Waukegan Paraprofessionals Ratify Four-Year Extension

by Michelle Standridge, IFT Field Service Director

The Waukegan Paraprofessionals held a meeting on June 4, 2019 and subsequently ratified a new four-year extension to their Collective Bargaining Agreement which will run through school year 2022-2023.

This extension brings many continued positive changes in the salary schedule structure for Paraprofessionals, which has been the Council’s goal during the previous two negotiations cycles as well as this round of bargaining. The changes this round include raising the starting wage for the lowest paid category in the Paraprofessional contract to $15.00 an hour in the first year of the contract (with that increase also trickling through the whole category to raise the category salary structure) as well as raising the overall compensation of the entire unit over the course of the contract to be more competitive with surrounding districts. This includes significant increases for many paraprofessionals during the first year of the agreement. The percentage of new money to fund this structure and the included salary increases is 13.63% in year 1, 5.73% in year 2, 6.20% in year 3, and 4.77% in year 4. All four years of the contract include step movement which averages a little over 2% on top of cell increases of 3% in year 2, 3.5% in year 3, and 2% in year 4. Lastly, Paraprofessionals saw an increase to their Career Paraprofessional Stipend (CPS) in each of the years of the contract for those who have reached the top of the salary schedule.

A very important benefit to members is their Board-paid single health insurance coverage which the unit was able to maintain through the life of this agreement. In addition, any increases for family/dependent coverage continue to be shared equally between the Board and the Paraprofessional who takes the family/dependent care coverage.

The Waukegan Paraprofessionals are grateful for the collaborative process that took place during this round of bargaining. The dialogue was open and honest, and the parties looked at the data collaboratively in an effort to structure the contract extension in a way that works well for everyone. The Council was particularly pleased to have bargaining completed prior to the end of the school year so that the members could adjourn for summer knowing they were coming back to work with a contract in place. The Council would like to say a special thank you to Mr. Moten and Ms. Polk for spending time listening to concerns, researching together, and working to come to consensus. This was different from what we have experienced in the past, and it was a refreshing and rewarding experience.

Congratulations to the Waukegan Paraprofessionals on this exciting new agreement! On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Shari Nuetzmann, Vice-President Ami Montalbano, and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.
From the Desk of

Michael T. McGue

There seems to be a change coming regarding our worker rights in the United States.

Maximizing profits for stockholders has been the corporate goal for several decades but with the increasingly burgeoning income inequity, we are witnessing a growing backlash throughout our country. Recently appearing on the PBS Newshour, author and professor Steven Pearlstein: Can American Capitalism Survive?, noted that 200 of the most significant American companies recently issued an unusual joint statement by their CEO’s stating that corporations should take into account the concerns “of all stakeholders including employees, customers, suppliers and society in general.” According to Pearlstein, “the decision to declare maximizing value for shareholders as the sole purpose of a corporation is the source of much of what has gone wrong with American capitalism.” Pearlstein believes that the pendulum may be swinging back with a shift of attitudes to signal a change for a more compassionate opinion of the other “stakeholders”. Pearlstein further asserts that the political dialogue, especially among several of the Democratic candidates, has changed significantly. As I watch the Democratic presidential debates during this 2020 campaign primary I am impressed by the frequency that the terms “Unions” and “worker rights” are being included as an essential topic for concern.

In an opinion article: “Yes, America is Rigged Against Workers,” (New York Times, Sunday, August 4, 2019) author Steven Greenhouse quoted from his upcoming book: Beaten Down, Worked Up: The Past Present and Future of American Labor: the United States is the only industrialized nation that doesn’t have laws guaranteeing paid maternity leave. It is the only advanced economy that doesn’t guarantee workers any vacation, paid or unpaid, the only highly developed country (other than South Korea) that doesn’t guarantee paid sick days. In contrast the European Union’s 28 nations guarantee workers at least four weeks vacation.

Among the three dozen industrialized countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United States has the lowest minimum wage as a percentage of the median wage - 34 percent of the typical wage, compared with 62 percent in France and 54 percent in Britain. It also has the second-highest percentage of low-wage workers among that group, exceeded only by Latvia.

Greenhouse says: “All this means is the United States suffers from what I call ‘anti-worker exceptionalism.’”

He goes on: “there is overriding agreement on one reason...Labor Unions are weaker in the United States than other industrialized nations.”

The desire to Unionize often faces daunting hurdles: employer interference (including threats to close), intimidation of organizers, rewarding anti-Union managers for keeping out Unions and other strong-arm techniques to keep Unions from creating a fair playing field in a workplace. But that’s just what takes place internally. Corporate America holds unfair advantages externally, as well. In many cases the lawmakers side with employers. And, according to Greenhouse, the diminished power of Unions and workers has skewed American politics. In the 2015-16 election cycle, business outspent labor $3.4 billion to $213 million, a ratio of 16 to 1, according to the non-partisan Center for Responsive Politics. Then there is the lobbying: corporations spend nearly $3 billion on their efforts to Labor’s $48 million. Little wonder why too many lawmakers interested in financing their next campaign are listening to the corporations and not the workers.

While it is clear that we will not outspend corporations on elections and lobbying (nor should we try in my opinion), we can certainly do two things.
Retirees Corner

by Carolyn Scaccia, Retirees Council President

The Retirees’ Council has some dates for you to add to your calendar for this fall.

We had some issues getting membership forms out this summer, so they will be included with this mailing. We are using the list from the 2018-2019 school year, but will have it updated prior to the October edition of the 504Word. Please return your forms as soon as possible, so you are eligible to attend our new retirees’ luncheon and continue to receive the 504Word.

The luncheon is the one event we limit to members only. It will be held at the Union Hall on October 10 at 11:00 a.m. We have box lunches and lots of time to offer tips on how to be a retiree! Most new retirees catch on right away. It is also a chance for you to meet members from councils other than your own and for everyone to make suggestions for the kinds of events they’d like to see planned for the future.

We are planning to have a book club on November 13th at 11:00 at the Union Hall. Brian Smith will lead the discussion on the book Art Thief by Noah Charney. It is a mystery and sounds like a really good read. Feel free to have a spouse, friend, or neighbor join you. We ask that you bring a light refreshment that we can enjoy while we talk.

Our final event for 2019 is what we refer to as “A Taste of 504”. Everyone brings a dish to share and a copy of the recipe for that dish. While we enjoy all the wonderful tastes, our phenomenal staff makes copies of the recipes for the foods we have all been enjoying. You go home with a cookbook and new recipes to try over the upcoming holidays. That will occur on December 5th at 11:00 a.m. in the main room at the Union Hall. We also ask that you bring non-perishable foods to be donated to a local food pantry. Our annual food drive has grown over the past few years and the donations have been much appreciated.

Hope to see you at the luncheon in October!

President continued from page 2

that CEO’s and their managers cannot: vote in greater numbers for labor friendly positions and use our position as community leaders to sway public opinion.

I am proud of the work that the LCFT Political Action Committee does ferreting out candidates that will support us in the workplace and the 2018 election bore the fruits of their labors, but the balance of the work remains to be done by you: stay up-to-date on candidates’ positions, work on their behalf, and of course, vote for them. Public opinion will come our way because there are more of us workers than there are CEO’s of corporations. However, much damage can be done in short order as witnessed by the last few years. It remains incumbent on each of us to “set the record straight” about all of the the benefits Unions provide. The recent discourse among the Democratic presidential candidates is offering all of us hope by placing worker rights exactly where they belong: center stage. While most of us do not have the luxury of a “bully pulpit” we can illuminate these issues on a grass roots level. We have an exciting opportunity to spread the word of why Unionism is essential to preserve not just the rights of the individual employee but the rights of all workers, coast-to-coast.

In Unity,

Michael T. McGue, President, Lake County Federation of Teachers

August 2019
Contract Settlements:
Around Lake County

Lake Villa Federation of Teachers settles Four-Year Deal with District 41 Board of Education

by Matt Beverly,
IFT Field Service Representative

The Lake Villa Federation of Teachers overwhelmingly voted to ratify a new contract on August 20, with the Board of Education set to approve the deal in September. The negotiations, which began in March, concluded this July with a 12-hour session. The final settlement entailed substantive changes and some clean-up to existing language. New changes will enhance working conditions, the teaching and learning environment and members’ pay and benefits. Some highlights include:

*A 4-year deal with no reopening language
*Enhanced union security language, including revised dues deduction language, FOIA notification language, access to new employees and the requirement of the board to send a complete bargaining unit list to the council president, in addition to the LCFT union hall
*Enhanced curriculum committee language
*Enhanced teacher assignment notification language
*Enhanced perfect attendance language and benefits, including up to $700 annually if no used sick or personal days and expansion of definition of family for bereavement leave purposes
*Maintenance of single premium insurance cost for members for duration of contract, and increase in each year of the agreement in employer-provided dependent stipends for single + 1 and family

coverage
*Maintenance of existing retirement benefits
*Increases in tuition reimbursement amounts
*Internal sub pay increases, and creation of contractual committee related to substitute shortage issues
*Increased longevity pay from 70% of salary schedule raise average to 75%, which equates to a 3.5625% raise in 2019-2020, a 3.1875% raise in 2020-2021, a 3.09375% raise in 2021-2022 and a 3% raise in 2022-2023
*Increase CPI-based extra-curricular pay formula from 0% floor and a 1.5% ceiling to 1.5% floor and a 3.0% ceiling, along with adjustments to particular positions
*Preparation time and committee MOU

“This time around was much more collaborative as evidenced by the fact that we were able to get a deal done in five months,” said Council President and PE teacher Melissa Merges. “The board of education operated in good faith from the start, and our membership saw us through to the end. We are thrilled to start the school year with a new contract that offers competitive compensation packages to our members, and that builds upon progress made in the last contract to support student learning.”

In addition to other changes to the contract, another notable win for the Union was settling a competitive 4-year wage package. Teachers will realize, with step, a 4.75% raise in 2019-20, a 4.25% raise in 2020-21, a 4.125% raise in 2021-22 and a 4.0% raise in 2022-23.

The bargaining team consisted of Members Paul Santopadre, Amy Jo Hodge, Cathy Welch, Matt Wawiorka, Mary Phelps, Scott Kapchinski, Melissa Merges, and IFT Field Service Director Matthew Beverly.
Libertyville HS & Vernon Hills HS Federation of Teachers Settles Three-Year Deal with District 128 Board of Education

by Matt Beverly,
IFT Field Service Representative

The Libertyville Federation of Teachers overwhelmingly voted to ratify a new contract last spring, with the Board of Education approving the deal shortly thereafter. The negotiations, which began last fall, concluded in April. The final settlement comprised substantive changes and some clean-up to existing language. New changes will enhance working conditions, the teaching and learning environment and members’ pay and benefits. Some highlights include:

* A 3-year deal with no reopener language
* Less administrative meetings
* Preservation of special AP class prep period
* New 403(b) employer-match program concluding in the last year of the agreement with a $1000 match
* New 90% (single) / 70% (family) dental insurance coverage
* Preservation, with modification of the criteria, of the existing performance bonus
* Expanded tuition reimbursement benefits
* Restructured retirement incentive program that preserves value of the previous four 6% increases
* Implementation of new CPI-based salary schedule, with equal percentage step raises, mid-contract

“We were happy to secure a multi-year deal this time around and believe that because of the hard work of the bargaining team—and the incredible support of the entire membership—we settled a fair contract,” said Council President and history teacher Dennis Duffy. “We know that this contract will continue the tradition of allowing our teachers to support students in the classroom, excelling in every aspect of their education.”

In addition to other changes to the contract, another notable win for the Union was settling a competitive 3-year wage package, including the preservation of health insurance benefits. Teachers will realize, with step, an average 5.58% raise in 2019-20 (longevity remains at 3%), an average 4.89% in 2020-21 (longevity: 3%) and a 2.0% step raise plus the as yet unknown applicable PTELL CPI-U, with a 1.5% CPI floor and a 2.5% CPI ceiling, in 2021-2022 (longevity: 3%).

The bargaining team consisted of members Rick Brenner, Dennis Duffy, Shawn Healey, Andrea Lara, Greg Loika, Julianne Luick, Monica Tolva, and IFT Field Service Director Matthew Beverly.

Prairie Crossing Council Ratifies Four-Year Agreement

by Michelle Standridge,
IFT Field Service Representative

Immediately preceding the close of the school term, Prairie Crossing Council ratified provisions for a new contract that will remain in effect through the 2022-23 school year.

Some changes to language include reconvening the evaluation committee to revise the evaluation instrument for the 2019-20 school year, the addition of “professional make-up days” as another option for religious holiday leave, the inclusion of “records days” in lieu of the staff meetings directly preceding report card due dates, and language that addresses administrative follow up to ODRs (office discipline referrals). During the 2019-20 school year, members will receive a BRI (Base Rate Increase) of 7%. In the past, the Council had a Merit Award in the contract that was applicable in some years and not in others, but they opted to put emphasis on the BRI and remove the Merit Award language from the contract altogether during this round of bargaining. In addition, members will maintain the same insurance benefits, some new stipends were added to the miscellaneous stipend schedule, and many stipends, including the longevity stipend, were increased. The contract calls for a salary reopener in the remaining three years.

On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Robb Freeman, Vice-President Chris Hershiser, Secretary Melissa Plucinski, Treasurer September Larson and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.
How can my Union help me with issues in the workplace?

by Kelly Regnier,
504 WORD Editor

It’s the beginning of the school year, which means that most education professionals come into their buildings with a renewed sense of positive energy and a desire to be a positive influence in the lives of Lake County’s children.

This productive attitude can quickly be eroded by many factors that are outside of the students and their needs. Sometimes demands from administration in the form of more meetings, more paperwork, and more duties can curtail our abilities to work to fullest potential for the student. Other times, the way that we are treated by administrators or even other staff members will cause us heartache that creates a loss of focus on the students we serve.

But when do we say “enough” and ask our Union to help us out? This is both a simple and complex question to answer. The simple answer is that the Union will assist you any time you feel that your contractual rights have been violated.

Many members realize that each Union contract contains a “grievance procedure.” This is the process that the Union and the district use to resolve questions of contract violation.

If you can point to a specific clause in the contract that your district has violated, this is grounds for a grievance, and you should seek out your council president or defense chair as soon as possible.

The more complex answer is that even when we cannot point to specific contract language, your Union may still be able to help you with your issue. If something is concerning to you or it doesn’t “feel right,” speak with your council president or building representative. While we might not always be able to “formally” resolve issues, we are often able to offer other assistance. In any case, you should always count on your council leadership to listen and offer help if they can.

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August 2019
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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

(Please Print Clearly)
Name: ___________________________ Home Phone: _______________________

Home Address: ____________________________________________________________

City: ___________________________ State: _____ Zip: _______________________

Personal E-mail: _____________________ (School District): ____________________

IEIN Number: ___________________

Select courses you will attend:

□ FALL      DAILY ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED

□ MAKING STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES WORK FOR YOU:
  Tuesdays and Thursdays (4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.) 30 PDU's 30 hours
  October 1 through October 31

□ BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION:
  Tuesdays and Thursdays (4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.) 30 PDU's 30 hours
  November 5 (off the 28th) – December 10

Number of courses selected: x Cost per course: $50 = $ ____________

CHECKS AND REGISTRATION FORM MUST BE IN THE UNION HALL TWO WEEKS PRIOR
TO THE START OF THE CLASS. PLEASE DON'T JEOPARDIZE THE CLASS BY
REGISTERING LATE. ALL CLASSES ARE HELD IN THE UNION HALL.

Enclose check or money order (no cash) made payable to: AFT Local 504

Return form with non-refundable payment to: Lake County Federation of Teachers, Local 504
  248 Ambrogio Drive
  Gurnee, IL 60031

August 2019
Grant Teachers Ratify Four-Year Agreement

by Michelle Standridge,
IFT Field Service Representative

The Negotiations for Grant Teachers, which began in mid-December 2018, culminated in a Tentative Agreement on July 30, 2019. The Council held its ratification meeting on August 9th. Members voted in favor of the 2019-2023 Agreement which preserves long-standing benefits, adds some new language and benefits for members, and provides competitive increases in salary over the life of the Agreement.

The four-year contract affords average salary schedule increases of 4.75% per year in each of the four years of the Agreement and preserves insurance benefits, longevity pay and the four-year, six percent retirement incentive.

Just a few provisions of the new Agreement include an increase in the number of sick leave days for those who have twenty years of service with banked leave, the addition of a National Board Certification stipend and a $25,000 Board-paid life insurance policy, the inclusion of crisis intervention pay for Counselors, Social Workers, and Psychologists, and expanded access to professional meetings. In addition, there are miscellaneous stipend increases throughout the contract for items such as tuition reimbursement and internal substitution, the team was able to secure an additional benefit for all coaches and sponsors whose teams make it to state, and the sick leave bank was expanded to include a teacher’s spouse and children. Extracurricular stipends increased, as did the allocation for certain activities/sports, and the contract reflects the addition of extracurricular activities/sports that weren’t previously included. This contract did eliminate the ability for members to take a leave of absence to seek employment outside of the District. Other leave provisions remain intact.

The Union’s bargaining team had representatives from a variety of departments, and they worked diligently and collaboratively to secure a deal they felt worthy to bring back to their members. Congratulations, Grant!

On the Union’s bargaining team were Council President Dan Benes, Council Vice-President Shane Rivette, Secretary Elian Skolar, Treasurer Jeff Austin, Steve Avallone, Lauren Behm, Joree Morris, Kurt Rous, Carl Uphoff, Greg Wodzien, and IFT Field Service Director Michelle Standridge.

Classroom Links

by Kelly Regnier,
504 WORD Editor

According to Illinois School Code, Social Studies teachers are required to “include in the teaching of United States history the role of labor unions and their interaction with government in achieving the goals of a mixed free-enterprise system” (Section 27-21 of the School Code).

Here are some links to resources for this purpose:

* Illinois Labor History Society: http://www.illinoislaborhistory.org/curriculum
* American Federation of Teachers: https://www.aft.org/resolution/teaching-labor-history
* National History Education Clearinghouse: https://teachinghistory.org/history-content/website-reviews/22871