



AFTerthoughts

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Diverse, Dedicated,
Determined

UNITY IN COMMUNITY: GIRL SCOUT TROOP VISITS SPRINGFIELD

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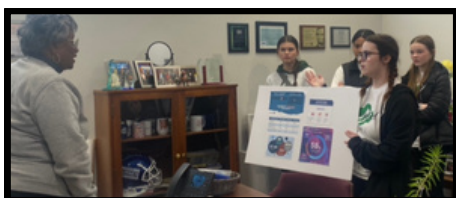
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Girl Scout Troop 60152 on the House Floor with IFT's Legislative Director, Cynthia Riseman and Troop Leader, Karen O'Dea

On Friday, February 16th Senior Girl Scout Troop 60152 visited Springfield, Illinois. The trip was coordinated by their troop leader and also Local 943's office manager, Karen O'Dea and IFT's Legislative Director Cynthia Riseman. They arranged a tour of the Illinois House of Representatives "House Floor" and a visit to Senator Doris Turner's office. This Springfield trip helped our scout troop achieve their "Behind the Ballot" badge and work on their Girl Scout Journey "Your Voice, Your World" said girl scout troop leader, Karen O'Dea. While visiting Senator Turner our Senior Scout, Liv G. presented vaping statistic boards to help explain the vaping problem in schools. Senator Turner listened to every word, asked important questions and thanked Liv, stating that she acknowledges the vaping problem in schools, and she will do her homework regarding this. It was a great day exploring everything that Springfield has to offer, and we were grateful for the opportunity to see the House Floor and meet with Senator Turner.

Girl Scout Troop 60152 is based out of Oak Lawn, IL and the scouts are Sophomore and Freshman grades from Richards H.S., Oak Lawn H.S., Marist and Southwest Chicago Christian School. This troop is very lucky to have supportive families and an outstanding troop leader!!



Liv presenting her vaping boards to Senator Doris Turner



Girl Scout Troop 60152 on the House Floor



Cynthia Explaining the room and how votes are counted



Illinois Senator Doris Turner of the 48th District and Girl Scout Troop 60152

Attention Members with HS Seniors!

Remind them to start planning Scholarship Applications!

- **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 "Members Only" page.



President's Message

By: Elaine Barlos, AFT Local 943 President



View the IFT
latest issue of
Union Link

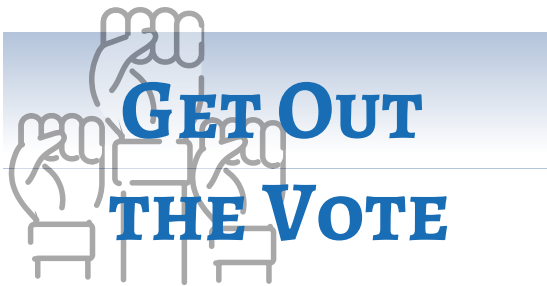
Political Fatigue is Real - How Do We Overcome It?

It's February and some of you may already be sick of receiving phone calls, texts, post, and emails regarding candidate platforms and the airing of their "dirty laundry" by their opponents. The turbulent political environment can cause us to experience awkward confrontations and uncomfortable conversations with friends, family and co-workers. So how do we survive election year? Don't say "move to Canada", suppress your views, or surrender to "voter abstention"!

Instead, check out this link for [Nine Tips for Coping With Election Stress](#). Take ownership of being an educated voter by learning about the candidates in your area. Take a look at this nonpartisan [Illinois Voters Guide website](#) from the Illinois League of Women's Voters. Make sure you are registered to vote at your current address and that you are aware of important deadlines and dates to get out to vote by visiting [Illinois State Board of Elections](#).

Finally, be an informed voter! Learn about pro-public education candidates vetted by your union. Print a copy of this [List of Endorsements from the Illinois Federation of Teachers](#) and take it with you when you go to vote in the Illinois Primary Election on March 19th. It is crucial to remember that staying positive during an election is not only beneficial for our mental and emotional well-being but also for the overall health of our society. So be sure you get out to vote NO MATTER WHAT!

Elaine Barlos



The Tax Man Cometh!

The first quarter of the year can bring feelings of elation or dread as we contemplate the April 15th tax deadline. Though this two-month deadline may seem, to some, eons away, it will be here before you know it.

As I was researching information for this article, I discovered a huge surprise! The following unreimbursed employee expenses have not been deductible since 2018 and through 2025, even if you itemize:

- Union dues
- travel to Union Senate meetings
- travel to educational workshops
- out-of-pocket expenses for classroom purchases

The AFT is part of a group of unions fighting to reinstate these deductions. Be sure to do your own research and/or check with your tax professional to ensure that you are best positioned when filing your 2023 tax return.

The following link provides additional information on tax deductions:
<https://www.hrblock.com/tax-center/filing/adjustments-and-deductions/deducting-union-dues>

Council filing deadlines vary. Presidents and treasurers are reminded to ensure that Council 990s are filed within your required timeframe. Reach out to me if you have questions or concerns.



Alfreida S. Jamison
Treasurer, AFT Local 943
Treasurer4Local943@gmail.com



Primary Election - 3/19/2024

- [Early voting through 3/18/24 - Check HERE for locations](#)

Are you registered to vote?

Check [HERE](#)

- Online voter registration system closes on 03/03/2024
- Deadline to request a [mail-in ballot](#) is March 14

Local 943 TEACH Professional Development Calendar of Events

Courses are FREE to AFT Local 943 members!

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, March 13, 4:30-6:30pm

Shannon Mural

Improving Comprehension of Narrative Text

(Remote) - PD Hours: 2

DEADLINE to register: Monday, March 4th

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, 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



For more information
and to register for
TEACH classes
email Elaine Bernal at
ebernalteach943@
gmail.com

Migrant Resources



Black History Month

February Resources -

Smithsonian - Theme:
African Americans and the Arts

National Museum of African
American History and Culture

AFT Share My Lesson -
Black History Month

Care.com Kids activities

Woman's History Month

March Resources -

Share My Lesson

International Women's Day 3/8

**Student
Debt
Relief
Virtual
Clinic**



Free

Access for AFT
Members

**GPT
ZERO** NewsGuard

AI identification
tool platform



Likes vs. Learning

The Real Cost of Social Media for Schools

Educators, Parents, Students & Child
Advocates Demand Platform Changes



Legislative Update

A Plan Time Bill

By Andrew Weber



Check out our website!
www.aft943.org

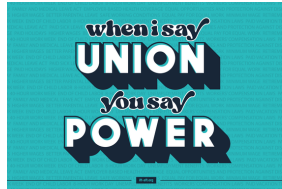


State Senator Meg Loughran Cappel (D-Shorewood) introduced a bill to provide 45 minutes of continuous plan time for all public school teachers. As currently written, the bill would guarantee that educators may not be forced to substitute in other areas of the building or district when another educator is absent or a vacancy exists and may not be forced to attend meetings, trainings, or conferences of any kind. If an educator chooses to substitute or attend a meeting, training, or conference during their guaranteed planning period of their own free will, the educator shall be compensated at a rate of pay that is negotiated between the Union and the administration. If signed, the law would go into effect on Jan 1, 2025. To track this bill through the legislative process, [click here](#).

For a full initial overview of the Spring Legislative Session including IFT initiatives, [click here](#).



& [STEM Resources](#)



Illinois State Board of Education

www.isbe.net
for current ISBE updates



IFT YouTube Channel

2024 IFT Presidents' Conference - March 15-17, Springfield, IL



[Local 943 Application Link](#)

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

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.

[Local 943 Application Link](#)

Save the Date



COVID-19
CDC Guideline
Changes



FANNIE MAY SPRING CANDY GIFT CARD SALE

25% DISCOUNT OFFERED TO YOU BY AFT LOCAL 943

Local 943's Spring Fannie May® Candy Gift Card Sale is here!

Members receive a savings of 25%.

The gift cards are available in the retail value of \$5, \$10, \$20, or \$50 and may be redeemed either at a Fannie May retail or outlet store or on the web at www.fanniemay.com.

This allows you or your gift recipient to choose your/their own selection.

In order to receive the cards by Easter, order forms are due in the union office no later than 5 p.m. on Thursday, March 7th.

Return your order form...with payment...to the Local 943 union office to the attention of: Judy Spirakes,

15521 S. 70th Court, Orland Park, IL 60462. (708-633-0943)

Make checks payable to Local 943.

We will notify you as soon as the cards arrive.

Gift cards must be picked up at the union office. We cannot mail gift cards!

Fannie May Order Form

Name (Please print)		School/Office/Retired	
_____		_____	
Home/Cell Phone Number		Email address	
_____		_____	
Card Retail Value	Quantity	Your Cost	Total
\$ 5.00 (Five Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 3.75 = \$	_____
\$10.00 (Ten Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 7.50 = \$	_____
\$20.00 (Twenty Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 15.00 = \$	_____
\$50.00 (Fifty Dollars)	_____ x	\$ 37.50 = \$	_____
Number of cards ordered	GRAND TOTAL \$		
_____	_____		

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO LOCAL 943

Attention: Judy Spirakes,

Local 943, 15521 S 70th Court, Orland Park, IL 60462

Orders due: Thursday, March 7, 2024

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

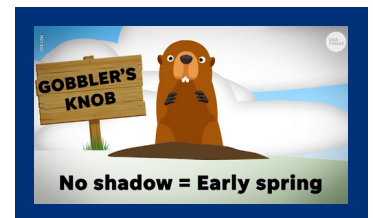


RETIREE CALENDAR 2023- 2024

Wednesday, May 22 -Guys and Dolls

Spring Retiree Meeting - TBA

[Retire Wisely Guide](#)
[New! IFT Retiree Page](#)



Punxsutawney Phil did NOT see his shadow on February 2nd, predicting an early spring in 2024.

AFTerthoughts

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

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Kate Kosner and Andrew Weber

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Leisl Brown and 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

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Elaine Barlos, Sue Benigni, Tina Thauer, and Elaine Bernal

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