



# Reporter

March, 2009

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PAC Chairperson

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Laurie Moore

## SUPPORTING OUR RIGHTS

Bargaining throughout the county has been arduous. Several districts are without a current contract even though they are districts with surplus funds deceptively called fund equity. The teachers and educational support personnel in Waterford had a contract imposed upon them that took away MESSA and reduced their salary ladder. In Wayne County, the Wayne-Westland district had a four day strike prompted by the lack of a contract for teachers. The strike was successful; Wayne Westland now has a 3 year contract.

It is imperative that we support other bargaining units. We will be bargaining this spring and will likely face the same difficult bargaining as other teachers. When we support our fellow teachers, they in turn will support us.

In the spirit of protecting teaching as a respected and adequately remunerated profession, I want to thank the following members for their participation at rallies to support their colleagues:

Betty Ann Garlak and Norma Sanders were at one of the Wayne-Westland rallies. Laurie Moore was there as well. Bertha Arribas, Cherilyn Ross-Blair, Betty Ong, Sue Jones, Alan Law, Jay Vought, Nicole Murawski, and Marcia Rauschendorfer walked with our Troy colleagues in early October. Tracy Crawley made arrangements to

go to Walled Lake on October 30<sup>th</sup>, but the rally was cancelled.

My thanks to all of these members. The Troy EA and Wayne-Westland EA teachers were extremely grateful for their presence. You should be, too. Every good contract won by an MEA local helps us in our struggle to maintain good pay, benefits and working conditions for Royal Oak teachers.

### *Speaking of bargaining...*

The Executive Board has appointed a survey team. The members of the team are Karen Banat, ROHS special education; Jolie Booser, ROHS science and math; Debbie Buffa, elementary and high school music; Nancy Dreyer, ROMS special education; Ryan Knapp, Addams Elementary; Diane Mehringer, ROMS music; and Betty Ong, ROHS media specialist.

This year's survey will be done online via MEA technology.

It's great to have a large committee. It means that we will have broad scale representation in constructing the survey. The Executive Board thanks them for volunteering for the job.

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## PAC UPDATE *Get Involved, Stay Involved*

Our PAC (Political Action Committee) dollars are needed now more than ever. When you give to PAC, you are supporting the legislators that support our career in these critical economic and political times. We need their help! It is imperative that we all take a stand, raise our voices, and open our wallets. Our PAC contributions go towards local and state legislators that are screened and endorsed by the MEA. Many ROEA members have sat in on these committees. Sometimes the candidates chosen are Democrats and sometimes they are Republicans. The bottom line is we need to get involved in the political process so we can really impact public education. Our PAC monies support legislators that promote bills that affect our health benefits, retirement, class size, and bargaining rights. Every decision that affects our students, our selves, and our families is a political decision.

THANK YOU for making your PAC contribution. If you have overlooked this, it is not too late. I would be happy to send you a contribution envelope. Join your ROEA members in solidarity to send a message to our legislators to protect our career. Here are some reasons why our fellow members contribute to PAC:

*"I know that my PAC dollars are well-spent because in these times during which cuts are being made in most businesses, in education, in spending, in government offices, etc., PAC is looking out for OUR needs when we aren't able to, or aren't informed enough to do so for whatever reason. PAC is our, the teachers' voice, heard strongly in government offices and in the legislature. Donating to PAC will help us be better, more strongly, more adequately and more efficiently represented. I consider donating to PAC money well-spent for me, for teachers on the whole, and for education and therefore, inevitably, for students." – Jo Fetsco, RO High School Spanish Teacher*

*"To keep education in Michigan focused on 'what is best for children,' we must be willing to support legislators who share this philosophy. Teachers aren't always thought of with the respect they deserve. Consequently, we must financially back those in Lansing and Washington who view us as valued professionals and therefore work on bills that compensate and support us accordingly." – Nancy Hollyer, Addams Elementary Kindergarten Teacher*

To date this year, 60% of our membership has contributed. That is 198 out of 330 members. Clearly there is room for improvement until we reach 100%. The amount collected is \$7085. Additional contributions were made at the NEA summer convention by some of our members, bringing the total to \$8188.



CONGRATULATIONS to Northwood School! They had 100% participation. Thank you for showing your support and leadership! They were recognized with treats in the teacher's lounge on Records Day. Here are the other building percentages:

Upton-88%  
 Addams Elem.-69%  
 RO High School-68%  
 Oakland-66%  
 Addams ECC-58%  
 Oak Ridge-56%  
 Churchill-50%  
 RO Middle School-42%  
 Keller-23%

This past January, a PAC participation raffle was held at the ROEA midyear party. Winners were chosen from each building. The prizes were gift cards from businesses that are owned or operated by people directly connected to Royal Oak Schools. The winners were Susan McKee, Noreen Chapin, Jan Kyle, Jack Donnellon, Gail Granett, Melissa McAuliff, Dawn Mayers, Rebecca Bates, George Icsman, Tom McLeod, Debra Natke, Todd Noonan and Kathleen Michaels. Also, three members were recognized for making the highest contribution - Barbara Pollis, Linda Flynn, and Martha Shrode.

Betty Ann Garlak  
 PAC Chair  
 Northwood School

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## MIDDLE SCHOOL GRIEVANCE

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the School Board voted to implement a new educational plan for Royal Oak Middle School. The plan, which alters the student day, also changes the conditions of work for our members. Team planning time has decreased and instructional time has increased. The ROEA is opposed to the unilateral implementation of the Board's plan.

We have filed a grievance because we feel that the language in the 2008-2009 Supplemental Agreement which established a committee to bargain conditions of work in the middle school for 2009-10 was not followed by the Administration. We are also investigating whether the unilateral change in working conditions constitutes an unfair labor practice.

The intent of bargaining a collaborative ROEA-Administration middle school committee as part of the Supplemental Agreement was to protect individual and team planning time in the context of the Administration declaring that there would be a reduction of staff at the middle school. The ROEA committee members were Mike Betman, Kate Brueckman, Deborah Taylor, Jenny Lewis and Janet Von Eberstein. I sat on the committee as our ROEA representative. I can assure you that the work of our teachers on the committee was based on preserving the best possible working conditions for teachers and a strong educational program for students. Keep in mind that since the committee's work was supposed to result in a ratification vote, committee members had the security of knowing that their work would have been either validated with a "yes" vote or questioned with a "no" vote. When the Administration usurped the ratification process by refusing to work with Laurie and me to secure a Letter of Agreement which would have reflected the committee's ideas, the committee members were put in the position of appearing to be making decisions for everyone else. That was not the intention of the Supplemental Agreement, but rather the result that the Administration's action unfairly created.

The committee's work was finished by late January. Jenny Lewis reported the work of the committee to the ROEA Executive Board on January 27<sup>th</sup>. At about the same time we received two letters from the Administration. One letter extended the deadline for the committee's work until February 12<sup>th</sup>. The accompanying memo addressed individual planning time and mentioned "preservation of team planning time." As Laurie and I typically do, we suggested modifications to the memo which we felt better represented the amount of individual and team planning time that was designed by the committee. At that point, the Administration refused to respond to our modifications. This was entirely atypical of our routine practices in which both sides modify and remodel letters of agreement until a compromise letter is achieved. When the Administration refused to continue to work with the ROEA and unilaterally implemented the committee's plan, this undermined the collaborative work of the committee and constituted the point of departure from the intention of the language in the Supplemental Agreement.

This was an assault upon any semblance of cooperative work between ourselves and the district regarding the middle school. As I said earlier, we have filed a grievance and are investigating an unfair labor practice. Additionally, our survey team will be seeking your input about the middle school as part of collective bargaining for a new contract .

If the lack of integrity demonstrated by our Administration in this process is indicative of how they will approach bargaining, be prepared for a protracted struggle to retain good contractual salaries and benefits and fair conditions of work.

In solidarity,  
Sid Kardon

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## UNION MEETING

We will be having a membership meeting on Tuesday, April 28th at which we will present our bargaining proposals. We haven't determined the location, but we will start at 4:30 so mark your calendar.

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## LOBBY DAY

I attended Lobby Day in Lansing, on February 18<sup>th</sup>, along with Sid Kardon and Karen Christian. The focus of our discussion was the school employee retirement legislation. We briefly met with Marie Donigan, State Representative for Royal Oak and Madison Heights. Also, newly elected State Representative Ellen Cogan-Lipton from Huntington Woods and Ferndale, joined us for lunch. We tried to impress upon them our desire to support this legislation which is now House Bill 4285 and Senate Bill 255.

The primary sponsors of these bills are Representative Fred Miller and Senator Wayne Kuipers. The bills will help to prevent financial cuts that would impact Michigan classrooms. It would provide a 33.33 percent pension increase for life for public school employees that are eligible to retire. The window for applying to retire would be April 1, 2009 through March 31, 2010. This incentive would save local districts money by enabling them to hire new teachers, cut back on the cost of pen-

sions and social security based on the salaries, and save on the medical expenses of younger teachers. The money saved would help to ensure proven programs like lower class size, early childhood programs and mentoring of newly hired teachers.

The MEA strongly supports this proposal since it saves money for school districts, represents a sound investment in public education, and opens up jobs that encourage young teachers to stay in Michigan.

The presenters at our Lobby Day briefing assured us that the pensions of all MEA members would not be touched to allow this proposal to work. If you would like to follow the progress of this bill, go to [michiganlegislature.org](http://michiganlegislature.org), Bill#4285.

Betty Ann Garlak

## Classified Ads

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