Well, if October hasn’t been sufficiently busy – what with opening our Fairbanks-North Star Borough Local’s negotiations, trying to monitor and hope something good happens with the Legislature’s Fourth Special Session – the month of October was “crowned” with the earlier-than-expected birth of my first grandchild – little Miss Peyton Lillian-Rae Hodges (6 lbs 8 oz, 19 inches) was born to my son and his wife at 10:53am Sunday morning, 29 October 2017.

Before receiving the call that Peyton’s birth was beginning, I had been engaged in successor contract negotiations at my Local Union, Fairbanks-North Star Borough Employees Association, Local # 6125; concerned about, watching and monitoring our State Legislature’s fourth Special Session and hoping to assist our legislative friends trying to enact legislation which may begin to address and correct our state’s revenue problems; and planning and participating in an in-person APEA Board of Directors’ meeting, to be followed by a Board Training program designed to continue our Board’s efforts to maintain and exercise a strong and unified working commitment that builds APEA/AFT strength and solidarity and advances APEA’s efforts on behalf of its members and Alaska’s working families in general.

I hadn’t anticipated it, among all my other feelings and happiness and relief that the birth was complete, that mother and baby were healthy and well, that I had made it to the hospital in time, but it also occurred to me that this work we do on behalf of our union, our co-members, our society, also will benefit the upcoming generations, now growing and learning their way to adulthood and just being born. Our work addresses and improves our own working lives, but it will also define, preserve and protect the lives and careers of the generations of children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors and fellow citizens who will advance our legacy and live the society we have created.

Our efforts on behalf of each other truly do have real meaning!
Northern Region Manager, Michael Koskie and Field Representative, Jason Roach traveled to Nome on October 11th and 12th to kick off contract negotiations.

After surveying our members and preparing our proposals with the negotiating team, Local 6141 City of Nome Employee Association was ready to meet with City leadership. The members of Local 6141 made it very clear that they wanted higher wages to attract new workers and also to retain long term employees. They also wanted the City to pick up a larger portion of the out-of-pocket medical costs.

Our negotiation sessions were very positive and the team has made great progress in securing the things that matter the most to our members. We look forward to more successful meetings in the future and would like to thank the negotiating team and the membership for all of their hard work.
News from JESS, Local 6096

By Joel Hill, Southeast Field Representative

Juneau Educational Support Staff (JESS) participated in an update on health insurance. Brian Penner, Lisa Petersen and Rex Dugger from the APEA/AFT Health Trust were present to field questions from membership.

An informative meeting with questions and concerns from the group that were asked and answered.

Health care configuration varies between negotiated contracts. If you have questions always feel free to call your respective APEA office.

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Does your Local have a union bulletin board?

By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

If not, would you like one?

Example of a bulletin board that was prepared for the Department of Fish and Game, APEA/AFT Supervisory Unit employees.

Your Local may have negotiated a provision for the union to have a bulletin board, or share a space on the company board. The union bulletin board is a useful tool when disseminating information important to members about their Local and about APEA/AFT. If you are interested in having a bulletin board, please contact your Local’s Field Representative or the Anchorage Field Office at 907-274-1688.
WASHINGTON—Responding to the water crisis in Puerto Rico, the AFT; Operation Blessing International; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and the Hispanic Federation launched Operation Agua to crowdsource contributions and provide a reliable source of safe drinking water to families across Puerto Rico.

Operation Agua’s initial goal is to purchase and distribute 100,000 individual water filtration systems for households and classrooms, and 50 large-capacity clean-water devices to a network of nonprofit organizations, union offices, schools, and other community-based groups to provide stable and reliable sources of safe water.

A single $30 contribution provides an in-home purifier that requires no electricity and provides more than 10 gallons of safe water per day to a family. And $5,000 delivers a disinfectant generator that can disinfect 150,000 gallons per day—enough safe water for thousands of people.

“People in Puerto Rico are enduring their second month without electricity, safe drinking water or adequate food. This is a national emergency the likes of which I have never seen, and the federal government continues to fail in its responsibility to help our fellow citizens,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “When I was in Puerto Rico, I saw children collecting water in contaminated streams; AFT nurses have treated people suffering from dehydration and in danger of contracting deadly diseases from drinking dangerous water; and Puerto Rico’s teachers, many of whom are without water themselves, are working to reopen schools, but these schools need clean drinking water. Operation Agua isn’t a substitute for federal action, which we continue to fight for, but a necessary intervention to get as much clean water as quickly as we can to care for people in serious need.”

The massive damage caused by Hurricane Maria and the lack of electricity and clean water on the island of Puerto Rico continue to threaten the health, safety and lives of millions of American citizens. People are resorting to collecting water in contaminated waterways, or from runoff, and there are reports of some even drinking from toxic Superfund sites. And the danger is not over for those with running water; because water-treatment plants are still not operational, tap water may be tainted with raw sewage.

“Operation Blessing has been working nonstop to help residents of Puerto Rico with a focus on providing safe water, as it remains in critically short supply even a month after the hurricane,” said Operation Blessing International President Bill Horan. “I am ecstatic about the launch of Operation Agua and partnering with the AFT, AFSCME, the Hispanic Federation and other like-minded organizations. The synergistic energy generated by this joint effort will enable us to exponentially expand efforts to provide safe water solutions to vulnerable families all over Puerto Rico.”

This unique coalition brings together relationships with manufacturers, experience providing clean water across the globe, partnerships with shipping and transport workers and corporations, and access to a regional and school-based infrastructure across the island to deliver clean water to people.

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“Public service workers are tirelessly struggling to rebuild their communities throughout Puerto Rico, but have not received the support they need from Washington to get the job done,” said AFSCME President Lee Saunders. “AFSCME is proud to join this effort and calls on Congress and the president to listen to the cries for help from their own citizens. The people of Puerto Rico cannot be left behind.”

Operation Agua will use multiple water purification devices, including:

The Kohler Clarity Filter, which works on gravity—no electricity is needed—removes over 99 percent of bacteria and protozoa to meet the World Health Organization's interim-level water-quality guidelines, and one unit can filter up to 10.5 gallons of water per day, meeting the drinking water needs of a typical family;

The De Nora SANILEC 6 system, which uses an electrolytic process to produce 50 gallons of powerful sodium hypochlorite disinfectant every eight hours, using only 15 pounds of common salt, 50 gallons of water and 110-volt electricity. Each gallon of sodium hypochlorite (chlorine) can disinfect up to 3,000 gallons of otherwise contaminated water;

The Water Mission Erosion Chlorinator, which uses a simple chlorination technique that allows for consistent dosing using chlorine tablets in a low-maintenance applicator. The unit can disinfect up to 20 gallons per minute and does not require electricity; and

The Parker Hannifin Aqua Matic and Aqua Whisper Pro 1800-2, which are reverse osmosis water filtration systems capable of purifying salt water (Aqua Matic), brackish or fresh water (Aqua Whisper Pro). Normally used on large boats, these units can purify up to 75 gallons per minute, or 1,800 gallons in 24 hours.

Operation Agua continues to seek additional partners and financial support. One hundred percent of contributions go to fund the purchasing and delivery of water filtration and purification systems.

The American Federation of Teachers is a union of professionals with 1.7 million members working in education, state and local government, hospitals and institutions of higher education. Through the AFT’s leadership, we also have the support of the mainland labor community and have actively reached out to other unions to support us in sea and land-based transportation services. The AFT has a track record of responding to numerous disasters affecting our members including Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Harvey with on the ground and tangible support; and has a 501c3 already in place to collect and distribute disaster relief funds.

The AFT’s local affiliate the Asociación de Maestros de Puerto Rico (AMPR) which represents 40,000 active and retired educators, has a network of 78 offices across the island, access to an army of volunteers and knowledgeable staff who have the local relationships, know-how and connections to move this program forward successfully.

Hispanic Federation is a leading Latino non-profit and has been at the forefront of efforts in Puerto Rico with 100% of donations going directly to relief and recovery.

Operation Blessing International is currently in place in San Juan, Puerto Rico using proven water filtration and purification systems. OBI provides strategic relief in 39 countries on an ongoing basis through core programs such as disaster relief, medical aid, hunger relief, vulnerable children and orphan care, clean water and community development.

American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees which represents 1.6 million nurses, corrections officers, sanitation workers and other public service workers across the country, including Puerto Rico. In addition to supporting Operation Agua, AFSCME’s Fallen Heroes Fund has collected and donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to victims of natural disasters, most recently including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.
Which Health Plan is Right for Me?  

By Brian Penner, Southcentral Regional Manager

Do you know the specifics of your health plan? Do you understand the deductibles, copays and which providers are in your network? If you do, you would be among the 24% nationwide who responded similarly in a recent survey conducted by Aflac. Two years ago, the percentage was 47%. As I have mentioned in previous articles, the healthcare landscape is continually changing and it requires each of us to spend increasing amounts of time to figure out what choice will best fit our circumstances. A separate study done by Aflac regarding younger workers found that this year, 51% of young workers are choosing health benefits for the first time. They are mostly concerned with the cost of the coverage followed by understanding how health insurance works. This is good, because health insurance selection is one of the most important decisions a member can make each year. If you don’t understand the plans available, you now know that you are not alone. Please help yourself by seeking the assistance of your health plan administrator to identify the right choice.

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ACE Local 4425, Meet & Greet

By Gene Christian, Southcentral Field Representative

The Anchorage Council of Education held it’s annual Meet & Greet on October 30th. It was a great opportunity for members to mingle and to chat with the Anchorage School District’s leadership as well as one another.

ACE President, Dane Sutterfield and the Executive Board welcomed members, including special guests Dr. Deena Bishop, ASD Superintendent, and Kim Hays from the AFL-CIO.

The talented West Anchorage High School Band played throughout the evening and several lucky winners walked away with door prizes. Thank you to all who attended the annual Meet & Greet!

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Members mingling.

ACE Executive Board members Eric Simmons and Suzette Johnstone

A lucky winner!

The West Anchorage High School Band

A good time was had by all!

ACE President, Dane Sutterfield and ASD Superintendent, Dr. Deena Bishop
Fire at Port Moller

By Anne Knight, Southcentral Field Representative

Reid Johnson began his state career working for the Department of Fish and Game in 2012. He has worked as a Fishery Biologist II and been a member of the APEA/AFT Supervisory Unit since 2014, and has been a volunteer fire fighter at the Bayside Fire Department in Kodiak since 2015. He spends his summer months overseeing seasonal employees who staff fish camps throughout the Alaska Peninsula.

At approximately 11:45 pm, on August 15, 2017, it was announced over the radio that there was a fire at the end of the Port Moller dock, while Reid initially thought it was a boat fire, he soon learned that the cannery was on fire. Port Moller is a cannery town, with town being used in the loosest definition of the word; there is a year-round population of two. During the summer, the population booms when about 125 seasonal workers arrive to staff the cannery and 100-200 fishermen arrive to harvest salmon. The entirety of Port Moller is made up of either cannery buildings and several Alaska Department of Fish and Game buildings.
Reid jumped into action, getting dressed and alerting his supervisor, Bob Murphy, also an SU member, and others to the fire before running to the cannery. In Port Moller, without the right tools, equipment, and training, putting out a cannery fire is difficult at best, but everyone gave it their all and worked together to save as much of Port Moller as possible. Reid reports that when he arrived at the cannery, employees already had a fire hose out and were throwing water on the fire. Reid discovered the tide was out so the water pump, which would bring ocean water to the fire, was not an option, so he connected the fire hose to the cannery water system (powered by the diesel generators housed in the same building that was on fire). At this time, Reid was fighting the fire with a bandana wrapped around his face to protect himself from smoke, but when a worker showed up wearing a complete set of firefighting bunker gear, with a mask and air pack, he handed off the hose and helped his supervisor get generators, chainsaws and demo equipment ready in case the fire spread down the dock into Port Moller proper (where people lived). The gear was staged near the Fish and Game buildings, so Reid figured they could dig a trench and cut boardwalks to build a fire stop.

Back at the cannery the fire spread to the generators that were providing the power needed to run the water system and lights. Within minutes, the cannery went dark and the hose lines went limp. At this point the decision was made to cut the dock to prevent the fire from spreading to all of the buildings which are attached via a wooden boardwalk. Once that task was completed, there wasn't anything else for them to do except watch the fire consume the cannery.

The next morning, the entire end of the dock was engulfed in smoke. No one could tell if anything on the dock was still standing. Reid, Bob and a fisherman, walked out past the plume of smoke, onto the mudflats, where they could see that one of the large cannery production buildings was still standing. They loaded a pump onto a small skiff, some hose lines, walked to the end of the dock that was still standing, climbed up, and started throwing water on the parts of the fire that was still active. At this point, buildings were collapsing as the pilings and woodwork underneath the dock was still slowly burning. The underside of the dock continued to burn for days, but the remaining building and Port Moller proper were out of danger. Thankfully no one was killed or seriously injured. The fire ended everyone’s fishing season early.
If your Local is having a meeting, participating in an event or doing something that you would like to share, please let us know and we’ll post it here.

ACE Open House
Question and Answer Meeting
Wednesday, November 15, 2017
4:00 to 6:00 pm
King Career Center
2650 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

October 25-28
2018 APEA/AFT CAUCUS
Empowering Members, Setting Goals and Creating Solutions for the Future!
Visit Caucus Corner: www.apea-aft.org
Due to the economic and politically charged atmosphere, TOTEM and the Anchorage School District engaged in Interest Based Bargaining to address a limited number of contract changes for their successor agreement.

TOTEM was successful in ensuring no loss in rights or benefits and maintained their annual steps. TOTEM held two ratification meetings prior to the vote. Approximately 60 people attended the meetings. TOTEM Volunteers, spearheaded by Crissy Reimers TOTEM Election Judge, spent their Tuesday evening counting ballots and were rewarded with a new agreement.
APEA/AFT presents Public Service Proud, an ongoing series wherein we spotlight a member(s) each month to illuminate the good work they do for the people of the State of Alaska. This month we are pleased to introduce Steve Brown (ACE).

“Like anywhere, working with great people makes any job experience better.”

Steve Brown
Coordinator Safety/Security/Emergency Preparedness
Anchorage School District
Anchorage Council of Education (ACE)

My name is Steve Brown and I'm the Safety/Security/Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the Anchorage School District. I've been with the district for over 13 years after serving my country mostly oversees as Embassy Security for the United States Marine Corp.

In my role, I monitor over 20 emergency preparedness drills. I develop and manage the school emergency drill reporting protocol. Some of my responsibilities include monitoring school and department compliance, developing and managing a districtwide building key control interface and schedule, coordinating inspection teams, as well as conducting school and facility safety inspections.

Security for the Anchorage School District involves the best, yet cost effective ways, to ensure every student and employee feels safe in our schools and buildings. Being prepared for any emergency that we might encounter while making facilities more secure is a priority.

Support those who work for OUR Alaska.
SU Negotiations Spearheads Many Tasks

Although we are approaching the time of the year when most of us try to relax and enjoy family and holidays, Alaska's challenging financial situation compels continued work and action, and SU's opening of negotiations for a new contract brings those concerns, issues and challenges into a tight-focused, very narrow reality for SU . . . but also for all the rest of us, for whom SU's negotiations may become a precursor.

Nominations for SU's 2018 Negotiating Team closed in mid-October, and the ballots went into the mail on Friday, 27 October. SU elects a member-negotiator and an alternate from each of its 3 regions – Northern Region has an uncontested election, Walter Evans (HSS) returns as Primary and Chief Sean Martines (DOT) joins the team as the Northern Alternate; Southcentral has 3 nominees, Bob Murphy (F&G), Mike Miller (DOR) and Jay Bryan (HSS); and Southeast has 6 nominees, John White (DOT), Tina Cochran (DOL), Denise Salter (HSS), Jason Wiard (DEC), Jeff Kasper (F&G) and Larry Owen (DOT).

If you are an SU member, please keep a look-out for your ballot, and please be sure to vote. Ballots must be returned to an APEA Office not later than COB, Wednesday, 15 November; ballots will be counted on Thursday, 16 November.

SU's Negotiations Survey is in the final stages of being finalized, and it will be posted and made available for SU members to record their issues, concerns and priorities. Members need not be limited by the survey, however – please feel free to call me, or your Field Rep, or your SU Regional Chair or Employee Rep or any member of the negotiating team, once they are elected.

Meanwhile, you are probably aware that our legislature is in its fourth special session of 2017. They are working to make corrections to last year's omnibus crime bill, SB 91; their vehicle for that effort is SB 54, and it appears that they will accomplish that work in prompt order. The other bill being considered, HB/SB 4001, is the Governor's effort to begin addressing Alaska's revenue challenges with the proposed Wage Tax, an attempt to compromise from the previously proposed personal income tax, and also an attempt to establish the beginnings of a dependable revenue system for the state. It would at least capture some state income from those several thousand North Slope workers who come here from out of state, work very well-paying jobs in our oil industry and leave here without paying anything into our state's economy. If it happens, which is highly questionable, it will be a start.

And SU will be making another start for a contract that is fair, reasonable and recognizes the good work the SU members provide the state of Alaska.