



Diverse, Dedicated, Determined
Proudly Representing You Since 1946



IFT-AFT Local 943, AFL-CIO

Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers

15521 South 70th Court, Orland Park, Illinois 60462

(708) 633-0943 - www.aft943.org

2025-2026 Union Membership Guide

The Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 943, unites 3,113 teachers, paraprofessionals, school related personnel (PSRP), and employees in Southwest Suburban Cook County, Illinois as well as 347 retirees, into a federated union comprised of dedicated members who articulate the needs, desires, and legitimate rights of our educational community. To help accomplish this, we hold regular meetings at our Union office (See "Meeting Dates" below). At AFT Local 943, no person shall be denied membership, nor shall this organization ever discriminate against individual members or applicants for membership based on race, creed, sex, sexual orientation, disability, social, political, or economic status, or national origin.



Save the Date

Back to School
Legislative Meet &
Greet Picnic

SATURDAY
13 SEPTEMBER, 2025

TIME:
11:00AM - 1:00PM

WHERE: 15521 S. 70TH COURT,
ORLAND PARK, IL



Mark Your Calendars

Meeting Dates 2025-2026

President/Treasurer Workshop - MANDATORY

Tuesday, August 5, 2025
10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (IN-PERSON)

Back to School Legislative Meet & Greet Picnic

Saturday, September 13, 2025
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (IN-PERSON)

Universal & Executive Board Meetings

Tuesdays 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. = Universal (REMOTELY)
Tuesdays 5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. = Executive Board (REMOTELY)

- *June 30, 2025 - 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon *Executive Board Only - (IN PERSON)
- August 26, 2025
- September 30, 2025
- December 2, 2025
- January 27, 2026
- February 24, 2026
- April 28, 2026

Senate Meetings

Tuesdays 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. (IN-PERSON)

- September 9, 2025
- October 14, 2025
- December 16, 2025
- February 10, 2026
- March 10, 2026
- May 12, 2026

ELECTIONS
— A MORE —
PERFECT UNION

IFT Officer
Election by
delegates will be
held on Saturday,
October 18, 2025



AFT Local 943
Officer Election will
be held in April of
2026. More details
to come!



What is the Local 943 Senate?

The senate is the governing body of the local. They give input and cast votes on the latest, most relevant information on matters such as legislative issues, union policies, professional concerns, negotiations, recertification, scholarship winners, etc.

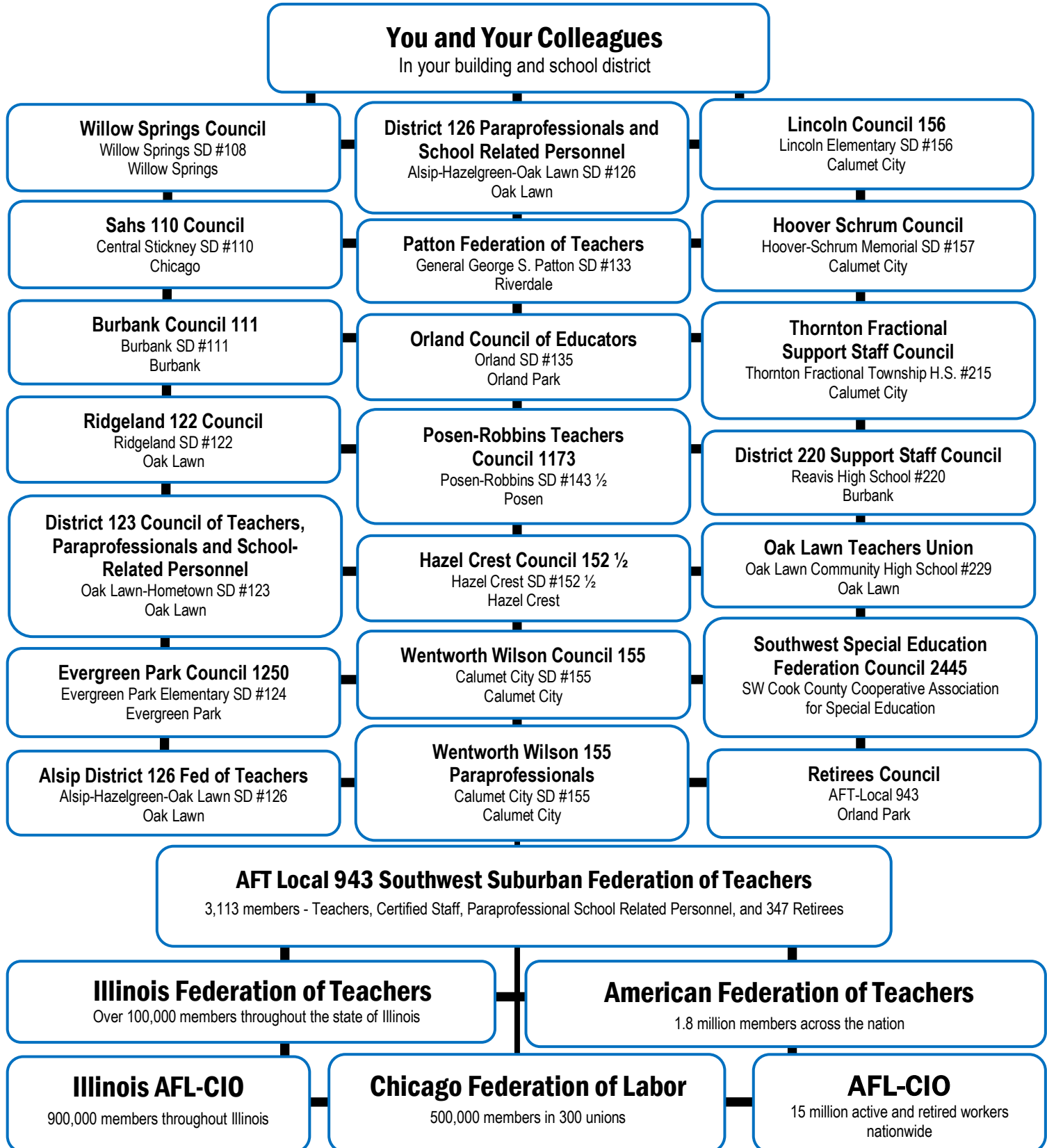
**All Local 943 members are welcome to attend, but only appointed or elected senators will be eligible to vote, and in-person meeting are based on the health regulations and recommendations of IDHP and CDC.*

What is the Universal Team?

Council presidents are invited to join members of the Local 943 Executive Board and IFT Constituency Council to give input into planning the agenda of our senate meetings. This small group forum is designed to allow open discussion in a non-formal setting.

The "U" in Union is YOU!

There is no Union without you. We are thankful for all of you who stand in solidarity with working people. Each IFT-AFT Local 943 member is an essential part in building a strong Union, especially at your workplace. However, you also play an important part of a much larger picture. Each of us alone can only do so much, but with the power of a collective voice, we can make a real difference.



What are my Weingarten Rights?

"If this discussion could, in any way, lead to my being disciplined or terminated or cause an effect on my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative be present at this meeting. Without representation present, I choose not to participate in this discussion."

One of the functions of the Union is to prevent management from intimidating employees. This is especially important in closed-door meetings when management attempts to induce employees to confess to mistakes or wrongdoing.

Employees have the right to union representation during investigatory interviews. This right was established by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1975 in the case called *NLRB (National Labor Relations Board) vs. J. Weingarten, Inc.* The rules of the court declared are called "Weingarten Rights".

Weingarten Rights are applicable during meetings employees are asked to attend which are investigative in nature. **Investigatory meetings** occur whenever management questions an employee to obtain information or whenever an employee has reasonable belief that discipline, or other adverse consequences may result from what he or she says. Investigatory meetings relate to such subjects as: absenteeism, accidents, compliance with school rules, damage to school property, drinking, drugs, falsification of records, fighting, insubordination, lateness, poor attitude, poor work performance, sabotage, work slowdowns, theft, and violation of safety rules.

Not every discussion with management is an investigatory meeting. Management has the right to speak to an employee about the proper way to do a job. Even if the manager asks the employee questions, this is not investigatory because the possibility of discipline is removed. However, if the manager takes a hostile attitude because they don't like the employees' answers, then the meeting becomes investigatory, and *Weingarten* applies.

When an investigatory meeting occurs, the following rules apply:

If notified of such a meeting in advance, the employee may request Union representation before or during the meeting. After the request, the employer must choose from three options:

1. Grant the request and delay questioning until the Union representative arrives.
2. Deny the request and end the meeting immediately.
3. Give the employee a choice of (a) having the interview without representation (**this is usually a mistake!**) OR (b) ending the interview.

If the employer denies the request for union representation and questions the employee, it commits an Unfair Labor Practice, ULP, and the employee may refuse to answer.

Another point to remember is that, if an employee is requested without prior notice, for example, to go to the office to talk about the employee's attendance, the employee cannot refuse to go to the office without union representation. The employee must make the request after the meeting begins. The employee can only refuse to go to the meeting if the employer makes clear in advance that union representation will be denied.

(Information in this article was taken from "The Legal Rights of Union Stewards" by: Robert M. Schwartz)

What is a Collective Bargaining Agreement?

A "Collective Bargaining Agreement" or CBA is the contract between you and your employer. It acts as a legal document that is negotiated with your employer by your Union. You should have access to a copy and we advise that you become familiar with the contents of this agreement.

The best way to avoid confusion about the contents of your contract is to be informed. Since the contract guides the actions of both you and your employer, you should become very familiar with its language. Be sure to obtain a copy of your contract from your union building representative or council president.

Every contract is different, so it is important to contact your union building representative or council president, **NOT YOUR EMPLOYER**, if you have questions about anything in your contract.

Seek the advice and assistance of a union representative **IMMEDIATELY** if you believe a contract violation has occurred.

What is a Grievance?

A "grievance" is a complaint by an employee, a group of employees or the union that there has been a violation or misinterpretation of a specific term of your contract agreement, CBA. Sometimes it can refer to an established policy or practice that has been applied unfairly. It is important to note that not all contracts allow a "past practice" grievance.

If you believe a grievance has occurred, please do the following:

1. Check your contract to find the section that is to be grieved.
2. Check the grievance procedure in the contract and be sure to follow the timeline. Grievances need to be filed in a timely manner and can be lost if the timeline is not followed.
3. Contact your union leader (building representative, council president, union council officer) whenever you feel a grievance may be warranted. Your council president should be made aware of the problem(s) as they occur and should contact the IFT Field Service Director for Local 943.
4. Document, in writing, all the facts:
 - Who is involved? (*Employee, supervisor, witnesses*)
 - When did it happen? (*Date and time*)
 - Where did it happen?
 - What happened? (*Describe what took place and try to separate fact from opinion*)
 - Why is it a grievance? (*Cite the language from which contract section, past practice, or board policy*)
 - How do you wish to remedy the grievance?
 - What must be done to make the grievant "whole"?
5. It is important that a grievant write down, **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**, a narrative script describing the situation that started the grievance.
6. Council presidents must contact AFT Local 943 at 708-633-0943 in order to keep the office informed of the suspected grievance.

DO NOT BE INSUBORDINATE! The act of refusing or deliberately failing to carry out a legal assignment could lead to a charge of insubordination. When in doubt, carry out the work under protest and follow up the assignment with a grievance. **OBEY FIRST AND GRIEVE LATER!** Being insubordinate can lead to **LOSS OF JOB!**



Online Resources for Members

Diverse, Dedicated, and Determined

Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers AFT

Local 943:

www.aft943.org

Website for your local union, Local 943 and stay up to date by visiting often

AFT Local 943 Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Southwest-Suburban-Federation-of-Teachers-Local-943>

Twitter: @Local943 <https://twitter.com/local943>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/local943sfsft/>

Threads:

<https://www.threads.com/@local943sfsft?hl=en&scrlbykr=c76eb732>

Illinois Federation of Teachers:

www.ift-aft.org

IFT's website, where you can find news, professional development opportunities, and more

www.ift-aft.org/collectivevoice

Explains the importance being a union member

IFT Social Media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iftaft/>

Twitter: @iftaft - <https://twitter.com/iftaft>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/iftaft/>

My IFT:

<https://m.ift-aft.org/>

Provides you with information & resources specific to your local

IFT's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Racial Injustice Resources:

www.ift-aft.org/oeiresources

This site provides a wealth of resources for teachers, students, and communities to help critically address inclusion topics

American Federation of Teachers:

www.aft.org

Website for our national union, the American Federation of Teachers. IFT members are AFT members, too!

<https://leadernet.aft.org/webform/illinois-memberlocal-beneficiary-form>

Accidental Death & Dismemberment Beneficiary Form to designate or change your beneficiary

Member Benefits Sites:

www.ift-aft.org/benefits

www.aft.org/member-benefits and www.unionplus.org/

These sites highlight the service and discount programs offered through your IFT and AFT membership

Illinois AFL-CIO:

www.ilafcl-cio.org

Website for the Illinois federation of the AFL-CIO, an affiliate of the Illinois Federation of Teachers

Illinois Performance Evaluation Advisory Council (PEAC):

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Eduator-Evaluations.aspx>

This council makes recommendations to the state as it develops new performance evaluation systems for teachers that incorporate student growth measures

ISBE Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS):

www.isbe.net/Pages/Educator-Licensure-Information-System.aspx

This site is where teachers enter professional development hours and check to ensure that their license, endorsement, and personal contact information is current. Teachers can also renew their licenses here

Illinois New Teacher Collaborative:

<https://intc.education.illinois.edu/>

Illinois New Teacher Collaborative online provides resources for new teaching professionals, teacher mentors, and others interested in supporting new teachers

State Board Websites:

www.isbe.net

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)

www.ibhe.org

Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)

www.iccb.org

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)

Pension Websites:

www.trsil.org

Illinois Teachers Retirement System (TRS)

www.imrf.org

Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF)

www.surs.com

State Universities Retirement System of IL (SURS)

www.srs.illinois.gov

State Employees Retirement System of IL (SERS)

Colorín Colorado:

www.colorincolorado.org

This site provides resources for teachers and parents who work with English Language Learners

Illinois Elections:

<https://ova.elections.il.gov/>

Online voter registration for Illinois residents as well as other election-related information

Illinois Legislature:

www.ilga.gov

Illinois General Assembly: House & Senate legislator and committee information, as well as Illinois legislation and laws, can be viewed from this site

I'm Committed to my Union

We care. We fight. We show up. We vote.

Charles Harper is the IFT Field Service Director for the following councils*:

- Alsip District #126 Teachers/Certified
- Alsip District #126 Paraprofessionals (PSRP)
- Evergreen Park #124
- Hazel Crest #152 ½
- Lincoln #156 Teachers/Certified
- Lincoln #156 Paraprofessionals (PSRP)
- Orland #135 Teachers/Certified
- Orland #135 Paraprofessionals (PSRP)
- Patton/Riverdale #133
- Posen-Robbins #143 ½ Teachers
- Thornton Fractional H.S. #215 Paraprofessionals (PSRP)



Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers AFT Local 943 Executive Officers:



Elaine Barlos, President
Alfreida Jamison, Treasurer
Catrina Niven, Secretary
Bob Goldsbury, Vice President, Communications/Public Relations
Andrew Weber, Vice President, Political Activities/COPE
Elaine Bernal, Vice President, Educational and Professional Issues and TEACH Coordinator

Local 943 Constituency Council and Committee Members*:

IFT PreK-12 Education Constituency Council

Leisl Brown, Jill Decker-Doom

IFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel, PSRP, Constituency Council

Angelita Alvarez, Lourdes Angel, Valerie Wilhoite

IFT Next Generation Constituency Council

Kate Kosner, Andrew Weber

IFT Retirees Constituency Council

Elaine Barlos - Chairperson, Donna Rehm, Judy Spirakes

IFT Racial and Social Justice Constituency Council

Elaine Barlos, Amber Jackson

IFT Special Education Constituency Council

Elaine Bernal, Ashley Isherwood

IFT Union Leadership Development Constituency Council

Jill Decker-Doom

Local 943 Defense Committee

Alfreida Jamison - Chairperson, Elaine Barlos, Julie Moloney-Stephan, Catrina Niven, Elaine Bernal

**Committee members are appointed and subject to change*

IFT Executive Board Members:

Elaine Barlos and Andrew Weber

Staff Members:

Charles Harper, IFT Field Service Director
Spencer Saal, IFT Field Service Director
Karen O'Dea, IFT Support Staff
Sandy Quero, Local 943 Website Manager

2025-2026 Union Dues Categories*

**Dollar thresholds are established by the AFT national affiliate and reviewed annually.*

Full Dues Rate: for employees earning \$24,059 or salary equal to a beginning teacher's salary, whichever is greater.

Half Dues Rate: for employees earning less than a beginning teacher, or \$24,059, whichever is greater, but more than or equal to \$19,899 per year.

Quarter Dues Rate: for employees earning less than \$19,899 per year but more than or equal to \$12,082.

Eighth Dues Rate: for employees earning less than \$12,082 per year.

Spencer Saal is the IFT Field Service Director for the following councils*:

- Burbank #111
- Hoover-Schrum #157
- Oak Lawn-Hometown #123
- Oak Lawn Community High School #229
- Reavis High School #220 Support Staff
- Ridgeland #122
- Sahs (Central Stickney) #110
- SW Cook County Cooperative/Special Education
- Wentworth Wilson #155 Teachers
- Wentworth Wilson #155 Paraprofessionals (PSRP)
- Willow Springs #108

**Council assignments may be adjusted throughout the year as needed.*

Politics in the Workplace – Issues vs. Politics

We build power brick-by-brick, or in our case, conversation-by-conversation. One-on-one personal conversations are extremely important to union success. Here are some tips about what's permissible when discussing issues v. politics.

When at the worksite, remember the following:

- ❖ **If it's on the ballot – Don't discuss it at the worksite.**
 - ✓ This includes candidates and referendums.
 - ✓ If you want to talk about politics/candidates, make sure you use personal cell numbers and personal email addresses. (DO NOT USE DISTRICT/EMPLOYER EMAIL!)
- ❖ **What can you discuss openly?**
 - ✓ Legislative measures that may affect your profession or work.
 - ✓ The need to contact legislators and urge support or opposition of a policy and/or legislation.
 - ✓ Advocating for the signature or veto of a bill
 - ✓ Voter registration – checking voter registration status. (<https://ova.elections.il.gov>) and getting people registered.
 - ✓ Voting in general – encouraging people to vote

Are you registered to vote?

Go to <https://ova.elections.il.gov> to check your registration or to register to vote.



Union Scholarships Available to Members' Children - Don't miss out!



AFT Local 943 Scholarship

Each year, the Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 943 awards two (2) scholarships in the amount of two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00) each.

The applicant must be the child of a currently employed, active member in good standing of Local 943; or the child of a member of Local 943's retiree chapter; or the child of a deceased member who was in good standing at the time of death.

The applicant must be a member of a public high school graduation class and enrolling in a public college or university (including community colleges).

IFT Carl J. Megel Scholarship

Applicants for this scholarship must be enrolled in a special education school, class, or program. The award is \$20,000 distributed \$5,000 for each year for four years.

IFT Robert G. Porter Scholarship

Awards two (2) scholarship awards in the amount of \$20,000 each, distributed \$5,000 for each year for four years.

Illinois Retired Teachers Foundation Scholarships

Awards six (6) \$2,000 awards available to incoming juniors or seniors in college enrolled in a certified teacher training program.

AFT Robert Porter Scholarship

Awards four (4), four-year, \$8,000 post-secondary scholarships to students who are dependents of AFT members, as well as 10 one-time \$1,000 grants to AFT members to assist with their continuing education and/or fund their proposed ideas to strengthen and grow their union.

Chicago Federation of Labor, CFL William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship

Awards ten (10) scholarships valued at \$2,000 each, to ten high school seniors.

Union Plus Scholarship

Award amounts: \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall. Students may re-apply each year.

Be sure to check our websites at <https://www.aft943.org/benefits> and <https://www.ift-aft.org/benefits> throughout the year for more information on these scholarships and links to obtain applications.