTI and Illinois and West Virginia are both in their second year of it.

It is important that support staff be included in the planning and implementation of RTI. Every school district should be using their staff to the fullest in order to fulfill the needs of the children. Information on RTI is available on the web: www.RTINetwork.org, www.rti4success.org or www.NASDSE.org.

Lori Dunnett, PSRP, District 122

Union Learning Representatives are not building reps, but work hand-in-hand with the building rep, the HR Department, training providers, and the leadership of the local by acting as a liaison between union members and these offices.

Union Learning Representative

A new design for professional development

The Union Learning Representative will:

- Present the union as an advocate and facilitator of work-place learning.
- Act as a point of contact of members and potential members who are interested in learning and for those unlikely to make contact with the union through their building representative.
- Familiarize learning providers with the needs and demands of on-the-job learners.
- Consult with employers about employee learning needs, outside traditional managerial routes and without any of the connotations associated with evaluation.
- Act as an on-site expert about all kinds of learning resources including the union, community colleges, on-line, and professional and technical schools.

Union leaders have observed this program in action in the United Kingdom. Although this program is just in its infancy here in the United States, based on the feedback from the participants and union leaders, enthusiasm for this type of a program and the need for professional development for all of our PSRPs is very apparent. Stay tuned.....

Next year's conference:

March 19 – 22, 2009 in Baltimore, Maryland

--Mari Jayne Tittle, District 135

FYI: Illinois' Public Pension Plans: among the most affordable in the nation

The cost of benefits being earned today by teachers in Illinois is more affordable than Social Security through what is provided for in the private sector. This “normal cost” of the current pension benefit package for teachers in Illinois is headed toward 6.5% of payroll, with no additional Social Security payroll taxes for nearly 4 of 5 employees in state funded plans. The state has one of the most economical benefit plans in the U.S. for its teachers, university faculty and staff and state employees. Consider these facts:

1. Most private sector employers that offer either a pension plan or a defined contribution plan pay 7.65% in Social Security and Medicare taxes, plus 5% or more for either a 401k plan or a pension plan for employees. This brings the total cost to well over 12% for most employers. Compare that to the modest state cost in Illinois of 6.5% for 78% of its employees in the five state funded plans.
2. The state's normal cost is low because the individual pays more. For example, teachers and university faculty and staff contribute 9-9.4% of their income to their pensions. *This is one of the highest contribution rates in the nation.*
3. **The 78% of employees not covered by Social Security have no safety net, unlike private sector employees.** A shift to a defined contribution plan would be an enormous risk to their retirement security. In addition, a shift would cost the state more money and result in a lesser benefit for employees.
4. Illinois' 6.5% contribution rate is a result of SB 27, passed in 2005, which dramatically lowered the state's costs by approximately 25%. The cuts were an enormous blow to the thousands of employees covered by state plans. There is no need for additional benefit cuts to bring state costs in line.

How did it come to this?

The problem in Illinois is not that benefit levels are too high. The sole reason for the massive pension debt that exists today is that the state of Illinois has failed to meet its own modest financial

commitments to the plans. Members of these plans have always kept up their end of the bargain. The state must meet its responsibility and do the same.

What is the answer?

There are several options as to how the state could attack this contribution problem.

- Approve the governor's plan to issue \$16 billion in pension obligation bonds, provided that there is an adequate state contribution for normal cost.
- Craft a new funding plan with contribution amounts that are realistic in future years.
- Pay the fiscal year 2009 certified amount of \$2.8 billion.

Benefit cuts are not the answer.

IFT Contact Nick Yelverton at 217-544-8562

IFT Lobby Day *by Deneen Pajeau*

April 30th was the annual IFT Lobby Day in Springfield. The morning began with a briefing from IFT leadership. Then, Senate Bill 2288 sponsor Senator James Meeks addressed the crowd about the importance of speaking with the legislators about the passage of this bill. (See page 2—from the president—for more information on SB2288.) Senator Meeks also stressed that we ask our senators and representatives exactly where they stand on school funding reform and making education a priority in the state.

Local president Kathy Setlak, treasurer Sue Mirabella, Orland Park council vp Sandy Kulak and I met with Senators Maloney and Crotty as well as with Representatives McCarthy and Joyce. We discussed a variety of important educational issues that our members face. Many Local 943 retirees also spent the day in Springfield meeting with legislators.

Putting a face, a voice, a story to the issues that are prevalent today in the state of Illinois is crucial to the success of having legislators respond to the constituents they represent. I urge you to let your voice be heard. You can contact your representative and senator via email, phone, letter or through a meeting at their district office. And don't forget, there's always IFT Lobby Day 2009!

Local 943 delegates selected for AFT Convention

Members may attend Convention at Navy Pier as a guest



Local 943 voted at its April senate meeting to send nineteen delegates to the AFT convention. No election is needed because the number of interested members was one less than the twenty which would have necessitated an election. The delegates are: Kathy Setlak, Deneen Pajeau, Sue Mirabella, Jody DePeder, Bob Goldsbury, Nancy Havlin, Karen Kendall, Laura Kies, Dan Lieb, Donna McDonough, Stacy Passarella, Donna Rehm, Jerry Rucker, Karen Smith, Judy Spirakes, Dawn Stanovich, Mary Stockwell, Debra Terry, and Linda Wagner.

This year marks the 80th convention of the American Federation of Teachers. It will be held at Chicago's Navy Pier beginning July 11, 2008

*"Each one of us can make a difference.
Together we make change."*

This year's theme at the AFT Convention

at 2:30 p.m. and will remain in session until such time as it has given full consideration to such matters as legally may be brought before it. The AFT is governed

by its elected officers and delegates to the union's biennial convention, which sets union policy and elects the union's officers. The convention is scheduled to run until Monday, July 14.

Local 943 members interested in attending the convention for a day or two, may register as a guest which will allow access to the visitors' gallery on the convention floor, attend the Friday evening reception and visit the exhibitions. Visit www.aft.org/convention to view the tentative program. Please contact Local 943 at 708.633.0943 x. 221 to register as a guest.

Help the Burma Cyclone Victims The AFL-CIO Solidarity Center has launched an online relief fund, with contributions going to the Federation of Trade Unions of Burma so it can distribute clothing, medicine and non-perishable food for Burmese workers and their families. Link is <http://blog.aflcio.org/2008/05/06/help-provide-relief-to-burmese-workers>

Voluntary COPE Contribution

Please consider making a contribution to the Local 943 Committee On Political Education (COPE) fund. Our goal is to receive a **\$5.00 donation per year** from each member. Any amount, more or less, will be beneficial. You may make a donation at any time throughout the year.



Local 943 Voluntary COPE Contribution Form

Please send this form and your contribution, payable to Local 943 COPE, to your Council President or send to:
Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers - Local 943, 15521 S. 70th Court, Orland Park, Illinois 60462

Name _____ School District _____

Address _____ City, State & Zip _____

Preferred e-mail address (will be used to send legislative updates) _____

Phone Number (used to rally members on important issues) _____

Signature _____ Date _____ Amount _____

Contributions to IFT-AFT/COPE are not deductible for Federal income tax purposes.

Are you a first year staff member?

➡ Sign up for the Local's New Staff Workshop

Every August, Local 943 holds a New Staff Workshop to acquaint new school employees to the Union. Some of the topics covered include certification, tenure, classroom management, and your rights and responsibilities as a union member. If you missed last year's workshop, and would like attend this year's workshop, call 708.633.0943 x 221 or e-mail Laura Kies at lkies@ift-aft.org. Invitations will be mailed out in July.

Retiring this year?

Continue your Union membership.

Join the IFT/Local 943 Retirees Chapter.

Only \$20 / year.

Local 943 will be contacting this year's retirees with information about the retirees chapter. Any questions, please e-mail Judy Spirakes at jspirakes@ift-aft.org

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Visit Local 943's website:

www.aft943.org

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E-mail: aft943president@yahoo.com
www.aft943.org

Bob Goldsbury **Judy Spirakes** **Laura Kies**
Editor *Member Benefits* *Design*

Kathy Setlak
President

Vice Presidents:

Dawn Stanovich
Secretary

Bob Goldsbury

Deneen Pajeau

Sue Mirabella
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IFT Field Service Directors

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