START NOW PREPARING FOR AFT’S CONVENTION & APEA’S CAUCUS

Cecily Hodges, President

It may seem early, but this is an excellent time to begin preparing for your Local’s attendance and participation in AFT’s 100th Anniversary Convention and APEA’s Biennial Caucus.

The Convention is 18 – 21 July 2016 in Minneapolis and Caucus is 20 – 23 October 2016 at the Captain Cook Hotel, in Anchorage. These are very intensive, in depth, business events, where our organizations establish their future agenda, consider constitutional amendments, set goals and priorities and elect their respective organizational officers. There is also excellent training, informational presentations, wonderful fraternity and reinvigoration of everyone’s commitment to our movement and our struggle to make the American workplace one which values dignity, civility and fair treatment of every participant.

Both AFT and APEA are democratic, member directed organizations, with a commitment to fair and equal treatment for all members, so there are rules and procedures. Except for those elected officers whose duties include delegate status, each delegate to both the convention and the caucus must be elected by the membership of the Local. This is a formal election, with typical notice, nomination, balloting and procedure, so please inform yourselves about the process and make sure your Local satisfies that process. If you have questions, please feel free to consult your representative member of the APEA Board of Directors, APEA management staff or even the APEA Caucus Committee (Cecily Hodges, APEA & FNSBEA President; John White, SU President & BOD alternate; Sharon Baker, TOTEM President & BOD Member; Lynne Anne Carter, KBEA BOD Member; or Business Manager Pete Ford) or Corinne McVee, APEA BOD Member, Executive VP & Credential Committee Chair, and we will insure that you are provided whatever assistance you need to assure your Local’s compliance with procedure and ability to participate in these important, enjoyable and invigorating events.

We hope to see you at both Convention and Caucus!

JESS wins the AFT Helping Hands Award

Over the last 10 years, JESS has contributed a total of $13,650 to the Juneau School District’s breakfast programs. This year, JESS members went a step further and collected nearly 900 pounds of food for Helping Hands, a local organization dedicated to maintaining a food pantry for needy children and adults. JESS was recognized at the AFT 2016 PSRP Conference for this wonderful program.

Photo: PSRP PPC Chairperson Ruby Newbold (right) presents AFT’s Helping Hands Award to Juneau Education Support Staff members Jennifer Johnson, Jerome Kristjanson, and Cricket Curtain (left to right).
Negotiations, which never conclude, and the Legislature, which never ends, continue to dominate our efforts.

There is good news: JESS Local 6096 and the Juneau SD have reached a tentative agreement, which was ratified by the membership as this newsletter goes to press. The district will schedule a Special Meeting for their ratification before the end of this month tentative agreement for a 3-year agreement. (See, SOA, successful, good faith bargaining, and a new contract, is possible!) Kenai Peninsula Borough EA Local 6055 ratified its new contract, and the Borough Assembly also ratified (albeit after a bit of drama); CEA Local 6133 ratified its new agreement, and the contract is included in the Operating Budget, if the Legislature will ever get around to adopting a budget and going home!!

Meanwhile, SU Local 4900 came close, but could not grasp the ring, so SU and the state are seeking assistance from a mediator…yet to be scheduled.

On the legislative front, although no budget has yet been passed, the House Finance Committee did pass HB 379, out of committee to the House Floor, where it continues to pend a vote. This is a really nasty proposed law which would freeze and prevent award of any state salary schedule merit steps or pay increments (except for contracts in effect before 1 July 16), granting step/increment award on a pro-rated basis defined by the price of oil. An utterly unnecessary, mean-spirited, punitive proposed law, which will be destructive to state employment and to the state’s general economy if enacted. We and other public employee unions and the state AFL-CIO are working very hard against this bill, and, so far, we seem to have sufficient votes to deny passage. But, we must be diligent, alert and ready to forcefully renew our do-not-pass lobbying efforts at a moment’s notice. (NOTE: “We” in the foregoing sentence, really means “YOU”, our involved, dedicated, activist members, who are the ones that really get the attention of legislators when they are considering this kind of really bad legislation.

Thank you!!! And keep up the struggle.

APEA/AFT Training

Photo: Anchorage Field Rep Jennifer Madsen facilitates Investigating the Grievance to a full class of APEA/AFT Members at the annual training in Alyeska.
An update from Northern Regional Manager, Michael Koskie:

Alaska Higher Education Crafts & Trades Local #6070

6070 Members working at the University Power Plant should be praised for their quick handling of an emergency early April 21st. Through their quick actions, employees such as Danny Hesleton and Jeff Culley (both plant employee reps) and the other members on duty, avoided a major catastrophe as well as serious injury when a boiler tube failed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks power plant, filling the plant with steam, sending burning coal out of the boiler and causing a temporary shutdown of the entire facility.

The Atkinson Heat and Power Plant at the University of Alaska Fairbanks was built in 1964 and was given an estimated 50-year life span. Fifty-two years later, it’s already suffered through one near-catastrophic failure and a handful of other worrisome maintenance issues. 6070 Members work diligently to keep the plant operational and safe, while a new plant is being built.

This malfunction was similar to one that occurred in December 1998 when a pipe burst and electricity went down for 10 hours. Then, the university nearly experienced a campus-wide freeze up. In October 2013, an electrical fault triggered another power plant shutdown. In that instance, the campus was without electricity for about 30 minutes.

Contractors have broken ground on a $245 million power plant that will replace the current plant’s two original coal-fired boilers with a 17 megawatt coal and biomass-capable boiler. The current power plant’s oil and gas/oil power plants will remain in use. The new plant is expected to be completed and commissioned hopefully by early 2018.

In this most recent incident, a complete disaster was avoided largely through skill and quick reaction of our members. A 50 plus year old valve failure appears to be the reason. Members work daily to ensure the safety of the plant and its employees while looking forward to the new plant becoming operational.

Fairbanks North Star Borough Employees Association

FNSBEA and Animal Control will be losing an employee representative when Lisa Stoffel leaves. Lisa should be congratulated in becoming the new Animal Control Director in Saginaw County, Michigan. Lisa will be missed and we thank you for your years of service to APEA!

Northern SU Local #4900

Northern Supervisory President Michael Lund is a TV star! Mike can be seen prominently in a recent episode of the new Science TV Channel series “Alaska Mega Machines”. Mike, as the Construction Project Engineer of the Dalton Highway, lends his engineering expertise to a recent episode. The TV series highlights machines that are specialized to overcome extreme Alaskan weather conditions.

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At the University of Alaska, the United Academic-Adjuncts, Local #6054, led by President Fran Polumsky, South Central Region Secretary/Treasurer Paul Thomas, and South Central Region Vice-President Ann Spohnholz, are pulling together members and communities to bring awareness to the possible fallout of the university’s financial difficulties. In February, after joining forces with the University of Alaska Federation of Teachers, Local #2404, and the Alaska Higher Education Crafts and Trades Employees, Local #6070, over 530 staff signed a petition requesting the President and Board of Regents share governance with faculty and staff regarding the upcoming hard fiscal decisions, particularly concerning the future structure of the University. This was presented to university management on February 18. In addition to the petition, members are going to worksites and homes to get member input and involvement. If you are an APEA member and have not been contacted yet, please call your local union representative, or APEA staff, to see what you can do. Change and protection can only come from a strong union of active members. A union only gets its power from strength in numbers, community involvement and political clout. How are you helping your union?

Dezarae Deraimer, Southeast Field Associate

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**Changes at UAS**

**TOTEM Spring Conference 2016**

TOTEM is the APEA Union that represents instructional and non-instructional support staff at the Anchorage School District. TOTEM held their 40th annual Spring Conference on March 14 & 15. The union plans, organizes and runs this professional development conference for all of their members. This year TOTEM saw 500 members participate in 42 different classes over the two days. The classes offered ranged from Beginning Google Forms & Spreadsheets, First Aid/CPR certification, Non-violent Crisis Intervention, and Teaching Children with Brain Based Disabilities, to Child Abuse Reporting. Besides all of the learning, the union holds their annual meeting over the lunch break with nominations for officers, door prizes and a silent auction to raise money for the American Cancer Society.