

AFT Amesbury
Local #1033
AFT/AFT Mass/AFL-CIO

Presidents Newsletter Vol 22

AFT Amesbury Web Site = <http://ma.aft.org/010330/>

April 2013

Local Union News

Your delegates to the AFT Massachusetts convention FY13 are Cindy Yetman, Brian Hopkins, Laurie Williams, Mark Allred, Tim Angerhofer and Pam Gagnon. They will attend in May and gain helpful information about legislative changes that may be occurring that could affect your future. Topics such as retirement benefits, health care, evaluation and other important aspects of our profession will be discussed. We will report back to the membership those topics of the utmost importance. We are consistently being attacked in regards to what we have fairly bargained for and have earned in our careers and the future is uncertain at best. Therefore, we will attend and keep you informed.

Your president has been busy handling many local issues. She is also cognizant of next years school budget and that funding is limited in our community to meet all our needs. Your support at budget hearings at both the school committee level and municipal council level are so important and noticeable!

Election for all Executive Board positions and delegates to state and local conventions will be held in buildings **June 12 2013**. Please find more

information related to elections via email through the district and postings on our web site. President Yetman's candidacy for the post once again this year will be based upon the following; *open lines of communication and information and advocacy so that the conditions of our contract are upheld.*

Cynthia Yetman, AFT Amesbury
President

Health Care Corner

Start here:

<https://www.mybluehealthma.com/>

Continue here:

<http://www.bluecrossma.com/municipal/amesbury/well-power.html>

Also consider:

http://www.emiia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=286

Our unit and building reps have a copy of an updated Health Care Benefits review handout your President has prepared for you. As we start to utilize our benefits several questions have been raised in terms of yearly deductibles, payments for particular exams, use of HRA (Health Reimbursement Arrangement) and FSA

(Flexible Spending Plan). Contact your rep for a copy of this review. It may prove to be a handy resource as you access our benefits and understand our plan design.

Cynthia Yetman, AFT Amesbury
President

Notes from Your Treasurer

Spring is finally starting to feel like its really here—whew, it's about time!

Some friendly reminders...

1. Our fiscal year for health care benefits (including deductibles) is **not** the regular calendar year, but instead runs from July 1 to June 30. This is also the same fiscal year for our flexible spending accounts (FSAs). So, that means, that it's time to keep your eyes and ears open—it will soon be time to renew or start a flexible spending account for medical care and/or for dependent care. All money you elect to set aside not only is pre-state tax and pre-federal tax, but also pre-Medicare tax also. (Our third party provider for FSAs is Benefit Strategies at www.benstrat.com)

2. Take a look at your retirement account(s). If you don't have one, consider starting one to be kind to your future self! It's so important to make long-term saving/investing automatic and periodic (to take advantage of the tremendous power of compound interest and dollar-cost averaging). A great rule-of-thumb is to set aside at least 10% for long-term retirement savings. If you can

do more, all-the-better! Your money is contributed pre-tax and can help to build security for your retirement. This can be done through your paycheck using a 403b type of account, or it can be done independently to an individual retirement account (IRA) using direct deposit or automatic electronic transfers from your checking account. Once established, most people get accustomed to a little bit less, and find that their retirement savings grows to make a real difference. If you just don't think 10% is possible, start with 5%, or even less, but START – that's the hardest part. If you already have a 403b and/or IRA account, congratulations! However, make sure your asset allocation (mixture of stocks, bonds, etc.) is appropriate for you and consider increasing your contribution.

3. If you notice that you owed quite a bit when you did your taxes, or that you got a large refund and would rather see more of that money in your paycheck as you get paid (instead of waiting), the form that can help you is the IRS form W4.

Everyone completed one when hired, but many don't update it. It's a very easy thing to do. When you've completed it, just forward it to Patrice at the Central Office and she'll make the change to your exemptions/allowances. Here's a direct link to the form...

<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4.pdf>

Have a happy and healthy spring!

Thad J. Ackerman
Treasurer, AFT Amesbury

AFT Massachusetts News

There are numerous opportunities to get active and contribute to the common cause of supporting public education locally, statewide, and nationally. Recently, members Deb Murphy (AES) and Scott LaCava attended the 27th Annual Paraprofessionals Statewide Conference on Saturday, March 9, at the Boston Teachers Union Hall. The conference focused on changes in retirement policy for public employees. Andy Powell, an AFT Field Rep. who was also a member of the commission that made recommendations on retirement policy to Governor Patrick, led the discussion. Futures Education, the same group that nearly displaced our own paraprofessionals two years ago, got attention at the conference, too. They are now looking to enter Revere in much the same way as they did with Amesbury.

Workshops and conferences are a regularly available to **all** members, including regional and national seminars, so please check aftma.net regularly to see what appeals to you.

Please take the time to discourage further cutting of public services. Simply sign, address, and stamp and send the premade (actually directed to the Massachusetts Senator and Representative for your home

residence) postcards that you received in the mail at home.

On March 16, the AFT-Massachusetts Executive Board voted to endorse Edward Markey for U.S. Senate to fill the seat vacated by John Kerry when he became the U.S. Secretary of State.

The Boston Teachers Union Local 66 has approved and sponsored a resolution that will be on the floor for a vote at our state convention, May 3-4. It calls for the Presidents and Executive Board of our union to enter into merger discussions with the leadership of the MTA. As you can imagine, this proposal has powerful implications for the future of the AFT and there are many provocative arguments, pro and con. Given the massive ramifications of this proposal, as a delegate to this year's convention, I invite you to please feel free to contact me through the allowable means to express your point of view.

Tim Angerhofer, AFT Mass Vice-President
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AFT National News

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten [was arrested](#) in Philadelphia while protesting a hearing of the School Reform Commission that voted to close 23 public schools. Here are some of the reasons she believes

simply closing public schools and firing staff members is not the solution to closing achievement gaps.

She went to Philadelphia to support the parents, teachers, students, clergy and others—including our local union—who have repeatedly tried to engage the Mayor and the School Reform Commission on what the people of Philadelphia want for their schools. She asked for a one-year moratorium on school closings to give the time to do the other things the community has **proposed**—with thousands of people supporting this plan in hearings, town halls and conversations. She was ignored. When the powers that be ignore you and dismiss you, then you have no other choice than to resort to civil disobedience to confront an immoral act.

Closing schools might seem like an easy solution, but fixing, not closing schools and investing in what kids and teachers need is what we should be pursuing. It is hard work, but it is what works and it is what parents, students and teachers want for their schools and neighborhoods. Pursuing a school closing strategy also doesn't produce the savings we're promised. The original school-closing plan had a price tag of more than \$25 million—more than the \$24 million we were told we would save. And look at the school closings that occurred in 2008 in Washington, D.C.—recent audits have shown that the cost of the closings was not the \$9.7 million price tag the district

originally claimed but closer to \$40 million. Not only won't students benefit academically, they'll be forced to travel far outside their neighborhoods, because the closings would create education deserts in areas of the city with the highest concentration of minority and low-income residents. Who would want to stay or move to a neighborhood that doesn't have a great neighborhood public school as an option? At the end of the day, it's about doing everything we can do to make every public school, a school where parents want to send their kids, teachers want to teach and students want to learn. From our work arm-in-arm with community in Philadelphia to revamping how we think about teacher preparation, we are demonstrating that unions can not only be one vehicle to help our children not only dream their dreams but achieve their dreams, we are a critical ally and a crucial element to creating strong public schools.

Teachers consider this valuable online resource to support your work with children:

<http://aft.org/yourwork/tools4teachers/index.cfm>