

the Professional



Published by AFT-Wisconsin — Committed to quality public education and public services in Wisconsin.
Graduate Employees • Higher Education • K-12 Teachers • Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel •
State Employees • Wisconsin Technical College System • Retiree Chapter

Unions fight for the future of public education – in Israel as well as Wisconsin



Chad Alan Goldberg

By: Chad Alan Goldberg, United Faculty & Academic Staff, Local 223

Chad Alan Goldberg is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a proud member of the American Federation of Teachers. He is on leave and teaching in Israel as a visiting professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem during the spring 2008 semester. To read more about his experiences in Israel, visit his blog, A Wisconsin Yankee in King David's Court, at <http://wisconsinyankeeinkingdavidscourt.blogspot.com/>.

On January 15 I arrived in Israel to teach as a visiting professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, thanks to the generosity of the George L. Mosse Faculty Exchange Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. One of the first Hebrew words I learned upon my arrival was *shvutah* (strike). While we at the University of Wisconsin continue to fight for the simple democratic right to bargain collectively, our brothers and sisters here in Israel have been engaged in their own struggles for social justice. You wouldn't know it by reading the American press – the conflict with the Palestinians seems to be the only news about Israel that the U.S. media find fit to print – but in the past

few months Israel has been convulsed by major labor conflicts involving its educational workers in both secondary and higher education.

Let's start with secondary schools. On December 13, 2007 – about a month before I arrived here – a 65-day strike by Israel's secondary school teachers concluded with an eleventh-hour agreement between the Secondary School Teachers Association and Israel's Education and Finance minis-

tries, reached “just minutes before court injunctions ordering teachers back into the classroom would have gone into effect” (“The Morning After,” *The Jerusalem Report*, Jan. 21, 2008). Following what *The Jerusalem Post* described as “the longest and most grueling education strike in Israeli history,” the agreement gave Israel's teachers a modest pay raise and a promise to reduce class size. However, the teachers' shamefully small salaries and poor working conditions were only the most prominent of a much wider set of grievances, which included growing frustration with repeated

budget cuts imposed by Israel's Finance Ministry. As Israeli union activists put it, the teachers' struggle was not for themselves alone, but was a “just struggle for the future of public education in Israel” (“Schools Reopen

...see Israel on page 7



Ran Erez, the head of the Secondary School Teachers Association (the teachers' union), celebrates after learning that the National Labour Court has postponed a decision regarding injunctions against the teachers to stop the strike. Jerusalem, June 11, 2007. Photo by Oren Ziv/Activestills.org.

Win-Win

Two AFT-Wisconsin locals recently undertook community service projects. While the two projects appear on the surface to be very different, the outcome was essentially the same: both groups strengthened their locals while giving back to their communities in very meaningful ways.

A Harbor Housewarming

When I sat down to talk with Kristin Trianoski of the Superior Federation of Teachers (AFT-Wisconsin Local 202) about their fundraiser for a local homeless shelter, I was shocked to learn of the overwhelming need for this service.

“It's so sad. On more than one occasion, I'd have a really bright student who was struggling in class. I'd talk with them and find out that their family had lost their home. You can't expect a child to succeed in school if they're worried about whether they'll have a bed to sleep in that night,” said Kristin, who estimates that in any given year, there are between two to

five students in the school whose families are homeless.

The poverty rates in Superior are nothing short of alarming. According to Kristin, over 75 percent of the students in the district qualify for free or reduced lunch. Sixty percent of students in the school district come from families that live below the poverty level.

Kristin decided to turn to her union sisters and brothers for help in addressing this overwhelming problem. Along with four other

...see Win on page 2

A Harbor Housewarming, organized by the Superior Federation of Teachers, will run March 25-April 11. If you are able, please consider making a donation to this very worthwhile cause. Contact Kristin Trianoski at **218-390-3869** or **Kristin.Trianoski@superior.k12.wi.us** to find out how you can help.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 2759
Madison, WI

AFT-Wisconsin
6602 Normandy Lane
Madison, WI 53719

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



If you are moving or have an address change, please print changes on mailing label and return to AFT-Wisconsin.

I N T H I S I S S U E

2

President's
Column

4

My Friend
Justice Butler

5

A Mile in
Their Shoes

6

Quick Tips to
Fix Repetitive
Strain Injury



PRESIDENT'S C O L U M N

Signs of life

The snow is beginning to melt and the sun is shining in Madison. It looks like Spring has finally arrived. With it, comes new life and new opportunities.

Not too long ago, I was in northern Wisconsin visiting our locals with one of our professional field staff. As we got in her car for a drive from Glidden to Ashland one night, I noticed that the external temperature reading on her car's computer said -28°. I asked her if that was accurate, and she replied with a smile, "Welcome to northern Wisconsin." What surprised me was not the cold. I was amazed at how many people had just come out to meet me and discuss their local's challenges in a small town on an extremely cold evening.

They saw potential for their local and wanted to enlist the support of their state federation to find

new life and new opportunities. As I have traveled over the state, visiting approximately half of our locals so far, I have met so many wonderful people who braved extreme temperatures, hectic family schedules, and other challenges in order to discuss what we can do to help their locals at the state level.

We face budget crunches, organizational struggles, and in some cases, hostile management who wish to diminish our rights and position. AFT-Wisconsin is blessed to have extraordinary staff to help you meet those challenges. Our professional field staff have between them 113 years experience. We have historically recruited our staff from among the most experienced at other Wisconsin unions, and from among the best and brightest in AFT.

As you face bargaining challenges, abuses by management, and budget issues, please call on your professional staff. Your per capita dues pay their

salaries. I know that their greatest desire is to help our members get the best contracts possible, and to enforce every clause of those contracts. They are strong unionists and they have chosen a career in union servicing and organizing. Of course, our staff representatives couldn't function as well as they do without the support of our team of staff assistants. They serve as a model of efficiency and professionalism in their field, and are always happy to assist locals with mailings, organization, and other support services.

Please utilize the services and personnel that AFT-Wisconsin provides for you. We are here to meet your needs in whatever way we can. There is new life out there, and there are many new opportunities for growth and strength; let's continue to move AFT-Wisconsin forward together.

—Bryan Kennedy

Win ... continued from page 1

members of her local, Kristin set out to organize a fundraiser for Harbor House, a homeless shelter serving families in Superior. Their campaign, "A Harbor Housewarming," runs March 25-April 11, the time that the shelter is most in need of donations.

In addition to raising funds for this vital organization, Kristin's efforts have gone a long way to reinvigorating her union. "We didn't see a lot of new members getting involved in the union," said Kristin. "I think new employees would come into the district, and they'd be intimidated or kind of scared by the union – they didn't know what it was, didn't have any past experience with unions, and didn't know how they could get involved.

"Working on behalf of this great cause has been an excellent introduction to the union. New members discover – and longtime members are reminded –

that the union exists not only to benefit us, but also to serve a larger purpose. 'A Harbor Housewarming' serves not only the community at large, but also the kids that we service everyday."

Freezin' for a Reason

It takes a lot of passion for a cause to be willing to jump into a lake in the deep freeze of a Wisconsin winter... but then, no one could ever accuse the Teaching Assistants' Association (AFT-Wisconsin Local 3220) of being short on passion.

On Saturday, February 16, a team of seventeen brave TAA members made the Polar Plunge in icy Lake Mendota to benefit Special Olympics Wisconsin. Led by their fearless team captain,

Jamon Van Den Hoek, the group raised over \$4500 for Special Olympics as of press time. As Kaja Rebane, TAA co-president, notes, "Interestingly, the amount our team raised keeps going up, despite the fact that the plunge [already] happened."

Jamon notes that, besides raising thousands of dollars for Spe-



Freezing water is no match for the mighty members of the Teaching Assistants' Association! TAA members took the Polar Plunge on February 16 to benefit Special Olympics Wisconsin.

cial Olympics Wisconsin, the TAA Polar Plunge team has helped develop leaders within the union. "I got involved with the TAA Polar Plunge Team for the first time last year [2007]. It was also the first time I got involved with the TAA. Because of the connections I made on the team, I wanted to get more involved with the organization. Now, a year later, I'm a steward for the TAA and the captain of the Polar Plunge Team." ■

"What could be better than taking the plunge for a great cause like the Special Olympics?" asks TAA co-president Kaja Rebane. The answer, of course, is making a donation to the TAA 2008 Polar Plunge Team from the warmth of your living room. If you are interested in contributing to the Special Olympics via the TAA Polar Plunge Team, please go to <http://www.specialolympicswisconsin.org>. Click on "2008 Polar Plunge," then "Find a Team."

The Professional

Spring 2008

Vol. XXVII, No. 2

Published 4 times per year by AFT-Wisconsin, AFT, AFL-CIO
6602 Normandy Lane, Madison, WI 53719
(608) 662-1444 • (800) 362-7390 • fax (608) 662-1443

POSTMASTER send change of address information to:
AFT-Wisconsin, 6602 Normandy Lane, Madison, WI 53719

AFT-Wisconsin Officers
BRYAN KENNEDY—President
KATHY KREUL—Secretary
PAM CAMPBELL—Treasurer

AFT-Wisconsin Editorial Staff
JILL MALAK—Editor
RHONDA DITTBARNER—Layout & Design

Member of
Union Teacher Communications Association
Midwest Labor Press Association

DEADLINES

The Professional welcomes articles and editorials of interest from AFT-Wisconsin members. Please note the following deadlines for submissions:

Back-to-School Edition (Summer issue): August 8, 2008
Convention Edition (Fall issue): September 12, 2008
Resolutions Edition (Winter issue): December 5, 2008
Tax Day Edition (Spring issue): March 6, 2009

The Professional, Bulk Permit 2759, is published by AFT-Wisconsin at 6602 Normandy Lane, Madison, WI. Subscription to *The Professional* is included with yearly membership dues in AFT-Wisconsin. *The Professional* is published six times per year.

www.aft-wisconsin.org

The mission of AFT is to improve the lives of our members and their families, to give voice to their legitimate professional, economic and social aspirations, to strengthen the institutions in which we work, to improve the quality of the service we provide, to bring together all members to assist and support one another and to promote democracy, human rights and freedom in our Union, in our nation and throughout the world.

AFT-Wisconsin represents more than 17,000 public service employees in over 500 job classifications and is a proud affiliate of the AFL-CIO.

CONVENTION

Changes to convention

By: Kathy Kreul, Convention Committee Chair



Every year after convention, we send evaluation forms to all delegates

asking what worked, what didn't, and how we can improve future conventions to make them as effective, as efficient – and yes, as fun – as possible.

The Convention Committee takes the results of these evaluations very seriously – after all, this is *your* convention. Based on the results of the 2007 convention evaluation forms, the committee has decided to implement some changes for the 2008 AFT-

Wisconsin Convention...

Registration changes

· We have established an annual static delegate registration deadline. For all future conventions (starting in 2008), **the delegate registration deadline is October 1**. In the spirit of fairness to all, there will be NO EXCEPTIONS or extensions made to this deadline for any local, for any reason.

· Only local presidents will be allowed to register delegates for their local.

Presidents will be sent an email with a URL and password to the registration form on the opening day of registration, which will be August 18 for this year's convention.

· AFT-W will send a reminder email with a list of delegates registered to date to all local presidents ten days prior to the delegate registration deadline.

· After the October 1 deadline, AFT-W will mail an official delegate list to

local Presidents. This list must be signed by both the President and Secretary of the local and returned to AFT-W no later than October 10 – again, no exceptions – in order for their delegates to be seated at convention.

· We will not use the colored registration cards this year. Instead, each delegate **MUST** present some form of picture ID at the registration desk in order to be seated.

Other changes

· In an effort to keep costs down, we will not provide convention bags to delegates this year. Each delegate will receive a pocket folder of materials. If you need a bag to carry your things at convention, it is BYO this year – please bring your own!

· Convention evaluations will be done online this year in an effort to streamline and save costs. AFT-W will email all delegates shortly after convention

to provide them the link to the online evaluation tool.

· We want to have the workshops finalized earlier in the planning process so information can go out to locals sooner. We are hoping to utilize councils more in the development of convention workshops. Please give ideas to your Executive Board Vice President or your Council Chair.

We continue evaluate how we function in hopes of making things better. Please continue to turn to *The Professional* and to the AFT-W website for updates throughout the year. Also, as the Chairperson of the Convention Committee, I am always happy to receive comments and suggestions ... please feel free to contact me at kkreul@swtc.edu.

It's time to think about electing delegates to conventions

By: Bryan Kennedy, President of AFT-Wisconsin

As we look forward to our national convention in Chicago in July and our state convention in Milwaukee in October, I thought it might be a good time to advise locals of the federal laws that govern the election of delegates to conventions. Local leaders should plan to have a membership meeting soon to elect delegates to the national convention, which is only four

months away.

Delegates must be nominated and elected according the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (commonly referred to as "Landrum-Griffin"). This federal law and the AFT Constitution require that:

1. Each member have a reasonable opportunity to be nominated as a delegate.
2. Notice of election of delegates be mailed to each member at least 15 days in advance of the election.
3. Election be by secret ballot.
4. Results be published and records (including ballots) kept for one year.

The president or other elected union officer may serve as a delegate without a special election provided:

- He or she was elected to office by secret ballot according to provisions of the Landrum-Griffin Act, and
- The local constitution or by-laws state that one of the duties of office is to be a delegate to the Convention.

If you have questions about how this process is supposed to work, please feel free to speak with your local's staff representative or you may contact me, your AFT-Wisconsin President, at 608-662-1444, ext. 232, or kennedy@aft-wisconsin.org.

AFT VOICES



YOU are invited to share your opinions on the issues that affect you at www.aft.org/voices.

You also can read what other AFT members have to say, participate in surveys and watch member videos.



Let your voice be heard!

WSP Hospital bargaining team thrives in negotiations

By: John Burger, WSP UWHC Bargaining Team Member

The Wisconsin Science Professionals (WSP) bargaining team at the UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) effectively ended over 30 years of salary compression by recently negotiating a fantastic contract for their members.

The contract includes a \$.70 per hour wage increase combined with a seniority stratification of \$.045 per hour per year of seniority (up to \$1.35 per hour) for each year of the contract. For the most senior WSP-represented employees, this means a salary in-

crease of more than 20 percent over the life of the contract! The contract, which also includes improved language, is key in the union's effort to implement a salary structure that shows member their potential for advancement at UWHC.

Chaired by Donna Lawler, the winning team included Peggy Frickenstein, Terry Broxmeyer, John Burger and District 8 Representatives Dan Seibel and

David Vandermeuse. Together, with all the members who stood up when the bargaining team asked them to help push negotiations to

the next level, they achieved amazing results. Way to go! ■

1	7	4	2	5	9	8	6	3
2	6	3	4	8	7	1	9	5
9	8	5	1	3	6	2	7	4
6	4	7	9	2	1	5	3	8
3	9	1	8	4	5	6	2	7
8	5	2	7	6	3	9	4	1
5	1	9	6	7	4	3	8	2
7	2	6	3	1	8	4	5	9
4	3	8	5	9	2	7	1	6

Sudoku provided by Sudoku.com.au

My friend Justice Butler

Dr. Jim Leppi shares some insights about the man behind the gavel

At the 2007 AFT-Wisconsin convention, delegates and guests were fortunate to have been paid a visit by Justice Louis Butler. Stating, "I'm not a Democrat; I'm not a Republican; I'm a judge," Justice Butler shared that he believes that judges must be fair, neutral, and impartial in every case, and that they should rule narrowly. That means not substituting his judgment for the Constitution or state statutes, and not forming an opinion about how he'll rule until he has heard all of the facts.

While all of the delegates were treated to a glimpse of the inner workings of this exceptional legal mind, one of the delegates has had the honor of knowing not just the judge, but also the man, for over three decades. Dr. Jim Leppi, an AFT-Wisconsin vice president at large and member of the Wisconsin Physician and Dentist Association (AFT-Wisconsin Local 4893), has been friends with Louis Butler since the two met while working together at Gimbels in 1970.

When Dr. Leppi talks about his friend, his eyes twinkle, and his voice reflects both a profound respect and a genuine fondness for the man he describes as "a gift to Wisconsin from the State of Illinois." He explained that, while Justice Butler lived his entire adult life in Wisconsin, he grew up in Chicago's south side. "I'm sure it couldn't have been an easy place to grow up," said Dr. Leppi. "Louis no doubt grew up witnessing the effects of poverty throughout his community."

One is left to wonder if childhood experiences have shaped Justice Butler's approach to his career. Justice Butler began his career as an appellate lawyer with the state public defender's office, working as an attorney for those who couldn't afford representation. He later earned distinction as the first public defender in Wisconsin history to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Justice Butler has served with distinction on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the first African-American ever to serve on Wisconsin's high court, since 2004. In his four years on the state's highest court, Justice Butler has earned the reputation of a fair-minded and impartial judge who is protects the little guy and holds those who break the law accountable, be they big business to common criminals. He is also a nationally recognized scholar who was chosen to serve on the faculty of the National Judicial College, where for more than ten years, he has trained

judges from all over the country.

Dr. Leppi explains that besides being an enormously respected judge and scholar, Justice Butler is also a devoted family man. "Louis adores his family. Besides the fact that his grandchildren are the light of his life, I think he draws much of his inspiration and passion for the law from his family. I know that he's particularly close to his brother Eric, an officer who was shot in the line of duty. No doubt an experience like that opens your eyes to the sacrifices and risks taken by law enforcement staff and their families every single day."

Perhaps it is this realization that has led to Justice Butler's strong commitment to keeping the State of Wisconsin safe. To that end, he has ruled against criminal appeals 97 percent of the time. He has also earned the confidence of those working to keep our neighborhoods safe: Justice Butler is backed by groups representing nearly 20,000 law enforcement officers from around the state.

Given Justice Butler's commitment

and passion for upholding the constitution, it comes as no surprise that Justice Louis Butler knew his life's ambition from a very young age. It's Dr. Leppi's favorite story about Justice Butler: "It was in the early seventies, and Louis and I were both living in Appleton. He was a student at Lawrence University at the time, an undergraduate... he couldn't have been much more than twenty. We were shooting pool, talking about our futures, and Louis told me that one day he would be on the Supreme Court. I laughed and shook my head. 'Okay, Louis, sure you will,' I said.

"The years went by, and I never forgot that statement. I was fortunate to be invited to his swearing in as a Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice in 2004. What an amazing moment, watching my friend's dream come to fruition. I kept reflecting back on that game of pool, all those years ago, when I had teased him for his ambi-

tion, as twenty-somethings will to do. I am truly fortunate to have a friend the caliber of Louis Butler; we all as citizens of Wisconsin are truly fortunate to have the opportunity to retain a Supreme Court Justice of his integrity, passion and genius."

Since announcing his campaign to be retained on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Justice Louis Butler has compiled a bipartisan endorsement list that includes (in part) five major law enforcement organizations representing nearly 20,000 personnel, more than 200 Wisconsin judges, a bipartisan list of twenty district attorneys, both U.S. Sena-

tors from Wisconsin and five of Wisconsin's eight U.S. Representatives. Justice Butler is also the clear labor candidate, having been endorsed by the Wisconsin AFL-CIO and all of Wisconsin's largest labor unions, including AFT-Wisconsin.

Justice Butler faces voters on April 1, 2008, for a ten-year term. ■



Justice Louis Butler. Photo by Jonathan Gramling.

Our Unity is Our Strength: VOTE APRIL 1!

Based on candidates' records, AFT-Wisconsin has made the following endorsements:

Statewide:

LOUIS BUTLER for WISCONSIN SUPREME COURT



Justice Butler has the experience, integrity, and fair-minded approach that we need on Wisconsin's Supreme Court. Justice Butler's judicial philosophy is simple – uphold the Constitution and hold lawbreakers accountable. He has a long record of protecting the little guy and holding those who break the law accountable, no matter who they might be – from big business to common criminals.

Milwaukee County:

LENA TAYLOR for MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE



A former public defender, Lena Taylor is fiercely committed to the fight for quality education, and she wants to restore Milwaukee's parks and transit system so that they serve people in the community again. As a State Senator, Lena Taylor has fought for increased access to quality education for all children and access to affordable quality health care for all citizens. She has taken a strong stand against outsourcing and private contracting that waste public dollars.

City of Milwaukee:

PEDRO COLON for MILWAUKEE CITY ATTORNEY



An attorney with a long and distinguished career, Pedro Colon is a principled fighter who will stand up for the working families of Milwaukee. As a State Representative, Pedro Colon has a long record of unqualified support for the members of AFT-Wisconsin. A member of the Joint Finance Committee, Pedro Colon has been a leader in protecting funding for state employees, the University of Wisconsin System, public schools and technical colleges.

Make your voice heard. VOTE APRIL 1.

To find out where to vote, go to <http://vpa.wi.gov/>



A MILE IN THEIR SHOES ...

Dana Parask, Superior Federation of Teachers

By: Bryan Kennedy, AFT-Wisconsin President

I was on my way to meet with a school psychologist and I was almost certain that his office would have a couch. You see, I'm married to a psychotherapist, and I know just enough about talk therapy to parody a therapist on TV. A school psychologist is not a therapist, however, as I quickly learned when visiting with Dana Parask at Superior High School. Dana is the Executive Secretary of the Superior Federation of Teachers (AFT-Wisconsin Local 202) and is a school psychologist at the high school.

Growing up on the north side of Milwaukee at a time of racial integration and urban challenges, Dana had some experiences that helped prepare him for the career path that would lie in front of him. He saw violence in his own neighborhood, poverty in the schools, and a racial and economic stratification that tended to divide kids into categories instead of bringing them together.

One day, as an adult working in Superior, a very large high school student—tall, broad and athletic—hovered over Dana as they were talking in Dana's office. The student was threatening Dana and, without blinking, Dana smiled at the

troubled young man and said, "Is this really what you want?" The student backed off and realized that Dana was not about to be intimidated. The school psychologist that he was trying to threaten had been through worse experiences than this as a kid in inner-city Milwaukee. Dana's reaction deescalated the student and Dana was able to assist the young man in getting the help that he needed.

Mr. Parask explained to me that our schools are really a microcosm of our communities. The same things that happen outside of our schools happen inside them, as well. When parents have goals and ambitions, and foster an appreciation for education and lifelong learning, their children are likely to value the same things. Likewise, when we see neighborhoods with random shootings, extreme poverty, suicide, and many absentee parents, we should not be surprised to see those same challenges emerge in the schools.

A school psychologist like Dana, as I mentioned earlier, is not there to treat

the symptoms of these societal struggles. He is there to offer support to students and to help guide them toward the kind of help that they or their families need. Dana explained to me that, in order to perform his duties well, he cannot look at any situation by viewing the problem. He puts on his "problem-solver" hat and views the possible solutions, instead. After 35 years of doing this, no challenge is really

"new" anymore. It is just a matter of examining each opportunity and directing his students to the right source of assistance.

A female student once approached Dana and asked him, "What do you do?" He explained his role and she asked if they could talk. She outlined for him many of the struggles that she faced—an incredibly dysfunctional family with no ambition and a history of substance abuse issues—and she said that she wanted to be different. "Will you help me?" she asked.

He did just as his student requested. Dana helped her set a series of goals, and benchmarks of how to achieve

those goals. He met with her regularly and provided for her the one major ingredient to overcoming her family-of-origin struggles: he was someone who cared. Dana was able to engage her in a discussion of what it takes to succeed, to be a good student, and to solve one's own problems. He was a mentor. The student eventually graduated with honors and went on to college. She is now working in a field where she can assist others and mentor young people who face extraordinary struggles like the ones she faced growing up.

Society would have written off this young woman as someone who did not stand a chance of succeeding. An experienced school psychologist like Dana Parask has the daunting task of helping struggling young people find everything that is good in themselves, and work to hone those strengths into a pattern of success.

Our union has other members who do much the same thing as Dana. They better society by offering assistance to those who struggle most. AFT-Wisconsin's slogan is "A Union of Professionals." What an asset it is to us to have professional problem-solvers like Dana Parask in our ranks.



AFT-Wisconsin committees need you!

By: John Burger, AFT-Wisconsin Vice President At Large



As an AFT-Wisconsin vice president at large, it's always fulfilling to meet with the large number of AFT-W mem-

bers that choose to spend their valuable free time by participating in the various AFT-W Committees, taking advantage of the educational Conferences AFT-W holds throughout the year or who participate in AFT-W Executive Board meetings. I am always rejuvenated by the time I spend talking with other leaders about the challenges they face while building or defending their Union. I find it to be

very rewarding to spend so much of my free time with a group of people who share so many of my core values and beliefs about the world we live and work in.

It's not uncommon during these discussions for people to ask, "what is the Executive Board up to?" Well, we're moving forward, getting stronger and building AFT-W! One of our responsibilities is to distribute committee assignments, which is crucial for the organization because our committees do the work that makes AFT-Wisconsin thrive.

If you would like to play a vital role in building your union, we would love for you to participate on a committee. Current AFT-W standing committees and their chairs are:

- **Constitution:** Jeff Richter
- **Convention:** Kathy Monaghan and Kathy Kreul
- **Committee On Political Education**

(COPE): Charlotte Foth, Marwill Santiago and Cliff Winkelman

• **Information Technology:** John Burger

• **Leadership Development:** John Burger

• **Organizing:** Mark Evenson, Brian Rothgery and Gary Steffen

• **PK-12 Education Issues:** Judy Hack

• **Planning and Practices:** Joe Lowndes

• **Scholarships:** Kathy Monaghan

The work of the above committees is crucial to every function of AFT-W, and the broad diversity of their tasks highlights this. The Planning and Practices Committee is in the process of creating an Ethics Statement for AFT-W. The IT Committee is researching video conferencing options. The Constitution committee works with several committees and is looking forward to receiving members' suggestions about how the AFT-W Constitution should

grow. The COPE committee provides the structure to understand how and why AFT-W supports candidates in the wide range of partisan and non-partisan elections – elections whose outcome will affect us all. If you would like to learn more about any of these committees, email AFT-W President Bryan Kennedy at Kennedy@aft-wisconsin.org and he will be happy to put you in touch with a committee chair.

That's just a smidge of what the AFT-W Executive Board has been up to. If you haven't been asked by someone else, let me extend my hand and say to you, "Yes! AFT-W does need your help, advice and guidance!" Please consider joining an AFT-W committee to allow your voice to be heard, get to know other leaders in the organization, and have a good time doing it. ■



QUICK TIPS TO FIX Repetitive strain injuries

On February 29, 2008 – the only non-repetitive day of the year – workers around the world observed International Repetitive Strain Injury Awareness Day, a day set aside to highlight the workplace hazards and conditions that can cause Repetitive Stress Injuries (RSI). Over the past five years, RSI have been identified the nation's most common of all types of workplace injuries: according to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, RSI account for up to 60% of all reported occupational illnesses.

While RSI are all too common, they are also preventable by incorporating easy and healthy routines into your workday. Therefore, in belated honor of International RSI Awareness Day, here are ten Quick Tips to Fix (and prevent) Repetitive Strain Injuries.

1. Conduct an ergonomic evaluation of your workplace.

Redesigning a space to fit the worker – rather than expecting the worker to fit the space – is the most effective way to prevent RSI. You can make an informal ergonomic evaluation of your workplace by keeping a journal of RSI warning signs such as a stiff back, sore shoulders, or painful wrists as they arise. Make note of the time of day, the activity you were engaged in at the time, and the approximate length of time you were performing the activity. Being more aware of RSI “triggers” can lead to ergonomic changes that are simple, fast, and inexpensive. Simple ergonomic solutions in office settings include adjustable keyboards and chairs, lumbar support pillows, adjustable computer monitor stands, and removable desk shelves.



Taking just fifteen seconds every half hour to close your eyes and breathe deeply can dramatically improve muscle tension, stress and anxiety, and eye fatigue.

2. Close your eyes and breathe.

It may sound simplistic, but this technique can immeasurably improve symptoms of RSI. Several times a day, try closing your eyes, clearing your mind and breathing deeply for a count of fifteen – one count for each inhale and each exhale. Making a habit of this practice can dramatically lower stress and anxiety levels, which in turn helps to relax your entire body. This exercise also has immediate benefits for your eyes, which are often the first casualties of computer overuse.

3. Structure your workday around task variety.

Try to vary your tasks at least every hour to accommodate changes in body position, work pace, and visual demands. If you've been working on your computer for an hour, try filing or making phone calls for a period of time.

4. Go for short walks frequently.

Our bodies weren't meant to sit all day long. Make a point of taking short walks as often as possible – send a print

job to a printer that's farther away from your desk, take the long route to the water fountain, or get up to talk to your co-workers rather than emailing them. If possible, take a fast walk around the block instead of grabbing a second cup of coffee when you feel tired. A quick walk can clear your mind, relieve stress and get your blood circulating.

5. Watch that posture!

Bad posture habits can creep up unnoticed, until you suddenly feel like you could be ringing the bells of Notre Dame. Make a point of sitting up straight and gently stretching your back often. Practice joint loosening exercises such as shoulder rolls and gentle spine twists.

6. Stay organized.

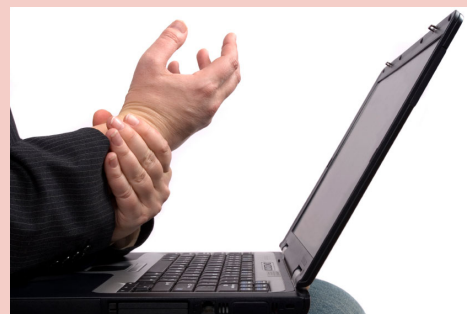
Keep the equipment you use most often within easy reach to avoid unnecessary reaching, bending or awkward stretching. Keep your floor clear of any materials that may cause you to slip or trip. Get into the habit of taking five minutes at the end of each workday to organize your space.

7. Vary your body position when you're not at work.

Although the nature of your job may require you to be in the same position for the majority of the day, you can help prevent RSI by holding your body in the opposite position when you're at home. For example, if you work on a computer most of the day, you'll spend the majority of your workday with your palms pointed down. When you're at home, try sleeping with your palms facing your body rather than the bed.

8. Stay warm.

Keeping your body warm can help with all manner of RSI, from neck and shoulder tension to pain in the wrists and other joints. If your office tends to be chilly, keep a sweater or long-sleeve shirt at work. If possible, consider using a space heater in your office or under your desk.



Carpal tunnel syndrome is the most common type of RSI. It's important to take special care of your wrists.

9. Keep your wrists happy.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is by far the most commonly reported RSI. Take extra care of your wrists by positioning your keyboard and arms so that

your wrists stay straight as you type. If your arms get tired from this position, get a foam pad to support your wrists. If you have long fingernails, consider trimming them short – long fingernails force you to type with the pads of your fingers,

which can result in added wrist tension.

10. Know when to stop.

Many RSI are developed when people decide that they need to “work through the pain.” Pains and aches are your body's way of communicating with you – if you ignore the message, you're increasing the likelihood of developing a permanent problem. Remember: there is no task or deadline that is more important than your long-term health.

“Quick Tips to Fix...” is a regular column of *The Professional* that suggests ways to create a better working environment. If you have tips you'd like to share, contact Jill Malak at Malak@aft-wisconsin.org or (608) 662-1444.



Many RSIs can be prevented by taking simple precautions, such as practicing good posture and occasional stretching.

Israel ... continued from page 1

as Last-Minute Talks Aim to Clinch Deal," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 13, 2007).

It's not clear to me whether the last-minute settlement with Israel's secondary school teachers adequately addresses the underlying problems and grievances. In an interesting commentary on the strike ("The Treasury's Shining Hour?," *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 14, 2007), Haviv Rettig suggested that the outcome was a "tactical victory" for the Finance Ministry that reflected the current government's commitment to American-style market-oriented rationalization. "This is a Treasury," Rettig suggests, "that will enforce strict budgetary discipline and maintain an efficient marketplace at almost any cost." Quoting another observer of the education system, Rettig asked: "Are we a country that has an economy or does the government think of us as an economy that happens to have a country?" Rettig concluded that "the strike has only contributed to a widespread feeling – according to polls extremely widespread – that the country is led by a political class disconnected from the daily struggles of ordinary Israelis." (That situation should sound familiar to Americans.) But elsewhere Rettig offered a more optimistic assessment: "By forcing the government to recognize some of the structural issues in secondary education and to promise to deal with them," the teachers' union "may have succeeded in getting something very important.... [T]he current deal launched a process that will see a broader reform plan developed" ("Just the Beginning," *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 14, 2007). Probably there is more conflict to come.

Secondary school teachers were not the only ones striking in Israel. Senior lecturers at Israeli universities were in the midst of their own grueling strike when I arrived. Their strike was a matter of great concern for me, not only because it might have precluded me from teaching if it had continued into the second term, but also because it involved friends of mine at Haifa and Tel Aviv universities. I was eager to express my solidarity with them, but the lecturers brought their extraordinary 90-day strike to an end on January 18, 2007 (shortly after I arrived) when they, too, reached a deal with Israel's Treasury officials. The agreement came only after the lecturers stood firm in the face of threats from the Council of University Presidents to seek an injunction against their strike or to cancel the academic year altogether. (The latter would have been completely unprecedented.) According to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, it was "the longest higher education strike in Israel's history."



Teachers' union holds mass rally in support of strike. Banners read "Great education for all," and "Put in our heart to understand and to become wise." Tel Aviv, Israel, November 17, 2007. Photo by Oren Ziv/Activestills.org.

As with the secondary school teachers, the university lecturers' demands for higher salaries (to compensate for years of wage erosion) were only the most prominent of a wider set of grievances. In an illuminating commentary ("Why Academics are on Strike," *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 27, 2007), Professor Nathan Dascal outlined the lecturers' other grievances, including cuts in government funding for research; increasing class size; the shrinking number of tenured academic positions; growing reliance on cheaper "junior academic staff (mostly our own PhD students) and non-tenured teachers hired for eight months a year and shamefully fired every summer without academic rights and unable to do any research"; and tuition hikes to compensate for the government's budget cuts. "Our struggle is really over funding for education and research," Professor Dascal noted, "not just our salaries." (As if Israel's university lecturers didn't have enough woes, some readers may recall that certain misguided activists in Britain's University and College Union sought to punish them still more with an academic "boycott," more accurately described as a blacklist. That campaign was thankfully defeated when the union's own lawyers warned that such a blacklist would violate British anti-discrimination laws.) Again, it's not clear to me whether the compromise agreement between the university lecturers and the government will adequately address the underlying problems. Even leaving aside all of the other issues besides salaries, the deal reportedly fell short of the lecturers' initial demands. However, Zvi Hacohen, the head of the coordinating body for senior faculty organizations,

nevertheless hailed it as "an excellent wage agreement, the best that has been reached in the last decade."

The broader social and historical context for these labor conflicts is the dismantling of Israel's once-sturdy social compact and the resulting growth in socio-economic inequality here. "During the last decade," *The Forward* noted in December 2004, "thanks to the Thatcherism of Likud and Labor neo-liberals [i.e., neo-liberals in the European sense of free-market enthusiasts], Israel has been turned from the most egalitarian nation in the industrialized world into the most unequal." In fact, the trend started earlier. In 2002, the Knesset Committee of Inquiry into Income Inequality found that "the gap between rich and poor [in Israel had] widened by 23 percent in the past two decades [i.e., since 1982], putting the country at the worst level of inequality in the Western world after the US. In contrast, Israel had one of the best equality figures in the 1960s" ("Gap Between Rich and Poor Here Up," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 3, 2002). Some readers may recall that shortly after Israel's 2006 election, there was talk that Israel's Labor Party (then under the new leadership of Amir Peretz), the religious Shas party, and the newly formed Pensioners' Party might form a united "social bloc" in the Knesset to halt the socio-economic polarization of Israeli society. Unfortunately, this much-needed social bloc never materialized, and the polarizing trend has continued. Just recently *The Jerusalem Post* reported the following: "The budget cuts of recent years and widening social gaps are causing increased polarization between those from rich and poor families according

to Dr. Yitzhak Kadman, director of the National Council for the Child which released its 16th annual report.... Perhaps the most disturbing data revealed in the report is the confirmation that every third Israeli child lives below the poverty line" ("On Eve of Israel's 60th Anniversary Its Children Are Worse Off Than Ever," *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 31, 2007). Truly, the great theoreticians of socialist Zionism and the country's socialist founders must be turning over in their graves.

If all of this sounds critical of Israeli society, it's meant to be. However, we should remember that the social ills I have described in this post are hardly unique to Israel; they appear, albeit in different forms, in other countries as well. (American readers should need to be reminded of this least of all.) Moreover, my purpose here is not to add to the demonization of Israel, which is regrettably all too common in certain circles that I have had the misfortune to encounter. On the contrary, my criticism reflects sincere distress about the serious harm these trends are doing to a country about which I care deeply; it reflects my concern that socio-economic inequality is weakening social solidarity here; and it reflects my own sense of solidarity with those "ordinary Israelis" from whose daily struggles the country's political class appears so disconnected. But, since I don't wish to end this missive on a pessimistic note, I'll close with the words of American radical and labor leader Joe Hill: "Don't waste time mourning – organize!" That advice is as good now as it was then, and it's as good for Israel as it is for America. ■

CALENDAR of EVENTS

2008

March 27 All Union Social — 4:30-6:30pm, Madison
 April 1 Election Day — Get Out and Vote!
 April 18-19 AFT-Wisconsin Northern Leadership Conference —
 Barker's Island, Superior
 April 19-20 AFT-Wisconsin Executive Board Meeting — Barker's
 Island, Superior
 April 25 Professional Development Day — Pyle Center, Madison
 June 20-21 AFT-Wisconsin Executive Board Meeting — Madison
 July 10-14 AFT Convention — Navy Pier, Chicago, IL
 September 12-13 ... AFT-Wisconsin Leadership Conference — Eau Claire
 September 13-14 ... AFT-Wisconsin Executive Board Meeting — Eau Claire
 October 29-31 AFT-Wisconsin Convention — Milwaukee
 November 4 Election Day — Get Out and Vote!
 November 4 State Federation Presidents Conference — Loews, New
 Orleans, LA
 December 5-6 AFT-Wisconsin Executive Board Meeting — Madison

2009

July 9-12 AFT QuEST Conference — Hilton Washington & Towers,
 Washington, DC

2010

July 7-11 AFT Convention — Washington State Convention &
 Trade Center, Seattle, WA

State Employees Council Professional Development Day is April 25

By: Aaron Crandall, WPEC Communications Committee Chair



Reserve Friday, April 25, 2008, on your calendars for the next State Employees Council (SEC) Professional Development Day! Volunteers from each of the SEC locals – Wisconsin Science Professionals; Wisconsin State Public Defenders Association; Wisconsin Professional Employees Council; Wisconsin Physician & Dentist Association; and Professional Employees in Research, Statistics & Analysis – have done an excellent job of planning a program of

many diverse workshops covering a wide range of topics.

The all-day program is planned again to take place at the Pyle Center on the UW-Madison campus. OSER has approved this event as a Professional Development Day, provided that employees request the time out of the office with their supervisor a minimum of fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the event. Please visit the AFT-Wisconsin website, www.aft-wisconsin.org, to register.

Following is this year's schedule for this year's Professional Development Day – please note that workshop times are subject to change.

9:00-10:15: Workshops

- Wisconsin Deferred Compensation Program
- Keeping Up with Career Trends
- Management's View of the Grievance Process
- Tips on Buying Wireless Service
- Family Law
- Labor Law Issues
- How to Be a Savvy Energy Consumer
- Improving Focus and Organization in Your Writing
- Retirement Options for State Employees
- Institute for Wisconsin's Future: Corporate Tax Issues

10:30-11:45: Workshops

- Recycling Computers and Other Electronic Devices
- Threats to Your Pension
- Restoring Wisconsin's Good Name
- Propaganda and the Corporate War on the Public Interest
- Navigating the System of Family Caregiver Support
- The Wisconsin Economy from a Worker's Perspective
- Management's View of the Grievance Process
- Action Messaging – Discover and Convey Motivating Messages
- Looking Forward Financially – Investment Strategies
- Institute for Wisconsin's Future: Corporate Tax Issues

1:45-3:00: Workshops

- Great Lakes Water Issues
- Health Care Reform in Wisconsin
- Restoring Wisconsin's Good Name
- Sick Leave or Sick Leave Abuse
- Navigating the System of Family Caregiver Support
- How Corporations Get the Laws They Want
- Taking the Mystery out of IT Devices – Digital Cameras for Work and Home
- Scientific and Practical Ways to Handle Difficult People
- Buying and Selling a House in Today's Market
- Transition to DTV and HDTV

3:15-4:30: Workshops and PERSA Annual Meeting

- Bullying in the Workplace
- Will My Pension Be There for Me?
- Grievance or Gripe
- How to Prepare for an Investigatory Meeting
- Transition to DTV and HDTV
- Taking the Mystery out of IT Devices – Personal Computers and Printers for Work and Home
- Using the Power of Ethics to Improve Behavior
- Looking Forward Financially – Taxes and Retirement
- Credit Reports and How They are Used

RETIREE CORNER

Keeping retirees connected in 2008

By: Kathy Monaghan, Retiree Chapter President



At the January Board Meeting, your Executive Board had a long discussion on how to keep AFT-W retirees more informed and involved both with the retiree chapter and AFT-Wisconsin. Along with that discussion, we worked hard to prepare an interesting and improved plan for the upcoming year. Here are some of the highlights of that plan:

Our newsletter has been redesigned with six issues planned. We hope that by issuing six editions per year, retirees will be more informed

about the issues that affect them and will discover new ways to get involved with their union.

As part of our plan to get retirees more involved in AFT-W events around the state, we have planned four different social events. The first event will be in conjunction with the Northern Leadership Conference in Superior at Barker's Island on April 18 and 19. On Friday, April 18, your retiree chapter invites you to have dinner at 5:00 p.m. Your dinner will be paid for by the chapter. You are encouraged to stay and participate at the leadership conference, which will begin at 7 p.m. on Friday with an opening by President Bryan Kennedy. A social hour will follow. The program will continue on Saturday with interesting presentations and workshops. If you plan to attend, contact Elaine Schwoerer toll free at 1-800-362-7390 or Schwoerer@aft-wisconsin.org by April 11 so we can reserve the appropriate space.

The second social event will be a picnic in Madison in conjunction with the board meeting. The third will be in September with the Emerging Leaders Conference in Eau Claire and the fourth will be in Milwaukee at the Convention. Watch for more information about these events in upcoming editions of your newsletter. We hope you can join us for these fun events around the state!

					9	8	6	3
2			4	8		1		5
9		5		3			7	
	4			2	1			
	9	1				6	2	
			7	6			4	
	1			7		3		2
7		6		1	8			9
4	3	8	5					

Sudoku provided by Sudoku.com.au

Answers on page 3.