Thank you, Enjoy the Holidays & Come Back Strong in 2016!!

Cecily Hodges, President

We have all worked very hard this past year, and, as we enter the year-end holiday season, I want each and every one of you to know that your work is recognized, appreciated, and meaningful.

I hope each of you has a wonderful, safe, and happy holiday season. Take time to relax and rejuvenate. When you come back in 2016, be prepared to resume our efforts to improve our own workplaces and the workplaces of those around us. Our labor — your labor — is important…it must be successful because our efforts directly impact the achievements of our society and our country. Working people make the United States a great nation; they make our society the most successful in human history. Please never lose focus on how important our work — your work — is to our state, our nation, even our world.

If you are able to include it in your schedule, please plan to attend the AFT Western Region Presidents’ Conference in San Francisco on Friday and Saturday, January 15-16, 2016. This is a very important conference; and we think you will find it extremely valuable and meaningful. If your Local needs support or assistance in attending the conference, please contact me or Business Manager Pete Ford — APEA will find a way to help.

Thank you, Happy Holidays, Happy New Year, and I look forward to working with you in 2016!!

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Take Your Breaks!

Dezarae Deraimer, Southeast Field Associate

Other than the obvious, and continually proven, reasons for your health, taking your scheduled breaks will help you and your coworkers have less work. Yes. That’s right, if you take your breaks as scheduled, you and your coworkers will, in the end, have less piled on your plate.

I have seen so many people just roll their eyes and sigh, “Yeah, well, we don’t take breaks here”. Ahh! Please keep in mind that all bosses are still people and have their own bosses too, so if they can cut corners, they will (same thought pattern as... well... working through your breaks).

When you work through your break to get the job done, you are telling your boss “I don’t need any help” or “you’re not overloading me”, but that’s not true. In reality, you are overloaded if you don’t have enough time to take this contractual time for yourself.

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SU NEGOTIATIONS OPEN, BUT HOLIDAYS BECKON

SU opened its negotiations on the first of December. Given our state’s financial situation, this is a negotiating year that does not stir the imagination or generate wonderful anticipation. Nevertheless, the SU Team was extremely pleased at the attitude, style, decorum and preparation exhibited by the Management Team. In the 15 years that I have been involved in SU-SOA negotiations, I have never seen a better start – despite the known financial challenges, management was prepared and ready to engage in business in a professional and competent manner.

This is not to say the job will be easy…but I think it may be more manageable because it appears that SU will not be alone in wanting to negotiate, wanting to address issues and wanting to reach a fair, bilateral agreement. CEA’s re-opener letter was dispatched on 3 December, and CEA negotiations will begin in earnest immediately after the New Year.

This no doubt will be a busy and challenging year…and we will knuckle down and address all issues as they arise, but until then, let APEA wish each and every Member and Member’s Family a healthy, happy and most enjoyable holiday season and New Year – our best wishes to you and yours, and our sincere good thoughts for a wonderful season and a successful 2016!

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United Academics Adjunct Executive Board Meeting on November 20, 2015.

In attendance were President Frances Polumsky, S/T Steve Becker, Southcentral VP Ann Spohnholz, Northern VP Katie Boylan, Northern S/T Sally Rafson, Southcentral S/T Paul Thomas, Mary Jo Shannon from AFT National, APEA staff Pete Ford, Michael Koskie, Katherine Pfeiffer, and Gene Christian.

Some of the discussion items included pay for mandatory training, wages for under enrolled classes, and a particular emphasis on monitoring the Legislative Session regarding the funding of pay increases in the contract.

Mary Jo Shannon from AFT joined us to speak about member engagement and converting agency fee payers to full members. She gave a brief outline as to what can be expected with this campaign in the coming months.

Molly Brenner from Working America also gave a short presentation and spoke about her work with the AFL-CIO and her desire to work with APEA.
Bethel Members Ratify Contract

November 16th City of Bethel Employees Association, Local 6055 overwhelmingly ratified a new contract. The major terms of the contract are as follows:


2. COLA—Upon ratification and approval by the City Council all employees will receive a one-time $500 lump sum bonus and a 1% pay increase. On July 1, 2016, all employees will receive a 1% pay increase. (Employees at Step N at the time of either pay increase will receive a lump sum equal to 1% of pay up to $1,000.)

3. Return to the Merit System - Effective the third year of the contract (7/1/16-6/30/17) employees will return to a merit system whereby upon receiving a good to excellent performance evaluation, they would receive an annual step increase of 2.5%.

4. Other Important Changes –
   - Call out pay minimum hours increases from 2 to 3 hours;
   - Stand-by pay increases from $3.00 to $4.00;
   - Shift Differential increases from 6% to 7% with assigned hours between 10:00 PM and 4:00 AM.
   - Holiday Pay for the regularly scheduled work shift (not just 8 hours).
   - Acting Appointments become effective the first day of appointment.
   - Lay off Policy allows for recall to previously held open positions in another department.
   - Definition of Immediate Family expanded to include “step” relatives; aunt and uncle; domestic partner.

5. No increases in Medical Plan provisions

City of Bethel Employees Association Members Battle Fire

A fire raged for hours in Bethel Tuesday, November 2nd destroying a Yup’ik language immersion school and damaging a boarding school in the same building, with just about every piece of firefighting equipment in the Western Alaska hub city at the scene as crews tried to save parts of the structure and prevent the fire from spreading.

City of Bethel Employees Association rallied to the scene to help with firefighting efforts. Special thanks go out to the following member employees:

Paul Dorn        Thor Williams        Byung Park
Nicholai Phillips Daron Solesbee       Tekoa Tony
James Colonel    Carl Ekamrak          Lisa Paul
Jang Kim         Frank Chanar           Michael Mendenhal
Jim Boan         David Chaney           Shawn Ahlo    Harry Choi

The members would also like to thank the kind folks from the community who brought food and drinks to the crew.

Photo: Fire destroys half of a Bethel School (below).

Photo: Bethel residents work to fight the fire.
ACE Union Members Win Denali Award

The Denali Award is the highest level award given to employees at the Anchorage School District. Fellow employees nominate people that have shown outstanding achievement, service and education in ensuring every student has the opportunity to achieve his or her potential. A panel of judges at the district selects the winners from the nominations. The two winners were both from the Anchorage Council of Education, APEA/AFT local. **Dan Merri-gan, Transportation Planner & Melanie Sutton, Health and PE Curriculum Coordinator** were the fall 2015 winners.

Dan has been an ACE member for 17 years and with the district for 26 years. He won the award after coordinating with the Special Education Department to develop a more efficient scheduling system for special education routes and refine a new online registration database. The district provides door-to-door transportation service for many students in need. There are a lot of moving parts and in previous years, special education teachers were required to fax bus request forms in, now with the Dan’s help the process is more efficient.

Melanie oversees all of the district’s health and physical education teachers providing them with support and professional development. Melanie has brought many community partnerships to the district. Through her leadership, the district continues to participate in the statewide Healthy Futures program as well as the homegrown movement Start the Conversation for middle school students. Start the Conversation was so successful, it will soon be implemented statewide. Under her leadership, seven high schools now have at least one American Red Cross certified first aid/CPR/AED instructor. Earlier this year, Sutton helped secure a grant for a mobile bike trailer and five adjustable bicycles that will allow ASD students the opportunity to learn safe biking and road skills.

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Meals are a great way to celebrate family, friends and colleagues. When you are shopping for your holiday goodies, please support products made by union members. Below is a short list of union made products. For more information, visit [www.unionlabel.org](http://www.unionlabel.org).

- Butterball or Foster Farms turkey
- Black Forest, Hormel Honey Roasted or Tyson Ham
- Ocean Spray or Dole cranberries/cranberry Sauce
- Andy Boy, Birds Eye or Mann’s vegetables.
- Pillsbury rolls and pie crust.
- Marie Callender’s, Sara Lee & Entenmann’s pies
- Kroger brand pumpkin puree, Del Monte fresh apples.
One of the most frequent questions I am asked as your Field Representative is: *Is my issue a grievance?*

First, have you spoken with your supervisor? Many times I’ve found the supervisor has not been contacted in order to resolve an issue. Always speak with your supervisor first, giving them the opportunity to do the right thing. More often than not, while an issue may be annoying, it may also only be a complaint.

So how do I know, **“Is it a grievance?”**

- **Does it violate the contract?**

  Read your union contract and refer to the article, section or clause that has been violated. While the meaning of specific language may be debated, if it is in the contract you’re generally in good position to argue the violation of the article, section or clause.

- **Does it violate past practice?**

  Even if it is not spelled out in the contract, if it’s been done that way for years, it may well be a violation.

- **Does it violate employer rules?**

  Refer to the employee handbook, employer policy & procedures and the Alaska Administrative Manual (AAM).

- **Does it violate the law?**

  Is it illegal? Does it violate health & safety laws such as federal occupational safety laws?

- **Does it violate basic rights?**

  Discrimination. Be aware that discrimination charges are hard to prove. If you base your case on contract language, you’ll find it much easier to pursue.

Read your contract. And, if you still have questions ... ask.

Enjoy the holidays!

*Joel Hill*

Southeast Field Representative