



Firebird 24

Reborn From Our Ashes

NTEU Chapter 24 Newsletter

Volume 18

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

August 2009

President's Corner

-Jeri Burger, Chapter President

Stewards

Please join me in welcoming two new stewards: **Meta Hyde** has agreed to become a steward in ACS. Meta has worked as a Customer Service Representative for over 3 years. She brings great enthusiasm and willingness to work with and for the employees in ACS. Revenue Agent **Sheree Jones** has rejoined the Chapter 24 steward cadre. Sheree was a steward in the 1990s and has agreed to share her experience and skill with members in the Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS.) Welcome and thank you Meta and Sheree.

We are saying goodbye and good luck to Steward **Marcia Pratt**. Marcia is retiring on September 1. Marcia has been a steward for 10 years in both the Saginaw and Traverse City offices. Marcia; thank you for your many years of stewardship and congratulations on your retirement. We will miss you!

Election

The election for the officers and executive board members for Chapter 24 was held on August 5. Thanks to all of you that took the time and opportunity to vote. A special thank you to the Election Committee: Chairman **Brian Norton, Clenda Carter, David Hauenstein, Chalsea Sommer, and Thrisa Tolbert-Hamilton**. We truly appreciate the hours you spent organizing, preparing, and mailing the letters and ballots and counting the ballots on Election Day. On a personal note, I look forward to serving you as Chapter President for the next three years.

Contract

The National Agreement II (new contract) will finally be implemented. The final hurdle with the Department of Treasury has been resolved. The actual implementation date will be sometime between September 27 and October 11, depending on printing timeframes. Please look for emails from National NTEU and the chapter regarding contract changes. I am thinking about having Lunch and Learns in the PODs. Would you be interested?

POD Issues

I have been working on many POD issues and changes. The Agency needs to negotiate with NTEU to ensure that the unprecedented number of new employees have space to work. If local management and the chapter did not come to agreement then the Agency would cancel the hiring in Michigan and place the new employees in another state. I did not want, not did I think you would want, to be responsible for jobs leaving Michigan. I want to especially acknowledge the Pontiac employees for enduring a temporary fix while the Agency secures additional permanent space. Another large, looming issue is the move of IRS employees from the McNamara building in Detroit. The process is just starting and I will continue to keep you informed. Steward **Jessie Dawkins** and I are working on the relocation of the Flint office. The Saginaw, Farmington Hills and Pontiac offices are in different stages of redesign. We are also still working on some issues still pending in Grand Rapids.

Membership Meeting

Our annual fall membership meeting in metro-Detroit is scheduled for October 21. The venue this year is the **Roostertail** banquet facility. The

Roostertail is located at 100 Marquette Drive, Detroit, Michigan 48214. For those of you who attended the prior membership meeting with Colleen Kelley, it is across the street from Sinbad's. **Ken Moffett**, National NTEU Deputy Director of Negotiations, will be the guest speaker. Ken will tell us about the negotiation process, including negotiating the new contract. Watch your email for a flyer and further details. I hope you can join us.

Convention

Chapter Vice President **Dan Itchue** and I were your delegates at the 2009 NTEU convention the week of August 10. I also had the privilege of chairing the Nominations and Elections committee. The chapter was recognized for Sustained 70 Percent Membership for Ten Years. I was proud to accept the award on your behalf. Thank you for your membership and support of NTEU. Now I need to ask for your help. We need you, the members, to help make Chapter 24 as strong and effective as possible. You are the strength of NTEU. The stewards and officers are willing and able to serve you, but we cannot do it alone. How can you help?

- Participate
Come to membership meetings and Lunch and Learns. Vote in the chapter elections. Make your voice heard. Only 33% of the members voted in the recent election
- Be Informed
Read your contract. Read, or at least glance at, the emails from National NTEU and the chapter. Register and use the NTEU web sites (www.NTEU.org and www.nteu24.org). Pay attention to the legislative issues that affect you and your employment. Ask your steward

HAILS FROM THE CHIEF

-Karen Johnson, Chief Steward

It's hard to believe summer is almost over. I remember as a young girl (yes I can still remember that far back) at the end of a school year, thinking summer lasted forever. It always seemed like Christmas would never come. Now, it's quite the opposite. As we continue to get older, time flies by so much faster. Every work day in Room 2350 of the McNamara Building presents time management challenges not unlike the challenges all IRS employees face. The

how to use CAPWIZ to send messages to your congressional representatives.

- Encourage nonmembers to Join.
As you know, the strength of NTEU is only as strong as you, the members. We need to encourage all nonmembers to join us and help show their support of all that NTEU does for all employees. Now is the time! Through September 30 you can earn \$100 for recruiting a nonmember. See your steward for details.
- Be Watchful
Let your steward know if you observe Management implementing a change in your working condition, or your manager conducts a formal meeting without a steward, or there is a problem/change in your work space or if you think your rights have been violated. We will continue to fight for your rights through grievances and informal resolution but we need your help to identify all the problems.
- Become Involved
Most of your officers and board members are retired, eligible to retire now or eligible to retire within the next three years. Many stewards will be retiring within the next three years as well. Please let me know if you are interested in becoming a future steward or elected chapter leader. The future of Chapter 24 is in your hands.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with your ideas and concerns. I am always open to and welcome your thoughts and suggestions. Again, thank you for your support and membership in NTEU.

Chapter office continues to be one of the busiest places I have ever worked.

As of July 31st, we have completed 72 issues on behalf of NTEU members. We have 75 open issues in process. Our continuing efforts to improve working conditions for our members in ACS accounts for 48% of our case work... This process may be slow and arduous, but we are making significant progress.

Stewards throughout the chapter work diligently representing the rights of all employees under our collective bargaining agreement. Keep in mind that stewards are representatives for the union, but we, all chapter members, make up the union. We have said many times there is no uni-

on without “U”. So the next time you encounter an issue you believe is a violation of the contract ask yourself what “U” can do about it. Speak out, contact your steward for guidance, and push back by filing a grievance. “U” are the union. Kudo’s to the following stewards for their excellent representational work: **Scott Marshall, Dan Itchue, Dave Hauenstein, Dave King, Reese Scripture, Rhonda Davis, Henry Morrison, Barry Begeny, Wendy Molloy**, Membership coordinator **Kim Longstreet**, and my faithful Outstate Assistant Chief Steward **Mary Cook**.

Chapter Election Results

Chapter 24 held its last every other year election this summer. Henceforth, elections will be held every third year, saving the Chapter considerable money. This expense of an election through printing and postage is over \$1500. Thus, the next election is in 2012.

It is important that the membership take note that again like the previous election, many of the positions were uncontested. The offices of Chapter President and Chapter Treasurer were uncontested, and there was no candidate for the office of Vice President. Furthermore, both the president and treasurer will most likely be retiring in 2012 or before. This means Chapter 24 desperately needs members to become more involved and to become candidates for all of the elected positions. The chapter can use your help and involvement in other ways, too. If you are interested, please contact your steward or Chapter President Jeri Burger.

As to the election, the ballots were counted August 5th. The uncertified results are: 808 ballots were mailed out to members. From these, the election committee received 264 ballots. To those of you who took the time and interest to vote, “Thank you.”

President **Jeri Burger** was uncontested.

Vice-President: no candidate. A vice president will be selected by vote of the newly seated officers and members of the board.

Treasurer **Henry Morrison** is returned uncontested.

Marianne Gordon was returned to the office of Chapter Secretary, defeating **Rhonda Davis**. The votes for Members of the Board were as follows: **Karen Johnson**, 186; **Mary Cook**, 162; **Cynthia Harris**, 134; **Carol Engelsman**, 122; **Barry Begeny**, 117; **Scott Whitehead**, 114; **Greg Wert**, 110; **Brenda Lowery**, 87; and **Jessie Dawkins**, 73. The top five vote recipients are elected to the Board. Two additional board

members are appointed by the elected officers and board.

To all candidates, the most sincere and grateful thanks for your interest and efforts.

STEWARD OF THE YEAR

This year the Chapter selected two stewards for the Steward of the Year Award. Both **Acqueneese King** of ACS and **Henry Morrison** of Collection have done exemplary work in representing members in grievances and oral replies. Acqueneese was selected for Revenue Officer earlier this year, as well. In addition, **Rhonda Davis** of ACS earned the New Steward of the Year Award. Congratulations to all three and thank you for your hard work.



Henry Morrison
(Photographs of Acqueneese and Rhonda not available.)

Legislative Corner

-Daniel Itchue, Chapter Vice President & Legislative Coordinator

Chapter 24 is happy to announce the formation of a new legislative committee that will be comprised of Chapter members Laura Buus, Jessie Dawkins, Cynthia Harris, and me. The purpose of the committee is to ensure that our voices are heard by our elected representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. We are making plans to bring the issues that are important to all Federal employees directly to our representatives’ attention, including issues such as improved health care coverage, FERS sick leave retirement credit, Labor/Management Partnerships, and Pay Parity. We are also working to bring your representatives directly to your Posts of Duty so that you may have the opportunity to voice your concerns with them directly. We hope we will have a full schedule of POD visits for the next scheduled Congressional recess. In the meantime, we will make every effort to keep you fully informed of emerging issues through National Office Issue papers, Chapter emails, and periodic Congressional Voting Records. Finally, we will be letting you know of

opportunities to write to your Representatives regarding these issues using Cap Wiz.

Student Loan Forgiveness for Federal Employees under CCRAA

-Reese Scripture, EP Revenue Agent & Steward



For some of us with student loans, there may be good news! Through the NTEU supported College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (CCRAA), Congress created the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program to encourage individuals to enter and continue to work full-time in public service jobs.

Only certain people will qualify; there are four specific requirements that must be met.

1. You must be a public servant. To be considered a public servant, you must be employed full-time in any position in a public sector job for the entire time loan repayments are being made. A public sector job is generally defined as a job in emergency management, government, military service, public safety, law enforcement, public health, public education, social work, public interest law services, child care, public library sciences, or any other job at an organization that is described in section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

So, full-time federal employees would qualify, regardless of the job they perform or the department for which they work, as long as they have been working for the Service for a full 10 years. Part-

time and/or seasonal employees would not be eligible nor would employees who leave the Service before completing 10 years of service unless they move to a different full-time job in the public sector. You must be employed full-time in a public sector job at the date of forgiveness.

2. Loan forgiveness is only available for loans made or repaid under the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program. This program includes loans subsidized and unsubsidized Stafford/Ford Loans, Direct PLUS Loans, and Direct Consolidation Loans. One way to find out what type of loan(s) that you have is to visit the U.S. Department of Education's national Student Loan Data System at <http://nslds.ed.gov>.
3. Loan repayments must be structured in one or a combination of the following arrangements:
 - Income contingent repayment plan
 - Income-based repayment plan (new with CCRAA)
 - One of the other Direct Loan repayment plans where the payment is more than what the payer would pay under a 10-year repayment plan.

Income contingent and income-based plans permit a person making lower wages coming out of college to keep their loan repayments low (affordable) until their income increases. Under such a plan, payments will typically extend beyond a 10-year period.

Under the CCRAA your loan balance after the 10-year period will be forgiven, if you meet the other criteria.

What this means is: depending on your federal pay grade (and other factors such as other household income and number of children), you may not qualify because, in essence, the bill is geared to forgive

loans for people with lower incomes.

Visit the Federal Student Aid website at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/OtherFormsOfRepayment> for a description of the different loan repayment plans and links to calculators to estimate your loan repayments under each program and to see if you qualify based on your income.

4. If the first three requirements have been met, then in order to apply for forgiveness, you must have made 120 separate monthly payments beginning after October 1, 2007. That is, you must have made 10-years of monthly loan payments. Payments made earlier than October 2, 2007 do not count! Furthermore, payments cannot be less than the full installment amount and cannot be made more than 15 days late for any month due. Thus, if your payment is \$250 per month and is due on the 5th of the month, and on January 21, 2010 you paid only \$200, but in all other months you timely paid the full required payment, you are no longer qualified for loan forgiveness.

If you think you will qualify for loan forgiveness, it might be a good idea to set your payments up as an automatic deduction from your checking account to make sure you are never late!

The CCRAA also has provisions regarding changes in how current student loans are structured including interest rates, how Pell grants are awarded, changes to TEACH grants, and more. For those with children entering college and looking for options to finance their education, the Act may have some benefits.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has prepared an excellent review of the different components of the CCRAA; their link is <http://www.nasfaa.org/publications/2007/G2669Summary091007.html>.

For those of you that like to go right to the source, you can review the actual final

regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Education on October 23, 2008 at

<http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/finrule/2008-4/102308a.html>.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 has a number of provisions that offer a variety of benefits for individuals seeking a higher education and for those who have completed their education and have the student loan debt to prove it! If you think you may benefit under the CCRAA, become familiar with its provisions so you are best able to take advantage of what is available to you!

Feedback

Chief Steward **Karen Johnson** received the following note from a 20 year employee and member with a previously unblemished record: "Thanks for the update Karen. I will await the outcome. We have really struggled with this, and I appreciate everything you have done to represent me in this matter. I have tried to live my life by doing what is right and this has been a matter of principle with me since the beginning. It cost me to hire an attorney to represent me with TIGTA as well. Without the union, I don't know how any employee can be treated fairly by Management. You support and service is greatly appreciated."

We also received several accolades on the "Diagnosis: Anal Glaucoma" article.

Sound Off!



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.

Stan Lotzoff Memorial Golf Outing



NTEU Chapter 24 will again hold its annual golf outing in memory of Stan Lotzoff and to benefit brain cancer research at the University of Michigan Medical Center. The outing is scheduled for Friday, September 18. Tee times begin at 9:00 am. The \$30 price includes golf and prizes. To sign up, please contact **Dennis Johnson, Karen Johnson, Acqueneese King, or Greg Wert.**

Retirements



The wave of Revenue Officers leaving has not crested. Since our last newsletter, Revenue Officers **Claudia Brain** from Marquette, **Clarenda Carter** from Pontiac, and **Sandi Charter** from East Lansing have all retired, as did **Sally Laskey** from the Farmington Hills Office. Revenue Officer and Chapter Steward **Marcia Pratt** will be retiring September 1, and Revenue Officers **Beryl Allen** and **Ron Williams** will be retiring in September, as well. Also, Collection Secretary **Judy Brocklebank** retired August 3rd. Additionally, LMSB Revenue Agent **Bill Gniewek** retired July 1st. **Orena Perry** of TAC also retired this June.

Recession Resources

-**Janice T. Williams-Littlejohn**, Steward.
In response to the serious and real economic situation in southeast Michigan, Metro Net—a consortium of 8 public libraries in southeast Michigan—has come up with the following aides to job seekers:
-a website, www.metronet.lib.mi.us/toughtimes
that provides valuable recession resources;

-a brochure (available in libraries) that contains similar information

-library programs that are designed to help people cope with job loss and to regroup and start a job search.

The eight participating libraries are: Ferndale, Highland, Novi, Oak Park, Oxford, Pontiac, Southfield, Troy, Waterford, and Wayne.



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Jeri Burger, President
Daniel Itchue, Vice President
Marianne Gordon, Secretary
Henry Morrison, Treasurer
Karen Johnson, Chief Steward

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