by Michelle Standridge, IFT Field Service Director

On January 19th, leaders from 15 councils: CLC-AFO, Diamond Lake, Grayslake, Grayslake PSRP, Gurnee, Lake Villa, North Chicago, Retirees, SEDOL, Warren, Waukegan Paraprofessionals, Waukegan Psychologists, Waukegan Teachers, Waukegan Professional Support Staff, and Woodland joined IFT Field Service Directors, Matt Beverly and Michelle Standridge and LCFT Business Agents, Matt LaPierre and Jim Pergander for the first of five modules in the IFT’s Worksite Leader Training Program, a professional development series designed to provide a strong foundation in union leadership and encourage members’ active participation in making our Union stronger.

Module 1, entitled “Union 101,” gave participants an overview of our Union structure including important roles and responsibilities as well as an opportunity to further discuss the current landscape and the attacks unions are facing.

Participants seemed to agree that now, more than ever before, our profession is under attack, and if we are to weather the coming storm, we must have a united front, be able to work together and encourage one another, and ensure that members become active in shaping our future as a strong and visible force, dedicated to our communities and our profession.

Upcoming modules include Module 2: Communication and Information (February 16), Module 3: Member Advocacy (March 15), Module 4: Member Mobilization and Engagement (April 19), and Module 5: Political, Legislative, and Community Engagement (May 10). We look forward to continuing to learn from one another and develop strategies that will help us be successful together.
The Privatization of our Schools

Several years ago North Chicago Council President, Deborah Lawson, and I met with administrators of North Chicago Public Schools, area politicians, the commander at Great Lakes Naval Base and the State Superintendent of Schools regarding our shared mutual interest in protecting the financial solvency of the North Chicago School District. The solution the officials presented to the District’s seemingly interminable financial distress was to create a corporate-run charter school.

The charter school officials and the base commander’s rationale was based on their premise that the Navy parents wouldn’t live here and send their kids to the North Chicago District as it currently existed. At this time, I remember thinking that these arguments were remarkably similar to those that were made by advocates for segregation during the sixties and seventies. This charter school assertion was based on the false presumption that, as the District’s Navy student population dropped, the District would lose federal impact funding, monies meant to offset the cost the District incurs educating Navy children as these families are exempt from providing associated property tax revenue for education. The officials concluded that the federal impact aid was in jeopardy unless the North Chicago District could maintain a Navy student population greater than thirty percent. They deemed that creating a charter school would solve this financial concern.

It was evident that then, state superintendent, Chris Koch, was on board with the charter concept so the ensuing discussion then revolved around “set-asides” for Navy children. In other words: guarantees that a certain percentage of the charter school’s population be reserved for the children of Navy personnel. In spite of the protests from both Debbie and myself regarding the ethics of these “set-asides,” state officials moved ahead with their charter school proposal and the “Learn” (corporation’s name) Charter School was established.

The educational success of Learn’s students is still an unsubstantiated and unknown entity.

Nonetheless, Learn is now back for another bite of the proverbial “apple”, looking to expand the existing charter school. Upon closer inspection, the student population continues to reflect a decline in Naval personnel children. However, reflecting a change of strategy, Learn Charter’s advocates no longer make the case that they will attract Navy children. They no longer need to.

I attended a public forum in January where Learn’s officials, as required by law, made their case for expansion to the North Chicago officials. These office holders technically comprised a school board but have been undemocratically appointed by the state because of financial distress within the district. Several hundred residents, including many students, filled the North Chicago High School cafeteria and to my estimation, probably ninety percent of those were opposed to any charter expansion. There was a plethora of opinions expressed in opposition to expansion but my overwhelming “take-away” was this: Learn’s officials were impassive to the residents’ objections.”

--LCFT President Michael T. McGue

Continued, page 3
TO PLAY: they can simply appeal the District’s decision to the Illinois State Charter School Commission, a commission stacked with charter school advocates thanks to Governor Bruce Rauner. I even publicly challenged Learn’s chief administrator to abide by the School Board’s decision and he refused.

The establishment and expansion of the Learn Charter School in North Chicago has not only ignored the democratic process, which most schools follow, but it does so in spite of the dissenting voices of the taxpayers. When will Learn provide the data which they claim reveals their success over the non-charter approach?

Billionaire Governor Bruce Rauner is an avowed charter school proponent and teacher Union hater. Elections do matter. And anyone who says that public school educators should stay out of politics does so for this reason: to further their own agenda. An agenda most easily advanced in poor, minority communities. Similar to the lead contaminated water crisis created in Flint, Michigan by Rauner ally, Michigan Governor Snyder, corporate models do not apply to every situation especially in the public sector.

Elections do matter to our profession. Unfortunately, now the decision to expand a corporate charter school in North Chicago rests with Rauner’s cronies. Our governor continues to promote his version of the Golden Rule: “he who has the gold, rules.” As we ramp up for another presidential election my concern now is that voters will put a similar soul in the White House on the false impression that the corporate model is ideal.

In Unity,

Michael T. McGue, President
Lake County Federation of Teachers

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Retirees Corner
by Carolyn Scaccia,
LCFT Retirees Council President

On Thursday, December 3rd, the Retirees’ Council held a Taste of 504. Every attendee brought a dish to share and the recipe for it. We all went home with full stomachs and a recipe book full of delicious ideas for holiday entertaining. We had a great time.

In April we will have a book club meeting. You will need to read Major Pettigrew’s Last Stand. We’re letting you know now so that you have ample time to get a copy of the book and read it. We will meet at the Union Hall on Tuesday, April 5, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.

We are planning to head north to Potawatomi in May. It is a little too soon to make reservations, but we are hoping to go on Wednesday, May 11. We will send out a mailing to let you know the details prior to the trip.

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Here’s one more thing union families can share.

When you send flowers, Union Plus sends back savings. Union Plus offers union families 20% off flowers, plants, wreaths and gift baskets from Teleflora. Order online with a Union Plus Credit Card and save 25%. Teleflora delivers through local florists, so freshness is assured. Sending flowers makes two people feel wonderful—your loved one and you!

Find out more at UnionPlus.org/AFT

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February 2016
Gurnee Overwhelmingly Ratifies New Collective Bargaining Agreement

by Jim Pergander, LCFT Business Agent

Continuing in their recent tradition of working collaboratively together through the negotiations process, the Gurnee Council and the District Administration have reached a new three year agreement after only a couple months of deliberation. The Gurnee membership overwhelmingly ratified the agreement by a 105 – 7 vote.

Formalizing the reality of the last two years, the salary schedule was eliminated and replaced with a two tier system. Gurnee’s Tier 1 includes all teachers with twenty or less years of service. Tier 2 includes all teachers with more than twenty years of service. Over the three years of the CBA, teachers in Tier 1 will receive a cumulative salary increase of ten percent while those in Tier 2 (longevity) will receive a total increase of eight percent. The end of career incentive, six percent per year for four years, was modified, though teachers over age forty-five, as well as younger teachers who put in long term service to the district, were completely unaffected by the change. A one-time two percent increase was made to the extra duty schedule stipends as well as other monies in the CBA.

In order to make the summer school program financially viable in the future, teacher compensation was reduced to thirty-two dollars per hour for the first year and thirty-six dollars per hour for subsequent years of teaching summer school.

No change was made to the compensation earned by teachers for educational advancement (formerly called horizontal or lane movement).

For the first time, teachers will possibly share a portion of the cost increase for the Board offered medical insurance. Teachers will be responsible for any increase in medical insurance cost that falls between three percent and six percent of the prior year’s Board cost, with a cap of eight percent of the total cost of the individual medical insurance plan.

The process was shepherded along by Council President Kim Woodward who expressed, “With the positive on-going working relationship the Union has with the D56 School Board, Dr. Hutton, and Sheila Peckler our District Business Director, both parties negotiated a fair contract that is fiscally responsible not only for the next three years, but for years moving forward.” Woodward was assisted by her team at the table: Kim Witt and Kathy Kibitlewski.

Additional assistance and advice was given by her negotiations “large group”: Nick Streicher, Lisa Hlavin, Amanda Knezovich, Dave Schopf, and Betsy McLoughlin. The District negotiating team consisted of Sheila Peckler, Business Manager, and Superintendent John Hutton, who stated, “In this political age of Union blasting, I want to unequivocally state the success of this School District is a result of the great contributions we have received from the Union Leadership and the staff as a whole in advocating for the success of all children.”

Jim Pergander, LCFT Business Agent, also assisted with the negotiations process at the table and otherwise.
Woodland Council voted to ratify its new contract December 4, 2015, with the Board approving the deal just before winter break, officially ending contract negotiations that began in January 2015. The new contract includes provisions that will improve teaching and learning at the District. Some highlights include:

* Teachers will receive an additional month notice as to their assignments for the proceeding school year, giving them more time to plan for the upcoming school year.

* Teachers aides will be given notification as to which teachers they will work with in the upcoming school year, allowing for more collaborative planning time.

* The Council and Board agreed to the terms of a program that will allow parents to monitor student grades in real time.

* Parent-teacher conferences will now be held in evenings, making them more accessible to parents.

* Teachers will review new curricula and collaborate on improvements with administration before implementation.

* New guidelines have been established for bus drivers to make school transportation safer.

* Funding has been increased for teachers and support staff to engage in professional development.

"I am grateful at the amazing job our union bargaining team did throughout this entire process," said Woodland Council president and middle school science teacher Sharon Anday. "Likewise, the unity and support our membership displayed was equally impressive and crucial in finalizing a fair contract for all -- especially the students we serve. We're not just employees of the district, but parents and taxpayers too, so negotiating changes that support our students ultimately moves our entire school community forward.

This collaborative approach has a long history at Woodland, and would have been impossible without the professionalism of the administrators on the Board's bargaining team. We look forward to continuing this approach when we return to the table to negotiate our next contract."

In addition to dozens of other changes to the contract that will improve working conditions, the 5-year deal also includes annual step and lane salary schedule raises for teachers for each year of the contract, with an average annual 4.15% salary schedule step raise. Teachers in longevity will receive an annual 3% raise for the first 2 years of the CBA, with 2.5% annual raises for the last three years of the contract. Support staff will receive 4.15% raises each year of the contract, for a total 20.75% over five years. Noticeably, the union bargaining team was able to preserve the existing single $500 and $1500 deductible insurance plans and coverage levels for the life of the Agreement at the existing 97.5% board-paid for each of these single plans, while also preserving for the concurrent family plans the existing deductible and coverage levels. Furthermore, the union bargained for board-provided Health Savings Account contributions of $375 annually for the individual high deductible health plan and $750 annually for the family high deductible health plan.

Support your Union Brothers and Sisters:

SHOP UNION

February 2016
Technology Campus Council Ratifies Five Year Deal with Board of Control

by Matt Beverly, IFT Field Service Director

The Technology Campus Council voted to ratify its new contract November 13, 2015, with the Board of Control approving the deal on the same day, officially ending contract negotiations that began in the spring of 2015. The negotiations entailed changes to multiple aspects of the new contract, including many clean-up provisions relating to old and outdated provision, but also including new language that will improve working conditions and teaching and learning at the District. Some highlights include:

- Teachers will have additional time during the school year to collaborate with their colleagues to improve the educational program and to meet with administration regarding professional development opportunities.
- Improvements to the Mentoring Committee.
- New language that clarifies opportunities for teachers to attend conferences related to an instructor’s instructional area and increased stipends related thereto.
- Changes, clarification and improvement to the extra-curriculum stipends, and increases to those stipends.
- New language that clarifies curriculum work.
- Including National Board Certification credit and tuition into existing tuition reimbursement benefits.

- Strengthening the contractual Evaluation Committee language.
- Clarifying ESP vacation language.

“I had a solid team to work with during this long process, especially from my fellow teachers and support staff,” said Tech Campus president and medical assisting instructor Jude Rodriguez. “But that also includes the board bargaining team, who operated fairly and professionally during the entire process. In the end, I believe we bargained a good contract that supports the entire educational community at Tech Campus.”

In addition to many other changes to the contract, the 5-year deal also includes a 4.75% raise for instructors and educational support staff in 2015-16, 4.0% in 2016-17, 3.4% in 2017-18, 3.4% in 2018-19 and 3.95% in 2019-20. New employee salary guidelines were also increased. Furthermore, insurance benefits were locked in place for the life of the agreement at the 2014-15 coverage levels, except that the dependent insurance benefit was increased by just under 25%. The inclusion of a new longevity pay benefit was added in for teachers, while the existing longevity pay benefit for ESPs was substantially increased. An additional dental plan will also be added into the new contract.

The council would also like to thank Sue Eberle and Betty McCann at the Union Office for their help.

Union Professional Development Update

We are about ready to start the spring classes. The summer classes are being planned and will be announced in the next 504 Word.

As a reminder, teachers still receive credits for lane movement and recertification by taking the classes. Two hours of graduate credit for those districts that have approved this and thirty PDUs for recertification for the thirty hour classes and one hour of graduate credit and fifteen PDUs for the fifteen hour classes.

We are still diligently trying to get the word out about these classes so that more teachers can take advantage of these credits for a very reasonable cost. If your district does not award in-district credits, talk to your council president and have them get in touch with me to discuss how this can be accomplished. Currently we have four districts awarding in-district credits.

If you have any questions regarding our professional development program, please feel free to contact me through the union office or my personal email.

Andrea Herbster
Professional Development Coordinator for LCFT
a.herbster@sbcglobal.net

A LOOK AT TWO NEW CLASSES

PLEASE SIGN UP EARLY TO HELP ENSURE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF 10 FOR THE CLASS. TAKE

NAME: ____________________________________  Home Phone: ___________________
City: _____________________________________  State: _____  Zip: ______________
Home Address: _______________________________________________________________

NAME: ____________________________________  Home Phone: ___________________
City: _____________________________________  State: _____  Zip: ______________
Home Address: _______________________________________________________________

E-mail: __________________________Your council (School District): ___________________

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

PRIOR TO THE START OF THE CLASS. PLEASE DON'T JEOPARDIZE THE CLASS BY
CHECKS AND REGISTRATION FORM MUST BE IN THE UNION HALL TWO WEEKS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (New 15 hour class)
STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

April 12 – May 12    4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

May 17 – May 31     4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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REGISTRATION FORM
LCFT LOCAL 504 – 2015 Winter-Spring
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

(Please Print Clearly)
NAME: ________________________________ Home Phone: ______________________

Home Address: __________________________________________________________________

City: _____________________________ State: ____ Zip: ______________

E-mail: __________________________ Your council (School District): ________________

PLEASE SIGN UP EARLY TO HELP ENSURE THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF 10 FOR THE CLASS.
TAKE A LOOK AT TWO NEW CLASSES
Select courses you will attend. All classes will be Tuesdays and Thursdays

ER&D CLASSES OFFERED

☐ STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
   April 12 – May 12  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

☐ ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (New 15 hour class)
   May 17 – May 31  4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

If you have an interest in a particular class, register as soon as possible.

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

(Please visit our website for class descriptions www.lcft.org)
The Education of an Election Season

by Corinne McGue, 
LCFT PAC Committee Chair

As we are bombarded with the campaign rhetoric surrounding the upcoming presidential election it is quite understandable that many of us have turned down the volume and directed our attentions elsewhere.

Recently, the AFT asked your LCFT PAC committee for permission to forward pro-Hillary Clinton campaign literature to our members. After polling our PAC members we revealed an unanimous preference in choosing not to side with any presidential candidate at this time. This does not imply that the LCFT will not eventually endorse a candidate but, rather, we prefer a more deliberative approach. The media, while talented and often well-intentioned, too frequently sensationalize and editorialize events and issues during any campaign season. As I recently lamented with my dentist, the days of Walter Cronkite have evolved into the “Dirty Laundry” style of reporting as Don Henley satirically refers to in his 80’s pop hit. This leaves us, the voters, with the responsibility of sifting through this rhetoric, separating fact from fiction, which cannot be accomplished overnight.

As an organization we have established a long and strong history of remaining thoughtful and grounded in our decision-making in all determinations related to our profession and the upcoming elections provide no exception to this democratic, and often difficult, process.

While the presidential election is undoubtedly consequential in many respects, there are other races which concern us which are closer to home. Your PAC members met in January to proactively discuss the elections of the local officials running in November. While there are no contentious contests in the March primary, we gathered to strategize our approach to these crucial elections in the fall. As you know, there are numerous outside forces with enormous war chests working hard to influence the outcomes to their benefit. Unfortunately, the priorities of these groups are often in conflict with those of us in education, to say the least. As frustrating and time consuming as it may be, we owe it to our students to study the candidates to discern where they truly stand when it comes to all matters of our profession.

We have a distinct advantage when it comes to voting because, collectively, we are more passionate and better informed as a result of our enthusiasm for our very important work. Please turn up the volume (just a little?) and take the time to distinguish the authenticity from the pretensions as we proceed through the 2016 elections. We have so much to lose but we have even more to gain.

In unity,
Corinne