



Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

Volume 14

*****Member Edition*****

June 2008

Thank you, Members

NTEU standing together for the good of the group. This is the basic tenant of unionism. There can be no union without "U."

EMBEDDED QUALITY: FAIRNESS OR FAILURE?

**-Karen Johnson, Chief Steward and
Member of the Board**

A prior series of articles in our newsletter from then Vice President and Chief Steward **Jeri Burger** centered on the grievance process, performance appraisals, and evaluative recordations. Now that Jeri has assumed her duties as chapter President, and I have been appointed chief steward, I would like to continue the series. Jeri's last article on evaluative recordations included Embedded Quality Reviews, or what we have commonly come to know as EQ. This system of review has evolved into the bane of many IRS employees.

At its onset, EQ was designed to serve as only one factor in the evaluative process that managers would use to rate employees based on the critical job elements of their position. Other factors to be considered in the overall appraisal process included managerial observations, review of other work not related to EQ attributes, office visits, field visits, observations of interactions with the public and co-workers, other evaluative recordations, and self assessments, just to name a few. So why is management slowing moving towards reliance on EQ as the sole factor when evaluating employees?

The EQ system is designed to demonstrate that employees are performing at a fully successful

level, nothing more. What does this mean to IRS employees? It means that last year's 4 or 5 is this year's 3. While you may have a belief that you are exceeding in your Critical Job Elements, or deserve an outstanding rating in a CJE, management believes you are just doing your job at a fully successful level.

NTEU believes that the IRS has engaged in subterfuge over the intent of EQ. The anniversary of the Letter of Understanding between IRS and NTEU is upon us. This is the opportunity for the Union to reopen the discussion on EQ. As a starting point, our National President, Colleen Kelley, has asked to meet directly with SB/SE Commissioner Kathy Petronchak to resolve these concerns. NTEU is prepared to mount a full assault on the system that is having such a negative impact upon our members.

In the meantime, NTEU encourages all employees to self promote by turning in good work to your manager for review and recordation. Prepare a self-assessment to be turned in within 30 days of the end of your rating period. Keep a written record of the type of work you complete which you believe demonstrates outstanding performance. If you believe that your annual performance appraisal is not a fair and objective analysis of your overall performance, contact your steward immediately. NTEU stewards will provide the assistance you need to address and resolve your concerns.

The next article will focus strictly on the nuances of performance appraisal grievances.



We Get Letters

Karen:

I always knew labor unions mattered, but until recently I never had the personal need to be represented by the Union. I learned first hand that without the American Labor Movement there is no safe American worker. The union has allowed me as a worker to be respected as an equal and to be protected against arbitrary discrimination.

Anyone who believes that unions remove 'freedoms' from employees is wrong. The only 'freedoms' unions remove are the freedom to work for low pay; the freedom to be fired without cause; the freedom to have no benefits (or prohibitively expensive benefits); the freedom to have little or no say over working conditions; and the freedom to be unjustly treated by management.

We all have the unions to thank for 40 hour work weeks, two days off per week, and living wages. Experience has long shown that employees making a living wage contribute tremendously to economic growth, and that employers freed of constraint exploit their employees.

Most legal workplace protections wouldn't be there without unions. If unions were nonexistent, many of the legal protections we take for granted would also be nonexistent. Joining together in unions is the only way that individual workers can have a voice to defend pay, working conditions and benefits—whether legal or bargained. Unions are the only means to make sure that management lives up to its corporate and social responsibility not to sicken, injure, kill, and exploit workers and the community.

Karen, you took the time to develop a relationship with one of your members by getting to personally know about me and my working conditions. You became well informed with my issue, and I respect you for that. You accurately communicated to management and were strong in stressing fair treatment.

Karen, you were my voice and fought to fix unfair treatment. As Chief Steward of Chapter 24, you fight so hard. If one dedicated steward can make a difference, one brave woman can be willing to stand up and back off management, I think we owe you a debt. I know that I do. You are dedicated to helping your co-workers. I can at-

test to that. You do it because you know it is right. Thank you for your time and thank you for caring.

Even if we don't win, I know that we don't win them all, but if we don't fight, we will lose them all. Karen, thank you, and know that I appreciate what you do for IRS bargaining unit employees.

--Name withheld at request of the author.

*Editor's Note—Karen Johnson is an excellent Chief Steward. The Chapter could not ask for better. That being said, if you need assistance from NTEU, please contact your local steward.

Management Denies Your Grievance. Now What?

-Jeri Burger, Chapter President

Arbitration is the next step if your grievance is denied by Management. An arbitration is similar to a court proceeding. An arbitrator conducts a hearing and then renders a binding decision. At the arbitration hearing, the Agency attorney and NTEU attorney argue points of law and the National Agreement. Not all cases can or should go to arbitration. The decision to take a case to arbitration is based upon the merits of the individual case and the corresponding likelihood of winning a favorable decision. This is important because losing a case sets an unfavorable precedent that can impact future actions and cases. In other words, if a weak case is lost in arbitration the resulting loss can and will negatively impact any similar subsequent cases. Chapter 24 forwards the vast majority of the relevant cases to our attorney for arbitration consideration. The merits of each case are thoroughly reviewed and discussed before the decision is made to arbitrate or not. Most of the cases we forward are accepted. If the merits do not support a favorable decision we have no choice but to decline the case for arbitration. We can not risk the potential harm to the bargaining unit as a whole for the benefit of one member. The grievant does still have the right and ability to take their case to another forum, the Merit Systems Protection Board.

In the past four years, the Agency has become far more heavy-handed in proposing discipline and adverse action penalties. Rather than using penalties to correct behavior as the National Agreement and the Penalty Guide (Document 11500) prescribe, proposed penalties are harsh beyond the limits of reason. NTEU has been very successful in returning fairness and sanity to the penalty process through grievances and arbitration.

President's Corner

Spring Training

-Jeri Burger, Chapter President

NTEU Chapter 24 had its annual steward training the week of May 5. The venue this year was Frankenmuth. As this is our only opportunity to meet as a group, I was particularly pleased that all the Chapter 24 stewards were able to attend. Chapter 24 takes our stewardship very seriously, and training the stewards is the first and best step. We welcomed 8 new stewards to their first training session. We were also joined by 5 members of Chapter 44, Toledo, Ohio.

NTEU Assistant Counsel, **Thomas Coates**, was one of the instructors. He discussed, among other topics, grievance and arbitration procedures and strategies. We also had a "Past Presidents" panel. Former Presidents **Barney Rutkowski**, **Larry Baugh**, **Phyllis Vidler**, and **Ron Woytalewicz** addressed the stewards. They spoke about the main issues, challenges, and victories during their tenures. It was amazing to hear that we are still fighting some of the same battles from 30 years ago.

Several stewards were honored for their extraordinary efforts during the past year:

Steward of the Year was awarded to **Mary Cook**. Mary has been a steward for 17 years. She has also served as a Board Member for many years. Mary is always willing to help the chapter in whatever needs to be done. She not only does excellent representational work for her members in East Lansing and Jackson, but also readily agrees to handle any "out state" member's issue.

New Steward of the Year recognition went to **Gregory Wert**. Greg represents the members in the Office of Employee Protection and Advisory Collection. Greg worked very hard on his first grievance, which was accepted for arbitration. He is a very zealous advocate for his members, Chapter 24, and NTEU, and worthy of the new steward award.

ACS Steward **Brenda Lowery** was given the "**Timex Award**" because she "takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin'." ACS managers have tried to stymie Brenda's enthusiasm and passion when representing her members in ACS. But Brenda keeps doing the right things and stands up to the managers, who try to quash her rights as a steward and her members' rights to representation.

Henry Morrison was named **Volunteer of the Year**. Henry is always willing and able to tackle some of the hardest discipline/adverse action cases. He is an original member of the oral reply committee. Henry is known as the "research gu-

ru" for Chapter 24. He is always willing to share his knowledge and expertise. Henry is also the Chapter Treasurer. He spends many hours of his own time keeping our books and records up to date.

David Hauenstein was recognized for his excellent representational abilities. David is also a member of the oral reply committee. David, of course, was also honored for his outstanding work and dedication to this newsletter.

Thank you to all the stewards for your hard work and advocacy for the members of Chapter 24!

Look for Chief Steward **Karen Johnson** and me at a Lunch and Learn in your POD. I intend to have a lunch time meeting in all of the PODs sometime this year. I look forward to meeting as many members as possible. Please look for the flyers!

Sound Off!



"Please remind group managers that they should not use polite or bullying tactics to see who took the survey or what they said. Otherwise, the survey results are tainted."

Got something you want to tell us or others about? Want to express your opinion anonymously? We'd really like to hear from you.

Leave your message at **(313) 628-3864** and we will print reasonable topics. Please speak distinctly and limit your comments to a few sentences.

HAILS FROM THE CHIEF

-Karen Johnson, Chief Steward

Our Chapter continues to have one of our busiest years ever. We have 57 open grievances and other issues. Cases invoked for arbitration total 11. We continue to prevail at a very high success rate. Members and stewards have asked that we provide more information on the successes of our grievances, so here goes:

Chapter 24 recently resolved an Article 16 grievance in which we alleged that a member was

working higher graded duties without being compensated. The member was awarded a retroactive temporary promotion.

An employee who had a 2007 leave entitlement under the Family Medical Leave Act reapplied for the same time to cover the 2008 leave year. Because this member had switched to part time, the Agency tried to narrow the scope of the time off from 480 hours to just 16. The member sought advice from Chapter 24. We provided the advice and encouragement our member needed to push back, while working with the primary care physician and the Federal Occupations Health Professional. The result was approval of the full 480 hours for the 2008 leave year.

Chapter 24 successfully resolved a case through the arbitration process involving a UNAX violation. The member had been proposed for termination. NTEU presented facts and circumstances at the arbitration hearing proving the Agency did not adhere to the principles of progressive discipline; acting instead, outside the Agency's own penalty guide. The arbitrator ruled that termination was inappropriate because of the Agency's failure to abide by the tolerable limits of reasonableness. Our member was reinstated with back pay minus a 90 day suspension as the appropriate discipline for the offense.

Chapter 24 also recently received an arbitration award that was a split decision where NTEU proved that the Agency violated a past practice in determining seat assignments.

At press time, this issue is in process of resolution.

Kudos to the following stewards for their excellent representational efforts:

Mary Cook, Leonard Hanline, Ella Porter, Donna Jones, Brenda Lowery, Acqueneese King, Patricia Buchanan, Scott Marshall, Jesse Dawkins, and Greg Wert.

Who Said It?

- "The price of apathy in public affairs is to be ruled by evil men."
- "The law is free from passion."

Know the answer to either? Both? Call me, David Hauenstein @ (248) 874-2210 or E-mail me at david.b.hauenstein@irs.gov. If you are the first to answer correctly, you'll get kudos in the next newsletter and a small prize of nominal value from NTEU Chapter 24.

I.R.S. Titanic



-Gregory T. Wert, Steward

I always love the news articles that begin, "Scientists have discovered." In this case, the New York Times story by William Broad referred to research on the sinking of the *Titanic* 96 years ago on April 15, 1912. Of course, it's impossible to ignore any opportunity to use the *RMS Titanic* as a metaphor for the IRS.

Especially when you hear why: because of contracting out of rivet production beyond the usual supplier, the substandard rivets failed when the ship hit an iceberg. You can't make this stuff up. Rivets were in short supply because each of the several ships under construction required over 3 million rivets. Apparently, the same faulty logic that is encouraging the government to contract out tax collection efforts was in operation in Britain. It's easy for us to see the consequences of someone who says, "Let's get people who've never made rivets for us before, who have never met our standards and requirements, to solve our life and death problem."

The crisis was well documented, but I can imagine some genius's remark: "Well, they're only rivets; anybody can make them." Or: "These contractors will be good for business." Or maybe: "Think about all the money we'll save." We all know how the story ends.

If we want to avoid the same result as the *Titanic* then it's pretty obvious that the nuts and bolts production of the IRS should remain in-house. Isn't it?

The Eclipse of the American Worker

-Dan Itchue, Chapter Vice President

There are two primary duties of any and all labor unions:

1. To protect employees from unfair labor practices, discrimination, retaliation, etc.

2. Negotiation: bargaining over pay and benefits, personnel policies, work processes, safety, etc.

We have seen most vividly in the past several years the catastrophic and dramatic concessions American labor unions have been forced to make in the private sector. In just May of this year, the United Auto Workers were forced to give a 35% pay reduction to American Axle. And these workers are not alone. Industry's answer to the American worker is: give concessions or we will outsource your job overseas.

However, this is not the case in the public labor sector. Despite the efforts of the current Administration, federal employee unions remain strong, and maintain the rights and benefits of their members. NTEU is the largest federal employee union, and is a leader in securing, negotiating, and maintaining the rights of its bargaining unit employees. The contract negotiated between NTEU and IRS is the most liberally beneficial contract available to public employees, save the Post Office.

But NTEU, like any union, is only as strong as its membership. The Administration and IRS want to whittle away at our rights and benefits. Our contract has been under renegotiation for two years. IRS has been determined to outsource Collection functions. The personnel policies at Homeland Defense and Transportation Safety Administration are from the Dark Ages. The more members we have, and the more active and vocal they are, the more IRS, the Administration, Congress, and the American people will have to recognize us, our rights and benefits, and our service to the country.

One has to wonder what the Native Americans felt as the *Mayflower* dropped anchor off Plymouth Rock, or UAW workers thought when the first Toyotas were offloaded. Could it have been something like: It can't happen here. It couldn't happen to me.

Public Transportation Subsidy Program -John Stevens, Steward

With the ever rising price of gasoline, many IRS employees may be beginning to feel the pinch in their wallets for the daily commute to work. Unfortunately, many of the lowest salaried employees are not eligible to work Flexiplace. The IRS Public Transportation Subsidy Program (PTSP) might be an alternative means of commuting.

Any IRS employee using public transportation to commute to and from work may apply for a

PTSP subsidy. Once approved, the IRS will pay a subsidy toward your commuting cost. The funds are not treated as income; they are not taxable. Employees may apply for the subsidy at any time, by using Form 11664-A, or Form 11664-B for vanpools. Both forms require managerial approval. Once approved, the employee is entitled to one of two types of subsidies:

1. Transit pass/vouchers, which are normally distributed on a quarterly basis, and used for public transportation, such as buses. They cannot be exchanged for cash, transferred to other employees, nor given, loaned, or sold to others. These pass/vouchers are distributed prior to the employee incurring the travel and expense.
2. Cash Reimbursements are normally used for vanpools, and are limited to \$115 a month. Cash reimbursements are distributed after the travel and expense has been incurred.

The program is open to all eligible IRS employees and Chief Counsel Employees.

It is important to point out that if an employee requests the vouchers, they must actually use them for commuting, or return the vouchers to the Agency. It is not intended as a backup means of transportation for an unreliable car or bad weather. Employees are being disciplined for this mistake.

For more information on the Public Transportation Subsidy Program, go to the IRS homepage, and click on ERC. The information is available under "Travel and Relocation".

Steward in the Spotlight



Gregory T. Wert

I began my IRS career as a revenue officer in 1987 in Norfolk, VA, a few years after graduating from UM. Prior to working for IRS I sold life insurance and cars and made cans for Plant-

ers peanuts. I attended Troy Athens HS and was born in Henry Ford Hospital, which my van pool now drives past every workday. So I guess I've come full circle.

I've worked in Detroit for ten years after about a year in Memphis, Tennessee. Prior to that, I lost money owning real estate for five years in Washington, DC. At least I met my wife there and we had our first daughter there.

As a new steward I am enjoying helping other NTEU members with whatever situations they may be in, along with other official representation duties.

I believe our union is an important benefit. Although we take things like credit hours and alternate work schedules for granted, management didn't just give them to us; they were earned through hard work.

I also believe in the principles of justice and mercy; being a steward provides me many opportunities to apply these codes. A retired RO told me once that, "if you don't do anything wrong then you don't have anything to worry about." That was before he dealt with a difficult manager.

I have many things for which to be grateful: faith, family, friends, health, and my job. The government has been a good career, and benefits such as mobility have broadened my horizons. If you know me then you know I'd like to add more, but the editor tells me he needs this space for more valuable information, so...

Feedback

In the previous newsletter, we ran an article explaining why there was a member/non-member edition of the newsletter. In it, we stated: "Non-members get most of the same benefits and protections provided by the union without paying for it. Just as Illegal Tax Protestors—we can use that expression here—still get the same protections and benefits provided by the United States Government."

In response to that, we received the following response:

*"That a union sponsored newsletter would make a direct comparison between **ME** and an Illegal Tax Protestor reminds me why I'm not a member. Making such an offensive comment is not the way to invite new members. You don't want to be a thief? Join the union."*

(Note: the word "thief" does not appear in our article.)

And in contrast, we also received:

"I think these are excellent (non- and member version) particularly the explanation as to why there are two editions."

Opinion/Editorial

ANOTHER OPEN LETTER

TO NON-MEMBERS

-Dan Itchue, Chapter Vice President

We have a problem that only you, non-member, can solve!

As a union, we are not fully using our power, through membership, in our struggle to win and maintain basic rights as employees and human beings with IRS and the federal government. With our membership rate hovering around 75% of all eligible bargaining unit employees, we employees are telling management, Congress, and the entire country that they don't have to take us seriously. Why should they, they say, when there are over 25,000 IRS employees who won't pay for NTEU protection and advocacy?

Do these words strike a familiar bell? They probably should, as membership is a common theme of [Firebird 24](#). Previously, I wrote an open letter to all non-members regarding "Free Riders". That article was intended to show the harmful impact of non-members. The article was also intended to convey the benefits of membership in NTEU; e.g. Flexiplace, AWS, and part-time schedules—all benefits earned directly and solely by the efforts of NTEU. I know at least four non-members in my POD who enjoy the benefits won them by the Herculean efforts of NTEU; efforts which could not have been made without the backing and support of DUES paying members across the country. These members have been approached and asked why they won't join NTEU. I find their answers perplexing. I know that some people are simply philosophically opposed to unionization, yet still willing to enjoy all the benefits that our hard earned dues have won. There are those who feel they really can't afford the bi-weekly union dues. These people should ask themselves why they pay other insurances, but not the insurance of NTEU. I know people have dropped their membership because of real differences of opinion with past (and maybe present) local union leadership. Members can vote for their union leaders.

These musings are only relevant for one reason. The contributors to and editors of this newsletter have heard complaints regarding our appeals to you as non-members to reconsider joining NTEU. We have been described as "insulting" and "ignorant" in our approach. While I can

respect a person's stance on an issue without agreeing with them, I can't respect someone who is insulted when I voice my opinion. Disagree with me on the merits of the issue. Explain to me why you believe membership in NTEU is not beneficial or helpful. I don't even mind a nice heated exchange once in awhile. But to anonymously say that you are insulted? Have the courage to step forward, give me a call, and let me know why I'm wrong. Frankly, I'm insulted by your non-membership for this reason: you gladly take advantage of the benefits that our efforts have won for all employees. You may "legally" be entitled to share in these benefits, but, because you don't pay dues, why don't you refuse to share in the "Union" won benefit? That seems to be the honorable thing to do. Please understand that I respect your right to disagree with me. I hope that you also respect my right to voice my opinion. And, I also hope that you will at least consider the merits of what I've said. I truly believe that membership is in all employees' best interests.

Did You Know?

-Marianne Gordon, Chapter Secretary

Article 36 Section 9 allows employees Administrative Time to donate blood as well as reasonable time to travel to the site to donate blood (this would not be your post of duty), and 4 hours of admin to recover after donating. More time can be granted that day if needed for recuperation. Only the time needed to travel and attempt to donate will be granted in admin leave if the employee is unable to donate.

-And more from Victor Jackson, Member of the Board

Effective March 11, 2008, the City of Detroit has passed an ordinance prohibiting text messaging while driving. This is a secondary offense, meaning that you cannot be pulled over simply for this violation; there must be another, more serious violation. However, there is already in effect a 2006 ordinance in the City of Detroit prohibiting the use of hand-held cell phones. This can be either a primary or secondary offense.

Membership Meeting

Breaking with a long-standing tradition, Chapter 24 held a general membership meeting for metro-Detroit outside of the city. Instead, it was held at **Alibi Restaurant** in Troy. The turnout was approximately forty-seven people, which

was more than the attendance we were getting at **Nemo's** in recent years. Issues that were discussed were:

Chief Steward **Karen Johnson** discussed grievance trends. The number of grievances, as well as discipline/adverse action cases the Chapter is working is on the rise. Also, a growing trend is for the Agency to treat performance problems as Code of Conduct violations, and attempt to terminate employees via that route.

Chapter Vice President **Dan Itchue** discussed legislative issues, including the government pension offset and the windfall elimination provision.

President **Jeri Burger** discussed the contract negotiations, and how IRS and NTEU are still negotiating on how to negotiate. These negotiations are of paramount importance, as the Agency is looking to take back all that NTEU has won in the past 20 years, including Flexiplace, Alternate Work Schedules, and the annual awards agreement. Also, NTEU is looking to renegotiate the Embedded Qualities agreement, as management is not using it as the Letter of Understanding stated. IRS has a new commissioner, but he is an unknown commodity for now. He may, or may not, leave when the current administration leaves office. President Bush is proposing a 2.9% pay raise; NTEU is pushing for the same as the military: 3.9%. GSA is asking Congress that when IRS changes the mileage rate, it goes in effect for government employees the same time it does for the general public; under current procedures, government employees have to wait until GSA concurs with IRS. Chapter 24 has pressured IRS to install a wall between the lobby and the restrooms in the Pontiac Post of Duty, so that employees are not accosted by the public when using the facilities. And finally, Jeri informed the members that the Shared Work Stations (us old-timers remember them as MOWS) initiative has been put on hold; your desk is still just your desk. No hot bunking.

Financial Survival in the "Lost Decade"

-Gregory T. Wert, Steward

As this decade gains a moniker as a time of declining stock market and housing values, federal employees need to be especially wise. Downturns typically become times for federal employees to come out of hibernation financially. It's easy to understand why: In the boom times federal employees typically have neither

the means nor the inclination to compete against other generously compensated workers.

For those who have saved money during the good times, now might be a good time to take advantage of any hungry retailers that have lowered their prices to more acceptable levels.

For those who are struggling, especially because of high gas prices, you need to find out if taking the bus or joining a van pool is possible for you. Unless you go into the field everyday, public transportation can save you hundreds of dollars each month, plus the wear and tear on your vehicle. I've counseled people with negative cash flow and this is a meaningful big item.

To combat high food prices, this year more than ever, it's time to grow your own vegetables. I love the taste of home grown tomatoes, and they are expensive at the grocery store. Green beans are cheap but a few bush beans can produce for months. I haven't had luck with green peppers or corn. Don't forget to protect your garden from grazing critters which are abundant. Eating healthy can improve your overall health, which really is your best asset.

Tips like turning the thermostat down in winter and up in summer are timeless. Combine trips to the store to save gas. Shop your insurance rates when they come due. Pay your bills on time to improve your FICO score (a credit score). Pay off any high interest debt. Live below your means.

Finally, this is probably not a good year to take long trips. Keep an eye on Michigan destinations and look for a deal at your favorite spot or even somewhere you have never been.

Good luck!

S.O.A.R. Breakfast

-Phyllis Vidler

Chapter 24 officers, board members, and members recently attended the S.O.A.R breakfast held on April 20, 2008, in Livonia.

You might be asking yourself what does S.O.A.R. stand for.

Well, I will tell you. It stands for Save Our Annuity and Retirement. It was started to do exactly that: save our pensions. Congress has, over the past 38 years since I have been a member of Chapter 24, taken back many benefits from our retirement package. **Clyde Moore**, former NARFE chapter president, is now president of SOAR, with our own **Kathy McHugh** a Trustee, and **Larry Baugh**, Vice-President.

SOAR lobbies our congressional delegates on our behalf to stop the erosion of our federal pen-

sions, much like NARFE, AARP, and NTEU. Each year they hold a breakfast as a fundraiser and invite our Michigan delegation to speak. This year, the only Congressional person to speak in person was Senator **Debbie Stabenow**. The rest of our delegation sent their staff. **Kathy McHugh**, our Legislative co-coordinator, arranged for a one-on-one meeting with Senator Stabenow after the breakfast. **Jeri Burger**, **Karen Johnson**, and **Dan Itchue** accompanied her.

The following were, also, guest speakers: **Tom Johnson**, NARFE, Region IV Field Vice-President, and NARFE Federation State President **Ed Kessler**. From the National Association of Letter Carriers: **Patrick Carroll**, National Business Agent for our region and **Frederick Rolando**, National Executive Vice-President. It was interesting to listen to Mr. Rolando talk about the contracting out in the postal service.

Additional items discussed were Premium conversion, WEP-GPO, IRS contracting out, and OPM's request to have separate health plans for retirees.

There were over 300 people in attendance.

This is just one of the many activities and events Chapter 24 does to make sure our members get their voices heard and concerns raised.



Overheard

Retired Chapter President Barney Rutkowski stated to the assembled stewards in their annual training: "Getting fired by Internal Revenue Service is like getting bounced from a leper colony. You don't want that hanging over your head."

Life After the IRS

-Marianne Gordon, Chapter Secretary

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Marianne Gordon. I started with the IRS two weeks after I graduated from college. I retired on August 3, 2007, after a little over 32 years with the IRS. Some of my family members and friends were concerned about what I was going to do with all my "free time" once I retired.

One of the first things I did was to sign up for a water aerobics class; I'm still taking the class and know most of the people in it.

I volunteered for AARP Tax-Aide at the Livonia Senior Center. There was a week long class and a competency test. The season ran from February 1 through April 15. I worked two days a week. At our site we had 22 volunteers and did over 1,300 returns! Since it was at the senior center most of the people using the service were seniors. I prepared returns for three people that were 100 years old. I plan on doing this again next filing season.

I have taken two trips: New York City and Key West. I was told once you retire you do not take vacations, you travel. I have an autumn trip planned to Mashpee, Massachusetts, with a stop in Salem. In 2009, I plan on taking a train trip out west and I have a list of other places I want to travel to.

I get together with my other retired friends, **Phyllis Vidler, Judy Beard, and Diane Greiner**, at least once a month. We go to a play, concert, or a museum. These are also the friends I travel with on my trips. I have lunch a few times a month with my friends from the office. I also have time to get together with other friends for a late lunch or other activity.

I am the Secretary for NTEU Chapter 24, so I'm in the union office at least once a month, more if Jeri or Karen needs me to do something. I house sit for repair people for my sisters and take family and friend for medical tests when a driver is required. My closets and laundry room are still waiting to be cleaned.

My advice for anyone who is thinking about retiring in the next three to four years is to see a financial adviser now to make sure you are financially capable. There is plenty to do after you retire. Any organization can always use volunteers. You just have to look around, find out what you would like to do, and go for it!

P.O.D. Happenings

Steward **Ella Porter** reports: We had a small luncheon on 5/19 for **Gail Clifford** the IA reviewer, **Brenda Morrison** who has been promoted as a GS-11 in Pontiac, and **Nancy Hollingsworth** who was selected as an advisor in the Tech Unit. Nancy will remain in this POD in her new position. Gail's husband was selected as the AD for the Austin area and her last day was May 21. On June 2, the POD had a Lunch & Learn, with Congressman **Thaddeus McCotter**, who answered questions from employees. Legislative Coordinator **Kathy McHugh**, Chapter President **Jeri Burger**, and Vice President **Dan Itchue** also attended. Kudos to Kathy for a great session.

The office hosted a second Lunch & Learn June 17, attended by Chapter Vice President Dan Itchue and Chief Steward **Karen Johnson**. There were more than 30 participants attending. Some of the items of discussion were the mileage rate and Hatch Act Do's and Don'ts.

Clinton Twp POD Happenings from **Donna Jones**, Steward:

- RO **Sharon Sloan** retired after 23 years of service in February and she and her husband Billy will be RVing America. A luncheon was held Feb 7th in her honor at the Olive Garden by Lakeside Mall.

-RO **Marc Miles** was selected as a special agent with CID and he had to report for training in Georgia the last week of May. A luncheon was held in his honor at Wild Buffalo Wings in Mt. Clemens on May 20th. Best Wishes to Marc!

-RO /Union Steward **Donna Jones** was recognized by CI in a ceremony on May 28th for her good work done in developing a fraud case.

-Our NTEU Lunch & Learn will be held in our lunch room on June 24th from 11:30 am - 12:30pm. Our guest speaker will be NTEU Chapter 24 President **Jeri Burger**.

Collection Advisory had a Lunch and Learn on April 22nd, according to Steward **Greg Wert**. Chapter President **Jeri Burger** and Chief Steward **Karen Johnson** provided timely information to our members.

Pontiac POD also had a Lunch & Learn. NTEU Assistant Counsel **Thomas Coates** was the guest speaker, answering employee questions regarding the arbitration process. In addition to Thomas and nearly twenty members, were Vice President **Dan Itchue**, Chief Steward **Karen Johnson**, and Steward **David Hauenstein**.

Janice Williams-Littlejohn reports **Susan Barrett** is again a grandmother to grandson Hayes.



Eating Crow

In response to the previous newsletter and the article on the Community Service Committee, Steward **Mary Cook** asked for clarification on her Post of Duty. She thought she worked in East Lansing. We placed her in **Easy** Lansing. To quote Mary: "Is this some sort of comment about my morals?"

Our Union

NTEU

Our Voice



Firebird 24

Jeri Burger, President

Daniel Itchue, Vice President

Marianne Gordon, Secretary

Henry Morrison, Treasurer

Karen Johnson, Chief Steward

David Hauenstein, Editor

Chapter 24 Website, www.nteu24.org

Caroline Trinkwalder