

WEASO and WEA members: protecting our professional future

(This column was distributed at the recent WEA Representative Assembly.)

Priorities ... in times of economic downturn and limited resources, it is all about priorities. WEA Staff Organization members are hard at work with WEA members, advocating for the health and welfare of public education in Washington.

Our staff lobbyists, Federal Way staff and UniServ field staff, alongside WEA member lobbyists, have been fixtures in the halls of the state Capitol during this long and brutal legislative session.

WEA and WEASO members have stepped up to the plate, organizing the tens of thousands of contacts with legislators in the struggle to keep our school funding and programs intact. WEASO members are working long hours laying the groundwork to defend WEA members from impending RIFs, and we're advocating NO District take-backs of hard-won contractual rights, benefits and compensation.

This work lays on top of the work WEASO staff members already have on our proverbial "plates" — now "platters" — the

day-to-day advocacy, grievance processing and bargaining. Carrying on the essential work of the WEA also involves training



Janet Beck, WEASO President

leaders and members, organizing ESP Living Wage campaigns and many, many other important elements.

At the same time, we are hearing concerns within WEA itself regarding the financial impact of the state budget on the WEA budget. The NEA UniServ staff program was created with

one primary purpose in mind: To provide NEA members with highly trained and knowledgeable staff with expertise in advocacy, negotiation, contract maintenance, legislative issues and educational issues to promote, protect and defend the interests of members.

The priorities of the WEA must focus on the primary purpose WEA exists: As a UNION. Now, more than ever, WEA members need the guidance, expertise, resources and support provided by WEA staff, just as WEASO members rely on the strength and courage of WEA union members to put that guidance and expertise into practice.

WEASO union members stand side-by-side with WEA union members to fight for their rights and professional future and to promote the organizational mission of the WEA as a union to "make public education the best it can be for staff, students and community."

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janet".

Janet Beck, WEASO president and WEA MidState UniServ representative

Who are we? We're a UNION!

(This article was distributed at the recent WEA Representative Assembly.)

What is WEASO? We're the WEA Staff Organization — the union for WEA employees. There are a lot of similarities between WEA staff and WEA members. Just like WEA members belong to a local union, WEASO is our local union. Our compensation and working conditions are covered by the collective bargaining agreement between WEA and WEASO, similar to the agreement between your local association and your school district.

WEASO is in the first year of a three-year contract with WEA. It's a good collective bargaining agreement, and we're proud of it. We hope WEA members see it the same way.

The contract between WEASO and WEA represents years of collaboration, compromise and hard work on both sides. It hasn't always been easy. But when employees and employers sit down and negotiate in good faith, they can bargain contracts that satisfy the needs and interests of both parties.

There's no doubt the state budget cuts are going to affect both WEA and WEASO members. In these

tough economic times, we need to stick together. That's the only way we'll ever solve the school funding crisis.

This is going to a very difficult year for local bargaining. Even so, as union members and WEA staff, we are committed to helping local associations negotiate the best possible contracts and to upholding the terms of existing contracts.

WEA members and WEASO members have common, shared interests:

- Fair and equitable pay.
- Quality health care benefits.
- Reliable retirement plans.
- Budget priorities that put people first.
- Reasonable workloads.
- Safe working conditions.
- Honest and open communications between employees and management.

No matter where we work, or what kind of work we do, we all want a fair contract that embraces those interests and offers the respect we all deserve.

Julaila wins volunteer award

WEASO member and WEA legal assistant Rosalie Julaila was one of several people who recently won the Salvation Army's 2009 Volunteer of the Year. Fellow WEASO member Zeny Fletcher wants to make sure WEASO members knew about the honor.

"What a boost to get recognition for what she does after work!" Fletcher said. "She was so surprised and didn't know whom the announcer was talking about until they called her name. Very moving and touching story!"



Rosalie Julaila

Fotter notes efforts to limit RIFs

WEA Advocacy and Organizing Director Jim Fotter recently thanked UniServ staffers for their efforts to minimize the number of WEA members getting laid off. Here's part of what he wrote:

"As I listen to Mary read the updated RIF figures to the WEA-RA delegates, it is not lost on me that these numbers would be even higher had you not been out there to hold districts accountable for their choices.

"You make a difference every day that you show up for work. You may be the one that offers a calming voice when a

member calls the office and their world is falling apart. Or you might be the one giving information to help members navigate options. Or you're the ones helping to support your local leaders make a bad situation better.

"Together, you have created several resource pieces to assist in navigating this challenge. You saw the need to improve collective bargaining language for successor agreements. You are helping members to share their stories to help the public understand the effect of the cuts and what it means for them."

A successful WEA RA, with WEASO help

More than 50 WEASO members helped staff the 89th annual WEA Representative Assembly in Spokane. As always, they did a lot to make RA successful, including supervising the audio-visual operation, handling registration, taking minutes, doing the printing and running the computers. WEASO members talked to dozens of WEA members at the WEASO booth in the exhibition hall.

"Each year, I look forward to working the WEA RA because it provides an opportunity to chat with members face-to-face in an often energizing environment," said Brooke Mattox. "As staff, the WEA-RA provides us an opportunity to work as a team, which oftentimes, strengthens our bonds."

Bev Roehr has worked RA registration for many years.

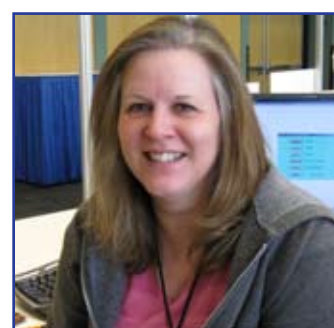
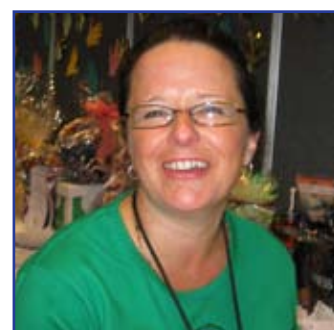
"Working Registration I get to meet members I often talk to," Roehr said. "It's nice to be able to put a face with a name and make a personal contact with them."

Rebecca Jaffe from WEA research said she, too, liked the chance to meet and talk with WEA members.

"I had the chance to talk to some members I had worked with in the past and get caught up on how things are going with their work and their families," she said. "The best part of RA was having the opportunity to work with fellow WEASO members in what was for me a new setting. I also enjoyed seeing membership and staff work

together on raising money for the Children's Fund — this was especially inspiring given the tough economic times and the RIF deadlines."

WEA assistant Stephanie Mikos said, "I love working at RA! It gives me an opportunity to experience first-hand the passion that drives our members and encourages me to continue to work hard. The Children's Fund whirled with excitement as we not only reached our goal, but surpassed it by over half, equaling \$18,334.24!"



Top: Mark Andrews; Melissa Olschewsky and Brooke Mattox; Connie Powell and Dixie Gunter; Middle: Tom Baier; Stephanie Mikos; Lower: Sally McNair, Jim Gow and Sue Laib; Jill Dahlen; Bev Roehr.

Another higher ed union victory thanks to solid organizing

WEA higher ed organizer and WEASO Executive Board member Gary McNeil recently helped faculty at Montana State University organize a successful union election. McNeil was on NEA assignment and worked with the Associated

Faculty of Montana State University for more than a year, visiting the campus several times during that period.

"It was a real nail-biter, but they had a very good Organizing Committee, an excellent Organiz-

er and a hard-nosed voter turn-out machine," McNeil said. "Quality leadership and hard organization prevails. This is a big victory. There has not been a faculty union election at a research/land grant institution in nearly 20 years."

Anderson, Mattox et al head to NSO RA

WEASO members Mark Anderson, Simone Boe, Scarlett Riebold, Rosalie Julaila, Mike Horner, Edna Barnhouse-Lopez, Brooke Mattox, Rich Wood and

WEASO President Janet Beck will serve as WEASO delegates to the National Staff Organization Representative Assembly in June. Last year, our delegation success-

fully proposed a new business item to endorse Barack Obama for president, a move that played a critical part in his landslide election last fall.

More WEASO members at WEA RA

Top: Wendy Rader-Konofalski with U.S. Congressman Jay Inslee, Jill Van Glubt, John Brickell.

Bottom: Ben Ibale, Rebecca Jaffe and Martin Wiedemann.



Just **REWARDS**

It's a monthly newsletter about the WEA Staff Organization, its members and our issues, and is distributed to WEASO members, WEA managers, WEA board members and local WEA leaders.

