

# WELCOME BACK!

# AFTerthoughts

VOLUME 54 • ISSUE 1 • SEPTEMBER 2023

Diverse, Dedicated,  
Determined



## Activating Members Over the Summer

Great Lakes IFT ULI was held this summer from Monday, June 26 through Friday, June 30 at the Lake Lawn Resort in Delavan, Wisconsin.

The four courses offered this year were:

- Union leadership skills to help build a strong union
- Effective grievance administration and organizing
- Introduction to negotiations and contract campaigns
- Organizing with parents and communities

Attendees (pictured on the right) from our Local include:

- Schenia Jamison (Hoover Schrum PSRP)
- Valerie Wilhoite (WW 155 PSRP)
- Joy Lane (Posen Robbins 143.5)
- Julie Molony Stephan (WW 155 Teachers)
- Cheryl Knight (OCE 135 Teachers)
- William Lammel (OCE 135 PSRP's)
- Catrina Niven (OCE 135 Teachers)
- Andrew Weber (Oak Lawn-Hometown 123)
- Elaine Bernal (Oak Lawn-Hometown 123)
- Leslie Mannion (Evergreen Park 124)



## Additional Event Photos

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Wisely Guide, ISBE, CDC, NOCC,  
IFT, Student Loan Debt Clinic &  
AFT Team

## AFT TEACH Conference Local 943 Presenters

Congratulations to two of our AFT Local 943 members who were presenters at the AFT TEACH conference held at the Hilton in Washington DC from July 21st through July 23rd.

Brian Jurinek presented a workshop on “Reclaiming Assessment” and Pia Conte presented a workshop on “SEL Strategies for a Calm Classroom & Teacher Self Care “

AFT TEACH provides an unforgettable experience filled with inspiration and ideas to bring back to school for the year ahead. Each professional development workshop is custom-developed for TEACH by AFT members and other experts to directly focus on tools and strategies to support educators and their efforts to help kids and communities succeed.



# You're Invited!

## Back-to-School Legislative Meet & Greet Picnic



**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>**  
**11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

AFT/IFT Local 943 is hosting a "Back-to-School Picnic" right here at our Orland Park Office.

**Join us along with our local legislators for some  
delicious food, fellowship and fun!**

### WHO:

All Local 943 members, their families & invited guest

### WHEN:

Saturday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

### WHERE:

AFT Local 943, 15521 S. 70<sup>th</sup> Court, Orland Park, IL 60462

### RSVP:

**PLEASE REPLY NO LATER THAN MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>**

to Local 943 at (708) 633-0943 or [kodea@ift-aft.org](mailto:kodea@ift-aft.org) with your NAME, the number of  
ADULTS and the number of CHILDREN attending.



**The food will be catered by Mel's Tacos & More and ice cream will be available at no cost to you! Raffle tickets will be available for purchase for a chance to win one of our "COUNCIL GIFT BASKETS". All proceeds will support our Committee On Political Education (COPE).**



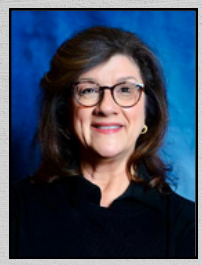
**NEW THIS YEAR! "Early Bird Raffle" -Members who arrive between 11:00-11:30 a.m. will receive a special raffle ticket and the chance to win one of three CASH PRIZES!**

# President's Message

By: Elaine Barlos, AFT Local 943 President



[View the IFT latest issue of Union Link](#)



Welcome back to school!

I hope that your summer break was relaxing and refreshing and filled with memories and adventures. As you get back into the routine of learning, growth, and achievement, I'd like to offer my heartfelt welcome and warmest greetings to all of our brand new union members and veteran members alike.

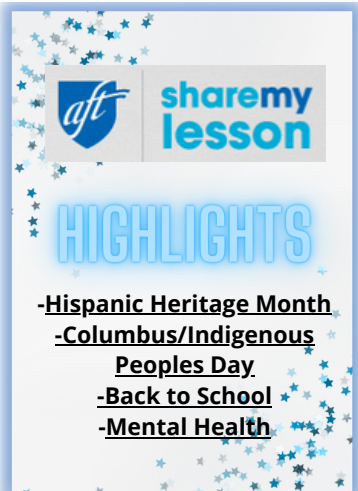
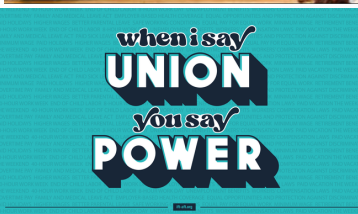
September carries with it a feeling of hope and new beginnings. It is a time when educators, support staff, and students alike make a fresh start. It is also time to inspire, motivate, and set a positive tone for a successful year ahead.

Starting a new school year can bring a mix of emotions - from excitement to nervousness - and we want to take this opportunity to let you know that everyone at AFT Local 943 is here to support you in your efforts and foster a sense of belonging. Throughout the year, Local 943 will provide members with FREE professional development opportunities, update you on the latest information on political and educational issues that impact you, and support you with your union council's contractual negotiations, grievances, and obligations. Your union is grateful for your dedication and hard work and we want you to know that we appreciate your unwavering commitment to educating and guiding our students.

Keep in mind that challenges are opportunities in disguise and that your union is here to help you conquer the hurdles you may face this school year. Remember, ***"Some things we can EXPECT. Some things will come as a SURPRISE. But ONE thing we can ALL count on is our SHARED strength, wisdom, and dedication."*** ~Chris Capodice

Here's wishing you a wonderful school year!

*Elaine Barlos*



**REGISTER  
NOW  
FOR FALL  
CLASSES**

# Local 943 TEACH Professional Development Calendar of Events

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



**Wed, October 4,** 4:30pm to 6:30pm -  
Michelle Gustafson & Elizabeth Keblusek  
**Foundations of Effective Teaching**  
(In Person) - PD Hours: 2  
[Click to register by Monday, September 26th](#)

**Wed, October 18,** 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Pia Conte  
**SEL Strategies for a Calm Classroom**  
(In Person) - PD Hours: 2  
[Click to register by Monday, October 24th](#)

**Wed, November 8,** 4:30pm to 6:30pm - Pia Conte  
**Primary Writing** (Remote) - PD Hours: 2  
[Click to register by Monday, November 1st](#)

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

**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,** 4:30pm 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

## Union Leadership Institute (ULI)

**November 4-5      February 3-4      April 20-21**

Saturdays: 9:00-4:30PM & Sundays: 9:00-12:00PM

- Bootcamp for Union Leaders
- Effective Grievance Administration
- Building and Sustaining Union Power
- Introduction to Collective Bargaining

ULI provides participants with hands on learning of union skills, professional development opportunities and a chance to network with other IFT members from throughout the state. Participants **must** attend all three weekend sessions.

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 October 6th.

Detailed ULI course descriptions are available at the IFT website, [www.ift-aft.org](http://www.ift-aft.org)

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





# Legislative Update

*By Andrew Weber*

## [“Invest in Kids”](#)



“Invest in Kids” is a voucher program and a tax break for the wealthy! This program was a Bruce Rauner demand in the 2017 budget that was planned to sunset at the end of last school year. Legislators did not approve this voucher program to be an item in this year’s state budget, but there are many working to put back on the table during this Fall’s Veto Session in Springfield. The Invest in Kids program diverts up to \$75M per year in tax revenue taking away from much needed funding in our public education system. Please contact your state senators and representatives to let them know you oppose the continuation of the “Invest in Kids” voucher program.

[Click here](#) to find contact info.

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

## [New Legislation of Interest](#)



**SB 1872 (PA 103-500):** Reduces tenure track from four years to three — Teachers hired on or after July 1, can attain tenure in three years with an overall evaluation of proficient in their second and third years. They can attain tenure in two years with two years of overall excellent on their evaluations.

**SB 1351 (PA 103-85):** Waiver of final year evaluation — a teacher set to retire in their last year can waive their evaluation if the previous overall evaluation was proficient or excellent.

**SB 1352 (PA 103-549):** Teacher resignation timeline — the timeline to submit a resignation during the school term must be concurred by the board. If the resignation is after the school term, the resignation letter must be submitted 30 days prior to the first student attendance day. This legislation also sets the time frame for when a district must notify the teacher of submitting their license to the state superintendent as well as when the state superintendent must notify the teacher once a decision has been made.

**SB 1468 (PA 103-88):** Return to work TRS provision - Until 2026, retired teachers are allowed to return to the classroom for up to 120 days without impairing their TRS annuity.

## [Social Security - Repeal WEP and GPO!](#)

The WEP and GPO are social security regulations that impact teachers and public employees by decreasing benefits for those who have government pensions from jobs not covered by social security, which can unfairly affect teacher spouses. It is essential for teachers to advocate for the repeal of these rules since they can greatly diminish the social security benefits teachers have earned, potentially causing financial insecurity during retirement. These regulations do not consider the complexities of teaching careers and may unfairly disadvantage educators who have consistently contributed to the social security system. The goal of eliminating WEP and GPO is to ensure retiring teachers receive fair and just social security benefits. [Click here](#) to sign a petition and tell congress to stop penalizing our teachers and public employees.

# 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 - February 13, 2024**

**- October 10, 2023 - March 12, 2024**

**- December 12, 2023 - 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 - January 30, 2024 -**

**September 26, 2023 - February 27, 2024**

**- November 28, 2023 - April 30, 2024**

## RETIREE CALENDAR

### 2023- 2024

**October 12**

Retiree Meeting

10:00 a.m. at the Local 943 office

The agenda will include:

- A presentation about the social security issues affecting all Illinois teachers. The topics are Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset.
- Elections of AFT Local 943 Retiree officers and two senators to AFT Local 943. Officers are president, vice president, and secretary. If you or someone you know would like to serve as an officer or a senator, please submit those names to Bob at the office (708) 633-0943 and to Kathy at kaysatlak@gmail.com.
- Notice to TRS members about substitute teaching.
- And then some fun, Ginny Holak, retired food service teacher from Oak Lawn High School, will show us how to make cute edible turkeys for your table decoration using candy and cookies. A fun activity to do later with your families.

**Wednesday, October 11**

Ring of Fire

NEW-[Retire Wisely Guide](#)



# 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

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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

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

### Staff Members

Charles Harper, IFT Field Service Director  
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Sandra Quero, Staff Writer

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### FOLLOW US ON:

• **FACEBOOK:** Southwest-Suburban-Federation-of-Teachers-Local-943

• **TWITTER (aka: X):** #AFTLocal943