

## PSRP CONFERENCE

The IFT PSRP/Public Employee Conference in Springfield, IL was held on October 20th and October 21st. Local 943 had two members attending: Valerie Wilhoite (WW 155 PSRP Council) and Trinidad Conroy (WW 155 PSRP Council). Valerie stated, "There were 3 great speaker's: Nikki Budzinski State Rep from Springfield, IFT President Dan Montgomery, and Mayor Brandon Johnson. They brought a lot of energy to the audience. It was great to see a large amount of Union people from Illinois. The workshops were very informative. They were based on most of the things we are facing today in our school system. Everything was great. Trini and I would like to thank AFT Local 943 for allowing us to attend this awesome conference."



Pictured from left to right: Trinidad Conroy, State Rep. Nikki Budzinski, Valerie Wilhoite

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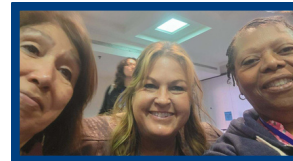
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-Misprint correction from the Oct/Nov AFTerthoughts edition Pg.2: The Happy Fall Y'All gift basket for our Back-to-School Legislative picnic was donated by the Burbank 111 Council. We apologize for the error and are grateful for your contribution! Updated Oct/Nov 23 issue [HERE](#).

### Local 943 Gift Card Tree Raffle Contribution



Trinidad Conroy, Deneen Taylor, Valerie Wilhoite



Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and Valerie Wilhoite

## PSRP DAY - NOVEMBER 15TH

Paraprofessionals and school-related personnel (PSRP) provide essential services at public schools and universities. They include secretaries, bus drivers, food service workers, maintenance workers, custodians, library assistants, groundskeepers, school bus/cafeteria/playground aides, IT professionals, parent liaisons, graduation coaches and paraprofessionals such as reading specialists, special education assistants and more.

11/15 was PSRP Day - Local 943 gave pocket fans as a gift. Message was "We Are Your Biggest Fan"



# Attention Members with HS Seniors!

Remind them to start planning Scholarship Applications!

- **Union Plus Scholarship** - Sponsored by the Union Plus Education Foundation

Valued between \$500-\$4000. The program is open to members, spouses and dependent children of unions participating in any of the Union Plus programs.

[Click HERE-->2024 APPLICATION](#)

Deadline to apply is January 31, 2024

- **CFL William A. Lee Memorial Scholarship**

The Chicago Federation of Labor will award 10 scholarships, valued at \$2,000 each, to 10 high school seniors: five to the winners of the Academic Competition, and five to the winners of the Random Drawing. Students or their parents must belong to a union affiliated with the Chicago Federation of Labor.

[Click HERE--> for more information](#)

Deadline to apply is February 28, 2024

- **Carl J. Megel Special Education Scholarship** - Honoring AFT President Emeritus

IFT educators have a unique opportunity to help special education students pursue higher education or career training by sponsoring them for this Special Education Scholarship.

The IFT will award one \$20,000 Megel scholarship (\$5,000 each year for four years) to a deserving high school senior who is enrolled in a special education school, class, or program for students with disabilities. Applicants must be high school seniors who will graduate in 2024.

IFT members who work directly with (or previously worked with) an eligible student must provide a letter of sponsorship for the applicant. (Children of IFT members may also apply)

[Click HERE-->2024 APPLICATION](#)

Deadline to apply is March 1, 2024

- **Robert G. Porter Scholarship** - Honoring late AFT Secretary-Treasurer

The IFT shall provide annually two \$20,000 scholarship awards (\$5,000 each year for four years) to current high school seniors with no less than a cumulative "B" grade average.

An applicant must be the son or daughter of a currently employed, active member in good standing of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, of IFT retirees chapter, or of a deceased member in good standing with the Illinois Federation of Teachers at the time of death.

[Click HERE--> 2024 APPLICATION](#)

Deadline to apply is March 1, 2024

- **AFT Robert G. Porter Scholars Program** -

This AFT Program offers four 4-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.

[Click HERE for updated info on --> 2024 APPLICATION](#)

Application window is Dec. 1 - March 31.

All scholarship winners will be notified by June 30

## Each year the Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers, AFT Local 943, awards two 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).

Selection will be made on the basis of five criteria listed below:

1. official scores on the ACT/SAT entrance examinations
2. class rank, and GPA (1st semester of senior year)
3. record of extra-curricular activities and community service
4. two (2) letters of reference by members of the staff of the student's high school where he/she is currently enrolled
5. a 100-word essay which details future aspirations.

Deadline to apply for the 2023-2024 scholarship is March 21, 2024

[Click HERE for updated info on --> 2024 APPLICATION](#)

As always, links to all available Union scholarships are posted on [AFT943.org](https://www.aft943.org) "Members Only" page.





# President's Message

By: Elaine Barlos, AFT Local 943 President



View the IFT latest issue of Union Link

## 'Tis the Season to Get Motivated by INSPIRATION, not FEAR!



Local 683's President, Joseph Stephan inspires Local 943 senators by sharing details about Thornton Fractional High School's "Grow Your Own Educator" program, developed during the onslaught of Janus and as a response to the nation's teacher shortage.

In order to combat some of the negative rhetoric that may invoke fear and uncertainty during the 2024 election year, the AFT has launched a yearlong campaign called, "Real Solutions for Kids and Communities" (see the link at the bottom left of this page), that rejects the toxic attacks against public education in favor of working to strengthen public schools, making real solutions for kids a national priority. Also, Local 943 plans to do our best to involve you in the process of electing pro-education candidates who will support you with the important work you do.

The challenges public educators and staff face are real, but if we, together, envision a positive future, we can endure setbacks, manage to be prideful in our work, and continue making progress with our students towards their dreams! Wishing you all a Happy Holiday and an Inspirational New Year!

*Elaine Barlos*

## Students from SWCCCASE Transition Work Program Join AFT Local 943 for a Semester!

Paige & Camden (pictured to the left) came to AFT Local 943, every Monday and Thursday (11:30 a.m. - 1:00p.m.) from September 18th - December 14th.

Kelly & Alex also started working on 10/11/23 and came to the office every Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

They adeptly completed all tasks designed and prepared by Karen O'Dea. [Click here to see a list of some of their task.](#)

All of the students were professional and a pleasure to work with. They efficiently completed many helpful tasks for Local 943. They played a key role in sorting and distributing the PSRP gifts, assembled New Member Packets and set up the meeting room for our Local 943 TEACH Classes and monthly meetings. Each student worked well independently and also was able to collaborate with their fellow student to complete tasks. Karen O'Dea acted as their "manager" and reported that, "They had the best manners and were a complete JOY to have in the office every week!"

[Click here to learn more about SWCCCASE Transition Program.](#)



**REAL SOLUTIONS FOR KIDS & COMMUNITIES**

The AFT has launched a yearlong \$1 million campaign, Real Solutions for Kids and Communities, that rejects the toxic attacks against public education in favor of working to strengthen public schools, making real solutions for kids a national priority.

We are addressing learning loss, loneliness and literacy through transformative strategies that can be sustained, integrated and scaled to help children recover and thrive:

- **Create joyful reading environments** - by partnering with Reading Unwired, First Book, NEA and the Barbaree Institute to help teachers access the best evidence based reading instructional practice and by continuing to give books away. So while others ban books, we will give away 2.5 million books by July 2024.
- **Expand community schools** - which wrap services around schools and make them hubs for kids and families, tackling mental health challenges, hunger, language barriers, healthcare and career supports for families.
- **Provide all children the opportunity to learn by doing** - Experiential learning, including career and technical education, engages them in deeper learning, provides them with real world, real life skills, and boosts academic achievement. Career and technical education is experiential learning at its best, and it prepares students not only for traditional trades programs but also for in-demand careers in healthcare, information technology, skilled manufacturing and more.
- **Further care for children's mental health and well-being** by demanding that social media companies protect, not prey on, children. The report "Likes vs. Learning: The Real Cost of Social Media for Schools" outlines a series of recommendations tech companies must take to keep kids safe and protect learning environments.
- **Fight for better schools** - so they can recruit, retain and respect the educators and school staff who help kids thrive, offer a well-rounded curriculum, and provide safe, welcoming and well-maintained school buildings.

These strategies will strengthen and improve public education. Together, they are transformative for kids, regardless of their ZIP code.

An extremist try to divide Americans, we know that public schools unite us. The parents of 90 percent of American children send their kids to public schools. And national polls show that parents overwhelmingly support and trust teachers, and want schools strengthened, not politicized or privatized.

Extremists don't offer a single idea that will improve public schools, because they don't want to strengthen public education; they want to end it - by inserting political divisions, cutting resources, and diverting funding from already underfunded public schools through vouchers, despite evidence that vouchers do not improve achievement.

Public schools are the vehicle that anchors our democracy and creates opportunity for our children. The Real Solutions for Kids and Communities campaign is about strengthening these opportunities and helping kids prepare for college, career and life.

Join us in our mission to have a positive impact on our children's lives. Explore [15 Things](#) to discover various ways to get involved, share and learn from success stories about effective programs in communities nationwide, and find more information on great things happening in public schools.

Head Organizers: **Paula C. Higgins** | **Paula C. Higgins** | **Paula C. Higgins**  
 Midwest Representative: **Michelle** | **Michelle** | **Michelle**  
 Midwest Representative: **Michelle** | **Michelle** | **Michelle**

**Likes vs. Learning**  
The Real Cost of Social Media for Schools

Educators, Parents, Students & Child Advocates Demand Platform Changes

15 Things educators, school support staff and communities can do to help protect undocumented students and their families

**Protecting OUR Students**

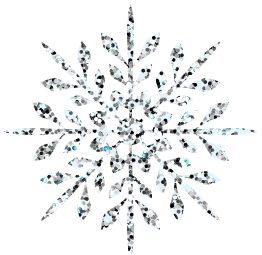
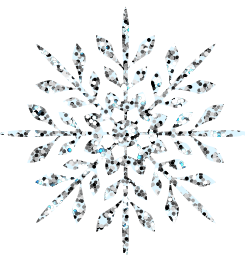
**SAVE THE DATE**

IFT PRESIDENTS' CONFERENCE  
MARCH 15-17, 2024  
CROWNE PLAZA SPRINGFIELD

together we lead

Local 943 Application Link:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ipgLZ3p-DpP\\_-t7TIlmin8zQlIf9hkZf/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ipgLZ3p-DpP_-t7TIlmin8zQlIf9hkZf/view?usp=sharing)





# Local 943 TEACH Professional Development Calendar of Events

**Courses are FREE to AFT Local 943 members!**

**Wed, January 31**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm -  
Michelle Gustafson & Elizabeth Keblusek  
**Foundations of Effective Teaching**  
(Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, January 23rd

**Wed, February 28**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm -  
Shannon Mural  
**Vocabulary Strategies for Informational and  
Narrative Texts** (Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, February 20th

**Wed, February 7**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Pia Conte  
**SEL Strategies for a Calm Classroom**  
(Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, January 30th

**Wed, March 6**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Shannon Mural  
**Improving Comprehension of Narrative Text**  
(Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, March 5th

**Wed, February 21**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Pia Conte  
**Beginning Reading**  
(Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, February 15th

**Wed, April 10**, 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Shannon Mural  
**Improving Comprehension of Expository Text**  
(In Person) - PD Hours 2  
DEADLINE to register: Monday, April 2nd

## 2024 Union Leadership Institute: Administrator Academy

Initial Teacher's Evaluation Training- ISBE #AA2001  
**January 10 (4-6 p.m.)    January 20-21 (8 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.)**  
This training aligns to the Illinois School Code competencies defined by Administrative Code Part 50, Section 50.42- (a-b). IFT is offering this course as part of the ULI program to support Unions as they implement locally bargained appeals processes. Participants must complete and submit pre-work and complete both full days of training and successfully complete an assessment to be qualified as an evaluator.

Register by submitting your request to our local office at [kodea@ift-aft.org](mailto:kodea@ift-aft.org). [Click here for Request Form](#). Deadline to submit requests is **January 2, 2024**. Detailed ULI course description is [HERE](#)



For more information  
and to register for TEACH  
classes  
email Elaine Bernal at  
[ebernalteach943@gmail.com](mailto:ebernalteach943@gmail.com)

Engage with  
*Brookfield Zoo*  
while earning your  
**MASTER'S DEGREE**  
from Ohio's Miami University

You are invited to a virtual information session about the  
**Advanced Inquiry Program (AIP)**

**On October 16, 2023,  
December 15, 2023, and  
January 10, 2024 at 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.**  
For more information on this innovative degree,  
go to [CZS.org/AIP](https://CZS.org/AIP).

RSVP at least one day before your session  
at (708) 688-8223 or [Agnes.Kovacs@CZS.org](mailto:Agnes.Kovacs@CZS.org).  
You will then receive a link to the session.

The Chicago Zoological Society and Project Dragonfly at Miami University are excited to announce a conservation-focused, inquiry-driven learning experience. The Advanced Inquiry Program is an online master's degree from Ohio's Miami University that includes inspiring experiential learning at Brookfield Zoo, which is managed by the Chicago Zoological Society. Students earn a master's in biology or a master's in teaching the biological sciences.

- Join a national degree program and earn either a Master of Arts (MA) in Biology or a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Biological Science.
- Earn seven optional credits from international travel through Earth Expeditions, a global conservation and education program.
- Contribute to social and ecological change in your community.
- Complete this affordable degree part-time while working.
- The AIP is open to all individuals who meet admission criteria, regardless of profession or background.
- The AIP is an online master's degree conferred by Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

**M MIAMI UNIVERSITY** | PROJECT DRAGONFLY

**BROOKFIELD ZOO**  
Chicago Zoological Society  
Inspiring Curiosity. Enriching Lives.

© Chicago Zoological Society. The Chicago Zoological Society is a private nonprofit organization that operates Brookfield Zoo on land owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County.



# Legislative Update

## “Invest In Kids”

By Andrew Weber

The “Invest in Kids” Scholarship Tax Credit Program will officially come to a close at the start of the new year. Despite the intended plan to sunset, the program has stirred controversy, leading many lawmakers to advocate for its extension in this year's Fall Veto Session. Vouchers reduce funding for public schools by allowing the use of taxpayer public funds for private schools. This program alone has diverted more than \$190 million in tax dollars to hundreds of private schools around the state, while “investors” in this program receive a 75% tax credit on their donation.

We'd like to thank all those who reached out to our legislators by sending postcards and emails, making phone calls, and having 1-on-1 conversations discussing our opposition to this program. In response to the news, IFT President Dan Montgomery released a statement summarizing the focus of our union advocacy: “We will continue to work with our school communities and lawmakers to advocate for equitable educational policies that uplift every child and strengthen our public education system by fully funding it and opposing any voucher or voucher-like programs in the future.”



Check out our website!  
[www.aft943.org](http://www.aft943.org)



**Save The Date**

Mark your calendars for the Local 943 Political Action Committee Meeting. Join us in the process of vetting candidates for upcoming elections in our area\*. All members are welcome!

Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024  
Time: 5:00 p.m. (Light dinner will be served)  
Place: AFT Local 943, 15521 S. 70<sup>th</sup> Ct., Orland Park  
\*more details to follow in the upcoming weeks



## General Primary Election Organizing Dates

Statewide PAC Meeting - Nov. 29, 2023

Chicago Federation of Labor COPE Meeting - Jan 12, 2024

**PAC Region E Endorsement Meeting - Jan 16, 2024 5pm (At the Local 943 Office)**

General Primary Election - March 19, 2024




& STEM Resources


when i say  
**UNION**  
you say  
**POWER**



"Union Link"



Illinois State Board of Education  
[www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net)  
for current ISBE updates

**SAY NO TO VOUCHERS!**

Private education should continue to be privately funded. Taxpayer dollars should be invested in strengthening our public schools, which are open to all children.



IFT YouTube Channel

## Mark Your Calendars!

### Local 943 Meeting Dates:

Tuesday Meeting Dates 2023 – 2024

#### Senate Meetings

4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. (IN-PERSON)

- September 12, 2023
- October 10, 2023
- December 12, 2023
- February 13, 2024
- March 12, 2024
- May 14, 2024

#### Universal & Executive Board Meetings

4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. = Universal (REMOTE)

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. = Executive Board (REMOTE)

- August 29, 2023
- September 26, 2023
- November 28, 2023
- January 30, 2024
- February 27, 2024
- April 30, 2024

# GPT ZERO

Click below to double check your voter registration status

Illinois Online Voter Registration Begins Here!



# UNION-MADE GIFTS

Shipping gifts this year? Make sure to ship using a union carrier like the U.S. Postal Service or UPS.

## APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

- MAJESTIC ATHLETIC
- NATURALIZER SHOES
- TIMEX WATCHES

## BEAUTY PRODUCTS

- AVON
- CARESS SKIN CARE
- DOVE BEAUTY PRODUCTS

## GAMES

- BARREL OF MONKEYS
- THE GAME OF LIFE
- MONOPOLY

## STOCKING STUFFERS

- BIC LIGHTERS
- JELLY BELLY CANDIES
- SEE'S CANDIES

## BOOK & STATIONERY STORES

- GREENLIGHT BOOKSTORE
- RMCNALLY JACKSON
- YOURS TRULY, BROOKLYN

## COMIC BOOKS

- IMAGE COMICS
- SEVEN SEAS ENTERTAINMENT
- TENDER CLAWS

## SPORTS EQUIPMENT

- AMERICAN ATHLETIC
- LOUISVILLE SLUGGER
- STANDARD GOLF

## WINE AND BEER

- BUDWEISER
- CK MONDAVI
- MICHELOB

*CLICK For More*

Share Your Joy! 

Is there something exciting happening at your school/district?

We would love to hear from you!

Email Local 943 at [squero.local943@gmail.com](mailto:squero.local943@gmail.com)

## RETIREE CALENDAR 2023- 2024

Wednesday, December 13

Cinderella

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Fiddler on the Roof

NEW-[Retire Wisely Guide](#)

## AFT Convention 2024

MONDAY, JULY 22, 2024 TO THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2024 - ALL DAY

GEORGE R. BROWN CONVENTION CENTER  
HOUSTON, TX

Arrival day is Sunday, July 21.

*Save the Date*

Local 943 Application Link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ipgLZ3p-DpP\\_-t7TIImin8zQII9hkZf/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ipgLZ3p-DpP_-t7TIImin8zQII9hkZf/view?usp=sharing)

# AFTerthoughts

Official Publication of the Southwest Suburban Federation of Teachers AFT Local 943

### Executive Board

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

### IFT Next Generation Constituency Council

Kate Kosner and Andrew Weber

### IFT Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel (PSRP) Constituency Council

Angelita Alvarez, Lourdes Angel and Valerie Wilhoite

### IFT PreK-12 Constituency Council

Jill Decker-Doom

### IFT Racial and Social Justice Constituency Council

Elaine Barlos and Amber Jackson

### IFT Retirees Constituency Council

Elaine Barlos, Donna Rehm and Judy Spirakes

### IFT Special Education Constituency Council

Elaine Bernal and Ashley Isherwood

### IFT Union Leadership Development Constituency Council

Jill Decker-Doom

### Local 943 Defense Committee

Alfreida Jamison, Chairperson  
Elaine Barlos, Sue Benigni, Tina Thauer, and Elaine Bernal

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### FOLLOW US ON:

- **FACEBOOK:** Southwest-Suburban-Federation-of-Teachers-Local-943
- **TWITTER (aka: X):** #AFTLocal943