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March/April 2009

# The APA

# NEWSLETTER

*The Official Newsletter for the Administrative-Professional Association of MSU*  
MSU Administrative-Professional Association MEA/NEA/1480 Kendale Blvd, Suite 300/East Lansing MI 48823/(517) 353-4898

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## APA Receives Additional MEA Staff Support

**Our numbers are growing!**

*by Maury Koffman*

*President/Chairperson, MSU APA*

As you may be aware, I have been lobbying within the MEA leadership to provide staff to assist with internal organizing. After months of persistence and meetings, I am delighted to say that over the 2009 calendar year, Christina Canfield has been assigned to work with our bargaining unit.

Christina has worked for MEA for nearly 16 years. She has most recently been working with MEA organizing and has been integral in the ongoing efforts of organizing a higher education unit at Ferris State University. Her skills will be a great addition to the APA.

The formula for MEA staff representation is one MEA staff person per 1400 members within a given local. Because APAs numbers continue to grow – we are nearly 2000 at last count – we were in need of additional support staff to continue to engage our membership as well as launch new initiatives that are vital union activism.

Please know that while Christina is MEA staff, her function will be different for the APA than our current UniServ Director, John Van Dyken. Christina has been assigned for internal organizing efforts to include a new member orientation, assisting in the implementation of our developing Area Representative program, creating literature for the APA and for non-faculty higher education members, and organizing and assisting with special member engagement events.

Christina has already begun her efforts and will be joining me at member gatherings around campus over the next year. Please feel free to say hello and introduce yourself to our new MEA provided staff member, Christina Canfield.

## 2009 Association Elections

**MEA Region Election**

**Election Dates: March 4-11**

**APA Executive Board and Delegate Election**

**Election Dates: March 23-30**

*by the APA Nominations and Elections Committee*



March is a critical month for members of the APA. Members will have the opportunity to exercise their basic right of full, dues paying membership by voting in two elections – MEA Region Election (March 4-11) and APA Executive Board and Delegate Election (March 23-30). Both elections will be by electronic means. (A paper ballot will be made available upon request for the APA election. Please contact Deb Porter, 2009 Nominations Elections Committee Chairperson – [porterd@msu.edu](mailto:porterd@msu.edu).)

This year's MEA Region Election (March 4-11) includes a candidate from our own local, Cynthia Schneider. Cynthia also serves as the APA Vice Chair, Communications Chair and 8H Coordinating Council Vice Chair. She is a candidate for the MEA Board of Directors/NEA RA Delegate-Representing Minority 3-1G.

"It is important that we achieve and maintain a board [MEA Board of Directors] that is reflective of the entire membership, including Higher Ed and ESP," states Cynthia. "We need to make sure that MSU's and other support concerns and needs are addressed."

Per the APA Constitution and Bylaws, the annual APA Executive Board election shall be conducted by March 31 of each year. By this time, you should have already received an email notification (via APA ListServ on February 4, 2009) soliciting nominations—which have now closed—and providing notice of APA balloting set to

commence March 23 and concluding at 4:30pm on March 30. (See submitted candidate bios at the end of this newsletter.)

Each year, the APA Nominations and Elections Committee work diligently to operate an efficient, accurate, and transparent election in compliance with the APA Constitution and Bylaws. In doing so, the Committee has established a public testing of the ballot on March 16, 2009. There will also be a public tabulation and announcement of election results on March 31, 2009. Both public election events are open to full members of the APA and will commence at 5:30pm at the APA Association Office. We hope to see you there!

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## Critical Issues Conference

### A Newcomer's View

by Ann Hancock

APA Executive Board Member

In January, I attended my second critical issues conference, held at MEA Headquarters here in East Lansing. This day was organized by Terri Battaglieri, chair of BFCL (Building Full Capacity Locals) and the content was both timely and eye-opening. As a new board member, I continue to be humbled by just how much there is to know about our union and what it takes to successfully represent a very large and diverse group of members. I am also now keenly aware of the need to act pro-actively against outside forces who wish that unions did not even exist (and who spend vast sums of money disseminating anti-union propaganda). Some of these forces are The Mackinac Center as well as a broad coalition of folks (The Mackinac Center is among them) who intend to bring "Right-to-Work" legislation to our next election. Pay attention to this issue; it could really harm workers in Michigan.

We attended three keynote speeches (Privatization in the Public Sector, Bargaining Issues for All, and Right Wing Think Tanks) as well as several breakout sessions tailored to specific groups (Higher Ed Support Staff). One session in particular, "Higher Ed. Legislation at the State Level", was full of surprises for me. I had always assumed that the political process involved in state appropriations for universities was based on fact finding and presentations given by various officials sent to the Capitol to plead MSU's case before the legislature. I guess I have been living under a very large rock. Our workshop speaker Dr. David Michelson, guided us through the processes of fund appropriations and the passage of bills into law. The revelation for me was that appropriations, as well as bills, are not linear, logical, or really based on need. Instead they are the result of skillful negotiation and often painful compromises. The take home message was; you better have lobbyists, and

you better have good lobbyists, the very best you can get.

Does MEA have lobbyists? You bet they do! Do our dues pay for these lobbyists? Good question; no, they don't. MEA is forbidden by law to use dues for this purpose. Instead, MEA relies on something called PAC (Political Action Committee) funds, which are voluntary contributions given by rank and file members like me. Now that I know the truth, you can be sure that I will contribute to our MEA PAC funds. Our jobs depend on it!

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## APA Holds AR Training

### We Are Off To A Great Start!

by Vikki Tormala

APA Executive Board Member

APA Membership Committee Chair



In January, the APA Membership Committee held its first Area Representative (AR) meeting. Eighteen showed up for the three-hour training session that took place at the MEA headquarters on Kendale Blvd (off Saginaw). This group included APA board members, MEA staff and several others from the membership role. Several areas and job classifications were represented.

After months of organizing and soliciting the membership for attendees, the group was diverse and manageable for training purposes. "I was very pleased to see the response from the membership with regards to initiating a formal AR program," says APA Executive Board Member and APA Membership Chair Vikki Tormala. "Because the APA comprised of more than 100 classification spread out over 500 buildings, it is important that we strive to achieve a diverse group of representatives that are well trained in the areas of contract maintenance, grievance and other representation."

MEA appointed APA staff representative John Van Dyken and Christina Canfield (see article in this issue of newsletter) were the facilitators for the evening. AR training materials developed by MEA, specifically *Building Full Capacity Locals-Association/Building Representatives and Stewards-Starting with the Basics*, were used as a basis for the training session. Another training session is currently planned for spring of 2009. This training will focus on **The Difference Between a**

## Grievance and a Gripe and Knowing Your Contract Cover to Cover.

The MSU APA Membership Committee is currently responsible for the following:

- Serving as information resource for members.
- Maintaining membership lists and fee payers lists.

Members of the APA need an avenue to turn to for guidance and understanding of their Union and the University. The goal of the MSU APA Membership Committee is to meet this need of its members.

The Membership Committee is comprised of the Area Representative (AR) program which is comprised of highly trained APA members. ARs are considered the initial point of contact for members for guidance in understanding and applying the contract to their work environment and filing grievances.

Other duties of ARs include distributing Association materials upon request of the Executive Board and keeping the Association chairperson and Executive Board informed of important issues on campus.

Currently there are no official Area Representatives identified at this time. This training is on-going and we hope to appoint selected ARs in the near future.

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## Know Your Contract!

### Article 10; Settlement of Disputes



Unfortunately, there may come a time in our employment when a disagreement or dispute between employee and employer takes on the need for a conference between both parties. It is important that as a union employee, you know of your rights in such a situation.

Article 10, paragraph 62 of the APA contract states:

*At any hearing, conference or meeting that may result in disciplinary action to an employee in the bargaining unit, the employee may and is encouraged to request the presence of an Association representative. The employing department must, if requested by the employee, allow sufficient time for the employee to arrange to have Association representation.*

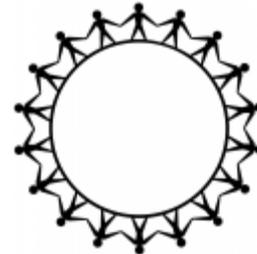
This article begins on page 17 of the APA contract and continues through page 21. Other items included in this section: The Grievance Procedure; Time Limits; Computation of Back Wages (if there is a loss in pay due to unemployment, Workers' Compensation and any replacement wages earned); Reprimand, Suspension or Discharge; Grievance Definition and Procedure; Finality of Decisions and Special Conference.

While we all like to participate in a "civil work environment"—it one of the basic tenants of our contract—we also know that in the "real" world unfortunate things sometimes happen. Your executive board, grievance committee, and MEA staff want you to be aware of your rights. Feel to call us at anytime with your concerns and questions.

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## Know Your Contract! Part II

### Health Care and Bargaining: A Brief History of the Coalition of Labor Organizations (CLO)



Health care, wages and job security are top priorities for workers in Michigan, including those of us here at MSU. In that sense, not much has changed in the past 15 years. However, the challenges involved in maintaining our wage and benefit levels become greater every year.

When MSU union leaders evaluated the conditions MSU labor faced in the mid-1990s they identified three critical issues that would define negotiations and labor relations for what they thought would be eight to ten years:

**1)** Health care costs were rising at rates two to three times the rate of general inflation; **2)** the economy in Michigan was continuing to soften; and **3)** State appropriations for higher education generally, and at MSU specifically, were inadequate and below historical levels.

The ways MSU Unions have addressed the challenges we've faced over this past twelve years has been successful as a maintenance strategy in a deteriorating economic environment, which includes factors such as continually rising health care costs and diminishing operating revenues from State appropriations.

In establishing their strategy, the unions expected three things to happen within an eight-to ten-year period:

- Real measures to resolve the national and state health care funding crises would be in place.
- Michigan's soft economy would level out, probably for some extended period, and then adjust slowly upward.
- Higher education funding would rise and efforts to restore previous under-funding would resume when the State budget's structural deficit was corrected. We believed State legislators were temporarily diverting revenues away from higher education in order to preserve other compelling needs of the citizenry.

Unfortunately, these things did not happen. All we've seen in the area of health care reform are ill-conceived schemes that shift costs to workers while providing no real, sustainable, effective cost containment pressures on the system. It now appears that the State Legislature intends to permanently de-fund higher education in Michigan as a policy.

Where we've come from in the early 1990s wage increases were declining as health care costs soared. The MSU Labor Unions were facing strong pressure to accept wage freezes and major shifts in health care costs, and were threatened with layoffs if we didn't give concessions. The employer's strategy of pattern bargaining to win concessions from one labor union in order to pressure the others to accept wage concessions and health care cost shifts was becoming an increasingly effective tool.

The unions came together to resist the threats and address the underlying causes of the then-current pressures. Working together, our representatives identified the core values that the members of the various groups shared in common. They became more knowledgeable about the employer-sponsored health care funding and the delivery structure that was beginning to unravel. They also recognized the obligation to become active and engaged in the political process that determines appropriations to the University, both for the benefit of their members' pockets and for the preservation of this important state resource.

By forming themselves into a coalition, the members of the MSU unions were able to speak to the employer with one voice. With that united voice, we were able to direct the discussion away from concessions and toward the issues that were driving the agenda, and find options that were not available working independently.

Before, during and after the negotiations that produced the first Joint Labor Agreement on Health Care, our union leaders invested a considerable amount of time meeting with each other, our respective executive boards and councils, and our memberships. There were joint union board meetings and open meetings held at

various locations across campus, all to be sure that the clear majority interest of the MSU staff community was represented.

*Next Issue of the APA Newsletter: The MSU Coalition of Labor Organizations Today—Relevancy and Resolve*

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## Campus Happenings

### What's Going-on In Your "Neck of the Woods?"

by Cynthia Schneider

APA Executive Board Member/Vice Chair

APA Communications Chair



In the last issue of the APA newsletter (*January/February 2009*) there were a couple of articles that reported some little known gems on the MSU campus—the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the dining hall opportunities open to all staff for a small fee.

We had some very positive feed back on these articles as many readers did not know these opportunities existed as part of the day-to-day campus activities available to employees.

If there is something happening in your area that you would like mentioned in the newsletter, let me know. Please note that these should be mentions and opportunities offered to all employees and not just self-serving for a few. For example, issues of fitness and health are important to all. If there is a great cost-savings opportunity or campus fitness group that you want to "shout about," let me know.

Send your information to Cynthia Schneider, Communications Chair/Editor, APA Newsletter, [cynthia@wkar.org](mailto:cynthia@wkar.org). Include basic information as well as contact name and number for follow-up support.

*[Note that the APA does have an editorial policy. Please consult the website for it prior to your submission. All submissions will be held to editorial standards.]*

## 2009 APA Executive Board Nominees & Biographies

\*(B) = Denotes incumbent/current board member.

### **Robert Adams**

#### **Physical Plant Maintenance/Planner/Inspector-Analyst**

I have worked on campus since August of 1986 starting with the Physical Plant Set-Up Crew as a Temporary Employee. My full time employment started at Butterfield Hall followed by the MSU Library. I then transferred to the Physical Plant as a Stockroom Attendant. After obtaining a State Mechanical license I transferred to the Skilled Trades HVAC and Refrigeration departments within the Physical Plant. I obtained my current position as a Planner/Inspector/Analyst in the APA in May of 2005. I feel that I have some valuable insight with the internal workings of unions as well as experience with Labor/Management issues. I have held various offices in AFCME Local 999 including Trustee, District Steward, Chief Steward and Executive Board. I also held the position of District Steward in AFSCME Local 1585. My goal is to improve communication and record keeping within the APA association.

### **Don Bosman**

#### **Libraries/Information Technology Professional**

I have been employed at MSU for a bit under eight years since leaving what had been a portion of the State of Michigan that was privatized. Prior to that I was for over twenty five years self employed under an S Corp. One of my proudest accomplishments was getting a home mortgage as the sole employee of that S. Corp. and paying down half that before international competition led to the decision to close the corporation. My sole goal in running for an APA Executive Board seat is to encourage more openness in the inner workings of our union. Despite the rancor of the last couple of years we still do not have timely posting of board minutes nor a clear understanding of what we are receiving for our payments of over a million dollars a year to the MEA. By the way, sales people, solicitor, the IRS, and relatives call me Donald. My friends and detractors call me Don.

### **Nick Bourland (B)**

#### **CARRS/Administrative Assistant I**

I joined MSU in February 1999 and have since served over 10 years on campus. As an administrative assistant for the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies (CARRS), I primarily work with pre-award proposals and post-award accounting of the department's numerous contracts, grants, and other sponsored projects. Raised within a professional union household of a teacher father and nurse mother, a philosophy of responsible representation and strong work ethic was shared with me and my siblings. My labor experience includes serving as a union representative in the CTU in my earlier MSU days, working over 4 years in a supervisory capacity as a member of the APSA, and helping to revitalize an area representative program in APA. In addition to my career and home life, I am in the process of using MSU's educational benefit to seek a business degree in finance and hope to bring those additional skills to the Executive Board. I hold to a strong philosophy of transparent and timely communication with the members,

advocacy for representation of member needs, adherence to internal policy and procedure, and professional conduct of elected representatives. I ask for your support in electing me to the APA Executive Board.

### **Laurence Farmer**

#### **Housing & Food Service Information Services/ Systems Analyst I**

Larry Farmer is a Systems Analyst for the Division of Housing & Food Service. He has been an MSU employee, and APA member, for 12 years.

### **Deborah J. Sudduth Garland**

#### **College of Nursing/ Executive Staff Assistant**

I am seeking your support to serve the membership of APA and MEA/NEA. I have been employed at MSU for over 23 years and active in union/associations on campus for 12+ years. I have served on the Executive Boards of the CTU (1987-1988) and APSA (1995-2006). My positions on the Executive Boards were as a member of the both APSA and CTU Executive Board and negotiating teams. As a member of the APSA, I also served as Membership Secretary 1999-2006. I am seeking to serve on the APA Executive Board. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experience with my fellow APA members to the best of my ability by listening to your concerns and comments. I request your vote so that I can represent and support you, my fellow APA members, to the best of my ability. Thank you in advance for supporting me. I look forward to serving you.

### **Ramiro Gonzales (B)**

#### **Counseling Center/Social Worker**

Ramiro has been affiliated with MSU, in one capacity or another, for close to 30 years. An MSU alum, he began working for the University as a graduate assistant with the Office of Supportive Services in 1974. From 1977-79, Ramiro was employed as an Admission Officer for the Office of Admissions & Scholarships. Since 1984, he has been a key member of the staff on the Multi-Ethnic Counseling Center Alliance, a unit within the larger Counseling Center. Throughout his adult lifetime, Ramiro has served on the boards for a number of non-profit, community based organizations, including Cristo Rey Community Center, the Office for Young Children and Ingham Regional Medical Center, where he currently sits on committees that deal with issues involving finance, credentialing and community benefit matters. A former Secretary for the Ingham County Democratic Party, Ramiro is "committed to being an advocate for optimizing the benefits of the collective bargaining rights afforded to Administrative Professional support staff and organized labor, in general."

### **Michael Kramizeh**

#### **Language Learning Center/Language Center Technology Coordinator**

I have been employed here at MSU for the last 14 years. I have been a member of the CTU and now the APA. Previously I have been a member of the Bookbinders Union of Chicago, the International Association of Theatrical and Stage Employees and the United Steel Workers Union. I grew up in a United Steel Workers family and strongly believe in the Union

Ethic. I support APA membership in the MEA. In times like these it's important to have the resources that the MEA/NEA can bring to the table. That said I am running for an executive board position because the APA needs to be accountable to its union membership. I want to insure that your dues are fair and are being spent appropriately. I want you to have your voice heard at open board meetings. I will not support the continuation of back room business meetings. There's been a lot of talk about "change" lately. It's time our union had some changes as well. I will do my very best to see that your union works for you.

**Danny Layne**

**Julian Samora Research Institute/Hardware & Software Coordinator**

I have served as this Hispanic Research Center's Network & Publications Administrator for more than a decade. Besides writing, editing, photography, and layout & design, my responsibilities include the maintenance and upkeep of about 25 computers and two computer networks — an internal Local Area Network and a web server. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from MSU and an Associate of Arts Degree in Photography. I am a long-standing APA Union Member, but have never served in any APA Union position. I believe in and promote self-empowerment and self-determination (or self-actualization and direct legislation) and think that — together — we can continually have a positive impact in all areas our Union. Transparency and immediacy, in all aspects of APA Union business, are the keys to accomplishing that.

**Vivian Leung (B)**

**Eli Broad College of Business/Associate Director for Corporate & Foundation Relations**

She has been employed at Michigan State University since 2006. She has a history of political activism and worked for political candidates raising money for 13 years prior to coming to MSU. She is committed to making APA a better union for all of its members.

**Leo Sell (B)**

**Academic Technology Services/Information Technology Professional**

Leo is the recent past Chairperson (President) of the APA, serving as an executive board member since 1994, and as Chairperson (President) from 1995 until 2008. In addition to the board, he serves on the Grievance Committee. Leo has participated as a team member or lead bargainer on nine bargaining teams for the APA and the Coalition of Labor Organizations. He continues to counsel members in workplace issues, protecting members' rights and interests. His is a voice of experience on the board as new leadership develops. He also serves on the MEA Board and is highly respected by other leaders -- while being known for promoting the interests of the broader membership, particularly the interests of both Higher Ed and Educational Support Professionals. He also chairs the local MEA Political Action Committee. Leo has helped make the APA a vital and engaged player within MSU, MEA and with lawmakers. He says, *"I am very proud of the relationships that we have built as an Association within the University, MEA,*

*and at the state Capitol. I laid the groundwork, and I believe our continuing efforts in all these arenas have made the APA a particularly effective labor organization."*

**Rachel Zakhem (B)**

**Academic Technology Services/Site License Coordinator**

I have been a member of the APA for almost nine years and a board member for more than five. I have also served as a grievance committee member for those five years. I believe that we have some difficult times approaching and as an executive board member, I am committed to representing all APA members to make sure that the benefits that we receive are preserved and improved upon for the foreseeable future.

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