



UNION SPOTLIGHT

AFT Washington, AFL-CIO

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March 2012

Telling the Senate: No More Cuts!



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Rallying the State Senate for more revenue and no more budget cuts. Shown here are Emma Gordon, Lead Organizer for WEEL/AFT, Steven Kendall, Owner of Kids N Me Children's Center in Chehalis, and Bernal Baca, AFT Washington Lobbyist.

At the table

Updates on bargaining efforts at locals by Nancy Kennedy and Merrilee Miron

AFT Renton Classified began bargaining a full contract. Subcommittees are going through different areas of the contract for language clarification and updates. All issues are in the discussion phase.

The **UW English Language Faculty (ELF)** local has been meeting on Sundays to review and align language, written by issues committees, into a cohesive document to take to the table on March 19 in their first bargaining session with the university. They have been challenged by the university's slow responses to information requests.

Bargaining for **Clover Park Technical College Professional Staff** has slowed due to a compensation study that will complete the final Articles that remain and the salary schedule.

United Faculty of Green River reached an agreement to extend their contract to 2014, pay the 2011 increments, and annually review the need for creating full-time tenure-track positions. They dropped the two (ULP's) they filed for bad-faith bargaining.

RTC Faculty began bargaining in March and are still at the table with new issues about background checks.

The **Everett Community College Professional Staff** are preparing to go to the table early this spring on their first contract.

The **Yakima Community College Professional Staff** returned to mediation with a new mediator and a new union bargaining team. After a long frustrating dry spell, the employer finally made some movement and some open items were settled. The big issue of job security is still not resolved.

Clover Park Technical College Classified had their first session with the employer yesterday. The employer is proposing a different approach to their current contract which was first bargained when they were part of the K-12 system. The stated goal is to bring the contract more into the college realm. The team has agreed to have an open mind and will look at their proposal.

Cornish College Federation of Teachers spent a concentrated three weeks at the table in an attempt to finish their contract within that time. While the faculty came to a much better understanding of the financial situation of the college, and there was shared understanding of issues, they are still working out the language details.

After the employer imposed the 1.9 percent wage reduction without bargaining, **Sno-Isle Skills Center** teachers were able to come to a compromise for this year and put timeline language in place for bargaining next year if a reduction is required.

Lake Washington Institute of Technology (formerly Lake Washington Technical College) **Classified Employees** have agreed to extend their current contract for two years with some minor modifications for clarity and to reflect the name change.

Pierce College Faculty are down to a few issues and, at last report, thought they might need to use mediation to get their contract settled.

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Board meetings are usually held on the first Saturday of the month except for holidays and summer months. Board members are elected to two-year terms.

AFT Washington represents over 6,000 members in early childhood education, K-12, and higher education in Washington State and is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, which represents 1.5 million members nationwide.

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Photos by Sylvia Watson unless otherwise noted.

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AFT Washington board to seek per capita increase

At this year's 2012 convention in May, AFT Washington leadership will ask convention delegates to vote in favor of a motion to increase its per capita rate to affiliates.

"Per capita" is the amount that a local forwards from the dues it collects to, in this case, the state federation, AFT Washington, for the services and advocacy that the affiliate provides both to locals and statewide. AFT Washington assists locals in many ways, including support and training for negotiations and contract maintenance, training for leadership growth and membership outreach, organizing new locals to increase strength, and providing advocacy in Olympia and through educational agencies for improved education and working conditions.

To provide that support, AFT Washington has employed nine people (often supplemented by AFT staff) who reach out to local leaders and members constantly. Last year it became very clear that in order to continue the organizing growth we have sustained in recent years, we would need more resources. We were able to hire an organizing director, thanks in part through a generous grant from AFT which permanently funds half the position.

AFT Washington has not increased its per capita rate to locals in the past five years. In the five years before that, when salaries were going up, the increases on the highest earners totaled about \$5.50 a month; the

AFT Washington
2012 Annual Convention 

"Sea Change"
May 4-5, 2012
Shilo Inn Suites Hotel, Ocean Shores

Key Convention Deadlines

✓ **April 4, 2012**
Hotel room reservation cutoff date
Proposed bylaws amendments due in the AFT Washington office

✓ **April 9, 2012**
Nominations for AFT Washington Executive Board Awards Due

April 14, 2012
AFT Washington Executive Board Meeting
Proposed resolutions to AFT Washington must be postmarked by this date
Credentials and early registration fees must be postmarked by this date
Bylaws amendments must be published in an official publication of AFT Washington

April 24, 2012
Per capita must be paid through the month of February to AFT and AFT Washington

April 27, 2012
Copies of all bylaws amendments and resolutions must be mailed to locals, delegates, and alternates

May 4 – 5, 2012
AFT Washington Convention, Ocean Shores, Washington

For your convenience, you can find information about credentials, hotel accommodations, and things to do in and around Ocean Shores at www.tinyurl.com/AFTWA-Convention.

rates on the lowest earners increased less than \$.40 a month. We were able to avoid yearly increases by careful budget management, by making our dues structure more progressive, and by growing our membership through organizing. While most unions increase their dues every year, we

were proud to hold firm on increases during the worst of the recession. We wish we could have held off until salary increases again came to our members.

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Unions involved in communities: not ‘business as usual’

The freight train left the station a long time ago and has been steaming ahead in a direction that will eventually devastate our public education system. But instead of trying to convince the ‘powers that be’ to fix and fund the system, the faculty union at Seattle Community Colleges has decried “Enough Already!” and are stepping up to define the education structure they want to have.

With all of the program cuts, layoffs, and furloughs over the last several years (despite record-high enrollment at our colleges), AFT Seattle determined last spring that they have to take a more assertive role in telling the critical story of the value of investing in education and courageously stand up to those who value money more than investments and banks more than education.

That’s one of the reasons they became involved in the Occupy Seattle movement: to change the status quo and values that are detrimental to a healthy civilization. According to instructor and award-winning filmmaker **Sandy Cioffi**, “We are at the moment that we need to boldly figure out that full funding for two-year community and technical colleges is an absolute earmark of a decent society, and that’s what we’re demanding.”

“Instead of looking to the business community to fund those parts of community colleges that are in their interests as an employer, we need to be pushing for businesses to pay their fair share into the revenue base so the state can fund colleges for all of the needs of the community, not

just the business needs,” said AFT Seattle President Karen Strickland.

When Occupy Seattle ended up at Seattle Central’s campus, **Karen Strickland** showed leadership by finding ways to work with the college administration while maintaining good relationships with Occupy.

Some faculty members stepped up, some were uncomfortable, and some were provoked. According to Karen, she received a few messages that they agreed with the Occupy movement but didn’t agree with what the union was doing.

“Fortunately I got far more messages saying this is the right thing and don’t back off,” Karen said.

So they met with Occupy Seattle and created teach-ins where faculty, students, and Occupiers were able to get together and create opportunities to learn, share dialogue, and explore ideas in a safe environment. Several faculty stepped up to teach and several helped make the occupation of Seattle Central a constructive event. Even **Dr. Cornell West** came to the campus one day.

Last December, before Occupy Seattle was forced to move from the campus, the faculty union helped to mitigate issues between them and the administration. Clearly, the chancellor and college president did not support the encampment. What could have been a volatile situation was diminished by AFT Seattle. Indeed, the president sent out a communication to the campus community thanking Karen Strickland and Kimberly McRae, Faculty Senate President, for

helping bring the move to a peaceful conclusion.

Occupy invigorated the discussion about doing business as usual as a union in a whole new way. “You have to do your business-as-usual union activities – and that’s important – but they are no longer close to sufficient,” said Sandy.

What’s clear to Karen and Sandy is that we need to reach out more intentionally and specifically to our community partners and create more of a mass movement that will stand up and say “Enough Already! I will defend community colleges as a great value in my community, period!”

The goals of AFT Seattle’s “Enough Already” campaign are to engage the faculty, to engage the students, and to engage the community.

What’s next? Sandy will be filming stories using faculty and students to tell the story about the impact of community and technical colleges in our communities.

“If we close our eyes and do nothing, community colleges will no longer exist as we know them. Telling our stories is important,” said Sandy.

Karen added, “If we continue on with business as usual, we will have declining membership, declining union power, and increased attacks on collective bargaining. It’s just a matter of time. So part of it is internalizing it and doing something about it by focusing on community engagement. We have to.”

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2012 education scholarships available for members and family

Three \$1,000 education scholarships are available to eligible applicants who are members or spouses, partners, children, or dependents of AFT Washington members in good standing. Qualified applicants must plan to attend an institution of higher education at the AA or BA level during the 2012-2013 academic year for the purpose of obtaining a degree or certification.

To date, twenty-one students have been awarded \$1,000 education scholarships. The scholarship recipients are affiliated with members from the following locals: Skagit Valley College Federation of Teachers #4985, Clover Park Vocational Federation #3913, Bates Technical College #4184, AFT Yakima #1485, AFT Seattle Community Colleges #1789, Lake Washington Federation of College Classified #4787, Peninsula Community College Federation of Teachers #3439, and Tacoma Community College Federation #2196.

The AFT Washington/Schwerin Campbell Barnard Iglitzin & Lavitt Scholarship was initiated in 2005 in partnership with Schwerin Campbell Barnard Iglitzin & Lavitt LLP, a Seattle-based labor law firm. The award was established in recognition of our close alliance working toward improved education and labor rights for the working people of our state and the members of AFT Washington.

Eligibility requirements, applications guidelines, and the scholarship application are attached and can also be downloaded from our website at <http://wa.aft.org>. **An original and two copies of the application and supporting documents must be received in the AFT Washington office no later than Monday, April 23, 2012.** Application packets can be mailed to AFT Washington/SCBIL Scholarship Fund, 625 Andover Park West, Suite 111, Tukwila, WA 98188. For questions, please contact **Elizabeth Ferrell-Gray** at **206.432.8088** or **eferrell-gray@aftwa.org**.



Members and supporters of Washington Educators for Early Learning/AFT rally to end state budget cuts and support for Working Connections child care program.

Good news for professional staff at Seattle Community Colleges

The organizing drive among professional staff at Seattle Community College has kicked into high gear as cards are gathered to take the crucial step to forming a union. Professional staff, called "exempt" staff by college administrations, perform crucial duties like directing small programs, keeping the computers running, helping students enroll, and advising students on their classes. Their work is sometimes invisible to the college community and they work from year to year with no due process or continuing contracts. AFT Washington is proud to have helped the professional staff at Clover Park, Everett and Yakima colleges form their first unions.

Now it's time for the professional staff at Seattle. If you are a faculty member at Seattle CC and want to help, even in a small way, please let us know.

If you are a faculty member at any of the colleges where the professional staff have not yet organized but you know someone who has expressed an interest, please also let us know. It only takes one contact to get things started.

AFT faculty and staff higher ed unions are stronger together when the professional staff also organize with AFT. To help grow the union where you work, contact **Robert Hayden** at **rhayden@aftwa.org** or **206-432-8087**.

AFT Seattle (cont'd from pg. 4)

Other locals' members have participated in Occupy Seattle. For example, **David Ortiz** from Cascadia Federation of Teachers taught one of the sessions at an all-night teach-in. For more information about Seattle's involvement in the Occupy movement or their "Enough Already" campaign, contact **Karen Strickland** at 206-934-5478. Their "Enough Already" website can be found at www.teacherswithspine.org.

Congratulations, Amy!

Shoreline Community College Local 1950 president **Amy Kinsel** has recently been elected to the executive board of the Organization of American Historians (OAH). She will serve in a position that represents community college history faculty on the nine-member board of the largest professional society dedicated to the teaching and study of American history.



"This is a tremendous honor," said Kinsel. "I am excited to accept this position, and I look forward to representing community college historians at the national level."

Amy's term is 2013 through 2015 beginning at the organization's annual meeting this spring. You can find out more about OAH at www.oah.org/about/.

Two staff join state union

AFT Washington is pleased to announce that we have hired two staff in recent months.



Kristin Elia, our new State Affiliate Political Organizer, began last December, replacing Richard Burton. She is responsible for coordinating AFT Washington's political advocacy programs and working with members to engage in important education and labor issues. Prior to joining AFT Washington, Kristin was the Organizing Director at Fuse Washington where she helped to build and mobilize political activists around progressive issues. Kristin is an East Coast native, who worked on environmental advocacy and community organizing with New Jersey PIRG at Rutgers University and Environment America in Washington, D.C.

Kristin can be reached at **206-432-8085**.

Dorothy Gibson was hired as our newly created Director of Organizing. Dorothy has worked with us since 2003, when she was hired by AFT to lead our early education organizing project now called Washington Educators in Early Learning (WEEL).

After leading the project for two years, she continued her early education work with AFT as a consultant with the department of Organization and Field Services, assisting with organizing projects in several states as well as doing research and advising on professional development for early educators. Dorothy began her union leadership at the University of Washington in 1990 helping to build the unit representing four thousand clerical workers.

The new position is jointly funded by AFT and AFT Washington. Dorothy will lead the Organizing Team of **Nancy Kennedy**, **Merrilee Miron**, and **Robert Hayden** in new efforts to strengthen AFT Washington both internally and through external organizing campaigns.

If she hasn't already, Dorothy will be in touch with you in upcoming weeks to discuss ways in which the AFT Washington Organizing Team can help your local. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dorothy at **206-432-8082**.



The fight is never about grapes or lettuce. It is always about the people." — Cesar Chavez

Professional development conference offered workshops and more

Variety is the spice of life, as the saying goes. And that was what was offered at the annual professional development conference on Saturday, March 17, in Tacoma. About 60 members from the early learning and K-12 classified corps attended.

Three distinctly different workshops were offered:

- “Stop the Bullying!” on workplace bullying and student bullying;
- What’s happening to our public

education system; and

- Creating a green and healthy workplace.

Workshop presenters included

Darren Garrett, President of AFT Kent Classified; **Ginger Ott**, AFT Kent Classified; **Darryl Alexander**, Director of AFT Health and Safety;



Participants at the “Stop the Bullying” workshop discuss workplace bullying

Local businesses need grads but program may be cut

— *Martha Chamberlin, RTC Accounting Instructor*

“Mai” is a Vietnamese name

meaning “Dawn,” as in the start of a new day and new beginnings. It is an appropriate name for an amazing woman. This woman lived through the horrors of the Khmer Rouge in Vietnam and struggled to complete an accounting degree; then Mai sacrificed her language, career, and home in Vietnam in order to offer her daughter the hope of a better life in this country.

Finding herself in Renton, Mai went to Renton Technical College (RTC) in order to get the credentials she needed to work in accounting in this country. I met Mai my first quarter teaching at RTC and was immediately impressed with her intelligence and strength. She quickly graduated with top grades and started looking for the job that would allow her to achieve her long sought-after goals.

This is where the fairy tale ends. Not because I don’t know what happens next, but because I do know. Mai was not able to find a job in the accounting area. She took a job in a warehouse, doing what she could to put her daughter through college.

The Seattle area, one of the most diverse areas in the country, has thousands of small businesses in need of accounting work, many of them run by owners who would love the language and cultural skills of those who come to Renton Technical College every day from disenfranchised communities – and whose communities desperately need language and finance skills in order to pull themselves out of their poverty so that they can truly become part of the American story. And the Seattle

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Mike Donlin from OSPI’s Student Safety Center; **Lucinda Young**, WEA’s Chief Lobbyist; and AFT Washington’s **Bernal Baca**, Lobbyist; and **Kristin Elia**, Political Organizer.

The conference also featured **Tom Rawson**, folksinger and storyteller, who entertained everyone and got the audience to sing along to songs by Pete Seeger.

Last, but not least, several locals contributed to door prizes that were raffled off. Winners received gift cards from a variety of union retailers ranging from \$25 to a grand prize of \$75. Contributing to the door prizes were AFT Renton Technical College Classified Employees, AFT Renton Classified, Tacoma Federation of ParaEducators, and AFT Washington.

To see more photos on the event, go to our website at <http://wa.aft.org> or to www.facebook.com/aftwa.



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Seeking per capita increase (cont'd from pg. 3)

In order to continue growing the strength of our organization and thereby avoiding yearly increases, we need to have a solid organizing team so we can seek opportunities and continually reach out to new constituencies.

The details of the per capita increase will be sent to local presidents for discussion. We hope delegates from your local will support the increase at convention.

Local businesses need grads (cont'd from pg 7)

area needs these communities as well. Especially during this recession, we need hard-working, innovative people from all walks of life to start the new businesses that will turn the economy back around to prosperity.

It was about three years ago that I met Deborah "Debbie" Asavarahapun, president and CEO of Accounting for Small Business, Inc. She has been providing quality bookkeeping and accounting services to local businesses for over 30 years now. She was recently at the top of "Seattle Tech Startups" list of affordable, quality service providers.

Debbie was looking for people with bookkeeping and accounting training whom she could also mentor.

Debbie has currently worked with four RTC students over the past few months, helping them move forward with their careers while also helping local small businesses be successful. She is looking forward to ramping up her collaboration with RTC.

I am sick at the thought of this program being set back or canceled because of budget cuts to education in the state of Washington. I understand that the financial situation in the state is dire, but cutting a program like this that has so much promise and is just getting going can't possibly be worth the relatively few dollars it would save. Please help the Mais, Joses, Phengkys, Praveenas, Rameshs . . . and the small businesses by allowing this program to continue.