

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

**Wednesday, February 18:** Forum on State-Mandated Testing, SMS Auditorium @ 7pm

**Tuesday, February 24:** BOE Work Session, location TBD @ 6pm.

**Monday, March 2:** SHTA Executive Session, Fernway @ 4:15pm

**Tuesday, March 3:** BOE meeting, SHHS small auditorium @ 6pm

**Saturday March 7:** *A Night for the Red & White*, Tudor Arms Hotel @7pm

**Monday March 9:** SHTA Representative Council, SMS @ 4:30pm

# **SHTA news**

**February 17, 2015**

**ISSUE NO. 5**

## **Message From the President**

It's been a difficult month. Losing a beloved member of Our Association and colleague, Jim Caffrey, has affected us all profoundly. Jim loved his students, his profession, his school, and his peers. I had been working and corresponding with Jim shortly before the senseless tragedy that took his life and was able to experience some of the intelligence and insight that was part of Jim's personality. His life, work, and legacy are a tribute to what one teacher can do in a community. After attending Jim's calling hours and funeral, I was profoundly moved by story after story of Jim's kindness and generosity. My heart goes out to Patricia, James, and Julie as they live with the loss of Jim. We mourn with them and will continue to feel their loss.

It was wonderful to see the level of love and support provided by our colleagues at Jim's home school, Woodbury, and from other colleagues who had worked with Jim when he was a student teacher and substitute. It was a reminder of what we do as an Association and community when one of our own is hurt or lost. Equally rewarding was seeing recent retiree and longtime SHTA veteran, Mike Kobilis, step into Jim's classroom to support his teaching partner Kathy Brewster and their 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. Mike's generosity is also a reminder of the kind of people our teachers are when times are most difficult.

The second challenge surrounding our teachers this month center on Cathy Grieshop, SHTA member and beloved kindergarten teacher at Lomond School. Without going into explicit detail, I will say that Cathy has 100% of our support as she goes through this difficult time. I was proud and humbled by the community and collegial support that showed up to speak on Cathy's behalf at the February board meeting. The statements delivered by Cathy's former students, parents, colleagues, and concerned citizens gave me hope about the enduring quality of the teachers and citizens of Shaker Heights, Ohio.

We will continue to support Cathy through her ordeal. One of our mandates as an Association is to represent our members through our generously supported legal aid fund. Our membership believes in Cathy's case and in its relevance to all of our professional lives in the district. Our focus is always foremost on supporting the safety and well-being of our students. However, we believe that the unfortunate circumstances that befell Cathy could happen to us at any time and in any school. We love our students but we cannot control every variable in the teaching environment. We will continue to monitor Cathy's case and will update the membership as it continues to unfold.

Finally, it has also been my job to take part in the normal operations of Our Association. I continue to work on negotiations, which I will update in the Salary-Tenure Report. I sent out a letter to support teachers on behalf of the Association as they prepare for an approval vote for SHTA representation. I

worked on a legal issues in the district. I sent out a letter concerning our Association's response to Jim's passing. I attended a conference at Cleveland State University on OTES and the law. I met with administration and evaluation concerning evaluation issues.

In difficult times like these, it's even more important that we support each other as colleagues, Association members, and friends. I believe we perform one of the most important services community members can provide, educating its children. Reach out to a peer who might be struggling or suffering under undue stress. Provide the kind of support you would like to receive yourself. Have faith in your peers and your family. Sometimes, even though not related by blood, they feel like both. We are here for one another and we are bound together through Our Association. Don't forget that. Feel free to contact me at x6033 or [morris\\_j@shaker.org](mailto:morris_j@shaker.org). I will always do whatever I can to help.

***Respectfully submitted,***  
***John Morris***



**SHTA President John Morris  
speaks at the February  
Representative Council  
meeting @ Shaker Heights  
High School.**



# Reports from the Executive Board

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

*A Night for the Red and White* is quickly approaching. I hope you take the opportunity to attend this amazing event. *A Night for the Red and White* will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2015, 7:00 p.m., at the Tudor Arms Hotel. If you were not one of the lucky members to be chosen from our drawing please remember that the Committee is again offering a special staff ticket price of \$95. The SHTA's donation to the silent auction this year will be two tickets to a performance at the Cleveland Play House and a gift certificate to Edwin's Restaurant on Shaker Square. I want to thank all of you who have made contributions to the Silent Auction. Thank you to Darlene Garrison for organizing the Red and White drawing and congratulations to our drawing winners.

The SHTA Teacher Fellowships recipients are encouraged to submit receipt documentation to collect reimbursement. This money can be used to enhance your professional development.

Finally, I was thrilled to see how the membership rallied behind a colleague in need on the evening of February 10. I am honored to work with and for such a talented and accomplished teaching staff. I continue to ask that you help and support each other. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at x4692.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
**Matthew Zucca**



**SHTA Vice President Matt Zucca  
with SHTA Treasurer Bill Scanlon  
at the February Representative  
Council meeting @ Shaker Heights  
High School.**

**High School Principal Mike  
Griffith thanks SHTA members for  
their hard work with our students  
at the February Representative  
Council meeting @ Shaker Heights  
High School.**



## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

The Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, Shaker Heights School Board meeting was a little different from normal. They usually have fewer than ten spectators. Tuesday's meeting was attended by close to 200 people. The small auditorium of the High School was completely packed. Every seat was occupied and every piece of open floor and doorway was filled with people standing or sitting. People (teachers and community members) were there in support of a Shaker teacher who the Board was planning on terminating.

The School Board had taken the proposal for this teacher's termination off the agenda and normally, in the interest of conducting pertinent business, does not allow comments on any item not on the agenda. They stated that, but then allowed for a full 30 minutes of comments, all of which addressed the potential termination. [I compliment the members of the School Board for adjusting their traditional practice in light of the response.] During those comments an S.H.T.A. member read the following letter:

February 9, 2015

To the Shaker Heights Board of Education,

We have a strong teaching staff. The success of our schools is the result of the hard work and dedication of individual teachers at the front of our classrooms throughout the district. Every one of our students is nurtured and valued by us each day. We are accountable for the success of our students, and we, as a staff, take this responsibility seriously.

We are aware the Board is considering the termination of Cathy Grieshop's teacher employment contract. We understand that this action is being brought against her due to a student leaving her classroom and ultimately the building. Cathy acted quickly to track down the student following all procedures at her disposal. She did what any of us confronted with those adverse, stressful conditions would have done. On any given day, a student could leave any one of our classrooms and end up somewhere unexpected. Each of us, regardless of who or where we teach, could be in the very same situation as Cathy. If there is something amiss with the protocols, perhaps we should use this unfortunate event to review and improve our procedures.

A decision to dismiss Cathy Grieshop will be viewed by all the teachers of this district as an attack on the staff as a whole. It will undermine our confidence in our administrators and drive a wedge between our communal cooperation. The administrations, as well as parents, rely on and trust us to not only teach, but to protect, our students. A termination decision in this case will be seen as a breach of that trust.

Sincerely,  
Faculty Members of the Shaker Heights City School District

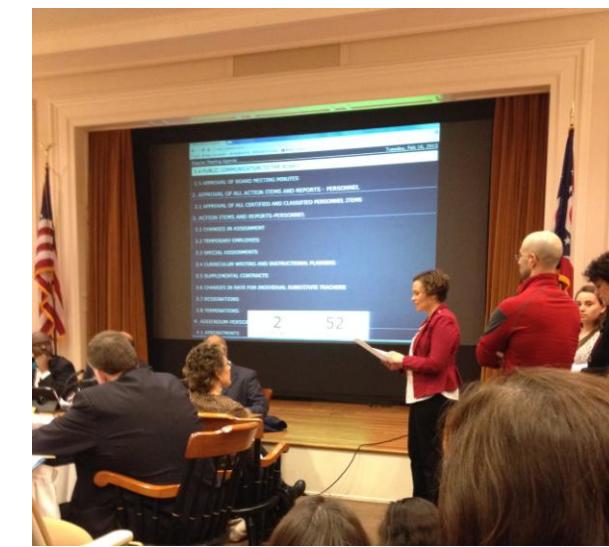
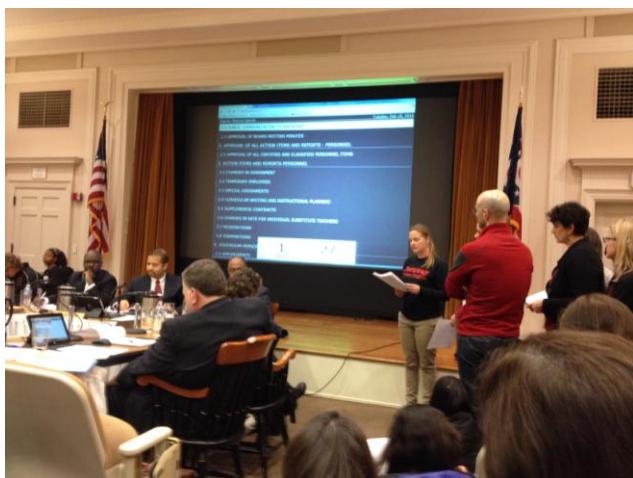
This letter had been passed out to SHTA Representatives from each building Monday evening and by 5 p.m. Tuesday had 123 signatures. On top of those 123 signatures there were numerous staff members who supported the letter's intent but would not sign for fear of repercussions from our Board.

I relay this story to make clear one of the many purposes of our Association. We are here to protect our members and protect our profession. I don't know the teacher in question. I don't know anything about this teacher's performance. But I do know that the incident in question is not grounds for dismissal. Regardless of how you individually feel about a colleague's performance, you must be responsive to the vulnerability of our role in the front of the classroom. For the sake of our profession we must defend our colleagues, and I am proud to be a part of that endeavor.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bill Scanlon*



SHTA Treasurer Bill Scanlon explains  
our budget at the February  
Representative Council meeting @  
Shaker Heights High School.



SHTA Members Elisabeth Bates (above)  
& Lena Paskewitz (left) speak at  
February BOE meeting in defense of  
fellow member Cathy Grieshop.

# **EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORTS**

## **PROFESSIONAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES REPORT**

The technology grievance report from the administration is attached to this newsletter. Please review it and contact me if you have any questions about the action plans or timelines mentioned in the report. I will be meeting with administrators from the central office to review the report, ask questions, and receive progress updates in the coming weeks. Both the administration and the SHTA agree that our technology has to function better in order for teachers and students to use it effectively.

Several members contacted me about going on maternity leave in the summer. Ohio Revised Code dictates that maternity leave starts with the child's date of birth. The advantage for teachers who have babies in the summer is that they do not have to use sick days during the final weeks of pregnancy and delivery. The disadvantage is that they are expected back at work six weeks after the baby is born, which could mean they do not have any paid time off with their new child. If they have a C-section, they are expected back at work eight weeks after the baby is born. I talked with Benefits Specialist Sue Garber to confirm the details listed above. She mentioned another option for moms who give birth in the summer. Since they are not on pay status until the first day of the school calendar in August, they could use up to twelve weeks of Family Medical Leave (FMLA) that begins on the first contracted day in August. During the school year, FMLA would have to start on the baby's date of birth. If the first contracted day in August is more than six weeks after the date of birth (eight weeks for a C-section), then the FMLA (up to twelve weeks) would all be unpaid with full insurance benefits. However, if the first contracted day is less than six weeks after the date of birth (eight weeks for a C-section), then the employee could use some sick days for part of the parental leave. Senior Accounting Specialist Jennifer Browne is able to pro-rate paychecks based on the number of paid days out of the 185-day work year. Anyone who is pregnant should contact me to discuss their leave options.

If a member has exhausted their sick leave, they can use FMLA (unpaid) for a medical condition or to care for a family member. However, the employee has to have worked for the school district for at least 12 months, including 1250 hours in the previous year. This situation could create challenges for new employees who are pregnant or who have a serious medical condition. The SHTA leadership, including myself, will work with the member and the administration to provide the best possible outcome for the teacher and to make the member aware of all their options.

In the past month, I have also participated in the Interest-Based Bargaining process and attended a discussion at Cleveland State about teacher evaluation and the law. I listened to member concerns about OTES, problems with substitutes, and termination policies and procedures. Please continue to keep SHTA officers, executive board members, and building representatives informed about challenges and concerns in your building. We can be better advocates for teachers if we know more about what is happening in each building.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Mike Sears, chairperson*

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

The *Shaker Life* magazine has recently published an SHTA advertisement congratulating our merit scholars. Please take a few moments and peruse the most current issue of *Shaker Life* magazine. Samples of the SHTA Polo shirts should be in my hands by the end of the week. I have ordered examples of both 100% cotton as well as the active wear synthetic. The shirts will be priced at \$32.00 and \$40 dollars; these prices include a small contribution to the SHTA PAC. The shirts will be available soon! Please keep an eye out for an order form.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Bob Bognar, chairperson*

## EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Over the last month, I have worked on several evaluation issues and attended related meetings and workshops. I participated in Diversity Training with the Cleveland Diversity Center along with other teacher leaders, principals, and central administration. I also attended a seminar at CSU regarding the Law of Teacher Evaluation. While the content of the seminar was less informative than expected, we were able to talk with other participants about their practices and these interactions sparked important discussion during our debriefing session following the seminar. In late January, I met with the Peer Evaluation Co-Coordinators to work on program development for Peer Evaluation.

A focus of my work this month has been to gather information about how the evaluation process is going this year and to communicate the results to administration. After receiving concerns from several buildings about how conferences and observations were being scheduled, as well as questions about evidence, I decided to inquire with all head building representatives about these two issues specifically and the evaluation experience generally. After receiving the responses, I created a document summarizing the shared concerns and feedback and forwarded it to the Evaluation Committee Co-Coordinators, Dr. Erin Herbruck and Andrew Glasier, who then shared them with the Director of Human Resources, Darlene Bushley.

The Evaluation Committee met in early February. Much of this meeting focused on discussion and problem solving based on this feedback. Revisions to the system in order to make the evidence gathering process more effective, efficient, and reflective of a holistic picture of teachers' practices are being considered. It is my hope that we will continue to work towards the goal of creating and implementing an evaluation system that effectively supports professional growth for everyone. Your continued updates and feedback about your experiences with evaluation, both positive and negative, are essential to this work.

Please read the following evaluation guideline reminders and clarifications. They are reflective of your concerns and questions. I have been assured that evaluators who have been identified as not following protocols have been reminded of them.

- Evaluation conferences and observations will be scheduled at mutually agreed upon dates and times. Some evaluators use a sign-up procedure, while others prefer to propose meeting and observation dates and times that work within their schedules. If a date or time is proposed that does not work for you, do not accept. There should not be any negative repercussions for asking for a different date or time. If you feel that your evaluator is not following this guideline, please contact your building representative or me right away.
- Post-observation conferences will take place shortly after the observation takes place. The evaluation guidelines suggest they take place approximately one week after the observation. This allows both the teacher and evaluator time to reflect on the lesson and prepare notes for the conference, but is timely enough to provide relevant feedback.

- January Formative and May Summative ratings and comments will be a reflection of multiple sources of evidence, including lesson observations, pre and post conference discussions, walkthroughs, and additional evidence provided by the teacher. Teachers are encouraged to provide clarifying evidence about the observed lessons, as well as other evidence of their work in all areas of the rubric. Professional, collaborative discussions about ratings and areas for growth are an expected piece of the process.
- Observation Summary forms will reflect the observed lesson and conference discussions regarding the lesson, as well as additional evidence pertaining to the observed lesson provided by the teacher. A written lesson plan that references rubric objectives is an essential piece of evidence to provide to your evaluator.

Guidelines regarding the new informal evaluation year need further development. Summative ratings are not given for the year, although they are indicated on the Observation Summary form. This has caused confusion. The ratings on the observation form will not be reported or become part of your personnel file.

Please contact me if you have specific questions, concerns, or if you need my assistance with any aspect of the evaluation process.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Lena Paskewitz, chairperson*

## **PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

You may wonder why it is important to have an SHTA presence at the various meetings of the Board, Administration, and their committees. By attending these meetings, we learn about the policies and procedures of the Board and Administration and hear their dialogue on issues or proposed changes. Recent events have reinforced why I attend many meetings and report back to President John Morris.

Transparency has been one of the buzz words of the Board of Education. Sometimes there seems to be an underlying message that the Administration and Board of the recent past were not transparent...but that could just be my perception. (And, by the way, since I was SHTA President during the previous Administration, let me make it clear that our dealings with that Administration were professional, cordial, and completely open). Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine's office has a booklet online entitled Ohio Sunshine Laws. It opens with quotes from historical figures. I have chosen a quote from that list.

*"The liberties of a people never were, nor ever will be, secure, when the transactions of their rulers may be concealed from them . . . To cover with the veil of secrecy the common routine of business, is an abomination in the eyes of every intelligent man." –Patrick Henry*

In my opinion, the actions of the Administration and the Board of Education toward one of our colleagues have not been truly transparent. Meeting dates and resolutions seem to have been modified to meet a specific agenda. Communication should not be sent and then rescinded. It concerns me to feel so uneasy about these actions.

My hope is that the public participation at the February 10 Board of Education meeting is perceived as a message to the Board that business should be conducted openly at regular business meetings.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Becky Thomas, chairperson*

## POLICY COMMITTEE

This month's policy focus concerns one of the many ways our Association supports members and their concerns. By-Law V, Section G concerns our Legal Aid committee:

### 1. Funding

**a. Funding for this committee shall be from the general savings account and from voluntary contributions. The Treasurer shall designate the general savings accounts of the Association as the Legal Aid Fund.**

b. A purpose of the fund shall be to provide available resources for legal and or related services for the Association as authorized by the Executive Board.

**c. A further purpose of the fund shall be to provide monies to assist any members of the Association who may need legal aid in connection with their employment in the Shaker Heights City Schools.**

2. Committee There shall be a Legal Aid Committee consisting of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Professional Rights and Responsibilities Chair and at least three other members appointed by the President to represent the senior high, middle school and elementary levels. The purpose of the Committee shall be to administer the fund with respect to assisting individual members of the Association.

### 3. Procedures and Limitations.

a. The Executive Board shall have the authority to commit Representative Council to expenditures against the fund for legal and/or related services required by the Association in an amount not to exceed that established by the Representative Council.

b. The Legal Aid Committee shall consider requests of individual members applying directly for assistance. Requests should be submitted in writing to the Association President and Legal Aid Chair.

c. Representative Council shall be informed of any grants or other expenditures made against the fund on behalf of members of the Association, but the Legal Aid Committee shall be the investigating body for determining eligibility and need of applicants and shall be permitted to make grants to members on its own authority in an amount not to exceed that established by Representative Council for approval at the earliest scheduled meeting.

While our Representative Council votes to allocate funds based on the Legal Aid Committee's recommendation, the nature and details of the request are not divulged out of deference to the parties involved. As the highlighted **section a.** points out, the Association considers it a vital function to have available funds to assist our members, and this is reflected in the Association's stewardship of our member's dues, and the ample funds available. Also highlighted is **section c.** which refers to these funds that are intended to help members with legal aid needs in regards to their employment in the district; however the details and even the legal aid itself is not publicly shared - only that the funds have been allocated is disclosed. This is a very important and prominent function of our Association, but it is also a discretionary one. As an Association we are interested in not only due process, but also the integrity of our district, our profession, and our colleagues.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Tim Kalan, Chairperson*

## **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

Governor Kasich's 2015 budget proposal has changed the level of funding districts across Ohio will receive from the state. "What we want to do, and are trying to do, is to change the very mix and diversify the economy of Ohio," said Kasich as he attempted to explain the rational for the changes. The proposal recommends a 100% decrease in income tax for small businesses and a 23% decrease in personal income tax with increases in deductions over two years. To make up for the loss of revenue, Kasich proposes an increase in the sales tax from 5.75% to 6.25% and increases to the cigarette tax among other sources of income for the state.

With less revenue, the governor has decided to reallocate the funding levels for school districts. Wealthier school districts will receive less funding from the state, while poorer districts will see higher levels of funding from the state. About half of the state's 610 school districts would receive more money from the state than they currently are receiving. In Cuyahoga County, 14 districts would receive more money in 2016-2017, and 17 would receive less, according calculations from data released by the Ohio Office of Budget and Management.

Using the budget impact database published by the Office of Budget and Management, Shaker Heights School district will fare better than some of our neighbors. Some of the reasons for the increase are the lack of industry within the Shaker Heights city limits.

<b>Shaker Heights City SD Cuyahoga County</b>	
<b>FY 2015 (current)</b>	\$15,562,400
<b>FY 2016</b>	\$17,118,640
<b>FY 2017</b>	\$17,921,231
<b>Change 2015-17</b>	\$2,358,832
<b>Percent Change</b>	15.2%

Note: these figures include both state core funding and the money the state provides to make up for the elimination of the personal property tax.

Other issues to watch:

- On Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>, State Superintendent Richard Ross presented his recommendations on reducing testing in Ohio to the state legislature. Amidst concerns about over testing students, Ross was directed to research and present a set of recommendations to lessen the number of tests and time spent in test preparation in Ohio classrooms.
- In response to a report released by State Auditor, Dave Yost, State Rep. Teresa Fedor (D-Toledo) announced she would reintroduce a bill to establish a committee to study the effectiveness of community schools and community school regulations. The report critiqued several aspects of current charter school laws and noted "unusually high" discrepancies between the number of students in school and the number reported to the state. At least seven charter schools that state reviewed had enrollment levels 34 percent to 93 percent less than what was reported to the state for funding purposes.
- House Bill 2, by Reps. Mike Dovilla, R-Berea, and Kristina Roegner, R-Hudson, seeks to eliminate conflict-of-interest problems by requiring a school treasurer to be independent of the management company or sponsor. It also would prohibit school employees or vendors from serving on school boards and require board members to disclose any family members doing business with the school.
- At the federal level, Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) recently introduced the SMART Act to streamline and improve testing practices, and the CORE Act to bridge the student achievement gap.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Eileen Sweeney*

## **MEMBERSHIP/ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

Payroll deduction for SHTA dues began with the October 1<sup>st</sup> paycheck - \$30 per pay for 10 pays. Payment for dues will be complete after the Feb 16<sup>th</sup> paycheck deduction. Thank you!

Our Association now has a total of **404** members. Here is the breakdown by building:

<u>Building</u>	<u>Members</u>
Boulevard	24
Fernway	23
Lomond	34
Mercer	30
Onaway	29
Woodbury	63
Middle School	70
High School	131

*Respectfully submitted,  
Stacy Elgart, chairperson*

## **TEACHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Salary Reclassification:** Board action on salary reclassification will be taken two times a year at the regular Board Meetings in November and April. Payment for classes only occurs once a year, but reclassification occurs twice. Remember, your coursework must be completed before you can be considered for reclassification.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have: 216-295-6385 or [smith\\_st@shaker.org](mailto:smith_st@shaker.org).

*Respectfully submitted,  
Steve Smith, chairperson*

## **LEGAL AID COMMITTEE**

Greetings! First, I want to take this opportunity to say that I am a very proud member of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. It has often been said that no news (or report) is good news from my committee.

This year our committee received two requests for legal aid. The first request, which was unanimously approved by the rep council, resulted in \$6536.70 being given to a member for their legal expenses. The second and most recent request from another member was voted on and unanimously approved at the February SHTA Representative Council to assist a member with legal expenses. \$5000.00 was approved at this meeting.

Thank you for your continued support. As you can see, it has allowed us to be here for our members.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Chante Thomas-Taylor*

## SALARY TENURE COMMITTEE

IBB Negotiations continue during the month of February. We are hoping to come to a conclusion before the month's end.

*Respectfully submitted,  
John Morris*

### **WANTED: SHTA PAC TREASURER**

**Seeking a politically minded Association dedicated person to oversee the duties of Treasurer.**

**DUTIES INCLUDE: Bi-Annual reporting to the B.O.E. & keeping abreast of state election laws. Time commitment is approximately a couple hours/month**

**Interested? Contact Eileen Sweeney at:  
[pacshed@gmail.com](mailto:pacshed@gmail.com)**

### **WANTED: SHTA PAC MEMBERS**

**Seeking Association dedicated people to participate and represent the SHTA politically.**

**Committee members will develop political positions on issues impacting the SHTA and organize political actions. Time commitment is approximately a couple hours/month**

**Interested? Contact Eileen Sweeney at:  
[pacshed@gmail.com](mailto:pacshed@gmail.com)**



# A TRIBUTE TO JIM CAFFREY

I found myself thinking a lot about Jim over the past couple of days. What comes to mind is the way he would walk proudly down the hallways, with such a smile on his face! And then there was his signature nod or salute. I always got a kick out of his distinctive laughter. Even now, I can here his laughter in my head.

I first really met Jim at the beginning of the school year when he began teaching 6th grade (teaming with Mark Sakowski). We were both teaching Math & Social Studies. I remember the late summer, sweaty evenings, setting up our classrooms with family members helping us along. By the end of day, we were all like ships passing in the night with those dedicated and tired looks on our faces.

Over the past few years, I rarely saw Jim at work, as he was on the opposite side of the building teaching 5th grade. But how thankful I am that *I did see him last* when I was up on the third floor with my class, and he was walking his class down the hall. There he was, that proud walk, warm smile, and the signature nod. No words necessary. I'm glad I had that moment.

While I didn't know Jim very well, I do know that what he did here at Woodbury was in his heart. He was a very dedicated and passionate individual. And that is something that I feel I picked up on early. Even his facial expressions communicated his state of being. To me that said a lot about him though, because his energy was that dynamic.

***Ms. Bethamie M. Portner  
6th grade teacher  
Woodbury Elementary School***

When I heard that Jim Caffrey was not only starting a Model UN club at Woodbury last year, but that he intended to bring all of them ~5th AND 6th graders~ to Columbus for the Junior Ohio Model UN gathering last spring, I shook my head in wonder and amazement. Two long bus rides, several meals, meetings, hotel stays... I love my work with these students, but shepherding a crew of 10-, 11- and 12-year-olds sounded daunting to me. Not to Jim! For Jim it was the opportunity to introduce an amazing organization to Shaker's young students. He knew he was opening the door to global activism for many and showing them the good that they might eventually do in our world.

My youngest child was one of those unofficial (5th grade) delegates. The work she did, the lessons she learned, and the passion that was ignited by her experience can be directly attributed to the guidance and enthusiasm she got from working with Mr. Caffrey. She came away from last year's event wanting to attend Model UN camp (yes, there is such a thing) and so excited to get rolling again this year. When Jim found me last September and asked if I would be willing to come along as a chaperone, I knew I had to say yes.

Being in Columbus next month with all these kids but without Jim will be a bittersweet experience, I am sure, but I am looking forward to it all the same. I am eager to witness these budding diplomats as they represent their school and honor their mentor, Mr. Caffrey. I know they will make him proud.

***Amy Kerr Thome  
Parent***

## **A TRIBUTE TO JIM CAFFREY**

I opened an e-mail from former Woodbury assistant principal Erica Wigton in the spring of 2013 asking me to help a Woodbury teacher start a Model United Nations program there. My initial thoughts were about adding one more thing to my calendar. However, I quickly realized I could help a little bit and that this was the professional thing to do. I am so glad I did because it gave me the opportunity to get to know Jim Caffrey on a more personal level. I knew Jim a little bit from his time doing his math student teaching and some substitute teaching at the Middle School. His son Jamie had been an excellent student in my class a few years earlier.

Jim brought enthusiasm and passion to the Model UN program because he had experienced it as a student in high school and college. He helped me become a better Model UN advisor more than I helped him. He volunteered to drive to the advisor's conference in Columbus in the fall of 2013, picking me up at the Middle School. We shared great conversations on our trip about Model UN, teaching, and parenting. I was really impressed to hear about Jamie's work with the Shaker LaunchHouse and Mission Stove. Jamie spoke at my church to raise more money for Mission Stove. Jim told me how he encouraged his son to focus more on co-curricular activities when he started high school. Jamie certainly took his father's advice. He recently told me he has been accepted to the University of Virginia, and is still waiting to hear from a few other top schools.

Jim's Model UN students were well-prepared for the conference last March, especially considering it was their first year participating in the event. I shouldn't have been surprised since Jim was detail-oriented and had asked me many good questions in the weeks leading up to the conference. I was also impressed with how his students ate together with him at every meal, like a large family. I asked him how he got them to all sit together, and he said they just all came over to sit with him. This makes sense considering his students sometimes preferred to stay in from recess to work with him on their school work.

Jim's daughter Julie is currently participating in Model UN at the Middle School for the second year in a row. She and her teammates could not attend meetings during their swimming season and they considered quitting the club. Jim agreed to work with them at his home in the evenings and on weekends so they could continue to participate. Jim and I spoke on the phone Wednesday night before the accident. I am going to miss those phone conversations. He told me that Julie's team had been working hard and had a unique resolution topic about discrimination against people accused of practicing witchcraft. His only concern was the Central African Republic's official position on this discrimination. This is a common challenge in Model UN. Students are pretending to be delegates from another country's government, so they have to set aside their American ideals and write resolutions from the point of view of the country they are representing in the simulation. Julie brought me her resolution at the last Model UN meeting. She had written at the bottom words from her father, "Does the Central African Republic's government think this discrimination is a problem?" By the end of the meeting, she and her teammates discovered that the government would like the discrimination to end, but there is pressure on them from local groups who are against witchcraft. Jim was not only the first teacher for Julie and Jamie, but he continued teaching them as they grew into young adults.

*Mike Sears  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Shaker Middle School*

## A TRIBUTE TO JIM CAFFREY

Jim Caffrey was a class act. He was willing to try anything that was best for kids. He was fun to work with. He worked hard and was extremely dedicated to his students. Many of us who taught social studies and/or math often laughed when his cell phone alarm would sound in our meetings at 2:35. "It's time to take out your planners students". This was how we always ended our meetings sharing a common laugh. Jim, you are missed.

*Chante Thomas-Taylor  
5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher  
Woodbury School*



**Photos courtesy of SHTA Members  
Deanna Clemente-Milne and Eileen  
Sweeney of Woodbury school.**

# MINUTES FOR THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

## February 9, 2015, Shaker Heights High School

SHTA President, **John Morris** started the February 09, 2015 Representative Council Meeting at 4:33PM. **Michael Griffith, Principal of Shaker Heights High** was not available to greet membership at the start of the meeting. Superintendent **Dr. Gregory Hutchings** was available to welcome membership to Shaker Heights High School. Dr. Hutchings shared the success of the **TEDXSHHS** program that took place at the High School over the weekend. It was awesome and the speakers were phenomenal.

- Please plan on attending the **State of the Schools Address** on Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>. We will be sharing the progress made as it relates to our 5-year Strategic Plan.
- Dr. Hutchings opened a question/answer session with the membership of SHTA.
- **Question/statement 1** – Shaker was always special, we felt like an island. With all the CPTs, TBTs, OTES, etc... we are starting to feel demoralized because we are dealing with so much.
  - People are being held accountable. We are told what to do but it is up to us how we go about doing it. Everything that is happening, the changes relates to what was asked for by teachers, parents and the community.
- **Question/statement 2** – Central Office was rebuilt and that is a positive. Teachers have been here for decades. Shaker is a special place because of the teachers. Teachers feel that they cannot connect with our superintendent. There is a lot of fear; we need more collaboration, more reassurance.
  - Superintendent comes to Rep. Council meetings monthly. He's visible in all school buildings. People have access to the superintendent. He genuinely wants feedback from teachers. He understands, he's a Shaker parent and a resident. He wants the best for his own children as well. Shaker's history, passion for the arts and the phenomenal teachers brought him here to Shaker. He made a choice to come to Shaker. We are moving in a different direction. Not trying to change everything but we are refining it.
- **Question/statement 3** – Teachers are nervous, anxious and scared about consequences that may happen. Not a pleasant place to work.
  - Be professional and remember that we are here to do what's best for all students. We want each child to have a quality education. When you say things, be able to show evidence.
- **Question/statement 4** – Morale at the Middle School is low. Staff members are not in favor of all the changes. Powers that be have not listened to our staff.
  - We can't make drastic changes. We start with what we have and we make it work. Something is working because parent phone calls and meetings have cut down quite a bit this year.
- **Question/statement 5** – Concerns about one of our colleagues being terminated and the process taking place.
  - The investigation taking place is a personnel matter. You don't know all of the details. You have only heard one side of the story. There are two sides. It is important to do your job, come to work and make sure that every student gets a quality education. Know your facts before you support.

**Michael Griffith, High School Principal** joined the meeting, welcomed and thanked membership to Shaker Heights High School.

**MINUTES** from the January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Rep. Council meeting were accepted. Motion by Steve Smith and seconded by Matt Zucca.

**P.T.O. Report** – There was no representative from the P.T.O. present at the meeting. Therefore, no P.T.O.

report was given.

## Officer's Report

### *President, John Morris*

- Worked on Negotiations – Update during Salary Tenure.
- Sent out letter to Support Teachers on behalf of the Association.
- Worked on legal issue in the district.
- Attended Diversity Training with I & A council.
- Attended a conference at CSU on OTES and the law.
- Met with administration and evaluation concerning evaluation issues.

### *Vice President, Matt Zucca*

- Worked on Negotiations.
- In the process of dispersing fellowship grant funds.
- Worked on legal issues in the district.
- Made the donation for *A Night for the Red & White* on the behalf of the Association. Gift card to Edwin's Restaurant, Shaker Square. Also tickets to the Cleveland Playhouse.
- Thank you to staff members who made donations to the silent auction.

### *Secretary, Darlene Garrison*

- Thank you building reps for selling raffle tickets supporting *A Night for the Red & White*.
- A total of \$588.00 was raised for the event.
- Top three selling reps: James Schmidt with 71 tickets, Amy Santos with 65 tickets and Paula Klausner with 44 tickets.
- Three names pulled winning tickets to attend *A Night for the Read & White* event: Sarah Lambert, Middle School; Addie Tobey, Middle School and Paula Klausner, Onaway.

### *Treasurer, Bill Scanlon*

- Has been busy paying bills for the Association.
- The value has decreased on some investments because we had some foreign investments that didn't do well.
- Tax filings are all taken care of.

## Executive Board Reports

### *Past President, Becky Thomas*

- Busy working on website for SHTA.
- Attended the Finance and Audit meeting.
- Attended School Board Meetings.
- Assisted with question/answer session with superintendent.

### *Teacher Education, Steve Smith*

- No Report

### *Membership/Elections, Stacy Elgart*

- No report, not in attendance

### *Policy, Tim Kalan*

- Working on Constitution and By-Laws. Trying to create a new language for eligibility to be part of Representative council and adding the position of Evaluation Chair to the executive board.

*Public Relations, Bob Bognar*

- New advertisement in the *Shaker Life* magazine.
- Waiting for shirts to arrive with SHTA logo.

*Evaluation, Lena Paskewitz*

- Attended diversity-training seminar with John Morris and Peer Evaluation coordinators.
- Attended Evaluation Committee Meeting.
- Would like to hear from a few more schools about their feelings on evaluation and how it is going?
- Dealing with issues about administrators not accepting evidence from Middle School, High School and Lomond.
  - Question: What do we tell a staff member who is scared to seek representation because of possible consequences? Don't meet alone with administration; get assistance from SHTA. You do yourself a disservice when you don't seek representation.

*Legislative, Eileen Sweeney*

- Worked on negotiations.
- Filed PAC information with the Board of Elections.
- Looking at information concerning reducing the hours of testing.

*Publications, Andrew Glasier*

- Wednesday at midnight all submissions are due.
- Spent 11 hours talking about issues relating to evaluations.

*Social, Selena Brown*

- No Report

*Legal Aid, Chante Thomas-Taylor*

- There has been a request made for legal aid help.

*Professional Rights and Responsibilities, Mike Sears*

- Regarding the technology grievance, an eight-page report was sent explaining a plan of action. It was not resolved but it listed an action plan.
- Will be writing about Jim Caffrey in the newsletter. We worked on Model UN together and I would like to take the opportunity to share kind words about Jim.

*Salary Tenure, John Morris*

- Continuing with IBB Negotiations, hopefully to finish this month.

## **Building Reports**

*Boulevard, Jennifer Goulden*

- Substitute problem still exists.
- Fifteen teachers missed their specials.
- Three regular education Teachers were absent and support staff members were pulled to cover classes.
- Several days without the Internet, it pops in and pops out.

*Fernway, Annie Haney*

- Conference day miscommunication. Told that there were no conferences Thursday morning
- Technology – Chrome Books will not work for the PARCC Assessment.
- Roof damage, happening repeatedly. Classrooms with water dripping in garbage cans with students in the rooms.

*Lomond, Donita Townsend*

- Attended meetings with teachers and administrators
- Problem with the quality of subs in the building.

*Mercer, Lisa Hardiman*

- Had a SHTA meeting after school to discuss situation regarding teacher from Lomond.
- Concerns about the validity of the MAP Assessment.

*Onaway, Paula Klausner*

- Continuation of problems with substitutes.
- Wants to conduct a meeting concerning the situation with the Lomond teacher. How do we set that up? After contract hours.

*Woodbury, Amy Santos*

- On January 24<sup>th</sup>, Woodbury and the Shaker community suffered a great loss. After putting in a full day's work on a Saturday, Jim Caffrey was struck and killed while jogging down Shaker Blvd. Needless to say, shock and devastation struck Woodbury. When we reported to work on Monday we met as a staff to learn of the crisis team and supports in place for both the staff and students. As difficult as the day and week was, we can all agree that we were overwhelmed with the support from parents, churches in the community, the Cleveland Heights, University Heights Association, fellow staff members, our own students, and most importantly, the administration. The staff was provided lunch multiple days as well as transportation and release time to attend the funeral service. Thank you Lomond for sending us the fruit, candy, and card. It was extremely thoughtful of you. As we continue to heal, we have learned that although the stress level may be heightened for all of us, at the end of the day, we are all family; and family has to take care of each other. Let us deliberately agree to disagree and deliberately really get to know each other. There is more to our day to day than just CPT, TBTs, RITs, IEPs, BLTs, and PARCC.
- Poor communication about the upcoming PARCC

*Middle School, Paul Repasy*

- Building level meeting about OTES was very informative.
- Issues regarding the Middle School schedule.
- Substitute teacher issue still exists, unfilled absences.
- A concern about the Physical Education department going from 7 to 4 staff members.
- Are the voices of the Middle School staff members being heard?
- Appears that programs are being reduced to accommodate the new schedule.

*High School, James Schmidt*

- There is an issue with an enormous discrepancy between the number of units that teachers were promised for working on the SLOs for their departments and the number of units that the Administration is offering to pay them. Up to 4 units vs.  $\frac{1}{2}$  unit from administration – I have heard nothing back from the administration regarding this matter and it has been nearly two months.
- Some teachers will still not have the 50 minute uninterrupted lunch period as guaranteed by our contract under the newest and most currently revised Delayed Start Schedule.

- There is a persistent and ongoing issue where additional evidence presented at a Post-Conference is not being accepted by certain administrators per the agreed upon Evaluation Process.
- There is a continuing problem with the lack of available substitutes in the building and the need to ask teachers to give up their valuable planning time to cover these otherwise uncovered classes.
- There is an issue with the lack of substitutes in co-taught classes.
- There is an issue that walkthroughs are still not being conducted anonymously as agreed upon for informal walkthroughs conducted by non-observing administrators.
- There is an issue that is hopefully reaching a resolution involving certain SLOs needing to be rewritten at what appears to be the sole discretion of certain administrators.
- Members expressed concerns about the lack of notification and communication about retire/rehire.
- We will represent the High School for the sub grievance.

## **Old Business**

- None

## **New Business**

- Motion made by Paul Repasy for the request of legal aid in the amount of \$5000. Motion was seconded by John Morris.
- The vote was unanimously passed to approve legal aid for a member of SHTA.

## **Good of the Order**

- Thank you High School Representatives for hosting the February SHTA Representative Council Meeting.

## **Adjournment**

- Motion for adjournment made by James Schmidt and seconded by John Morris.
- Meeting adjourned at 6:23P.M.



**Special thanks to SHTA High School  
Representatives Aimee Grey &  
Amanda Ahrens for hosting the  
February SHTA Representative  
Council meeting at Shaker Heights  
High School.**

## ***Unintended Consequences***

*This newsletter is a publication of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association, an independent organization of professional educators in the Shaker Heights City School District. Signed editorials represent the opinion of the author(s) and may or may not reflect the thinking of other officers or members of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. Members and friends of the Association are invited and encouraged to express their opinions or share information via this newsletter.*

For every action there is a reaction. We all learned this natural law long ago in our science class. Sometimes the reaction is what we would predict. However, sometimes we end up with unintended consequences. A good friend of mine always mentored me to look for the unintended consequences of our actions. Examine what may happen that we do not expect. Often it is the unintended consequences that cause the greatest issues. When I think back over the last several years, the actions of our Board of Education (BOE) and our new administration have led to several unintended consequences that threaten good teaching and good public education.

The BOE has tasked Superintendent Dr. Gregory Hutchings to cut \$1 million/year from the district's expenses in order for him to obtain a \$25,000 bonus. The members of the Board must have thought that reducing costs will help to justify future levies and force the district to "do more with less." What are the unintended consequences of this action?

It means the administration must limit access to the buildings and limit the number of programs the district offers. Shaker Heights is known as an open community and it is not uncommon to see parents, students and community members at events in the schools as late as nine at night. Meetings, exercise classes, homework centers, etc... may all be eliminated as administration begins to limit access.

This focus on reducing costs would also mean hiring based on affordability as opposed to the best qualifications. When I was hired,

members of my cohort included teachers with 20+ years experience and a masters' degree because they were right for the job opening. They cost more to hire but were best for our students. How many experienced teachers will be hired in the future? How young will our staff be in a few years? Is that always the best for our students?

The cuts in spending will also mean more attrition and larger class sizes. We have already felt a surge in class size during the Great Recession. At the high school, our class size grew from around 24 to 28-30 in core classes. Kindergarten classes reached as high as 26 students. While one report once stated that class sizes does not matter for student performance, all teachers know this to be untrue. What we can do with smaller class sizes that cannot be done in larger classes is enormous: build stronger relationships, grade essays in depth, provide more feedback on student performance, create more hands-on activities, use more small group instruction, include more technology, etc. This has meant the unintended consequence of more families making the choice to leave Shaker Schools. I have talked to several families who have chosen private schools for their young children based solely on the class sizes of our kindergarten classes. These are families that can afford school choice and they did not choose our district, which also means they are less likely to vote for future levies, another unintended consequence.

The BOE's adoption of a mere 6.9 mil levy and willingness to listen to the Finance & Audit Committee's report as gospel only exacerbates the problem. As we take in less funding, leave decisions of finance to non-educators, and reduce cost at the same time, we will be less attractive to those that can provide the most and best solution to our issues.

Strict adherence to Common Core coupled with fast tracking the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program mixed with the massive influx of state and district mandated testing has the unintended consequence of less opportunity for meaningful teacher collaboration on curriculum, less focus on teacher individuality and a very stressed faculty. We are pushed to the breaking point. We go from attending a MYP meeting to reading testing information emails to attending another meeting. We are told we must teach the same unit and give the same tests, once truly

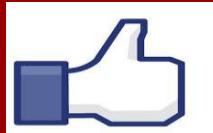
antithetical to a Shaker education. This was a district that thrived on teacher and student individuality. While the goals may be justifiable, the amount being asked of staff has led to teachers who are struggling to keep up with the newest initiatives. We do the best we can while trying to keep focus on our classrooms; which, of course, has led to the unintended consequence: mass resignations and retirements of seasoned teachers. By far, the massive turn over in faculty and staff has been our greatest loss. Without their mentorship, we are losing what it means to be Shaker and becoming just another district.

Yet the greatest unintended consequence has come recently with the actions against a Lomond teacher for a situation that could have happened to any teacher. In fact, it has happened to teachers both here and around the country. The normal response is a letter of reprimand and an assigned training module along with a review of the district security procedures. Instead, this situation has been perceived as an opportunity to remove a skilled teacher and, thereby, cut the budget.

The unintended consequences of this action are so numerous yet we must focus on two: the distrust and distaste by the community, parents, faculty and staff of our administration and Board members and the increased militancy of the Shaker Heights Teachers' Association. I have heard from so many that wished to organize against the Board and our current administration. This may be the greatest unintended consequence.

**AG**

***The SHTA is on***



**us @**

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