



A Union of Professionals

1274 Newsline



North Suburban Teachers Union – Local 1274, CFL, IFT/AFT, AFL-CIO

December 2010

Dan Montgomery elected to head IFT

In a clear recognition of the strength of our local leadership, NSTU President Dan Montgomery was elected president of the IFT at the annual convention in St. Louis in October. He is joined in statewide leadership by Karen Lewis of the Chicago Teacher’s Union and Marcia Boone (who is also a PSRP) from Southwestern Illinois College in Belleville.

Steve Grossman, who replaces Montgomery as Local 1274 president, pointed out that Local 1274 had its biggest delegation ever to an IFT convention. “It was important to have a strong presence to show our support for Dan in his run for president.” Grossman was also elected to the IFT Executive Board as a Vice President.

Dan Montgomery follows a long tradition of Local 1274 members taking prominent leadership roles in the IFT, including former President Jim Dougherty (still an emeritus member of the 1274 Executive Board), and Field Service Director Kathy Shaevel, who began as President of the East Prairie Council. (See article on page 2.)

“There’s no right we have we didn’t fight to get, and there’s no right that we won’t have to fight to keep,” said Montgomery in his acceptance speech.

Montgomery was opposed for a time by Perry Buckley, President of the City Colleges of Cook County local, who ran in a show of opposition to the new leadership structure of the IFT. The proposed three officer structure came about as a result of careful study and discussion. It provides for a more representative statewide leadership, such as we see with the election of Montgomery, Lewis and Boone. After a long and transparent process in which the proposal was thoroughly vetted, it was offered as an amendment at the convention. When it passed, Buckley withdrew his candidacy and Montgomery was elected by acclamation.

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Dan Montgomery’s acceptance speech as President of the IFT was a high point of the IFT Convention for Local 1274 delegates. In addition, Montgomery energized the convention with his call to defend our rights. To learn more, go to ift-aft.org, which has a link to the entire speech.

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On the left, delegates Joe Edwards and Tim Miller listen intently.

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In his acceptance speech, a high point for Local 1274 delegates, Montgomery energized the crowd by calling on our members to stay strong in the face of continued attacks against our profession. Delegates also heard from big names in Illinois politics, including IFT endorsed candidates Jesse White (Secretary of State) and Sheila Simon (now Lieutenant Governor). State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias and Governor Pat Quinn both sent video messages thanking the IFT for our endorsements and pledging support for public education. Delegates also heard from AFT President Randi Weingarten, who spoke once more about the attacks on public education and the continuing effort to privatize the nation's schools.

In addition, a variety of resolutions were passed which can be found on the IFT website (www.ift-aft.org). ■



Our Local delegation, the biggest ever for an IFT convention, sported their 1274 teeshirts. "It was important to have a strong presence to show our support for Dan in his run for president," said Steve Grossman.

Local 1274: A tradition of leadership

The election of Dan Montgomery as IFT President is impressive, and a testament to his inspiring leadership, but it is hardly something new in the history of Local 1274.

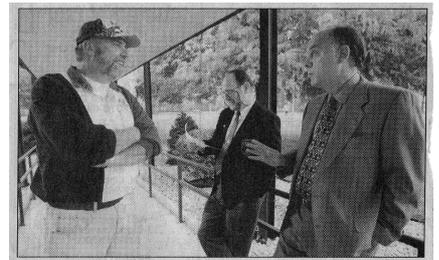
Our tradition of leadership dates back to 1970, when the original District 219 union (NTFT) created a federated local embracing councils from surrounding elementary and middle school districts. The first of our leaders to move to statewide office was Ken Drum, who was the Local president from 1971 to 1974. After the 1973 strike in District 219, he was enlisted to serve as the IFT Secretary-Treasurer.

Drum was followed in more recent years by Jim Dougherty (pictured on the right in a newspaper story from 1976), an early NTFT organizer and president of Local 1274 from 1981 to 2000. He served as president of the IFT from 2001 to 2007.

Another early NTFT leader, Charles "Chuck" Burdeen, became a

Field Service Director for the IFT and helped organize Lake County. Local 504 is now one of the state's largest locals. Another Field Service Director originating from Local 1274 is Ray O'Keefe, who was an NTFT leader in the early 80s and joined the IFT staff in 1984. Kathy Shaevel, currently our star Field Service Director, was president of the East Prairie Council and served as a Local Vice President.

Other Local leaders have made their marks in other ways. Nancy Tripp was a teacher who was fired in 1970 and then rehired after winning an arbitration hearing. She went on to become a union leader and a prominent labor lawyer.



Teacher union leaders (from left) Jim Sweeney and Frank Mayfield wait outside Niles Township High School District 219 headquarters with school board lawyer Tony Scariano before Tuesday's negotiations.

Jim Sweeney, who was the Local president from 1974 to 1979, came back into leadership in the 1990s and continued to do organizing work for the SEIU in his retirement. Jim is shown above (in the cap) during the 1996 District 219 strike.

Who knows which of our local activists may become the union leaders of the future? ■



From the President

At its November meeting, the NSTU Executive Board appointed Steve Grossman to the office of president, filling the vacancy created by the election of Dan Montgomery as president of the Illinois

Federation of Teachers.

Steve has been on the NSTU Executive Board for the past eight years, most recently in the position of Executive Vice President.

Prior to that Steve served As the Local's Defense Chair, as a member of its PAC Committee, and as a regional PAC chairperson

for the IFT. A social studies teacher at Niles West High School, Steve has served since 1997 in various leadership roles for the Niles Township Federation of Teachers including a four-year stint as president. With his appointment as president of the NSTU, Steve will serve the remainder of Dan Montgomery's two-year term, through May of 2012. Also at the November meeting, the Executive Board appointed Lyndy Massoth, president of the Fairview Teachers Union, District 72, to serve in the position of Executive Vice President for the remainder of Grossman's term.



Prior to the recent national elections, I settled in one night to watch the televised debate between the two senatorial candidates in Delaware, Democrat Chris Coons and Tea Party Republican Christine O'Donnell, endorsed by Sarah Palin. Like a person who cannot stop himself from staring at a car accident, I tuned in to the debate to see just how absurd our politics have become.

But what left the greatest impression on me during the debate was not the performance of O'Donnell; it was the moment about halfway through the debate when the moderator directed the first education question to the Democrat. After briefly reviewing the troubled state of our public schools, the question was, "Do you believe that teachers unions have become too powerful?" The insinuation was clear: the problem with schools today is teachers and their unions.

That anecdote is just one small reminder that we as teachers and unionists are in the midst of an unprecedented attack, both locally and nationally, by a variety of social and political leaders and pundits, many of whom present themselves as educational "reformers." Though the topics might change – pensions, tenure, accountability, student achievement, seniority, bargaining rights, compensation, evaluation, competence, school choice, vouchers, charter schools, etc. – the narrative remains the same: our public

schools are in an unprecedented decline and ineffective teachers and the unions who protect them are to blame.

Of course it is all a bunch of nonsense and full of distortion, but the more a lie is told, the more likely the general audience will accept it as truth. How many of us have found ourselves having to defend our profession to even close friends and family members who have latched onto the easy sound bites of our opponents? "***Unions protect bad teachers; tenure is a job for life; your pensions have bankrupted our state; why should my taxes pay for you to have a salary for life?***" – and so on.

In the face of that overly-simplistic criticism, it can be difficult to find the right words in rebuttal. Yet that highlights the crux of the problem: the challenges of providing publicly funded education for all citizens are incredibly complex. There are no easy answers. But that is exactly what some of the pundits offer, easy answers: get rid of tenure and fire all the bad teachers, measure teacher effectiveness based on students' standardized test scores, offer merit pay, allow families to use public money to send their children to private and charter schools, save money by converting pension plans to 401Ks, etc.

The challenges of providing publicly funded education for all citizens are incredibly complex. There are no easy answers.

Those "easy answers" are all wrong and not just wrong because they are bad for teachers, but because they threaten our entire system of public education. While our opponents continue to scapegoat teachers, we know – and research shows that the vast majority of the public agrees – that we are the heroes in this story, the one's who have made it our career and our lives' mission to educate our students. Tearing down our profession is not the answer; we must get out there and tell our story -- the real story -- and build up our profession to attract the best and the brightest into it.



Since our opponents continue to scapegoat teachers, we must get out there and tell the real story.

In the coming issues of this newsletter we will be examining some of these divisive issues up close to point out both the fallacies of our opponents' arguments, and the union's position on a real way forward.

In Solidarity,
Steve

Education guru bashes *Superman*

This fall's release of the documentary *Waiting for Superman* unleashed a deluge of commentary. A recent issue of the *New York Review of Books* included an essay by education specialist Diane Ravitch, who offers a scathing critique that may be of interest to those of you who sat through the movie in frustrated rage.

Ravitch is a historian of education, a former Assistant Secretary of Education, a professor at New York University and the author of many books on education. Originally a supporter of No Child Left Behind, she soon became disillusioned and has emerged as a strong critic of current education policies.



In her article, Ravitch writes that “the message of the film is clear. Public schools are bad, privately managed charter schools are good.” And, of course, the problem with public schools is bad teachers.

Ravitch responds with some fact-checking. Among the points she makes are:

- The film ignores the fact that there are twice as many failing charter schools as there are successful ones.
- There is no mention of the effect of poverty on student achievement, which studies show even the best teachers cannot always overcome.
- The hero of the film, charter school creator Geoffrey Canada, has access to enormous financial resources, yet his own schools' low test scores show that even the best-funded charters cannot completely negate the effects of poverty. Other successful charters, such as SEED in Washington, D.C., spend as much as \$35,000 per student, three times the average spending in public schools.
- It is not so easy to identify “bad” teachers. Use of test scores to rate teachers is biased, giving an advantage to teachers in affluent districts and creating an incentive for teachers to avoid districts with the neediest students.

The entire article is available at:
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/nov/11/myth-charter-schools/>

Council Corner

SS 39 – The district's financial status has the union and administration meeting on a regular basis concerning cuts and priorities. The Board of Education is considering a referendum in April. We have formed a committee to review and discuss the ramifications.

District 71 – We held a well attended union meeting to push support for our Democratic ticket in the elections. Everyone understood the urgency and felt their votes counted.

District 219 NTFT – After 2 ½ years of discussion and negotiation, the NTFT and the administration agreed to adopt a new teacher evaluation system called Peer Assistance and Review (PAR). A longer report will be included in a future newsletter.

District 234 – We are beginning negotiations in November. We have completed a needs assessment of union members. We have also put together a negotiating committee, which has compiled a list of issues to bring to the table.

District 807 – The union and administration have agreed to delay contract talks until January of 2011.

Retirees – We worked long and hard on the Biss election. We covered the East Prairie area like a blanket.

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