

AFT-WV IN ACTION

REPS WIN GRIEVANCES, SAVE JOBS
ACROSS THE STATE

MEMBER ACCOLADES

AFT-WV MEMBERS HONORED FOR
PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

AFT MEMBER BENEFIT

FREE TRAUMA COUNSELING



April 2023

THE INSIDER

THE PUBLICATION FOR AFT-WEST VIRGINIA MEMBERS

From the desk of...

AFT-WV President Fred Albert



The school year has flown by, but we are in the home stretch. Spring is here and our schools are abuzz with spring extracurriculars, prom, and graduation planning.

While it's an exciting time for our students, I know that educators are exhausted by this time of the year, and ready for some well-deserved rest during the summer.

Post-Covid, our profession has become even more challenging. The social-emotional needs of our students have become a greater factor in our daily work. These challenges feel even heavier when compounded with the failure of the WV Legislature to pass meaningful measures to address the critical shortage of teachers, bus drivers and other school personnel in our state and find a permanent funding source for PEIA. The best opportunity we have to affect change is to make our union larger and stronger and elect candidates who will fight for public education. Ask a colleague to join AFT-WV and stand with us for what is right for our students and profession!

As you move into the final weeks of the school year, I wish you a successful conclusion of the academic year and a restful summer. Hoping to see you at an AFT event soon... remember, YOU are the union!

In solidarity,

Fred

New member incentives launched to grow our union power

The attacks on education since the back to back educator strikes have been relentless. Charter schools, vouchers (aka the Hope Scholarship), and the elimination of payroll deduction for union dues are just a few of the retaliatory laws passed by the legislative supermajority. These bills were all designed to diminish public education, weaken the unions that represent those employees and silence your voice in the workplace.

During the 2023 legislative session, lawmakers overwhelmingly approved a bill to increase PEIA premiums for plan participants. The bill also requires an additional premium for spousal coverage, if the spouse has health insurance coverage available through their employer. The union's attempts to stop or amend the bill were limited by the vast legislative majority. Additionally, Governor Jim Justice backpedaled on his promise of no premium increases during his term, leaving no stopgap. It was another stark reminder that elections have consequences. These ongoing attacks prove one essential truth- our union must be larger and stronger to fight these attacks, and to elect candidates who will support education employees at the Capitol.

Let's face it...there is strength in numbers. That's why AFT-WV is kicking off two incentives to grow our union membership. Each spring, we have

traditionally offered our Buck A Month membership incentive to nonmembers. The incentive allows education employees who have not been an AFT member during the current school year to join now and pay only \$1 a month until September 2023.

This year, we are adding an element to the program to reward current AFT-WV members who help grow their union. AFT-WV members will be entered into a drawing each time they recruit a new member. One professional member and one service personnel member will each win \$2500! There will also be 10 individual drawings for \$500 each! The contest runs now until September 1st.

Scan the QR code below with your smartphone to get the flyer with full contest details and access to a membership application.



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AFT-WV members recognized for professional excellence

AFT-WV proudly recognizes our many members who have recently been honored for professional excellence.

AFT-Cabell Co. member Michael Harshbarger was recently selected as the WV Council of Teachers of Mathematics Teacher of the Year. Harshbarger was presented with the award during the Council's annual conference, held at Stonewall Resort, March 17-18, 2023.

AFT member Melissa Brammer was named Raleigh County Teacher of the Year. Brammer is a special education teacher at Beckley Stratton Elementary School.

AFT- Marshall County member Allyson Varlas was recently named a winner of the Dr. Jennie Bechtold Award. It's an honor presented from the WV Reading Association to a beginning teacher with 1-5 years of teaching experience who demonstrates excellence.

Congratulations are also extended to the AFT-WV members who are among our state's 2022 National Board Certification recipients and renewal recipients. Recipients were honored at an event in Charleston on March 14, 2023, co-sponsored by the WV Department of Education and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

2023 new recipients are:

Katherine Leone -Monongalia Co.

Chase Leone -Monongalia Co.

Kristen Muscaro-Winters -Monongalia Co.

Kristen Smallwood -Monongalia Co.

Joshua Isaacs- Putnam Co.

2023 renewals are:

Rebecca Harden- Cabell Co.

Valerie Mullins- Kanawha Co.

Emily Patterson- Kanawha Co.

Robin Peck- Kanawha Co.

Sara Raines- Wilson- Kanawha Co.

Jonna Kuskey- Marshall Co.

Rebonica Davis-Mineral Co.

Tracy Godwin- - Monongalia Co.

Nancy Kincaid-- Monongalia Co.

Heidi Zumbrunnen- Ohio Co.

Amber Lafferty-- Putnam Co.

Chastity Miller - Putnam Co.

Erika McGuire- Raleigh Co.

Susan McCauley-Randolph Co.

Linda Hindman- Wood Co.

Diana Mundorff- Wood Co.

Union mourns loss of longtime activist and former local leader

Our union movement mourns the loss of one of our most dedicated, longtime activists. John Cox passed peacefully on April 4, 2023, after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

John Cox taught electrical skills at Preston High School from 1998 to 2017. He was a leader in his profession and his students loved him and performed at the highest level in the state of WV. Not only did he have students place first in Skills USA, but also helped over 90% of his students gain



their journeyman electrician status to begin their careers. After working their apprentice hours, many returned to John's classroom to gain their master electrician credentials to further their careers. John was a former WV Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Year and also mentored many young teachers along his path.

During his teaching career, John was a strong advocate for educators to be unionized and served in many union capacities over the years, including president of AFT-Preston County.

Prior to his teaching career, John was a union organizer for the United Mine Workers of America. This experience led him to be a very proactive local AFT president and he handled many grievances and member issues personally. AFT-WV Staff Representative Frank Caputo lauded John as

one of his greatest mentors in the union movement.

A glimpse at John's Facebook page reveals the tremendous impact he had on hundreds of students during his career, as countless tributes were posted after the news of his passing.

John was adored by not only his students but also loved and respected by his colleagues. To recognize John's dedication to his profession and his students, AFT-Preston County, along with their local president Brian Bailey, John's former students, and his teaching colleagues, have established the John Cox Work Readiness Scholarship to help pay the cost of the journeyman electrician test for Preston High School students. While John will be missed tremendously, the scholarship will ensure his legacy will continue.

Spring and summer events offer members opportunity to get involved in your union

A union is only as strong and active as its members... that's why it is so important to be involved and take advantage of local and state events and activities. The information gained by attending conferences, participating in meetings and offering your viewpoint and concerns to the union is invaluable. The more active and informed our members are, the stronger our union is!

Many local unions are hosting spring socials and end of school year events for members. Watch your local's communication methods (newsletters, flyers, Remind app) to make sure you don't miss any events scheduled in your area.

Also, AFT-WV will be hosting our 26th annual Summer School at Camp Dawson in Kingwood, WV from June 26-30, 2023. The week features professional development courses on a variety of topics, informative presentations on education issues and an unmatched opportunity to network with members from across West Virginia. If you are interested in attending, learn more at www.aftwv.org or ask your local president or AFT-WV staff representative.

SAVE THE DATES

AFT-WV Legislative Summit

September 8-9, 2023

Huntington, WV

AFT-WV Convention

November 9-11, 2023

Morgantown, WV



Our Marion County teacher and service personnel locals know how to put on a great event! The two locals jointly held an evening of fellowship and fun on April 17, 2023, in conjunction with the spring membership drive held in their county the same week. The event also served as a farewell and thank you to longtime activist Rosie Saunders, who is moving out of state.

AFT-WV reps score victories for members in several counties

Logan County

A middle school special education teacher, working on a block schedule of 90 minutes, was only given a 45 minute planning period. AFT-WV filed a grievance and won \$4000 in back pay for our member. Additionally, the member will receive the appropriate amount of planning time moving forward, just like her colleagues.

Wyoming County

A member was written up for refusing to take her elementary students out for recess when weather conditions were not safe. After a level one grievance, the letter of reprimand that she had received was removed from her personnel file.

Cabell County

The superintendent recommended a termination for a teacher's aide for an improper restraint after the aide was physically assaulted by the special education student. After representation by AFT-WV at a board of education hearing, the board voted 5-0 not to terminate the employee.

Roane County

A member was placed on the transfer list and out of her position as a librarian/ technology specialist. After representation by AFT-WV, she won her hearing before the board of education and retained her current position.

Taylor County

At a hearing before the board of education, AFT-WV won a RIF hearing for a member and saved their job. Additionally, the union won a transfer hearing for another member.

Randolph County

AFT-WV won RIF hearings for two teachers and two service personnel, saving four members jobs in total. Additionally, the union won three other hearings to prevent the transfer of two service personnel and one teacher.

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Your union: Empowering recovery

AFT understands that our work to educate, help and serve our communities often carries its own stresses and strains. As professionals, we are challenged to be fully present for others even as we shoulder the burden of our own traumas.

AFT offers an innovative form of mental health care and support—trauma counseling. It is available to AFT members, free of charge, anywhere in the United States at any time in the one-year aftermath of a traumatic incident. This no-cost benefit:

- Offers therapy, which can be scheduled 24/7, when you need it, where you need it.
- Connects you with a licensed, certified, master's level (or higher) therapist with special training in post-traumatic care.
- Uses the latest communication technologies—phone, video, text and even AI (artificial intel-

ligence)— to provide help that works with your schedule.

- Is confidential and free as a benefit to AFT members.

Traumas to AFT members covered by this new insurance include:

- Aggravated assault • Domestic violence • Sexual assault • Mass shootings/Terrorist acts • Major disaster • Bullied, harassed or threatened at work • Traumatized by witnessing a violent incident • Infected by contagious disease

How this program works:

Members will gain access to the program through the AFT Member Benefits members-only portal. Privacy is ensured; no information about your use of this benefit is reported back to your employer. Members meeting the criteria for a covered trauma will have access to a total of 21 hours of counseling—as many, or as few, hours as

needed—over a three-month period. Generally, the counseling period follows an arc with initial assessment and planning, then a series of sessions in lengths of both 50-minutes and 15-minutes, and finally a closing session for review of treatment results. Everything is confidential and jointly scheduled with your counselor for mutual convenience.

At the conclusion of these AFT-paid sessions, a member who seeks additional trauma counseling may purchase a member-paid policy. In addition, members can purchase expanded trauma coverage for the entire family, available to our members at a discounted rate. To learn more about the AFT-paid Trauma Coverage benefit, visit www.aft.org/benefits/trauma. To access the counseling benefit, visit the AFT member-only portal at www.aft.org/members-only or call Trauma Coverage toll-free at 1-855-631-1421.

