

January/February 2009

# The APA NEWSLETTER

*A Newsletter for the Administrative-Professional Association of MSU*

*Next issue of the APA Newsletter: The Formation of the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations—A History*

## APA Executive Board

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*\*Executive Board meetings are normally held on the second Tuesday of each month commencing at 2:00 p.m. in the APA office located at 1480 Kendale, Suite 300, East Lansing. Visiting members should call in advance to verify the time and place*

## REPORT FROM THE FALL MEA Representative Assembly

November 8, 2009

by Maury Koffman

President/Chairperson, MSU APA

On Saturday, November 8, 2008, MSU APA represented the interests of its members at the annual MEA fall Representative Assembly. Elected delegates were able to provide their perspectives and desires for the new business items introduced, both to the general assembly and in region caucus meetings.

Of significant interest at the fall assembly was discussion on the Crisis Assistance Program (CAP) fund. The CAP fund was created years ago and is invoked by local unions for financial assistance when they engage in work actions. Recently, the MEA local in Wayne Westland engaged in such an action and accessed the fund. Between the use by Wayne Westland and the volatility of the financial markets over the last year, the fund has been significantly reduced. Dues dollars do not contribute to the fund so the assembly addressed the necessity to replenish the funds and how to go about accomplishing that goal. Ultimately, the assembly referred the new business item with intention for a proposal to be presented at the next spring assembly.

As the largest local association in the MEA, MSU APA is entitled the greatest allotment of delegates to the assembly. In March of each year, during the annual APA elections, APA members have the opportunity to elect representatives to this assembly. While the fall assembly conducts business of the organization, more delegates are seated during the spring assembly and typically more business is conducted. As an MEA member, you can attend the assembly even if you are not an official delegate; however, you cannot be seated on the delegation floor or vote.

If you would like to know more about the responsibilities of being a delegate to the MEA Representative Assembly or have questions about running for a

delegate position during the next election, please feel free to contact the Association office or any member of the APA Executive Board.

## Lunchtime Meetings

Come By and Chat for Awhile...



You may have heard but just haven't had the time to stop by and have a sit down with your Association chair, Maury Koffman, and other board members over the noon hour.

Well, good news! Due to success and requests, this series of informal meetings will take place in January and February. Watch your email and new APA website ([www.msuapa.org](http://www.msuapa.org)) for announcement of dates, times, and locations.

Hope to see you there!

## 2009 APA Executive Board Elections

Elections by March 31

In accordance with the APA Constitution & Bylaws, the election for upcoming executive board position "shall be conducted by March 31 of each year." Details on the

election and how to submit your candidacy are forthcoming via the APA listserv.

Be sure to watch for the details!

## MSU Employee Assistance Program

**Don't Go It Alone – Get Help With Life's Troubles**

by Lisa L. Davidson

LMSW, MSU EAP Coordinator



**In life's harder moments, help is available.** All of us have moments in our lives when things can seem too big and overwhelming. We may be confronted with a problem we have never had to face before and not know what to do about it. We may experience a trauma or loss that overwhelms our current coping skills and leaves us with intense feelings of stress.

If we have moments like this and try to ignore them, stress tends to build up. Emotionally turbulent times take a toll on our physical bodies as well. Sometimes we deal with emotional and physical upset by behaving in ways we believe will reduce our stress (isolating ourselves, drinking more alcohol, eating, smoking, gambling, etc.), but these behaviors just complicate the situation.

For employees of MSU and their family members, another option exists. There is no need to go through moments like this alone and without support.

**The MSU Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is available to you as part of your employment benefits. The EAP offers free, confidential, short-term counseling (one to six sessions) for MSU employees and their immediate family members. Sometimes people use their sessions to work through a specific issue in their work or personal life. Others use their sessions to get a sense of what is happening in their emotional world.

Occasionally, people are concerned about depression, anxiety attacks or may wonder if they have a drinking problem. The EAP staff will work with you on these issues during your sessions, and may also refer you to a counselor or other resources in the community so you can continue to obtain any needed help or support.

**Don't wait for a crisis.** People sometimes experience low moods or high levels of stress, and in those moments, it is hard to find your own way, make healthy decisions or determine the next best step.

If you find yourself in this position, please feel free to utilize your contracted EAP benefit. If you notice a coworker having a tough time in their life, encourage them to take advantage of the MSU EAP. Effort is made to hold sessions at times that are convenient for employees and/or family members.

**To make an appointment to speak with a counselor, please send an email to [EAP@ht.msu.edu](mailto:EAP@ht.msu.edu) or call 355-4506 or 1-888-280-9478.**

## Dining Deals for Staff

**Let's eat!!!**

by Sue Brandt

Housing & Food Services



University Housing began offering discounted dining plans in fall 2007 for all faculty/staff, where for as low as \$5.00 (plus tax), staff can dine in any of the all-you-care-to eat undergraduate dining rooms with access to soup, sandwiches, salad bars, meat and meatless entrees, side dishes, desserts and beverages.

There are thirteen undergraduate hall dining locations with varying hours. There is a minimum of one dining room open in each area of campus 7:00am-midnight seven days a week. Each dining hall has its own uniqueness from the higher focus on organics in Yakeley to breakfast all day in Holden. Cook to order stations are located in all dining rooms so cooks can customize entrees.

University Housing currently has over 350 full-time employees and 2,000 student employees in a variety of positions. The department is committed to providing outstanding Spartan experiences and is hiring its first sous chef. A marketplace executive chef was hired and is stationed at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips which opened fall 2007.

Opening the dining halls to staff is a win-win for both the individual member who gets a good meal at a great price, in a convenient location (they don't have to leave campus at lunch and lose their parking space), or if they

have an evening work or personal commitment, they can grab dinner on their way. Plus it keeps dollars on campus and allows University Housing to increase its ancillary income, and these profits are used to help keep room and board costs down for students, to renovate university facilities, and help us better meet the needs of current and future students, faculty/staff and campus visitors.

Visit [www.eatatstate.msu.edu](http://www.eatatstate.msu.edu) for dining menus, hours and information on block meal plans exclusive to faculty/staff.

## Know Your Contract!

Vision Care...Yes, we do have a "base" plan!



Many of you may not be aware but a base vision plan is available to union members.

Sponsored by the Coalition of Labor Organizations at Michigan State University (CLO), the prepaid vision insurance plan is administered through Michigan Employee Benefit Services (MEBS). (For those of you who may be familiar with the original plan, MEBS replaced REDS as the third-party administrator in early 2006.)

Provisions of the plan include payroll deductions as an available option. Deductions are sent to MEBS. The SeeCOM vision plan, the only plan available in the past, is available through MEBS under their Vision Care Direct or VCD option. In addition to SeeCOM, MEBS offers a second plan, National Vision Administrators (NVA) to participants.

The CLO is delighted to be able to continue to offer vision insurance, now with more choices and through a Michigan-based administrator.

For information on these plans and a comparison chart, visit the MEBS website at [www.mebs.com](http://www.mebs.com) or call **1-800-968-9682**. If you call, ask to connect to the accounting department and tell them you are staff employee of MSU. This plan is also open to employee dependents as well as retirees.

Open enrollment will occur between March and May for a July 1 effective date. So if you are in need of a base vision plan, check this one out!

## Know Your Contract! Part II

So, what is the MSU CLO and Why should I care?

After several lunchtime meeting with members it appears that many of us are not well informed of the purpose and need for the MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations (CLO). The MSU CLO is responsible for negotiating the health care agreement between the university and labor organizations on campus. In order to better inform and educate our membership, we begin the first of a multi-part series of articles focusing on the CLO.

Anybody who has been hired into MSU from "the Outside" has a deep appreciation for the health coverage options available. It's all too easy to lose valuable perspective on this as we are confronted with other rising costs in our lives. However, we encourage you to get out your most recent payroll receipt and take a look at the cost breakouts listed there.

Next to Health Care, you will see a figure followed by the letter "C." This is MSU's contribution to your health coverage. Your health coverage is a benefit that is in place for you with very little deductible. Generally this amounts to a 15 dollar co-payment for doctor visits, and a variable co-payment for pharmaceuticals. In addition, you can enroll in Flexible Spending Plans. These plans allow you to set aside part of your salary tax-free for anticipated medical expenses such as eye exams, extra dental appointments not covered by your dental insurance, as well as some over the counter medications.

Have you priced single payer health insurance recently? An internet search was revealing. One carrier had an annual deductible of **\$1000**, but most carriers had deductibles between \$5000-10,000. The monthly premiums listed ranged from \$197.00 (with a \$10,000 deductible), to \$896.00 per month (with a \$3,000 deductible). Individuals with pre-existing health conditions or chronic health issues should expect to pay on the high end of these prices. And a catastrophic health event can be devastating for your finances.

For all these reasons, your executive board, together with the MSU CLO, believes that this is a benefit that is critical for the membership of all locals to continue to band together to get the best health care coverage at the best benefit to the employee. Through the MSU CLO we have been able to manage health care cost, maintain employer paid health care and continue annual raises.